SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS TO RETREAT ON THE DHAMMACAKKA SUTTA

III. The Middle Way

1. *The middle way as avoiding the two extremes*

“‘One should not pursue sensual pleasure, which is low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial; and one should not pursue self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial.’ With reference to what is this said?

“The pursuit of the sensual enjoyment is low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial; it is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Disengagement from sensual enjoyment of one is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way.

“The pursuit of self-mortification is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial; it is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Disengagement from the pursuit of self-mortification is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way.

“So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘One should not pursue sensual pleasure, which is low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial; and one should not pursue self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial.’

5. “‘The middle way discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both these extremes; giving vision, giving knowledge, it leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.’”

MN 45: “What, bhikkhus, is the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain? There are certain recluses and brahmins whose view is this: ‘There is no harm in sensual pleasures.’ They take to gulping down sensual pleasures and divert themselves with women wanderers who wear their hair bound in a topknot. They say: ‘What future danger do these good recluses and brahmins see in sensual pleasures when they speak of abandoning sensual pleasures? Pleasant is the touch of this woman wanderer’s tender arm!’ Thus they take to gulping down sensual pleasures, and having done so, on the dissolution of the body, after death, they reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. There they feel painful, racking, piercing feelings. They say thus: ‘This is the future danger those good recluses and brahmins saw in sensual pleasures when they spoke of abandoning sensual pleasures. For it is by reason of sensual pleasures that we are now feeling painful, racking, piercing feelings.’”

2. *The emphasis on knowledge and vision*

(1) *For one who knows and sees*

“I say that the destruction of the taints is for one who knows and sees, not for one who does not know and does not see. For one who knows what, for one who sees what, does the destruction of the taints come about? The destruction of the taints comes about for one who knows and sees: ‘This is suffering’; for one who knows and sees: ‘This is the origin of suffering’; for one who knows and sees: ‘This is the cessation of suffering’; for one who knows and sees: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ It is for one who knows thus, for one who sees thus, that the destruction of the taints occurs.”

(SN 56:25)

(2) *Ignorance is the root condition*

“A first point of craving for existence is not seen such that before this there was no craving for existence and afterwards it came into being. Still, craving for existence has a specific condition. And what is the condition for craving for existence? It is ignorance.”

(AN 10:62)

IV. The Four Noble Truths: General Comments

1. *The Role of the Four Noble Truths*

(a) As the content of the Buddha’s enlightenment (see MN 36 above)

(b) *The enlightenment of all Buddhas*

“Whatever Perfectly Enlightened Ones in the past were fully enlightened to things as they really are, all were fully enlightened to the Four Noble Truths as they really are. Whatever Perfectly Enlightened Ones in the future will be fully enlightened to things as they really are, all will be fully enlightened to the Four Noble Truths as they really are. Whatever Perfectly Enlightened Ones at present are fully enlightened to things as they really are, all are fully enlightened to the Four Noble Truths as they really are.” (SN 56:24)

(2) *The purpose of the homeless life*

“All those in the past who correctly renounced the home life, all did so to realize the Four Noble Truths as they really are. All those in the future who will correctly renounce the home life, all will do so to realize the Four Noble Truths as they really are. All those who at present have correctly renounced the home life, all have done so to realize the Four Noble Truths as they really are.” (SN 56:4)

(3) *The handful of leaves*

Once the Buddha was dwelling in a *siṃsapā* grove. Then the Blessed One took up a few leaves in his hand and told the monks thus: “The leaves in my hand are few, but those in the grove overhead are numerous. So too, the things I have directly known but have not taught you are numerous, while the things I have taught you are few. And why have I not taught those many things? Because they don’t lead to enlightenment and nibbāna. Therefore I have not taught them. And what have I taught? The four noble truths. And why have I taught this? Because this leads to enlightenment and nibbāna. Therefore I have taught this.” (SN 56:31)

(4) *The truths are all-inclusive*

Ven. Sāriputta: “Friends, just as the footprint of any living being can be placed within an elephant’s footprint, and so the elephant’s footprint is declared the chief of them because of its great size; so too, all good teachings can be included in the Four Noble Truths. In what four? In the noble truth of suffering, in the noble truth of the origin of suffering, in the noble truth of the cessation of suffering, and in the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.”

