

DN 9
Dīgha Nikāya
The Long Discourses

Poṭṭhapāda Sutta
“Discourse to Poṭṭhapāda”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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I have personally heard this.

On one occasion, The Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anāthapiṇḍika at Jeta’s Park, in the city of Sāvatti.

It was during that time also, that the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda was staying at the Queen Mallika’s Garden, along with his three hundred followers, all residing at the monastic hall surrounded by the Tinduka trees, where recluses would gather and engage in debates.

When it was morning, having put on His robes and while carrying His outer robe and alms bowl with Him, The Blessed One entered Sāvatti to collect His daily alms. Then, it occurred to Him:

‘It is still too early to go for alms in Sāvatti at this hour. Let us go instead to Poṭṭhapāda’s hermitage, at Queen Mallikā’s Garden.’ So, He did.

Meanwhile, at that time, Poṭṭhapāda the wandering recluse was sitting in his hermitage at Queen Mallika’s Garden, having gathered there along with a large group of his fellow wandering recluses, as they kept loudly conversing, boisterously discussing various topics, making a lot of noise, shouting and speaking over each other, where each tried to convince the other on many kinds of superficial and trivial matters.

In this way, those recluses were engaged in conversations dealing with kings and rulers, robbers and thieves, as well as various ministers of state; speaking to each other about the military, soldiers and their battle cries; various kinds of food & drinks; clothing, furniture, jewelry, garlands and fragrances; in addition to issues dealing with their families and relatives; modes of transportation, cities, townships and villages, as well as regions. They were further engaged in conversation about the women and heroes they had heard about; what is being discussed and gossiped about currently on the street or the popular water well; matters dealing with the dead or the afterlife; the world and its creation and of the oceans; as well as talking about which realms beings are reborn into after death and the nature of becoming.

It was in the middle of that chaos, when suddenly, Poṭṭhapāda the wandering recluse saw The Blessed One coming from afar, walking in their direction. On seeing Him, he quickly quieted his fellow wanderers, by telling them:

“Good sirs, please quiet down! Stop making so much noise! The Recluse Gautama appears to be coming our way. Everyone knows He enjoys quietude and always speaks in praise of maintaining silence and quietude. So, if in approaching us He notices that we are quiet and reserved in our demeanor, then perhaps He may consider coming our way, and maybe even exchange a few words with us.”

In hearing these prompts, the wandering recluses that were gathered there, quickly quieted down and became completely silent.

1. The Blessed One at the recluses' debating hall

Then, The Blessed One came and approached Poṭṭhapāda, who warmly welcomed The Blessed One by saying:

“Welcome, O Blessed One. You are most welcome indeed, Bhante! It sure has been quite some time since we have seen The Blessed One go out of His way to come and pay us a visit here.

“Please, do sit down, O Blessed One! This seat has been prepared for you, Bhante.”

And The Blessed One sat on the seat that was prepared for Him, after which Poṭṭhapāda went and took a lower seat and sat to one side.

Once seated, The Blessed One proceeded to ask:

“Poṭṭhapāda, what were you all engaged in discussing earlier, having gathered here? What might have been the topic of your conversation before my arrival, which was interrupted as a result?”

When this was spoken, Poṭṭhapāda replied to The Blessed One by saying:

“Bhante, the topic of conversation which we had come here to discuss is not an important one for us to continue, in fact. Surely, if The Blessed One wants to hear about it later, that won't be an issue, at all.

“On the other hand, Bhante, what I wish to share with You is this.

“For the past several days now, an issue has come up among us, recluses and ascetics of other traditions, as well as brahmins present, for which we've assembled here engaging in a certain discussion, within this debating hall.

“What we have all assembled here trying to reach a conclusive agreement on, concerns the state of cessation, pertaining to the higher levels of perception (*abhisaññānirodha*). So, basically, the question we have is this:

‘How can one experience it? How does the state of cessation pertaining to the higher levels of perception take place?’

a. “Now, in discussing the matter among us, some have stated that:

‘A person’s perception arises and ceases, without there being a cause or any specific condition. So, without there being a cause, the moment that perception arises, one becomes percipient or aware. When it ceases, one is no longer percipient or aware.’

“This, Bhante, happens to be the position of one group of recluses and brahmins, who explain how the state of cessation pertaining to the higher levels of perception really takes place.

b. “But then, there are also others who state:

‘No, no! That is not how it is! Perception is in fact a person’s own self, which comes and goes. So, when it comes, one becomes percipient or aware. When it goes and is no longer there, then one is no longer percipient or aware.’

“That, Bhante, is how another group of recluses and brahmins explain how the state of cessation pertaining to the higher levels of perception really takes place.

c. “And then, there are also others who state a third position, by saying:

‘No, no! That is not the way it really happens! Actually, there are certain recluses, ascetics, and brahmins of immense power and psychic abilities, who go on inserting perception into a person and withdraw it, as they please. So, when the perception is inserted into the person, then one becomes percipient and aware. But when it is withdrawn, then one is no longer percipient or aware.’

“That is another way, Bhante, that some of us recluses and brahmins explain how the state of cessation pertaining to the higher levels of perception takes place.

d. “Then, Bhante, there is yet a fourth group among us, who objects to all these preceding positions, by stating:

‘No, no! That is not how it happens! It is in fact those great Devas of incredible power and strength, who are responsible for inserting perception into a person and withdrawing it out again, as they please. So, when the perception is inserted by these Devas into the person, then one becomes percipient and aware. But when it is withdrawn, then one is no longer percipient or aware.’

“It is in this way, Bhante, that we recluses and brahmins gathered here, in this debating hall, have been trying to explain how the state of cessation pertaining to the higher levels of perception takes place.

“Then, Bhante, all of a sudden, I thought of you, as I began reflecting:

‘Oh, wait a minute! There is The Blessed One! The Sugata Himself! If there is anyone who can properly give us a conclusive answer to this issue, then He most certainly is The One to be knowledgeable in these extremely fine matters.’

“After all, The Blessed One is known far and wide for being an expert in explaining how the state of cessation pertaining to the higher levels of perception takes place.

“Therefore, Bhante, now we ask The Blessed One this question:

“How does the state of cessation pertaining to the higher levels of perception take place?”

2. Perception requires a cause for it to arise

“Now, Potṭhapāda, as it relates to those recluses, ascetics and brahmans, who hold the position that perception arises in a person without there being a cause or any specific condition, they have blundered at the very outset, for they are mistaken in their conclusion.

“And why is that?

“It is because, Potṭhapāda, perception arises or ceases in a person as a result of a cause, a specific condition, for which reason it comes to be.

“After all, it is through training that some perceptions arise, and through training also, that some perceptions cease to be.

“And what is that ‘Training’ referred to here?

“It is, Potṭhapāda, when a Tathāgata appears in the world, The Arahant, a Perfectly Self-Awakened Buddha, endowed with Sublime Knowledge and Supremely Pure Conduct, the Well-Gone, the Knower of worlds, the Incomparable Tamer of those to be tamed, the Teacher of gods and humans, Enlightened and Blessed.

“The Tathāgata then teaches the Dhamma that is beautiful in its beginning, beautiful at its middle, and beautiful in its end, The Dhamma that is full of meaning, balanced in Its expression and phrasing, which He realizes Himself with His direct higher understanding of the true nature of existence, just as it really is in this world full of Devas, Māras, Brahmas, along with its recluses, brahmins, and religious practitioners. Thus, He declares and reveals to all beings the completeness and purity of the Holy Life.

“Now, a householder or his son, on hearing and listening to That Dhamma being taught by The Blessed One, or one of His Disciples, gains much faith in It.

“Having become thus deeply inspired by It, and gladdened in his heart by That Dhamma, that householder or his son starts considering:

‘Household life is troublesome and problematic; it is full of impurities, whereas going forth into homelessness is wide open with many possibilities.

‘It is not easy to lead the Holy Life that is complete and pure to its fullness, while living the household life.

‘What if I shave my head and beard, and put on the monastic robes and just go forth?’

“So, in due course, he gives up a small or a large amount of wealth, giving up a small or a large circle of friends and relatives, as he shaves his head and beard, puts on the monastic robes, and goes forth in the Tathāgata’s Dispensation, by leaving behind his household life and thus going into homelessness; that is, with the freedom of his choice, and the very strong faith he feels in his heart for The Dhamma that The Tathāgata teaches.

“Once gone forth, that householder strives by living ethically, while restrained in accordance to the Discipline Code of the Pātimokkha, conducting himself in right behavior, as he sees danger in the slightest fault.

“Thus, he lives virtuously while adhering to the code of discipline and becomes more and more anchored in living with sense-restraint, virtuously living with mindfulness and full awareness, while feeling a strong presence of contentment in his heart, throughout.

A. Cultivation of Virtuous Living (Sīla)

1. Shorter Section on Virtue (Sīla)

“And how, Poṭṭhapāda, does such a Bhikkhu grow and become fully developed in virtue?

1.1 “Here, Poṭṭhapāda, having already gone forth thus, he trains himself in the monastic precepts, while abandoning the destruction of living beings, as he gives up the tendency to harm; throwing away his weapons; being caring and considerate, with aroused compassion, he abides with compassion for all living beings.

“This is one aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

1.2 “By giving up taking what is not freely given, he only accepts what is given. By giving up the common and unholy life, he leads a celibate holy life while abstaining from the low practice of sexual intercourse.

“This too, is one aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

1.3 “By giving up telling lies, he speaks only what is truth and becomes trustworthy in the world. By giving up slandering, he does not go and tell over there, what he has heard here, to create a schism between people. Similarly, he does not tell here, what he had heard over there, in order to create a schism between people. Thus, he speaks in order to join the disjointed and the separated, while strengthening the wholesome bonds between people. Fond of unity, he talks words that lead to unity.

“Also, this is another aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

1.4 “By giving up rough words, he speaks politely and with a pleasant, sweet voice, with words that go straight to the heart. His words are accepted by all the masses. By giving up frivolous speech and idle chatter, he speaks at the right time. Speaking only what is truth and meaningful, he speaks only the Dhamma and the Discipline, and at the right time, using appropriate words, and succinctly, with such words that are worth being recorded and repeated, due to their beneficial nature.

“This too, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

1.5 “Furthermore, such a Bhikkhu refrains from destroying seeds, fruit trees, and vegetable plants. While refraining from taking food at night-time, he only takes one meal a day. He refrains from dancing, music and musical entertainments. He refrains from decorating himself with flowers, scents, or fragrant ointments. He gives up high and stately beds. He refrains from accepting gold, silver and money. He does not accept raw grains, raw meat, women, girls, slaves, whether men or women, goats and sheep, roosters and pigs, elephants, cattle, horses and mares. He does not accept fields or lands. He abstains from carrying messages between people, from buying and selling, or dealing in matters unfairly, such as measures and weights. He does not take bribes, nor cheats or engages in any insincere act. He does not cut, kill or bind, and he does not collect even a single morsel of food violently, and in voracious, barbaric ways.

