

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattḥī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus." "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Bhikkhus, whatever fears arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man; whatever troubles arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man; whatever calamities arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man. Just as a fire that starts in a shed made of rushes or grass burns down even a house with a peaked roof, with walls plastered inside and outside, shut off, secured by bars, with shuttered windows; so too, bhikkhus, whatever fears arise...all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man. Thus the fool brings fear, the wise man brings no fear; the fool brings trouble, the wise man brings no trouble; the fool brings calamity, the wise man brings no calamity. No fear comes from the wise man, no trouble comes from the wise man, no calamity comes from the wise man. Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'We shall be wise men, we shall be inquirers.'"

3. When this was said, the venerable Ānanda asked the Blessed One: "In what way, venerable sir, can a bhikkhu be called a wise man and an inquirer?"

"When, Ānanda, a bhikkhu is skilled in the elements, skilled in the bases, skilled in dependent origination, skilled in what is possible and what is impossible, in that way he can be called a wise man and an inquirer."

(THE ELEMENTS)

4. "But, venerable sir, in what way can a bhikkhu be called skilled in the elements?"

"There are, Ānanda, these eighteen elements: the eye element, the form element, the eye-consciousness element; the ear element, the sound element, the ear-consciousness element; the nose element, the odor element, the nose-consciousness element; the tongue element, the flavor element, the tongue-consciousness element; the body element, the tangible element, the body-consciousness element; the mind element, the mind-object element, the mind-consciousness element. When he knows and sees these eighteen elements, a bhikkhu

can be called skilled in the elements.”

5. “But, venerable sir, might there be another way in which a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements?”

“There might be, Ānanda. There are, Ānanda, these six elements: the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the air element, the space element, and the consciousness element. When he knows and sees these six elements, a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements.”

6. “But, venerable sir, might there be another way in which a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements?”

“There might be, Ānanda. There are, Ānanda, these six elements: the pleasure element, the pain element, the joy element, the grief element, the equanimity element, and the ignorance element. When he knows and sees these six elements, a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements.”

7. “But, venerable sir, might there be another way in which a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements?”

“There might be, Ānanda. There are, Ānanda, these six elements: the sensual desire element, the renunciation element, the ill will element, the non-ill will element, the cruelty element, and the non-cruelty element. When he knows and sees these six elements, a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements.”

8. “But, venerable sir, might there be another way in which a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements?”

“There might be, Ānanda. There are, Ānanda, these three elements: the sense-sphere element, the fine-material element, and the immaterial element. When he knows and sees these three

elements, a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements.”

9. “But, venerable sir, might there be another way in which a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements?”

“There might be, Ānanda. There are, Ānanda, these two elements: the conditioned element and the unconditioned element. When he knows and sees these two elements, a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the elements.”

(THE BASES)

10. “But, venerable sir, in what way can a bhikkhu be called skilled in the bases?”

“There are, Ānanda, these six internal and external bases: the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and flavors, the body and tangibles, the mind and mind-objects. When he knows and sees these six internal and external bases, a bhikkhu can be called skilled in the bases.”

(DEPENDENT ORIGINATION)

11. “But, venerable sir, in what way can a bhikkhu be called skilled in dependent origination?”

“Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu knows thus: ‘When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases. That is, with ignorance as condition, formations [come to be]; with formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, mentality-materiality; with mentality-materiality as condition, the sixfold base; with the sixfold base as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, being; with being as condition, birth; with birth as condition, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.’”

“But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of formations; with the cessation of formations, cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness, cessation of mentality-materiality; with the cessation of mentality-materiality, cessation of the sixfold base; with the cessation of the sixfold base, cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of being; with the cessation of being, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.’ In this way, Ānanda, a bhikkhu can be called skilled in dependent origination.”

#### (THE POSSIBLE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE)

12. “But, venerable sir, in what way can a bhikkhu be called skilled in what is possible and what is impossible?”

“Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could treat any formation as permanent □ there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that an ordinary person might treat some formation as permanent □ there is such a possibility.’ He understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could treat any formation as pleasurable □ there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that an ordinary person might treat some formation as pleasurable □ there is such a possibility.’ He understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could treat anything as self □ there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that an ordinary person might treat something as self □ there is such a possibility.’

13. “He understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could deprive his mother of life □ there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that an ordinary person might deprive his mother of life □ there is such a possibility.’ He understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could deprive his father of life...could deprive an arahant of life □ there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that an ordinary person might deprive his father of life...could deprive an arahant of life □ there is such a possibility.’ He understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could, with a mind of hate, shed a Tathāgata’s blood □ there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that an ordinary person

might, with a mind of hate, shed a Tathāgata's blood □ there is such a possibility.' He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could cause a schism in the Sangha...could acknowledge another teacher □ there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that an ordinary person might cause a schism in the Sangha...might acknowledge another teacher □ there is such a possibility.'

14. "He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that two Accomplished Ones, Fully Enlightened Ones, could arise contemporaneously in one world-system □ there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that one Accomplished One, a Fully Enlightened One, might arise in one world-system □ there is such a possibility.' He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that two Wheel-turning Monarchs could arise contemporaneously in one world-system...It is possible that one Wheel-turning Monarch might arise in one world-system □ there is such a possibility.'

15. "He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a woman could be an Accomplished One, a Fully Enlightened One □ there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that a man might be an Accomplished One, a Fully Enlightened One □ there is such a possibility.' He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a woman could be a Wheel-turning Monarch...that a woman could occupy the position of Sakka...that a woman could occupy the position of Māra...that a woman could occupy the position of Brahmā □ there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that a man might be a Wheel-turning Monarch...that a man might occupy the position of Sakka...that a man might occupy the position of Māra...that a man might occupy the position of Brahmā □ there is such a possibility.'

16. "He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a wished for, desired, agreeable result could be produced from bodily misconduct...from verbal misconduct...from mental misconduct □ there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that an unwished for, undesired, disagreeable result might be produced from bodily misconduct...from verbal misconduct...from mental misconduct □ there is such a possibility.'

17. He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that an unwished for, undesired, disagreeable result could be produced from good bodily conduct...from good verbal conduct...from good mental conduct □ there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that a wished for, desired, agreeable result might be produced from good bodily conduct...from good verbal conduct...from good mental conduct □ there is such a possibility.'

18. He understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person engaging in bodily misconduct...engaging in verbal misconduct...engaging in mental misconduct could on that account, for that reason, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world □ there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that a person engaging in bodily misconduct...engaging in verbal misconduct...engaging in mental misconduct could on that account, for that reason, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell □ there is such a possibility.’

19. He understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person engaging in good bodily conduct...engaging in good verbal conduct...engaging in good mental conduct could on that account, for that reason, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell □ there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that a person engaging in good bodily conduct...engaging in good verbal conduct...engaging in good mental conduct could on that account, for that reason, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world.’

“In this way, Ānanda, a bhikkhu can be called skilled in what is possible and what is impossible.”

(CONCLUSION)

20. When this was said, the venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: “It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvelous! What is the name of this discourse on the Dhamma?”

“You may remember this discourse on the Dhamma, Ānanda, as ‘The Many Kinds of Elements’ and as ‘The Four Cycles’ and as ‘The Mirror of the Dhamma’ and as ‘The Drum of the Deathless’ and as ‘The Supreme Victory in Battle.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ānanda was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

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Majjhima Nikāya 115

Part Three— The Final Fifty Discourses (Uparipaṭṭhāsapāṭi)

The Division at Devadaha (Devadahavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

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