

1. Thus have I heard. Once the Lord was staying at Sāvatti, in Jeta's grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's park. And at that time the wanderer Poṇḍhapāda was at the debating-hall near the Tinduka tree, in the single-halled park of Queen Mallikā, with a large crowd of about three hundred wanderers.

2. Then the Lord, rising early, took his robe and bowl and went to Sāvatti for alms. But it occurred to him: 'It is too early to go to Sāvatti for alms. Suppose I were to go to the debating-hall to see the wanderer Poṇḍhapāda?' And he did so.

3. There Poṇḍhapāda was sitting with his crowd of wanderers, all shouting and making a great commotion, indulging in various kinds of unedifying conversation, such as about kings, robbers, ministers, armies, dangers, wars, food, drink, clothes, beds, garlands, perfumes, relatives, carriages, villages, towns and cities, countries, women, heroes, street- and well-gossip, talk of the departed, desultory chat, speculations about land and sea, talk of being and non-being.

4. But Poṇḍhapāda saw the Lord coming from a distance, and so he called his followers to order, saying: 'Be quiet, gentlemen, don't make a noise, gentlemen! That ascetic Gotama is coming, and he likes quiet and speaks in praise of quiet. If he sees that this company is quiet, he will most likely want to come and visit us.' At this the wanderers fell silent.

5. Then the Lord came to Poṇḍhapāda, who said: 'Come, reverend Lord, welcome, reverend Lord! At last the reverend Lord has gone out of his way to come here. Be seated, Lord, a seat is prepared.'

The Lord sat down on the prepared seat, and Poṇḍhapāda took a low stool and sat down to one side. The Lord said:

'Poṇḍhapāda, what were you all talking about? What conversation have I interrupted?'

6. Poṇḍhapāda replied: 'Lord, never mind the conversation we were having just now, it will not

be difficult for the Lord to hear about that later. In the past few days, Lord, the discussion among the ascetics and Brahmins of various schools, sit-ting together and meeting in the debating-hall, has concerned the higher extinction of consciousness, and how this takes place. Some said: "One's perceptions arise and cease without cause or condition. When they arise, one is conscious when they cease, then one is unconscious." That is how they explained it. But somebody else said: "No, that is not how it is. Perceptions are a person's self, which comes and goes. When it comes, one is conscious, when it goes, one is unconscious." Another said: "That is not how it is. There are ascetics and Brahmins of great powers, of great influence. They draw down consciousness into a man and withdraw it. When they draw it down into him, he is conscious, when they withdraw it, he is unconscious." And another said: "No, that is not how it is. There are deities of great powers, of great influence. They draw down consciousness into a man and withdraw it. When they draw it down into him, he is conscious, when they withdraw it, he is unconscious." It was in this connection that I thought of the Lord: "Ah, surely, the Blessed Lord, the Well-Farer, he is supremely skilled about these matters! The Blessed Lord well understands the higher extinction of consciousness." What then, Lord, is this higher extinction of consciousness?"

7. In this matter, Poṇḍhapāda, those ascetics and Brahmins who say one's perceptions arise and cease without cause or condition are totally wrong. Why is that? One's perceptions arise and cease owing to a cause and conditions. Some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training.' 'What is this training?', the Lord said. ' Poṇḍhapāda, a Tathāgata arises in this world an Arahant, fully- enlightened Buddha, endowed with wisdom and conduct, Well-Farer, Knower of the worlds, incomparable Trainer of men to be tamed, Teacher of gods and humans, enlightened and blessed. He, having realized it by his own super-know-ledge, proclaims this world with its devas, māras and Brahmās, its princes and people. He preaches the Dhamma which is lovely in its beginning, lovely in its middle, lovely in its ending, in the spirit and in the letter, and displays the fully- perfected and purified holy life. A disciple goes forth and practices the moralities (

Sutta 2, verses 41—62).

That for him is morality.

8. 'And then, Poṇḍhapāda, that monk who is perfected in morality sees no danger from any side... (as *Sutta 2, verse 63*). In this way he is perfected in morality.