“This, Poṭṭhapāda, is how a Bhikkhu grows and develops in his virtuous behavior.

2. Middle Section on Virtue (Sīla)

2.1 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless, abuse seeds and plant life, such as those that have been started from roots, from cutting, grafting, budding, from stems, and seeds, acting in such a destructive, blind and self-serving manner, the Bhikkhu completely abstains from such a damaging lifestyle.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

2.2 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless, go on greedily hoarding and storing food, when others struggle to survive, yet they keep hoarding and storing up edible food, various types of drinks, robes, vehicles for transport, bedding, oils and fragrant incense, drying and storing up meat, all so that they could enjoy consuming them later, in the future; and so while these individuals choose to live in such a greedy, blind and self-serving manner, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from such a damaging lifestyle entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

2.3 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless, forget their role as religious practitioners who are supposed to be living the Holy Life, and instead spend their time entertaining themselves by watching various kinds of shows, such as dancing, singing, concerts and musical events, choruses and other oral recitations, drumming and playing on cymbals, hand-clapping, moving picture shows, circus performances, elephants performing or fighting, horses performing or fighting, buffaloes, roosters, goats, rams, quails, and also human beings performing or fighting with each other; as well as attending carnivals; wrestling and boxing matches, battle re-enactments, military demonstrations and shows, troops being in action, or doing their drills; and so, while others engage in such activities that are wasteful of precious time, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from them entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

2.4 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless, forget their role as religious practitioners who are supposed to be living the Holy Life, and instead become heedless while spending their time playing various kinds of games, such as 8- and 10-row chess, checkers, hopscotch, dice games, stick throwing games, drawing pictures through tracing of the palms, doing summersaults, gymnastics, acrobatics, playing with toy pipes, cars, and other vehicles, running and chasing one another, playing with toy ploughs, toy windmills, toy measures, toy chariots, building and playing with toy weapons like bows and arrows, as well as guessing games such as charades, guessing letters written in the air, riddles for amusements, guessing each other’s thoughts, mimicking and pretending to be deformed or handicapped to amuse themselves or others; and so while others engage in such activities that are wasteful of precious time, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from it entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

2.5 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless, abuse that trust as they go and seek a lavish and luxurious lifestyle, such as fancy and opulent furnishings and accommodations for themselves, ornate and expensive chairs, thrones, extravagant seats; over-sized couches, using animal hides as their rugs and throws; covers and drapes with long tassels and laces, multi

colored pillows, pillows made of cotton, of fine embroidery, pillows and covers made of wool, coverlets and pillowcases embroidered with precious gems, gold, fine materials, or animal figures; hides from all sorts of animals, such as elephants, lions, tigers, antelope, deer; beds, couches and seats with awnings, or having stuffed quilts, or red fluffy cushions for the head and feet; and so while others engage in such a lavish lifestyle that is so wasteful, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from it entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

2.6 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless, abuse that trust by enjoying, seeking out or demanding that they use fine unguents, fragrances, precious oils and ghee, along with various fine rubbing powders for their body and massaging oils to treat themselves to, as well as perfumed water to bathe in, and different types of cosmetic products to beautify themselves with or look younger, such as by using mirrors, garlands, creams, mascara, bracelets, head-bands and other head gear, turbans, ornamented water containers, swords, fancy sun shades and fans, walking sticks, yak-tail whisks, robes with long fringes and tassels; and so, while others seek to live in such absurd ways, having a lavish lifestyle that is so wasteful, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from it entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

2.7 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless, abuse that trust by engaging in frivolous talk and idle chatter, that is unbecoming to those who say they are living the Holy Life, yet who engage in useless talk and gossip about kings and rulers, ministers of state, their armies and military prowess, the dangers or threats they present, battles and wars, as well as talking about food and drink, clothing, types of furniture, engaging in all types of street talk, or chatting about robbers and thieves; discussing such trivial topics as chariots, vehicles, villages or towns, major cities and their populations, differences among them; talking around the watering hole, about heroes and women, or those who have died, discussing philosophical points about the past or the future, that lead nowhere; talking about the ‘creation’ of the world and the oceans, or whether they are truly existing or not, in addition to talking about winning and losing; and so while others seek to live in such absurd ways, engaging in useless and frivolous discussions that are so wasteful, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from them entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

2.8 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless, are adamantly passionate about debating and winning in arguments, more than striving to live the Holy Life, as they go on claiming:

‘You definitely do not understand this doctrine and discipline! I, on the other hand, thoroughly understand this doctrine and discipline!’ At best, your understanding of it is quite pathetic,

whereas my understanding of it goes deep! Plus, you are practicing it all wrong, unlike me, who knows how to practice! You are not consistent either, whereas I am very consistent! Also, what should have been said, you spoke at the very last, meanwhile what should have been spoken last, you said first! Anyhow, whatever you thought you were defending or claiming, has been already defeated and debunked! So, might as well just admit you're done for and are now vanquished! Go and work on your theories, and perhaps you could salvage some of it! You are caught and have no way out of this argument with me!

And so, while others waste living the Holy Life by such damaging, absurd, and useless activities, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from them entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

2.9 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless of their true position as supposed religious practitioners, start engaging in taking messages back and forth; serving as go-betweens between kings and rulers, ministers and other heads of state, warrior princes and other nobles, brahmins, merchants, and other householders and their youths, meanwhile running errands for them and doing their bidding, while being directed thus: ‘*Come here! Go there! Take this there! Bring that over here!*’ etc.; and so, while others waste living the Holy Life in such foolish and damaging ways, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from them entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

2.10 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, being inconsiderate and careless of their true position as supposed religious practitioners, keep up pretenses as they deceitfully live taking advantage of their position, by flattering others, and those from whom they anticipate some benefit or gain; insinuating and hinting at things to gain some benefit while trying to hide their evil tracks; pressuring supporters against their will to do things for them, thereby abusing their role as well as the trust such supporters or students have towards them, pushing others whether through force, intimidation and especially coercion, to make offerings, following the strategy of ‘*you scratch my back, and I will scratch yours*’, in addition to lying about their practice and spiritual attainments; and so while others seek to live the Holy Life through deception and false pretense in order to gain some benefit or influence over others, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from them entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

3. Longer Section on Virtuous Living (Sīla)

3.1 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, obtain their livelihood through wrong means, such as by making

predictions, divination, fortune telling, psychic readings, casting spells; the reciting, giving or providing of special protective charms, amulets, and the like; and thus they engage in reading signs and omens, reading tea leaves, marks or lines on limbs as in palmistry and other bodily features; interpreting cosmic events, constellations, movements of celestial objects; interpreting dreams; reading and interpreting various scratch marks on pieces of bones; offering fire or water blessings, oblations with a ladle, whisks, with ivory or horns, or oblations and blessings through rice grains, ghee, and various types of oils; furthermore, they engage in making sacrifices by chanting mantras, doing blood sacrifices, making predictions about the person by looking at the shape of their fingertips; engaging in geomancy, so as to determine the best location and position for a new structure, such as a garden or building; predicting as to who will be the next ruler or important political figure; comforting and pushing away demons, doing exorcism; snake charming, treating poisons from various animals, insects, and rodents; interpreting the calls of animals, bird sounds, and predicting the date of a person's death; making charms or reciting them to ward off and protect against arrows and other projectiles; and so while others seek to live the Holy Life by wasting it as they engage in wrong livelihood and such useless ways, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from such inferior and debased practices entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

3.2 “Now, Potṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, obtain their livelihood through wrong means, such as by making predictions and forecasting various things, as in identifying the power of gems and crystals, in terms of which among them brings more good luck or fortune; similarly, helping in the selection of garments, staffs, swords and other weapons; helping in the selection of the best among the women one is to marry, as well as getting involved with the selection of boys and girls, male and female slaves for one's retinue or household; helping choose the best animals for someone, as in selecting the best elephants, horses, buffaloes, cows, oxen, goats, rams, deer, chickens, quail, rabbits, tortoises, and other animals; and so while others seek to live the Holy Life by wasting it as they engage in wrong livelihood and such useless ways, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from such inferior and debased practices entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

3.3 “Now, Potṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, living through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, obtain their livelihood through wrong means, such as by making predictions and forecasting future events, as in who the next ruler of the domain would be to lead the people, while predicting their future actions and strategies; how those in power will behave or which direction they would take in the event of wars, or how they would be attacking, advancing or retreating, and in which direction; how the attacking rulers would triumph or how they would be defeated, etc.; and so while others seek to live the Holy Life by wasting it as they engage in wrong livelihood and such useless ways, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from such inferior and debased practices entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

3.4 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, living through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, obtain their livelihood through wrong means, such as by making predictions and forecasting various natural events, as in when the next solar or lunar eclipse is going to take place, or other transitions having to do with the sun or the moon, or both combined; making predictions about celestial phenomena and what those things mean; also, explaining when the next meteor showers will take place; the darkening of the sky; when or why some clouds or thunderstorms would be happening or not; when or why earthquakes would be taking place; forecasting the position of the sun or the moon; their shape, color or impact on other phenomena, etc.; and so while others seek to live the Holy Life by wasting it as they engage in wrong livelihood and such useless ways, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from such inferior and debased practices entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

3.5 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, obtain their livelihood through wrong means, such as by making predictions and forecasting various things, as in telling when the next abundant rainfall would take place, or whether there will be a drought; predicting whether there will be famine or drought; whether wars or dangers are on their way to be faced by the public; whether there will be disease and hardship; also, engaging in accounting work or measuring and calculating things; or composing chants or poetry, as a way of making a living or gaining profits; and so while others seek to live the Holy Life by wasting it as they engage in wrong livelihood and such useless ways, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from such inferior and debased practices entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

