MN 77 — MN 77 The Greater Discourse to Sakuludāyin | Mahāsakuludāyi Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

The Greater Discourse to Sakuludāyin

Mahāsakuludāyi Sutta (MN 77)

Introduction

This sutta illustrates a principle set forth in DN 1: that run-of-the-mill people, when praising the Buddha, tend to speak only of minor matters, connected with virtue. They don’t really understand the higher reasons for giving the Buddha the praise he rightly deserves.

Sakuludāyin the wanderer, in conversation with the Buddha, here states that the Buddha is respected by his followers because he eats little; he is content with little in terms of food,

clothing, and shelter; and he practices seclusion. The Buddha replies that he has students who eat less than he does; who are more ascetic than he is in terms of food, clothing, and shelter; and who practice seclusion more stringently than he does. If Sakuludāyin's reasons were the only ones for which the Buddha's followers respected him, these more stringent followers wouldn't respect him at all.

The Buddha then goes on to explain five deeper reasons for which his followers respect him. The five fall into two sorts: qualities of his character, and his ability to teach them to master many skills, all the way to the total ending of suffering.

Because the Buddha in this sutta states that he does not follow the strict ascetic regimen that some of his students do, some people have interpreted this sutta as an implied criticism of those students and of ascetic regimens in general. This interpretation, however, takes the Buddha's statements out of two contexts: their context within this sutta, and their context within his statements about ascetic regimens in other suttas.

In terms of this sutta, there is nothing in the Buddha's words in this sutta to suggest that he is criticizing his stricter followers in any way. And in terms of his statements about asceticism in other suttas, it's easy to see why. MN 101 contains a passage that is particularly relevant here.

"Suppose a fletcher were to heat & warm an arrow shaft between two flames, making it straight & pliable. Then at a later time he would no longer heat & warm the shaft between two flames, making it straight & pliable. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was heating & warming the shaft. That is why at a later time he would no longer heat & warm the shaft between two flames, making it straight & pliable.

"In the same way, the monk notices this: 'When I live according to my pleasure, unskillful qualities increase in me & skillful qualities decline. When I exert myself with stress & pain, though, unskillful qualities decline in me & skillful qualities increase. Why don't I exert myself with stress & pain?' So he exerts himself with stress & pain, and while he is exerting himself with stress & pain, unskillful qualities decline in him, & skillful qualities increase. Then at a later time he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was exerting himself with stress & pain. That is why, at a later time, he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain." — MN 101

This passage makes two points. The first is that some people find that they cannot indulge in certain pleasures without provoking unskillful qualities in the mind. In cases like that, they have to avoid those pleasure and practice with pain. This would be the legitimate reason for which the Buddha's followers would follow a stricter ascetic regimen than the Buddha, and there would be no reason for him to criticize them for doing so.

The second point explains why the Buddha himself no longer adheres to an ascetic regimen: He has already achieved his goal, and so is in no danger of falling back, even when eating larger amounts of food; when making use of exquisite food, clothing, and

shelter; and when living surrounded by students and visitors. He is like the fletcher who has succeeded in straightening the arrow and no longer has to heat it between two flames.

Rather than taking a categorical position that all asceticism is bad or all asceticism is good, the Buddha took an analytical approach to the issue:

"If, when an asceticism is pursued, unskillful qualities increase and skillful qualities decline, then I tell you that that sort of asceticism is not to be pursued. But if, when an asceticism is pursued, unskillful qualities decline and skillful qualities increase, then I tell you that that sort of asceticism is to be pursued." — AN 10:94

"Headman, those who say, 'Gotama the contemplative criticizes all asceticism, that he categorically denounces & disparages all ascetics who live the rough life,' are not saying what I have said, and they slander me with what is unfactual & untrue....

"As for the ascetic living the rough life who afflicts & torments himself, who doesn't attain a skilled state, and doesn't realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision: This ascetic living the rough life can be criticized on three grounds. On which three grounds can he be criticized? 'He afflicts & torments himself': This is the first ground on which he can be criticized. 'He doesn't attain a skilled state': This is the second ground on which he can be criticized. 'He doesn't realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision': This is the third ground on which he can be criticized....

