

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Vesālī in the Great Wood in the Hall with the Peaked Roof.
  
2. Now on that occasion a number of bhikkhus had declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One thus: “We understand: Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.”
  
3. Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, heard: “A number of bhikkhus, it seems, have declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One thus: ‘We understand: Birth is destroyed...there is no more coming to any state of being.’” Then Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said to the Blessed One:
  
4. “I have heard, venerable sir, that a number of bhikkhus have declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One. Did they do so rightly or are there some bhikkhus here who declare final knowledge because they overestimate themselves?”
  
5. “When those bhikkhus, Sunakkhatta, declared final knowledge in my presence, there were some bhikkhus who declared final knowledge rightly and there were some who declared final knowledge because they overestimated themselves. Therein, when bhikkhus declare final knowledge rightly, their declaration is true. But when bhikkhus declare final knowledge because they overestimate themselves, the Tathāgata thinks: ‘I should teach them the Dhamma.’ Thus it is in this case, Sunakkhatta, that the Tathāgata thinks: ‘I should teach them the Dhamma.’ But some misguided men here formulate a question, come to the Tathāgata, and ask it. In that case, Sunakkhatta, though the Tathāgata has thought: ‘I should teach them the Dhamma,’ he changes his mind.”
  
6. “This is the time, Blessed One, this is the time, Sublime One, for the Blessed One to teach the Dhamma. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the bhikkhus will remember it.”

“Then listen, Sunakkhatta, and attend closely to what I shall say.”

“Yes, venerable sir,” Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

7. “There are, Sunakkhatta, these five cords of sensual pleasure. What are the five? Forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. Sounds cognizable by the ear...Odors cognizable by the nose...Flavors cognizable by the tongue...Tangibles cognizable by the body that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. These are the five cords of sensual pleasure.

8. “It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on worldly material things. When a person is intent on worldly material things, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the imperturbable is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

9. “Suppose, Sunakkhatta, a man had left his own village or town a long time ago, and he were to see another man who had only recently left that village or town. He would ask that man whether the people of that village or town were safe, prosperous, and healthy, and that man would tell him whether the people of that village or town were safe, prosperous, and healthy. What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Would that first man listen to him, give him ear, and exert his mind to understand?” □ “Yes, venerable sir.” □ “So too, Sunakkhatta, it is possible that some person here may be intent on worldly material things. When a person is intent on worldly material things...and he does not find satisfaction in that. He should be understood as a person who is intent on worldly material things.

10. “It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the imperturbable. When a person is intent on the imperturbable, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about worldly material things is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

11. “Just as a yellow leaf that has fallen from its stalk is incapable of becoming green again, so too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is intent on the imperturbable he has shed the fetter of worldly material things. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of worldly material things who is intent on the imperturbable.

12. “It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the base of nothingness. When a person is intent on the base of nothingness, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the imperturbable is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

13. “Just as a thick stone that has split in two cannot be joined together again, so too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is intent on the base of nothingness his fetter of the imperturbable has been split. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the imperturbable who is intent on the base of nothingness.

14. “It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. When a person is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the base of nothingness is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

15. “Suppose a person has eaten some delicious food and thrown it up. What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Could that man have any desire to eat that food again?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because that food is considered repulsive.”

“So too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, his fetter of the base of nothingness has been rejected. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the base of nothingness who is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

16. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be completely intent on Nibbāna. When a person is completely intent on Nibbāna, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

17. "Just as a palm tree with its top cut off is incapable of growing again, so too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is completely intent on Nibbāna, his fetter of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception has been cut off — cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that it is no longer subject to future arising. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception who is completely intent on Nibbāna.

18. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some bhikkhu here might think thus: 'Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humor of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; the poisonous humor of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on Nibbāna.' Since he conceives himself thus, though it is contrary to fact, he might pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on Nibbāna. He might pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye, he might pursue unsuitable sounds with the ear, unsuitable odors with the nose, unsuitable flavors with the tongue, unsuitable tangibles with the body, or unsuitable mind-objects with the mind. When he pursues the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye...unsuitable mind-objects with the mind, lust invades his mind. With his mind invaded by lust, he would incur death or deadly suffering.

19. "Suppose, Sunakkhatta, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon. The surgeon would cut around the opening of the wound with a knife, then he would probe for the arrow with a probe, then he would pull out the arrow and would expel the poisonous humor, leaving a trace of it behind. Thinking that no trace was left behind, he would say: 'Good man, the arrow has been pulled out from you; the poisonous humor has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming you. Eat only suitable food; do not eat unsuitable food or else the wound may suppurate. From time to time wash the wound and from time to time anoint its opening, so that pus and blood do not cover the opening of the wound. Do not walk around in the wind and sun or else dust and dirt may infect the opening of the wound. Take care of your wound, good man, and see to it that the wound heals.'

20. “The man would think: ‘The arrow has been pulled out from me; the poisonous humor has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming me.’ He would eat unsuitable food, and the wound would suppurate. He would not wash the wound from time to time nor would he anoint its opening from time to time, and pus and blood would cover the opening of the wound. He would walk around in the wind and sun, and dust and dirt would infect the opening of the wound. He would not take care of his wound, nor would he see to it that the wound heals. Then, both because he does what is unsuitable and because a trace was left behind when the foul poisonous humor was expelled, the wound would swell, and with its swelling he would incur death or deadly suffering.

21. “So too, Sunakkhatta, it is possible that some bhikkhu here might think thus: ‘Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humor of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; the poisonous humor of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on Nibbāna.’ Because he conceives himself thus, though it is contrary to fact, he might pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on Nibbāna...(as above)...With his mind invaded by lust, he would incur death or deadly suffering.

22. “For it is death in the Discipline of the Noble One, Sunakkhatta, when one abandons the training and reverts to the low life; and it is deadly suffering when one commits some defiled offence.

23. “It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some bhikkhu here might think thus: ‘Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humor of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; the poisonous humor of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on Nibbāna.’ Being one who really is completely intent on Nibbāna, he would not pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on Nibbāna. He would not pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye, he would not pursue unsuitable sounds with the ear, unsuitable odors with the nose, unsuitable flavors with the tongue, unsuitable tangibles with the body, or unsuitable mind-objects with the mind. Because he does not pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye...unsuitable mind-objects with the mind, lust does not invade his mind. Because his mind is not invaded by lust, he would not incur death or deadly suffering.

24. “Suppose, Sunakkhatta, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon. The surgeon would

cut around the opening of the wound with a knife, then he would probe for the arrow with a probe, then he would pull out the arrow and would expel the poisonous humor without leaving a trace of it behind. Knowing that no trace was left behind, he would say: 'Good man, the arrow has been pulled out from you; the poisonous humor has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming you. Eat only suitable food; do not eat unsuitable food or else the wound may suppurate. From time to time wash the wound and from time to time anoint its opening, so that pus and blood do not cover the opening of the wound. Do not walk around in the wind and sun or else dust and dirt may infect the opening of the wound. Take care of your wound, good man, and see to it that the wound heals.'

25. "The man would think: 'The arrow has been pulled out from me; the poisonous humor has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming me.' He would eat only suitable food, and the wound would not suppurate. From time to time he would wash the wound and from time to time he would anoint its opening, and pus and blood would not cover the opening of the wound. He would not walk around in the wind and sun, and dust and dirt would not infect the opening of the wound. He would take care of his wound, and would see to it that the wound heals. Then, both because he does what is suitable and because no trace was left behind when the foul poisonous humor was expelled, the wound would heal, and because it had healed and was covered with skin, he would not incur death or deadly suffering.

26. "So too, Sunakkhatta, it is possible that some bhikkhus here might think thus: 'Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humor of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; the poisonous humor of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on Nibbāna.' Being one who really is completely intent on Nibbāna, he would not pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on Nibbāna...*(as above)*...Because his mind is not invaded by lust, he would not incur death or deadly suffering.

27. "Sunakkhatta, I have given this simile in order to convey a meaning. This is the meaning here: 'Wound' is a term for the six internal bases. 'Poisonous humor' is a term for ignorance. 'Arrow' is a term for craving. 'Probe' is a term for mindfulness. 'Knife' is a term for noble wisdom. 'Surgeon' is a term for the Tathāgata, the Accomplished One, the Fully Enlightened One.

28. "That bhikkhu, Sunakkhatta, is one who practices restraint in the six bases of contact. Having understood that acquisition is the root of suffering, being acquisitionless, liberated in the destruction of the acquisitions, it is not possible that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any acquisition.

29. “Suppose, Sunakkhatta, there were a bronze cup of beverage possessing a good color, smell, and taste, but it was mixed with poison, and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure and recoiled from pain. What do you think, Sunakkhatta, would that man drink that cup of beverage, knowing: ‘If I drink this I will incur death or deadly suffering’?” □ “No, venerable sir.” □ “So too, that bhikkhu is one who practices restraint in the six bases of contact. Having understood that acquisition is the root of suffering, being acquisitionless, liberated in the destruction of the acquisitions, it is not possible that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any acquisition.

30. “Suppose, Sunakkhatta, there were a deadly poisonous snake, and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure and recoiled from pain. What do you think, Sunakkhatta, would that man give that deadly poisonous snake his hand or his thumb, knowing: ‘If I am bitten by him I will incur death or deadly suffering’?” □ “No, venerable sir.” □ “So too, when a bhikkhu practices restraint in the six bases of contact, and having understood that attachment is the root of suffering, is without attachment, liberated by the destruction of attachment, it is not possible that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any object of attachment.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

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Majjhima Nikāya 105

Part Three— The Final Fifty Discourses (Uparipaṭṭi āsapāṭi)

The Division at Devadaha (Devadahavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

Contributed by Chris Burke