3.6 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, obtain their livelihood through wrong means, such as by making predictions and forecasting various events in people’s lives, as in calculating what date, time, or place would be most auspicious for significant activities for individuals and their families, such as designating the best time for wedding or marriage ceremonies, or divorces, or for purchasing property, or borrowing money or investing in financial endeavors; similarly, making charms or protective amulets or writing, engraving, tattooing special spells to make one attractive or desirable, or immune to dangers, as well as prosperous and successful; or helping couples be parents by helping the woman get pregnant, or for protecting pregnant women from having miscarriages, or inducing abortion; chanting or reciting or writing spells on individuals’ body parts to bring about a certain desirable effect, as in cases of paralysis, blindness, stuttering or inability to speak, or making the person lose control over their limbs, making them incapacitated, or one to go blind, mute, or deaf; also, playing the role of an oracle, providing answers to questions while looking into a body of water, a mirror, a young boy’s or girl’s finger nails or inducing the children to become mediums to give him the answers he seeks; becoming a medium himself by going into a trance, invoking spirits; or worshipping some Devas or Mahā Brahmā to get good fortune for himself or others; and so while others seek to live the Holy Life by wasting it as they engage in wrong livelihood and such useless ways, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from such inferior and debased practices entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

3.7 “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, while other recluses and brahmins, who live through the generosity of the faithful who trust in them, obtain their livelihood through wrong means, such as by concocting various protective chants or substances, writings, potions, etc., to induce certain desired outcomes, whether to promote healing for someone or to harm them, or even to kill them; and thus they engage in showing people how to bless or protect a house from unwanted energies; how to overcome impotence or enhance virility; engaging in the consecration of sites prior to construction, showing people how to conduct ceremonial bathing, or how to ritualistically wash the mouth; conducting fire rituals; engaging in the preparation of medicinal potions, as in diuretics, laxatives, purgatives, etc., or preparing eye or ear drops, or various treatments with oils to be taken internally through the mouth, the eyes, ears, or nose, or applied topically, or the application of balms and other mixtures, topically or by rubbing them onto the joints, limbs, or the skin; and so while others seek to live the Holy Life by wasting it as they engage in wrong livelihood and such useless ways, the Bhikkhu utterly and completely refuses to do so, abstaining from such inferior and debased practices entirely.

“This also, is an aspect of his growth and development in virtue.

“So, you see, Poṭṭhapāda, when the Bhikkhu is well-developed and matured in his virtue, by living with responsibility as per the wholesome principles of The Dhamma Itself, then no danger could befall him, simply because he has protected himself from all sides, with his restraint, through intentionally living a virtuous life.

“In this manner, just like a head-anointed Khattiya warrior king who, having defeated all his enemies from all sides of his kingdom, fears no enemies, nor finds any danger to be threatening him from any of the regions within his dominion; similarly, Poṭṭhapāda, when the Bhikkhu is well-developed and matured in his virtue, by living with responsibility as per the wholesome principles of The Dhamma Itself, then no danger could befall him, simply because he has protected himself from all sides, with his restraint through intentionally living a virtuous life.

“Now, because of possessing this aggregate of virtue, being thus endowed with this virtuous behavior of the Noble Ones, he lives happily, experiencing within him the unmistakable sense of blameless joy.

“Thus, Poṭṭhapāda, such a Bhikkhu is declared to be well-developed and matured in his virtue, for living with responsibility as per the wholesome principles of The Dhamma Itself.

B. Mental Cultivation (Bhāvanā - Samādhi)

1. Restraint of the Sense Doors (Saṁvara)

“And how, Poṭṭhapāda, does such a Bhikkhu grow and become fully developed through his mental cultivation, by sense restraint?

“Here, Poṭṭhapāda, on seeing a form with the eye, such a Bhikkhu does not allow himself to be taken by or absorbed into its features and details. For, he knows quite well that if he were to abide with an otherwise uncontrolled eye faculty, unwholesome states would start to leak in, whereby he might very well fall victim to longing, covetousness, and dejection that would dominate his thoughts. Thus, he guards and practices restraint of the eye faculty.

“Similarly, on hearing a sound with the ear, the Bhikkhu does not allow himself to be taken by or absorbed into its features and details. For, he knows quite well that if he were to abide with an otherwise uncontrolled ear faculty, unwholesome states would start to leak in, whereby he might very well fall victim to longing, covetousness, and dejection that would dominate his thoughts. Thus, he guards and practices restraint of the ear faculty.

“Similarly, on smelling an odor with the nose, the Bhikkhu does not allow himself to be taken by or absorbed into its features and details. For, he knows quite well that if he were to abide with an otherwise uncontrolled nose faculty, unwholesome states would start to leak in, whereby he might very well fall victim to longing, covetousness, and dejection that would dominate his thoughts. Thus, he guards and practices restraint of the nose faculty.

“Similarly, on tasting a flavor with the tongue, the Bhikkhu does not allow himself to be taken by or absorbed into its features and details. For, he knows quite well that if he were to abide with an otherwise uncontrolled tongue faculty, unwholesome states would start to leak in, whereby he might very well fall victim to longing, covetousness, and dejection that would dominate his thoughts. Thus, he guards and practices restraint of the tongue faculty.

“Similarly, on touching a tactile object with the body, the Bhikkhu does not allow himself to be taken by or absorbed into its features and details. For, he knows quite well that if he were to abide with an otherwise uncontrolled body faculty, unwholesome states would start to leak in, whereby he might very well fall victim to longing, covetousness, and dejection that would dominate his thoughts. Thus, he guards and practices restraint of the body faculty.

“Similarly, on knowing a thought with the mind, the Bhikkhu does not allow himself to be taken by or absorbed into its features and details. For, he knows quite well that if he were to abide with an otherwise uncontrolled mind faculty, unwholesome states would start to leak in, whereby he might very well fall victim to longing, covetousness, and dejection that would dominate his thoughts. Thus, he guards and practices restraint of the mind faculty.

“By possessing complete restraint over his mental faculties, such a Bhikkhu is not perturbed when touched by a displeasing negative experience.

“Therefore, being thus endowed with this level of restraint over his sense doors, he lives happily, experiencing within him the unmistakable sense of blameless joy.

2. Maintaining Mindfulness (Sati) & Full Awareness (Sampajaññā)

“Whether approaching or going away, in looking forward, backward, and about, he remains mindful, clearly comprehending the experience of it, with full awareness. Also, when bending and stretching his limbs, or in wearing his outer robes or taking the bowl with him, he remains mindful, clearly comprehending the experience of it, with full awareness. When eating his meal, drinking, and tasting, he remains mindful, moving and behaving with full awareness, clearly comprehending the whole experience. Similarly, when urinating and defecating, he remains mindful, moving and behaving with full awareness, clearly comprehending the entire experience, whether he is walking, standing, sitting, or lying down to rest, or while waking up, speaking, or while being silent.

“This, Poṭṭhapāda, is how such a Bhikkhu lives by maintaining mindfulness and full awareness.

“And how, Poṭṭhapāda, does such a Bhikkhu live with contentment wherever and whatever situation he may find himself in?

“Poṭṭhapāda, wherever he may be, living fully contented and satisfied with the robes for his body and the morsels of food he obtains for his stomach, the Bhikkhu goes with all that he has. Thus, much like a bird that flies freely with only the feathers on its back, in the same way, contented and satisfied with the robes for the body and morsels of food for the stomach, wherever he goes, the Bhikkhu goes with all his things.

“In this manner, Poṭṭhapāda, such a Bhikkhu lives with contentment wherever he goes and whatever situation he may find himself in.

“By possessing these virtues also of the Noble Ones, the Bhikkhu experiences the internal happiness that is blameless.

3. Working with the Obstacles/Hindrances (Nīvaraṇa)

“Now, being endowed with this virtuous behavior of the Noble Ones through complete restraint over his mental faculties, along with mindfulness and clear comprehension, with full awareness, that are distinctive of the Noble Ones, he looks for and then abides in a secluded dwelling: a forest, the root of a tree, a mountain grotto, a cemetery, a jungle, an open space or a heap of straw.

“Then, having found himself a quiet area to practice in the forest, or by the visible roots of trees, or in an empty room, by folding his legs in a comfortable position and keeping the body straight, he establishes mindfulness in front of him.

“Thus, the Bhikkhu trains and lives by actively dropping passion, lust, and greed from his heart, as he purifies it from the stains of coveting. He trains and lives by actively dropping anger from his heart, as he purifies it from the stains of hatred. He trains and lives by actively dropping delusion from his heart, as he purifies it from the stains of delusion.

“He develops compassion towards all living beings, as he purifies his heart from any hatred or ill-will. With mindfulness and clearly comprehending his experience, he actively pushes through both drowsiness and procrastination, as he abides with the perception of light, cleansing his mind from drowsiness and procrastination. He thus calmly stabilizes the agitated mind, while carefully moving beyond both restlessness and worry, as he abides with a heart that is now internally appeased and contented. Finally, by actively removing skeptical doubt, he lives while putting an end to all doubts and perplexity he once had about the wholesome behaviors that should be developed and the unwholesome behaviors that should be abandoned.

4. Similes for the Obstacles/Hindrances (Nīvaraṇa)

a. “Now, Poṭṭhapāda, imagine there was a man who goes and takes out a loan, borrowing money with the intention to invest in his business. As a result, his business does become successful and he prospers and earns much more than he did before, whereby he pays off all his debts. With his financial status now stable and lucrative, he is able to have a wife and start a family.

“Then, this man begins reflecting:

‘Previously, I was miserable and worried ceaselessly about my financial status. But then, I went and took out a loan by borrowing money which I invested into my business. Now, seeing that I have prospered and gained so much wealth from this venture, I have already repaid all my debts and gave back whatever money I borrowed from others, to the point that I can finally get married, now that I have enough funds to maintain a wife and have a family of my own!’

“As result of this, the man becomes quite happy and relieved, experiencing much joy.

b. “Furthermore, Poṭṭhapāda, let us suppose that this man becomes sick and has to face much physical pain, and he can no longer function as before, due to this illness. Then, as time passes, he gets better and fully recovers from his ailments, whereby he regains all his physical energy and is able to use his healthy body, yet again.

“Then, this man begins reflecting:

‘Previously, I fell terribly sick and had to face much physical pain, where I could no longer function as I used to. But now I have fully recovered, and I can enjoy eating my meals yet again, having regained all my strength!’

“As a result of this, the man becomes quite happy and relieved, experiencing much joy.

c. “Furthermore, Poṭṭhapāda, let us suppose that this man was taken to prison, where he is kept bound up and in shackles. However, after some time, he is released, whereby he regains his freedom, yet again, feeling safe and no longer in fear or captivity.

“Then, this man begins reflecting:

‘Previously, I was taken to prison, where I was kept bound up and in shackles. But now, I have regained my freedom, and I feel safe again, no longer in fear or captivity!’

