

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī 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, I shall teach you an exposition of the sixfold base. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say." – "Yes, venerable sir," the bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

3. "The six internal bases should be understood. The six external bases should be understood. The six classes of consciousness should be understood. The six classes of contact should be understood. The eighteen kinds of mental exploration should be understood. The thirty-six positions of beings should be understood. Therein, by depending on this, abandon that. There are three foundations of mindfulness that the Noble One cultivates, cultivating which the Noble One is a teacher fit to instruct a group. Among the teachers of training it is he that is called the incomparable leader of persons to be tamed. This is the summary of the exposition of the sixfold base.

4. "'The six internal bases should be understood.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? There are the eye-base, the ear-base, the nose-base, the tongue-base, the body-base, and the mind-base. So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'The six internal bases should be understood.'

5. "'The six external bases should be understood.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? There are the form-base, the sound-base, the odor-base, the flavor-base, the tangible-base, and the mind-object-base. So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'The six external bases should be understood.'

6. "'The six classes of consciousness should be understood.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? There are eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness. So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'The six classes of consciousness should be understood.'

7. "'The six classes of contact should be understood.' So it was said. And with reference to what

was this said? There are eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, and mind-contact. So it was with reference to this that it was said ‘The six classes of contact should be understood.’

8. “The eighteen kinds of mental exploration should be understood.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

“On seeing a form with the eye, one explores a form productive of joy, one explores a form productive of grief, one explores a form productive of equanimity. On hearing a sound with the ear...On smelling an odor with the nose...On tasting a flavor with the tongue...On touching a tangible with the body...On cognizing a mind-object with the mind, one explores a mind-object productive of joy, one explores a mind-object productive of grief, one explores a mind-object productive of equanimity. Thus there are six kinds of exploration with joy, six kinds of exploration with grief, and six kinds of exploration with equanimity. So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘The eighteen kinds of mental exploration should be understood.’

9. “The thirty-six positions of beings should be understood.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? There are six kinds of joy based on the household life and six kinds of joy based on renunciation. There are six kinds of grief based on the household life and six kinds of grief based on renunciation. There are six kinds of equanimity based on the household life and six kinds of equanimity based on renunciation.

10. “Herein, what are the six kinds of joy based on the household life? When one regards as a gain the gain of forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desired, agreeable, gratifying, and associated with worldliness – or when one recalls what was formerly obtained that has passed, ceased, and changed – joy arises. Such joy as this is called joy based on the household life.

“When one regards as a gain the gain of sounds cognizable by the ear...the gain of odors cognizable by the nose...the gain of flavors cognizable by the tongue...the gain of tangibles cognizable by the body...the gain of mind-objects cognizable by the mind that are wished for, desired, agreeable, gratifying, and associated with worldliness – or when one recalls what was formerly obtained that has passed, ceased, and changed – joy arises. Such joy as this is called joy based on the household life. These are the six kinds of joy based on the household life.

11. “Herein, what are the six kinds of joy based on renunciation? When, by knowing the impermanence, change, fading away, and cessation of forms, one sees as it actually is with proper wisdom that forms both formerly and now are all impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, joy arises. Such joy as this is called joy based on renunciation.

“When, by knowing the impermanence, change, fading away, and cessation of sounds...of odors...of flavors...of tangibles...of mind-objects, one sees as it actually is with proper wisdom that mind-objects both formerly and now are all impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, joy arises. Such joy as this is called joy based on renunciation. These are the six kinds of joy based on renunciation.

12. “Herein, what are the six kinds of grief based on the household life? When one regards as a non-gain the non-gain of forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desired, agreeable, gratifying, and associated with worldliness – or when one recalls what was formerly not obtained that has passed, ceased, and changed – grief arises. Such grief as this is called grief based on the household life.

“When one regards as a non-gain the non-gain of sounds cognizable by the ear...the non-gain of odors cognizable by the nose...the non-gain of flavors cognizable by the tongue...the non-gain of tangibles cognizable by the body...the non-gain of mind-objects cognizable by the mind that are wished for, desired, agreeable, gratifying, and associated with worldliness – or when one recalls what was formerly not obtained that has passed, ceased, and changed – grief arises. Such grief as this is called grief based on the household life. These are the six kinds of grief based on the household life.

13. “Herein, what are the six kinds of grief based on renunciation? When, by knowing the impermanence, change, fading away, and cessation of forms, one sees as it actually is with proper wisdom that forms both formerly and now are all impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, one generates a longing for the supreme liberations thus: ‘When shall I enter upon and abide in that base that the noble ones now enter upon and abide in?’ In one who generates thus a longing for the supreme liberations, grief arises with that longing as condition. Such grief as this is called grief based on renunciation.

“When, by knowing the impermanence, change, fading away, and cessation of sounds...of odors...of flavors...of tangibles...of mind-objects, one sees as it actually is with proper wisdom that mind-objects both formerly and now are all impermanent, suffering, and subject to change,

one generates a longing for the supreme liberations thus: 'When shall I enter upon and abide in that base that the noble ones now enter upon and abide in?' In one who generates thus a longing for the supreme liberations, grief arises with that longing as condition. Such grief as this is called grief based on renunciation. These are the six kinds of grief based on renunciation.

14. "Herein, what are the six kinds of equanimity based on the household life? On seeing a form with the eye, equanimity arises in a foolish infatuated ordinary person, in an untaught ordinary person who has not conquered his limitations or conquered the results [of action] and who is blind to danger. Such equanimity as this does not transcend the form; that is why it is called equanimity based on the household life.

"On hearing a sound with the ear...On smelling an odor with the nose...On tasting a flavor with the tongue...On touching a tangible with the body...On cognizing a mind-object with the mind, equanimity arises in a foolish infatuated ordinary person, in an untaught ordinary person who has not conquered his limitations or conquered the results [of action] and who is blind to danger. Such equanimity as this does not transcend the mind-object; that is why it is called equanimity based on the household life. These are the six kinds of equanimity based on the household life.

15. "Herein, what are the six kinds of equanimity based on renunciation? When, by knowing the impermanence, change, fading away, and cessation of forms, one sees as it actually is with proper wisdom that forms both formerly and now are all impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, equanimity arises. Such equanimity as this transcends the form; that is why it is called equanimity based on renunciation.

"When, by knowing the impermanence, change, fading away, and cessation of sounds...of odors...of flavors...of tangibles...of mind-objects, one sees as it actually is with proper wisdom that mind-objects both formerly and now are all impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, equanimity arises. Such equanimity as this transcends the mind-object; that is why it is called equanimity based on renunciation. These are the six kinds of equanimity based on renunciation.

"So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'The thirty-six positions of beings should be understood.'

16. "“Therein, by depending on this, abandon that.’ So it was said. And with reference to what

was this said?

“Here, bhikkhus, by depending and relying on the six kinds of joy based on renunciation, abandon and surmount the six kinds of joy based on the household life. It is thus they are abandoned; it is thus they are surmounted. By depending and relying on the six kinds of grief based on renunciation, abandon and surmount the six kinds of grief based on the household life. It is thus they are abandoned; it is thus they are surmounted. By depending and relying on the six kinds of equanimity based on renunciation, abandon and surmount the six kinds of equanimity based on the household life. It is thus they are abandoned; it is thus they are surmounted.

17. “There is, bhikkhus, equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity; and there is equanimity that is unified, based on unity.

18. “And what, bhikkhus, is equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity? There is equanimity regarding forms, sounds, odors, flavors, and tangibles. This, bhikkhus, is equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity.

19. “And what, bhikkhus, is equanimity that is unified, based on unity? There is equanimity regarding the base of infinite space, the base of infinite consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This, bhikkhus, is equanimity that is unified, based on unity.

20. “Here, bhikkhus, by depending and relying on equanimity that is unified, based on unity, abandon and surmount equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity. It is thus this is abandoned; it is thus this is surmounted.

“Bhikkhus, by depending and relying on non-identification, abandon and surmount equanimity that is unified, based on unity. It is thus this is abandoned; it is thus this is surmounted.

“So it was in reference to this that it was said: ‘Therein, by depending on this, abandon, that.’

21. “There are three foundations of mindfulness that the Noble One cultivates, cultivating which the Noble One is a teacher fit to instruct a group.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

22. “Here, bhikkhus, compassionate and seeking their welfare, the Teacher teaches the Dhamma to the disciples out of compassion: ‘This is for your welfare; this is for your happiness.’ His disciples do not want to hear or give ear or exert their minds to understand; they err and turn aside from the Teacher’s Dispensation. With that the Tathāgata is not satisfied and feels no satisfaction; yet he dwells unmoved, mindful, and fully aware. This, bhikkhus, is called the first foundation of mindfulness that the Noble One cultivates, cultivating which the Noble One is a teacher fit to instruct a group.

23. “Furthermore, bhikkhus, compassionate and seeking their welfare, the Teacher teaches the Dhamma to the disciples out of compassion: ‘This is for your welfare; this is for your happiness.’ Some of his disciples will not hear or give ear or exert their minds to understand; they err and turn aside from the Teacher’s Dispensation. Some of his disciples will hear and give ear and exert their minds to understand; they do not err and turn aside from the Teacher’s Dispensation. With that the Tathāgata is not satisfied and feels no satisfaction, and he is not dissatisfied and feels no dissatisfaction; remaining free from both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, he dwells in equanimity, mindful, and fully aware. This, bhikkhus, is called the second foundation of mindfulness that the Noble One cultivates, cultivating which the Noble One is a teacher fit to instruct a group.

24. “Furthermore, bhikkhus, compassionate and seeking their welfare, the Teacher teaches the Dhamma to the disciples out of compassion: ‘This is for your welfare; this is for your happiness.’ His disciples will hear and give ear and exert their minds to understand; they do not err and turn aside from the Teacher’s Dispensation. With that the Tathāgata is satisfied and feels satisfaction; yet he dwells unmoved, mindful, and fully aware. This, bhikkhus, is called the third foundation of mindfulness that the Noble One cultivates, cultivating which the Noble One is a teacher fit to instruct a group.

“So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘There are three foundations of mindfulness that the Noble One cultivates, cultivating which the Noble One is a teacher fit to instruct a group.’

25. “Among the teachers of training it is he that is called the incomparable leader of persons to be tamed.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

“Guided by the elephant tamer, bhikkhus, the elephant to be tamed goes in one direction – east, west, north, or south. Guided by the horse tamer, bhikkhus, the horse to be tamed goes in one direction – east, west, north, or south. Guided by the ox tamer, bhikkhus, the ox to be tamed goes in one direction – east, west, north, or south.

26. “Bhikkhus, guided by the Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened, the person to be tamed goes in eight directions.

“Possessed of material form, he sees forms: this is the first direction. Not perceiving forms internally, he sees forms externally: this is the second direction. He is resolved only upon the beautiful: this is the third direction. With the complete surmounting of the perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of sensory impact, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, aware that ‘space is infinite,’ he enters upon and abides in the base of infinite space: this is the fourth direction. By completely surmounting the base of infinite space, aware that ‘consciousness is infinite,’ he enters upon and abides in the base of infinite consciousness: this is the fifth direction. By completely surmounting the base of infinite consciousness, aware that ‘there is nothing,’ he enters upon and abides in the base of nothingness: this is the sixth direction. By completely surmounting the base of nothingness, he enters upon and abides in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception: this is the seventh direction. By completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, he enters upon and abides in the cessation of perception and feeling: this is the eighth direction.

“Bhikkhus, guided by the Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened, the person to be tamed goes in these eight directions.

28. “So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘Among the teachers of training it is he that is called the incomparable leader of persons to be tamed.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

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Majjhima Nikāya 137

Part Three— The Final Fifty Discourses (Uparipaṭṭi āsapāṭi)

The Division of Expositions (Vibhangavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

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