DN 29 — DN 29 The Inspiring Discourse | Pāsādika Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

The Inspiring Discourse

Pāsādika Sutta (DN 29)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans in the mansion in the mango grove of the Sakyan family called Vedhañña [Archer]. And on that occasion Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta had just died in Pāvā. On his death, the Nigaṇṭhas had split into two factions. They kept arguing, quarreling, & disputing, stabbing one another with weapons of the mouth: “You don’t understand this Dhamma-Vinaya. I understand this Dhamma-Vinaya. How could you understand this Dhamma-Vinaya? You practice wrongly. I practice rightly. I’m consistent. You’re inconsistent. What should be said first, you said last. What should be said last, you said first. What you cogitated so long has been turned inside out. Your position has been overthrown. You’re trapped, so go try to release your position

or disentangle yourself if you can!" Nothing but slaughter, as it were, was being committed among the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭa-sons. Even the lay disciples of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, dressed in white, seemed disenchanted, disgusted, & repelled by the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭa-sons, and at how that poorly proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya was poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who was not rightly self-awakened, its foundation [now] broken, without an arbiter.1

Then Cunda the novice, who had spent the Rains at Pāvā, went to Ven. Ānanda at Sāmagāma and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda, "Venerable sir, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta has just died in Pāvā. On his death, the Nigaṇṭhas have split into two factions. They keep arguing, quarreling, & disputing, stabbing one another with weapons of the mouth: 'You don't understand this Dhamma-Vinaya. I understand this Dhamma-Vinaya. How could you understand this Dhamma-Vinaya? You practice wrongly. I practice rightly. I'm consistent. You're inconsistent. What should be said first, you said last. What should be said last, you said first. What you cogitated so long has been turned inside out. Your position has been overthrown. You're trapped, so go try to release your position or disentangle yourself if you can!' Nothing but slaughter, as it were, is being committed among the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭa-sons. Even the lay disciples of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, dressed in white, seem disenchanted, disgusted, & repelled by the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭa-sons, and at how that poorly proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya was poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who was not rightly self-awakened, its support [now] broken, without an arbiter."

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to Cunda the novice, "Friend Cunda, there is warrant here for talking to the Blessed One. Let's go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, report this matter to him."

"As you say, venerable sir," Cunda the novice responded to Ven. Ānanda. Then Ven. Ānanda & Cunda the novice went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, "Lord, Cunda the novice, here, has said that Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta has just died in Pāvā. … Even the lay disciples of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, dressed in white, seem disenchanted, disgusted, & repelled by the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭa-sons, and at how that poorly proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya was poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who was not rightly self-awakened, its support broken, without an arbiter."

"That's the way it is, Cunda, with a poorly proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya, poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who is not rightly self-awakened.

A Poorly-expounded Dhamma-Vinaya

"There is the case, Cunda, where a teacher is not rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya is poorly proclaimed, poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who is not rightly self-awakened. A disciple of that Dhamma

does not dwell practicing the Dhamma in accordance with [that] Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with [that] Dhamma, but deviates from it. He is to be told, 'It is a gain for you, friend, well-gained by you, that—when your teacher is not rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya is poorly proclaimed, poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who is not rightly self-awakened—you are one who does not dwell practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma, but deviates from it.' There, Cunda, the teacher is to be criticized, the Dhamma is to be criticized, but the disciple is to be thus praised.

"Whoever might say to such a disciple, 'Come, friend, practice in line with the Dhamma as taught and formulated by your teacher': The person who urged him, the thing urged, and the person who practiced in line with what was urged would all produce much demerit. Why is that? That's the way it is, Cunda, with a poorly proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya, poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who is not rightly self-awakened.

"There is the case, Cunda, where a teacher is not rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya is poorly proclaimed, poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who is not rightly self-awakened. A disciple of that Dhamma dwells practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma, and acts to conform to it. He is to be told, 'It is no gain for you, friend, poorly-gained by you, that—when your teacher is not rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya, is poorly proclaimed, poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who is not rightly self-awakened—you are one who dwells practicing the Dhamma in accordance with [that] Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with [that] Dhamma, and acts to conform to it.' There, Cunda, the teacher is to be criticized, the Dhamma is to be criticized, and the disciple is to be thus criticized.

"Whoever might say to such a disciple, 'Yes, friend, practicing the right way, you will succeed in the right way': The person who praised him, the thing praised, and the person who, being praised, aroused even greater persistence would all produce much demerit. Why is that? That's the way it is, Cunda, with a poorly proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya, poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who is not rightly self-awakened.

A Well-expounded Dhamma-Vinaya

"There is the case, Cunda, where a teacher is rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya, is well-proclaimed, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened. A disciple of that Dhamma does not dwell practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma, but deviates from it. He is to be told, 'It is no gain for you, friend, poorly-gained by you, that—when your teacher is rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya is well-proclaimed, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming,

expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened—you are one who does not dwell practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma, but deviates from it.' There, Cunda, the teacher is to be praised, the Dhamma is to be praised, but the disciple is to be thus criticized.