“As a result of this, the man becomes quite happy and relieved, experiencing much joy.

d. “Furthermore, Poṭṭhapāda, let us suppose that this man was taken as a slave; no longer a free man, instead he lives being seen as nothing more than another’s property, completely subject to their will. But, after some time, he is released from slavery, whereby he gains back his cherished freedom and is no longer a slave, nor living or being seen as someone else’s property; no longer subject to another’s will.

“Then, this man begins reflecting:

‘Previously, I was taken as a slave, where I no longer was a free man, but instead, I lived while being seen as nothing more than another’s property, completely subject to their will. But now, I have gained back my freedom, and no longer am a slave, nor am I being seen as someone else’s property, no longer subject to others’ will!’

“As result of this, the man becomes quite happy and relieved, experiencing much joy.

e. “Also, Poṭṭhapāda, let us suppose that a merchant was traveling on a journey in a caravan, carrying with him large amounts of gold coins and various other valuable goods, while having to cross a wide and desolate stretch of wilderness for some extended period of time. Then, once having crossed through it, as he emerges out from that wide and desolate stretch of wilderness area, he is finally relieved and relaxed, whereby his worries leave him, seeing that he has returned back to civilization, where he feels the comfort of safety, without having lost his wealth or his valuable goods.

“Then, this merchant begins reflecting:

‘Earlier, while I was crossing that wide and desolate stretch of wilderness area with all my wealth and various other valuable goods, I was worried and in fear of danger. But now, having already crossed it, I have emerged from the wilderness! I’m finally relieved and relaxed, because I no longer have any worries, seeing that I’ve returned back to civilization, hence I feel safe again, not having lost my wealth or my valuable goods!’

“As result of this, the man becomes quite happy and relieved, experiencing much joy.

“Now, in the same manner, Poṭṭhapāda, so long as these five obstacles are still not abandoned and relinquished in him, that Bhikkhu will continue to look upon them as being no less than a debt or loan that he has to pay; a terrible sickness he must overcome; a prison sentence he has to struggle through; a slavery he must endure and break free from; and an arduously dangerous journey through a desolate stretch of wilderness that he must cross and push himself through!

“And when he does indeed let go and abandon these five obstacles or hindrances to his mental cultivation, then he regards them as successfully paying back a heavy loan; gaining of one’s health; release from prison; attaining freedom from slavery; and finally tasting the safety of security.

*“When the mind is uplifted with joy,
the body experiences happiness.
With the tranquilizing of the body,
there is delight everywhere.
With the Citta/Heart feeling such comfort,
And the mind thus composed and controlled, Dhamma arises in the mind.
With the mind thus controlled, one sees and understands how things really are.”*

5. The Jhānas

a. “Here, Poṭṭhapāda, while living secluded and removed from sensual desires and unwholesome thoughts, the Bhikkhu enters upon and remains in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by thinking and pondering, along with joy and pleasure that arise from such seclusion.

“Further, whatever lingering sensual desires he may have had or perceived in the past, at this point, however, they simply drop away and cease, with only joy and that state of refined happiness remaining in him. Thus, he becomes fully percipient of the factual and unmistakable spiritual joy, as well as the refined pleasure and happiness, which come forth from secluding and training himself in this manner.

“So, you see, Poṭṭhapāda,” continued explaining The Blessed One, “it is through training that some perceptions arise, and through training also, that some perceptions cease to be.

b. “Next, Poṭṭhapāda, through the disappearance of both thinking and pondering, he enters upon and remains in the second *jhāna*, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind, that take place in the absence of thinking and pondering, with joy and pleasure that are the result of his deepening *samādhi*, his collectedness of mind.

“Now, his earlier perception of spiritual joy and the refined state of pleasure that arose from seclusion ends and ceases, at which point, however, he becomes percipient of an even finer and subtle level of joy and pleasure, that is now the result of his deepening *samādhī*. Thus, he becomes fully percipient of an even finer state of unmistakable spiritual joy, with pleasure and happiness, but which come forth from his collectedness of mind, as he continues to train himself in this manner.

“Here again, Potṭhapāda,” continued explaining The Blessed One, “it is through training that some perceptions arise, and through training also that some perceptions cease to be.

c. “Next, Potṭhapāda, with the detachment from and the fading away of joy itself, the Bhikkhu remains in the comfort of equanimity, while being mindful and fully aware, with pristine clarity, experiencing pleasure and happiness within the body, as he enters upon and remains in the third *jhāna*, about which the Noble Ones declare:

‘It is such a one indeed, who is serenely mindful; abiding in happiness; with an ever-present sense of equanimity.’

“Now, here too, Potṭhapāda, his perception of the refined spiritual joy and state of pleasure that arose from his deepening *samādhī* also ends and ceases, but now he becomes percipient of the unmistakable state of equanimity. Thus, he becomes fully percipient of the unmistakably present state of equanimity, as he continues to train himself in this manner.

“So, you see, Potṭhapāda,” continued explaining The Blessed One, “it is through training that some perceptions arise, and through training also that some perceptions cease to be.

d. “Afterwards, by giving up both pleasure and pain, and having already gone beyond joy and anguish, he remains in the continuous state of purifying mindfulness, with an ever-present sense of equanimity, as he enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhāna*, while experiencing neither pleasure nor pain, having now gone beyond both of them.

“Here, also, Potṭhapāda, his earlier perception of equanimity in its preliminary stage and grosser aspect also ceases, while, at the same time he becomes percipient of an even more stable and balanced state of equanimity, a state where he is no longer touched by either pleasure or pain. Thus, he becomes fully percipient of the undeniable and directly experienced state of deeply balanced equanimity, as he continues to train himself in this manner.

“So, you see, Potṭhapāda,” continued explaining The Blessed One, “it is through training that some perceptions arise, and through training also that some perceptions cease to be.

e. “Next, having completely transcended and gone beyond the confines of the physical world and of tangibility, along with the disappearance of perceptions dealing with sensory reflexive contact, and no longer paying any attention to the multiplicity of unending perceptions,

and instead remaining fully aware of how *'space is infinitely boundless,'* the Bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the dimension of 'Boundless Infinity of Space.'

“Again, Potṭhapāda, as was the case before, here too, his earlier perception of the very refined and unmistakable experience of neither pleasure nor pain ceases, of which he was thus far percipient, as it is substituted by the perception of a more subtle but factual experience of the dimension of boundless infinity of space. Thus, he becomes fully percipient of the new and unmistakable experience of boundless infinity of space, while he continues to train himself in this manner.

“So, you see, Potṭhapāda,” continued explaining The Blessed One, “it is through training that some perceptions arise, and through training also that some perceptions cease to be.

f. “Next, having completely transcended and gone beyond the perception of space being infinitely boundless, and by experiencing and being fully aware of how *'consciousness is infinitely boundless,'* the Bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the dimension of 'Boundless Infinity of Consciousness.'

“Here, Potṭhapāda, the Bhikkhu transcends his previous perception of the very refined state of boundless infinity of space, as he enters into the perception of the boundless infinity of consciousness. Thus, he now becomes fully percipient of the newly unmistakable experience of boundless infinity of consciousness, as he continues to train himself in this manner.

“So, you see, Potṭhapāda,” continued explaining The Blessed One, “it is through training that some perceptions arise, and through training also that some perceptions cease to be.

g. “Furthermore, Potṭhapāda, having completely transcended and gone beyond the perception of consciousness being infinitely boundless, and by experiencing and being fully aware of how *'now, there is only nothingness,'* the Bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the dimension of 'Nothingness.'

“Here as well, the Bhikkhu goes beyond his previous perception of the very refined state of boundless infinity of consciousness, as he enters the perception of 'nothingness.' Thus, he now becomes fully percipient of the direct and undeniably ever-present experience of nothingness, while he continues to train himself in this manner.

“So, you see, Potṭhapāda,” continued explaining The Blessed One, “it is through training that some perceptions arise, and through training also that some perceptions cease to be.

6. Cessation (Nirodha)

“Potṭhapāda, when a Bhikkhu in this Dispensation practices, while staying fully aware of his own perception (*sakasaññī*), he can then pass from one layer of perception to another, until he gradually touches the peak of perception (*saññagga*), that is the dimension of Nothingness.

“Now, as he stands there at the very peak of perception, it occurs to him:

*‘To keep making or having intentions is truly wrong for me!
It is so much better for me to just stop intending, altogether!’*

“So, he proceeds to weigh in the benefits and losses of doing so, while reflecting thus:

‘If I keep making or having intentions ceaselessly, always preparing these generative causes (abhisamkharoti), then these perpetually growing perceptions would simply not come to a full stop and cease, and instead more new perceptions would arise or try to replace them.’

“In this manner, he makes a strong determination, whereby he neither goes on making nor having intentions, or engaging in the preparation of newer generative causes, and as a result, those various perceptions come to a full stop and just cease, and no further or grosser perceptions arise to replace them.

“Thus, such a Bhikkhu touches cessation itself (*So nirodham phusati*).

“This, therefore, Potṭhapāda, is how the attainment to the gradual cessation of higher levels of perception really takes place, with full awareness.

“Now, what do you think, Potṭhapāda?

“Have you ever come across a teaching such as this, where specific instructions are provided, guiding a person *and* in a methodical manner, to attain to the cessation of progressively higher levels of perception, one after the other, *and* with full awareness?”

“No, Bhante!” replied Potṭhapāda.

“In fact, what I have understood thus far from The Blessed One’s statements is this:

‘Every so often, while being presently and fully aware of his own perception (*sakasaññī*), a Bhikkhu can then pass from one layer of perception to another, until he gradually touches the peak of perception (*saññagga*), that is the dimension of Nothingness.

“Now, as he stands there at the very peak of perception, it occurs to him:

*‘To keep making or having intentions is truly wrong for me!
It is so much better for me to just stop intending, altogether!’*

“So, he proceeds to weigh in the benefits and losses of doing so, while reflecting thus:

‘If I keep making or having intentions ceaselessly, always preparing these generative causes (abhisamkharoti), then these perpetually growing perceptions would simply not come to a full stop and cease, and instead more new perceptions would arise or try to replace them.’

“In this manner, he makes a strong determination, whereby he neither goes on making nor having intentions, or engaging in the preparation of newer generative causes, and as a result, those various perceptions come to a full stop and just cease, and no further or grosser perceptions arise to replace them.

“Thus, such a Bhikkhu touches cessation itself (*So nirodham phusati*).

“This, therefore, is how the attainment to the gradual cessation of higher levels of perception really takes place, with full awareness. Is this correct, Bhante?”

“Yes, Potṭhapāda. That is correct.”

Then, the ascetic Potṭhapāda proceeded to ask further questions from The Blessed One, as he spoke:

“But Bhante, does The Blessed One instruct while revealing only one peak of perception (*saññagga*), or does he make known several peaks of perception?”

