

The Four Noble Truths

A Study Guide

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Contents

- [Introduction](#)
 - [The First Noble Truth](#)
 - [The Second & Third Noble Truths](#)
 - [The Fourth Noble Truth](#)
-

Introduction

The four noble truths are the most basic expression of the Buddha's teaching. As Ven. Sariputta once said, they encompass the entire teaching, just as the footprint of an elephant can encompass the footprints of all other footed beings on earth.

These four truths are best understood, not as beliefs, but as categories of experience. They offer an alternative to the ordinary way we categorize what we can know and describe, in terms of me/not me, and being/not being. These ordinary categories create trouble, for the attempt to maintain full being for one's sense of "me" is a stressful effort doomed to failure, in that all of the components of that "me" are inconstant, stressful, and thus not worthy of identifying as "me" or "mine."

To counter this problem, the four noble truths drop ideas of me/not me, and being/not being, and replace them with two sets of variables: cause and effect, skillful and unskillful. In other words, there is the truth of stress and suffering (unskillful effect), the truth of the origination of stress (unskillful cause), the truth of the cessation of stress (skillful effect), and the truth of the path to the cessation of stress (skillful cause). Each of these truths entails a duty: stress is to be comprehended, the origination of stress abandoned, the cessation of stress realized, and the path to the cessation of stress developed. When all of these duties have been fully performed, the mind gains total release.

Many people have charged Buddhism with being pessimistic because the four truths start out with stress and suffering, but this charge misses the fact that the first truth is part of a strategy of diagnosis and therapy focusing on the basic problem in life so as to offer a solution to it. Thus the Buddha was like a doctor, focusing on the disease he wanted to cure. Charging him with pessimism is like charging a doctor with pessimism when he asks, "Where does it hurt?" The total cure the Buddha promised as a result of his course of

therapy shows that, in actuality, he was much less pessimistic than the vast majority of the world, for whom wisdom means accepting the bad things in life with the good, assuming that there is no chance in this life for unalloyed happiness. The Buddha was an extremely demanding person, unwilling to bend to this supposed wisdom or to rest with anything less than absolute happiness. His course of therapy points to the fact that such a happiness is possible, and can be attained through our own efforts.

Another charge often leveled at Buddhism is that its focus is narrow, aiming only at the issue of stress and pain, and ignoring the larger or more uplifting issues of spiritual life. This, again, misses the thrust of the Buddha's cure for the ills of the heart and mind. One of the most important insights leading up to the Buddha's Awakening was his realization that the act of comprehending pain lay at the essence of the spiritual quest. In trying to comprehend pain, one begins to delve into the non-verbal, subconscious levels of the mind, bringing to light many ill-formed and hidden processes of which one was previously unaware. In this sense, pain is like a watering hole where all the animals in the forest — all the mind's subconscious tendencies — will eventually come to drink. Just as a naturalist who wants to make a survey of the wildlife in a particular area can simply station himself near a watering hole, in the same way, a meditator who wants to understand the mind can simply keep watch right at pain in order to see what subconscious reactions will appear. Thus the act of trying to comprehend pain leads not only to an improved understanding of pain itself, but also to an increased awareness of the most basic processes at work in the mind. As one fully comprehends pain, one gains a full comprehension of other spiritual issues as well, realizing which questions were worth asking and which ones weren't, at the same time gaining answers to the first set of questions and learning how to put the second set aside.

Thus the study of the four noble truths is aimed first at understanding these four categories, and then at applying them to experience so that one may act properly toward each of the categories and thus attain the highest, most total happiness possible.

The material in this study guide starts with a basic exercise in categorizing one's actions in terms of the variables at the heart of the four noble truths: cause and effect, and skillful and unskillful. It then builds on this understanding by discussing the role of the four noble truths in the course of the practice, and then analyzing in detail each of the truths, together with the duty appropriate to each. Further related readings can be found in the book, *The Wings to Awakening*.

§ 1.

The Buddha: "What do you think, Rahula: What is a mirror for?"

Rahula: "For reflection, sir."

The Buddha: "In the same way, Rahula, bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts are to be done with repeated reflection.

"Whenever you want to perform a bodily act, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily act I want to perform — would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily act, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it would lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it would be an unskillful bodily act with painful consequences, painful results, then any bodily act of that sort is absolutely unfit for you to do. But if on reflection you know that it would not cause affliction... it

would be a skillful bodily act with happy consequences, happy results, then any bodily act of that sort is fit for you to do.

(Similarly with verbal acts & mental acts.)

"While you are performing a bodily act, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily act I am doing — is it leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily act, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it is leading to self-affliction, to affliction of others, or both... you should give it up. But if on reflection you know that it is not... you may continue with it.

(Similarly with verbal acts & mental acts.)

"Having performed a bodily act, you should reflect on it... If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful bodily act with painful consequences, painful results, then you should confess it, reveal it, lay it open to the Teacher or to a knowledgeable companion in the holy life. Having confessed it... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful bodily act with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful mental qualities.

(Similarly with verbal acts.)

"Having performed a mental act, you should reflect on it... If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful mental act with painful consequences, painful results, then you should feel horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with it. Feeling horrified... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful mental act with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful mental qualities.

"Rahula, all the brahmans & contemplatives in the course of the past who purified their bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts, did it through repeated reflection on their bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts in just this way.

"All the brahmans & contemplatives in the course of the future... All the brahmans & contemplatives at present who purify their bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts, do it through repeated reflection on their bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts in just this way.

"And so, Rahula, you should train yourself: 'I will purify my bodily acts through repeated reflection. I will purify my verbal acts through repeated reflection. I will purify my mental acts through repeated reflection.' That's how you should train yourself."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Rahula delighted in the Blessed One's words.

— MN 61

§ 2.

Once the Blessed One was staying at Kosambi in the Simsapa tree grove. Then, picking up a few Simsapa leaves with his hand, he asked the monks, "What do you think, monks: Which are more numerous, the few Simsapa leaves in my hand or those overhead in the Simsapa grove?"

