

FROM BUDDHA-TO-BE TO TEACHER
IN THE BUDDHA'S OWN WORDS



ĀNANDAJOTI BHIKKHU

Table of Contents

Preface

Initial Practices

1. The Decision to Search for Awakening
2. The Meeting with the Āḷāra Kālāma
3. The Meeting with Uddaka Rāmaputta

Austere Striving

4. The Austerities
5. The Breathless Meditation
6. The Fasting
7. More extreme Austerities
8. Even more Austerities
9. Purity through Eating

The Awakening

10. Finding the Right Path
11. The Absorptions
12. The Three Knowledges
13. Liberation of Mind for the Buddha

Beginning to Teach

14. The Story about Brahmā's Request
15. Deciding Who to Teach
16. The Abstainer Upaka
17. The Meeting at Isipatana
18. Liberation of Mind for the Group-of-Five Monks

Preface

Although in later times a fairly detailed biography was developed, in the early texts there is a dearth of material about the Buddha's life, probably because the life as such was not considered as important as the teaching. Occasionally, though, in his encounters with others, the Buddha did refer to his own practice before his Awakening, and his life shortly thereafter.

There are five places where this occurs in the Middle Length Discourses (*Majjhimanikāya*), but all the information is not gathered in one place, and needs to be assembled for a complete picture. The discourses are the Great Lion's Roar (MN 12), the Noble Search (MN 26), and the discourses to Saccaka (MN 36), Prince Bodhi (MN 85) and Saṅgārava (MN 100).

The following material has been extracted from these discourses, but with some small changes, to present a continuous narrative. The main change has been the removal of the vocatives, addressed to the person the Buddha was speaking to, and which change from discourse to discourse.

In summary sections 1-3 and 13 & 18 come from MN 26, sections 2-6, 10-12 from MN 36, 85 & 100, but for the text I follow 85 and 100 rather than 36, which has some extra sentences specific to that context; there is also the insertion of sections 7-9 from MN 12. Sections 14-17 also occur in MN 85. Note also that sections 14-17 are paralleled in the Great Chapter, which is found elsewhere on this website. Below is a synoptic table.

Table indicating Source of Sections¹

Initial Practices

1			MN 26			
2			MN 26	MN 36	MN 85	MN 100
3			MN 26	MN 36	MN 85	MN 100

Austere Striving

4				MN 36	MN 85	MN 100
5				MN 36	MN 85	MN 100
6				MN 36	MN 85	MN 100
7		MN 12				
8		MN 12				
9		MN 12				

The Awakening

10				MN 36	MN 85	MN 100
11				MN 36	MN 85	MN 100
12				MN 36	MN 85	MN 100
13			MN 26			

Beginning to Teach

14	Mv 1		MN 26		MN 85	
15	Mv 1		MN 26		MN 85	
16	Mv 1		MN 26		MN 85	
17	Mv 1		MN 26		MN 85	
18			MN 26			

We should not forget, of course, that the Buddha's teaching was not normally given in the abstract, but was usually seeking to answer specific issues that had arisen in dialogue with others. This is

¹ Vin Mv 1-4, MN 26 & 85 appear separately on this website for those wishing to see the originals.

especially true on the first two great collections of his teaching, the Long and Middle Length Discourses.

But by extracting the story in this way, we can get a better overview of what the Buddha taught about that early period, and what his experience was both immediately before and after Awakening.

Some of the people and events that are found in the developed traditional biography are missing here: there is no mention of the ploughing festival (though there is mention of the Buddha's Father), or of Sujāta (though the rice and milk is mentioned), or the struggle with Māra. This doesn't mean they didn't happen, they might simply have not been considered relevant to mention in these contexts.

Also omitted from this story is the first teachings of the Discourse that Set the Dhamma Wheel Rolling, and the the Characteristic of Non-Self that led to the group-of-five monks attainment of Arahatsip, although the circumstances surrounding these teachings, which are related in the Great Chapter, are included, and it is clearly implied by the conclusion.

I hope that presenting the material in this way will help students familiarise themselves with these episodes from the Buddha's life and learn how the Buddha himself viewed his practice and his decision to teach. It is not the whole story, and it is not meant to be, but it does present a more or less continuous narrative, and a single voice, and that has certain advantages.

Repetition text that has been filled in by the present author is marked in italic. In the manuscripts it appears as *peyyāla* passages, marked normally as *...pe...* It seems to me that these passages would have been filled in by the recitor.

Ānandajoti Bhikkhu
April 2016

From Buddha-to-be to Teacher in the Buddha's own Words

Initial Practices

1. The Decision to Search for Awakening²

...before the Awakening, while still an unawakened Buddha-to-be,

being myself subject to birth,
I sought out what was subject to birth,
being myself subject to old-age,
I sought out what was subject to old-age,
being myself subject to sickness,
I sought out what was subject to sickness,
being myself subject to death,
I sought out what was subject to death,
being myself subject to grief,
I sought out what was subject to grief,
being myself subject to defilements,
I sought out what was subject to defilements.

Then this occurred to me:

'Why, being myself subject to birth,
do I seek out what is subject to birth,
being myself subject to old-age,
do I seek out what is subject to old-age,
being myself subject to disease,
do I seek out what is subject to disease,
being myself subject to death,
do I seek out what is subject to death,
being myself subject to grief,
do I seek out what is subject to grief,
being myself subject to defilements,
do I seek out what is subject to defilements?'

² MN 26.

Initial Practices - 7

What if I, being myself subject to birth,
after understanding the danger in being subject to birth,
were to seek out the birthless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,

being myself subject to old-age,
after understanding the danger in being subject to old-age,
were to seek out the ageless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,

being myself subject to disease,
after understanding the danger in being subject to disease,
were to seek out the sickless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,

being myself subject to death,
after understanding the danger in being subject to death,
were to seek out the deathless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,

being myself subject to grief,
after understanding the danger in being subject to grief,
were to seek out the griefless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,

being myself subject to defilements,
after understanding the danger in being subject to defilements,
were to seek out the undefiled, supreme, secure Nibbāna?