"Whoever might say to such a disciple, 'Come, friend, practice in line with the Dhamma as taught and formulated by your teacher': The person who urged him, the thing urged, and the person who practiced in line with what was urged would all produce much merit. Why is that? That's the way it is, Cunda, with a well-proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened.

"There is the case, Cunda, where a teacher is rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya, is well-proclaimed, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened. A disciple of that Dhamma dwells practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma, and acts to conform to it. He is to be told, 'It is a gain for you, friend, well-gained by you, that—when your teacher is rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya is well-proclaimed, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened—you are one who dwells practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma, and acts to conform to it.' There, Cunda, the teacher is to be praised, the Dhamma is to be praised, and the disciple is to be thus praised.

"Whoever might say to such a disciple, 'Yes, friend, practicing the right way, you will succeed in the right way': The person who praised him, the thing praised, and the person who, being praised, aroused even greater persistence would all produce much merit. Why is that? That's the way it is, Cunda, with a well-proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened.

The Complete Holy Life

"There is the case, Cunda, where a teacher has appeared in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened. And the Dhamma is well-proclaimed, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened. But his disciples have not been instructed in the meaning/goal of the True Dhamma,2 nor has the complete holy life been entirely disclosed to them, made plain, with all its steps collected, complete with miracles,3 well-proclaimed as far as human beings & devas. Then their teacher disappears. When a teacher of that sort has died, it is a matter of regret for his disciples. Why is that? Because: 'A teacher has appeared in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened. And the Dhamma is well-proclaimed, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened. But we have not been instructed in the meaning/goal of the True Dhamma, nor has the complete holy life been entirely disclosed to us, made plain, with all its steps collected, complete with miracles, well-proclaimed as far as human beings & devas, and now our teacher has

disappeared.' When a teacher of that sort has died, it is a matter of regret for his disciples.

"But then there is the case, Cunda, where a teacher has appeared in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened. And the Dhamma is well-proclaimed, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened. His disciples have been instructed in the meaning/goal of the True Dhamma, and the complete holy life has been entirely disclosed to them, made plain, with all its steps collected, complete with miracles, well-proclaimed as far as human beings & devas. Then their teacher disappears. When a teacher of that sort has died, it is a matter of no regret for his disciples. Why is that? Because: 'A teacher has appeared in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened. And the Dhamma is well-proclaimed, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened. And we have been instructed in the meaning/goal of the True Dhamma, and the complete holy life has been entirely disclosed to us, made plain, with all its steps collected, complete with miracles, well-proclaimed as far as human beings & devas, and now our teacher has disappeared.' When a teacher of that sort has died, it is a matter of no regret for his disciples.

"Now, if a holy life is endowed with those factors, yet there is no teacher who is an elder, of long standing, long gone forth, senior, attained to old age, then a holy life of that sort is incomplete with regard to that factor. But when a holy life is endowed with those factors, and there is a teacher who is an elder, of long standing, long gone forth, senior, attained to old age, then a holy life of that sort is complete with regard to that factor.

"But if a holy life is endowed with those factors, and there is a teacher who is an elder, of long standing, long gone forth, senior, attained to old age, yet there are no elder monk disciples of his that are experienced, trained, mature, attained to security from the yoke, able to teach the True Dhamma, able to trap with the True Dhamma any opposing doctrines that have arisen and—having trapped them—to teach the Dhamma complete with miracles, then a holy life of that sort is incomplete with regard to that factor. But when a holy life is endowed with those factors, and there is a teacher who is an elder, of long standing, long gone forth, senior, attained to old age, and there are elder monk disciples of his who are experienced, trained, mature, attained to security from the yoke, able to teach the True Dhamma, able to trap with the True Dhamma any opposing doctrines that have arisen and—having trapped them—to teach the Dhamma complete with miracles, then a holy life of that sort is complete with regard to that factor.

"But if a holy life is endowed with those factors, and there is a teacher who is an elder, of long standing, long gone forth, senior, attained to old age, and there are elder monk disciples of his who are experienced, trained, mature, attained to security from the yoke, able to teach the True Dhamma, able to trap with the True Dhamma any opposing doctrines that have arisen and—having trapped them—to teach the Dhamma complete with miracles, yet there are no monk disciples of his of middle standing… there are monk disciples of his of middle standing, yet no junior monk disciples of his… there are junior monk disciples of his, yet no elder nun disciples of his… there are elder nun disciples of his, yet no nun disciples of his of middle standing… there are nun disciples of his of middle standing, yet no junior nun disciples of his… there are junior nun disciples of his, yet no

male lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, following the celibate life… there are male lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, following the celibate life, yet no male lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality… there are male lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality, yet no female lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, following the celibate life… there are female lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, following the celibate life, yet no female lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality… there are female lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality, yet his holy life has not become powerful, prosperous, detailed, well-populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among devas & human beings… his holy life has become powerful, prosperous, detailed, well-populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among devas & human beings, yet has not attained supremacy in terms of gains & supremacy in terms of status, then a holy life of that sort is incomplete with regard to that factor.

“But when a holy life is endowed with those factors, and there is a teacher who is an elder, of long standing, long gone forth, senior, attained to old age, and there are elder monk disciples of his who are experienced, trained, mature, attained to security from the yoke, able to teach the True Dhamma, able to trap with the True Dhamma any opposing doctrines that have arisen and—having trapped them—to teach the Dhamma complete with miracles; and there are monk disciples of his of middle standing; there are junior monk disciples of his; there are elder nun disciples of his… nun disciples of his of middle standing… junior nun disciples of his… male lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, following the celibate life… male lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality… female lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, following the celibate life; there are female lay disciples of his, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality; and his holy life has become powerful, prosperous, detailed, well-populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among devas & human beings, and has attained supremacy in terms of gains & supremacy in terms of status, then a holy life of that sort is complete with regard to that factor.

“Cunda, I am now a teacher who has appeared in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened. And the Dhamma is well-proclaimed, well-expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened. My disciples have been instructed in the meaning/goal of the True Dhamma, and the complete holy life has been entirely disclosed to them, made plain, with all its steps collected, complete with miracles, well-proclaimed as far as human beings & devas. I am now a teacher who is an elder, of long standing, long gone forth, senior, attained to old age.

“There are now elder monk disciples of mine who are experienced, trained, mature, attained to security from the yoke, able to teach the True Dhamma, able to trap with the True Dhamma any opposing doctrines that have arisen and—having trapped them—to teach the Dhamma complete with miracles. There are now4 monk disciples of mine of middle standing. There are now junior monk disciples of mine. There are now elder nun disciples of mine… nun disciples of mine of middle standing… junior nun disciples of mine… male lay disciples of mine, householders wearing white, following the celibate life… male lay disciples of mine, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality… female

lay disciples of mine, householders wearing white, following the celibate life. There are now female lay disciples of mine, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality; and my holy life has now become powerful, prosperous, detailed, well-populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among devas & human beings.

"Cunda, to the extent that I am now a teacher who has appeared in the world, I do not see any other teacher who has attained supremacy in terms of gains & supremacy in terms of status equal to what I have. And to the extent that my community or group has appeared in the world, I do not see any other community that has attained supremacy in terms of gains & supremacy in terms of status, equal to what the Saṅgha of monks has.

"If one speaking rightly were to say, 'a well-expounded, entirely complete, well-proclaimed holy life, consummate in all its aspects, complete in all its aspects, with nothing lacking & nothing in excess,' he would, speaking rightly, say it of this: 'a well-expounded, entirely complete, well-proclaimed holy life, consummate in all its aspects, complete in all its aspects, with nothing lacking & nothing in excess.'

"Udaka Rāmaputta5 once made this statement: 'Seeing, one doesn't see.' And what is it that, 'seeing, one doesn't see'? One sees the blade of a well-sharpened razor, but not the edge of the razor. This, Cunda, is called, 'seeing, one doesn't see.' But this statement of Uddaka Rāmaputta is base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable, dealing only with a razor.

"But how would one, speaking rightly, say, 'Seeing, one doesn't see'? One speaking rightly, would say just this: 'Seeing, one doesn't see.' And what is it that, 'seeing, one doesn't see'? Such a well-expounded, entirely complete, well-proclaimed holy life, consummate in all its aspects, complete in all its aspects, with nothing lacking and nothing in excess: This is what one sees. One doesn't see, 'If this were taken away from here, it would become purer.' One doesn't see, 'If this were added here, it would become more complete.' This is called, 'seeing, one doesn't see.'

"Cunda, if one speaking rightly were to say, 'a well-expounded, entirely complete, well-proclaimed holy life, consummate in all its aspects, complete in all its aspects, with nothing lacking and nothing in excess,' he would, speaking rightly, say it of this: 'a well-expounded, entirely complete, well-proclaimed holy life, consummate in all its aspects, complete in all its aspects, with nothing lacking and nothing in excess.'

That this Holy Life May Long Endure

"Therefore, Cunda, with regard to the qualities I have taught, having directly known them, you should all, having assembled & gathered together, recite & compare6 meaning with meaning, expression with expression, so that this holy life may long endure & remain steadfast for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of the multitude; out of sympathy for the world; for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human beings & devas. And which are the qualities I have taught that you should all, having assembled & gathered together, recite & compare meaning with meaning, expression with expression, so that this holy life may

long endure & remain steadfast for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of the multitude; out of sympathy for the world; for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human beings & devas? The four establishings of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path.7 These are the qualities I have taught that you should all, having assembled & gathered together, recite & compare meaning with meaning, expression with expression, so that this holy life may long endure & remain steadfast for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of the multitude; out of sympathy for the world; for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human beings & devas. In them, you should train yourselves harmoniously, cordially, without dispute.