"The leaves in the hand of the Blessed One are few in number, lord. Those overhead in the grove are far more numerous."

"In the same way, monks, those things that I have known with direct knowledge but have not taught are far more numerous than the things I have taught. And why haven't I taught them? Because they are not connected with the goal, do not relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding. That is why I have not taught them.

"And what have I taught? 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.' This is what I have taught. And why have I taught these things? Because they are connected with the goal, relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding. This is why I have taught them.

"Therefore your duty is the contemplation, 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.'"

— SN 56.31

§ 3.

"'Stress should be known. The cause by which stress comes into play should be known. The diversity in stress should be known. The result of stress should be known. The cessation of stress should be known. The path of practice for the cessation of stress should be known.' Thus it has been said. Why was it said?

"Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with what is not loved is stressful, separation from what is loved is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

"And what is the cause by which stress comes into play? Craving is the cause by which stress comes into play.

"And what is the diversity in stress? There is major stress & minor, slowly fading & quickly fading. This is called the diversity in stress.

"And what is the result of stress? There are some cases in which a person overcome with pain, his mind exhausted, grieves, mourns, laments, beats his breast, & becomes bewildered. Or one overcome with pain, his mind exhausted, comes to search outside, 'Who knows a way or two to stop this pain?' I tell you, monks, that stress results either in bewilderment or in search.

"And what is the cessation of stress? The cessation of craving is the cessation of stress, and just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the

cessation of stress: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"Now when a disciple of the noble ones discerns stress in this way, the cause by which stress comes into play in this way, the diversity of stress in this way, the result of stress in this way, the cessation of stress in this way, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress in this way, then he discerns this penetrative holy life as the cessation of stress.

"Stress should be known. The cause by which stress comes into play... The variations in stress... The result of stress... The cessation of stress... The path of practice for the cessation of stress should be experienced.' Thus it has been said, and this is why it was said."

— AN 6.63

§ 4.

"Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: 'This is the noble truth of stress... This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended... This noble truth of stress has been comprehended... This is the noble truth of the origination of stress... This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned... This noble truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned... This is the noble truth of the cessation of stress... This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be realized... This noble truth of the cessation of stress has been realized... This is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress... This noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed... This noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.'

"And, monks, as long as this knowledge & vision of mine — with its three rounds & twelve permutations concerning these four noble truths as they actually are — was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening... But as soon as this knowledge & vision of mine — with its three rounds & twelve permutations concerning these four noble truths as they actually are — was truly pure, only then did I claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening... The knowledge & vision arose in me: 'Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.'"

— SN 56.11

The First Noble Truth

§ 5.

Sariputta: "There are these three forms of stressfulness, my friend: the stressfulness of pain, the stressfulness of fabrication, the stressfulness of change. These are the three forms of stressfulness."

§ 6.

Sariputta: "Now what, friends, is the noble truth of stress? Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

"Now what is *birth*? Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of sense media of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

"And what is *aging*? Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging.

"And what is *death*? Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.

"And what is *sorrow*? Whatever sorrow, sorrowing, sadness, inward sorrow, inward sadness of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called sorrow.

"And what is *lamentation*? Whatever crying, grieving, lamenting, weeping, wailing, lamentation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called lamentation.

"And what is *pain*? Whatever is experienced as bodily pain, bodily discomfort, pain or discomfort born of bodily contact, that is called pain.

"And what is *distress*? Whatever is experienced as mental pain, mental discomfort, pain or discomfort born of mental contact, that is called distress.

"And what is *despair*? Whatever despair, despondency, desperation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called despair.

"And what is the stress of not getting what one wants? In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what one wants. In beings subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and may aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what one wants.

"And what are the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful? Form as a clinging-aggregate, feeling as a clinging-aggregate, perception as a clinging-aggregate, fabrications as a clinging-aggregate, consciousness as a clinging-aggregate: These are called the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful.

"This is called the noble truth of stress."

— MN 141

§ 7.

At Savatthi. There the Blessed One said, "Monks, I will teach you the five aggregates & the five clinging-aggregates. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, "Now what, monks, are the five aggregates?"

"Whatever form is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: that is called the form aggregate.

"Whatever feeling is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: that is called the feeling aggregate.

"Whatever perception is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: that is called the perception aggregate.

"Whatever (mental) fabrications are past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: those are called the fabrication aggregate.

"Whatever consciousness is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: that is called the consciousness aggregate.

"These are called the five aggregates.

"And what are the five clinging-aggregates?"

"Whatever form — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near — is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with mental fermentation: that is called form as clinging-aggregate.

"Whatever feeling — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near — is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with mental fermentation: that is called feeling as a clinging-aggregate.

"Whatever perception — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near — is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with mental fermentation: that is called perception as a clinging-aggregate.

"Whatever (mental) fabrications — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near — are clingable, offer sustenance, and are accompanied with mental fermentation: those are called fabrication as a clinging-aggregate.

"Whatever consciousness — past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near — is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with mental fermentation: that is called consciousness as a clinging-aggregate.

"These are called the five clinging-aggregates."

— SN 22.48

§ 8.

The Buddha: "These are the five clinging-aggregates: form as a clinging-aggregate, feeling as a clinging-aggregate, perception as a clinging-aggregate, fabrications as a clinging-aggregate, consciousness as a clinging-aggregate... These five clinging-aggregates are rooted in desire..."

A certain monk: "Is it the case that clinging and the five clinging-aggregates are the same thing, or are they separate?"

The Buddha: "Clinging is neither the same thing as the five clinging-aggregates, nor are they separate. Whatever desire & passion there is with regard to the five clinging-aggregates, that is the clinging there..."

The monk: "What is the cause, what is the condition, for the discernibility of the form aggregate... feeling aggregate... perception aggregate... fabrications aggregate... consciousness aggregate?"

