

A Path Rooted in Desire

§1. “All phenomena [*dhammas*] are rooted in desire.

“All phenomena come into play through attention.

“All phenomena have contact as their origination.

“All phenomena have feeling as their meeting place.

“All phenomena have concentration as their presiding state.

“All phenomena have mindfulness as their governing principle.

“All phenomena have discernment as their surpassing state.

“All phenomena have release as their heartwood.

“All phenomena gain footing in the deathless.

“All phenomena have unbinding as their final end.” — *AN 10:58*

§2. “And what is the stress of *not getting what is wanted*? 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 is wanted. 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 is wanted.” — *DN 22*

§3. “And which is the noble search? There is the case where a person, himself being subject to birth, seeing the drawbacks of birth, seeks the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding. Himself being subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeing the drawbacks of aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeks the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, undefiled, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding. This is the noble search.

“I, too, monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened Bodhisatta, being subject myself to birth, sought what was likewise subject to birth. Being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, sought (happiness in) what was likewise subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement. The thought occurred to me, ‘Why do I, being subject myself to birth, seek what is likewise subject to birth? Being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, why do I seek what is likewise subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement? What if I, being subject myself to birth, seeing the drawbacks of birth, were to seek the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding? What if I, being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeing the drawbacks of aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, were to seek the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding?’ ...

“Then, monks, being subject myself to birth, seeing the drawbacks of birth, seeking the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke, unbinding, I reached the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding. Being subject myself to

aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeing the drawbacks of aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeking the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, unexcelled rest from the yoke, unbinding, I reached the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding. Knowledge & vision arose in me: 'Unprovoked is my release.'³ This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.'" — MN 26

§4. [Ven. Sāriputta:] "If one practices for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to aging-&death, one deserves to be called a monk who practices the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma....

"If one practices for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to birth... becoming... clinging/sustenance... craving... feeling... contact... the six sense media... name-&-form... consciousness... fabrications... ignorance, one deserves to be called a monk who practices the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma" — SN 12:67

§5. "And what is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress? Just this very noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration." — DN 22

§6. "Among whatever fabricated phenomena there may be, the noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—is considered supreme." — Iti 90

§7. "And what is right resolve? Right resolve, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right resolve with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right resolve, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"And what is the right resolve with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for non-ill will, resolve for harmlessness. This is the right resolve with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions.

"And what is the right resolve that is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path? The thinking, directed thinking, resolve, mental fixity, mental transfixion, focused awareness, & verbal fabrications [directed thought & evaluation] in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without effluents, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right resolve that is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"One makes an effort for the abandoning of wrong resolve & for entering right resolve: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong resolve & to enter & remain in right resolve: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities—right view, right effort, & right mindfulness—run & circle around right resolve." — MN 117

§8. *May all beings be happy at heart.
Let no one deceive another
or despise anyone anywhere,
or, through anger or resistance-perception,
wish for another to suffer.*

As a mother would risk her life
to protect her child, her only child,
even so should one cultivate the heart limitlessly
with regard to all beings.
With goodwill for the entire cosmos,
cultivate the heart limitlessly:
above, below, & all around,
unobstructed, without hostility or hate.
Whether standing, walking,
sitting, or lying down,
as long as one has banished torpor,
one should be determined on this mindfulness.
This is called a Brahmā abiding
here. — Sn 1:8

§9. “And what, monks, is right effort? (i) 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. (ii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen. (iii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (iv) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This, monks, is called right effort.” — SN 45:8

§10. “And how is striving fruitful, how is exertion fruitful? ...

“Suppose that a man is in love with a woman, his mind ensnared with fierce desire, fierce passion. He sees her standing with another man, chatting, joking, & laughing. What do you think, monks? As he sees her standing with another man, chatting, joking, & laughing, would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in him?”

“Yes, lord. Why is that? Because he is in love with her, his mind ensnared with fierce desire, fierce passion....”

“Now, suppose the thought were to occur to him, ‘I am in love with this woman, my mind ensnared with fierce desire, fierce passion. When I see her standing with another man, chatting, joking, & laughing, then sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise within me. Why don’t I abandon my desire & passion for that woman?’ So he abandons his desire & passion for that woman, and afterwards sees her standing with another man, chatting, joking, &

laughing. What do you think, monks? As he sees her standing with another man, chatting, joking, & laughing, would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in him?"

"No, lord. Why is that? He is dispassionate toward that woman...."

"In the same way, the monk, when not loaded down, does not load himself down with pain, nor does he reject pleasure that accords with the Dhamma, although he is not infatuated with that pleasure. He discerns that 'When I exert a [physical, verbal, or mental] fabrication against this cause of stress, then from the fabrication of exertion there is dispassion. When I look on with equanimity at that cause of stress, then from the development of equanimity there is dispassion.' So he exerts a fabrication against the cause of stress for which dispassion comes from the fabrication of exertion, and develops equanimity with regard to the cause of stress for which dispassion comes from the development of equanimity. Thus the stress coming from the cause of stress where there is dispassion from the fabrication of exertion is exhausted, and the stress coming from the cause of stress where there is dispassion from the development of equanimity is exhausted.

"And further, the monk notices this: 'When I live according to my pleasure, unskillful qualities increase in me & skillful qualities decline. When I exert myself with stress & pain, though, unskillful qualities decline in me & skillful qualities increase. Why don't I exert myself with stress & pain?' So he exerts himself with stress & pain, and while he is exerting himself with stress & pain, unskillful qualities decline in him, & skillful qualities increase. Then at a later time he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was exerting himself with stress & pain. That is why, at a later time, he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain.

"Suppose a fletcher were to heat & warm an arrow shaft between two flames, making it straight & pliable. Then at a later time he would no longer heat & warm the shaft between two flames, making it straight & pliable. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was heating & warming the shaft. That is why at a later time he would no longer heat & warm the shaft between two flames, making it straight & pliable.

"In the same way, the monk notices this: 'When I live according to my pleasure, unskillful qualities increase in me & skillful qualities decline. When I exert myself with stress & pain, though, unskillful qualities decline in me & skillful qualities increase. Why don't I exert myself with stress & pain?' So he exerts himself with stress & pain, and while he is exerting himself with stress & pain, unskillful qualities decline in him, & skillful qualities increase. Then at a later time he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was exerting himself with stress & pain. That is why, at a later time, he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain.

"This is how striving is fruitful, how exertion is fruitful."— *MN 101*

§11. “‘A person has four determinations.’ Thus it was said. In reference to what was it said? These are the four determinations: the determination for discernment, the determination for truth, the determination for relinquishment, the determination for calm. ‘A person has four determinations.’ Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said.

“‘One should not neglect discernment, should guard the truth, be devoted to relinquishment, and train only for calm.’” — MN 140

§12. I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying near Kosambi at Ghosita’s monastery. Then Uṇṇābha the brahman went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Ānanda: “Master Ānanda, what is the aim of this holy life lived under Gotama the contemplative?”

“Brahman, the holy life is lived under the Blessed One with the aim of abandoning desire.”

“Is there a path, is there a practice, for the abandoning of that desire?”

“Yes, there is a path, there is a practice, for the abandoning of that desire.”

“What is the path, the practice, for the abandoning of that desire?”

“Brahman, there is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence... concentration founded on intent... concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion. This, brahman, is the path, this is the practice for the abandoning of that desire.”

“If that’s so, Master Ānanda, then it’s an endless path, and not one with an end, for it’s impossible that one could abandon desire by means of desire.”

“In that case, brahman, let me cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Didn’t you first have desire, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the monastery,’ and then when you reached the monastery, wasn’t that particular desire allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Didn’t you first have persistence, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the monastery,’ and then when you reached the monastery, wasn’t that particular persistence allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Didn’t you first have the intent, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the monastery,’ and then when you reached the monastery, wasn’t that particular intent allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Didn’t you first have (an act of) discrimination, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the monastery,’ and then when you reached the monastery, wasn’t that particular act of discrimination allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“So it is with an arahant whose effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who is released through right gnosis. Whatever desire he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship that particular desire is allayed. Whatever persistence he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship that particular persistence is allayed. Whatever intent he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship that particular intent is allayed. Whatever discrimination he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship that particular discrimination is allayed. So what do you think, brahman? Is this an endless path, or one with an end?”

“You’re right, Master Ānanda. This is a path with an end, and not an endless one. Magnificent, Master Ānanda! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Ānanda—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Ānanda remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge, from this day forward, for life.” — *SN 51:15*

§13. “There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, ‘This desire of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly restricted nor outwardly scattered.’....

“And how is desire overly sluggish? Whatever desire is accompanied by laziness, conjoined with laziness, that is called overly sluggish desire.

“And how is desire overly active? Whatever desire is accompanied by restlessness, conjoined with restlessness, that is called overly active desire.

“And how is desire inwardly restricted? Whatever desire is accompanied by sloth & drowsiness, conjoined with sloth & drowsiness, that is called inwardly restricted desire.

“And how is desire outwardly scattered? Whatever desire is stirred up by the five strands of sensuality, outwardly dispersed & dissipated, that is called outwardly scattered desire.” — *SN 51:20*

§14. “‘This body comes into being through craving. And yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, ‘The monk named such-&-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having known & realized them for himself in the here & now.’ The thought occurs to him, ‘I hope that I, too, will—through the ending of the effluents—enter & remain in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for myself right in the here & now.’ Then, at a later time, he abandons craving, having relied on craving. ‘This body comes into

being through craving. And yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to this was it said.

“‘This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, ‘The monk named such-&-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.’ The thought occurs to him, ‘The monk named such-&-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now. Then why not me?’ Then, at a later time, he abandons conceit, having relied on conceit. ‘This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.’ Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said.” — *AN 4:159*

§15. “And what is the self as a governing principle? There is the case where a monk, having gone to a wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, reflects on this: ‘It’s not for the sake of robes that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; it’s not for the sake of almsfood, for the sake of lodgings, or for the sake of this or that state of (future) becoming that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness. Simply that I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress, (and I hope,) “Perhaps the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!” Now, if I were to seek the same sort of sensual pleasures that I abandoned in going forth from home into homelessness—or a worse sort—that would not be fitting for me.’ So he reflects on this: ‘My persistence will be aroused & not lax; my mindfulness established & not confused; my body calm & not aroused; my mind centered & unified.’ Having made himself his governing principle, he abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is unblameworthy, and looks after himself in a pure way. This is called the self as a governing principle” — *AN 3:40*

§16. “And what are the six kinds of house-based distress? The distress that arises when one regards as a non-acquisition the non-acquisition of forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, connected with worldly baits—or when one recalls the previous non-acquisition of such forms after they have passed, ceased, & changed: That is called house-based distress. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of renunciation-based distress? The distress coming from the longing that arises in one who is filled with longing for the unexcelled liberations when—experiencing the inconstancy of those very forms, their change, fading, & cessation—he sees with right discernment as it has come to be that all forms, both before and now, are inconstant, stressful, subject to

change and he is filled with this longing: ‘O when will I enter & remain in the dimension that the noble ones now enter & remain in?’ This is called renunciation-based distress. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.] ...

“By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation-based distress, abandon & transcend the six kinds of house-based distress. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending.” — MN 137

§17. “And how is mindfulness the governing principle? The mindfulness that ‘I will make complete any training with regard to good conduct that is not yet complete, or I will protect with discernment any training with regard to good conduct that is complete’ is well established right within. The mindfulness that ‘I will make complete any training with regard to the basics of the holy life that is not yet complete, or I will protect with discernment any training with regard to the basics of the holy life that is complete’ is well established right within. The mindfulness that ‘I will scrutinize with discernment any Dhamma that is not yet scrutinized, or I will protect with discernment any Dhamma that has been scrutinized’ is well established right within. The mindfulness that ‘I will touch through release any Dhamma that is not yet touched, or I will protect with discernment any Dhamma that has been touched’ is well established right within.

“This is how mindfulness is the governing principle.” — AN 4:245

§18. “Monks, endowed with six qualities, a monk dwells in the here & now with an abundance of pleasure & happiness, and his source for the ending of the effluents has been activated. Which six?

“There is the case where a monk is one who delights in the Dhamma, one who delights in developing (skillful qualities), one who delights in abandoning (unskillful qualities), one who delights in seclusion, one who delights in the unafflicted, one who delights in non-objectification [*nippapañca*].

“Endowed with these six qualities, a monk dwells in the here & now with an abundance of pleasure & happiness, and his source for the ending of the effluents has been activated.” — AN 6:78

§19. “And what are the effluents to be abandoned by tolerating? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, endures. He tolerates cold, heat, hunger, & thirst; the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; ill-spoken, unwelcome words & bodily feelings that, when they arise, are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable, displeasing, & menacing to life. The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to tolerate these things do not arise for him when he tolerates them. These are called the effluents to be abandoned by tolerating....

“And what are the effluents to be abandoned by destroying? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, doesn’t tolerate an arisen thought of sensuality. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence.

“Reflecting appropriately, he doesn’t tolerate an arisen thought of ill will...”

“Reflecting appropriately, he doesn’t tolerate an arisen thought of harmfulness...

“Reflecting appropriately, he doesn’t tolerate arisen evil, unskillful qualities. He abandons them, destroys them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence. The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to destroy these things do not arise for him when he destroys them. These are called the effluents to be abandoned by destroying.” — *MN 2*

§20. “‘This Dhamma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontent.’ Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk is content with any old robe cloth at all, any old almsfood, any old lodging, any old medicinal requisites for curing the sick at all. ‘This Dhamma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontent.’ Thus was it said. And with reference to this was it said.” — *AN 8:30*

§21. “These four traditions of the noble ones—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans. Which four?

“There is the case where a monk is content with any old robe cloth at all. He speaks in praise of being content with any old robe cloth at all. He doesn’t, for the sake of robe cloth, do anything unseemly or inappropriate. Not getting cloth, he isn’t agitated. Getting cloth, he uses it unattached to it, uninfatuated, guiltless, seeing the drawbacks (of attachment to it), and discerning the escape from them. He doesn’t, on account of his contentment with any old robe cloth at all, exalt himself or disparage others. Any monk who is diligent, deft, alert, & mindful in this is said to be a monk standing firm in the ancient, original traditions of the noble ones.

“And further, the monk is content with any old almsfood at all...

“And further, the monk is content with any old lodging at all...

“And further, the monk finds pleasure & delight in developing (skillful qualities), finds pleasure & delight in abandoning (unskillful qualities). He doesn’t, on account of his pleasure & delight in developing & abandoning, exalt himself or disparage others. Any monk who is diligent, deft, alert, & mindful in this is said to be a monk standing firm in the ancient, original traditions of the noble ones.

“These are the four traditions of the noble ones—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—which are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans.” — *AN 4:28*

§22. “Monks, I have known two qualities through experience: discontent with regard to skillful qualities and unrelenting exertion.... From this heedfulness of mine was attained awakening. From this heedfulness of mine was attained the unexcelled freedom from bondage.” — *AN 2:5*