9—10. *He guards the sense-doors, etc. (Sutta 2, verses 64—75).* Having reached the first jhāna, he remains in it. And whatever sensations of lust that he previously had disappear. At that time there is present a true but subtle perception of delight and happiness, born of detachment, and he be-comes one who is conscious of this delight and happiness. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training. And this is that training', said the Lord.

11. 'Again, a monk, with the subsiding of thinking and pondering, by gaining inner tranquility and unity of mind, reaches and remains in the second jhāna, which is free from thinking and pondering, born of concentration, filled with delight and happiness. His former true but subtle perception of delight and happiness born of detachment vanishes. At that time there arises a true but subtle perception of delight and happiness born of concentration, and he becomes one who is conscious of this delight and happiness. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training.

12. 'Again, after the fading away of delight he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly aware, and he experiences in his body that pleasant feeling of which the Noble Ones say: "Happy dwells the man of equanimity and mindfulness", and he reaches and remains in the third jhāna. His former true but subtle sense of delight and happiness born of concentration vanishes, and there arises at that time a true but subtle sense of equanimity and happiness, and he becomes one who is conscious of this true but subtle sense of equanimity and happiness. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training.

13. 'Again, with the abandonment of pleasure and pain, and with the disappearance of previous joy and grief, he reaches and remains in the fourth jhāna, a state beyond pleasure and pain, purified by equanimity and mindfulness. His former true but subtle sense of equanimity and happiness vanishes and there arises a true but subtle sense of neither happiness nor unhappiness, and he becomes one who is conscious of this true but subtle sense of neither happiness nor unhappiness. In this way some perceptions arise through training; and some pass away through training.

14. 'Again, by passing entirely beyond bodily sensations, by the disappearance of all sense of resistance and by non-attraction to the perception of diversity, seeing that space is infinite, he reaches and remains in the Sphere of Infinite Space. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training.

15. 'Again, by passing entirely beyond the Sphere of Infinite Space, seeing that consciousness is infinite, he reaches and remains in the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training.

16. 'Again, by passing entirely beyond the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness, seeing that there is

no thing, he reaches and remains in the Sphere of No-Thingness, and he becomes one who is conscious of this true but subtle perception of the Sphere of No-Thingness. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training. And this is that training', said the Lord.

17. 'Poṇḍhapāda, from the moment when a monk has gained this controlled perception, he proceeds from stage to stage till he reaches the limit of perception. When he has reached the limit of perception it occurs to him: "Mental activity is worse for me, lack of mental activity is better. If I were to think and imagine, these perceptions [that I have attained] would cease, and coarser perceptions would arise in me. Suppose I were not to think or imagine?" So he neither thinks nor imagines. And then, in him, just these perceptions arise, but other, coarser perceptions do not arise. He attains cessation. And that, Poṇḍhapāda, is the way in which the cessation of perception is brought about by successive steps.

18. 'What do you think, Poṇḍhapāda? Have you heard of this before?' 'No, Lord. As I understand it, the Lord has said: "Poṇḍhapāda, from the moment when a monk has gained this controlled perception, he proceeds from stage to stage until he reaches the limit of perception... He attains cessation... and that is the way in which the cessation of perception is brought about by successive steps."' 'That is right, Poṇḍhapāda.'

19. 'Lord, do you teach that the summit of perception is just one, or that it is many?' 'I teach it as both one and many.' 'Lord, how is it one, and how is it many?' 'According as he attains successively to the cessation of each perception, so I teach the summit of that perception: thus I teach both one summit of perception, and I also teach many.'

20. 'Lord, does perception arise before knowledge, or knowledge arise before perception, or do both arise simultaneous-ly?' 'Perception arises first, Poṇḍhapāda, then knowledge, and from the arising of perception comes the arising of knowledge. And one knows: "Thus conditioned, knowledge arises." In this way you can see how perception arises first, and then knowledge, and that from the arising of perception comes the arising of knowledge.'

21. 'Lord, is perception a person's self, or is perception one thing, and self another?' 'Well, Poṇḍhapāda, do you postulate a self?' 'Lord, I postulate a gross self, material, composed of the four elements, and feeding on solid food.' 'But with such a gross self, Poṇḍhapāda, perception would be one thing, and the self another. You can see that in this way. Given such a gross self, certain perceptions would arise in a person, and others pass away. In this way you can see that

perception must be one thing, the self another.'

22. 'Lord, I postulate a mind-made self complete with all its parts, not defective in any sense-organ.' 'But with such a mind-made self, perception would be one thing, and the self another...

23. 'Lord, I assume a formless self, made up of perception.' 'But with such a formless self, perception would be one thing, and self another...'

24. 'But Lord, is it possible for me to know whether perception is a person's self, or whether perception is one thing, and self another?' 'Poṇḍhapāda, it is difficult for one of different views, a different faith, under different influences, with different pursuits and a different training to know whether these are two different things or not.'

25. 'Well, Lord, if this question of self and perceptions is difficult for one like me — tell me: Is the world eternal? Is only this true and the opposite false?' 'Poṇḍhapāda, I have not declared that the world is eternal and that the opposite view is false.' 'Well, Lord, is the world not eternal?' 'I have not declared that the world is not eternal...' 'Well, Lord, is the world infinite,...not infinite?...' 'I have not declared that the world is not infinite and that the opposite view is false.'

26. 'Well, Lord, is the soul the same as the body,... is the soul one thing and the body another?' 'I have not declared that the soul is one thing and the body another.'

27. 'Well, Lord, does the Tathāgata exist after death? Is only this true and all else false?' 'I have not declared that the Tathāgata exists after death.' 'Well, Lord, does the Tathāgata not exist after death,... both exist and not exist after death? ...neither exist nor not exist after death?' 'I have not declared that the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death, and that all else is false.'

28. 'But, Lord, why has the Lord not declared these things?' Poṇḍhapāda, that is not conducive to the purpose, not conducive to Dhamma, not the way to embark on the holy life; it does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to higher knowledge, to

enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have not declared it.'

29. 'But, Lord, what has the Lord declared?' ' Poṇḍhapāda, I have declared: "This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, and this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering."

30. 'But, Lord, why has the Lord declared this?' 'Because, Poṇḍhapāda, this is conducive to the purpose, conducive to Dhamma, the way to embark on the holy life; it leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to higher knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have declared it.'

'So it is, Lord, so it is, Well-Farer. And now is the time for the Blessed Lord to do as he sees fit.' Then the Lord rose from his seat and went away.

31. Then the wanderers, as soon as the Lord had left, reproached, sneered and jeered at Poṇḍhapāda from all sides, saying: 'Whatever the ascetic Gotama says, Poṇḍhapāda agrees with him: "So it is, Lord, so it is, Well-Farer!" We don't understand a word of the ascetic Gotama' whole discourse: "Is the world eternal or not? — Is it finite or infinite? — Is the soul the same as the body or different? — Does the Tathāgata exist after death or not, or both, or neither?"'

Poṇḍhapāda replied: 'I don't understand either about whether the world is eternal or not.. .or whether the Tathāgata exists after death or not, or both, or neither. But the ascetic Gotama teaches a true and real way of practice which is consonant with Dhamma and grounded in Dhamma. And why should not a man like me express approval of such a true and real practice, so well taught by the ascetic Gotama?'

32. Two or three days later, Citta, the son of the elephant- trainer, went with Poṇḍhapāda to see the Lord. Citta prostrated himself before the Lord and sat down to one side. Poṇḍhapāda exchanged courtesies with the Lord, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened.

33. ' Poṇḍhapāda, all those wanderers are blind and sightless, you alone among them are sighted. Some things I have taught and pointed out, Poṇḍhapāda, as being certain, others as

being uncertain. Which are the things I have pointed out as uncertain? "The world is eternal" I have declared to be uncertain... "The Tathāgata exists after death..." Why? Because they are not conducive.. .to Nibbāna. That is why I have declared them as uncertain.

'But what things have I pointed out as certain? "This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering." Why? Because they are conducive to the purpose, conducive to Dhamma, the way to embark on the holy life; they lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to higher knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have declared them as certain.

34. ' Poṇḍhapāda, there are some ascetics and Brahmins who declare and believe that after death the self is entirely happy and free from disease. I approached them and asked if this was indeed what they declared and believed, and they replied: "Yes." Then I said: "Do you, friends, living in the world, know and see it as an entirely happy place?" and they replied: "No." I said: "Have you ever experienced a single night or day, or half a night or day, that was entirely happy?" and they replied: "No." I said: "Do you know a path or a practice whereby an entirely happy world might be brought about?" and they replied: "No." I said: "Have you heard the voices of deities who have been reborn in an entirely happy world, saying: The attainment of an entirely happy world has been well and rightly gained, and we, gentlemen, have been reborn in such a realm?" and they replied: "No." What do you think, Poṇḍhapāda? Such being the case, does not the talk of those ascetics and Brahmins turn out to be stupid?

35. It is just as if a man were to say: "I am going to seek out and love the most beautiful girl in the country." They might say to him: "Well, as to this most beautiful girl in the country, do you know whether she belongs to the Khattiya, the Brahmin, the merchant or the artisan class?" and he would say: "No." Then they might say: "Well, do you know her name, her clan, whether she is tall or short or of medium height, whether she is dark or light-complexioned or sallow-skinned, or what village or town or city she comes from?" and he would say: "No." And they might say: "Well then, you don't know or see the one you seek for and desire?" and he would say: "No." Does not the talk of that man turn out to be stupid?' 'Certainly, Lord.'

36. 'And so it is with those ascetics and Brahmins who declare and believe that after death the self is entirely happy and free from disease... Does not their talk turn out to be stupid?' 'Certainly, Lord.'

37. 'It is just as if a man were to build a staircase for a palace at a crossroads. People might say

to him: "Well now, this staircase for a palace that you are building — do you know whether the palace will face east, or west, or north or south, or whether it will be high, low or of medium height?" and he would say: "No." And they might say: "Well then, you don't know or see what kind of a palace you are building the stair-case for?" and he would say: "No." Don't you think that man's talk would turn out to be stupid?' 'Certainly, Lord.'

38. *(as verse 34)*

39. ' Poṇḍhapāda, there are three kinds of "acquired self": the gross acquired self, the mind-made acquired self, the formless acquired self. What is the gross acquired self? It has form, is composed of the four great elements, nourished by material food. What is the mind-made self? It has form, complete with all its parts, not defective in any sense-organ. What is the formless acquired self? It is without form, and made up of perception.

40. 'But I teach a doctrine for getting rid of the gross acquired self, whereby defiling mental states disappear and states tending to purification grow strong, and one gains and remains in the purity and perfection of wisdom here and now, having realized and attained it by one's own super- knowledge. Now, Poṇḍhapāda, you might think: "Perhaps these defiling mental states might disappear..., and one might still be unhappy." That is not how it should be regarded. If defiling states disappear..., nothing but happiness and delight develops, tranquility, mindfulness and clear awareness — and that is a happy state.

41. 'I also teach a doctrine for getting rid of the mind-made acquired self.. *(as verse 40)*.

42. 'I also teach a doctrine for getting rid of the formless acquired self.. *(as verse 40)*.

43. ' Poṇḍhapāda, if others ask us: "What, friend, is this gross acquired self whose abandonment you preach...?" being so asked, we should reply: "This is that gross acquired self for the getting rid of which we teach a doctrine..."

44. 'If others ask us: "What is this mind-made acquired self ...?" *(as verse 43)*.

45. 'If others ask us: "What is this formless acquired self...?" (as verse 43). What do you think, Poṇḍhapāda? Does not that statement turn out to be well-founded?' 'Certainly, Lord'

46. 'It is just as if a man were to build a staircase for a palace, which was below that palace. They might say to him: "Well now, this staircase for a palace that you are building, do you know whether the palace will face east or west, or north or south, or whether it will be high, low or of medium height?" and he would say: "This staircase is right under the palace." Don't you think that man's statement would be well-founded?' 'Certainly, Lord.'