2. The Meeting with the Āḷāra Kālāma³

Then at another time, while still a youth, having beautiful black hair, endowed with auspicious youthfulness, in the prime of life, though my Mother and Father didn't like it, and were crying with tearful faces, after shaving off my hair and beard, and donning brown garments, I went forth from the home to the homeless life.

When I had gone forth thus, searching for whatever was wholesome, the unsurpassed, noble and peaceful state, I approached Āḷāra

³ MN 26, 36, 85, 100.

Initial Practices - 8

Kālāma,⁴ and after approaching, I said this to Āḷāra Kālāma: ‘I desire, friend Kālāma, to lead the spiritual life in this Dhamma and Discipline.’

When this was said, Āḷāra Kālāma said this to me: ‘Live here, venerable, this Dhamma is such that a wise man in no long time, having deep knowledge himself of what comes from his own teacher, can live, having directly experienced and attained it.’

Then in no long time, I had soon mastered that Dhamma.

Then after a little time, merely through beating my lips, merely through repeating the prattling, I spoke knowingly about that teaching and confidently about that teaching, claiming: ‘I know, I see.’ Both I and others also.

Then this occurred to me: ‘Āḷāra Kālāma did not declare: Through mere faith in this Dhamma alone, I have deep knowledge of it myself, I live, having directly experienced and attained it, for sure Āḷāra Kālāma lives knowing and seeing this Dhamma.’

Then I approached Āḷāra Kālāma, and after approaching, I said this to Āḷāra Kālāma: “In what way, friend Kālāma, do you declare: I have deep knowledge of this Dhamma myself, having directly experienced and attained it?”

When this was said Āḷāra Kālāma declared the Sphere of Nothingness.⁵

Then this occurred to me:
‘There is not faith for Āḷāra Kālāma alone,
for me also there is faith,
there is not energy for Āḷāra Kālāma alone,
for me also there is energy,

⁴ In Lalitavistara the Bodhisattva is said to have first gone to an ashram of a Śākya brāhmaṇī, then to another ashram run by a female, Padmā, before he arrived at Āḷāra’s ashram.

⁵ The penultimate level in the thirty-three Realms of Existence.

Initial Practices - 9

there is not mindfulness for Āḷāra Kālāma alone,
for me also there is mindfulness,
there is not concentration for Āḷāra Kālāma alone,
for me also there is concentration,
there is not wisdom for Āḷāra Kālāma alone,
for me also there is wisdom.⁶

What if, in regard to the Dhamma that Āḷāra Kālāma declares: I have deep knowledge of it myself, I live, having directly experienced and attained it, I were to strive to realise that Dhamma?

Then in no long time, soon having deep knowledge of that Dhamma myself, I lived, having directly experienced and attained it.

Then I approached Āḷāra Kālāma, and after approaching, I said this to Āḷāra Kālāma: “Is it in this way, friend Kālāma, that you declare: I have deep knowledge of this Dhamma myself, having directly experienced and attained it?”

“In this way, friend, I do declare: ‘I have deep knowledge of this Dhamma myself, having directly experienced and attained it.’”

“In this way I also, friend, say: I have deep knowledge of this Dhamma myself, I live, having directly experienced and attained it.”

“It is a gain for us, friend, it is a great gain for us, friend, that we see such a venerable with us in the spiritual life.

Thus I declare I have deep knowledge of this Dhamma myself, I have directly experienced and attained it, and you have deep knowledge of this Dhamma yourself, and live, having directly experienced and attained it.⁷

⁶ These are the five faculties (*indriya*).

⁷ Notice a contrast is set up here, between Āḷāra’s declaring *pavedemi* he has the attainment, as though it was unverified, and the Bodhisatta living *viharasi* with the attainment.

Initial Practices - 10

You have deep knowledge of this Dhamma yourself, and live, having directly experienced and attained it, and I declare I have deep knowledge of this Dhamma myself, I have directly experienced and attained it.

Thus the Dhamma I know is the Dhamma you know, the Dhamma you know is the Dhamma I know. Thus as I am, so are you, as you are, so am I. Come now, friend, the two of us will look after this group.”

“Thus my teacher Āḷāra Kālāma placed me, the pupil, as equal, and on the very same position as himself, and worshipped me with the highest worship.

Then this occurred to me: ‘This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to deep knowledge, to Complete Awakening, to Nibbāna, but only as far as rebirth in the Sphere of Nothingness.’

Then, having not found satisfaction in that Dhamma, I was therefore disgusted with that Dhamma and went away.

3. The Meeting with Uddaka Rāmaputta⁸

Then still searching for what was wholesome, the unsurpassed, noble and peaceful state, I approached Uddaka Rāmaputta, and after approaching, I said this to Uddaka Rāmaputta: “I desire, friend, to lead the spiritual life in this Dhamma and Discipline.”

When this was said, Uddaka Rāmaputta said this to me: “Live here, venerable, this Dhamma is such that a wise man in no long time, having deep knowledge himself of what comes from his own teacher, can live, having directly experienced and attained it.”

Then in no long time, soon I had mastered that Dhamma.

⁸ MN 26, 36, 85, 100.

Initial Practices - 11

Then after a little time I indeed, merely through beating my lips, merely through repeating the prattling, spoke knowingly about that teaching and confidently about that teaching, claiming: ‘I know, I see.’ Both I and others also.

Then this occurred to me: ‘Rāma did not declare: Through mere faith in this Dhamma alone, having knowledge of it myself, I live, having directly experienced and attained it, for sure Rāma lived knowing and seeing this Dhamma.’

Then I approached Uddaka Rāmaputta, and after approaching, I said this to Uddaka Rāmaputta: “In what way, friend, did Rāma declare: I have deep knowledge of this Dhamma myself, having directly experienced and attained it?”