The Buddha: "The four great existents [the properties of earth, water, fire, & wind] are the cause & condition for the discernibility of the form aggregate. Contact is the cause & condition for the discernibility of the feeling... perception... fabrications aggregate. Name & form are the cause & condition for the discernibility of the consciousness aggregate."

— MN 109

§ 9.

"And why do you call it 'form' (*rupa*)? Because it is afflicted (*ruppati*), thus it is called 'form.' Afflicted with what? With cold & heat & hunger & thirst, with the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles. Because it is afflicted, it is called form.

"And why do you call it 'feeling'? Because it feels, thus it is called 'feeling.' What does it feel? It feels pleasure, it feels pain, it feels neither-pleasure-nor-pain. Because it feels, it is called feeling.

"And why do you call it 'perception'? Because it perceives, thus it is called 'perception.' What does it perceive? It perceives blue, it perceives yellow, it perceives red, it perceives white. Because it perceives, it is called perception.

"And why do you call them 'fabrications'? Because they fabricate fabricated things, thus they are called 'fabrications.' What do they fabricate as a fabricated thing? From form-ness, they fabricate form as a fabricated thing. From feeling-ness, they fabricate feeling as a fabricated thing. From perception-hood...From fabrication-

hood...From consciousness-hood, they fabricate consciousness as a fabricated thing. Because they fabricate fabricated things, they are called fabrications.

"And why do you call it 'consciousness'? Because it cognizes, thus it is called consciousness. What does it cognize? It cognizes what is sour, bitter, pungent, sweet, alkaline, non-alkaline, salty, & unsalty. Because it cognizes, it is called consciousness."

— SN 22.79

§ 10.

MahaKotthita: "Feeling, perception, & consciousness: are these qualities conjoined or disjoined? And is it possible, having divided them, to describe their separateness?"

Sariputta: "Feeling, perception, & consciousness are conjoined, not disjoined, and it is impossible, having divided them, to describe their separateness. For what one feels, that one perceives; and what one perceives, that one cognizes..."

— MN 43

§ 11. Form.

Sariputta: "And what, friends, is form as a clinging-aggregate? The four great existents and the form derived from them. And what are the four great existents? They are the earth-property, the water property, the fire property, & the wind property.

"And what is the earth property? The earth property may be either internal or external. What is the internal earth property? Whatever internal, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified, & sustained: head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, feces, or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified, & sustained: This is called the internal earth property. Now both the internal earth property and the external earth property are simply earth property. And that should be seen as it actually is present with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it actually is present with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the earth property and makes the earth property fade from the mind...

"And what is the water property? The water property may be either internal or external. What is the internal water property? Whatever internal, belonging to oneself, is liquid, watery, & sustained: bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, oil-of-the-joints, urine, or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is liquid, watery, & sustained: This is called the internal water property. Now both the internal water property and the external water property are simply water property. And that should be seen as it actually is present with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it actually is present with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the water property and makes the water property fade from the mind..."

"And what is the fire property? The fire property may be either internal or external. What is the internal fire property? Whatever internal, belonging to oneself, is fire, fiery, & sustained: that by which one is warmed, ages, & wastes away; and that by which what is eaten, drunk, consumed, & tasted gets completely digested, or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is fire, fiery, & sustained: This is called the internal fire property. Now both the internal fire property and the external fire property are simply fire property. And that should be seen as it actually is present with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it actually is present with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the fire property and makes the fire property fade from the mind...

"And what is the wind property? The wind property may be either internal or external. What is the internal wind property? Whatever internal, belonging to oneself, is wind, windy, & sustained: up-going winds, down-going winds, winds in the stomach, winds in the intestines, winds that course through the body, in-&-out breathing, or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is wind, windy, & sustained: This is called the internal wind property. Now both the internal wind property and the external wind property are simply wind property. And that should be seen as it actually is present with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it actually is present with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the wind property and makes the wind property fade from the mind..."

— MN 28

§ 12. Feeling.

Sister Dhammadinna: "There are three kinds of feeling: pleasant feeling, painful feeling, & neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling... Whatever is experienced physically or mentally as pleasant & gratifying is pleasant feeling. Whatever is experienced physically or mentally as painful & hurting is painful feeling. Whatever is experienced physically or mentally as neither gratifying nor hurting is neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling... Pleasant feeling is pleasant in remaining and painful in changing. Painful feeling is painful in remaining and pleasant in changing. Neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling is pleasant when conjoined with knowledge and painful when devoid of knowledge."

— MN 44

§ 13. Fabrications.

"And what are fabrications? There are these six classes of intention: intention aimed at sights, sounds, aromas, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas. These are called fabrications."

— SN 22.56

§ 14.

"Three kinds of fabrications: meritorious fabrications (ripening in pleasure), demeritorious fabrications (ripening in pain), & imperturbable fabrications (the formless states of jhana)."

— DN 33

§ 15.

Sister Dhammadinna: "In-&-out breathing is bodily, bound up with the body, therefore is it called a *bodily fabrication*. Having directed one's thought and evaluated [the matter], one breaks into speech. Therefore directed thought & evaluation are called *verbal fabrications*. Perception & feeling are mental, bound up with the mind. Therefore perception & feeling are called *mental fabrications*."

— MN 44

§ 16. Consciousness.

"Consciousness is classified simply by the condition in dependence on which it arises.

"When consciousness arises in dependence on eye & forms, it is classified simply as eye-consciousness.

"When consciousness arises in dependence on ear & sounds, it is classified simply as ear-consciousness.

"When consciousness arises in dependence on nose & smells, it is classified simply as nose-consciousness.

"When consciousness arises in dependence on tongue & tastes, it is classified simply as tongue-consciousness.

"When consciousness arises in dependence on body & tactile sensations, it is classified simply as body-consciousness.

"When consciousness arises in dependence on intellect & ideas, it is classified simply as intellect-consciousness.