"As for the ascetic living the rough life who afflicts & torments himself, who attains a skilled state, and who realizes a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision: This ascetic living the rough life can be criticized on one ground and praised on two. On which one ground can he be criticized? 'He afflicts & torments himself': This is the one ground on which he can be criticized.... On which two grounds can he be praised? 'He attains a skilled state': This is the first ground on which he can be praised. 'He realizes a superior human state, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision': This is the second ground on which he can be praised." — SN 42:12

The last example shows that ascetic practices, in and of themselves, are not necessarily contrary to the middle way. It is possible to follow them all the way to the noble attainments. And, as this sutta shows, only when you have followed the path to its culmination and attained the noble attainments can you fully appreciate how skilled a teacher the Buddha was.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. And on that occasion, many well-known wanderers were staying in the Peacocks' Sanctuary—Annabhāra, Varatara, Sakuludāyin, and many other well-known wanderers.

Then early in the morning, the Blessed One adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Rājagaha for alms.1 The thought occurred to him, "It's still too early to go into Rājagaha for alms. What if I were to go to the Peacocks' Sanctuary, the wanderers' park, and to approach Sakuludāyin the wanderer?"

So the Blessed One went to the Peacocks' Sanctuary, the wanderers' park.

Now, on that occasion Sakuludāyin the wanderer was sitting with a large following of wanderers who were shouting, making a shrill racket, a great racket, engaged in many kinds of bestial topics of conversation: conversation about kings, robbers, & ministers of state; armies, alarms, & battles; food & drink; clothing, furniture, garlands, & scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women & heroes; the gossip of the street & the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity, the creation of the world & of the sea; talk of whether things exist or not.

Sakuludāyin the wanderer saw the Blessed One coming from afar, and on seeing him, hushed his following: "Be quiet, good sirs. Don't make a sound! Here comes the contemplative Gotama. He is fond of quietude and speaks in praise of quietude. Maybe, if he perceives our group as quiet, he will consider it worth his while to come our way."

So the wanderers fell silent.

Then the Blessed One approached Sakuludāyin the wanderer, who said to him, "Come, lord Blessed One. You are well-come, lord Blessed One. It has been long, lord Blessed One, since you arranged to come here. Have a seat, lord Blessed One. This seat is laid out."

The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out, while Sakuludāyin the wanderer, taking a lower seat, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "For what topic of conversation are you sitting gathered together here, Udāyin? What is the topic of your conversation that has been interrupted midway?"

When this was said, Sakuludāyin the wanderer replied, "Never mind, lord, about the topic of conversation for which we are sitting gathered here. It won't be difficult for the Blessed One to hear about that later. For the past few days a discussion has arisen among the many sects of contemplatives & brahmans gathered and sitting together in the debating hall; 'What a gain for the people of Aṅga & Māgadha! What a great gain for the people of Aṅga & Māgadha, that these contemplatives & brahmans—the leaders of communities, the leaders of groups, well-known & prestigious founders of sects, highly regarded by people at large—have come to spend the Rains near Rājagaha!

"'There's this Pūraṇa Kassapa who is the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, a well-known & prestigious founder of a sect, highly regarded by people at large. He has come to spend the Rains near Rājagaha. There's this Makkhali Gosāla… this Ajita Kesakambalin… this Pakudha Kaccāyana… this Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta… this Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta who is the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, a well-known & prestigious founder of a sect, highly regarded by

people at large. He, too, has come to spend the Rains near Rājagaha.2

"'And then there's this Gotama the contemplative who is the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, a well-known & prestigious founder of a sect, highly regarded by people at large. He, too, has come to spend the Rains near Rājagaha.

"'Now, among these venerable contemplatives & brahmans, who is honored, respected, revered, & worshiped by his disciples? And how, honoring & respecting him, do his disciples remain in dependence on him?'

"Then some said this, 'This Pūraṇa Kassapa—the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, a well-known & prestigious founder of a sect, highly regarded by people at large—is not honored, respected, revered, or worshiped by his disciples. And they don't, honoring & respecting him, remain in dependence on him. Once, when Pūraṇa Kassapa was teaching his doctrine to a following of more than one hundred, one of his disciples called out, "Sirs, don't ask Pūraṇa Kassapa about that matter. He doesn't know it. We know it. Ask us about that matter. We, sirs, will explain it for you." Pūraṇa Kassapa didn't get his way, even though he waved his arms & cried, "Be quiet, sirs. Don't make a sound, sirs. They're not asking you about that. They're asking us about that. I will explain about that." And many of his disciples left him after refuting his doctrine: "You don't understand this doctrine & discipline. I understand this doctrine & discipline. How could you understand this doctrine & discipline? 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!"

