

ARAHAT DHAMMADINNA'S DHAMMA TEACHING



MN 44 TRANSLATED BY
ĀNANDAJOTI BHIKKHU

Arahat Dhammadinnā's Dhamma Teaching

MN 44 AND COMMS TRANSLATED BY
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Introduction

What follows is a record of a conversation between the Arahāt nun Dhammadinnā and her ex-husband, the Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*) Visākha. The basis for the story is that Visākha had been amongst the first to hear the newly awakened Buddha teach, and had on that occasion attained Stream Entry, and subsequently the state of a Non-Returner.

As he was no longer able to live a normal householder's life his wife Dhammadinnā decides to go forth herself, and in no long time she attains Arahātship while in the countryside. She then returns to the capital, and Visākha, hearing of her sudden return, decides to visit her to find out if she is dissatisfied, or if she has understood the teaching.

Rather than asking her directly, however, he decides to ask her questions on the teaching, and to judge for himself from the answers she gives. The discourse then consists of a series of questions asked by Visākha and the profound answers given by Ven Dhammadinnā.

It should be noted that this is a very important turn of events given the context of ancient Indian society, for here it is the woman who attains to the higher level, and the ex-wife is now seen as able to teach her husband, and the husband as willing to learn from her.

At the end of the discourse Visākha relates all that passed between them to the Buddha and he confirms that the teaching is exactly as he would have given it himself, thereby making it his own word (*Buddhavacana*).

* * *

The questions are arranged in series, and mainly follow on from the answer that was previously given, probing into the depths of the teachings given by the Buddha, and Dhammadinnā's own experience and understanding of the practices entailed.

The first set of questions (1-7) are about the meaning of embodiment, its arising, cessation and the path to the cessation; and related questions on the twenty kinds of embodiment view, how they arise and how they do not arise.

The next set (8-11) concern the eightfold noble path, its definition, its conditionality, and how it is organised, which is followed by a question about concentration, its causes, accessories and development.

We then move on to a set of questions (12-14) about bodily, verbal and mental processes and their definitions. The next set of questions about the cessation of perception and feeling (15-20) segue very nicely with the preceding set, and further expand on the answers given there.

There is then a set of questions on feelings (21-26), what they are, their types, definitions, and the tendencies that underlie them. There follows a set on various complements (27-33), beginning with complements to the three feelings and moving step by step to the ultimate question about Nibbāna. At this point Ven Dhammadinnā, doubting his ability to understand it, asks Visākha to speak to the Buddha himself.

The title *Vedalla* given to this discourse, which I translate here as *Elaboration*, is also one of the categories in the nine-fold division of the teaching, and seems to correspond to the Sanskrit word *Vaipulya*. It may arise because of the ever-deepening nature of the sets of questions, which start out with a simple question, often requiring a definition, which is then probed into, sometimes in a very deep and subtle way.

For instance in the set of questions about the eightfold path, first it is enumerated, then there are questions about its conditionality, its constituents and a deep question about its final member, concentration. The same applies to the other factors which are asked about, and this pattern seems to appear in other discourses designated as *Vedalla* also.¹

* * *

There are a couple of anomalies in the text as it stands: when asked *how* does one enter and emerge from the cessation of perception and feeling, *Dhammadinnā* doesn't really answer, but gives an interesting statement that one who is entering that state doesn't think he will enter, he is entering or that he has entered (or emerged), but only that his mind has been developed so well that that is what happens.

When asked about the complement of the unconditioned *Nibbāna*, *Dhammadinnā* first says it is beyond *Visākha*'s ability to understand, and then sends him to the Buddha if he wants to understand it. When he follows this advice, however, the Buddha has no further instruction for him, and simply confirms *Ven Dhammadinnā*'s teaching up to that point.

These incidences, and the differences that are apparent in the parallel versions of the discourse,² make it highly likely that the Pāli version has suffered textual corruption in its transmission in certain places, which would explain how these anomalies have entered the text.

* * *

It was on the basis of the teaching given in this discourse, which is the most extensive we have from a nun in the Lord Buddha's own time, that the Buddha placed this Elder Nun in the foremost position in the Dispensation amongst those who teach the Dhamma, and she is remembered and honoured for this accomplishment to this day.