"Just as fire is classified simply by the condition in dependence on which it burns — a fire burning in dependence on logs is classified simply as a log fire... a fire burning in dependence on rubbish is classified simply as a rubbish fire; in the same way, consciousness is classified simply by the condition in dependence on which it arises."

— MN 38

The Second & Third Noble Truths

§ 17.

"Now what is the noble truth of the origination of stress? The craving that makes for further becoming — accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here &

now there — i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming... And what is the noble truth of the cessation of stress? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving."

— DN 22

§ 18.

"And what is the noble method that is rightly seen & rightly ferreted out by discernment? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones notices:

When this is, that is.

From the arising of this comes the arising of that.

When this isn't, that isn't.

From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.

"In other words:

"With ignorance as a condition there are fabrications.

With fabrications as a condition there is consciousness.

With consciousness as a condition there is name & form.

With name & form as a condition there are the six sense spheres.

With the six sense spheres as a condition there is contact.

With contact as a condition there is feeling.

With feeling as a condition there is craving.

With craving as a condition there is clinging/sustenance.

With clinging/sustenance as a condition there is becoming.

With becoming as a condition there is birth.

With birth as a condition, then old age & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance there is the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications there is the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness there is the cessation of name & form. From the cessation of name & form there is the cessation of the six sense spheres. From the cessation of the six sense spheres there is the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact there is the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling there is the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving there is the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance there is the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming there is the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then old age & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"This is the noble method that is rightly seen & rightly ferreted out by discernment."

— AN 10.92

§ 19.

Sariputta: "Now, the Blessed One has said, 'Whoever sees dependent co-arising sees the Dhamma; whoever sees the Dhamma sees dependent co-arising.'"

— MN 28

§ 20.

"First there is the knowledge of the steadfastness of the Dhamma (dependent co-arising), after which there is the knowledge of Unbinding."

— SN 12.70

§ 21.

"Now what is *becoming*? These three are becomings: sensual becoming, form becoming, & formless becoming. This is called becoming.

"And what is *clinging/sustenance*? These four are clingings: sensuality clinging, view clinging, precept & practice clinging, and doctrine of self clinging. This is called clinging.

"And what is *craving*? These six are classes of craving: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for smells, craving for tastes, craving for tactile sensations, craving for ideas. This is called craving.

"And what is *feeling*? These six are classes of feeling: feeling born from eye-contact, feeling born from ear-contact, feeling born from nose-contact, feeling born from tongue-contact, feeling born from body-contact, feeling born from intellect-contact. This is called feeling.

"And what is *contact*? These six are classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, intellect-contact. This is called contact.

"And what are *the six sense spheres*? These six are sense spheres: the eye-sphere, the ear-sphere, the nose-sphere, the tongue-sphere, the body-sphere, the intellect-sphere. These are called the six sense spheres.

"And what is *name & form*? Feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: This is called name. The four great elements, and the form dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This name & this form are called name & form.

"And what is *consciousness*? These six are classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness.

"And what are *fabrications*? These three are fabrications: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, mental fabrications. These are called fabrications.

"And what is *ignorance*? Not knowing stress, not knowing the origination of stress, not knowing the cessation of stress, not knowing the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called ignorance."

§ 22.

"The ending of the fermentations is for one who knows & sees, I tell you, not for one who does not know & see. For one who knows what & sees what? 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling... Such is perception... Such are fabrications... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' The ending of the fermentations is for one who knows in this way & sees in this way.

"The knowledge of ending in the presence of ending has its prerequisite, I tell you. It is not without a prerequisite. And what is its prerequisite? Release... Release has its prerequisite, I tell you. It is not without a prerequisite. And what is its prerequisite? Dispassion... Disenchantment... Knowledge & vision of things as they actually are present... Concentration... Pleasure... Serenity... Rapture... Joy... Conviction... Stress & suffering... Birth... Becoming... Clinging... Craving... Feeling... Contact... The six sense media... Name & form... Consciousness... Fabrications... Fabrications have their prerequisite, I tell you. They are not without a prerequisite. And what is their prerequisite? Ignorance...

"Just as when the gods pour rain in heavy drops & crash thunder on the upper mountains: The water, flowing down along the slopes, fills the mountain clefts & rifts & gullies. When the mountain clefts & rifts & gullies are full, they fill the little ponds. When the little ponds are full, they fill the big lakes... the little rivers... the big rivers. When the big rivers are full, they fill the great ocean.

"In the same way:

fabrications have ignorance as their prerequisite,
 consciousness has fabrications as its prerequisite,
 name & form have consciousness as their prerequisite,
 the six sense media have name & form as their prerequisite,
 contact has the six sense media as its prerequisite,
 feeling has contact as its prerequisite,
 craving has feeling as its prerequisite,
 clinging has craving as its prerequisite,
 becoming has clinging as its prerequisite,
 birth has becoming as its prerequisite,
 stress & suffering have birth as their prerequisite,
 conviction has stress & suffering as its prerequisite,
 joy has conviction as its prerequisite,
 rapture has joy as its prerequisite,
 serenity has rapture as its prerequisite,
 pleasure has serenity as its prerequisite,
 concentration has pleasure as its prerequisite,
 knowledge & vision of things as they actually are present has concentration as its prerequisite,
 disenchantment has knowledge & vision of things as they actually are present as its prerequisite,
 dispassion has disenchantment as its prerequisite,
 release has dispassion as its prerequisite,
 knowledge of ending has release as its prerequisite."

§ 23.

"One attached is unreleased; one unattached is released. Should consciousness, when standing (still), stand attached to (a physical) form, supported by form (as its object), established on form, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & development. Should consciousness, when standing (still), stand attached to feeling... to perception... to fabrications... it would exhibit growth, increase, & development. Were someone to say, 'I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase or a development of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,' that would be impossible.

"If a monk abandons passion for the property of form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, then owing to the abandoning of passion, the support is cut off, and consciousness is unestablished. Consciousness, thus unestablished, undeveloped, not performing any function, is released. Owing to its release, it stays firm. Owing to its staying firm, it is contented. Owing to its contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he (the monk) is totally unbound right within himself. He discerns that, 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

— SN 22.53

§ 24.

"There are these four nutriments for the establishing of beings or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. What four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second, consciousness the third, and intellectual intention the fourth. These are the four nutriments for the establishing of beings or for the support of those in search of a place to be born.

"Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness lands there and grows. Where consciousness lands and grows, name & form alight. Where name & form alight, there is the growth of fabrications. Where there is the growth of fabrications, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging, & death, together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair.

"Just as — when there is dye, lac, yellow orpiment, indigo, or crimson — a dyer or painter would paint the picture of a woman or a man, complete in all its parts, on a well-polished panel or wall or on a piece of cloth; in the same way, where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness lands there & grows... together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair.

(Similarly with the other three kinds of nutriment.)

"Where there is no passion for physical nutriment, where there is no delight, no craving, consciousness does not land there or grow... Name & form do not alight... There is no growth of fabrications... There is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair.

"Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?"

"On the western wall, lord."

"And if there is no western wall...?"

"On the ground, lord."

"And if there is no ground...?"

"On the water, lord."

"And if there is no water...?"

"It does not land, lord."

"In the same way, where there is no passion for physical nutriment... consciousness does not land or grow... That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair."

(Similarly with the other three kinds of nutriment.)

— SN 12.64

§ 25.

"Consciousness without feature, without end luminous all around: Here water, earth, fire, & wind have no footing. Here long & short coarse & fine fair & foul name & form, without remnant, are brought to an end. With the cessation of [the activity of] consciousness, each is here brought to an end."

— DN 11

§ 26.

"There is that dimension where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind; neither dimension of the infinitude of space, nor dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, nor dimension of nothingness, nor dimension of neither perception nor non-perception; neither this world, nor the next world, nor sun, nor moon. And there, I say, there is neither coming, nor going, nor staying; neither passing away nor arising: unestablished, unevolving, without support (mental object). This, just this, is the end of stress."

— Ud 8.1

§ 27.

"There is, monks, an unborn — unbecome — unmade — unfabricated. If there were not that unborn — unbecome — unmade — unfabricated, there would not be the case that emancipation from the born — become — made — fabricated would be discerned. But precisely because there is an unborn — unbecome — unmade —

unfabricated, emancipation from the born — become — made — fabricated is discerned."

— Ud 8.3

§ 28.

"One who is dependent has wavering. One who is independent has no wavering. There being no wavering, there is calm. There being calm, there is no desire. There being no desire, there is no coming or going. There being no coming or going, there is no passing away or arising. There being no passing away or arising, there is neither a here nor a there nor a between-the-two. This, just this, is the end of stress."

— Ud 8.4

The Fourth Noble Truth

§ 29.

"There are these two extremes that are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth. Which two? That which is devoted to sensual pleasure in connection with sensuality: base, domestic, common, ignoble, unprofitable; and that which is devoted to self-affliction: painful, ignoble, unprofitable. Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realized by the Tathagata — producing vision, producing knowledge — leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding.

"And what is the middle way realized by the Tathagata that — producing vision, producing knowledge — leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding? Precisely this Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the middle way realized by the Tathagata that — producing vision, producing knowledge — leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding."

— SN 56.11

§ 30. Analysis of the Path.

"Monks, what is the noble eightfold path? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"And what is right view? Knowledge with regard to stress, knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the cessation of stress, knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view.

"And what is right resolve? Resolve aimed at freedom from sensuality, at freedom from ill will, at harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

"And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.

"And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, from stealing, & from unchastity. This is called right action.

"And what is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood: This is called right livelihood.

"And what is right effort? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds, & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen...(and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen: This is called right effort.

"And what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting away greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness.

"And what is right concentration? There is the case where a monk — quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful (mental) qualities — enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation — internal assurance. With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain — as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress — he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration."

— SN 45.8

§ 31.

"Suppose a man in need of oil, looking for oil, wandering in search of oil, would pile gravel in a tub and press it, sprinkling it again & again with water. If he were to pile gravel in a tub and press it, sprinkling it again & again with water even when having made a wish [for results] ... having made no wish ... both having made a wish and having made no wish ... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be incapable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an inappropriate way of obtaining results.

"In the same way, any brahmans or contemplatives endowed with wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, & wrong concentration: If they follow the holy life even when having

made a wish [for results] ... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish ... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, they are incapable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an inappropriate way of obtaining results...

"Suppose a man in need of oil, looking for oil, wandering in search of oil, would pile sesame seeds in a tub and press them, sprinkling them again & again with water. If he were to pile sesame seeds in a tub and press them, sprinkling them again & again with water, even when having made a wish [for results] ... having made no wish ... both having made a wish and having made no wish ... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, he would be capable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an appropriate way of obtaining results.

"In the same way, any brahmans or contemplatives endowed with right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, & right concentration: If they follow the holy life even when having made a wish [for results] ... having made no wish... both having made a wish and having made no wish ... neither having made a wish nor having made no wish, they are capable of obtaining results. Why is that? Because it is an appropriate way of obtaining results."

— MN 126

§ 32.

"Monks, ignorance is the leader in the attainment of unskillful qualities, followed by lack of conscience & lack of concern. In a unknowledgeable person, immersed in ignorance, wrong view arises. In one of wrong view, wrong resolve arises. In one of wrong resolve, wrong speech... In one of wrong speech, wrong action... In one of wrong action, wrong livelihood... In one of wrong livelihood, wrong effort... In one of wrong effort, wrong mindfulness... In one of wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration arises.

"Clear knowing is the leader in the attainment of skillful qualities, followed by conscience & concern. In a knowledgeable person, immersed in clear knowing, right view arises. In one of right view, right resolve arises. In one of right resolve, right speech... In one of right speech, right action... In one of right action, right livelihood... In one of right livelihood, right effort... In one of right effort, right mindfulness... In one of right mindfulness, right concentration arises."

— SN 45.1

§ 33.

Ven. Ananda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Ananda said to the Blessed One, "This is half of the holy life, lord: having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues."

"Don't say that, Ananda. Don't say that. Having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues is actually the whole of the holy life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, he can be expected to develop & pursue the noble eightfold path.

"And how does a monk who has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, develop & pursue the noble eightfold path? There is the case where a monk develops right view dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. He develops right resolve ... right speech ... right action ... right livelihood ... right effort ... right mindfulness ... right concentration dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. This is how a monk who has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, develops & pursues the noble eightfold path.

"And through this line of reasoning one may know how having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues is actually the whole of the holy life: It is in dependence on me as an admirable friend that beings subject to birth have gained release from birth, that beings subject to aging have gained release from aging, that beings subject to death have gained release from death, that beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair have gained release from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. It is through this line of reasoning that one may know how having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues is actually the whole of the holy life."

— SN 45.2

§ 34. More on Right View.

"And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong view as wrong view. One discerns right view as right view. This is one's right view. And what is wrong view? 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no brahmans or contemplatives who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is wrong view.

"And what is right view? Right view, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right view with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the paraphernalia (of becoming); and there is noble right view, free from fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"And what is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in paraphernalia? 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are brahmans & contemplatives who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in paraphernalia.

"And what is the right view that is free from fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The discernment, the faculty of discernment, the strength of discernment, analysis of qualities as a factor for Awakening, the path factor of right view in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is free from fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right view that is free from fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"One tries to abandon wrong view & to enter into right view: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong view & to enter & remain in right view:

This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities — right view, right effort, & right mindfulness — run & circle around right view."

— MN 117

§ 35. More on Right Action & Right Speech.

"Having thus gone forth, following the training & way of life of the monks, abandoning the taking of life, he abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, kind, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He takes only what is given, accepts only what is given, lives not by stealth but by means of a self that has become pure. Abandoning uncelibacy, he lives a celibate life, aloof, refraining from the sexual act that is the villager's way.

"Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world. Abandoning divisive speech he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from the people here. What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from the people there. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord. Abandoning abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing & pleasing to people at large. Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, & the discipline. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal."

— AN 10.99

§ 36. More on Right Action & Right Speech for Lay People.

"Abandoning sensual misconduct, he abstains from sensual misconduct. He does not get sexually involved with those who are protected by their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their relatives, or their Dhamma; those with husbands, those who entail punishments, or even those crowned with flowers by another man.

"Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. When he has been called to a town meeting, a group meeting, a gathering of his relatives, his guild, or of the royalty (i.e., a royal court proceeding), if he is asked as a witness, 'Come & tell, good man, what you know': If he doesn't know, he says, 'I don't know.' If he does know, he says, 'I know.' If he hasn't seen, he says, 'I haven't seen.' If he has seen, he says, 'I have seen.' Thus he doesn't consciously tell a lie for his own sake, for the sake of another, or for the sake of any reward."

— AN 10.176

§ 37. Right Mindfulness.

"This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the

right method, & for the realization of Unbinding — in other words, the four frames of reference. What four?

"There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world."

Body

"And how is does the monk remain focused on the body in & of itself? There is the case of a monk who, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect and setting mindfulness to the fore [lit: to the front of the chest]. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

"Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.' Just as a skilled turner or his apprentice, when making a long turn, discerns, 'I am making a long turn,' or when making a short turn discerns, 'I am making a short turn'; in the same way the monk, when breathing in long, discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long' ... He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"Furthermore, when walking, the monk discerns, 'I am walking.' When standing, he discerns, 'I am standing.' When sitting, he discerns, 'I am sitting.' When lying down, he discerns, 'I am lying down.' Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it.

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or focused externally... unsustained by anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"Furthermore, when going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away... when bending & extending his limbs... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe & his bowl... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring... when urinating & defecating... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert.

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or focused externally... unsustained by anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"Furthermore... just as if a sack with openings at both ends were full of various kinds of grain — wheat, rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame seeds, husked rice — and a man with good eyesight, pouring it out, were to reflect, 'This is wheat. This is rice. These are mung beans. These are kidney beans. These are sesame seeds. This is husked rice,' in the same way, monks, a monk reflects on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of unclean things: 'In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or focused externally... unsustained by anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"Furthermore... just as a skilled butcher or his apprentice, having killed a cow, would sit at a crossroads cutting it up into pieces, the monk contemplates this very body — however it stands, however it is disposed — in terms of properties: 'In this body there is the earth property, the liquid property, the heat property & the wind property.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or focused externally... unsustained by anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground — one day, two days, three days dead — bloated, livid, & festering, he applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate'...

"Or again, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground, picked at by crows, vultures, & hawks, by dogs, hyenas, & various other creatures... a skeleton smeared with flesh & blood, connected with tendons... a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, connected with tendons... a skeleton without flesh or blood, connected with tendons... bones detached from their tendons, scattered in all directions — here a hand bone, there a foot bone, here a shin bone, there a thigh bone, here a hip bone, there a back bone, here a rib, there a breast bone, here a shoulder bone, there a neck bone, here a jaw bone, there a tooth, here a skull... the bones whitened, somewhat like the color of shells... piled up, more than a year old... decomposed into a powder: He applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge &

remembrance. And he remains unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself."

Feelings

"And how does a monk remain focused on feelings in & of themselves? There is the case where a monk, when feeling a painful feeling, discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling.' When feeling a pleasant feeling, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.'

"When feeling a painful feeling of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling of the flesh.' When feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh.' When feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh.' When feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling of the flesh.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on feelings in & of themselves, or externally on feelings in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on feelings in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to feelings, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to feelings, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to feelings. Or his mindfulness that 'There are feelings' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on feelings in & of themselves."

Mind

"And how does a monk remain focused on the mind in & of itself? There is the case where a monk, when the mind has passion, discerns that the mind has passion. When the mind is without passion, he discerns that the mind is without passion. When the mind has aversion, he discerns that the mind has aversion. When the mind is without aversion, he discerns that the mind is without aversion. When the mind has delusion, he discerns that the mind has delusion. When the mind is without delusion, he discerns that the mind is without delusion.

"When the mind is restricted, he discerns that the mind is restricted. When the mind is scattered, he discerns that the mind is scattered. When the mind is enlarged, he discerns that the mind is enlarged. When the mind is not enlarged, he discerns that the mind is not enlarged. When the mind is surpassed, he discerns that the mind is surpassed. When the mind is unsurpassed, he discerns that the mind is unsurpassed. When the mind is concentrated, he discerns that the mind is concentrated. When the mind is not concentrated, he discerns that the mind is not concentrated. When the mind is released, he discerns that the mind is released. When the mind is not released, he discerns that the mind is not released.

"In this way he remains focused internally on the mind in & of itself, or externally on the mind in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the mind in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the mind,

on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the mind, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the mind. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a mind' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the mind in & of itself."

Mental Qualities

"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves? There is the case where a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances.

"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances? There is the case where, there being sensual desire present within, a monk discerns that 'There is sensual desire present within me.' Or, there being no sensual desire present within, he discerns that 'There is no sensual desire present within me.' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen sensual desire. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of sensual desire once it has arisen. And he discerns how there is no future arising of sensual desire that has been abandoned. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining hindrances: ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and doubt.]

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances...

"Furthermore, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for Awakening. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for Awakening? There is the case where, there being mindfulness as a factor for Awakening present within, a monk discerns that 'Mindfulness as a factor for Awakening is present within me.' Or, there being no mindfulness as a factor for Awakening present within, he discerns that 'Mindfulness as a factor for Awakening is not present within me.' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen mindfulness as a factor for Awakening. And he discerns how there is the culmination of the development of mindfulness as a factor for Awakening once it has arisen. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining factors for Awakening: analysis of qualities, persistence, rapture, serenity, concentration, & equanimity.]

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally... unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for Awakening...

"Now, in anyone who would develop these four frames of reference in this way for seven years, one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here & now, or — if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance — non-return.

"Let alone seven years. In anyone who would develop these four frames of reference in this way for six years... five... four... three... two years... one year... seven months... six months... five... four... three... two months... one month... half a month, one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here & now, or — if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance — non-return.

"Let alone half a month. In anyone who would develop these four frames of reference in this way for seven days, one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here & now, or — if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance — non-return.

"This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of Unbinding — in other words, the four frames of reference.' Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said."

— MN 10

§ 38. Breath Meditation.

"And how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to bring the four frames of reference to their culmination?

"On whatever occasion a monk (1) breathing in long discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, discerns that he is breathing out long; (2) or breathing in short, discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, discerns that he is breathing out short; (3) trains himself to breathe in... &... out sensitive to the entire body; (4) trains himself to breathe in... &... out calming bodily fabrications: On that occasion, monks, the monk remains focused on the *body* in & of itself — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, monks, that this — the in-&-out breath — is classed as a body among bodies, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the body in & of itself — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

"On whatever occasion a monk (5) trains himself to breathe in... &... out sensitive to rapture; (6) trains himself to breathe in... &... out sensitive to pleasure; (7) trains himself to breathe in... &... out sensitive to mental fabrications; (8) trains himself to breathe in... &... out calming mental fabrications: On that occasion the monk remains focused on *feelings* in & of themselves — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, monks, that this — careful attention to in-&-out breaths — is classed as a feeling among feelings, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on feelings in & of themselves — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

"On whatever occasion a monk (9) trains himself to breathe in... &... out sensitive to the mind; (10) trains himself to breathe in... &... out satisfying the mind; (11) trains himself to breathe in... &... out steadying the mind; (12) trains himself to breathe in... &... out releasing the mind: On that occasion the monk remains focused on the *mind* in & of itself — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. I don't say that there is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing in one of confused mindfulness and no presence of mind, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the mind in & of itself —

ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

"On whatever occasion a monk (13) trains himself to breathe in... &... out focusing on inconstancy; (14) trains himself to breathe in... &... out focusing on dispassion; (15) trains himself to breathe in... &... out focusing on cessation; (16) trains himself to breathe in... &... out focusing on relinquishment: On that occasion the monk remains focused on *mental qualities* in & of themselves — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He who sees clearly with discernment the abandoning of greed & distress is one who oversees with equanimity, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

"This is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to bring the four frames of reference to their culmination."

— MN 118

§ 39. Mindfulness & Concentration.

"Having abandoned the five hindrances — imperfections of awareness that weaken discernment — the monk remains focused on the body in & of itself — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. Just as if an elephant trainer were to plant a large post in the ground and were to bind a forest elephant to it by the neck in order to overcome its forest habits, overcome its forest memories & resolves, overcome its distraction, fatigue, & fever over leaving the forest, to make it delight in the town and to inculcate in it habits congenial to human beings. In the same way, these four frames of reference are bindings for the awareness of the disciple of the noble ones, for the sake of overcoming his household habits, overcoming his household memories & resolves, overcoming his distraction, fatigue, & fever over leaving the household life, for the attainment of the right method and the realization of Unbinding.

"Then the Tathagata trains him further: "Come, monk, remain focused on the body in & of itself, but do not think any thoughts connected with the body. Remain focused on feelings in & of themselves, but do not think any thoughts connected with feelings. Remain focused on the mind in & of itself, but do not think any thoughts connected with mind. Remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, but do not think any thoughts connected with mental qualities." With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters the second jhana..."

— MN 125

§ 40. Right Concentration.