"'Thus this Pūraṇa Kassapa—the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, a well-known & prestigious founder of a sect, highly regarded by people at large—is not honored, respected, revered, or worshiped by his disciples. They don't, honoring & respecting him, remain in dependence on him. And he is scorned with rightful scorn.'

[Similarly with Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta, & Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta.]

"Then some said this, 'This Gotama the contemplative is honored, respected, revered, & worshiped by his disciples. And his disciples, honoring & respecting him, remain in dependence on him. Once, Gotama the contemplative was teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of many hundreds. There one of his disciples cleared his throat, upon which one of his fellows in the holy life nudged him with his knee: "Be quiet, venerable sir. Don't make a sound. Our Teacher, the Blessed One, is teaching the Dhamma." On any occasion when Gotama the contemplative is teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of many hundreds, there is no sound of coughing or throat-clearing among his disciples. Instead, that great crowd of people is standing by in expectancy: "We will hear the Dhamma the Blessed One will teach." Just as if a man at a crossroads were to press out pure honey, and

a great crowd of people would be standing by in expectancy, in the same way, on any occasion when Gotama the contemplative is teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of many hundreds, there is no sound of coughing or throat-clearing among his disciples. Instead, that great crowd of people is standing by in expectancy: "We will hear the Dhamma the Blessed One will teach."

"'And those of Gotama the contemplative's disciples who, having fallen out with their fellows in the holy life, disavow the training and return to the lower life, even they speak in praise of their Teacher, in praise of the Dhamma, in praise of the Saṅgha. They blame themselves, and not others, (saying,) "We were unfortunate and without merit, in that even though we went forth into such a well-taught Dhamma & Vinaya, we were unable to follow the holy life, complete and perfect, throughout life." Becoming monastery attendants or lay followers, they undertake and observe the five training rules. In this way, Gotama the contemplative is honored, respected, revered, & worshiped by his disciples. And his disciples, honoring & respecting him, remain in dependence on him.'"

"But, Udāyin, how many qualities do you see in me for which my disciples honor, respect, revere, & worship me and—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me?"

"Lord, I see five qualities in the Blessed One for which his disciples honor, respect, revere, & worship him and—honoring & respecting him—remain in dependence on him. Which five? The Blessed One, lord, eats little and speaks in praise of eating little. The fact that the Blessed One eats little and speaks in praise of eating little: This is the first quality I see in the Blessed One for which his disciples honor, respect, revere, & worship him and—honoring & respecting him—remain in dependence on him.

"Further, the Blessed One is content with any old robe cloth at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old robe cloth at all…

"Further, the Blessed One is content with any old almsfood at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old almsfood at all…

"Further, the Blessed One is content with any old lodging at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old lodging at all…3

"Further, the Blessed One is secluded and speaks in praise of being secluded. The fact that the Blessed One is secluded and speaks in praise of being secluded: This is the fifth quality I see in the Blessed One for which his disciples honor, respect, revere, & worship him and—honoring & respecting him—remain in dependence on him.

These are the five qualities I see in the Blessed One for which his disciples honor, respect, revere, & worship him and—honoring & respecting him—remain in dependence on him."

"But, Udāyin, if my disciples honored, respected, revered, & worshiped me, and—honoring & respecting me—remained in dependence on me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One eats little and speaks in praise of eating little': There are disciples of mine who eat a cupful or half a

cupful of food, a bamboo-fruit or half a bamboo-fruit (amount) of food (a day). Yet I sometimes eat as much as this bowlful of food or more. So if my disciples honored… me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One eats little and speaks in praise of eating little,' then those disciples of mine who eat a cupful or half a cupful of food, a bamboo-fruit or half a bamboo-fruit (amount) of food (a day) wouldn't honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me.

"If my disciples honored… me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One is content with any old robe cloth at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old robe cloth at all': There are disciples of mine who wear rag-robes & coarse robes. They—gathering cloth scraps from a charnel ground, a rubbish heap, or a shop, and making them into patched-together robes—wear them. Yet I sometimes wear robes given by householders, so fine that the hair of a bottle gourd plant is coarse in comparison. So if my disciples honored… me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One is content with any old robe cloth at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old robe cloth at all,' then those disciples of mine who wear rag-robes & coarse robes wouldn't honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me.

