

3. NONRETURNING

(1) *Abandoning the Five Lower Fetters*

7. "There is a path and way, Ānanda, to the abandoning of the five lower fetters. That anyone, without relying on that path and way, might know or see or abandon the five lower fetters—this is not possible. Just as when there is a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, it is not possible that anyone might cut out its heartwood without cutting through its bark and sapwood, so too, in the case of abandoning the five lower fetters.

"There is a path and way, Ānanda, to the abandoning of the five lower fetters. That someone, by relying on that path and way, might know and see and abandon the five lower fetters—this is possible. Just as, when there is a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, it is possible that someone might cut out its heartwood by cutting through its bark and sapwood, so too, in the case of abandoning the five lower fetters.

8. "Suppose, Ānanda, the river Ganges were full of water right up to the brim so that crows could drink from it, and then a feeble man came thinking: 'By swimming across the stream with my arms, I shall get safely across to the further shore of this river Ganges'; yet he would not be able to get safely across. So too, when the Dhamma is being taught to someone for the cessation of identity, if his mind does not enter into it and acquire confidence, steadiness, and resolution, then he can be regarded as like the feeble man.²⁵

"Suppose, Ānanda, the river Ganges were full of water right up to the brim so that crows could drink from it, and then a strong man came thinking: 'By swimming across the stream with my arms, I shall get safely across to the further shore of this river Ganges'; and he would be able to get safely across. So too, when the Dhamma is being taught to someone for the cessation of identity, if his mind enters into it and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution, then he can be regarded as like the strong man.

9. "And what, Ānanda, is the path and way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters? Here, with seclusion from acquisitions,²⁶ with the abandoning of unwholesome states, with the complete tranquilizing of bodily inertia, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and dwells in the first jhāna, which

is accompanied by thought and examination, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion.

"Whatever exists therein of form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness, he sees those states as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumor, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, as nonself."²⁷ He turns his mind away from those states and directs it toward the deathless element thus: 'This is the peaceful, this is the sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna.'²⁸ If he is steady in that, he attains the destruction of the taints. But if he does not attain the destruction of the taints, then through that very desire for the Dhamma, that delight in the Dhamma, with the destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes one due to be reborn spontaneously [in the pure abodes] and there attain final Nibbāna without ever returning from that world.²⁹ This is the path and way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters.

10–12. "Again, with the subsiding of thought and examination, a monk enters and dwells in the second jhāna.... Again, with the fading away as well of rapture, a monk ... enters and dwells in the third jhāna.... Again, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain ... a monk enters and dwells in the fourth jhāna, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

"Whatever exists therein of form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness, he sees those states as impermanent ... as nonself. He turns his mind away from those states and directs it toward the deathless element... This is the path and way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters.

13. "Again, with the complete transcending of perceptions of forms, with the passing away of perceptions of sensory impingement, with nonattention to perceptions of diversity, aware that 'space is infinite,' a monk enters upon and dwells in the base of the infinity of space.

"Whatever exists therein of feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness,³⁰ he sees those states as impermanent ... as nonself. He turns his mind away from those states and directs it toward the deathless element ... This is the path and way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters.

14. "Again, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of

space, aware that 'consciousness is infinite,' a monk enters upon and dwells in the base of the infinity of consciousness.

"Whatever exists therein of feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness, he sees those states as impermanent ... as nonself. He turns his mind away from those states and directs it toward the deathless element... This is the path and way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters.

15. "Again, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of consciousness, aware that 'there is nothing,' a monk enters upon and dwells in the base of nothingness.

"Whatever exists therein of feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness, he sees those states as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumor, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as nonself. He turns his mind away from those states and directs it toward the deathless element thus: "This is the peaceful, this is the sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna. 'If he is steady' in that, he attains the destruction of the taints. But if he does not attain the destruction of the taints, then through that very desire for the Dhamma, that delight in the Dhamma, with the destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes one due to be reborn spontaneously [in the pure abodes] and there attain final Nibbāna without ever returning from that world. This is the path and way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters."

(from MN 64: *Mahānāḷikya Sutta*; I 434-37)

(2) *Four Kinds of Persons*

"There are, O monks, four kinds of persons found existing in the world. What four?"

"Here, monks, in this very life a person attains Nibbāna through volitional exertion. Here, with the breakup of the body, after death, a person attains final Nibbāna through volitional exertion. Here, in this very life a person attains final Nibbāna without volitional exertion. Here, with the breakup of the body, after death, a person attains final Nibbāna without volitional exertion.

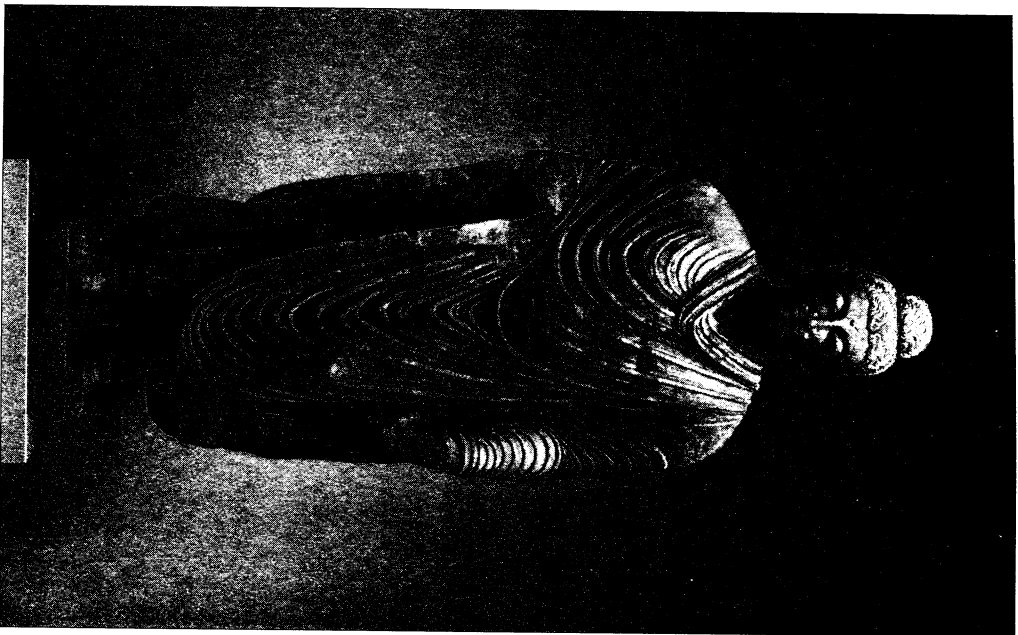
"And how, monks, does a person, in this very life, attain Nibbāna

through volitional exertion? Here, a monk dwells contemplating the unattractiveness of the body, perceiving repulsiveness in food, perceiving discontent with the entire world, contemplating impermanence in all formations; and the perception of death is well established within him.³¹ He dwells relying upon these five powers of a trainee: the powers of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. These five faculties are extremely strong in him: the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Because of the strength of these five faculties, in this very life he attains Nibbāna through volitional exertion. This is how a person, in this very life, attains Nibbāna through volitional exertion.

"And how, monks, does a person, with the breakup of the body, after death, attain Nibbāna through volitional exertion? Here, a monk dwells contemplating the unattractiveness of the body ... and the perception of death is well established within him. He dwells relying upon these five powers of a trainee: the powers of faith ... and wisdom. These five faculties are relatively feeble in him: the faculties of faith ... and wisdom. Because of the feebleness of these five faculties, with the breakup of the body, after death, he attains Nibbāna through volitional exertion. This is how a person, with the breakup of the body, after death, attains Nibbāna through volitional exertion.

"And how, monks, does a person, in this very life, attain Nibbāna without volitional exertion? Here, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and dwells in the first jhāna. He dwells relying upon these five powers of a trainee: the powers of faith... and wisdom. These five faculties are extremely strong in him: the faculties of faith ... and wisdom. Because of the strength of these five faculties, in this very life he attains Nibbāna without volitional exertion. This is how a person, in this very life, attains Nibbāna without volitional exertion.

"And how, monks, does a person, with the breakup of the body, after death, attain Nibbāna without volitional exertion? Here, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and dwells in the first jhāna ... the fourth jhāna. He dwells relying upon these five powers of a trainee: the powers of faith ... and wisdom. These five faculties are relatively feeble in him: the faculties of faith ... and wisdom. Because of the feebleness of these five faculties, with the breakup of the body, after death, he attains Nibbāna without volitional



Tamed, he is supreme among those who tame;
At peace, he is the sage among those who bring peace;
Freed, he is the chief of those who set free;
Delivered, he is the best of those who deliver.

—*Anguttara Nikāya* 4:23

In the
Buddha's
Words



An Anthology of Discourses
from the Pāli Canon

Edited and introduced by

Bhikkhu Bodhi



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON