

## ❁ Selections from the *Sutta Pitaka* (2<sup>nd</sup> part of the Pāli Canon)

From *Samyutta-nikāya*, v.420

*The First Sermon*

These two extremes, O monks, are not to be practiced by one who has gone forth from the world. What are the two? That conjoined with the passions, low, vulgar, common, ignoble, and useless—and that conjoined with self-torture, painful, ignoble, and useless. Avoiding these two extremes the Tathāgata [the Buddha] has gained the knowledge of the Middle Way, which gives sign and knowledge, and tends to calm, to insight, enlightenment, *nirvāṇa*.

What, O monks, is the Middle Way, which gives sight...? It is the noble Eightfold Path, namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This, O monks, is the Middle Way...

(1) Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of pain: birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, sorrow, lamentation, dejection, and despair are painful. Contact with unpleasant things is painful, not getting what one wishes is painful. In short the five *khandhas* of grasping are painful.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the cause of pain: that craving which leads to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there, namely, the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

(3) Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of pain: the cessation without remainder of that craving, abandonment, forsaking, release, non-attachment.

(4) Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain: this is the noble Eightfold Path, namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration...

As long as in these noble truths my threefold knowledge and insight...was not well purified, even so long, O monks, in the world with its gods, Māra, Brahmā, with ascetics, *brahmins*, gods, and men, I had not attained the highest complete enlightenment. Thus I knew.

But when in these noble truths my threefold knowledge and insight...was well purified, then, O monks, in the world...I had attained the highest complete enlightenment. Thus I knew. Knowledge arose in me; insight arose that the release of my mind is unshakable; this is my last existence; now there is no rebirth.

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<sup>1</sup> The five *khandhas* (groups or aggregates) are (bodily) form, feeling, perception, mental reactions [*saṅkhāra*], and consciousness. For the Buddha, suffering arises if one clings or identifies with any of these aggregates. Also, see *Samyutta-nikāya* iii.66 below.

**From *Majjhima-nikāya*, iii.250-252.**

[What] leads to the cessation of suffering?—It is just the Noble Eightfold Path, consisting of right outlook, right resolves, right speech, right acts, right livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness and right rapture of concentration.

Right outlook is to know suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

Right resolves are the resolve to renounce the world and to do no hurt or harm.

Right speech is to abstain from lies and slander, from reviling, and from tattle.

Right acts are to abstain from taking life, from stealing, and from lechery.

Right livelihood is that by which the disciple of the Noble One supports himself, to the exclusion of wrong modes of livelihood.

Right endeavor is when an almsman brings the will to bear, puts forth endeavor and energy, struggles and strives with all one's heart, to stop bad and wrong qualities which have not yet arisen from ever arising, to renounce those which have already arisen, to foster good qualities which have not yet arisen, and, finally, to establish, clarify, multiply, enlarge, develop, and perfect those good qualities which are there already.

Right mindfulness is when realizing what the body is—what feelings are—what the heart is—and what the mental states are—an almsman dwells ardent, alert, and mindful, in freedom from the wants and discontents attendant on any of these things.

Right rapture of concentration is when, divested of lusts and divested of wrong dispositions, an almsman develops, and dwells in, the first ecstasy [*jhana*] with all its zest and satisfaction, a state bred of aloofness and not divorced from observation and reflection. By laying to rest observation and reflection, one develops and dwells in inward serenity, in [the] focusing of heart, in the zest and satisfaction of the second ecstasy, which is divorced from observation and reflection and is bred of concentration—passing thence to the third and fourth ecstasies.

This, sirs, constitutes the Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

**From *Samyutta-nikāya*, iii.66**

*The Second Sermon*

The body, monks, is soulless. If the body, monks, were the soul, this body would not be subject to sickness, and it would be possible in the case of the body to say, “Let my body be thus, let my body not be thus.” Now, because the body is soulless, monks, therefore the body is subject to sickness, and it is not possible in the case of the body to say, “Let my body be thus, let my body not be thus.”

Feeling is soulless. . . perception is soulless. . . mental reactions are soulless...

Consciousness is soulless. For if consciousness were the soul, this consciousness would not be subject to sickness, and it would be possible in the case of consciousness to say, “Let my consciousness be thus, let my consciousness not be thus.” Now, because consciousness is soulless, therefore consciousness is subject to sickness, and it is not possible in the case of consciousness to say, “Let my consciousness be thus, let my consciousness not be thus.”

What think you, monks, is the body permanent or impermanent?

–Impermanent, Lord.

But is the impermanent painful or pleasant?

–Painful, Lord.

But is it fitting to consider what is impermanent, painful, and subject to change as, “this is mine, this am I, this is my soul”?

–No indeed, Lord.

[And so of feeling, perception, mental reactions, and consciousness.]

Therefore in truth, monks, whatever body, past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, low or eminent, near or far, is to be looked on by one who duly and rightly understands, as, “all this body is not mine, not this am I, not mine is the soul.”

[And so of feeling, perception, mental reactions, and consciousness.]

Thus perceiving, monks, the learned noble disciple feels loathing for the body, for feeling, for perception, for mental reactions, for consciousness. Feeling disgust one becomes free from passion, through freedom from passion one is emancipated, and in the emancipated arises the knowledge of one’s emancipation. This disciple understands that destroyed is rebirth, the religious life has been led, done is what was to be done, there is naught beyond this world.