"If my disciples honored… me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One is content with any old almsfood at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old almsfood at all': There are disciples of mine who are almsgoers, who go on unbroken almsround [not skipping over households], who delight in the practice of taking what is to be thrown away. When going among houses, they will not consent even to sitting down when invited. Yet I sometimes eat invitational meals of select rice & wheat with many curries & sauces. So if my disciples honored… me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One is content with any old almsfood at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old almsfood at all,' then those disciples of mine who are almsgoers, who go on unbroken almsround, who delight in the practice of taking what is to be thrown away, who—when going among houses, they will not consent even to sitting down when invited—wouldn't honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me.

"If my disciples honored… me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One is content with any old lodging at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old lodging at all': There are disciples of mine who live at the roots of trees or in the open air. For eight months (of the dry season) they don't rest under a roof. Yet I sometimes live in dwellings with a gabled roof, plastered inside & out, draft-free, with close-fitting door & windows shut against the wind. So if my disciples honored… me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One is content with any old lodging at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old lodging at all,' then those disciples of mine who live at the roots of trees or in the open air, who—for eight months don't rest under a roof—wouldn't honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me.

"If my disciples honored, respected, revered, & worshiped me, and—honoring & respecting me—remained in dependence on me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One is secluded and speaks in praise of being secluded': There are disciples of mine who are wilderness dwellers, who live, having plunged into remote dwelling spots, in wild forest thickets. Only

once every half-month do they enter into the midst of the Saṅgha for the Pāṭimokkha recitation. Yet I sometimes live surrounded by monks & nuns, male lay followers & female lay followers, kings & kings ministers, sectarians & sectarians' disciples. So if my disciples honored, respected, revered, & worshiped me, and—honoring & respecting me—remained in dependence on me, (thinking,) 'The Blessed One is secluded and speaks in praise of being secluded,' then those disciples of mine who are wilderness dwellers, who live, having plunged into remote dwelling spots, in wild forest thickets, and who only once every half-month enter into the midst of the Saṅgha for the Pāṭimokkha recitation, wouldn't honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me.

"There are, Udāyin, five other qualities for which my disciples honor, respect, revere, & worship me and—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me. Which five?

"There is the case where my disciples esteem me for my heightened virtue, (thinking,) 'Gotama the contemplative is virtuous, endowed with the foremost aggregate of virtue.' This is the first quality for which my disciples honor, respect, revere, & worship me and—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me.

"Further, there is the case where my disciples esteem me for my exceeding knowledge & vision, (thinking,) 'Only when knowing does Gotama the contemplative say, "I know." Only when seeing does he say, "I see." It's through direct knowledge that he teaches the Dhamma, not without direct knowledge. It's with a cause that he teaches the Dhamma, not without a cause. It's with marvels that he teaches the Dhamma, not without marvels.'4 This is the second quality…

"Further, there is the case where my disciples esteem me for my heightened discernment, (thinking,) 'Gotama the contemplative is discerning, endowed with the foremost aggregate of discernment.' It's impossible that he wouldn't foresee the future consequences of a doctrine, or that he wouldn't refute an existing opposing doctrine, having well-refuted it in line with the Dhamma.' What do you think, Udāyin? Would my disciples—thus knowing, thus seeing—interrupt me in mid-sentence?"

"No, lord."

"It's not the case that I expect instruction from my disciples. Invariably, they expect instruction from me." This is the third quality…

"Further, when my disciples have met with suffering & stress, are beset with suffering & stress and overcome with suffering & stress, they—having approached me—ask about the noble truth of suffering. I, being asked, explain the noble truth of suffering and I satisfy their minds with my answer. They ask me about the noble truth of the origination of suffering … the noble truth of the cessation of suffering … the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of suffering. I, being asked, explain the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of suffering and I satisfy their minds with my answer. This is the fourth quality…

The Four Establishings of Mindfulness

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the four establishings of mindfulness: 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… the mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.5 And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection6 & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Four Right Exertions

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the four right exertions: There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Four Bases of Power

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the four bases of power: There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence… the base of power endowed with concentration founded on intent… the base of power endowed with concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion.7 And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Five Faculties

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the five faculties: There is the case where a monk develops the faculty of conviction going to stilling, going to self-awakening. He develops the faculty of persistence… the faculty of mindfulness… the faculty of concentration… the faculty of discernment going to stilling, going to self-awakening.8 And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Five Strengths

