

# **Early Buddhist Discourses**

Edited, with Translations, by  
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## Discourse to the Kālāmas

(*Kālāma Sutta*<sup>1</sup>)

This discourse begins with a common problem: different religious teachers make vastly different claims about religious truth and the practices necessary to achieve religious goals, so how does one know which one is right? What criteria can one use to determine who is telling the truth? This is the problem posed by the Kālāmas to the Buddha, and, no doubt, it remains a problem for many religious inquirers today. Compounding the problem is the tendency of most religious traditions to claim to have exclusive ownership of the highest religious truth.

In responding to the Kālāmas, the Buddha demonstrates his empiricism and balanced teaching methods. Moreover, the Buddha stands out (perhaps, even alone) among religious teachers for his antidogmatic treatment of religious doctrines. Most religions, of course, hold that their scriptures or the pronouncements of their spiritual leaders are ultimate truths and should be accepted unquestioningly by the faithful. But in this discourse, the Buddha makes it clear that he disagrees with traditions that require unquestioning faith in scriptures or spiritual leaders. Instead, he proposes that there should be proper *reasons* for accepting a doctrine, even a religious doctrine. According to the Buddha, an objective assessment of a doctrine should look carefully at what sort of results are likely, if one were to act in accordance with the doctrine. A doctrine should be accepted only to the extent that the doctrine can be verified in the person's own experience as one that leads to wholesome and happy consequences. Even the authority of the Buddha and the Buddhist texts, therefore, should not be a matter of blind faith. The canonical Buddhist texts are certainly revered by Buddhists, but if one takes the Buddha at his word, the texts are to be read critically and the teachings contained in the texts subjected to reflection and empirical assessment. Today, this position would be called "religious empiricism."

This discourse also gives a detailed description of the noble disciple—a person freed from the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion. Such a person develops the cardinal virtues of Buddhism: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Significantly, the noble disciple has access to the four "comforts" that offer spiritual solace to a person. Among

<sup>1</sup> *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.188–193

the profound, existential problems that cause many people anxiety are such matters as whether or not there is an afterlife or whether actions are rewarded or punished according to the merits of the action. But these problems do not trouble the trained noble disciple. Such a person has achieved “comfort” because the noble disciple thinks that whether or not there is an “after-world,” and whether or not there are rewards and punishments for actions (i.e., karmic results), one should purify oneself from moral stains and do good. In other words, the rationale for morally good actions is intrinsic and can be found in this very world. The noble disciple is neither plied with promises of an afterlife nor guaranteed great rewards for moral actions, as in many other religious traditions.

## Discourse

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1. Thus have I heard. At one time, the Exalted One was walking on tour in Kosala with a large contingent of *bhikkhus* and arrived at a town named Kesaputta. The Kālāmas of Kesaputta heard that the recluse Gotama, son of the Sakyans, the one who went forth from the Sakyian clan, had arrived. And this good report was spread about concerning the venerable Gotama; the Exalted One is described as: “an *arahant*, a fully awakened one, endowed with knowledge and virtue, a Well-Farer, a knower of the world, an unsurpassed charioteer of human beings who are like horses to be tamed, a teacher of *devas* and human beings, a Buddha, an Exalted One. He makes known this world—with its *devas*, Māras, Brahmās, religious wanderers, and Brahmins—to the present generation of *devas* and human beings, having understood and realized this for himself. He teaches the *dhamma* which is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, and beautiful in the end, in spirit as well as in letter. He makes known the pure religious life that is complete in its entirety. It would be a good thing to see such an *arahant* as that.”

2. Then the Kālāmas of Kesaputta approached the Exalted One. Having approached him, some of them saluted him and sat down to one side. Some of them exchanged greetings with the Exalted One, conversed courteously with him, and when finished, sat down to one side. Some others stretched out their clasped hands in a gesture of reverence and then sat down to one side. Still others announced their names and clans, and then sat down to one side. Some others remained silent and then sat down to one side. When he was seated to one side, one of the Kālāmas of Kesaputta said this to the Exalted One:

“There are, sir, certain recluses and Brahmins who come to Kesaputta. They explain and proclaim only their own doctrines, while the doctrines of others they abuse, despise, treat with contempt, and condemn. Also, sir,  
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explain and proclaim their own doctrines, while the doctrines of others they abuse, despise, treat with contempt, and condemn. Sir, we are in doubt and perplexity about this. Who among these honorable recluses speaks the truth, and who speaks what is false?"

3. "Indeed, it is proper to be in doubt, Kālāmas, and to be perplexed. When there is a doubtful situation, perplexity arises.

"In such cases, do not accept a thing by recollection, by tradition, by mere report, because it is based on the authority of scriptures, by mere logic or inference, by reflection on conditions, because of reflection on or fondness for a certain theory, because it merely seems suitable, nor thinking: 'The religious wanderer is respected by us.' But when you know for yourselves: 'These things are unwholesome, blameworthy, reproached by the wise, when undertaken and performed lead to harm and suffering'—these you should reject.

4. "What do you think, Kālāmas? When greed arises within a person, is it to one's benefit or to one's detriment?"

"To one's detriment, sir."

"So, Kālāmas, does this greedy person, being overpowered by greed and having lost control over his mind, kill living beings, take what is not given, go with another's wife, tell lies, and encourage others to do the same, which things are to his detriment and suffering for a long time?"

"Yes, sir."

5. "What do you think, Kālāmas? When hatred arises within a person, is it to one's benefit or to one's detriment?"

"To one's detriment, sir."

"So, Kālāmas, does this hateful person, being overpowered by hate and having lost control over his mind, kill living beings, take what is not given, go with another's wife, tell lies, and encourage others to do the same, which things are to his detriment and suffering for a long time?"

"Yes, sir."

6. "What do you think, Kālāmas? When delusion arises within a person, is it to one's benefit or to one's detriment?"