## From *Khuddaka-nikāya*, II.i.1

### *Milindapañha*

Then the venerable Nāgasena spoke to Milinda the king as follows:—

Your majesty, ... did you come afoot, or riding?

—*Bhante*, I do not go afoot: I came in a chariot.

Your majesty, if you came in a chariot, declare to me the chariot. Pray, your majesty, is the pole the chariot?

—Nay, verily, *bhante*.

Is the axle the chariot?

—Nay, verily, *bhante*.

Are the wheels the chariot?

—Nay...

Is the chariot-body the chariot? ...Is the banner-staff the chariot?...Is the yoke the chariot? ... Are the reins the chariot? ... Is the goading-stick the chariot?... Pray, your majesty, are pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, bannerstaff, yoke, reins, and goad unitedly the chariot?

—Nay, verily, *bhante*.

Is it, then, your majesty, something else besides pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, banner-staff, yoke, reins, and goad which is the chariot?

—Nay, verily, *bhante*.

Your majesty, although I question you very closely, I fail to discover any chariot. Verily now, your majesty, the word ‘chariot’ is a mere empty sound. What chariot is there here? Your majesty, you speak a falsehood, a lie: there is no chariot. Your majesty, you are the chief king in all the continent of India; of whom are you afraid that you speak a lie? Listen to me, my lords, ye five hundred Yonakas, and ye eighty thousand priests! Milinda the king here says thus: ‘I came in a chariot’; and being requested, ‘Your majesty, if you came in a chariot, declare to me the chariot,’ he fails to produce any chariot. Is it possible, pray, for me to assent to what he says?

When he had thus spoken, the five hundred Yonakas applauded the venerable Nāgasena... Then Milinda the king spoke to the venerable Nāgasena as follows:—

—*Bhante* Nāgasena, I speak no lie: the word ‘chariot’ is but a way of counting, term, appellation, convenient designation, and name for pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, and banner-staff.

Thoroughly well, your majesty, do you understand a chariot. In exactly the same way, your majesty, in respect of me, Nāgasena, is but a way of counting, term, appellation, convenient designation, mere name for the hair of my head, hair of my body...brain of the head, form, feeling, perception, mental reactions, and consciousness. But in the absolute sense there is no ego here to be found.

Then the priestess Vajira, your majesty, said in the presence of the Blessed One:—

Even as the word of ‘chariot’ means  
That members join to frame a whole;  
So when the groups appear to view,  
We use the phrase, ‘a living being.’

**From *Samyutta-nikāya*, iv.19**

*Adittapariyaya Sutta: The Fire Sermon*

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying in Gaya, at Gaya Head, with 1,000 monks. There he addressed the monks:

Monks, the All is on fire. What All is on fire? The eye is on fire. Forms are on fire. Consciousness at the eye is on fire. Contact at the eye is on fire. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is on fire. On fire with what? With the fire of desire, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. On fire, I tell you, with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs.

The ear is on fire. Sounds are on fire...

The nose is on fire. Aromas are on fire...

The tongue is on fire. Flavors are on fire...

The body is on fire. Tactile sensations are on fire...

The intellect is on fire. Ideas are on fire. Consciousness at the intellect is on fire. Contact at the intellect is on fire. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is on fire. On fire with what? With the fire of desire, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. On fire, I say, with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs.

Seeing thus, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with consciousness at the eye, disenchanted with contact at the eye. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye, experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: With that, too, one grows disenchanted.

One grows disenchanted with the ear...

One grows disenchanted with the nose...

One grows disenchanted with the tongue...

One grows disenchanted with the body...

One grows disenchanted with the intellect, disenchanted with ideas, disenchanted with consciousness at the intellect, disenchanted with contact at the intellect. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect, experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: One grows disenchanted with that too. Disenchanted, the disciple becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, one is fully released. With full release, there is the knowledge, ‘Fully released,’ one discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing more for this world.’

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted at his words. And while this explanation was being given, the hearts of the 1,000 monks, through no clinging (not being sustained), were fully released from depravities.

**From *Samyutta-nikāya*, xxii.90**

*Dependent Origination*

That things have being, O Kaccāna, constitutes one extreme of doctrine; that things have no being is the other extreme. These extremes, O Kaccāna, have been avoided by the Tathāgata, and it is a middle doctrine he teaches:—

- On ignorance depends mental reactions;
- On mental reactions depend consciousness;
- On consciousness depend name and form;
- On name and form depend the six organs of sense;
- On the six organs of sense depend contact;
- On contact depends sensation;
- On sensation depends craving;
- On craving depends attachment;
- On attachment depends existence;
- On existence depends birth;

On birth depend old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair. Thus does this entire aggregation of misery arise.

But on the complete fading out and cessation of ignorance ceases mental reactions;

- On the cessation of mental reactions ceases consciousness;
- On the cessation of consciousness cease name and form;
- On the cessation of name and form cease the six organs of sense;
- On the cessation of the six organs of sense ceases contact;
- On the cessation of contact ceases sensation;
- On the cessation of sensation ceases craving;
- On the cessation of craving ceases attachment;
- On the cessation of attachment ceases existence;
- On the cessation of existence ceases birth;

On the cessation of birth cease old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair. Thus does this entire aggregation of misery cease.