When this was said Uddaka Rāmaputta declared the Sphere of Neither-Perception-nor-Non-Perception.⁹

Then this occurred to me:
‘There was not faith for Rāma alone,
for me also there is faith,
there was not energy for Rāma alone,
for me also there is energy,
there was not mindfulness for Rāma alone,
for me also there is mindfulness,
there was not concentration for Rāma alone,
for me also there is concentration,
there was not wisdom for Rāma alone,
for me also there is wisdom.

What if, in regard to the Dhamma that Rāma declared: I have deep knowledge of it myself, I live, having directly experienced and attained it, I were to strive to realise that Dhamma?’

⁹ The very highest level in the thirty-one Realms of Existence. The way this is stated is odd in that we might have expected Uddaka to have claimed this for Rāma, but the way it is written it appears he claims it for himself.

Initial Practices - 12

Then in no long time, soon having deep knowledge of that Dhamma myself, I lived, having directly experienced and attained it.

Then I approached Uddaka Rāmaputta, and after approaching, I said this to Uddaka Rāmaputta: “Is it in this way, friend, that Rāma declared: I have deep knowledge of this Dhamma myself, having directly experienced and attained it?”

“In this way, friend, Rāma did declare he had deep knowledge of this Dhamma himself, having directly experienced and attained it.”

“In this way, friend, I also say: I have deep knowledge of this Dhamma myself, I live, having directly experienced and attained it.”

“It is a gain for us, friend, it is a great gain for us, friend, that we see such a venerable with us in the spiritual life. Thus Rāma declared he had deep knowledge of this Dhamma himself, having directly experienced and attained it, and you have deep knowledge of this Dhamma yourself, you live, having directly experienced and attained it.

And that Dhamma you have deep knowledge of yourself, you live, having directly experienced and attained it, that Rāma declared he had deep knowledge of that Dhamma himself, having directly experienced and attained it.

Thus the Dhamma Rāma knew is the Dhamma you know, the Dhamma you know is the Dhamma Rāma knew. Thus as Rāma was, so are you, as you are, so was Rāma. Come now, friend, you will look after this group.”

Thus my friend in the spiritual life, Uddaka Rāmaputta placed me in the teacher’s position, and worshipped me with the highest worship.

Then this occurred to me: ‘This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment, or to dispassion, or to cessation, or to peace, or to deep knowledge, or to Complete Awakening, or to Nibbāna, but only as far as rebirth in the Sphere of Neither-Perception-nor-Non-Perception.’

Initial Practices - 13

Then having not found satisfaction in that Dhamma, I was therefore disgusted with that Dhamma and went away.

Then I, still searching for what was wholesome, the unsurpassed, noble and peaceful state, while walking gradually on walking tour I entered Magadha, and arrived at the Army town at Uruvelā.

There I saw a delightful piece of land, and a pleasing jungle thicket, with a clear river flowing and lovely banks, and nearby a village suitable for collecting alms.

Then this occurred to me: 'Delightful is this piece of land, with its pleasing jungle thicket, and a clear river flowing and lovely banks, and it is near a village suitable for collecting alms.'

I thought: 'This is surely enough for the striving of a son of a good family who is seeking to strive.' Then I sat down right there, thinking: 'This is enough for striving.'

Austere Striving

4. The Austerities¹⁰

Then this occurred to me: ‘What if I, with teeth clenched against teeth, with the tongue pressing on the palate, were to completely restrain, constrain and suppress one thought with another thought.

Then I with teeth clenched against teeth, with the tongue pressing on the palate, did completely restrain, constrain and suppress one thought with another thought.

Then to me with teeth clenched against teeth, with the tongue pressing on the palate, with complete restraint, constraint and suppression of one thought with another thought, sweat flowed from my armpits.

Just as a strong man after seizing a very weak man by the head, or seizing him by the body, would restrain, constrain and suppress him, just so to me with teeth clenched against teeth, with the tongue pressing on the palate, with complete restraint, constraint and suppression of one thought with another thought, sweat flowed from my armpits.

But although my energy was strenuous and unshaken, and mindfulness was attended to and unconfused, my body was overstressed, not quietened, and therefore the effort I made was overwhelmed by the strain of exertion.

¹⁰ MN 36, 85, 100.

5. The Breathless Meditation¹¹

Then this occurred to me: ‘What if I were to meditate on the breathless meditation?’

Then I blocked the in-breath and out-breath at the mouth and at the nose.

Then to me, with the in-breath and out-breath blocked at the mouth and at the nose, there was an excessive noise of wind escaping through the ears.

Just as there is an excessive noise from blowing on a smith’s bellows, just so to me with the in-breath and out-breath blocked at the mouth and at the nose, there was an excessive noise of wind escaping through the ears.

But although for me energy was strenuous and unshaken, and mindfulness was attended to and unconfused, my body was overstressed, not quietened, and therefore the effort I made was overwhelmed by the strain of exertion.

* * *

Then this occurred to me: ‘What if I were to meditate on the breathless meditation?’

Then I blocked the in-breath and out-breath at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears.

Then to me, with the in-breath and out-breath blocked at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears, excessive winds raged within my head.

Just as though a strong man were to cleave inside my head with a sharp pointed sword, just so to me with the in-breath and out-breath

¹¹ MN 36, 85, 100.

Austere Striving - 16

blocked at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears, excessive winds raged within my head.

But although for me energy was strenuous and unshaken, and mindfulness was attended to and unconfused, my body was overstressed, not quietened, and therefore the effort I made was overwhelmed by the strain of exertion.

* * *

Then this occurred to me: 'What if I were to meditate on the breathless meditation?'

Then I blocked the in-breath and out-breath at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears.

Then to me, with the in-breath and out-breath blocked at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears, there was an excessive headache in my head.

Just as though a strong man were to tie a turban on my head with a strong thong of leather, just so to me with the in-breath and out-breath blocked at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears, there was an excessive headache in my head.

But although for me energy was strenuous and unshaken, and mindfulness was attended to and unconfused, my body was overstressed, not quietened, and therefore the effort I made was overwhelmed by the strain of exertion.