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the five strengths: There is the case where a monk develops the strength of conviction going to stilling, going to self-awakening. He develops the strength of persistence… the strength of mindfulness… the strength of concentration… the strength of discernment going to stilling, going to self-awakening. And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Seven Factors for Awakening

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the seven factors for awakening: There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. He develops analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening… persistence as a factor for awakening… rapture as a factor for awakening… calm as a factor for awakening… concentration as a factor for awakening… equanimity as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment.9 And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Noble Eightfold Path

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the noble eightfold path: There is the case where a monk develops right view, he develops right resolve… right speech… right action… right livelihood… right effort… right mindfulness… right concentration.10 And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Eight Emancipations

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the eight emancipations:

“Possessed of form, one sees forms: This is the first emancipation.

“Not percipient of form internally, one sees forms externally: This is the second emancipation.

“One is intent only on the beautiful: This is the third emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite space,’ one enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space: This is the fourth emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite consciousness,’ one enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of

consciousness: This is the fifth emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) ‘There is nothing,’ one enters and remains in the dimension of nothingness: This is the sixth emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, one enters and remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception: This is the seventh emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, one enters and remains in the cessation of perception & feeling: This is the eighth emancipation.

“And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Eight Dimensions of Mastery

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the eight dimensions of (mental) mastery:

“One percipient of form internally sees forms externally as limited, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, he is percipient of ‘I know; I see.’ This is the first dimension of (mental) mastery.

“One percipient of form internally sees forms externally as immeasurable, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, he is percipient of ‘I know; I see.’ This is the second dimension of (mental) mastery.

“One percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as limited, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, he is percipient of ‘I know; I see.’ This is the third dimension of (mental) mastery.

“One percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as immeasurable, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, he is percipient of ‘I know; I see.’ This is the fourth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“One percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as blue, blue in their color, blue in their features, blue in their glow. Just as a flax-flower is blue, blue in its color, blue in its features, blue in its glow, or just as Vārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is blue, blue in its color, blue in its features, blue in its glow, in the same way, one percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as blue, blue in their color, blue in their features, blue in their glow. Mastering them, he is percipient of ‘I know; I see.’ This is the fifth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“One percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as yellow, yellow in their color, yellow in their features, yellow in their glow. Just as a kaṇṇikāra-flower is yellow, yellow in its color, yellow in its features, yellow in its glow, or just as Vārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is yellow, yellow in its color, yellow in its features, yellow in its glow, in the same way, one percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as yellow, yellow in their color, yellow in their features, yellow in their glow. Mastering them, he is percipient of ‘I know; I see.’ This is the sixth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“One percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as red, red in their color, red in their features, red in their glow. Just as a bandha-jīvaka-flower is red, red in its color, red in its features, red in its glow, or just as Vārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is red, red in its color, red in its features, red in its glow, in the same way, one percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as red, red in their color, red in their features, red in their glow. Mastering them, he is percipient of ‘I know; I see.’ This is the seventh dimension of (mental) mastery.

“One percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. Just as the morning star is white, white in its color, white in its features, white in its glow, or just as Vārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is white, white in its color, white in its features, white in its glow, in the same way, one percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. Mastering them, he is percipient of ‘I know; I see.’ This is the eighth dimension of (mental) mastery.11

“And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Ten Totality-dimensions

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the ten totality-dimensions: One perceives the earth-totality [kasiṇa] above, below, all-around: non-dual [advayaṁ], immeasurable. One perceives the water-totality… the fire-totality… the wind-totality… the blue-totality… the yellow-totality… the red-totality… the white-totality… the space-totality… the consciousness-totality above, below, all-around: non-dual, immeasurable.12 And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Four Jhānas

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the four jhānas:13 There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. Just as if a dexterous bathman or bathman’s apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again and again with water,

so that his ball of bath powder—saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within and without—would nevertheless not drip; in the same way, the monk permeates… this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of seclusion.

“Then, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from within, having no inflow from the east, west, north, or south, and with the skies supplying abundant showers time and again,14 so that the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would permeate & pervade, suffuse & fill it with cool waters, there being no part of the lake unpervaded by the cool waters; in the same way, the monk permeates… this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of concentration.

“And then, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. Just as in a lotus pond, some of the lotuses, born and growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated & pervaded, suffused & filled with cool water from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those lotuses would be unpervaded with cool water; even so, the monk permeates… this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture.

“And then, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. Just as if a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; in the same way, the monk sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness.

“And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

Insight Knowledge

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they discern, ‘This body of mine is endowed with form, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother & father, nourished with rice & porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, & dispersion. And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here.’ Just as if there were a beautiful beryl gem of the

purest water—eight faceted, well polished, clear, limpid, consummate in all its aspects, and going through the middle of it was a blue, yellow, red, white, or brown thread—and a man with good eyesight, taking it in his hand, were to reflect on it thus: 'This is a beautiful beryl gem of the purest water, eight faceted, well polished, clear, limpid, consummate in all its aspects; and this, going through the middle of it, is a blue, yellow, red, white, or brown thread.' In the same way, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they discern, 'This body of mine is endowed with form, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother & father, nourished with rice & porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, & dispersion. And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here.' And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Mind-made Body

"Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they create from this body another body, endowed with form, made of the mind, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties. Just as if a man were to draw a reed from its sheath: The thought would occur to him, 'This is the sheath, this is the reed. The sheath is one thing, the reed another, but the reed has been drawn out from the sheath.' Or as if a man were to draw a sword from its scabbard: The thought would occur to him, 'This is the sword, this is the scabbard. The sword is one thing, the scabbard another, but the sword has been drawn out from the scabbard.' Or as if a man were to pull a snake out from its slough: The thought would occur to him, 'This is the snake, this is the slough. The snake is one thing, the slough another, but the snake has been pulled out from the slough.' In the same way, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they create from this body another body, endowed with form, made of the mind, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties. And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

Supranormal Powers

"Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they wield manifold supranormal powers. Having been one they become many; having been many they become one. They appear. They vanish. They go unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space. They dive in and out of the earth as if it were water. They walk on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged, they fly through the air like a winged bird. With their hand they touch & stroke even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful. They exercise influence with their body even as far as the Brahmā worlds. Just as a dexterous potter or his apprentice could craft from well-prepared clay whatever kind of pottery vessel he likes, or as a dexterous ivory-carver or his apprentice could craft from well-prepared ivory any kind of ivory-work he likes, or as a dexterous goldsmith or his apprentice could craft from well-prepared gold any kind of gold article he likes; in the same way, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they wield manifold supranormal powers. Having been one they become many; having been many they become one.... They exercise influence with their body even as far as the Brahmā worlds. And there many of my

disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

Clairaudience

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they hear—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far. Just as a strong conch-blower would, with next-to-no difficulty, alert the four quarters; in the same way, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they hear—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far. And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

Mind Reading

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they discern the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with their own awareness. They discern a mind with passion as ‘a mind with passion,’ and a mind without passion as ‘a mind without passion.’ They discern a mind with aversion as ‘a mind with aversion,’ and a mind without aversion as ‘a mind without aversion.’ They discern a mind with delusion as ‘a mind with delusion,’ and a mind without delusion as ‘a mind without delusion.’ They discern a restricted mind as ‘a restricted mind,’ and a scattered mind as ‘a scattered mind.’ They discern an enlarged15 mind as ‘an enlarged mind,’ and an unenlarged mind as ‘an unenlarged mind.’ They discern a surpassed mind [one that is not at the most excellent level] as ‘a surpassed mind,’ and an unsurpassed mind as ‘an unsurpassed mind.’ They discern a concentrated mind as ‘a concentrated mind,’ and an unconcentrated mind as ‘an unconcentrated mind.’ They discern a released16 mind as ‘a released mind,’ and an unreleased mind as ‘an unreleased mind.’ Just as if a young woman—or man—fond of ornaments, examining the reflection of her own face in a bright mirror or a bowl of clear water would know ‘blemished’ if it were blemished, or ‘unblemished’ if it were not; in the same way, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they discern the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with their own awareness. They discern a mind with passion as ‘a mind with passion,’ and a mind without passion as ‘a mind without passion’ … a released mind as ‘a released mind,’ and an unreleased mind as ‘an unreleased mind.’ And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