“Potṭhapāda, I instruct while revealing one peak of perception (*saññagga*), as well as teaching several peaks of perception.”

Then, Potṭhapāda asked a further question:

“But how is it, Bhante, that The Blessed One instructs while revealing one peak of perception, while also teaching several peaks of perception?”

The Blessed One then said:

“In whichever way one may have come to touch cessation, while applying oneself, I point out a peak of perception specific to that.

“Therefore, Potṭhapāda, it is in that sense, that while instructing I point out one peak of perception, as well as several peaks of perception; that is, given the capacity and various methods by which individuals come to touch cessation.”

“And which one is it that arises first, Bhante; that is, should perception already be there, while knowledge comes in only afterwards?”

“Or is it the opposite, where knowledge must have arisen first, in order for perception to take place? Or is it that they both arise together, simultaneously?”

“Potṭhapāda, perception arises first, while knowledge comes in only afterwards. Thus, perception is the very substrate and ground upon which knowledge rests.

“Thus, the Bhikkhu comes to understand for himself:

‘Knowledge has arisen in me, due to there being the sufficient condition necessary for it!’

“It is in this manner, Potṭhapāda, that one properly understands how perception arises first, while knowledge comes in only afterwards. Thus, perception is the very substrate and ground upon which knowledge rests.”

C. Perception and the “self” (Saññāattakathā)

Then, Potṭhapāda went on to ask yet another question:

“How about the ‘self,’ Bhante?”

“Is perception the same as the self, found within the person? Or is perception one thing and the self of a person totally another, having nothing to do with each other?”

“What exactly do you mean by ‘self,’ Potṭhapāda?”

“I mean the substantial essence within the person, Bhante; the one that has gross form and is made up of the four great primaries, that is sustained by consuming mouthfuls of food; basically, this human body, as it is.”

“In that case, Potṭhapāda, given what this thing called ‘a self’ represents for you, then perception is one thing and the ‘self’ something else, entirely.

“Here, Potṭhapāda, you may understand perception the way I teach and declare it, in this way: so long as there is that attachment to the belief that there is some kind of a substantial essence within a person; a gross form that is made up of the four great primaries, and sustained by consuming mouthfuls of food, then some perceptions will continue to arise, while some other perceptions will continue to cease.

“Thus, you may understand my statement that perception is one thing and the ‘self’ something else, entirely.”

Then, Poṭṭhapāda went on to say:

“What I meant to say, Bhante, is that the ‘self’ is in fact mind-made, complete with all its major and minor limbs and attributes, not lacking in any of its important faculties and senses.”

“Poṭṭhapāda, even if the ‘self’ you speak of is of that description, still, perception will remain as one thing, and ‘self’ as something entirely different.

“Here, Poṭṭhapāda, you may further try to understand perception the way I teach and declare it, in this way: so long as there is that attachment to the belief that there is some kind of a mind-made self, complete with all its major and minor limbs and attributes, not lacking in any of its important faculties and senses, then again, there will inevitably be some perceptions that continue to arise, while some other perceptions continue to cease.

“Thus, you may understand my statement that perception is one thing and the ‘self’ something else, entirely.”

Then, Poṭṭhapāda replied by saying:

“But Bhante, what I meant to say is that the ‘self’ is without form, utterly formless and purely made up of perception.”

“Poṭṭhapāda, even if the ‘self’ you speak of is formless, still, perception will remain as one thing, and ‘self’ as something entirely different.

“Here, you may further try to understand perception the way I teach and declare it, in this way: so long as there is that attachment to the belief that there is some kind of a ‘self’ without a form; utterly formless and purely made up of perception, then again, there will inevitably be some perceptions that continue to arise, while other perceptions continue to cease.

“Thus, you may understand my statement that perception is one thing and the ‘self’ something else, entirely.”

Then, Poṭṭhapāda asked The Blessed One this question:

“In that case, Bhante, would you say that it is possible for me to come to understand how perception is one thing and the ‘self,’ something else, entirely?”

“Poṭṭhapāda, it is not possible for you to understand how perception is one thing and the ‘self’ something else, entirely, so long as you continue to subscribe to a different view altogether, possessing different convictions, with different predilections, practicing different teachings, and under other teachers whose belief and doctrine are quite different from what I instruct to my disciples.”

1. The Ten Undeclared/Undetermined Points (*Avyākata*)

When this was said, Poṭṭhapāda then proceeded to ask a series of other questions:

“In that case, Bhante, seeing that it is not possible for me to understand how perception is one thing and the ‘self’ something else, entirely; that is, so long as I continue to subscribe to a different view altogether, possessing different convictions, with different predilections, practicing different teachings, and under other teachers whose belief and doctrine are quite different than what The Blessed One instructs to His disciples, then,

a. “I would like to know whether you declare existence to be eternal? Therefore, do you state categorically that existence is eternal, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views are absolutely wrong?”

“Poṭṭhapāda, I neither claim that ‘existence is eternal,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views declaring otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

b. “Well, how about declaring existence not to be eternal? Therefore, do you state categorically that existence is not eternal, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views are absolutely wrong?”

“Poṭṭhapāda, I do not claim that ‘existence is not eternal,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views stating otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

c. “In that case, Bhante, do you declare that existence is in fact limited and not boundless? In other words, do you state categorically that existence is in fact limited and not boundless, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views stating otherwise would be absolutely wrong?”

“Poṭṭhapāda, I do not claim that ‘existence is in fact limited and not boundless,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views that state otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

d. “Well, Bhante, do you declare that existence is in fact boundlessly eternal? In other words, do you state categorically that existence is in fact limited and not boundless, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views that state otherwise would be absolutely wrong?”

“Poṭṭhapāda, I do not claim that ‘existence is in fact boundlessly eternal,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views that state otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

e. “How about this, Bhante, do you declare the soul and the body as being one and the same? In other words, do you state categorically that the soul and the body are undifferentiated and thus inseparably one and the same, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views stating otherwise would be absolutely wrong?”

“Potṭhapāda, I do not claim that ‘the soul and the body are one and the same,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views that state otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

f. “In that case, Bhante, do you declare the soul as being one thing, and the body as another? In other words, do you state categorically that the soul and the body are completely different, and thus separate from one another, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views stating otherwise would be absolutely wrong?”

“Potṭhapāda, I do not claim that ‘the soul is one thing, and the body another,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views that state otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

g. “Then, Bhante, do you declare that The Tathāgata lives on after death? In other words, do you state categorically that The Tathāgata exists and lives on after death, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views stating otherwise would be absolutely wrong?”

“Potṭhapāda, I do not claim that ‘The Tathāgata lives on after death,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views that state otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

h. “Then, Bhante, do you declare that The Tathāgata does not live on after death? In other words, do you state categorically that The Tathāgata neither exists nor lives on after death, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views stating otherwise would be absolutely wrong?”

“Potṭhapāda, I do not claim that ‘The Tathāgata does not live on after death,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views that state otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

i. “Then, Bhante, do you declare that The Tathāgata both lives and does not live on after death? In other words, do you state categorically that The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views stating otherwise would be absolutely wrong?”

“Potṭhapāda, I do not claim that ‘The Tathāgata both lives and does not live on after death,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views that state otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

j. “Then, Bhante, do you declare that The Tathāgata neither lives nor does not live on after death? In other words, do you state categorically that The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death, declaring this as *the* truth, whereby all other views stating otherwise would be absolutely wrong?”

“Potṭhapāda, I do not claim that ‘The Tathāgata neither lives nor does not live on after death,’ nor do I categorically declare that as *the* truth, whereby all other views that state otherwise would be absolutely wrong. Therefore, that question itself I have left aside, as unexplained and thus undeclared.”

When this was said, Potṭhapāda, again asked The Blessed One:

“But Bhante, why has The Blessed One not declare these questions and instead chose to leave them aside, unanswered?”

“The reason for that, Potṭhapāda, is that none of these are truly helpful, beneficial, or even relevant to be living the spiritual life, because they do not address the goal of the Holy Life, nor fundamentally related. Therefore, none of those ten questions connected in any way to The Dhamma. And why is that?

“It is because, Potṭhapāda, none of those questions lead to disenchantment, to dispassion and to the certain fading away of the defilements in one’s heart, therefore, none of them lead to cessation, to the complete ending of agitation and the attainment of inner peace, to direct and unmistakable knowledge and higher understanding, to Full Awakening, to Nibbāna Supreme!”

“If that is so, Bhante, then what has The Blessed One declared? What does The Blessed One assert and explain, categorically?”

“Potṭhapāda, I have explained and do declare categorically these four:

1. “‘This is suffering,’ is what I have categorically declared and do explain.
2. ‘This is the cause and arising of suffering,’ is what I have categorically declared and do explain.
3. ‘This is the ending of suffering,’ is what I have categorically declared and do explain.
4. ‘This is the Path that leads to the ending and cessation of suffering,’ is what I have categorically declared and do explain.”

“And why, Bhante, may I ask, has The Blessed One declared these points categorically?”

“They have been declared, Potṭhapāda, because they unmistakably lead to disenchantment, to dispassion and to the certain fading away of the defilements in one’s heart. Therefore, they lead to cessation, to the complete ending of agitation and the attainment of inner peace, to direct and unmistakable knowledge and higher understanding, to Full Awakening, to Nibbāna Supreme!

“That, Potṭhapāda, is therefore the reason why I have declared them categorically.”

“So You have declared, O Blessed One! So You have declared, indeed, O Well-gone One!

“Bhante, if You have other matters to attend to, then, please do not feel compelled to stay here with us further. May The Blessed One do whatever He sees fit.”

And The Blessed One arose from His seat and left the debating hall.

2. The Disgruntled Wandering Ascetics Criticize Poṭṭhapāda

Right after The Blessed One had left, being upset at Poṭṭhapāda, the wandering ascetics began barraging him with insults as they harshly criticized him. Thus, from all sides they began shouting their angry remarks while surrounding Poṭṭhapāda, and verbally abusing him thus:

“This Poṭṭhapāda surely seems to approve of all that the Recluse Gautama stated! In fact, whatever Gautama was saying, you kept agreeing with and rejoicing in hearing, while saying:

‘So You have declared, O Blessed One! So You have declared, indeed, O Well-gone One!’

“Don’t you realize that *none* of the Ten Questions you asked were answered properly or categorically by the Recluse Gautama!

“He neither declared nor held a clear position that is categorical, as in:

1. *‘Existence is eternal! This is the truth. Thus, all other views are absolutely wrong’*
2. *‘Existence is not eternal! This is the truth. Thus, all other views are absolutely wrong’*
3. *‘Existence is in fact limited and not boundless! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong’*
4. *‘Existence is boundlessly eternal! This is the truth. Thus, all other views are absolutely wrong’*
5. *‘The soul and the body are one and the same! This is the truth, while all other views are absolutely wrong’*
6. *‘The soul is separate and thus different from the physical body! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong’*
7. *‘The Tathāgata lives on after death! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong’*
8. *‘Once dead, The Tathāgata no longer exists! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong’*
9. *‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after His death! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong’*
10. *‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after His death! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong’*

But Poṭṭhapāda, in turn, snapped back at them by saying:

“Yes, I also did not see that any of those Ten Questions you asked were answered properly or categorically. But surely you could see that the Recluse Gautama does, in fact, lay down a true, and from what it sounds, an effective and factual Path of Practice, a statute of The Dhamma, an unmistakable and undeniable standard of and for The Dhamma, which no one could argue!

“Therefore, when the Recluse Gautama is laying down a true, and from what it sounds, an effective and factual Path of Practice, a statute of The Dhamma, an unmistakable and undeniable standard of and for The Dhamma, then how could *I*, as a rational and intelligent man, continue to speak against it? Or how could I try and disapprove the well-spoken words of the Recluse Gautama, attempting to find fault in them, or deny the fact that they are indeed well-spoken?”

3. Citta Hatthisāriputta and Poṭṭhapāda Visit The Blessed One

Then, two or three days later, Citta Hatthisāriputta, the son of the elephant trainer, and the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda both came to visit The Blessed One, and after paying their respects, the two sat to one side. Once the friendly greetings were over, Poṭṭhapāda addressed The Blessed One and began giving a report as to what ensued right after The Blessed One had left the debating hall, during the last encounter.

Thus, Poṭṭhapāda spoke by saying:

“Bhante, the other day, right after The Blessed One had left, the wandering ascetics being upset at me, began barraging me with insults as they went on harshly criticizing me. Thus, they began shouting their angry remarks, surrounding me from all sides, and verbally abusing me thus:

“This Poṭṭhapāda surely seems to approve of all that the Recluse Gautama stated! In fact, whatever Gautama was saying, you kept agreeing with and rejoicing in hearing, while saying:

‘So You have declared, O Blessed One! So You have declared, indeed, O Well-gone One!’

“Don’t you realize that *none* of the Ten Questions you asked were answered properly or categorically by the Recluse Gautama!

“He neither declared nor held a clear position that is categorical, as in:

1. *‘Existence is eternal! This is the truth. Thus, all other views are absolutely wrong’*
2. *‘Existence is not eternal! This is the truth. Thus, all other views are absolutely wrong’*
3. *‘Existence is in fact limited and not boundless! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong’*
4. *‘Existence is boundlessly eternal! This is the truth. Thus, all other views are absolutely wrong’*
5. *‘The soul and the body are one and the same! This is the truth, while all other views are absolutely wrong’*

6. *'The soul is separate and thus different from the physical body! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'*
7. *'The Tathāgata lives on after death! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'*
8. *'Once dead, The Tathāgata no longer exists! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'*
9. *'The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after His death! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'*
10. *'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after His death! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'”*

“In response, Bhante, I snapped back at them, by saying:

“Yes, I also did not see that any of those Ten Questions you asked were answered properly or categorically. But surely you could see that the Recluse Gautama does, in fact, lay down a true, and from what it sounds, an effective and factual Path of Practice, a statute of The Dhamma, an unmistakable and undeniable standard of and for The Dhamma, which no one could argue!

“Therefore, when the Recluse Gautama is laying down a true, and from what it sounds, an effective and factual Path of Practice, a statute of The Dhamma, an unmistakable and undeniable standard of and for The Dhamma, then how could I, as a rational and intelligent man, continue to speak against it? Or how could I try and disapprove the well-spoken words of the Recluse Gautama, attempting to find fault in them, or deny the fact that they are indeed well-spoken?”

Then, The Blessed One said:

“Potṭhapāda, all those wanderers of other sects are truly blind and lacking vision. *Only* you had the capacity to inquire and see, being eager for still learning and understanding more. Hence, you alone have eyes, compared to those blind people, to consider, appreciate and see what I was teaching there.

“After all, Potṭhapāda, there are Dhammas that I have declared and laid down non-categorically, and there are also Dhammas, which I have preached and laid down categorically.

“And what are the Dhammas (teachings) that I have declared and laid down non-categorically?

“Whereas other teachers have made emphatic and conclusive statements, such as claiming that:

1. *'Existence is eternal! This is the truth. Thus, all other views are absolutely wrong'*
2. *'Existence is not eternal! This is the truth. Thus, all other views are absolutely wrong'*
3. *'Existence is in fact limited and not boundless! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'*
4. *'Existence is boundlessly eternal! This is the truth. Thus, all other views are absolutely wrong'*
5. *'The soul and the body are one and the same! This is the truth, while all other views are absolutely wrong'*
6. *'The soul is separate and thus different from the physical body! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'*

7. *'The Tathāgata lives on after death! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'*
8. *'Once dead, The Tathāgata no longer exists! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'*
9. *'The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after His death! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong'*
10. *'The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after His death! This is the truth, and all other views are absolutely wrong''*

“I, on the other hand, laid all those questions aside and treated them with non-categorical statements, leaving them undeclared.

“And why is that, Poṭṭhapāda?

“It is because, Poṭṭhapāda, none of those questions lead to disenchantment, to dispassion and to the certain fading away of the defilements in one’s heart. Therefore, none of them lead to cessation, to the complete ending of agitation and the attainment of inner peace, to direct and unmistakable knowledge and higher understanding, to Full Awakening, to Nibbāna Supreme!”

“And what, Poṭṭhapāda, are those Dhammas that have I taught and laid down categorically?

“Poṭṭhapāda, I have explained and do declare categorically these four:

1. ‘This is suffering,’ is what I have categorically declared, and do explain.
2. ‘This is the cause and arising of suffering,’ is what I have categorically declared, and do explain.
3. ‘This is the ending of suffering,’ is what I have categorically declared, and do explain.
4. ‘This is the Path that leads to the ending and cessation of suffering,’ is what I have categorically declared, and do explain.”

“And why is it, Poṭṭhapāda, that I have explained and do declare categorically these four?

“They have been declared, Poṭṭhapāda, because they unmistakably lead to disenchantment, to dispassion and to the certain fading away of the defilements in one’s heart. Therefore, they lead to cessation, to the complete ending of agitation and the attainment of inner peace, to direct and unmistakable knowledge and higher understanding, to Full Awakening, to Nibbāna Supreme!

“That, Poṭṭhapāda, is therefore the reason why I have declared them categorically.’

“Poṭṭhapāda, there are some recluses and brahmins who actually believe, declare and entertain such a view as this:

‘After death, the self comes to enjoy a complete and an absolutely delightful state of unmixed bliss, while remaining healthy, free of any and all disease, and full of vigor, throughout.’

“So, I approach them and ask:

“Is it true that you declare and hold on to such a view as this?”

“They say: ‘yes.’”

“Then, I ask them: “Have you had the actual experience or live by knowing and seeing a world of absolute and exclusively unmixed bliss, through and through?”

“They reply: ‘no.’

“Then, I ask them: “Have you ever, even for a single night or a single day, or even half a night or half a day, experienced an absolutely all-blissful self?”

“They say: ‘no.’

“Then, I ask them: “In that case, do you have *any* first-hand knowledge or experience, whereby you could so emphatically declare:

‘This is the path, this is the practice for seeing, with one’s own eyes, that absolutely all-blissful and happy world?’

“They respond by saying: ‘no.’

“Then, I ask them further: “Well, have you heard the voices of any Devas reborn in some all-blissful world who go on saying:

‘Friends, be well-established on the path, be uprightly established on the path for seeing with your own eyes a world so delightful and all-blissful, as we on our part, friends, are reborn in an all-blissful and delightful world with such a path of practice?’

“And to this they reply and say: ‘no.’

“Now, what do you think, Poṭṭhapāda, if that is their position, then doesn’t it make the categorical statements and indemonstrable assertions of those recluses and brahmins utterly baseless, exposing how those declarations, in all actuality, lack any credibility or foundation?”

“Absolutely, Bhante! That *does* in fact make the categorical statements and assertions of those recluses and brahmins utterly baseless, exposing how those declarations, in all actuality, lack any credibility or foundation, indeed.”

- Simile of the “Non-existent Woman”

“Imagine, Poṭṭhapāda, that there was a man who kept saying and declaring to the world: *‘I am in love with the most beautiful and exquisitely stunning woman in the world! I only want to be with her! I desire no other woman, but her!’*

“Then, those people around him would begin to ask:

‘Good man, do you know which clan or family she is from?’

“He responds by saying: *‘I do not know.’*”

“Then they ask: *‘Well, do you know her name?’*

“Again, he responds and says: *‘I do not know.’*”

‘How about her features? Do you know whether she is tall or short, or whether she is fair-skinned or dark-skinned? How about the color of her hair: is it dark, brown, or grey?’

“He responds by saying: *‘I do not know.’*”

“Then they ask him: *‘In that case, do you know which village or town she lives in?’*

“But again, he replies by saying: *‘No, I do not know.’*”

“Then they would turn to him and retort:

‘So, you’re saying that you’re in love with someone you’ve never met, seen, or know where she is from, which village she is from, nor what her features are – yet you claim her to be the most beautiful and exquisitely stunning woman in the world, that you only want to be with her, and desire no other woman, but her?’

“And he replies by saying: *‘Yes, I am!’*”

“Now, what do you think, Poṭṭhapāda?

“Wouldn’t you then say that the statements that man was making amount to nothing? Don’t his assertions turn out to be utterly baseless, exposing those declarations he is making, in all actuality, to be lacking any credibility or foundation?”

“Absolutely, Bhante! That *does* in fact make the statements made by that man amount to nothing, where his assertions turn out to be utterly baseless, exposing those declarations he is making, in all actuality, to be lacking any credibility or foundation, indeed!”

“The same is the case, Poṭṭhapāda, with the categorical statements and indemonstrable assertions of those recluses and brahmins, who go on declaring:

‘After death, the self comes to enjoy a complete and an absolutely delightful state of unmixed bliss, while remaining healthy, free of any and all disease, and full of vigor, throughout.’

“All of their emphatically made assertions remain utterly baseless, exposing those declarations in all actuality, to be lacking any credibility or foundation.

“Absolutely, Bhante! That *does* in fact, make the categorical statements and assertions of those recluses and brahmins utterly baseless, exposing those declarations in all actuality, to be lacking any credibility or foundation, indeed.”

- Simile of the “staircase to the non-existent mansion”

“Imagine, Poṭṭhapāda, that there is a man standing at the junction point of four roads, busy at work, trying to build a staircase, a ladder that he claims is to be used to climb up a mansion.

“Now, all those passersby who witness him at work, begin to ask him:

‘Good man, this mansion you speak of, for which you are busily building this staircase, which way is it located?’

“To which he responds by saying: *‘I do not know.’*”

“They then ask further: *‘Well, is it to the east?’ Or to the west? Or is it to the south? Or to the north?’*

“Again, he responds and says: *‘I do not know.’*”

“They then ask him: *‘Well, do you know whether this mansion is very high, or low in structure?’*

“Again, he responds by saying: *‘I do not know.’*”

“Inquiring further, they ask him: *‘Well, have you actually seen the mansion, for which you are building this staircase?’*

“Again, he responds and says: *‘I do not know.’*”

“Then, those people would simply turn to him and retort:

‘So, you’re saying that you’re standing here, in the middle of the junction point of the four main roads, busy at work, trying to build a staircase to a mansion that you’ve never seen? A mansion that you do not know as to which direction it is located, whether to the east, west, south, or north; nor do you know it’s dimensions, whether it is high or low in its structure, yet you insist on putting up a ladder that you claim is to be used for climbing up to a mansion?’

“And the man replies by saying: *‘Yes, I am!’*

“Now, what do you think, Poṭṭhapāda?

“Wouldn’t you then say that the statements that man was making amount to nothing? Don’t his assertions turn out to be utterly baseless, exposing the declarations he is making, in all actuality, to be lacking any credibility or foundation?”

“Absolutely, Bhante! That *does* in fact make the statements uttered by that man amount to nothing, where his assertions turn out to be utterly baseless, exposing those declarations he is making, in all actuality, to be lacking any credibility or foundation, indeed!”

“The same is the case, Potṭhapāda, with the categorical statements and indemonstrable assertions of those recluses and brahmins, who go on declaring:

‘After death, the self comes to enjoy a complete and an absolutely delightful state of unmixed bliss, while remaining healthy, free of any and all disease, and full of vigor, throughout.’

“All of their emphatically made assertions remain to be utterly baseless, exposing those declarations, in all actuality, to be lacking any credibility or foundation.

“Absolutely, Bhante! That *does* in fact make the categorical statements and assertions of those recluses and brahmins utterly baseless, exposing those declarations, in all actuality, to be lacking any credibility or foundation, indeed.”

4. Three Types of “self-acquisition” (Attapaṭilābhā)

“Potṭhapāda, there are these three types of self-acquisition:

- a. the acquisition of a gross self,
- b. the acquisition of a mind-made self, and
- c. the acquisition of a formless self.

“And what is the acquisition of a gross self?

“Here, one comes to possess a form and a shape, comprised of the four great primaries, while being sustained by mouthfuls of ingestible food. This itself is what is meant by ‘the acquisition of a gross or physical self.’

“And what is the acquisition of a mind-made self?

“Here, Potṭhapāda, one comes to possess a form and a shape, but one that is conceived of and made by mind, a body which has all its major and minor limbs, with all its senses functioning. This itself is what is meant by ‘the acquisition of a mind-made self.’

“And what is the acquisition of a formless self?

“Here, Potṭhapāda, one is formless, possessing no form or shape, that is entirely the product of *and* consisting of perceptions. This itself is what is meant by ‘the acquisition of a formless self.’

5. The Dhamma Addresses the “self-acquisitions”

a. Giving up the gross self

“Potṭhapāda, it is for the complete abandoning and giving up of the gross acquisition of a self that I teach the Dhamma, according to which, through training, your defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned. In their stead, purifying mental states will develop in you, whereby through *your* own efforts, you will come to directly realize, *and* with your higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life.

“Now, Potṭhapāda, you might be thinking:

‘But, although defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned, and in their stead, purifying mental states may develop in me, whereby I would come to directly realize myself, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now and abide in it, in this very life, and yet, such a life would still be essentially suffering, would it not?’

“But that would not be a healthy way of understanding what is being taught here, Potṭhapāda. Therefore, it would indeed be helpful to you if you were to look at what is being taught here and comprehend it instead, in this manner –

‘Through training, my defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned. And in their stead, purifying mental states will develop in me, whereby I will, through my own efforts, come to directly realize myself, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life.’

“Thus, *you* will directly see and experience such a life as indeed blissful, *not* because someone else has told you about it, but because of *your own* experiencing of the undeniable spiritual joy, along with the tranquility of mind that it brings, with genuine mindfulness and full awareness, whereby you will know it for yourself and taste the reality of your happiness, and thus, dwell in it.

b. Giving up the mind-made self

“Similarly, Potṭhapāda, it is for the complete abandoning and giving up of the mind-made self that I teach the Dhamma, according to which, through training, your defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned. In their stead, purifying mental states will develop in you, whereby through *your* own efforts, you will come to directly realize, *and* with your higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life.

“Now, Potṭhapāda, you might be thinking:

‘But, although defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned, and in their stead, purifying mental states may develop in me, whereby I would come to directly realize myself, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now and abide in it, in this very life, and yet, such a life would still be essentially suffering, would it not?’

“But that also would not be a healthy way of understanding what is being taught here, Potṭhapāda. Therefore, it would indeed be helpful to you if you were to look at what is being taught here and comprehend it instead, in this manner –

‘Through training, my defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned. And in their stead, purifying mental states will develop in me, whereby I will, through my own efforts, come to directly realize myself, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life.’

“Thus, you will directly see and experience such a life as indeed blissful, *not* because someone else has told you about it, but because of *your own* experiencing of the undeniable spiritual joy, along with the tranquility of mind that it brings, with genuine mindfulness and full awareness, whereby you will know it for yourself and taste the reality of your happiness, and thus, dwell in it.

c. Giving up the formless self

“In the same manner, Potṭhapāda, it is for the complete abandoning and giving up of the formless self that I teach the Dhamma, according to which, through training, your defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned. In their stead, purifying mental states will develop in you, whereby through *your own* efforts, you will come to directly realize, *and* with your higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life.

“Now, Potṭhapāda, you might be thinking:

‘But, although defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned, and in their stead, purifying mental states may develop in me, whereby I would come to directly realize myself, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now and abide in it, in this very life, and yet, such a life would still be essentially suffering, would it not?’

“But that also would not be a healthy way of understanding what is being taught here, Potṭhapāda. Therefore, it would indeed be helpful to you if you were to look at what is being taught here and comprehend it instead, in this manner –

‘Through training, my defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned. And in their stead, purifying mental states will develop in me, whereby I will, through my own efforts, come to directly realize myself, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life.’

“Thus, *you* will directly see and experience such a life as indeed blissful, *not* because someone else has told you about it, but because of *your own* experiencing of the undeniable spiritual joy, along with the tranquility of mind that it brings, with genuine mindfulness and full awareness, whereby you will know it for yourself and taste the reality of your happiness, and thus, dwell in it.

6. Why the “self-acquisitions” are given up.

a. “And if, Poṭṭhapāda, we were to be asked by others:

‘But, friend, what is that acquisition of a gross self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which you teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, the defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned in you, and in their stead, purifying mental states will develop in you, as you will, through your own efforts, come to directly realize, and with your higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life?’

“Then, we respond to them with the explanation just given to you, Poṭṭhapāda, as we answer:

‘This gross body itself, friend, is what is meant by acquisition of a gross self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which we teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, my defiling and corrupting mental states are given up and abandoned in me, and in their stead, purifying mental states have developed in me, while through my own efforts, I have come to directly realize, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, as I abide in it, in this very life.’

b. “And if, Poṭṭhapāda, we were to be asked by others:

‘But, friend, what is that acquisition of a mind-made self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which you teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, the defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned in you, and in their stead, purifying mental states will develop in you, as you will, through your own efforts, come to directly realize, and with your higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life?’

“Then, we respond to them with the explanation just given to you, Poṭṭhapāda, as we answer:

‘This itself, friend, is what is meant by acquisition of a mind-made self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which we teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, my defiling and corrupting mental states are given up and abandoned in me, and in their stead, purifying mental states have developed in me, while through my own efforts, I have come to directly realize, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, as I abide in it, in this very life.’

c. “And if, Poṭṭhapāda, we were to be asked by others:

‘But, friend, what is that acquisition of a formless self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which you teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, the defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned in you, and in their stead, purifying mental states will develop in you, as you will, through your own efforts, come to directly realize, and with your higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life?’

“Then, we respond to them with the explanation just given to you, Poṭṭhapāda, as we answer:

‘This itself, friend, is what is meant by acquisition of a formless self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which we teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, my defiling and corrupting mental states are given up and abandoned in me, and in their stead, purifying mental states have developed in me, while through my own efforts, I have come to directly realize, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, as I abide in it, in this very life.’

“Now, what do you think, Poṭṭhapāda?

“Would you say that the statements and assertions made here are well-founded, credible, demonstrable, and thus have a valid basis?”

“Oh, Yes, Bhante! Surely these statements and assertions made here are well-founded, credible, demonstrable, and thus have a valid basis indeed, O Blessed One!”

- Simile of the “Staircase to the Mansion”

“Imagine, Poṭṭhapāda, that there is a man standing on the ground floor in front of a mansion, busy at work, trying to build a staircase, a ladder that he states is to be used to climb up to the mansion’s upper levels.

“Now, all those passersby who witness him at work, begin to ask him:

‘Good man, this mansion you speak of, for which you are busily building this staircase, which way is it located? Is it to the east? Or to the west? Or to the south? Or to the north?’

“To which he responds by saying:

‘Friends, here is the very mansion I speak of, for which I am building this staircase, as I stand here on the ground floor in front of the mansion of which I speak; busy at work, trying to build the ladder that is to be used to climb up to the mansion’s upper levels!’

“Now, what do you think, Poṭṭhapāda?

“Would you say that the statements made by that man are well-founded, credible, demonstrable, and thus have a valid basis?”

“Oh yes, Bhante! Surely those statements made by that man are well-founded, credible, demonstrable, and thus have a valid basis indeed!”

a. “In the same manner, Poṭṭhapāda, when we are asked by others:

‘But, friend, what is that acquisition of a gross self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which you teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, the defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned in you, and in their stead, purifying mental states will develop in you, as you will, through your own efforts, come to directly realize, and with your higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life?’