It should also be noted that she is recorded in the commentarial tradition as having been an inspiring teacher, and *Sukkā*, being inspired by her, went forth and attained *Arahatship*.

¹ Besides this discourse the comms. list MN 43, 9, 109 and DN 21, besides an unidentified discourse, the *Saṅkhārabhājanīyasutta*, as examples of the genre.

² For a discussion of the different versions of the text, see *Anālayo, A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya* 2011, pp.278-286; and *Chos sbyin gyi mdo* (2011).

Another sister called Vaḍḍhesī, who had been amongst the five hundred who followed Mahāpajāpatī when she ordained, also took Dhammadinnā as teacher, and after being tormented for years by lust was able to throw it off and attain Liberation. Her verses may serve as a further testament to Ven. Dhammadinnā's standing:

It is twenty-five years since I have gone forth,
but not even for a snap of the fingers did I attain calm of mind.
Not obtaining mental peace, soaked with sensual desire,
raising my arms and wailing, I entered the monastery.

I approached the nun (Dhammadinnā), who seemed trustworthy to me,
she taught me the Dhamma: constituents, spheres and elements.

After listening to her Dhamma and taking a seat on one side,
I came to know my past lives, I have purified the divine eye,
I have knowledge of others' minds, I have purified the divine ear.
I have realised spiritual power, the destruction of the pollutants was attained by me,
I have realised the six deep knowledges, and have fulfilled the Buddha's teaching.

Ānandajoti Bhikkhu
September 2014

The Commentarial Introduction

(from MA 44)

After the Fortunate One completely awakened to Perfect Awakening, turned the auspicious Dhamma Wheel, instructed Yasa, the son of a good family, arrived at Uruvelā, and there instructed the thousand yogis, and together with the former yogis, who were now pollutant-free monks, went to Rājagaha, he preached Dhamma to King Bimbisāra and the assembly of twelve myriads who had come in order to see the Awakened One.

From that twelve myriads who came together with the King one myriad announced they were devotees, and eleven myriads were established in the fruit of Stream Entry along with King Bimbisāra.

This devotee (Visākha) was one amongst them, and at the first meeting he was established with them in the fruit of Stream Entry, and again afterwards on another day, after hearing the Dhamma he was established in the fruit of a Non-Returner.

After becoming a Non-Returner unlike when returning to the home on other days, when he came looking round here and there laughing and smiling, he didn't come in this way, but he came with calmed faculties and calmed mind.

(His wife) Dhammadinnā got up from the couch, and looking down the road saw the way he was coming, and thought: 'Why (is he) like this?' and making her way out to meet him stood at the top of the stairs and stretched out her hand in order to support him.

The devotee waved (her away with) his hand.

She thought: 'I will see during the morning meal.' Formerly the devotee ate together with her. But that day without even looking round he ate on his own like a meditating monk.

She thought: 'I will see during the evening time.' That day the devotee didn't enter the bedroom, but set another to watch over the chamber, prepared a suitable bed and lay down.

The female devotee, thinking: 'I wonder if he has desire for someone else,³ or, something was said by a slanderer, or, whatever can my fault be?' and she became depressed, thinking: 'I am able to live like this for one or two days only', having gone to wait on him she worshipped him and stood there.

The devotee asked: "Has Dhammadinnā come at this time?"

³ Lit: *for an outsider*.

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“Yes, Noble Sir, I have come, you are not like before, is there desire for someone else?”

“There is not, Dhammadinnā.”

“Is there some kind of slander?”

“Not that.”

“That being so, (then) whatever can my fault be?”

“You have no fault.”

“Then why do you not make conversation with me as normal?”

He thought: ‘I should not broadcast this supermundane (attainment), which is a weighty and serious (matter), but if I don’t speak, her heart might break right now and she might die,’ so having sympathy for her, he said:

“Dhammadinnā, having heard the Teacher teach the Dhamma, I attained what is known as the supermundane state, and with that attainment such mundane actions are no longer suitable.

If you wish, with your four-hundred millions and my four-hundred millions there are eighty millions, take control of this, and be in the position of a Mother or Sister to me, and live on that, I can carry on with as little as a ball of rice given by you.

If such will not do, then take the wealth and return to your family home.

Or if there is no one else you desire, I will place you in the position of a Sister or a Daughter and look after you.”

She thought: ‘It is no ordinary person who is speaking thus. Surely the supermundane state has been penetrated by him. But can this state only be penetrated by men, or is it possible for a woman to penetrate it?’

She said this to Visākha: “Can this state only be attained by men, or can a woman also attain it?”

“What did you say, Dhammadinnā, for those who are practiced, theirs is the inheritance, for whoever there is a basis, for him there is the attainment.”

“If that is so, please allow my going forth.”

“Very well, Bhaddā,⁴ if this is the path you want to apply yourself to, not knowing your mind (previously) I did not speak.”

⁴ This appears to be an affectionate name for her.

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Then he went to King Bimbisāra, worshipped him and stood there.

The King asked: “Why have you come at this time, householder?”

“Dhammadinnā says: ‘Great King, I would go forth.’”

“But what is suitable to provide for her?”

“It is suitable to provide nothing other than a golden palanquin, God-King, and the cleaning of the city.”

The King gave the golden palanquin and had the city cleaned.

Visākha had Dhammadinnā washed with scented water, decorated with all her decorations, sat her down in the golden palanquin, gathered their relations around her, and while worshipping with scented flowers and so on, as though he was perfuming the city, he took her to the nunnery, and said: “Noble Ladies, you must give Dhammadinnā the going forth.”

The nuns said: “Householder, it is suitable to bear with one or two faults.”

“There are no faults at all, Noble Ladies, she goes forth out of faith.”

Then one learned Elder nun informed her about the five-fold meditation subject beginning with skin,⁵ shaved her hair and gave her the going forth.

Visākha said: “Rejoice in the well-taught Dhamma, Noble Lady,” then worshipped her and departed.

From the day she went forth many gains and much honour arose to her. Because of that there were obstacles and no chance to develop the ascetic practices.

Then taking the Elder nuns who were her Teacher and Preceptor, she went to the countryside, made them explain the thirty-eight meditation objects that delight the mind, and she began to develop the ascetic practices, and being endowed with resolution she did not tire easily.

A hundred thousand aeons in the past from now the Teacher Padumuttara arose in the world. At that time she had become a servant to one family, then having sold her hair, she gave a gift to (the Buddha’s) Chief Disciple, the Elder Sujāta, and made an aspiration.

Through her being endowed with that aspiration and resolution she did not tire easily, and in a very few days, having attained Liberation, she thought: “I ordained in this Dispensation for a purpose, the summit has been attained, how will my relatives make merit with me in the countryside? Also the Community of nuns should not be tired out with the (lack of) requisites, I am going to Rājagaha,” and taking the Community of nuns

⁵ This is the meditation on the foulness of the body, beginning: *kesā, lomā, nakhā, dantā, taco* (*hairs of the head, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin*), which is repeated in forward and reverse order.

she went to Rājagaha.

Visākha, having heard: “Dhammadinnā has come, it seems,” thought: ‘Not long after her going forth she went to the country, and not long after going she returns again, what can be up? I will go and see,’ and he came to the nunnery with a second person.

* * *

(And) he thought this it seems: ‘Do you take delight, or do you not take delight, Noble Lady?’ (But) this sort of questioning is not for a wise man, (so) having brought up the five constituents (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment, I will question her with a question, by her answer to the question I will know whether she has delight or no delight.’

The Small Discourse giving an Elaboration Cūḷavedallasuttam̐ (MN 44)

Introduction

Thus I heard:

At one time the Fortunate One was living near Rājagaha at the Squirrel’s Feeding Place in Bamboo Wood.

The devotee Visākha approached the nun Dhammadinnā, and after approaching and worshipping the nun Dhammadinnā, he sat on one side. While sitting on one side the devotee Visākha said this to the nun Dhammadinnā:

Q1. Embodiment

“‘Embodiment, embodiment,’⁶ is said, Noble Lady. What, Noble Lady, is said to be embodiment by the Fortunate One?”

“These five constituents (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment, friend Visākha, are said to be embodiment by the Fortunate One, as follows:

the form constituent that provides fuel for attachment
the feelings constituent that provides fuel for attachment
the perceptions constituent that provides fuel for attachment
the (mental) processes constituent that provides fuel for attachment
the consciousness constituent that provides fuel for attachment.

These are the five constituents (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment, friend Visākha, that are said to be embodiment by the Fortunate One.”

“Well said, Noble Lady,” said the devotee Visākha, and after greatly rejoicing and gladly receiving this word of the nun Dhammadinnā, he asked a further question to the nun Dhammadinnā:

Q2. Arising of Embodiment

“‘The arising of embodiment, the arising of embodiment,’ is said, Noble Lady. What, Noble Lady, is said to be the arising of embodiment by the Fortunate One?”

“It is that craving which leads to continuation in existence, friend Visākha, which is connected with enjoyment and passion, greatly enjoying this and that, as follows:

⁶ As we will see Visākha asks about embodiment in terms of the Four Noble Truths, and just as suffering is defined in terms of the constituents, so here is embodiment, and similarly with arising, cessation and Path.

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craving for sense pleasures
craving for continuation
craving for discontinuation.

This, friend Visākha, is said to be the arising of embodiment by the Fortunate One.

Q3. Cessation of Embodiment

“‘The cessation of embodiment, the cessation of embodiment,’ is said, Noble Lady. What, Noble Lady, is said to be the cessation of embodiment by the Fortunate One?”

“It is the complete fading away and cessation without remainder of that craving, friend Visākha, liberation, letting go, release and non-adherence.

This, friend Visākha, is said to be the cessation of embodiment by the Fortunate One.”

Q4. The Path Leading to the Cessation of Embodiment

“‘The path leading to the cessation of embodiment, the path leading to the cessation of embodiment,’ is said, Noble Lady. What, Noble Lady, is said to be the path leading to the cessation of embodiment by the Fortunate One?”

“It is this noble path with eight factors, friend Visākha, as follows:

right view, right thought,
right speech, right action,
right livelihood, right endeavour,
right mindfulness, right concentration.”

Q5. Attachment and the Five Constituents

“Is this attachment, Noble Lady, (the same as) these five constituents (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment, or is attachment different from the five constituents (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment?”⁷

“This attachment, friend Visākha, is not (the same as) these five constituents (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment, nor is attachment different from the five constituents (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment. But whatever desire and passion there is for the five constituents (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment, that is the attachment right there.”

⁷ The question is asked to clarify the answer given to the first question about embodiment.

Q6. Embodiment View

“But what, Noble Lady, is embodiment view?”⁸

“Here, friend Visākha, an unlearned worldling, one who doesn’t meet the Noble Ones, who is unskilled in the Noble Dhamma, untrained in the Noble Dhamma, one who doesn’t meet Good People, who is unskilled in the Good People’s Dhamma, untrained in the Good People’s Dhamma,

views bodily form as self,⁹ or self as endowed with bodily form, or bodily form as in self, or self as in bodily form.

Views feeling as self, or self as endowed with feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling.

Views perception as self, or self as endowed with perception, or perception as in self, or self as in perception.

Views (volitional) processes as self, or self as endowed with (volitional) processes, or (volitional) processes as in self, or self as in (volitional) processes.

Views consciousness as self, or self as endowed with consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness.

This, friend Visākha, is embodiment view.”

Q7. No Embodiment View

“But how, Noble Lady, is there no embodiment view?”

“Here, friend Visākha, a learned noble disciple, one who meets the Noble Ones, who is skilled in the Noble Dhamma, trained in the Noble Dhamma, one who meets Good People, who is skilled in the Good People’s Dhamma, trained in the Good People’s Dhamma,

doesn’t view bodily form as self, or self as endowed with bodily form, or bodily form as in self, or self as in bodily form.

Doesn’t view feeling as self, or self as endowed with feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling.

⁸ Embodiment view is one of the first three *fetters* (*samyojana*) that are overcome when attaining Stream Entry; the others are *uncertainty* (*vicikicchā*) and (*grasping at*) *virtue and practices* (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*).

⁹ What follows enumerates the twenty types of embodiment view, which are four ways of identifying with each of the constituents.

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Doesn't view perception as self, or self as endowed with perception, or perception as in self, or self as in perception.

Doesn't view (volitional) processes as self, or self as endowed with (volitional) processes, or (volitional) processes as in self, or self as in (volitional) processes.

Doesn't view consciousness as self, or self as endowed with consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness.

Thus, friend Visākha, there is no embodiment view.”

Q8. Eightfold Noble Path

“But what, Noble Lady, is the Eightfold Noble Path?”

“It is this noble path with eight factors, friend Visākha, as follows:

right view, right thought,
right speech, right action,
right livelihood, right endeavour,
right mindfulness, right concentration.”

Q9. Path Conditioned

“But is the eightfold Noble Path, Noble Lady, conditioned or unconditioned?”

“The eightfold Noble Path, friend Visākha, is conditioned.”

Q10. Constituents of the Path

“Are the three constituents¹⁰ comprised within the eightfold Noble Path, Noble Lady, or is the eightfold Noble Path comprised within the three constituents?”

“The three constituents are not comprised within the eightfold Noble Path, friend Visākha, but the eightfold Noble Path is comprised within the three constituents.

Whatever is right speech, friend Visākha, and whatever is right action, and whatever is right livelihood, these things are comprised within the virtue constituent.

Whatever is right endeavour, and whatever is right mindfulness, and whatever is right concentration, these things are comprised within the concentration constituent.

Whatever is right view, and whatever is right thought, these things are comprised within the wisdom constituent.

¹⁰ The constituents referred to here are what is elsewhere called the *three trainings* (*tisso sikkhā*).

Q11. Concentration

“But what, Noble Lady, is concentration,¹¹ what are the causes of concentration, what are the accessories to concentration, what is the development of concentration?”

“Whatever is one-pointedness of mind, friend Visākha, that is concentration, the four ways of attending to mindfulness are the causes of concentration, the four right endeavours are the accessories to concentration, whatever repetition of these things there is, their development, being made much of, this is the development of concentration herein.”

Q12. Processes

“But what, Noble Lady, are the processes?”

“There are these three processes, friend Visākha: the bodily process, the speech process, the mental process.”¹²

Q13. Processes Definitions

“But what, Noble Lady, is bodily process, what is speech process, what is mental process?”

“In-breathing and out-breathing, friend Visākha, is bodily process, thinking and reflection is speech process, perception and feeling is mental process.”

Q14. Explanation of Definitions

“But why is in-breathing and out-breathing, Noble Lady, bodily process, why is thinking and reflection speech process, why is perception and feeling mental process?”

“In-breathing and out-breathing, friend Visākha, are bodily, these things are bound up with the body, therefore in-breathing and out-breathing is a bodily process.

Having thought and reflected beforehand, friend Visākha, he afterwards breaks forth with a word, therefore thinking and reflection is a speech process.

Perception and feeling are mental factors, these things are bound up with the mind, therefore perception and feeling are mental processes.”

¹¹ Referring to the eighth factor in the Noble Eightfold Path.

¹² These appear in the next set of questions when discussing which of them cease first during cessation.

Q15. The Attainment of Cessation

“But how, Noble Lady, is the cessation of perception and feeling attained?”

“A monastic who is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, friend Visākha, does not think: ‘I will attain the cessation of perception and feeling,’ or ‘I am attaining the cessation of perception and feeling,’ or ‘I have attained the cessation of perception and feeling.’ But previously his mind has been developed so that it leads to that state.”¹³

Q16. Processes that Cease First during Cessation

“But for a monastic who has attained the cessation of perception and feeling, Noble Lady, which things cease first: bodily process, or speech process, or mental process?”

“For a monastic who is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, friend Visākha, first speech process ceases, then bodily process ceases, then mental process ceases.”¹⁴

Q17. The Emergence from Cessation

“But what, Noble Lady, is the emergence from the cessation of perception and feeling?”

“A monastic who is emerging from the cessation of perception and feeling, friend Visākha, does not think: ‘I will emerge from the cessation of perception and feeling,’ or, ‘I am emerging from the cessation of perception and feeling,’ or, ‘I have emerged from the cessation of perception and feeling.’ But previously his mind has been developed so that it leads to that state.”

Q18. Processes that Arise First during Emergence

“But for a monastic who has emerged from the cessation of perception and feeling, Noble Lady, which things arise first: bodily process, or speech process, or mental process?”

“For a monastic who is emerging from the cessation of perception and feeling, friend Visākha, first mental process arises, then bodily process arises, then speech process arises.”

¹³ This seems rather an odd answer, as it doesn't really answer the question.

¹⁴ Speech processes (thinking and reflection) cease when entering second absorption (jhāna); bodily processes (in-breathing and out-breathing) cease in fourth absorption; mental processes (perception and feeling) cease when entering cessation of perception and feeling. They arise again in reverse order when emerging from the attainment. See just below.

Q19. Contacts after Emergence

“Having emerged from the cessation of perception and feeling, Noble Lady, how many contacts touch that monastic?”

“Having emerged from the cessation of perception and feeling, friend Visākha, three contacts touch that monastic: emptiness contact, desirelessness contact, signlessness contact.”¹⁵

Q20. Inclination after Emergence

“For a monastic who has emerged from the cessation of perception and feeling, Noble Lady, what does his mind incline towards, what does it slope towards, what does it slant towards?”

“For a monastic who has emerged from the cessation of perception and feeling, friend Visākha, his mind inclines towards seclusion,¹⁶ it slopes towards seclusion, it slants towards seclusion.”

Q21. Number of Feelings

“But how many feelings are there, Noble Lady?”

“There are three feelings, friend Visākha: pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling, and neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling.”

Q22. Types of Feelings

“But what, Noble Lady, is pleasant feeling, what is unpleasant feeling, what is neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling?”

“Whatever, friend Visākha, is bodily or mentally pleasant and agreeable feeling: that is pleasant feeling. Whatever, friend Visākha, is bodily or mentally unpleasant and disagreeable feeling: that is unpleasant feeling. Whatever, friend Visākha, is bodily or mentally neither agreeable nor disagreeable feeling: that is neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling.”

¹⁵ These are the three *freedoms* (*vimokkha*), and are known as the *gateways to freedom* (*vimokkhamukha*).

¹⁶ Comm: *Vivekaninnan-ti-ādīsu, Nibbānaṃ viveko nāma, his mind inclines towards seclusion and so on, here seclusion means Nibbāna.*

Q22. Definition of Feelings

“But regarding pleasant feeling, Noble Lady: what is pleasant, what is unpleasant, regarding unpleasant feeling: what is pleasant, what is unpleasant, regarding neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling: what is pleasant, what is unpleasant?”

“Pleasant feeling, friend Visākha, is pleasant when it persists, unpleasant when it changes,¹⁷ unpleasant feeling is unpleasant when it persists, pleasant when it changes, neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling is pleasant when known, and unpleasant when unknown.”

Q23. Tendencies underlying Feelings

“But for pleasant feeling, Noble Lady, what tendency underlies it, for unpleasant feeling what tendency underlies it, for neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling what tendency underlies it?”

“For pleasant feeling, friend Visākha, the tendency to passion underlies it, for unpleasant feeling the tendency to repulsion underlies it, for neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling ignorance underlies it.”

Q24. Range of Tendencies

“But for all pleasant feeling, Noble Lady, does the tendency to passion underlie it, for all unpleasant feeling does the tendency to repulsion underlie it, for all neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling does the tendency to ignorance underlie it?”

“Not for all pleasant feeling, friend Visākha, does the tendency to passion underlie it, not for all unpleasant feeling does the tendency to repulsion underlie it, not for all neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling does the tendency to ignorance underlie it.”

Q25. Abandonment of Tendencies

“But for all pleasant feeling, Noble Lady, what should be abandoned, for all unpleasant feeling what should be abandoned, for all neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling what should be abandoned?”

“For pleasant feeling, friend Visākha, the tendency to passion should be abandoned, for unpleasant feeling the tendency to repulsion should be abandoned, for neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling the tendency to ignorance should be abandoned.”

¹⁷ This is a subtle point that people often can't understand, how is the pleasant unpleasant? The following answer shows how the unpleasant can also be pleasant.

Q26. Necessity of Abandonment

“But for all pleasant feeling, Noble Lady, (is there) a tendency to passion that should be abandoned, for all unpleasant feeling (is there) a tendency to repulsion that should be abandoned, for all neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling (is there) a tendency to ignorance that should be abandoned?”

“Not for all pleasant feeling, friend Visākha, (is there) a tendency to passion that should be abandoned, not for all unpleasant feeling (is there) a tendency to repulsion that should be abandoned, not for all neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling (is there) a tendency to ignorance that should be abandoned.¹⁸”

Here, friend Visākha, a monastic, quite secluded from sense desires, secluded from unwholesome things, having thinking, reflection, and the happiness and rapture born of seclusion, dwells having attained the first absorption. On that basis passion is abandoned, and herein there is no more underlying tendency to passion.

Here, friend Visākha, a monastic considers thus: ‘When will I dwell having attained that sphere that the Noble Ones now dwell in having attained that sphere?’ Thus a longing to give attendance towards that unsurpassed freedom arises and with longing as condition sorrow (arises). On that basis repulsion is abandoned, and herein there is no more underlying tendency to repulsion.

Here, friend Visākha, a monastic, having given up pleasure, given up pain,¹⁹ and with the previous disappearance of mental well-being and sorrow, without pain, without pleasure, and with complete purity of mindfulness owing to equanimity, dwells having attained the fourth absorption. On that basis ignorance is abandoned, and herein there is no more underlying tendency to ignorance.”

Q27. Complement of Unpleasant Feeling

“But for pleasant feeling, Noble Lady, what is the complement?”

“For pleasant feeling, friend Visākha, the complement is unpleasant feeling.”

Q28. Complement of Pleasant Feeling

“But for unpleasant feeling, Noble Lady, what is the complement?”

“For unpleasant feeling, friend Visākha, the complement is pleasant feeling.”

¹⁸ These answers are very unexpected, as indeed all the *anusaya do* have to be abandoned, and what is more Dhammadinnā explains how they are abandoned in the next part of her answer. Is there a textual corruption here?

¹⁹ We might have expected ellipsis markers to indicate the second and third absorptions, but they are absent, and we go from the first absorption straight to the fourth.

Q29. Complement of Neither-Unpleasant-nor-Pleasant Feeling

“But for neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling, Noble Lady, what is the complement?”

“For neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling, friend Visākha, the complement is ignorance.”

Q30. Complement of Ignorance

“But for ignorance, Noble Lady, what is the complement?”

“For ignorance, friend Visākha, the complement is understanding.”

Q31. Complement of Understanding

“But for understanding, Noble Lady, what is the complement?”

“For understanding, friend Visākha, the complement is freedom.”

Q32. Complement of Freedom

“But for freedom, Noble Lady, what is the complement?”

“For freedom, friend Visākha, the complement is Nibbāna.”

Q33. Complement of Nibbāna

“But for Nibbāna, Noble Lady, what is the complement?”

“You are not able to grasp, friend Visākha, answers to questions that are beyond your limits, like immersion in Nibbāna, friend Visākha, the spiritual life that ends in Nibbāna, that conclusion in Nibbāna.

Desiring this,²⁰ friend Visākha, approach the Fortunate One and you can ask him about this matter, and just as the Fortunate One explains, so you should bear it in mind.”

Interview with the Fortunate One

Then the devotee Visākha, after greatly rejoicing and gladly receiving this word of the nun Dhammadinnā, having worshipped and circumambulated the nun Dhammadinnā, approached the Fortunate One, and after approaching and worshipping the Fortunate One, he sat down on one side. While sitting on one side the devotee Visākha related the whole conversation he had had with the nun Dhammadinnā to the Fortunate One.

²⁰ This again is rather odd, as we might have expected the complement of the unconditioned Nibbāna to be conditioned states. Instead, first she says it is beyond his ability to understand, and then sends him to the Buddha if he wants to ask about this. The Buddha, however, has no further instruction for him, and simply confirms Ven Dhammadinnā’s teaching.

The Small Discourse giving an Elaboration - 20

That being said, the Fortunate One said this to the devotee Visākha: “Wise, Visākha, is the nun Dhammadinnā, having great wisdom, Visākha, is the nun Dhammadinnā, if you were to ask me, Visākha, the same matter, I would answer it in the same way, in the way the nun Dhammadinnā has answered, for this is indeed the meaning, and so should you bear it in mind.”

The Fortunate One said this,

and the devotee Visākha was uplifted and greatly rejoiced in what was said by the Fortunate One.

The Small Discourse giving an Elaboration is Finished

The Commentarial Conclusion

(from AA 1.5.5)

Thus did the story unfold. Later, as the Teacher was sitting in Jeta’s Wood, as he was assigning the places of the nuns in order, regarding this Small Elaboration, as the occasion had arisen, he placed this Elder Nun in the foremost position in the Dispensation amongst those who talk about Dhamma.