Recollection of Past Lives

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they recollect their manifold past lives: i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, (recollecting,) ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain,

such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus they recollect their manifold past lives in their modes & details. Just as if a man were to go from his home village to another village, and then from that village to yet another village, and then from that village back to his home village. The thought would occur to him, 'I went from my home village to that village over there. There I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I went to that village over there, and there I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I came back home.' In the same way, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they recollect their manifold past lives: i.e., one birth, two births... Thus they recollect their manifold past lives in their modes & details. And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Passing Away & Re-appearance of Beings

"Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they see—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and they discern how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: 'These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.' Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human—they see beings passing away & re-appearing, and they discern how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma. Just as if there were two houses with doors, and a man with good eyesight, standing between them, would see people entering the houses and coming out and walking to & fro; in the same way, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they see—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and they discern how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma... And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

The Ending of Effluents

"Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they—through the ending of the effluents17—enter & remain in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for themselves right in the here & now. Just as if there were a pool of water in a mountain glen—clear, limpid, & unsullied—where a man with good eyesight standing on the bank

could see shells, gravel, & pebbles, and also shoals of fish swimming about & resting, and it would occur to him, 'This pool of water is clear, limpid, & unsullied. Here are these shells, gravel, & pebbles, and also these shoals of fish swimming about & resting.' In the same way, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they—through the ending of the effluents—enter & remain in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for themselves right in the here & now. And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & culmination of direct knowledge.

"This is the fifth quality for which my disciples honor, respect, revere, & worship me and—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me.

"These, Udāyin, are the five qualities for which my disciples honor, respect, revere, & worship me and—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me."

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

Notes

1. According to the protocols given in Cv VIII, a monk leaving a monastery in the wilderness with the purpose of going for alms would wear just his under robe, while carrying his upper and outer robes folded over his shoulder or upper back. On approaching an inhabited area he would stop and make sure that his under robe was neatly arranged: covering the area from above his navel to below his knees, and hanging down evenly in front and behind. Then he would put on his upper and outer robe, arranged so that the upper robe was a lining for the outer robe. If he was wearing sandals, he would take them off and place them in a small cloth bag. Only then would he enter the inhabited area for alms.

2. The doctrines of these teachers can be found in DN 2.

3. These three areas of contentment are three of the traditions of the noble ones, explained in AN 4:28.

4. DN 11 explains instruction using the "marvel of pointing out" in these terms: "There is the case where a monk gives instruction in this way: 'Direct your thought in this way; don't direct it in that. Attend to things in this way; don't attend to them in that. Let go of this, enter and remain in that." This apparently means that the Buddha was able to see what was happening in his listeners' minds, and to tell them directly what to do with skillful and unskillful mental qualities as they arose.

5. The seven sets of teachings beginning with the four establishings of mindfulness and ending with the noble eightfold path are collectively known as the bodhi-pakkhiya-dhamma, the wings to awakening. In DN 16 and other suttas, the Buddha identified them as the most important teachings to know to maintain the harmony and

long life of his Dhamma. See The Wings to Awakening. For more detail on the establishings of mindfulness, see DN 22 and SN 47:40.

6. The word “perfection” (pārami) appears in only three suttas in the four main nikāyas: MN 111, AN 5:11, and here. In all three of those contexts, it simply means the full development of a skillful quality, and does not refer specifically to any of the ten qualities that were later included in the standard list of perfections.

7. For more detail on the bases of power, see SN 51:20 and Bases for Success.

8. For more detail on the five faculties, see SN 48:10 and The Five Faculties.

9. For more detail on the factors for awakening, see SN 46:51–52, MN 118, and Factors for Awakening.

10. For more detail on the noble eightfold path, see SN 45:8 and On the Path.

11. AN 10:29 adds that the last of these forms of mastery is the most sublime among them, but that even in beings percipient in this way, there is still aberration and change.

12. AN 10:29 adds that the consciousness-totality is the most sublime among these forms of non-dual perception, but that even in beings percipient in this way, there is still aberration and change. For an example of how the earth-totality might be used as a concentration exercise, see MN 121.

13. The list of topics from here to the end of the sutta follows the discussion in DN 2, with three exceptions: (a) The simile for clairaudience is different. (b) The simile for the ability to see beings passing away and being reborn is also different. (c) The discussion for the ending of the effluents here, unlike the discussion in DN 2, makes no mention of the four noble truths, even though the simile used for this knowledge is the same as in DN 2.

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

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

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

17. The effluents (āsava) are three: the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, and effluent of ignorance. They are so called because they “flow out” of the mind and defile it.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 1; MN 12; AN 3:126; AN 10:69