“Then, we respond to them with the explanation just given to you, Poṭṭhapāda, as we answer:

‘This gross body itself, friend, is what is meant by acquisition of a gross self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which we teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, my defiling and corrupting mental states are given up and abandoned in me, and in their stead, purifying mental states have developed in me, while through my own efforts, I have come to directly realize, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, as I abide in it, in this very life.’

b. “And if, Poṭṭhapāda, we are asked by others:

‘But, friend, what is that acquisition of a mind-made self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which you teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, the defiling and corrupting mental states will be given up and abandoned in you, and in their stead, purifying mental states will develop in you, as you will, through your own efforts, come to directly realize, and with your higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life?’

“Then, we respond to them with the explanation just given to you, Poṭṭhapāda, as we answer:

‘This itself, friend, is what is meant by acquisition of a mind-made self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which we teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, my defiling and corrupting mental states are given up and abandoned in me, and in their stead, purifying mental states have developed in me, while through my own efforts, I have come to directly realize, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, as I abide in it, in this very life.’

c. “And if, Poṭṭhapāda, we are asked by others:

‘But, friend, what is that acquisition of a formless self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which you teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, the defiling and corrupting

mental states will be given up and abandoned in you, and in their stead, purifying mental states will develop in you, as you will, through your own efforts, come to directly realize, and with your higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, and abide in it, in this very life?’

“Then, we respond to them with the explanation just given to you, Poṭṭhapāda, as we answer:

‘This itself, friend, is what is meant by acquisition of a formless self, for the complete abandoning and giving up of which we teach this Dhamma, whereby through training, my defiling and corrupting mental states are given up and abandoned in me, and in their stead, purifying mental states have developed in me, while through my own efforts, I have come to directly realize, and with my higher knowledge, the very perfection and fulfillment of wisdom, here and now, as I abide in it, in this very life.’

“Therefore, Poṭṭhapāda, would you say that the statements and assertions made here are well-founded, credible, demonstrable, and thus have a valid basis?”

“Oh yes, Bhante! The statements and assertions made here, are truly well-founded, credible, demonstrable, and thus have a valid basis indeed, O Blessed One!”

D. Citta Hatthisāriputta’s Questions

Then, Citta Hatthisāriputta, son of the elephant trainer, respectfully addressed The Blessed One and asked this question:

“Bhante, when there is the gross acquisition of self, are both the mind-made or mental acquisition of self, and the formless acquisition of self, empty and therefore false (*moghā*), at that time? In other words, is it the gross acquisition of self alone that is real for him, at that time?

“Similarly, while there is the experiencing of the mind-made acquisition of self, are both the physical, or gross acquisition of self, and the formless acquisition of self, empty and therefore false, at that time? In other words, is it the mind-made acquisition of self alone that is real for him, at that time?

“And Bhante, while there is the experiencing of the formless acquisition of self, are both the physical, or gross acquisition of self, and the mind-made acquisition of self, empty and therefore false, at that time? In other words, is it the formless acquisition of self alone that is real for him, at that time?”

“Citta, at the time when the gross acquisition of self is present, it is not reckoned as mental or mind-made acquisition of self, for that does not come into view. Also, it is not reckoned as formless acquisition of self, for that too does not come into view, because at that time, it is only reckoned and acknowledged as simply the gross acquisition of self.

“Similarly, Citta, at the time when the mental or mind-made acquisition of self is present, it is not reckoned as gross or physical acquisition of self, for that does not come into view. Also, it is not reckoned as formless acquisition of self, for that too does not come into view, because at that time, it is only reckoned and acknowledged as simply the mind-made acquisition of self.

“Also, Citta, at the time when the formless acquisition of self is present, it is not reckoned as gross or physical acquisition of self, for that does not come into view. Furthermore, it is not reckoned as mind-made acquisition of self, for that too does not come into view, because at that time, it is only reckoned and acknowledged as simply the formless acquisition of self.

“Citta, imagine people were to approach and ask you the following:

*‘Were you in the past – or was it that you did not exist?
‘Will you be in the future – or is it that you will not exist or be? Or how about -
‘Are you now – or is it that you are not existing or being?’*

“How would you reply to them, Citta?”

“Bhante, if they were to question me in that manner, then I would answer thus:

*‘I was in the past, seeing that I did exist and therefore, was.
‘I will be in the future, seeing that I will exist and therefore, be.
‘I am now, seeing that I do exist and therefore, am.’”*

Then, The Blessed One asked Citta another question, by saying:

“Then, Citta, if they were to ask you -

‘That acquisition of self you had in the past, would you consider that acquisition of self as being exclusively and truly real, whereas the future acquisition of self, and the present acquisition of self, to both be false and non-real?’

‘Or would you consider the acquisition of self you will have in the future, as being exclusively and truly real, and the other two false?’

‘Or would you consider the acquisition of self you do have now in the present as being exclusively and truly real, and the other two false?’

Then, Citta responded by saying:

“Bhante, if they were to ask me such questions, then I would reply thus:

‘Whatever acquisition of self I had in the past, at that time and when it was happening, that acquisition of self alone I considered as being exclusively and truly real, whereas the future acquisition of self, and the present acquisition of self, to both be false and non-real?’

‘Similarly, whatever acquisition of self I will have in the future, at that time and when it will happen, that acquisition of self alone I will consider as being exclusively and truly real, and the other two false and non-real.’

‘And, whatever acquisition of self I do have now in the present, at this time and as it is happening, this very acquisition of self alone I consider as being exclusively and truly real, and the other two, false and non-real.’

“In just the same manner, Citta, at whatever time the gross or physical acquisition of self is there, *at that time*, it is not reckoned as mental or mind-made acquisition of self, for that does not come into view. This, because at that time, Citta, it is reckoned only as gross or physical acquisition of self.

“Similarly, Citta, at whatever time the mental or mind-made acquisition of self is present, *at that time*, it is not reckoned as gross or physical acquisition of self, for that does not come into view. This, because at that time, Citta, it is reckoned only as mind-made or mental acquisition of self.

“Also, Citta, at whatever time the formless acquisition of self is present, *at that time*, it is not reckoned as gross or physical acquisition of self, for that does not come into view. This, because at that time, Citta, it is reckoned only as formless acquisition of self.

- Simile of milk (and its chain of refined transformations)

“Just like milk comes from a cow, Citta, and curd comes from milk, and butter from curd, and ghee from butter, and cream of ghee from ghee itself, at the time that it is still milk, it is not reckoned nor considered as curd, nor as butter, nor as ghee, nor as cream of ghee, which is considered their very best version.

“Now, Citta, at the time that it is still milk, it is reckoned only and simply as milk. Therefore, it is not reckoned nor considered as curd, or butter, or ghee, or cream of ghee. At that time, it is considered exclusively as milk.

“Similarly, when it is curd, it is reckoned only and simply as curd, where no one considers or assumes it to still be milk, or butter, or ghee, or cream of ghee, somehow hiding in it. It is simply seen and reckoned as curd.

“Similarly, when it has turned into butter, it is reckoned only and simply as butter, where no one considers or assumes it to still be milk, or curd, or ghee, or cream of ghee, somehow hiding in it. It is simply seen and reckoned as butter.

“Similarly, when it has turned into ghee, it is reckoned only and simply as ghee, where no one considers or assumes it to still be milk, or curd, or butter, or cream of ghee, somehow hiding in it. It is simply seen and reckoned as ghee.

“And Citta, when it has turned into cream of ghee, it is reckoned only and simply as cream of ghee, where no one considers or assumes it to still be milk, or curd, or butter, or even ghee. It is simply seen and reckoned as cream of ghee.

“In just the same manner, Citta, at whatever time the gross or physical acquisition of self is there, *at that time*, it is not reckoned as mental or mind-made acquisition of self, for that does not come into view. This, because at that time, Citta, it is reckoned only as gross or physical acquisition of self.

“Similarly, Citta, at whatever time the mental or mind-made acquisition of self is present, *at that time*, it is not reckoned as gross or physical acquisition of self, for that does not come into view. This, because at that time, Citta, it is reckoned only as mind-made or mental acquisition of self.

“Also, Citta, at whatever time the formless acquisition of self is present, *at that time*, it is not reckoned as gross or physical acquisition of self, for that does not come into view. This, because at that time, Citta, it is reckoned only as formless acquisition of self.

“After all, Citta, all these are mere designations and conventions of speech, modes of expressions, commonly used definitions and names, practiced and in usage by beings in the world, which The Tathāgata, although does not grasp at nor is reliant upon, nevertheless, He also puts them into use, simply for the purpose of helping His listeners.”

“When this was said, then Poṭṭhapāda, the wandering ascetic addressed The Blessed One and exclaimed:

“It is simply magnificent, Bhante! It is excellent, Lord! The Blessed One has made the Dhamma clear in so many ways. I feel as though The Tathāgata turned upright what was turned upside down; revealing what was hidden and showing the correct Path to those who were lost; just like bringing a brilliantly burning oil lamp into the darkness, for all those with eyesight to see, finally!

“Bhante, I go for refuge to The Blessed One, to The Dhamma, and to The Sangha of Bhikkhus! May The Blessed One accept and remember me as one of his lay followers, who has gone to Him for refuge, for life.”

Then, Citta Hatthisāriputta, while also addressing The Blessed One, said:

“Bhante, indeed! It is simply magnificent, Bhante! It is excellent, O Lord!

“The Blessed One has made the Dhamma clear to me in so many ways! I feel as though The Tathāgata turned upright what was turned upside down; revealing what was hidden by showing the correct Path to those who were lost, like bringing a brilliantly burning oil lamp into the darkness, for all those with eyesight to see, finally!

“Bhante, with my hands at my heart in respectful *anjalī*, I now ask for Your permission to Go Forth in Your presence, so that I may lead the Holy Life in full. Therefore, I also request to receive the Higher Ordination!”

It was in this manner, that the elephant trainer’s son, Citta, received the going forth in The Blessed One’s presence, as well as his Higher Ordination.

Then, while living alone and secluded from the crowd, continuing in his training, being withdrawn, diligent, and dedicated to his resolution to attain Release, the Venerable Citta Hatthisāriputta realized for himself, in this very life, and with his direct knowledge, the Highest Goal of the Holy Life, for the sake of which good sons of families rightly go forth from homelife into homelessness.

Thus, he now personally knew and understood with absolute certainty:

*“Destroyed is birth.
The Holy Life is now fully lived.
What had to be done, is now done and finally completed.
There is no more rebirth into any state of becoming.”*

Thus, the Venerable Citta Hatthisāriputta became one of the Arahants.

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu