

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Kuru country where there was a town of the Kurus named Kammāsadhamma. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: “Bhikkhus.” □ “Venerable sir,” they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. “Bhikkhus, sensual pleasures are impermanent, hollow, false, deceptive; they are illusory, the prattle of fools. Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come □ both alike are Māra’s realm, Māra’s domain, Māra’s bait, Māra’s hunting ground. On account of them, these evil unwholesome mental states such as covetousness, ill will, and presumption arise, and they constitute an obstruction to a noble disciple in training here.

(THE IMPERTURBABLE)

3. “Therein, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come...constitute an obstruction to a noble disciple in training here. Suppose I were to abide with a mind abundant and exalted, having transcended the world and made a firm determination with the mind. When I do so, there will be no more evil unwholesome mental states such as covetousness, ill will, and presumption in me, and with the abandoning of them my mind will be unlimited, immeasurable, and well developed.’ When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the imperturbable now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the first way directed to the imperturbable.

4. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘[There are] sensual pleasure here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come; whatever material form [there is], all material form is the four great elements and the material form derived from the four great elements.’ When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the imperturbable now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the second way directed to the imperturbable.

5. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come, material forms here and now and material forms in lives to come, perceptions of forms here and now and perceptions of forms in lives to come □ both alike are impermanent. What is impermanent is not worth delighting in, not worth welcoming, not worth holding to.’ When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the imperturbable now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the third way directed to the imperturbable.

(THE BASE OF NOTHINGNESS)

6. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come, material forms here and now and material forms in lives to come, perceptions of forms here and now and perceptions of forms in lives to come, and perceptions of the imperturbable □ all are perceptions. Where these perceptions cease without remainder, that is the peaceful, that is the sublime, namely, the base of nothingness.’ When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the base of nothingness now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the first way directed to the base of nothingness.

7. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, considers thus: ‘This is void of a self or of what belongs to a self.’ When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the base of nothingness now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the second way directed to the base of nothingness.

8. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘I am not anything belonging to anyone anywhere, nor is there anything belonging to me in anyone anywhere.’ When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the base of nothingness now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving

consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the third way directed to the base of nothingness.

(THE BASE OF NEITHER-PERCEPTION-NOR-NON-PERCEPTION)

9. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come, material forms here and now and material forms in lives to come, perceptions of forms here and now and perceptions of forms in lives to come, perceptions of the imperturbable, and perceptions of the base of nothingness □ all are perceptions. Where these perceptions cease without remainder, that is the peaceful, that is the sublime, namely, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.’ When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the way directed to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

(NIBBĀNA)

10. When this was said, the venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, here a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine; it will not be, and it will not be mine. What exists, what has come to be, that I am abandoning.’ Thus he obtains equanimity. Venerable sir, does such a bhikkhu attain Nibbāna?”

“One bhikkhu here, Ānanda, might attain Nibbāna, another bhikkhu here might not attain Nibbāna.”

“What is the cause and reason, venerable sir, why one bhikkhu here might attain Nibbāna, while another bhikkhu here might not attain Nibbāna?”

“Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine; it will not

be, and it will not be mine. What exists, what has come to be, that I am abandoning.’ Thus he obtains equanimity. He delights in that equanimity, welcomes it, and remains holding to it. As he does so, his consciousness becomes dependent on it and clings to it. A bhikkhu with clinging, Ānanda, does not attain Nibbāna.”

11. “But, venerable sir, when that bhikkhus clings, what does he cling to?”

“To the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, Ānanda.”

“When that bhikkhus clings, venerable sir, it seems he clings to the best [object of] clinging.”

“When that bhikkhus clings, Ānanda, he clings to the best [object of] clinging; for this is the best [object of] clinging, namely, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

12. “Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhus is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine; it will not be, and it will not be mine. What exists, what has come to be, that I am abandoning.’ Thus he obtains equanimity. He does not delight in that equanimity, welcome it, or remain holding to it. Since he does not do so, his consciousness does not become dependent on it and does not cling to it. A bhikkhu without clinging, Ānanda, attains Nibbāna.”

13. “It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvelous! The Blessed One, indeed, has explained to us the crossing of the flood in dependence upon one support or another. But, venerable sir, what is noble liberation?”

“Here, Ānanda, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come, material forms here and now and material forms in lives to come, perceptions of forms here and now and perceptions of forms in lives to come, perceptions of the imperturbable, and perceptions of the base of nothingness, and perceptions of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception □ this is identity as far as identity extends. This is the Deathless, namely, the liberation of the mind through not clinging.’

14. “Thus, Ānanda, I have taught the way directed to the imperturbable, I have taught the way directed to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I have taught the crossing of the flood in dependence upon one support or another, I have taught noble liberation.

15. “What should be done for his disciples out of compassion by a teacher who seeks their welfare and has compassion for them, that I have done for you, Ānanda. There are these roots of trees, these empty huts. Meditate, Ānanda, do not delay, or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you.”

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 106

Part Three— The Final Fifty Discourses (Uparipavāsaṅgāya)

The Division at Devadaha (Devadahavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

Contributed by Chris Burke