(MN 28)

(5) *Breaking free from saṃsāra*

“Monks, it is because of not understanding and not penetrating the four noble truths that you and I have roamed and wandered through this long course of saṃsāra. But now I have understood and penetrated the four noble truths. Craving for existence has been cut off; the tie of existence has been destroyed; now there is no more renewed existence.” (SN 56:21)

2. Why are they called *noble* truths?

(1) Because they are real: “These Four Noble Truths are real, free of error, not other than the truth (*tathāni avitathāni anaññathāni*). Therefore they are called noble truths.” (SN 56:27)

(2) Because the Buddha teaches them: “In this world, with all its many kinds of beings, the Tathāgata is the noble one. Therefore they are called noble truths.” (SN 56:28)

(3) Because realizing these four noble truths makes one a noble one; all the noble ones realize them (Visuddhimagga, 16.20).

*Two truths are the truths of saṃsāric process:*

Dukkha, suffering (nature of the conditioned existence): effect, result

Origin: cause of dukkha (craving & defilements): cause

*Two truths are the truths of transcending the saṃsāric process*

Cessation of dukkha (nibbāna): effect, result

Way to cessation, the path (the noble 8fold path) : cause, means

Threefold analysis of dukkha

* dukkha-dukkha: dukkha consisting in painful [bodily & mental] feeling
* vipariṇāma-dukkha: dukkha due to change = pleasant feeling (*sukhā vedanā*)
* saṅkhāra-dukkha: dukkha inherent in all conditioned experience (oppressiveness of moment-by-moment arising & passing away)

VII. The Five Aggregates Subject to Clinging

1. *The necessity of understanding the five aggregates*

“Without directly knowing and fully understanding form … feeling … perception … volitional activities … consciousness, without becoming dispassionate towards it and abandoning it, one is incapable of destroying suffering.

“By directly knowing (*abhijānam)* and fully understanding (*parijānam)* form … consciousness, by becoming dispassionate towards it and abandoning it, one is capable of destroying suffering.” (SN 22:24)

2. *The meaning of “aggregates”*

A monk asked the Blessed One: “Bhante, how does the designation ‘aggregates’ apply to the aggregates?” – “Whatever kind of form there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: this is called the form aggregate. Whatever kind of feeling there is … this is called the feeling aggregate. Whatever kind of perception there is … this is called the perception aggregate. Whatever kind of volitional activities there are … this is called the volitional activities aggregate. Whatever kind of consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: this is called the consciousness aggregate. It is in this way that the designation ‘aggregates’ applies to the aggregates.” (SN 22:82)

3. *Why “clinging aggregates”?*

(a) *Clinging and the aggregates*

A monk asked the Buddha: “Bhante, is clinging the same as the five aggregates subject to clinging, or is clinging something apart from the five aggregates subject to clinging?” – “Monks, clinging is neither the same as the five aggregates subject to clinging, nor is the clinging something apart from the five aggregates subject to clinging. But rather, the desire and lust for them, that is the clinging there.” (SN 22:82)

(b) *Suffering through clinging*

“I will teach you agitation through clinging and ease of mind through non-clinging. How is there agitation through clinging? Here, the worldling regards his bodily form thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’ That form changes and alters. With the change and alteration of bodily form, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair. He regards feeling thus … perception thus … volitional formations thus … consciousness thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’ That consciousness changes and alters. With the change and alteration of consciousness, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair. It is in such a way that there is agitation through clinging.” (SN 22:8)

4. *Regarding the aggregates as one’s self*

“Suppose, monks, a dog is tied up on a leash was bound to a strong post. If it walks, it walks close to that post. If it stands, it stands close to that post. If it sits down, it sits down close to that post. If it lies down, it lies down close to that post. So too, the uninstructed worldling regards form thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’ He regards feeling … perception … volitional formations … consciousness thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’ If he walks, he walks close to those five aggregates subject to clinging. If he stands, he stands close to those five aggregates subject to clinging. If he sits down, he sits down close to those five aggregates subject to clinging. If he lies down, he lies down close to those five aggregates subject to clinging.” (SN 22:100)

5. *Similes for the aggregates*

The Blessed One addressed the monks thus: “Monks, suppose that this river Ganges was carrying along a great lump of foam. A man with good sight would inspect it and it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in a lump of foam? So too, monks, whatever kind of form there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: a monk inspects it and it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in form?”

“Suppose that in the autumn, when it is raining, a water bubble arises and bursts on the surface of the water. A man with good sight would inspect it … For what substance could there be in a water bubble? So too, whatever kind of feeling there is … would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in feeling?

“Suppose, monks, that in the last month of the hot season, at high noon, a shimmering mirage appears. A man with good sight would inspect it … For what substance could there be in a mirage? So too, monks, whatever kind of perception there is … it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in perception?

“Suppose, monks, that a man needing heartwood would cut down the trunk of a large plantain tree and unroll the coil. As he unrolls the coil, he would not find even softwood, let alone heartwood…. For what substance could there be in a plantain trunk? So too, monks, whatever kind of volitional activities there are … they would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in volitional activities?

“Suppose, monks, that a magician or a magician’s apprentice would display a magical illusion at a crossroads. A man with good sight would inspect it … So too, monks, whatever kind of consciousness there is … it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in consciousness?” (SN 22:95)

6. *The aggregates are not-self*

The monk Rādha approached the Blessed One and said to him: “Bhante, how should one know, how should one see so that, in regard to this body with consciousness and in regard to all external objects, I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit no longer occur within?” – “Any kind of form whatsoever, Rādha, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—one sees all form as it really is with correct wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ Any kind of feeling whatsoever … Any kind of perception whatsoever … Any kind of volitional activities whatsoever … Any kind of consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—one sees all consciousness as it really is with correct wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ When one knows and sees thus, then in regard to this body with consciousness and in regard to all external signs, I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit no longer occur within.” (SN22:71)

VIII. Beginningless Saṃsāra

1. *The first two knowledges*

I recollected my manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many aeons of world-contraction, many aeons of world-expansion, many aeons of world-contraction and expansion: ‘There I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I reappeared elsewhere; and there too I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I reappeared here.’ Thus with their aspects and particulars I recollected my manifold past lives.

With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and being reborn, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate. I understood how beings pass on according to their actions (*kamma*) thus: ‘These beings who behaved badly in body, speech, and mind … on the dissolution of the body, after death, have been reborn in a bad destination; but these beings behaved well in body, speech, and mind … on the dissolution of the body, after death, have been reborn in a good destination, even in the heavenly world.’ Thus with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and being reborn, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and I understood how beings pass on according to their actions.

2. *Grass and wood*

“This saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.

Suppose a man would cut up all the grass and sticks in Jambudīpa and collect them together into a single heap, and then count each one thus: ‘This is my mother, this my mother’s mother.’ The sequence of that man’s mothers and grandmothers would not come to an end, yet the grass and sticks would be used up. For what reason? Because this saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning.”

3. *Stream of tears*

“The stream of tears that you have shed as you roamed and wandered through this long course, weeping and wailing, this is more than the water in the four great oceans. For a long time you have experienced the death of a mother … a father … a brother … a sister … a son … a daughter … as you have experienced this, weeping and wailing, the stream of tears that you have shed is more than the water in the four great oceans.”

4. *Heap of bones*

“One person, roaming and wandering on through one eon, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, would leave behind a heap of bones as large as Mount Vepulla. For what reason? Because, monks, this saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning.”

5. *The length of an eon*

“Suppose there was a great stone mountain, one solid mass of rock. At the end of every hundred years a man would stroke it once with a piece of fine cloth. That great stone mountain might in this way be worn away but the eon would still not have come to an end. So long is an eon. And of eons of such length, we have wandered through so many hundreds and thousands and hundreds of thousands of eons. For what reason? Because this saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning.”

(from SN chapter 15)

IX. The Truth of the Origin of Suffering

1. *Explanation of terms*

(a) “craving which leads to renewed existence (*ponobhavikā*), (b) accompanied by delight and lust (*nandīrāgasahagatā*), (c) seeking delight here and there (*tatratatrābhinandinī*).”

2. *The three types of craving*

Vibhanga §916:

(1) What is *bhavataṇhā*? The lust and attachment connected with the “view of existence,” that is, the eternalist view.

(2) What is *vibhavataṇhā*? The lust and attachment connected with the annihilationist view.

(3) The remaining craving is *kāmataṇhā* (sensual craving)

Alternatively:

(1) *Kāmataṇhā*? The lust and attachment connected with the sensual realm.

(2) *Bhavataṇhā*: the lust and attachment connected with the form realm and formless realm.

(3) *Vibhavataṇhā*: the lust and attachment connected with the annihilationist view.

My interpretation (simpler than the above):

Craving for sensual pleasures is simply craving for the enjoyment of sense objects.

Craving for existence is craving to go on existing, from life to life.

Craving for annihilation is craving for a complete end to existence, with the underlying view that existence comes to a complete end at death.

3. *Where craving arises and settles*

“Where does craving arise? Where does it settle? It arises and settles on anything in the world that has a pleasant and agreeable nature (*yaṃ loke piyarūpaṃ sātarūpaṃ*): the six internal sense bases; the six external sense bases; the six kinds of consciousness; the six kinds of contact; the six kinds of feeling; the six kinds of perception; the six kinds of volition; the six kinds of craving (“craving for craving”); the six kinds of applied thought; the six kinds of sustained thought.” (DN 22; Vibh §203)

4. *How craving causes suffering*

(a) *Psychological level*

“One excited by lust, overcome by lust, with mind obsessed by it, intends for his own affliction, for the affliction of others, and for the affliction of both, and he experiences mental suffering and dejection. But when lust is abandoned, he does not intend for his own affliction, for the affliction of others, or for the affliction of both, and he does not experience mental suffering and dejection.” (AN 3:53)

“Sensual pleasures are painful to touch, hot, and scorching, but beings who are not free from lust for sensual pleasures, who are devoured by craving for sensual pleasures, who burn with fever for sensual pleasures, have faculties that are impaired; thus, though sensual pleasures are actually painful to touch, they acquire a mistaken perception of them as pleasant.” (MN 75)

(b) *Meta-psychological level: dependent origination*

“When one dwells contemplating enjoyment in things that can be clung to, craving increases. With craving as condition, clinging [comes to be]; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. Suppose a great bonfire was burning, consuming a load of wood, and a man would cast dry wood into it from time to time. Thus, sustained by that material, that great bonfire would burn for a long time. So too, when one lives contemplating gratification in things that can be clung to, craving increases…. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.” (SN 12:52)

X. The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering

1. *Explanation of terms*

“The remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it” (*yo tassāyeva taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo*).

Vism 507: “Cessation through fading away that is remainderless because of the eradication of latent tendencies. Or: remainderless fading away, remainderless cessation. As to meaning, all these terms are synonyms for nibbāna.”

2. *How suffering ceases*

(a) *Psychological*

“When one experiences the remainderless destruction of lust, hatred, and delusion, it is in this way, that nibbāna is directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise." (AN 3:55)

“One understands thus: 'Formerly, there was greed; that was unwholesome. Now that is gone; this is wholesome. Formerly, there was hatred; that was unwholesome. Now that is gone; this is wholesome. Formerly, there was delusion; that was unwholesome. Now that is gone; this is wholesome.' Thus in this very life one dwells without craving, inwardly cool, experiencing bliss, having become holy (*brahmabhūtena attanā*)." (AN 3:66)

(b) *Meta-psychological cessation*

(1) *Dependent cessation*

“And what is the passing away of suffering? In dependence on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving comes cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of existence; with the cessation of existence, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This is the passing away of suffering. (SN 12:43)

(2) *Contemplating danger*

“When when one dwells contemplating danger in things that can be clung to, craving ceases. With the cessation of craving comes cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of existence … cessation of birth … aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. Suppose a great bonfire was burning, consuming a load of wood, and a man would not cast dry wood into it from time to time. Thus, when the former supply of fuel is exhausted, that great bonfire, not being fed with any more fuel, lacking sustenance, would be extinguished. So too, when one lives contemplating danger in things that can be clung to, craving ceases…. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.”” (SN 12:54)

(3) *Not generating saṅkhāras*

“If a person immersed in ignorance generates a meritorious volitional activity, consciousness passes on to the meritorious; if one generates a demeritorious volitional activity, consciousness passes on to the demeritorious; if one generates an unshaken volitional activity, consciousness passes on to the unshaken. But when a monk has abandoned ignorance and aroused true knowledge, then, with the fading away of ignorance and the arising of true knowledge, he does not generate any of these volitional activities. Since he does not generate these volitional activities, he does not cling to anything in the world. Not clinging … he personally attains nibbāna. He understands: ‘Finished is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming back to this state of being.’” (SN 12:51)

3. *Nibbāna*

(a) *The two nibbāna elements*

“There are, monks, these two nibbāna elements. What two? The nibbāna element with residue remaining and the nibbāna element without residue remaining.

“And what is the nibbāna element *with residue remaining*? Here, a monk is an arahant … completely liberated through final knowledge. However, his five sense faculties remain unimpaired, by which he still feels pleasure and pain. It is the destruction of lust, hatred, and delusion in him that is called the nibbāna element with residue remaining.

“And what is the nibbāna element *without residue remaining*? Here, a monk is an arahant … completely liberated through final knowledge. For him, in this very life, all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here. This is called the nibbāna element without residue remaining. (Itivuttaka §44)

(b) The unconditioned nibbāna

“There is, monks, an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconditioned. If, monks, there were no unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconditioned, no escape would be discerned from what is born, become, made, conditioned. But because there is an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unconditioned, therefore an escape is discerned from what is born, become, made, conditioned.” (Udāna 8.3)

XI. The Truth of the Path= The noble eightfold path

1. *Going to the Far Shore*

“These eight things, when developed and cultivated, lead to going beyond from the near shore to the far shore. What eight? Right view … right concentration. These eight things, when developed and cultivated, lead to going beyond from the near shore to the far shore.” (Saṃyutta 45.34)

2. *Right practice*

“I praise right practice, whether of a layperson or a monastic. One practicing rightly, whether a layperson or a monastic, because of their right practice, is one who achieves the method, the Dhamma that is wholesome.

“And what, monks, is right practice? It is this: right view … right concentration. This, monks, is called right practice. I praise, monks, right practice, whether of a layperson or of a monastic. One practicing rightly, whether a layperson or a monastic, because of their right practice, is one who achieves the method, the Dhamma that is wholesome.” (Saṃyutta Nikāya 45.24)

right view, right intention = wisdom group

right speech, right action, right livelihood = moral conduct group

right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration = concentration group

**See Saccavibhaṅga Sutta (MN 141) for analysis of path factors.**

*Right view*

(a) *Mundane right view: view of kamma and its fruits*

“A woman or a man, a householder or monastic, should often reflect thus: 'I am the owner of my kamma, the heir of my kamma; I have kamma as my origin, kamma as my relative, kamma as my resort; I will be the heir of whatever kamma, good or bad, that I do.' Why should one often reflect in such a way? People engage in misconduct by body, speech, and mind. But when one often reflects upon this theme, such misconduct is either completely abandoned or diminished. It is for the sake of this benefit that a woman or a man, a householder or one gone forth, should often reflect on kamma.” (AN 5.57)

“Master Gotama, why is it that human beings are seen to be inferior and superior: be short-lived and long-lived, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, without influence and influential, poor and wealthy, low born and high born, stupid and wise?” – “Young man, beings are owners of their kamma, heirs of their kamma; they originate from their kamma, are bound to their kamma, have their kamma as their resort. It is kamma that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.” (MN 95)

“Rāhula, any action—of body, speech, or mind—should be done after repeated reflection. When you wish to do an action, you should reflect: ‘Would this action lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both?’ When you reflect, if you know: ‘This action would lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both,’ understand that it is an unwholesome action with painful results.’ Then you definitely should not do such an action. But when you reflect, if you know: ‘This action would not lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both,’ understand that it is a wholesome action with pleasant results.’ Then you may do such an action.” (MN 61)

(b) *World-transcending right view*

“And what, friends, is right view? Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering—this is called right view.” (MN 9, MN 141, SN 45.8)

“All conditioned things are impermanent … All conditioned things are dukkha … All dhammas are non-self. When one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from dukkha. This is the path to purity.” (Dhammapada 277–79)

“What do you think, monks, is form … consciousness permanent or impermanent?” – “Impermanent, Bhante.” – “But is that which is impermanent suffering or happiness?” – “Suffering, Bhante.” – “But is it fitting to regard that which is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self’?” – “Surely not, Bhante.”

“Therefore, monks, any kind of form … any kind of consciousness, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all form … all consciousness should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ Seeing thus, the learned noble disciple becomes disenchanted with form … with consciousness. Being disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion he is liberated. When he is liberated, the knowledge occurs thus: ‘Liberated’. He understands: ‘Finished is birth, the spiritual life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no further for this state of being.” (SN 22:59)

XII. *The penetration of the four noble truths*

*The three turnings and twelve aspects in regard to the knowledge of the four noble truths*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Noble truth**  **(*ariyasacca*)** | **Knowledge of truth**  **(*sacca-ñāṇa*)** | **Knowledge of task**  **(*kicca-ñāṇa*)** | **Knowledge of completion of task**  **(*katakicca-ñāṇa*)** |
| Dukkha | 8 kinds of dukkha, five aggregates subject to clinging | Full understanding  (*pariññā*): to be fully understood | Has been fully understood |
| Origin | Craving is its origin | Abandoning (*pahāna*):  to be abandoned | Has been abandoned |
| Cessation | Cessation of craving brings cessation of dukkha | Realization (*sacchikiriya*):  to be realized | Has been realized |
| Path | The way is the noble eightfold path | Development (*bhāvanā*):  to be developed | Has been developed |

2. *Fully understanding the truth of suffering*

“Monks, I will teach you things that should be fully understood and also full understanding. And what are the things that should be fully understood? Form is something that should be fully understood; feeling … perception … volitional activities … consciousness is something that should be fully understood. And what is full understanding? The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion.” (SN 22:23)

“Without directly knowing and fully understanding form … consciousnesss, without becoming dispassionate towards it and abandoning it, one is incapable of overcoming suffering. By directly knowing and fully understanding form … consciousnesss by becoming dispassionate towards it and abandoning it, one is capable of overcoming suffering.” (SN 22:24)

The commentaries on the three kinds of *full understanding* (*pariññā*)

(1) *Full understanding of the known* (*ñātapariññā*): the understanding that occurs by observing the *specific characteristics* of various dhammas thus, “Material form (*rūpa*) has the characteristic of being deformed (*ruppana*); feeling has the characteristic of being felt, perception the characteristic of perceiving, or grasping the features of the object, volitional activities the characteristic of volitionally determining (willing), consciousness the characteristic of cognizing the object.” It also includes directly understanding the conditions for each of the conditioned dhammas included in the five aggregates.

Earth, water, fire, and air

(2) *Full understanding by investigation* (*tīraṇapariññā*): the understanding consisting in insight with the general characteristics as its object that occurs in attributing the general

characteristic to those same things in the way beginning, “Material form is

impermanent, feeling is impermanent … consciousness is impermanent; material form … consciousnesss is dukkha; material form … consciousnesss is non-self.”

(3) *Full understanding by abandoning* (*pahānapariññā*): The understanding consisting in insight with the characteristics as its object that occurs as the abandoning of the perception of permanence, pleasure, self, etc.” (Vism XX.3)

*The seven contemplations of insight*

(1) Contemplating things as impermanent, one abandons the perception of permanence.  
(2) Contemplating as dukkha, one abandons the perception of pleasure.  
(3) Contemplating as not-self, one abandons the perception of self.  
(4) Becoming disenchanted, one abandons delight.  
(5) Becoming dispassionate, one abandons passion.  
(6) Causing cessation, one abandons originating.  
(7) Relinquishing, one abandons grasping (Paṭisambhidāmagga I 58, quoted at Vism XX.4).

3. *Abandoning the origin: the three kinds of abandoning*

(1) *Abandoning in a particular respect* (*tadaṅga-pahāna*): the abandoning of the continuous occurrence of a particular defilement through the corresponding contemplation opposed to it. Using meditation on impurity to counter sensual lust, meditation on loving-kindness to counter ill will; meditation on the elements to counter conceit, etc.

(2) *Abandoning by suppression* (*vikkhambhana-pahāna*): abandoning of defilements through either access or absorption concentration.

(3) *Abandoning by eradication* (*samuccheda-pahāna*): the eradication of defilements through the development of the four noble paths.

Aggregate is the self, self possesses the aggregate, self is in the aggregate, aggregate is in the self

5. Development of the path: the four noble paths

Path Attainments, Fetters Eliminated, and Rebirths Remaining

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Attainment | Fetters Eliminated | No. of rebirths remaining |
| Stream-entry  (sotāpatti) | (1) view of a substantial self  (2) doubt about Buddha and Dhamma  (3) clinging to precepts and observances | At most seven, either in the human or celestial realms.  Finished is rebirth in the three lower realms (hells, animals, afflicted spirits). |
| Once-returner  (sakadāgāmi) | Weakens greed, hatred, and delusion | One or two, in the human or celestial realms |
| Non-returner  (anāgāmi) | (4) sensual lust  (5) aversion | Reborn into the form realm (pure abodes), attains final liberation there without returning to this world. |
| Arahantship | (6) desire for form realm  (7) desire for formless realm  (8) conceit “I am”  (9) restlessness  (10) ignorance | No rebirth anywhere in any realm, attains ultimate nibbāna. |

XIII. The unsurpassed enlightenment

1. *Gratification, Danger, Escape*

“So long, bhikkhus, as I did not directly know as they really are the gratification as gratification, the danger as danger, and the escape as escape in the case of these five aggregates subject to clinging, I did not claim that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi* in this world with its devas…. But when I directly knew all this as it really is, then I claimed that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi* in this world with its devas.” (Saṃyutta 22.26; see too SN 22.27)

2. The four phases

“So long as I did not directly know as they really are the five aggregates subject to clinging in four phases—the content of the aggregates, its origin, its cessation, and the way to its cessation—I did not claim that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Māra, and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. But when I directly knew all this as it really is, then I claimed that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with … its devas and humans.

XIII. Gaining the eye of the Dhamma

1. *The simile of the dust in a fingernail*

Once the Blessed One took up a little bit of soil in his fingernail and addressed the monks thus: “Monks, which is more: the little bit of soil that I have taken up in my fingernail or this great earth?” – “Bhante, the great earth is more. The little bit of soil that the Blessed One has taken up in his fingernail does not amount to a hundred thousandth part of the great earth.”

“So too for a noble disciple who has made the breakthrough, the suffering that has been eliminated is more, while that which remains is trifling. The latter does not amount to a hundred thousandth part of the suffering that has been eliminated, as there is a maximum of seven more lives. Of such great benefit is the breakthrough to the Dhamma, of such great benefit is it to obtain the eye of the Dhamma.” (SN 13:1)

2*. The simile of drops from the ocean*

“Bhikkhus, suppose that a man would draw out two or three drops of water from the great ocean. What do you think, bhikkhus, which is more: the two or three drops of water that have been drawn out or the water in the great ocean?”

“Venerable sir, the water in the great ocean is more. The two or three drops of water that have been drawn out are trifling. They do not amount to a hundredth part, or a thousandth part, or a hundred thousandth part of the water in the great ocean.”

“So too for a noble disciple … of such great benefit is it to obtain the vision of the Dhamma.”

3. *The simile of the mountain*

“Monks, suppose that a man would place on Sineru, the king of mountains, seven grains of gravel the size of mung beans. What do you think, which is more: the seven grains of gravel or Sineru, the king of mountains?” – “Bhante, Sineru, the king of mountains, is more. The seven grains of gravel do not amount to a hundred thousandth part of Mount Sineru.”

“So too, monks, the achievements of ascetics, brahmins, and wanderers of other sects do not amount to a hundred thousandth part of the achievement of a noble disciple who has made the breakthrough. So great in achievement is a person accomplished in view, so great in direct knowledge.” (SN 13:11)