"To one's detriment, sir."

"So, Kālāmas, does this deluded person, being overpowered by delusion and having lost control over his mind, kill living beings, take what is not given, go with another's wife, tell lies, and encourage others to do the same, which things are to his detriment and suffering for a long time?"

"Yes, sir."

7. "What do you think, Kālāmas? Are these things wholesome or unwholesome?"

“Unwholesome, sir.”

“Are they blameworthy or not blameworthy?”

“Blameworthy, sir.”

“Are they reproached by the wise or commended by the wise?”

“Reproached by the wise, sir.”

“If these things are undertaken and performed, do they lead to one’s detriment and suffering or not, or how is it in this matter?”

“Sir, if these things are undertaken and performed, they lead to harm and suffering. That is the way it is in this matter, in our opinion.”

8. “So then, Kālāmas, regarding what I said just now: ‘Do not accept a thing by recollection, by tradition, by mere report, because it is based on the authority of scriptures, by mere logic or inference, by reflection on conditions, because of reflection on or fondness for a certain theory, because it merely seems suitable, nor thinking: “The religious wanderer is respected by us.” But, Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves: “These things are unwholesome, blameworthy, reproached by the wise, when undertaken and performed lead to one’s detriment and suffering”—these you should reject.’ Having said this, this is the reason for what I said.

9. “Here, Kālāmas, do not accept a thing by recollection, by tradition, by mere report, because it is based on the authority of scriptures, by mere logic or inference, by reflection on conditions, because of reflection on or fondness for a certain theory, because it merely seems suitable, nor thinking: ‘The religious wanderer is respected by us.’ But, Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves: ‘These things are wholesome, not blameworthy, commended by the wise, when undertaken and performed lead to one’s benefit and happiness’—you should live undertaking these things.

10. “What do you think, Kālāmas? When non-greed arises within a person, is it to one’s benefit or to one’s detriment?”

“To one’s benefit, sir.”

“So, Kālāmas, does this non-greedy person, not being overpowered by greed and having control over one’s mind, not kill living beings, not take what is not given, not go with another’s wife, not tell lies, and encourage others to do the same, which things are to one’s benefit and happiness for a long time?”

“Yes, sir.”

11. “What do you think, Kālāmas? When non-hatred arises within a person, is it to one’s benefit or to one’s detriment?”

“To one’s benefit, sir.”

“So, Kālāmas, does this non-hateful person, not being overpowered by hate and having control over one’s mind, not kill living beings, not take what is not given, not go with another’s wife, not tell lies, and encourage others

to do the same, which things are to one's benefit and happiness for a long time?"

"Yes, sir."

12. "What do you think, Kālāmas? When non-delusion arises within a person, is it to one's benefit or to one's detriment?"

"To one's benefit, sir."

"So, Kālāmas, does this non-deluded person, not being overpowered by delusion and having control over his mind, not kill living beings, not take what is not given, not go with another's wife, not tell lies, and encourage others to do the same, which things are to one's benefit and happiness for a long time?"

"Yes, sir."

13. "What do you think, Kālāmas? Are these things wholesome or unwholesome?"

"Wholesome, sir."

"Are they blameworthy or not blameworthy?"

"Not blameworthy, sir."

"Are they reproached by the wise or commended by the wise?"

"Commended by the wise, sir."

"If these things are undertaken and performed, do they lead to one's benefit and happiness or not, or how is it in this matter?"

"Sir, if these things are undertaken and performed, they lead to one's benefit and happiness. That is the way it is in this matter, in our opinion."

14. "So then, Kālāmas, regarding what I just now said: 'In such cases, do not accept a thing by recollection, by tradition, by mere report, because it is based on the authority of scriptures, by mere logic or inference, by reflection on conditions, because of reflection on or fondness for a certain theory, because it merely seems suitable, nor thinking: "The religious wanderer is respected by us." But, Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves: "These things are wholesome, not blameworthy, commended by the wise, when undertaken and performed lead to one's benefit and happiness"—you should live undertaking these.' Having said this, this is the reason for what I said."

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15. "Now, Kālāmas, as a noble disciple is one who is freed from covetousness and malevolence, not confused in mind, attentive and mindful, with a heart filled with loving-kindness, he lives, having pervaded one direction with such a heart, and likewise a second direction, a third direction, and a fourth direction. Upward, downward, across, everywhere, and in every way, throughout the whole world, he lives endowed with a loving-kindness that is widespread, great, boundless, free from hatred, and untroubled. With a heart filled with compassion, he lives, having pervaded one direction with such intentions, and likewise a second direction, a third direction, and a

fourth direction. Upward, downward, across, everywhere, and in every way, throughout the whole world, he lives endowed with a compassion that is widespread, great, boundless, free from hatred, and untroubled. With a heart filled with sympathetic joy, he lives, having pervaded one direction with such a heart, and likewise a second direction, a third direction, and a fourth direction. Upward, downward, across, everywhere, and in every way, throughout the whole world, he lives endowed with a sympathetic joy that is widespread, great, boundless, free from hatred, and untroubled. With a heart filled with equanimity, he lives, having pervaded one direction with such a heart, and likewise a second direction, a third direction, and a fourth direction. Upward, downward, across, everywhere, and in every way, throughout the whole world, he lives endowed with an equanimity that is widespread, great, boundless, free from hatred, and untroubled.

“Indeed, Kālamas, a noble disciple is thus freed in mind from hatred, untroubled in mind, unstained in mind, pure in mind, and in this world has attained the following four comforts.

16. “[The noble disciple thinks:] ‘If there is an after-world, if there is the fruit and result of actions that are good or evil, then I will be reborn at the breaking up of the body, after death, in a place that is happy, a heavenly world.’ This is the first comfort he attains. He thinks: ‘If there is no after-world, no fruit and result of actions that are good or evil, then here in the visible world I will keep myself free from hatred, untroubled, free from vexation, and happy.’ This is the second comfort he attains. He thinks: ‘If I were to do an action that results in something bad, but I did not intend to do something bad to anyone, then how will suffering touch me who does nothing bad?’ This is the third comfort he attains. He thinks: ‘If I were to do an action that involves nothing bad, then I would see myself as pure in both ways.’<sup>2</sup> This is the fourth comfort he attains.

“Indeed, Kālamas, a noble disciple is thus freed in mind from hatred, untroubled in mind, unstained in mind, pure in mind, and in this visible world has attained those four comforts.”

17. “So it is, Exalted One. So it is, Well-Farer. Indeed, sir, a noble disciple is thus freed in mind from hatred, untroubled in mind, unstained in mind, pure in mind, and in this visible world has attained these four comforts.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, sir, a noble disciple is thus freed in mind from hatred, untroubled in mind, unstained in mind, pure in mind, and in this visible world has attained those four comforts.

<sup>2</sup> “Both ways” means pure in terms of both intentional and nonintentional results of actions.

<sup>3</sup> The four comforts are repeated verbatim.



“Wonderful, sir! Wonderful, sir! It is just as if someone were to make upright what was turned upside down, or were to uncover what was covered over, or were to explain the way to those who are lost, or were to hold up an oil lamp in the darkness saying ‘those endowed with eyes will see the visible objects.’ Just so, the Exalted One makes known the *dhamma* by diverse methods. We here go to the Exalted One for refuge, and also to the *dhamma* and to the *Saṅgha*. Let the Exalted One accept as lay followers those of us who have gone for refuge, from this day forth as long as we live.”

## The Greater Discourse on Cause

(*Mahānidāna Sutta*)<sup>1</sup>

This discourse provides what many scholars deem the most comprehensive analysis of the central doctrine of Buddhism, namely, dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). The importance of the doctrine of dependent arising cannot be overstated. Elsewhere, the Buddha is quoted as saying: “One who perceives dependent arising perceives the *dhamma*; and one who perceives the *dhamma*, perceives dependent arising.”<sup>2</sup> In short, all other parts of the Buddha’s teaching may be seen as grounded on the Buddha’s teaching of dependent arising.

According to the early Buddhist tradition, the catalyst for the Buddha’s enlightenment was his penetrative insight into the dependently arisen nature of all that exists. All existing things are conditioned by other things. Everything changes. Nothing is permanent; nothing has a self-subsisting nature like the Hindu conception of *ātman* or Brahman (or the Platonic notion of a “Form”). Neither the self nor anything else in the world exists immutably, independently, or permanently. Instead, all things arise, evolve, and eventually dissipate, because of complex causal conditions.

The doctrine of dependent arising is the “middle way” applied to metaphysics. It stands between the theories of a transcendent Absolute Reality (e.g., the Hindu “Brahman”) and metaphysical nihilism, or between eternalism and annihilationism (the Materialist<sup>3</sup> view that the person ceases at death). From the point of view of dependent arising, things *do exist*, but only as complex, interdependent, changing processes.

Insight into dependent arising illuminates specifically the processes whereby suffering arises and ceases in a person. It was the Buddha’s application of this insight to his own situation that led to his attainment of enlightenment or *nibbāna*. By realizing that there is nothing anywhere that is permanent enough to grasp onto for security, he understood that one is faced with only one alternative: to avoid suffering, one must stop grasping onto things as if they were permanent and secure (especially the belief in a permanent Self). In brief, one must *let go*.

<sup>1</sup> *Dīgha Nikāya* 2.55–71.

<sup>2</sup> *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.190–191.

<sup>3</sup> See note 13 in the General Introduction.

As it specifically applies to the arising and ceasing of suffering, the doctrine of dependent arising is usually presented in the Pāli Canon in terms of the “twelvefold formula.” In this discourse, however, the formula has only ten “causal links” (*nidānas*).<sup>4</sup>

By analyzing the arising and ceasing of suffering in terms of a causal chain, the Buddha intends to provide a means of controlling and eliminating suffering altogether. The arising of craving (*taṇhā*) from feeling (*vedanā*) is perhaps the most crucial link in the causal chain because it is at that point in the chain that the process can be redirected away from suffering to more beneficial results. Because the connection between craving and feeling is so critical to gaining control over the processes of experience, the discourse presents a secondary sequence of dependent arising that is interpolated between these two links.

Special attention should be given to the fact that dependent arising commences where psycho-physicality<sup>5</sup> and consciousness mutually condition one another. In other words, there is no single factor from which the chain of causal links arises, and yet there is no infinite regress of causes either. This fact suggests an approach to causation that is nonlinear, a theory of mutual conditionality, rather than a linear sequence of mechanical causes. The fact that consciousness mutually conditions psycho-physicality not only is a way to avoid an infinite regress in the causal chain but also shows that consciousness and the other mental phenomena are emergent features of natural processes and not imposed from a transcendent, supernatural realm of pure Spirit.

Perhaps most surprising from a religious point of view, the doctrine of dependent arising implies that religious liberation is neither the knowledge of a transcendent reality, nor an identification of one’s true Self (*ātman*) with the Absolute (*Brahman*), nor even a beatific relationship with God. Religious liberation in early Buddhism is not a matter of being liberated from a lower metaphysical state by passing to a higher metaphysical state. It is, instead, an ethical and a psychological transformation that takes place in this changing world. By cutting off the psychological roots of suffering, one escapes the bonds of *samsāric* existence, namely, the rounds of birth-death-rebirth. This is, from the early Buddhist point of view, nothing other than religious freedom (*nibbāna*).

The discourse also offers one of the more philosophically interesting accounts of the Buddha’s arguments against the belief in a permanent Self.

<sup>4</sup> The causal links “ignorance” (*avijjā*) and “dispositions to action” (*saṅkhāra*) that occur in the twelvefold version of the formula are omitted from the tenfold version in this discourse.

<sup>5</sup> “Psycho-physicality” (*nāma-rūpa*) is the Buddha’s way of referring to mental and bodily processes. Other translators render this term as “name and form” or “mental-materiality.”

The application of dependent arising to considerations about human nature is at the core of the Buddha's teaching, so these sections are no mere afterthought. Those who declare a permanent Self, such as the Brahmanical concept of *ātman*, must hold that such a Self is either material or immaterial and is either limited or unlimited. Taking up all four possible combinations of these characteristics of a permanent Self, the Buddha shows the *bhikkhus* that none of them represents a plausible view of the person.

The last sections of the discourse describe the seven stations of consciousness, the two planes of higher experience, and the eight stages of liberation. These successive stations and stages appear to be accounts of what the trained disciple can expect to experience as one follows the training and becomes more and more adept in wisdom (through the stations of consciousness) and meditational techniques (through the stages of liberation). The end result for those who master these two types of training is liberation in "both ways": liberation both by wisdom (or higher knowledge) and by meditative concentration. As the discourse boldly declares, liberation in both ways is the penultimate achievement of the practice of Buddhism.

## Discourse

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1. Thus have I heard. At one time, the Exalted One was staying among the Kurus in a town called Kammāsadhamma. Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Exalted One. And having approached him, he greeted him respectfully and sat down to one side. When he had sat down to one side, Ānanda said this: "It is wonderful, sir. It is marvelous how profound this dependent arising<sup>6</sup> is, and how profound it appears! And yet it appears to me as clear as clear can be!"

"Do not say that, Ānanda! Do not say that! This dependent arising is profound and appears profound. It is through not understanding and not penetrating this doctrine that this generation has become like a tangled ball of string, covered with blight, tangled like coarse grass, and unable to pass beyond states of woe, ill destiny, ruin, and the round of birth-and-death.

2. "If you are asked: 'Is there something specific on which aging-and-death are dependent?' you should answer: 'There is.' If someone were to ask: 'Dependent on what is there aging-and-death?' you should answer: 'Dependent on birth, there is aging-and-death.'

"If you are asked: 'Is there something specific on which birth is dependent?' you should answer: 'There is.' If someone were to ask: 'Dependent on

<sup>6</sup> *Paṭiccasamuppāda*.

what is there birth?' you should answer: 'Dependent on becoming, there is birth.'

"If you are asked: 'Is there something specific on which becoming is dependent?' you should answer: 'There is.' If someone were to ask: 'Dependent on what is there becoming?' you should answer: 'Dependent on attachment, there is becoming.'

"If you are asked: 'Is there something specific on which attachment is dependent?' you should answer: 'There is.' If someone were to ask: 'Dependent on what is there attachment?' you should answer: 'Dependent on craving, there is attachment.'

"If you are asked: 'Is there something specific on which craving is dependent?' you should answer: 'There is.' If someone were to ask: 'Dependent on what is there craving?' you should answer: 'Dependent on feeling, there is craving.'

"If you are asked: 'Is there something specific on which feeling is dependent?' you should answer: 'There is.' If someone were to ask: 'Dependent on what is there feeling?' you should answer: 'Dependent on contact, there is feeling.'

"If you are asked: 'Is there something specific on which contact is dependent?' you should answer: 'There is.' If someone were to ask: 'Dependent on what is there contact?' you should answer: 'Dependent on psycho-physicality, there is contact.'

"If you are asked: 'Is there something specific on which psycho-physicality is dependent?' you should answer: 'There is.' If someone were to ask: 'Dependent on what is there psycho-physicality?' you should answer: 'Dependent on consciousness, there is psycho-physicality.'

"If you are asked: 'Is there something specific on which consciousness is dependent?' you should answer: 'There is.' If someone were to ask: 'Dependent on what is there consciousness?' you should answer: 'Dependent on psycho-physicality, there is consciousness.'

3. "Thus, dependent on psycho-physicality, there is consciousness, and dependent on consciousness, there is psycho-physicality; dependent on psycho-physicality, there is contact; dependent on contact, there is feeling; dependent on feeling, there is craving; dependent on craving, there is attachment; dependent on attachment, there is becoming; dependent on becoming, there is birth; dependent on birth, there is aging-and-death; dependent on aging-and-death, there is sorrow, lamentation, pain, despair, and distress. Thus there is the arising of this whole mass of suffering. 57

4. "I have said: 'Dependent on birth, there is aging-and-death,' and this is the way that it should be understood that aging-and-death is dependent

on birth. If there were no birth at all, anywhere, of anybody or in any state—namely, of *devas* in the state of *devas*, of *gandhabbas* in the *gandhabba* state, of *yakkhas* in the state of *yakkhas*, of ghosts in the ghostly state, of humans in the human state, of quadrupeds in the state of quadrupeds, of birds in the state of birds, of reptiles in the reptile state—if there were absolutely no birth at all of all these beings in these various states, then, from the cessation of birth, would aging-and-death be evident?”

“No, sir.”

“Therefore, Ānanda, this is the cause, the source, the origin, the condition for aging-and-death—namely, birth.”

5. “I have said: ‘Dependent on becoming, there is birth,’ and this is the way that it should be understood that birth is dependent on becoming. If there were no becoming at all, anywhere, of anybody or in any state—namely, the becoming of pleasures, the becoming of the material, or the becoming of the immaterial—if there were absolutely no becoming at all, then, from the cessation of becoming, would birth be evident?”

“No, sir.”

“Therefore, Ānanda, just this is the cause, the source, the origin, the condition for birth—namely, becoming.”

6. “I have said that ‘Dependent on attachment, there is becoming,’ and this is the way that it should be understood that becoming is dependent on attachment. If there were no attachment at all, anywhere, by anybody in any state—namely, attachment to sensual pleasure, attachment to speculative views, attachment to rite-and-ritual, attachment to theories of the permanent Self<sup>7</sup>—if there were absolutely no attachment at all, then, from the cessation of attachment, would becoming be evident?”

“No, sir.”

“Therefore, Ānanda, just this is the cause, the source, the origin, the condition for becoming—namely, attachment.”

7. “I have said that ‘Dependent on craving, there is attachment,’ and this is the way that it should be understood that attachment is dependent on craving. If there were no craving at all, anywhere, by anybody in any state—namely, craving for sights, craving for sounds, craving for smells, craving for tastes, craving for tangibles, craving for mental objects—if there were absolutely no craving at all, then, from the cessation of craving, would attachment be evident?”

“No, sir.”

“Therefore, Ananda, just this is the cause, the source, the origin, the condition for attachment, namely, craving.”

<sup>7</sup> *Attā*.

8. “I have said that ‘Dependent on feeling, there is craving,’ and this is the way that it should be understood that craving is dependent on feeling. If there were no feeling at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state—namely, feelings born of eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, and mind-contact—if there were absolutely no feeling at all, then, from the cessation of feeling, would craving be evident?”

“No, sir.”

“Therefore, Ānanda, just this is the cause, the source, the origin, the condition for craving—namely, feeling.

9. “Thus, craving is dependent upon feeling; pursuit is dependent upon craving;<sup>8</sup> gain is dependent upon pursuit; decision-making is dependent upon gain; desire and passion are dependent on decision-making; indulgence is dependent on desire and passion; possessiveness is dependent on indulgence; stinginess is dependent on possessiveness; protecting possessions is dependent on stinginess; and many evil and unwholesome activities<sup>9</sup> such as taking up sticks and swords, quarreling, disputes, contention, strife, slander, and lies arise because of protecting possessions. 59

10. “I have said that ‘Many evil and unwholesome activities such as taking up sticks and swords, quarreling, disputes, contention, strife, slander, and lies arise because of protecting possessions.’ And this is the way that it should be understood that many evil and unwholesome activities such as taking up sticks and swords, quarreling, disputes, contention, strife, slander, and lies arise because of protecting possessions. If there were no protecting of possessions at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state, if there were absolutely no protecting of possessions, then, from the cessation of protecting of possessions, would there arise these many evil and unwholesome activities, such as taking up sticks and swords, quarreling, disputes, contention, strife, slander, and lies?”

“No, sir.”

“Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for these many unwholesome states, such as taking up sticks and swords, quarreling, disputes, contention, strife, slander, and lies—namely, protecting possessions.

11. “I have said that ‘protecting of possessions is dependent on stinginess.’ And this is the way that it should be understood that protecting of possessions is dependent on stinginess. If there were no stinginess at all,

<sup>8</sup> From this point through the next ten sections, the text gives a secondary or subsidiary sequence of dependent arising that lies between craving and feeling in the primary sequence of dependent arising.

<sup>9</sup> The word *dhammā* usually translates as “mental objects,” but the context requires rendering the term as “activities.” In the Buddha’s view, activities are motivated by mental factors.

anywhere, by anybody, in any state, if there were absolutely no stinginess of any sort at all, then, from the cessation of stinginess, would protecting of possessions be evident?"

"No, sir."

"Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for protecting possessions—namely, stinginess.

12. "I have said that 'stinginess is dependent on possessiveness.' And this is the way that it should be understood that stinginess is dependent on possessiveness. If there were no possessiveness at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state, if there were absolutely no possessiveness of any sort at all, then, from the cessation of all possessiveness, would stinginess be evident?"

"No, sir."

"Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for stinginess—namely, possessiveness.

13. "I have said that 'possessiveness is dependent on indulgence.' And this is the way that it should be understood that possessiveness is dependent on indulgence. If there were no indulgence at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state, if there were absolutely no indulgence of any sort at all, then, from the cessation of all indulgence, would possessiveness be evident?"

"No, sir."

"Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for possessiveness—namely, indulgence.

14. "I have said that 'indulgence is dependent on desire and passion.' And this is the way that it should be understood that indulgence is dependent on desire and passion. If there were no desire and passion at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state, if there were absolutely no desire and passion of any sort at all, then, from the cessation of all desire and passion, would indulgence be evident?"

"No, sir."

"Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for indulgence—namely, desire and passion.

15. "I have said that 'desire and passion are dependent on decision-making.' And this is the way that it should be understood that desire and passion are dependent on decision-making. If there were no decision-making at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state, if there were absolutely no decision-making of any sort at all, then, from the cessation of all decision-making, would desire and passion be evident?"

"No, sir."

"Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for desire and passion—namely, decision-making.



16. “I have said that ‘decision-making is dependent upon gain.’ And this is the way that it should be understood that decision-making is dependent upon gain. If there were no gain at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state, if there were absolutely no gain of any sort at all, then, from the cessation of all gain, would decision-making be evident?”

“No, sir.”

“Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for decision-making—namely, gain.

17. “I have said that ‘gain is dependent upon pursuit.’ And this is the way that it should be understood that gain is dependent upon pursuit. If there were no pursuit at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state, if there were absolutely no pursuit of any sort at all, then, from the cessation of all pursuit, would gain be evident?”

“No, sir.”

“Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for gain—namely, pursuit.

18. “I have said that ‘pursuit is dependent upon craving.’ And this is the way that it should be understood that pursuit is dependent upon craving. If there were no craving at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state—such as craving for pleasure, craving for becoming,<sup>10</sup> craving for non-becoming—if there were absolutely no craving of any sort at all, then, from the cessation of all craving, would pursuit be evident?”

“No, sir.”

“Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for pursuit, namely, craving. Hence, these two things become a pair and so become united as one by feeling.

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19. “I have said that ‘dependent on contact, there is feeling.’ And this is the way that it should be understood that feeling is dependent on contact. If there were no contact at all, anywhere, by anybody, in any state—such as eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact—if there were absolutely no contact at all, then, from the cessation of contact, would feeling be evident?”

“No, sir.”

“Thus, Ānanda, this is the reason, the cause, the origin, and the condition for feeling—namely, contact.

20. “I have said that ‘dependent on psycho-physicality, there is contact.’ And this is the way that it should be understood that contact is dependent

<sup>10</sup> The word *bhava* might also be translated as “rebirth” in this context. Of course, were *bhava* to be translated as “rebirth,” it would imply that there is a future life. Such a translation would give the passage a substantially different meaning.

on psycho-physicality. By whatever properties, characteristics, signs, or indications the mentality-factor is conceived, would there be evident, in the absence of such properties, characteristics, signs, or indications, any conception of the materiality-factor?"

"No, sir."

"By whatever properties, characteristics, signs, or indications the materiality-factor is conceived, would there be evident, in the absence of such properties, characteristics, signs, or indications, any conception of sensory reaction on the part of the mentality-factor?"

"No, sir."

"By whatever properties, characteristics, signs, or indications the mentality-factor and the materiality-factor are conceived, would there be evident, in the absence of such properties, characteristics, signs, or indications, any conception of either of these, or of sensory reaction?"

"No, sir."

"By whatever properties, characteristics, signs, or indications the mentality-factor is conceived, would there be evident, in the absence of these properties, characteristics, signs, or indications, any contact?"

"No, sir."

"Therefore, Ānanda, just this, namely psycho-physicality, is the root, the cause, the origin, the condition for contact.

21. "I have said: 'Dependent on consciousness, there is psycho-physicality.' And this is the way that it should be understood that psycho-physicality is dependent on consciousness. If consciousness were not to come into the mother's womb, would psycho-physicality develop there?"

"No, sir."

"Or if consciousness entered the mother's womb, but was deflected, would psycho-physicality come to birth in this life?"

"No, sir."

"And if the consciousness of a tender young being, boy or girl, were cut off, would psycho-physicality grow, develop, and mature?"

"No, sir."

"Therefore, Ānanda, just this is the root, the cause, the origin, the condition of psycho-physicality—namely, consciousness.

22. "I have said: 'Dependent on psycho-physicality, there is consciousness.' And this is the way that it should be understood that consciousness is dependent on psycho-physicality. If consciousness did not find a resting-place in psycho-physicality, would there subsequently be an arising and a coming-to-be of birth, aging, death, and suffering?"

"No, sir."

"Therefore, Ānanda, just this is the root, the cause, the origin, the condition

of consciousness—namely, psycho-physicality. Thus far, then, we can trace birth and decay, death, falling into other states, and being reborn; thus far extends the way of designation, of explanation; thus far is the sphere of understanding; thus far the round goes for our existence here [in this life]— 64  
namely, psycho-physicality together with consciousness.

23. “In what ways do those who declare a permanent Self explain it? Some of those who declare a permanent Self explain it as material and limited: ‘My Self is material and limited.’ Some of those who declare a permanent Self explain it as material and unlimited: ‘My Self is material and unlimited.’ Some of those who declare a permanent Self explain it as immaterial and limited: ‘My Self is immaterial and limited.’ Some of those who declare a permanent Self explain it as immaterial and unlimited: ‘My Self is immaterial and unlimited.’

24. “Whoever declares a permanent Self and explains it as material and limited, either explains the Self as material and limited now or explains that it is going to be so.<sup>11</sup> Or such a person thinks: ‘Though it is not so now, I will construct it so it is like that.’ That being the case, that is enough said about those who dwell on the speculation that the Self is material and limited.

“Whoever declares a permanent Self and explains it as material and unlimited, either explains the Self as material and unlimited now or explains that it is going to be so. Or such a person thinks: ‘Though it is not so now, I will construct it so it is like that.’ That being the case, that is enough said about those who dwell on the speculation that the Self is material and unlimited.

“Whoever declares a permanent Self and explains it as immaterial and limited, either explains the Self as immaterial and limited now or explains that it is going to be so. Or such a person thinks: ‘Though it is not so now, I will construct it so it is like that.’ That being the case, that is enough said about those who dwell on the speculation that the Self is immaterial and limited.

“Whoever declares a permanent Self and explains it as immaterial and unlimited, either explains the Self as immaterial and unlimited now or explains that it is going to be so. Or such a person thinks: ‘Though it is not so now, I will construct it so it is like that.’ That being the case, that is enough 65  
said about those who dwell on the speculation that the Self is immaterial and unlimited.

“In these ways, those who declare a permanent Self explain it.

25. “In what ways do those who do not declare a permanent Self explain the matter? Some of those who do not declare a permanent Self do not

<sup>11</sup> Using the variant reading *tathā bhāviṃ* for *tattha bhāviṃ* in the Pali Text Society edition.

explain it as material and limited with the words: 'My Self is material and limited.' Some of those who do not declare a permanent Self do not explain it as material and unlimited with the words: 'My Self is material and unlimited.' Some of those who do not declare a permanent Self do not explain it as immaterial and limited with the words: 'My Self is immaterial and limited.' Some of those who do not declare a permanent Self do not explain it as immaterial and unlimited with the words: 'My Self is immaterial and unlimited.'

26. "Whoever does not declare a permanent Self and does not explain it as material and limited, neither explains the Self as material and limited now nor explains that it is going to be so. Or such a person does not think: 'Though it is not so now, I will construct it so it is like that.' That being the case, that is enough said about those who do not dwell on the speculation that the Self is material and limited.

"Whoever does not declare a permanent Self and does not explain it as material and unlimited, neither explains the Self as material and unlimited now nor explains that it is going to be so. Or such a person does not think: 'Though it is not so now, I will construct it so it is like that.' That being the case, that is enough said about those who do not dwell on the speculation that the Self is material and unlimited.

"Whoever does not declare a permanent Self and does not explain it as immaterial and limited, neither explains the Self as immaterial and limited now nor explains that it is going to be so. Or such a person does not think: 'Though it is not so now, I will construct it so it is like that.' That being the case, that is enough said about those who do not dwell on the speculation that the Self is immaterial and limited.

66 "Whoever does not declare a permanent Self and does not explain it as immaterial and unlimited, neither explains the Self as immaterial and unlimited now nor explains that it is going to be so. Or such a person does not think: 'Though it is not so now, I will construct it so it is like that.' That being the case, that is enough said about those who do not dwell on the speculation that the Self is immaterial and unlimited.

"In these ways, those who do not declare a permanent Self explain the matter.

27. "In what ways does one who considers the permanent Self consider it? One considering the permanent Self as feeling considers it in these words: 'Feeling is my Self.' Or one considering the permanent Self as feeling considers it in these words: 'Feeling is not my Self, my Self insentient.' Or one considering the permanent Self considers it in these words: 'My Self is not feeling, nor is my Self insentient. My Self feels, my Self has a feeling nature.' In such ways, do those who consider the permanent Self explain it.

28. “In this connection, the one who says: ‘Feeling is my Self’ should be questioned: ‘There are these three kinds of feeling, friend: pleasant feeling, painful feeling, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.<sup>12</sup> Of these three kinds of feeling, which do you consider the Self?’

“When one feels a pleasant feeling, at that moment, one neither experiences a painful feeling nor a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling—one feels only a pleasant feeling at that time. When one feels a painful feeling, at that moment, one experiences neither a pleasant feeling nor a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling—one feels only a painful feeling at that time. When one feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, at that moment, one experiences neither a pleasant feeling nor a painful feeling—one feels only a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling at that time.

29. “Also, pleasant feeling is impermanent, a composite, dependently arisen, of a nature to be destroyed, of a nature to decay, of a nature to fade, of a nature to cease. Painful feeling, too, is impermanent, a composite, dependently arisen, of a nature to be destroyed, of a nature to decay, of a nature to fade, of a nature to cease. And yet again, a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is impermanent, a composite, dependently arisen, of a nature to be destroyed, of a nature to decay, of a nature to fade, of a nature to cease. 67

“If one who experiences a pleasant feeling thinks ‘this is my Self,’ when that same pleasant feeling ceases, one will think ‘my Self has disappeared.’ If one who experiences a painful feeling thinks ‘this is my Self,’ when that same painful feeling ceases, one will think ‘my Self has disappeared.’ If one who experiences a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling thinks ‘this is my Self,’ when that same neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling ceases, one will think ‘my Self has disappeared.’

“So it is that one considering the permanent Self, considers it in this world as impermanent, full of pleasure and pain, and as having an arising and decaying nature. Therefore, on account of this, it is not acceptable to consider that: ‘Feeling is my Self.’

30. “In another case, Ānanda, the one who says: ‘Feeling is not my Self, my Self is insentient,’ should be questioned: ‘Friend, where there is no feeling of any kind, would it be possible there to say that “I am”?’ [To which such a person would reply:] ‘No, sir, it would not.’

“Therefore, on account of this, it is not acceptable to consider that: ‘Feeling is not my Self, my Self is insentient.’

31. “In another case, Ānanda, the one who says: ‘My Self is not feeling, nor is my Self insentient. My Self feels, my Self has a feeling nature,’ should be asked: ‘Friend, were feelings of any kind, of any sort, in any way, to cease

<sup>12</sup> In other words, a *neutral* feeling.

without remainder, if there were no feeling at all and if feeling were to cease, would it be possible there to say “I am this”?’ [To which such a person would reply:] ‘No, sir, it would not.’

- 68 “Therefore, on account of this, it is not acceptable to consider that: ‘My Self is not feeling, nor is my Self insentient. My Self feels, my Self has a feeling nature.’

32. “When a *bhikkhu* does not consider feeling as the permanent Self, nor considers the Self as without feeling, nor considers ‘my Self feels, my Self has a feeling nature’—if he is without such considerations—he does not grasp after anything in this world. Not attached, he does not tremble. Not trembling, he personally achieves *nibbāna*. He knows that ‘birth is destroyed, the holy life has been fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is no further state of existence.’

“If, concerning the *bhikkhu* whose mind is thus freed, someone were to say: ‘The *bhikkhu* holds the speculative view that “The *Tathāgata* exists after death”’—that would not be proper. If someone were to say: ‘He holds the view that “The *Tathāgata* does not exist after death”’—that would not be proper. If someone were to say: ‘He holds the view that “The *Tathāgata* both does and does not exist after death”’—that would not be proper. If someone were to say: ‘He holds the view that “The *Tathāgata* neither does nor does not exist after death”’—that would not be proper.

“What is the reason for this? Because whatever verbal expression there is, whatever process of verbal expression there is, whatever language there is, whatever process of language there is, whatever concept there is, whatever process of conception there is, whatever wisdom there is, whatever sphere of wisdom there is, whatever round of rebirth there is, whatever evolving of the round there is—by understanding that, the *bhikkhu* is freed. Being freed by understanding that, it would not be proper to say that he holds the view ‘one does not know and one does not see.’

33. “There are these seven stations of consciousness and these two planes. What are the seven?

- 69 “There are beings who are diverse in body, and diverse in intelligence—such as human beings, some *devas*, and some who live in a state of misery after death. This is the first station of consciousness.

“There are beings who are diverse in body, but the same in intelligence—such as the *devas* of the Brahmā-order who are reborn at the level of the first *jhāna*. This is the second station of consciousness.

“There are beings who are the same in body, but diverse in intelligence—such as the *devas* of streaming radiance.<sup>13</sup> This is the third station of consciousness.

<sup>13</sup> *Ābhassarā*.

“There are beings who are the same in body, and the same in intelligence—such as the *devas* of the luminous realm.<sup>14</sup> This is the fourth station of consciousness.

“There are beings who, from completely passing beyond the perception of visible form, from the passing away of sensory reaction, from non-attention to the diversity of perceptions, think ‘space is infinite’ and who have reached the plane of infinite space. This is the fifth station of consciousness.

“There are beings who, through completely passing beyond the plane of infinite space, think ‘consciousness is infinite’ and who have reached the plane of infinite consciousness. This is the sixth station of consciousness.

“There are beings who, through completely passing beyond the plane of infinite consciousness, think ‘there does not exist anything’ and who have reached the plane of no-thing. This is the seventh station of consciousness.

“The plane of insentient beings is the first plane, the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception beings is the second plane.

34. “In a case where there is that first station of consciousness, wherein beings are diverse in body and diverse in intelligence—such as humans, some *devas*, and some who live in a state of misery after death—for those who know that, know its origin, know its passing away, know its satisfaction, know its danger, who know the escape from it, would it be proper for them to delight in it?”

“No, sir, it would not.”

“Ānanda, in a case where there is that second station of consciousness, wherein beings are diverse in body, but the same in intelligence—such as the *devas* of the Brahṃā-order who are reborn at the level of the first *jhāna*—for those who know that, know its origin, know its passing away, know its satisfaction, know its danger, who know the escape from it, would it be proper for them to delight in it?”

“No, sir, it would not.”

“Ānanda, in a case where there is that third station of consciousness, wherein beings are the same in body, but diverse in intelligence—such as the *devas* of streaming radiance—for those who know that, know its origin, know its passing away, know its satisfaction, know its danger, who know the escape from it, would it be proper for them to delight in it?”

“No, sir, it would not.”

“Ānanda, in a case where there is that fourth station of consciousness, wherein beings are the same in body, and the same in intelligence—such as the *devas* of the luminous realm—for those who know that, know its origin, know its passing away, know its satisfaction, know its danger, who know the escape from it, would it be proper for them to delight in it?”

<sup>14</sup> *Subhakiṃṃā*.

“No, sir, it would not.”

“Ānanda, in a case where there is that fifth station of consciousness, wherein beings, from completely passing beyond the perception of visible form, from the passing away of sensory reaction, from non-attention to the diversity of perceptions, think ‘space is infinite’ and who have reached the plane of infinite space—for those who know that, know its origin, know its passing away, know its satisfaction, know its danger, who know the escape from it, would it be proper for them to delight in it?”

“No, sir, it would not.”

“Ānanda, in a case where there is that sixth station of consciousness, wherein beings who, through completely passing beyond the plane of infinite space, think ‘consciousness is infinite’ and who have reached the plane of infinite consciousness—for those who know that, know its origin, know its passing away, know its satisfaction, know its danger, who know the escape from it, would it be proper for them to delight in it?”

“No, sir, it would not.”

“Ānanda, in a case where there is that seventh station of consciousness, in which one has completely passed beyond the plane of infinite consciousness, thinking ‘there does not exist anything’ and having reached the plane of nothing—for those who know that, know its origin, know its passing away, know its satisfaction, know its danger, who know the escape from it, would it be proper for them to delight in it?”

“No, sir, it would not.”

“Ānanda, in the case of the plane of insentient beings, for those who know that, know its origin, know its passing away, know its satisfaction, know its danger, who know the escape from it, would it be proper for them to delight in it?”

“No, sir, it would not.”

“Ānanda, in the case of the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, for those who know that, know its origin, know its passing away, know its satisfaction, know its danger, who know the escape from it, would it be proper for them to delight in it?”

“No, sir, it would not.”

“Ānanda, when a *bhikkhu* has understood things as they really are—in regard to these seven stations of consciousness and two planes, their origin, their passing away, their satisfaction, their danger, and the escape from them—then he becomes free. He is called a *bhikkhu* who has been freed by wisdom.<sup>15</sup>

35. “There are these eight stages of liberation, Ānanda. What are the eight?”

<sup>15</sup> *Paññā*. This term can also be translated as “insight.”



“One who is material sees material objects. This is the first stage of liberation.

“One who has perception of immaterial objects internally sees material objects externally. This is the second stage of liberation.

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“One who is intent on the word ‘beautiful.’ This is the third stage of liberation.

“One who passes completely beyond the perception of visible objects, with the passing away of sensory reaction and with non-attention to the diversity of perceptions, thinks ‘space is infinite,’ and lives having entered into the plane of infinite space. This is the fourth stage of liberation.

“One who passes completely beyond the plane of infinite space thinks ‘consciousness is infinite,’ and lives having entered into the plane of infinite consciousness. This is the fifth stage of liberation.

“One who passes completely beyond the plane of infinite consciousness thinks ‘there does not exist anything,’ and lives having entered into the plane of no-thing. This is the sixth stage of liberation.

“One who passes completely beyond the plane of no-thing lives having entered into the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This is the seventh stage of liberation.

“One who passes completely beyond the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception lives having entered into the cessation of perception and feeling. This is the eighth stage of liberation.

36. “When a *bhikkhu* has entered upon these eight stages of liberation—in forward order, or in reverse order, or in both forward and reverse order, so that he enters into and emerges from them whenever he desires—and when his defilements are destroyed, he enters and dwells in the undefiled liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom, which he has understood and realized by himself *in this world*, such a one is called a *bhikkhu* who is ‘liberated in both ways.’<sup>16</sup> And there is no other ‘liberation in both ways’ that is higher or more excellent than this ‘liberation in both ways.’”

This was said by the Exalted One. Delighted, the venerable Ānanda rejoiced in what the Exalted One had said.

<sup>16</sup> Being liberated in “both ways” means liberation achieved both through wisdom (insight) and through meditative concentration.