Visakha: "Now what is concentration, what qualities are its themes, what qualities are its requisites, and what is its development?"

Sister Dhammadinna: "Singleness of mind is concentration; the four frames of reference are its themes; the four right exertions are its requisites; and any cultivation, development, & pursuit of these qualities is its development."

§ 41.

"These are the four developments of concentration. What four? There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now. There is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision. There is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the ending of the effluents.

"And what is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now? There is the case where a monk — quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful qualities — enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation — internal assurance. With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain — as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress — he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the development of concentration that... leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now.

"And what is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision? There is the case where a monk has the perception of light, the perception of daytime (at any hour of the day) well-fixed & well in hand. Day (for him) is the same as night, night is the same as day. By means of an awareness open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind. This is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision.

"And what is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness? There is the case where a monk is conscious of feelings as they arise, as they persist, as they go totally to their end. He is conscious of perceptions as they arise, as they persist, as they go totally to their end. He is conscious of thoughts as they arise, as they persist, as they go totally to their end. This is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness.

"And what is the development of concentration that... leads to the ending of the effluents? There is the case where a monk remains focused on arising & falling away with reference to the five clinging-aggregates: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its passing away. Such is feeling... Such is perception... Such are fabrications... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its passing away.' This is the development of concentration that... leads to the ending of the effluents.

"These are the four developments of concentration."

§ 42.

"Now what, monks, is the five-factored noble right concentration? There is the case where a monk — quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful (mental) qualities — enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal.

"Just as if a skilled bathman or bathman's apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again & again with water, so that his ball of bath powder — saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within & without — would nevertheless not drip; even so, monks, the monk permeates... this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of withdrawal. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal. This is the first development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

"Furthermore, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, one-pointedness of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation — internal assurance. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of composure. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of composure.

"Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from within, having no inflow from east, west, north or south, and with the skies periodically supplying abundant showers, so that the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would permeate & pervade, suffuse & fill it with cool waters, there being no part of the lake unpervaded by the cool waters; even so monks, the monk permeates... this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of composure. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of composure. This is the second development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

"And furthermore, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture, so that there is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture.

"Just as in a blue-, white-, or red-lotus pond, there may be some of the blue, white, or red lotuses which, born & growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated & pervaded, suffused & filled with cool water from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those blue, white, or red lotuses would be unpervaded with cool water; even so, monks, the monk permeates... this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture. This is the third development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

"And furthermore, with the abandoning of pleasure & stress — as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress — he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He sits,

permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness, so that there is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness.

"Just as if a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; even so, monks, the monk sits, permeating his body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness. This is the fourth development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

"And furthermore, the monk has his theme of reflection well in hand, well attended to, well-pondered, well-penetrated by means of discernment.

"Just as if one person were to reflect on another, or a standing person were to reflect on a sitting person, or a sitting person were to reflect on a person lying down; even so, monks, the monk has his theme of reflection well in hand, well attended to, well-pondered, well-penetrated by means of discernment. This is the fifth development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

"When a monk has developed & pursued the five-factored noble right concentration in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

"Suppose that there were a water jar, set on a stand, brimful of water so that a crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to tip it in any way at all, would water spill out?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, when a monk has developed & pursued the five-factored noble right concentration in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

"Suppose there were a rectangular water tank — set on level ground, bounded by dykes — brimful of water so that a crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to loosen the dykes anywhere at all, would water spill out?"

"Yes, lord..."

"Suppose there were a chariot on level ground at four crossroads, harnessed to thoroughbreds, waiting with whips lying ready, so that a skilled driver, a trainer of tamable horses, might mount and — taking the reins with his left hand and the whip with his right — drive out & back, to whatever place and by whichever road he liked; in the same way, when a monk has developed & pursued the five-factored noble right concentration in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening."

— AN 5.28

§ 43.

There's no jhana
 for one with no discernment,
 no discernment
 for one with no jhana.

But one with both jhana
 & discernment
 is on the verge
 of Unbinding.

— Dhp 372

§ 44. Concentration & Discernment.

"Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, & to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born of withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the quality of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite — the resolution of all fabrications, the relinquishment of all mental acquisitions, the passing away of craving, dispassion, cessation, Unbinding.'

"Having attained this point, he reaches the ending of the mental fermentations. Or, if not, then — through passion & delight for this very quality [the discernment inclining to deathlessness] and from the total wasting away of the first five of the Fetters [self-identity views, grasping at precepts & practices, uncertainty, sensual passion, and resistance] — he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world." (Similarly with the remaining levels of jhana.)

— AN 9.36

§ 45. Discernment & Release.

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, & bright, the monk directs it to the knowledge of the ending of the mental fermentations. Just as if there were a pool of water in a mountain glen — clear, limpid, & unsullied — where a man with good eyesight standing on the bank could see shells, gravel, & pebbles, and also shoals of fish swimming about & resting, and it would occur to him, 'This pool of water is clear, limpid, & unsullied. Here are these shells, gravel, & pebbles, and also these shoals of fish swimming about & resting.' In the same way, the monk discerns, as it has come to be, that 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress... These are mental fermentations... This is the origination of fermentations... This is the cessation of fermentations... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.' His heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the fermentations of sensuality, becoming, & ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the

task done. There is nothing further for this world.' This, too, is a reward of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime. And as for another visible fruit of the contemplative life, higher & more sublime than this, there is none."

— DN 2

§ 46.

Washing my feet, I noticed
 the
 water.
 And in watching it flow from high
 to
 low,
 my heart was composed
 like a fine thoroughbred steed.
 Then taking a lamp, I entered the hut,
 checked the bedding,
 sat down on the bed.
 And taking a pin, I pulled out the wick:
 Like the flame's unbinding
 was the liberation
 of awareness.

— Thig 5.10

See also: "[The Four Noble Truths](#)" in "[A Path to Freedom: A Self-guided Tour of the Buddha's Teachings](#)"



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