47. 'In just the same way, Poṇḍhapāda, if others ask us: "What is this gross acquired self...?" "What is this mind-made acquired self...?" "What is this formless acquired self ...?" we reply: "This *is* this [gross, mind-made, formless] acquired self for the getting rid of which we teach a doctrine, whereby defiling mental states disappear and states tending to purification grow strong, and one gains and remains in the purity and perfection of wisdom here and now, having realized and attained it by one's own super-knowledge." Don't you think that statement is well-founded?' 'Certainly, Lord.'

48. At this, Citta, son of the elephant-trainer, said to the Lord: 'Lord, whenever the gross acquired self is present, would it be wrong to assume the existence of the mind-made acquired self, or of the formless acquired self? Does only the gross acquired self truly exist then? And similarly with the mind-made acquired self, and the formless acquired self?'

49. 'Citta, whenever the gross acquired self is present, we do not at that time speak of a mind-made acquired self, we do not speak of a formless acquired self. We speak only of a gross acquired self. Whenever the mind-made acquired self is present, we speak only of a mind-made acquired self, and whenever the formless acquired self is present, we speak only of a formless acquired self.

'Citta, suppose they were to ask you: "Did you exist in the past or didn't you, will you exist in the future or won't you, do you exist now or don't you?" how would you answer?'

'lord, if I were asked such a question, I would say: "I did exist in the past, I did not not exist; I

shall exist in the future, I shall not not exist; I do exist now, I do not not exist." That, Lord, would be my answer.'

50. 'But, Citta, if they asked: "The past acquired self that you had, is that your only true acquired self, and are the future and present ones false? Or is the one you will have in the future the only true one, and are the past and present ones false? Or is your present acquired self the only true one, and are the past and future ones false?" how would you reply?'

'Lord, if they asked me these things, I would reply: "My past acquired self was at the time my only true one, the future and present ones were false. My future acquired self will then be the only true one, the past and present ones will be false. My present acquired self is now the only true one, the past and future ones are false." That is how I would reply.'

51. 'In just the same way, Citta, whenever the gross acquired self is present, we do not at that time speak of a mind-made acquired self.. [or] of a formless acquired self.

52. 'In just the same way, Citta, from the cow we get milk, from the milk curds, from the curds butter, from the butter ghee, and from the ghee cream of ghee. And when there is milk we don't speak of curds, of butter, of ghee or of cream of ghee, we speak of milk; when there are curds we don't speak of butter...; when there is cream of ghee.. we speak of cream of ghee.

53. 'So too, whenever the gross acquired self is present, we do not speak of the mind-made or formless acquired self; whenever the mind-made acquired self is present, we do not speak of the gross or formless acquired self; whenever the formless acquired self is present, we do not speak of the gross acquired self or the mind-made acquired self, we speak of the formless acquired self. But, Citta, these are merely names, expressions, turns of speech, designations in common use in the world, which the Tathāgata uses without misapprehending them.'

And at these words Poṇḍhapāda the wanderer said to the Lord: 'Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if someone were to set up what had been knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost, or to bring an oil-lamp into a dark place, so that those with eyes could see what was there. Jug* so the Blessed Lord has expounded the Dhamma in various ways. Lord, I go for refuge to the Lord, the Dhamma and the Sangha. May the Lord accept me as a lay-follower who has taken refuge in him from this day forth as long as life shall last!'

55. But Citta, son of the elephant-trainer, said to the Lord: 'Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if someone were to set up what had been knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost, or to bring an oil-lamp into a dark place, so that those with eyes could see what was there. Just so the Blessed Lord has expounded the Dhamma in various ways. Lord, I go for refuge to the Lord, the Dhamma and the Sangha. May I, Lord, receive the going-forth at the Lord's hands, may I receive ordination!'

56. And Citta, son of the elephant-trainer, received the going- forth at the Lord's hands, and the ordination. And the newly- ordained Venerable Citta, alone, secluded, unwearying, zealous and resolute, in a short time attained to that for the sake of which young men of good birth go forth from the house-hold life into homelessness, that unexcelled culmination of the holy life, having realized it here and now by his own super-knowledge and dwelt therein, knowing: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further here.'

And the Venerable Citta, son of the elephant-trainer, became another of the Arahants.

Dīgha Nikāya 9

Division One – The Moralities

Translated by Maurice Walshe

Contributed by Ariya Zhong