"If one of your fellows in the holy life should speak of the Dhamma in the Saṅgha, and if the thought occurs to you, 'Friends, this venerable one has grasped the wrong meaning and picked up the wrong expression,' you should express neither delight nor scorn. Neither delighting nor scorning, you should say to him, 'With regard to this meaning, friend, there are these expressions or those expressions. Which are the more pertinent? And with regard to these expressions, there is this meaning or that meaning. Which is the more pertinent?'

"If he should say, 'Friends, with regard to this meaning, these expressions are more pertinent than those; and with regard to these expressions, this meaning is more pertinent than that,' then he is neither to be praised nor disparaged. Neither praising nor disparaging him, you should show him how to examine that meaning & those expressions.

"If another one of your fellows in the holy life should speak of the Dhamma in the Saṅgha, and if the thought occurs to you, 'Friends, this venerable one has grasped the wrong meaning but picked up the right expression,' you should express neither delight nor scorn. Neither delighting nor scorning, you should say to him, 'With regard to these expressions, there is this meaning or that meaning. Which is the more pertinent?'

"If he should say, 'Friends, with regard to these expressions, this meaning is more pertinent than that,' then he is neither to be praised nor disparaged. Neither praising nor disparaging him, you should show him how to examine that meaning.

"If another one of your fellows in the holy life should speak of the Dhamma in the Saṅgha, and if the thought occurs to you, 'Friends, this venerable one has grasped the right meaning but picked up the wrong expression,' you should express neither delight nor scorn. Neither delighting nor scorning, you should say to him, 'With regard to this meaning, friend, there are these expressions or those expressions. Which are the more pertinent?'

"If he should say, 'Friends, with regard to this meaning, these expressions are more pertinent than those,' then he is neither to be praised nor disparaged. Neither praising nor disparaging him, you should show him how to examine those expressions.

“If another one of your fellows in the holy life should speak of the Dhamma in the Saṅgha, and if the thought occurs to you, ‘Friends, this venerable one has grasped the right meaning and picked up the right expression,’ saying, ‘Excellent,’ you should express delight & rejoice in his statement. Expressing delight & rejoicing in his statement, saying, ‘Excellent,’ you should say to him, ‘It’s a gain for us, friend, a great gain, that we see a venerable one like you who has entered into the meaning and the expression in this way.’

The Pleasures of the Holy Life

“Cunda, I don’t teach you the Dhamma only for the restraint of effluents in the present life, nor do I teach you the Dhamma only for the warding off of effluents in the afterlife. I teach you the Dhamma both for the restraint of effluents in the present life and for the warding off of effluents in the afterlife.

“Therefore, the robe I have allowed you is enough simply to counteract cold, to counteract heat, to counteract the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; simply for the purpose of covering the parts of the body that cause shame.

“The alms food I have allowed you is enough simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life, thinking, ‘Thus will I destroy old feelings (of hunger) and not create new feelings (from overeating). I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.’

“The lodgings I have allowed you are enough simply to counteract cold, to counteract heat, to counteract the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; simply for protection from the inclemencies of weather and for the enjoyment of seclusion.

“The medicinal requisites used for curing the sick that I have allowed you are enough simply to counteract any pains of illness that have arisen and for maximum freedom from disease.

“Now, it’s possible, Cunda, that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘The Sakyan-son contemplatives live devoted to the devotion to pleasure.’ When they are saying that, the wanderers of other sects should be told, ‘Which devotion to pleasure, friends?—for devotion to pleasure has many modes, many permutations.’8

“There are four devotions to pleasure, Cunda, that are base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable, that do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, or unbinding. Which four?

“There is the case where a certain fool finds pleasure & rapture for himself in killing living beings. This is the first devotion to pleasure.

“Further, there is the case where a certain person finds pleasure & rapture for himself in taking what is not given. This is the second devotion to pleasure.

“Further, there is the case where a certain person finds pleasure & rapture for himself in telling lies. This is the third devotion to pleasure.

“Further, there is the case where a certain person goes about endowed & provided with the five strings of sensuality. This is the fourth devotion to pleasure.

“These are the four devotions to pleasure, Cunda, that are base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable, that do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, or unbinding.

“Now, it’s possible that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘The Sakyan-son contemplatives live devoted to these four devotions to pleasure.’ They are to be told, ‘Not so!’ They would not be speaking rightly of you. They would be slandering you with what is unfactual & untrue.

“There are four devotions to pleasure, Cunda, that lead exclusively to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, & unbinding. Which four?

“There is the case where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is the first devotion to pleasure.

“Further, Cunda, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, the monk enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. This is the second devotion to pleasure.

“Further, Cunda, with the fading of rapture, the monk remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ This is the third devotion to pleasure.

“Further, Cunda, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—the monk enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the fourth devotion to pleasure.

“These are the four devotions to pleasure that lead exclusively to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, & unbinding.

“Now, it’s possible, Cunda, that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘The Sakyan-son contemplatives live devoted to these four devotions to pleasure.’ They are to be told, ‘That is so!’ They would be speaking rightly of you. They would not be slandering you with what is unfactual & untrue.

“It’s possible that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘Living devoted to these four devotions to pleasure, friends, what fruits, what rewards can be expected?’

“The wanderers of other sects saying that are to be told, ‘Living devoted to these four devotions to pleasure, friends, four fruits, four rewards can be expected. Which four?

“‘Friends, there is the case where a monk, with the wasting away of (the first) three fetters, is a stream-enterer, certain, never again destined for the lower realms, headed for self-awakening. This is the first fruit, the first reward.

“‘Further, friends, the monk—with the wasting away of (the first) three fetters, and with the attenuation of passion, aversion, & delusion—is a once-returner; who, on returning only once more to this world, will make an ending to stress. This is the second fruit, the second reward.

“‘Further, the monk—with the wasting away of the five lower fetters—is due to arise spontaneously (in the Pure Abodes), there to totally unbind, destined never again to return from that world. This is the third fruit, the third reward.

“‘Further, the monk—with the ending of effluents—enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized it for himself right in the here & now.

“‘Living devoted to these four devotions to pleasure, friends, these four fruits, these four rewards can be expected.’

“Now, it’s possible, Cunda, that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘The Sakyan-son contemplatives live without an established Dhamma.’ The wanderers of other sects saying that should be told, ‘There are, friends, Dhammas taught & formulated by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy, & rightly self-awakened—that are not to be transgressed throughout life. Just like a gate post or iron post that is deeply buried, well-planted, immovable, unshakable, in the same way there are Dhammas taught & formulated by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy, & rightly self-awakened—that are not to be transgressed throughout life.

“‘Friends, an arahant monk whose effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who is released through right gnosis, cannot possibly transgress nine principles:

“‘[1] It is impossible for a monk whose effluents are ended to intentionally deprive a living being of life. [2] It is impossible for a monk whose effluents are ended to take, in the manner of stealing, what is not given. [3] It is impossible for a monk whose effluents are ended to engage in sexual intercourse. [4] It is impossible for a monk whose effluents are ended to tell a conscious lie. [5] It is impossible for a monk whose effluents are ended to consume stored-up sensual things as he did before, when he was a householder.

"'[6] It is impossible for a monk whose effluents are ended to follow a bias based on desire. [7] It is impossible for a monk whose effluents are ended to follow a bias based on aversion. [8] It is impossible for a monk whose effluents are ended to follow a bias based on fear. [9] It is impossible for a monk whose effluents are ended to follow a bias based on delusion.

"'An arahant monk whose effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who is released through right gnosis, cannot possibly transgress nine principles.'

The Tathāgata's Knowledge & Vision

"Now, it's possible, Cunda, that some wanderers of other sects might say, 'Gotama the contemplative describes unlimited knowledge & vision with regard to the past, but doesn't describe unlimited knowledge & vision with regard to the future. What is this? How is this?' Those wanderers of other sects construe the sort of knowing that is not knowledge & vision9 to be the sort of knowing that is knowledge & vision, just like inexperienced fools. The Tathāgata's memory-&-recollection knowledge with regard to the past is such that he recollects whatever he wants. The Tathāgata's knowledge with regard to the future arises born from his awakening: 'This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.'

"With regard to what is past: If it is unfactual, untrue, & unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, but unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, & beneficial, the Tathāgata has a sense of the proper time for giving the answer to that question.

"With regard to what is future…

"With regard to what is present: If it is unfactual, untrue, & unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, but unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, & beneficial, the Tathāgata has a sense of the proper time for giving the answer to that question.10

"Thus, Cunda, with regard to things that are past, future, & present, the Tathāgata is one who speaks at the proper time, speaks what is true, speaks what is factual, speaks the meaning, speaks Dhamma, speaks Vinaya. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

"Cunda, whatever in this world—with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people—is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect, that has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

"From the night the Tathāgata fully awakens to the unsurpassed right self-awakening until the night he totally unbinds in the unbinding property with no fuel remaining,11 whatever the Tathāgata has said, spoken, explained is just so [tatha] and not otherwise. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

“The Tathāgata is one who does in line with [tatha] what he teaches, one who teaches in line with what he does. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

“In this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people, the Tathāgata is the unconquered conqueror, all-seeing, the wielder of power. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.12

“It’s possible, Cunda, that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘How is it, friends? Is it the case that “after death a Tathāgata exists: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless”?’ The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, ‘Friends, it is undeclared by the Tathāgata that “after death a Tathāgata exists: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.”’

“It’s possible that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘How is it, friends? Is it the case that “after death a Tathāgata does not exist…”… “both exists & does not exist…”… “neither does nor doesn’t exist: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless”?’ The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, ‘Friends, it is undeclared by the Tathāgata that “after death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.”’

“It’s possible that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘But why, friends, is this undeclared by Gotama the contemplative?’ The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, ‘Friends, it isn’t connected with the goal, isn’t connected with the Dhamma, isn’t fundamental to the holy life. It doesn’t lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That’s why it’s undeclared by the Blessed One.’13

“It’s possible that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘But what, friends, is declared by Gotama the contemplative?’ The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, “‘This is stress,” is declared by the Blessed One. “This is the origination of stress,” is declared by the Blessed One. “This is the cessation of stress,” is declared by the Blessed One. “This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,” is declared by the Blessed One.’

“It’s possible that wanderers of other sects might say, ‘And why, friends, is this declared by Gotama the contemplative?’ The wanderers of other sects who say this should be told, ‘This is connected with the goal, is connected with the Dhamma, is fundamental to the holy life. It leads to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That’s why it’s declared by the Blessed One.’

“Cunda, the view-dependencies [diṭṭhi-nissayā]14 concerning beginning-points that I have declared as they are to be declared and as they are not to be declared: Would I [simply] declare them to you? And the view-dependencies concerning endpoints that I have declared as they are to be declared and as they are not to be declared: Would I [simply] declare them to you?

“And which are the view-dependencies concerning beginning-points that I have declared as they are to be declared and as they are not to be declared?15

“There are certain contemplatives & brahmans who are of this view, this opinion, ‘The self & the cosmos are eternal: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.’ There are certain contemplatives & brahmans who are of this view, this opinion, ‘The self & the cosmos are not eternal: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.’ … ‘The self & the cosmos are both eternal & not eternal’ … ‘The self & the cosmos are neither eternal nor not-eternal’ … ‘The self & the cosmos are self-made’ … ‘The self & the cosmos are other-made’ … ‘The self & the cosmos are both self-made & other-made’ … ‘Without self-making or other-making, the self & the cosmos are spontaneously arisen: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.’

“There are certain contemplatives & brahmans who are of this view, this opinion, ‘Pleasure & pain are eternal: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.’ … ‘Pleasure & pain are not eternal: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.’ … ‘Pleasure & pain are both eternal & not eternal’ … ‘Pleasure & pain are neither eternal nor not-eternal’ … ‘Pleasure & pain are self-made’ … ‘Pleasure & pain are other-made’ … ‘Pleasure & pain are both self-made & other-made’ … ‘Without self-making or other-making, pleasure & pain are spontaneously arisen: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.’

“As for the contemplatives & brahmans who are of this view, this opinion, ‘The self & the cosmos are eternal: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless’: I, going to them, say, ‘Friends, is it the case that this is said, “The self & the cosmos are eternal”? When they say, “Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless,” I don’t grant their point. Why is that? Because with regard to that, there are some beings who are percipient otherwise.16 And I do not see that this doctrine is even equal to mine, so how better? In fact, my doctrine is the better one.

[Similarly with the remaining views.]

“These, Cunda, are the view-dependencies concerning beginning-points that I have declared as they are to be declared and as they are not to be declared. Would I [simply] declare them to you?

“And which are the view-dependencies concerning endpoints that I have declared as they are to be declared and as they are not to be declared?17

“There are certain contemplatives & brahmans who are of this view, this opinion, ‘After death, the self is possessed of form & free from disease: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.’ There are certain contemplatives & brahmans who are of this view, this opinion, ‘After death, the self is formless: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.’ … ‘After death, the self is both possessed of form & formless’ … ‘After death, the self is neither possessed of form nor formless’ … ‘After death, the self is percipient’ … ‘After death, the self is not percipient’ … ‘After death, the self is both percipient & not percipient’ … ‘After death, the self is neither percipient nor not percipient’ … ‘The self is

annihilated, destroyed, & does not exist after death: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless.'

"As for the contemplatives & brahmans who are of this view, this opinion, 'After death, the self is possessed of form & free from disease: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless': I, going to them, say, 'Friends, is it the case that this is said, "After death, the self is possessed of form & free from disease"? When they say, "Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless," I don't grant their point. Why is that? Because with regard to that, there are some beings who are percipient otherwise. And I do not see that this doctrine is even equal to mine, so how better? In fact, my doctrine is the better one.

[Similarly with the remaining views.]

"These, Cunda, are the view-dependencies concerning endpoints that I have declared as they are to be declared and as they are not to be declared. Would I [simply] declare them to you?

"It's for the abandoning & transcending of these view-dependencies concerning beginning-points and view-dependencies concerning endpoints that I have thus taught & formulated the four establishings of mindfulness. Which four?

"There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.18

"It's for the abandoning & transcending of these view-dependencies concerning beginning-points and view-dependencies concerning endpoints that I have thus taught & formulated these four establishings of mindfulness."

Now on that occasion Ven. Upavāṇa19 was standing behind the Blessed One, fanning him. He said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding—how inspiring this Dhamma-sequence is, how very inspiring this Dhamma-sequence is. What is the name of this Dhamma-sequence?"

"In that case, Upavāṇa, you may remember this Dhamma-sequence simply as 'The Inspiring.'"

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

Notes

1. In other words, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta was the foundation and arbiter for this doctrine while he was alive, but left no foundation or arbiter to take his place. In contrast, see Ven. Ānanda's statement in MN 106 to the effect that, after the Buddha's passing, the Dhamma was the arbiter among the monks.

2. According to the Commentary, this means that they have not awakened to the meaning/goal (attha) of the True Dhamma.

3. See the three miracles discussed in AN 3:61 and DN 11.

4. This "now" appears in the Thai and Sri Lankan editions, but not in the Burmese or PTS editions.

5. One of the Buddha's teachers prior to his awakening. See MN 36.

6. Reading vicaritabbaṁ with the Thai edition. The other editions have na vivaditabbaṁ, "should not dispute."

7. These are the 37 bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammas. For a full account, see The Wings to Awakening.

8. The discussion that begins with this paragraph provides an explanation for what is meant by the "middle way" in the Buddha's first sermon. See also the discussion of pleasure and pain in MN 101.

9. Reading aññāṇadassanaṁ with the Thai edition. The other editions have ñāṇadassanaṁ, "that is knowledge & vision," which doesn't fit into the general message of the text here.

This passage appears to be a response to the claims made by Pūraṇa Kassapa and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, who taught two different forms of determinism and who both claimed to have infinite knowledge of the cosmos, a knowledge that included knowledge of the past and future, which in their view was already predetermined (AN 9:38, DN 2). The Buddha, however, rejected determinism (see AN 3:63) and instead taught a doctrine of kamma that allowed for the freedom to choose skillful or unskillful courses of action in the present moment. This meant that his knowledge of the future did not encompass all details about the future, as many of those details were contingent on decisions that had not yet been made. But he did have future knowledge of a more specific and more valuable sort: He knew that he would not be reborn. Regardless of how unlimited Pūraṇa Kassapa and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta might claim their knowledge of the future to be, they did not have this sort of knowledge of their own future at all.

Nevertheless, even though the Buddha did not claim total knowledge of the future, he was able to see tendencies in the present that would bear future fruit. For example, in SN 20:7 and AN 5:79–80, he foresees the decline of the Saṅgha and the disappearance of the True Dhamma, but he warns the monks of these coming dangers, not so that they would accept them as inevitable, but so that they would do what they could to counteract them. This

means that the monks would have it in their power to slow these tendencies down. In MN 12, he illustrates his knowledge of the future fate of specific individuals with the analogy of the one-way path (ekāyana-magga): When a man is following a one-way path to that leads only to one specific destination, one would know that he will eventually reach that destination. In the same way, the Buddha can see of specific individuals that as long as they follow specific one-way paths of practice, their practice will eventually lead them to the corresponding goals. This knowledge, of course, is dependent on each individual's continuing to follow that path of practice.

10. See MN 58.

11. See Iti 44 and the discussion in The Mind Like Fire Unbound, chapter 1.

12. See AN 4:24 and Iti 112.

13. For a discussion of the Buddha's reasons for not answering these questions, see Skill in Questions, chapter 8.

14. The refrains that frame the following discussion on view-dependencies contain many variant readings, and unfortunately none of the printed editions sorts out the variants especially well. The Commentary is of no help in this regard, as it addresses itself only to some of the more obvious issues in the discussion, and leaves the less obvious ones untouched. Therefore, this translation is tentative, based on the readings that seem best to me, based both on stylistic grounds and on the way they fit in with the discussions of these views in other suttas.

The term diṭṭhi-nissaya, "view dependency," is also found in Ud 6:5.

15. Of the view-dependencies in the following list, the question of whether the self and the world are eternal is treated in DN 1, DN 28, and MN 102, and is mentioned in Ud 6:5; the question of whether the self is self-made, etc., is mentioned in Ud 6:5, as is the question of whether pleasure & pain are eternal; the question of whether pleasure & pain are self-made, etc., is treated in SN 12:18 and SN 12:25, and mentioned in AN 6:95.

The suttas that treat these views, as opposed to those that merely mention them, show how the Buddha would and would not declare them. In all cases, he would not declare them as, "Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless." He would declare or explain them, however, in the sense of showing either how the view is formulated, how it is grasped, or how grasping to the view gets in the way of reaching the deathless. The discussion in DN 1 is the most complex, as it gives a detailed and different treatment for each of the views it covers. However, DN 1 contains a refrain that treats every view it covers in light of dependent co-arising. This refrain—along with passages from MN 102 and SN 12:25—gives the general thrust of the way in which the Buddha would explain/declare these views.

“When those contemplatives & brahmans assert various types of theories… on 62 grounds, that is an agitation & vacillation to be felt by those contemplatives & brahmans who, not knowing, not seeing, are immersed in craving…. That comes from contact as a requisite condition…. That they would experience that other than through contact: That isn’t possible…. They all experience that through repeated contact at the six sense media. For them, from feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“But when a monk discerns the origination, ending, allure, drawbacks of, & escape from the six sense media, he discerns what is higher than all of this.” — DN 1

“Those contemplatives & brahmans who are of this view, this opinion, ‘The self & the cosmos are eternal: Only this is true, anything otherwise is worthless’: It is impossible that—apart from conviction, apart from liking, apart from unbroken tradition, apart from reasoning by analogy, apart from an agreement through pondering views [see MN 95 and AN 3:66]—they would have their very own pure & clear personal knowledge of that. There being no pure & clear personal knowledge, whatever modicum or sliver of knowledge those venerable contemplatives & brahmans clarify on that matter is said to be clinging on their part. With regard to that—fabricated, gross—there is still the cessation of fabrications: There is this.’ Knowing that, seeing the escape from it, the Tathāgata has gone beyond it.” — MN 102

“Whatever contemplatives & brahmans, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made, even that is dependent on contact. Whatever contemplatives & brahmans, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain are other-made… self-made & other-made… without self-making or other-making, are spontaneously arisen, even that is dependent on contact.

“It isn’t possible that any contemplatives & brahmans—teachers of kamma who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made—would be sensitive to pleasure & pain otherwise than through contact. It isn’t possible that any contemplatives & brahmans—teachers of kamma who declare that pleasure & pain are other-made… self-made & other-made… without self-making or other-making, are spontaneously arisen —would be sensitive to pleasure & pain otherwise than through contact.

“When there is a body, pleasure & pain arise internally with bodily intention as the cause; or when there is speech, pleasure & pain arise internally with verbal intention as the cause; or when there is intellect, pleasure & pain arise internally with intellectual intention as the cause.

“From ignorance as a requisite condition, then either of one’s own accord one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally, or because of others one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain

arise internally. Either one fabricates alert the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally; or one fabricates unalert the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally. [Similarly with verbal & intellectual fabrications.]

"Now, ignorance is bound up in these things. From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, there no longer exists (the sense of) the body on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise. There no longer exists the speech… the intellect on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise. There no longer exists the field, the site, the dimension, or the issue on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise." — SN 12:25

16. As the discussions of these points in DN 1 and DN 28 make clear, there are beings who, even though they can remember past lives, have different memories/perceptions of those lives because of the vagaries of their kamma and the limitations on their memories. Thus they come to different conclusions about where they ultimately came from—and, as is shown in the following section of this sutta, what will become of them after death. The Buddha's larger knowledge of past lives shows that none of the view-dependencies offered here can be the only truth about the past or the future. And some of them are simply not true: As he says in SN 12:18, it is definitely not true that pleasure & pain are spontaneously arisen; instead, they are dependently co-arisen. And as for beginning points in general, SN 15:3 states that transmigration comes from an inconceivable beginning point; AN 10:61 says that a beginning point for ignorance, such that one might say, "Before this, ignorance did not exist; then it came into play," cannot be discerned.

Instead of basing his teachings on perceptions about the past, the Buddha focuses instead on how suffering is maintained—and can be ended—in the immediate present. His formulation of the four noble truths holds true, and is immediately applicable to the problem of suffering and stress here and now, regardless of what one remembers from the past. These truths also serve the purpose of leading to nibbāna, something that none of these other views can do. This is why his criticism of the other views does not apply to right view, and why his doctrine is superior to any of the view-dependencies discussed here.

17. The view-dependencies in the following list, or close variants, are discussed in DN 1 and MN 102. The first four are discussed in SN 24. The discussions in both DN 1 and MN 102 are quite extended, giving different details for each view, although the refrain in DN 1 is the same here as it is for the view-dependencies dealing with beginning points. A passage from SN 24:37 gives an idea of how it and its companion suttas declare/explain the first four of these views:

"Monks, there being what, clinging to what, entrenched in what, does this view arise: 'After death, the self is possessed of form & free from disease'?" …

"There being form, clinging to form, entrenched in form, this view arises: 'After death, the self is possessed of form & free from disease.' There being feeling… There being

perception… There being fabrications… There being consciousness, clinging to consciousness, entrenched in consciousness, this view arises: ‘After death, the self is possessed of form & free from disease.’

“Now what do you think, monks? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And without clinging to what is inconstant, stressful, and subject to change, would this view arise: ‘After death, the self is possessed of form & free from disease’?”

“No, lord.”

“Thus it is that—there being stress, clinging to stress, entrenched in stress—this view arises, ‘After death, the self is possessed of form & free from disease.’”

[Similarly with the remaining aggregates.]

“Now what do you think, monks? Is what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And without clinging to what is inconstant, stressful, and subject to change, would this view arise: ‘After death, the self is possessed of form & free from disease’?”

“No, lord.”

“Now, when a disciple of the noble ones has abandoned doubt with regard to these six bases [the five aggregates and what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect], and has abandoned doubt with regard to stress, has abandoned doubt with regard to the origination of stress, has abandoned doubt with regard to the cessation of stress, and has abandoned doubt with regard to the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress, then he is a stream-enterer, certain, never again destined for the lower realms, headed for self-awakening.”

In addition, MN 2 makes clear that the Buddha would avoid answering the question of whether there is a self to begin with.

18. See DN 22 and MN 118. See also, Right Mindfulness.

19. See SN 46:8 and DN 16.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 15; DN 16; AN 6:55; AN 9:7; AN 9:40; AN 10:93; Ud 5:5