

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

2. "Bhikkhus, I shall teach you an exposition of non-conflict. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say." – "Yes, venerable sir," the bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

3. "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. The Middle Way discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both extremes; giving vision, giving knowledge, it leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. One should know what it is to extol and what it is to disparage, and knowing both, one should neither extol nor disparage but should teach only the Dhamma. One should know how to define pleasure, and knowing that, one should pursue pleasure within oneself. One should not utter covert speech, and one should not utter overt sharp speech. One should speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly. One should not insist on local language, and one should not override normal usage. This is the summary of the exposition of non-conflict.

4. "'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.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

"The pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial – is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Disengagement from the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial – is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way.

"The pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Disengagement from the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – 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.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘The Middle Way discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both these extremes...to Nibbāna.’

6. “‘One should know what it is to extol and what it is to disparage, and knowing both, one should neither extol nor disparage but should teach only the Dhamma.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

7. “How, bhikkhus, does there come to be extolling and disparaging and failure to teach only the Dhamma? When one says: ‘All those engaged in the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low...and unbeneficial – are beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the wrong way,’ one thus disparages some. When one says: ‘All those disengaged from the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low...and unbeneficial – are without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the right way,’ one thus extols some.

“When one says: ‘All those engaged in the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – are beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the wrong way,’ one thus disparages some. When one says: ‘All those disengaged from the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – are without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the right way,’ one thus extols some.

“When one says: ‘All those who have not abandoned the fetter of being are beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the wrong way,’ one thus disparages some. When one says: ‘All those who have abandoned the fetter of being are without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the right way,’ one thus extols some. This is how there comes to be extolling and disparaging and failure to teach only the Dhamma.

8. “And how, bhikkhus, does there come to be neither extolling nor disparaging but teaching only the Dhamma? When one does not say: ‘All those engaged in the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires...have entered upon the wrong way,’ but says instead: ‘The pursuit is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way,’ then one teaches only the Dhamma. When one does not say: ‘All those disengaged from the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires...have entered upon the right way,’ but says instead: ‘The disengagement is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way,’ then one teaches only the Dhamma.

“When one does not say: ‘All those engaged in the pursuit of self-mortification...have entered upon the wrong way,’ but says instead: ‘The pursuit is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way,’ then one teaches only the Dhamma. When one does not say: ‘All those disengaged from the pursuit of self-mortification...have entered upon the right way,’ but says instead: ‘The disengagement is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way,’ then one teaches only the Dhamma.

“When one does not say: ‘All those who have not abandoned the fetter of being...have entered upon the wrong way,’ but says instead: ‘As long as the fetter of being is unabandoned, being too is unabandoned,’ then one teaches only the Dhamma. When one does not say: ‘All those who have abandoned the fetter of being...have entered upon the right way,’ but says instead: ‘When the fetter of being is abandoned, being also is abandoned,’ then one teaches only the Dhamma.

“So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘One should know what it is to extol and what it is to disparage, and knowing both, one should neither extol nor disparage but should teach only the Dhamma.’

9. “One should know how to define pleasure, and knowing that, one should pursue pleasure within oneself.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

“Bhikkhus, there are these five cords of sensual pleasure. What five? Forms cognizable by the eye...sounds cognizable by the ear...odours cognizable by the nose...flavours cognizable by the tongue...tangibles cognizable by the body that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. These are the five cords of sensual pleasure. Now the pleasure and joy that arise dependent on these five cords of sensual pleasure are called sensual pleasure – a filthy pleasure, a coarse pleasure, an ignoble pleasure.

I say of this kind of pleasure that it should not be pursued, that it should not be developed, that it should not be cultivated, and that it should be feared.

“Here, bhikkhus, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhāna...the second jhāna...the third jhāna...the fourth jhāna. This is called the bliss of renunciation, the bliss of seclusion, the bliss of peace, the bliss of enlightenment. I say of this kind of pleasure that it should be pursued, that it should be developed, that it should be cultivated, and that it should not be feared.

“So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘One should know how to define pleasure, and knowing that, one should pursue pleasure within oneself.’

10. “One should not utter covert speech, and one should not utter overt sharp speech.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

“Here, bhikkhus, when one knows covert speech to be untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, one should on no account utter it. When one knows covert speech to be true, correct, and unbeneficial, one should try not to utter it. But when one knows covert speech to be true, correct, and beneficial, one may utter it, knowing the time to do so.

“Here, bhikkhus, when one knows overt sharp speech to be untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, one should on no account utter it. When one knows overt sharp speech to be true, correct, and unbeneficial, one should try not to utter it. But when one knows overt sharp speech to be true, correct, and beneficial, one may utter it, knowing the time to do so.

“So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘One should not utter covert speech, and one should not utter overt sharp speech.’

11. “One should speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

“Here, bhikkhus, when one speaks hurriedly, one’s body grows tired and one’s mind becomes excited, one’s voice is strained and one’s throat becomes hoarse, and the speech of one who speaks hurriedly is indistinct and hard to understand.

“Here, bhikkhus, when one speaks unhurriedly, one’s body does not grow tired nor does one’s mind become excited, one’s voice is not strained nor does one’s throat become hoarse, and the speech of one who speaks unhurriedly is distinct and easy to understand.

“So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘One should speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly.’

12. “One should not insist on local language, and one should not override normal usage.’ So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

“How, bhikkhus, does there come to be insistence on local language and overriding of normal usage? Here, bhikkhus, in different localities they call the same thing a ‘dish’ [*pāṭi*], a ‘bowl’ [*patt*],

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a ‘vessel’ [*vittha*], a ‘saucer’ [*serāva*], a ‘pan’ [*dhāropa*], a ‘pot’ [*po*],
a
], or a ‘basin’ [*pis*],
ī
la

]. So whatever they call it in such and such a locality, one speaks accordingly, firmly adhering [to that expression] and insisting: ‘Only this is correct; anything else is wrong.’ This is how there comes to be insistence on local language and overriding normal usage.

“And how, bhikkhus, does there come to be non-insistence on local language and non-overriding of normal usage? Here, bhikkhus, in different localities they call the same thing a

‘dish’...or a ‘basin’. So whatever they call it in such and such a locality, without adhering [to that expression] one speaks accordingly, thinking: ‘These venerable ones, it seems, are speaking with reference to this.’ This is how there comes to be non-insistence on local language and non-overriding of normal usage.

“So it was with reference to this that it was said: ‘One should not insist on local language, and one should not override normal usage.’

13. “Here, bhikkhus, the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low...and unbeneficial – is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, disengagement from the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low...and unbeneficial – is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial -- is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, disengagement from the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial -- is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, 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. It is a state without suffering...and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, extolling and disparaging and failure to teach only the Dhamma is a state beset by suffering...and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, not extolling and not disparaging and teaching only the Dhamma is a state without suffering...and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, sensual pleasure – a filthy pleasure, a coarse pleasure, an ignoble pleasure – is a state beset by suffering...and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, the bliss of renunciation, the bliss of seclusion, the bliss of peace, the bliss of enlightenment, is a state without suffering...and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, covert speech that is untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, covert speech that is true, correct, and unbeneficial is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, covert speech that is true, correct, and beneficial is a state without suffering...Therefore this is a state without conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, overt sharp speech that is untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, overt sharp speech that is true, correct, and unbeneficial is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, overt sharp speech that is true, correct, and beneficial is a state without suffering...Therefore this is a state without conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, the speech of one who speaks hurriedly is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, the speech of one who speaks unhurriedly is a state without suffering...Therefore this is a state without conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, insistence on local language and overriding of normal usage is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

“Here, bhikkhus, non-insistence on local language and non-overriding of normal usage is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

14. “Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We shall know the state with conflict and we shall know the state without conflict, and knowing these, we shall enter upon the way without conflict.’ Now, bhikkhus, Subhūti is a clansman who has entered upon the way without conflict.”

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

Majjhima Nikāya 139

Part Three— The Final Fifty Discourses (Uparipaṃ āsapāṃ i)

The Division of Expositions (Vibhangavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṃ amoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

Contributed by Chris Burke