* * *

Then this occurred to me: 'What if I were to meditate on the breathless meditation?'

Then I blocked the in-breath and out-breath at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears.

Austere Striving - 17

Then to me, with the in-breath and out-breath blocked at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears, excessive winds cut through my stomach.

Just as though a butcher or a butcher's apprentice were to cut through the stomach with a sharp butcher's knife,¹² just so to me with the in-breath and out-breath blocked at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears, excessive winds cut through my stomach.

But although for me energy was strenuous and unshaken, and mindfulness was attended to and unconfused, my body was overstressed, not quietened, and therefore the effort I made was overwhelmed by the strain of exertion.

* * *

Then this occurred to me: 'What if I were to meditate on the breathless meditation?'

Then I blocked the in-breath and out-breath at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears.

Then to me, with the in-breath and out-breath blocked at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears, there was an excessive fever inside the body.

Just as though two strong men after seizing a very weak man with their arms, were to burn and scorch him with embers, so for me with the in-breath and out-breath blocked at the mouth and at the nose and at the ears, there was an excessive fever inside the body.

But although for me energy was strenuous and unshaken, and mindfulness was attended to and unconfused, my body was overstressed, not quietened, and therefore the effort I made was overwhelmed by the strain of exertion.

¹² Lit: *Cow-knife*.

Austere Striving - 18

Further, this occurred to the gods after seeing me:

‘The ascetic Gotama has died,’¹³

this occurred to some gods:

‘The ascetic Gotama has not died, he is dying,’

this occurred to some gods:

‘The ascetic Gotama has not died, he is not dying, the ascetic Gotama is Worthy, it is in this way that the Worthy One lives.’

Then I rejected those gods, saying: “Why should I do that?”

6. The Fasting¹⁴

Then this occurred to me: ‘What if I were to take food little by little, measure by measure, whether it be mung bean soup, or vetch soup, or chick-pea soup, or pea soup?’

Then I took food little by little, measure by measure, whether mung bean soup, or vetch soup, or chick-pea soup, or pea soup.

Then, as I took food little by little, measure by measure, whether mung bean soup, or vetch soup, or chick-pea soup, or pea soup, this body became excessively emaciated.

Just like vine knots or bamboo knots, so were my limbs both great and small through having so little food.

Just like a camel’s foot, so did my buttocks become through having so little food.

Just like a twisted vine, so did my backbone become twisted through having so little food.

Just like an old hall, in which the main beam is rotten and broken, so did my ribs become rotten and broken through having so little food.

¹³ Lit: *made (his) time*.

¹⁴ MN 36, 85, 100.

Austere Striving - 19

Just like in a deep pool, the stars in the water are seen lying deep and distant, so in the sockets of my eyes, the pupils of my eyes were seen lying deep and distant through having so little food.

Just like a freshly cut bitter gourd will become withered and shrunken through wind and heat, so did the skin on my head become withered and shrunken through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will touch the skin of my stomach,' I took ahold of my backbone, thinking: 'I will touch my backbone,' I took ahold of the skin of my stomach, so far did the skin of my stomach and my backbone stick together through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will pass excrement or urine,' I fell down face forward right there through having so little food.

Then I rubbed this body and my limbs comfortably with my hand. Then as I rubbed my limbs with my hand, hair that was rotten at the root fell out of my body through having so little food.

Further this occurred to men after seeing me:

'The ascetic Gotama is black,'

and to some men this occurred:

'The ascetic Gotama is not black, the ascetic Gotama is brown,'

and to some men this occurred:

'The ascetic Gotama is not black, he is not brown, the ascetic Gotama has golden skin.'

So far was the pure and bright colour of my skin spoilt through having so little food.

7. More extreme Austerities¹⁵

I was aware of living the spiritual life endowed with four factors:

I was one who lived austere, supremely austere,
I was one who lived rough, supremely rough,
I was one who lived avoiding, supremely avoiding,
I was one who lived secluded, supremely secluded.

This was my austerity there:

I was without clothes, living freely, licking my hands, not one who came when called, not one who stopped when called, I did not take food offered, nor allotted, nor when invited.

I did not accept from the rim of a pot,
I did not accept from the rim of a bowl,
not across a threshold,
not across a stick,
not across a pestle,
not from where two were eating,
not from one pregnant,
not from one feeding with the breast,
not from a woman in the midst of men,
not in a place advertised,
not from where it was made ready,
not from where flies were swarming.

I did not accept fish nor meat,
I did not drink liquor, nor wine, not fermented drinks.

I had but one house, or one morsel,
I had but two houses, or two morsels,
I had but three houses, or three morsels,
I had but four houses, or four morsels,
I had but five houses, or five morsels,

¹⁵ MN 12.

Austere Striving - 21

I had but six houses, or six morsels,
I had but seven houses, or seven morsels.

I survived from one saucer,
I survived from two saucers,
I survived from three saucers,
I survived from four saucers,
I survived from five saucers,
I survived from six saucers,
I survived from seven saucers.

I ate food once a day,
I ate food once in two days,
I ate food once in three days,
I ate food once in four days,
I ate food once in five days,
I ate food once in six days,
I ate food once in seven days,
and so up and to half a month,
I dwelt applying and devoting myself to eating food methodically.

I was one who ate only vegetables,
I was one who ate only millet,
I was one who ate only grain,
I was one who ate only rice,
I was one who ate only waterplants,
I was one who ate only husks,
I was one who ate only scum,
I was one who ate only poonac,
I was one who ate only grass,
I was one who ate only cow-dung.

I was one who survived on forest roots and fruits,
I was one who fed on fallen fruit.

I was one who wore only hemp,
I was one who wore only hempen admixture,
I was one who wore only charnel rags,
I was one who wore only dust-heap rags,

Austere Striving - 22

I was one who wore only bark,
I was one who wore only hides,
I was one who wore only cheetah hide,
I was one who wore only kusa-grass strips,
I was one who wore only bark strips,
I was one who wore only wooden slips,
I was one who wore only hair blankets,
I was one who wore only horse-hair blankets,
I was one who wore only owls' wings.

I was one who uprooted hair and beard, I dwelt applying and
devoting myself to uprooting hair and beard.

I was one who stood continuously and refused seats.

I was one who squatted, I dwelt applying and devoting myself to
squatting.

I was one who lay on thorns, I was one who prepared a bed of thorns
to lie on.

I lived applying and devoting myself to submerging in water three
times in the evening.

Thus in such various ways I dwelt applying and devoting myself to
mortification and affliction.

Such was my austerity.

* * *

This was my roughness there:

After countless years mud and dirt has accumulated on the body of
the bark of a tree.

Austere Striving - 23

And just as after countless years on the stump of a *tinduka* tree mud and dirt has accumulated on the bark of the tree, so also after countless years mud and dirt has accumulated on my body like the bark of a tree.

But this did not occur to me: ‘Indeed I should brush off with my hand this mud and dirt, or, others should brush off with their hand this mud and dirt.’ This didn’t occur to me.

Such was my roughness.

* * *

This was my avoidance¹⁶ there:

I was mindful in going forwards, I was mindful in going back, I dwelt with sympathy even for a drop of water, thinking: ‘Let me not cause pain towards small creatures in inaccessible places.’

Such was my avoidance.

* * *

This was my seclusion there:

I lived after entering into a certain wilderness. Whenever I saw a cowherder or a herdsman, someone gathering grass, or someone gathering sticks, or a woodsman, from wood to wood, from thicket to thicket, from vale to vale, from plateau to plateau I fled.

Why is that? I thought: ‘Do not let them see me, do not let me see them.’

Just as a wild animal, having seen men, from wood to wood, from thicket to thicket, from vale to vale, from plateau to plateau flees, so whenever I saw a cowherder or a herdsman, someone gathering grass, or someone gathering sticks, or a woodsman, from wood to

¹⁶ Comm: *pāpajeguchiko*, *avoiding wickedness*.

Austere Striving - 24

wood, from thicket to thicket, from vale to vale, from plateau to plateau I fled.

Why is that? I thought: ‘Do not let them see me, do not let me see them.’

Such was my seclusion.

8. Even more Austerities¹⁷

When the cows and the cowherders had left the cow-shed, after approaching that place on all fours, I ate the cow-dung of whatever young calves and suckling calves were there.

And for as long as my own urine and excrement was not exhausted, I ate my own urine and excrement.

Such was my greatly disgusting food.

Having entered a certain fearful wooded thicket I lived there.

There would be fear of that fearful wooded thicket, and when whoever is not without lust entered into that thicket, all his hair would stand on end.

During the cold Winter nights, in between ‘the eights’, at the time of the snowfall, I lived in the open by night during the nights, and by day in the wooded thicket, and during the last month of the hot season by day I lived in the open, and at night in the wooded thicket.

Further, these truly wonderful verses, unheard previously in the past, occurred to me:

Scorched and frozen, solitary in the fearful wood,
naked without fire to sit by, the sage is intent on his search.

¹⁷ MN 12.

Austere Striving - 25

I made my bed in the charnel ground, and reclined on the bones of corpses.

After approaching me the cowherders' sons spat, urinated, threw mud, and pushed straws into my ears. But I do not recall an unwholesome thought arising towards them.

Such was my abiding in equanimity.

9. Purity through Eating¹⁸

Now there are some ascetics and brahmins who say this, have this view: 'There is purity through eating.'

They say this: 'We survive on red date.' They eat red date, they eat red date powder, they drink red date juice: they enjoy countless kinds of red date.

But I recall surviving on just one red date a day for food.

It may occur to you: 'At that time red date was very large.' But it should not be seen like that. At that time at the most the red date was as it is nowadays.

Because of only eating one red date for food my body became exceedingly thin.

Just like vine knots or bamboo knots, so were my limbs both great and small through having so little food.

Just like a camel's foot, so did my buttocks become through having so little food.

Just like a twisted vine, so did my backbone become twisted through having so little food.

¹⁸ MN 12.

Austere Striving - 26

Just like an old hall, in which the main beam is rotten and broken, so did my ribs become rotten and broken through having so little food.

Just like in a deep pool, the stars in the water are seen lying deep and distant, so in the sockets of my eyes, the pupils of my eyes were seen lying deep and distant through having so little food.

Just like a freshly cut bitter gourd will become withered and shrunken through wind and heat, so did the skin on my head become withered and shrunken through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will touch the skin of my stomach,' I took hold of my backbone, thinking: 'I will touch my backbone,' I took hold of the skin of my stomach, so far did the skin of my stomach and my backbone stick together through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will pass excrement or urine,' I fell down face forward right there through having so little food.

Then I rubbed this body and my limbs comfortably with my hand. Then as I rubbed my limbs with my hand, hair that was rotten at the root fell out of my body through having so little food.

* * *

Now there are some ascetics and brahmins who say this, have this view: 'There is purity through eating.'

They say this: 'We survive on mung bean.' *They eat mung bean, they eat mung bean powder, they drink mung bean juice: they enjoy countless kinds of mung bean.*

But I recall surviving on just one mung bean a day for food.

It may occur to you: 'At that time mung bean was very large.' But it should not be seen like that. At that time at the most the mung bean was as it is nowadays.

Austere Striving - 27

Because of only eating one mung bean for food my body became exceedingly thin.

Just like vine knots or bamboo knots, so were my limbs both great and small through having so little food.

Just like a camel's foot, so did my buttocks become through having so little food.

Just like a twisted vine, so did my backbone become twisted through having so little food.

Just like an old hall, in which the main beam is rotten and broken, so did my ribs become rotten and broken through having so little food.

Just like in a deep pool, the stars in the water are seen lying deep and distant, so in the sockets of my eyes, the pupils of my eyes were seen lying deep and distant through having so little food.

Just like a freshly cut bitter gourd will become withered and shrunken through wind and heat, so did the skin on my head become withered and shrunken through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will touch the skin of my stomach,' I took ahold of my backbone, thinking: 'I will touch my backbone,' I took ahold of the skin of my stomach, so far did the skin of my stomach and my backbone stick together through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will pass excrement or urine,' I fell down face forward right there through having so little food.

Then I rubbed this body and my limbs comfortably with my hand. Then as I rubbed my limbs with my hand, hair that was rotten at the root fell out of my body through having so little food.

Austere Striving - 28

Now there are some ascetics and brahmins who say this, have this view: 'There is purity through eating.'

They say this: 'We survive on sesame.' They eat sesame, they eat sesame powder, they drink sesame juice: they enjoy countless kinds of sesame.

But I recall surviving on just one sesame a day for food.

It may occur to you: 'At that time sesame was very large.' But it should not be seen like that. At that time at the most the sesame was as it is nowadays.

Because of only eating one sesame for food my body became exceedingly thin.

Just like vine knots or bamboo knots, so were my limbs both great and small through having so little food.

Just like a camel's foot, so did my buttocks become through having so little food.

Just like a twisted vine, so did my backbone become twisted through having so little food.

Just like an old hall, in which the main beam is rotten and broken, so did my ribs become rotten and broken through having so little food.

Just like in a deep pool, the stars in the water are seen lying deep and distant, so in the sockets of my eyes, the pupils of my eyes were seen lying deep and distant through having so little food.

Just like a freshly cut bitter gourd will become withered and shrunken through wind and heat, so did the skin on my head become withered and shrunken through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will touch the skin of my stomach,' I took ahold of my backbone, thinking: 'I will touch my backbone,' I took ahold of the

Austere Striving - 29

skin of my stomach, so far did the skin of my stomach and my backbone stick together through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will pass excrement or urine,' I fell down face forward right there through having so little food.

Then I rubbed this body and my limbs comfortably with my hand. Then as I rubbed my limbs with my hand, hair that was rotten at the root fell out of my body through having so little food.

* * *

Now there are some ascetics and brahmins who say this, have this view: 'There is purity through eating.'

They say this: 'We survive on chick-peas.' They eat chick-pea, they eat chick-pea powder, they drink chick-pea juice: they enjoy countless kinds of chick-pea.

But I recall surviving on just one chick-pea a day for food.

It may occur to you: 'At that time chick-pea was very large.' But it should not be seen like that. At that time at the most the chick-pea was as it is nowadays.

Because of only eating one chick-pea for food my body became exceedingly thin.

Just like vine knots or bamboo knots, so were my limbs both great and small through having so little food.

Just like a camel's foot, so did my buttocks become through having so little food.

Just like a twisted vine, so did my backbone become twisted through having so little food.

Austere Striving - 30

Just like an old hall, in which the main beam is rotten and broken, so did my ribs become rotten and broken through having so little food.

Just like in a deep pool, the stars in the water are seen lying deep and distant, so in the sockets of my eyes, the pupils of my eyes were seen lying deep and distant through having so little food.

Just like a freshly cut bitter melon will become withered and shriveled through wind and heat, so did the skin on my head become withered and shriveled through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will touch the skin of my stomach,' I took hold of my backbone, thinking: 'I will touch my backbone,' I took hold of the skin of my stomach, so far did the skin of my stomach and my backbone stick together through having so little food.

Then thinking: 'I will pass excrement or urine,' I fell down face forward right there through having so little food.

Then I rubbed this body and my limbs comfortably with my hand. Then as I rubbed my limbs with my hand, hair that was rotten at the root fell out of my body through having so little food.

By such conduct, by such practice, by doing such austerities, I did not attain states beyond ordinary human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight.

Why is that?

I did not attain the noble wisdom, which noble wisdom, when attained, is noble and leads out, and leads one who practices rightly to the destruction of suffering.

The Awakening

10. Finding the Right Path¹⁹

Then this occurred to me: ‘Those ascetics and brahmins in the past times who felt acute pain, sharp, harsh, and bitter feelings, there is nothing beyond or superior to this.

Those ascetics and brahmins in the future times who will feel acute pain, sharp, harsh, and bitter feelings, there is nothing beyond or superior to this.

Those ascetics and brahmins who now feel acute pain, sharp, harsh, and bitter feelings, there is nothing beyond or superior to this.

But even by undergoing this bitter austerity I did not attain a state beyond ordinary human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight.

I wonder is there another path to Awakening?’

Then this occurred to me: ‘I recall that while my Sakyan Father was at work, while I was sitting in the cool of the shade of the Rose-Apple tree, quite secluded from sense desires, secluded from unwholesome things, having thinking, reflection, and the happiness and rapture born of seclusion, I dwelt having attained the first absorption. I wonder if this is the path to Awakening?’

Then to me in conformity with that recollection I became conscious: ‘This is the path to Awakening.’

Then this occurred to me: ‘Why am I afraid of that pleasure? That pleasure is one thing, and unwholesome sensual pleasures are another thing.’

¹⁹ MN 36, 85, 100.

The Awakening - 32

Then this occurred to me: ‘I am not afraid of that pleasure. That pleasure is one thing, and unwholesome sensual pleasures are another thing.’

Then this occurred to me: ‘It is not easy to attain that pleasure with the body so excessively emaciated, what if I were to take gross food, boiled rice and milk?’

Then I took gross food, boiled rice and milk. But at that time the group-of-five monks were present, thinking: ‘This ascetic Gotama will attain Dhamma, and he will inform us.’

When I took gross food, boiled rice and milk, then the group-of-five monks being disgusted, left me, thinking: ‘This ascetic Gotama is given to luxury, he has forsaken the striving, he has gone back to luxury.’

11. The Absorptions²⁰

Then having taken gross food and regained strength, quite secluded from sense desires, secluded from unwholesome things, having thinking, reflection, and the happiness and rapture born of seclusion, I dwelt having attained the first absorption.

With the ending of thinking and reflection, with internal clarity, and one-pointedness of mind, being without thinking, without reflection, having the happiness and rapture born of concentration, I dwelt having attained the second absorption.

With the fading away of rapture I dwelt equanimous, mindful, clearly knowing, experiencing happiness through the body, about which the Noble Ones declare: “He lives pleasantly, mindful, and equanimous,” thus I dwelt having attained the third absorption.

Having given up pleasure, given up pain, and with the previous disappearance of mental well-being and sorrow, without pain,

²⁰ MN 36, 85, 100.

The Awakening - 33

without pleasure, and with complete purity of mindfulness owing to equanimity, I dwelt having attained the fourth absorption.

12. The Three Knowledges²¹

Then with a mind well-concentrated, and complete purity that comes from a cleansed mind, being passionless, free of defilements, malleable, workable, steady, imperturbable, I directed my mind to knowledge and recall of previous existences.

I recollected various previous existences, such as: one life, two lives, three lives, four lives, five lives, ten lives, twenty lives, thirty lives, forty lives, fifty lives, a hundred lives, a thousand lives, a hundred thousand lives, innumerable aeons of devolution, innumerable aeons of evolution, innumerable aeons of devolution and evolution: in such and such a place I had this name, this family, this class, this food, this experience of pleasure and pain, this life term; passing away from there I arose in another state of existence, and in that place I had this name, this family, this class, this food, this experience of pleasure and pain, this life term, and passing away from there I arose here, and so with their characteristics and with their details I recollected my various previous existences.

This to me in the first watch of the night, was the first knowledge I attained, ignorance was abandoned, knowledge arose, darkness was abandoned, light arose, as I was living heedful, ardent, and resolute in this way.

* * *

Then with a mind well-concentrated, and complete purity that comes from a cleansed mind, being passionless, free of defilements, malleable, workable, steady, imperturbable, I directed my mind to knowledge of the passing away and rearing of beings.

With the divine eye which is purified and surpasses that of normal men I saw the passing away and arising of beings, inferior, superior,

²¹ MN 36, 85, 100.

The Awakening - 34

beautiful, ugly, in a good destiny, in a bad destiny, and I knew beings arise according to their good and bad actions.

This to me in the middle watch of the night, was the second knowledge I attained, ignorance was abandoned, knowledge arose, darkness was abandoned, light arose, as I was living heedful, ardent, and resolute in this way.

* * *

Then with a mind well-concentrated, and complete purity that comes from a cleansed mind, being passionless, free of defilements, malleable, workable, steady, imperturbable, I directed my mind to knowledge about the destruction of the pollutants.

I knew, as it really is: 'This is suffering,'
I knew, as it really is: 'This is the arising of suffering,'
I knew, as it really is: 'This is the cessation of suffering,'
I knew, as it really is: 'This is the practice going to the cessation of suffering,'

I knew, as it really is: 'These are pollutants,'
I knew, as it really is: 'This is the arising of pollutants,'
I knew, as it really is: 'This is the cessation of pollutants,'
I knew, as it really is: 'This is the practice going to the cessation of pollutants.'

Then knowing in this way, seeing in this way, my mind was free from the pollutant of sensuality, my mind was free from the pollutant of craving for continued existence, my mind was free from the pollutant of ignorance.

In freedom there was the knowledge: 'This is freedom,'

'Destroyed is rebirth,
accomplished is the spiritual life,
done is what ought to be done,
there is no more of this mundane state,' this I knew.

This to me in the last watch of the night, was the third knowledge I attained, ignorance was abandoned, knowledge arose, darkness was abandoned, light arose, as I was living heedful, ardent, and resolute in this way.

13. Liberation of Mind for the Buddha²²

Then I, being myself subject to birth,
after understanding the danger in being subject to birth,
while seeking the birthless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the birthless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

Being myself subject to old-age,
after understanding the danger in being subject to old-age,
while seeking the ageless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the ageless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

Being myself subject to sickness,
after understanding the danger in being subject to sickness,
while seeking the sickless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the sickless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

Being myself subject to death,
after understanding the danger in being subject to death,
while seeking the deathless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the deathless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

Being myself subject to grief,
after understanding the danger in being subject to grief,
while seeking the griefless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the griefless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

Being myself subject to defilements,
after understanding the danger in being subject to defilements,
while seeking the undefiled, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the undefiled, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

²² MN 26.

The Awakening - 36

To me knowledge and insight arose:

Sure is my liberation of mind,
this is my last birth,
now there is no continuation of existence.

Beginning to Teach

14. The Story about Brahmā's Request²³

Then this occurred to me: 'This Dhamma I have attained is deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond the sphere of logic, profound, understandable only by the wise.

But this generation delights in desire, is devoted to desire, gladdened by desire, and for this generation delighting in desire, devoted to desire, gladdened by desire, this thing is hard to see, that is to say: conditionality and conditional origination.

This thing also is hard to see, that is to say: the tranquilising of all processes, the letting go of all bases for cleaving, the end of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna.

But if I were to teach the Dhamma and others did not understand me that would be tiring for me, that would be troublesome to me.'

Further these truly wonderful verses occurred to me, that were unheard of in the past:

'Now is it suitable for me to explain
what was attained with difficulty?
For those overcome by passion and hatred
this Dhamma is not easily understood.
Going against the stream,
it is profound, deep, hard to see, subtle.
Those delighting in passion,
obstructed by darkness, will not see it.'

Such was my reflection and my mind inclined to inaction, not to teaching the Dhamma.

Then to Brahmā Sahampati, knowing with his mind the reflection in my mind, this thought occurred: 'The world is surely going to

²³ Vin. Mv. 1, MN 26, 85.

Beginning to Teach - 38

destruction, the world is surely going to complete destruction, wherever the Realised One, the Worthy One, the Perfect Sambuddha's mind inclines to inaction, not to teaching the Dhamma.'

Then Brahmā Sahampati, just as a strong man might stretch out a bent arm, or bend in an outstretched arm, so did he vanish from the Brahmā world and appear in front of me. Then Brahmā Sahampati, after arranging his upper robe on one shoulder, and raising his hands in respectful salutation, said this to me: "Let the Gracious One preach the Dhamma, reverend Sir, let the Fortunate One preach the Dhamma, there are beings with little dust on the eyes who are perishing through not hearing the Dhamma, there will be those who understand the Dhamma."

Brahmā Sahampati said this and after saying this he said something more:

"Formerly there appeared amongst the Magadhans
an impure Dhamma, invented by those still stained,
open the door to the Deathless,
let them hear the Dhamma understood by the Pure One.

As one who is standing on a rock on the top of a mountain
can see the people on all sides,
in the same way, One of Great Wisdom, having ascended
the Palace made from Dhamma, Visionary One,

look down on the people overcome by grief,
One Free of Grief, on those overcome by birth and old-age.
Caravan-Leader, Debtless One, travel through the world.
Rise up, O Hero, Victorious in Battle.

Let the Gracious One teach the Dhamma, there will be those who understand."

Then having understood Brahmā's request, out of kindness I looked at beings around the world with my Buddha-eye.

Beginning to Teach - 39

While looking around the world with my Buddha-eye,
I saw beings having little dust on the eyes,
having great dust on the eyes,
having sharp faculties,
having undeveloped faculties,
having good conditions,
having poor conditions,
easy to instruct,
hard to instruct,
and only some who dwelt seeing danger in what is blameworthy and
in the next world.

Just as with water-lilies or lotuses or white lotuses some of those
water-lilies or lotuses or white lotuses, born in the water, flourishing
in the water, not rising above water, are nourished from inside the
depths; some of those water-lilies or lotuses or white lotuses, born in
the water, flourishing in the water, surrounded by water, stand level
with the water; some of those water-lilies or lotuses or white lotuses,
born in the water, flourishing in the water, stand above the water,
and are untouched by the water.

Even so while looking around the world with my Buddha-eye, I saw
beings having little dust on the eyes, having great dust on the eyes,
having sharp faculties, having undeveloped faculties, having good
conditions, having poor conditions, easy to instruct, hard to instruct,
and only some who dwelt seeing danger in what is blameworthy and
in the next world.

Then I recited this verse to Brahmā Sahampati:

“Open for you are the doors to the Deathless,
whoever has ears let them release their faith.
Perceiving trouble, Brahmā, I did not speak amongst humans,
about what was hard-learned, the excellent Dhamma!”

Then Brahmā Sahampati, thinking: ‘I have obtained consent for the
Gracious One to teach the Dhamma,’ after worshipping and
circumambulating me, vanished right there.

15. Deciding Who to Teach²⁴

Then this occurred to me: ‘To whom should I first teach the Dhamma? Who will be able to understand the Dhamma quickly?’

Then this occurred to me: ‘This Āḷāra Kālāma is wise, learned, intelligent, for a long time he has been one with little dust on his eyes. Now what if I first teach the Dhamma to Āḷāra Kālāma? He will be able to understand the Dhamma quickly.’

Then a god having approached, said this to me: “Āḷāra Kālāma died seven days ago, reverend Sir,” and to me knowledge and insight arose: “Āḷāra Kālāma died seven days ago.”

Then this occurred to me: ‘Āḷāra Kālāma had great understanding, if he had heard this Dhamma he would have understood it quickly.’

* * *

Then this occurred to me: ‘To whom should I first teach the Dhamma? Who will be able to understand the Dhamma quickly?’

Then this occurred to me: ‘This Uddaka Rāmaputta is wise, learned, intelligent, for a long time he has been one with little dust on his eyes. Now, what if I first teach the Dhamma to Uddaka Rāmaputta? He will be able to understand the Dhamma quickly.’

Then a god having approached, said this to me: “Uddaka Rāmaputta died yesterday evening, reverend Sir,” and to me knowledge and insight arose: “Uddaka Rāmaputta died yesterday evening.”

Then this occurred to me: ‘Uddaka Rāmaputta had great understanding, if he had heard this Dhamma he would have understood it quickly.’

* * *

²⁴ Vin. Mv. 1, MN 26, 85.

Beginning to Teach - 41

Then this occurred to me: ‘To whom should I first teach the Dhamma? Who will be able to understand the Dhamma quickly?’

Then this occurred to me: ‘The group-of-five monks were very helpful to me, they attended on me when I was striving resolutely. Now, what if I first teach the Dhamma to the group-of-five monks?’

Then this occurred to me: ‘Where are the group-of-five monks dwelling right now?’

I saw with the divine eye which is purified and surpasses that of normal men, that the group-of-five monks were dwelling near Bārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana.

16. The Abstainer Upaka²⁵

Then having dwelt for as long as I liked I left on walking tour for Bārāṇasī.

The Abstainer Upaka saw me going along the highway between the Bodhi tree and Gayā, and after seeing me, he said this to me: “Your faculties, friend, are very clear, purified is your skin and bright, on account of whom, friend, did you go forth, or who is your teacher, or what Dhamma do you prefer?”

When this was said I addressed the Abstainer Upaka with verses:

“All-Conquering, All-Wise am I,
undefiled in regard to all things,
having given up everything,
liberated through the destruction of craving,
having deep knowledge myself,
who should I point to as Teacher?”

There is no Teacher for me, no one like me is found,
there is no person equal to me in the world with its gods.

²⁵ Vin. Mv. 1, MN 26, 85.

Beginning to Teach - 42

I am a Worthy One in the world, I am the Unsurpassed Teacher,
I am the One Perfect Sambuddha, cool and passionless.

I go to Kāsī's city to set the Dhamma-Wheel rolling,
I will beat the drum of the Deathless in a world that is blind.”

“It is as if you declare, friend, you are a Worthy One, an Infinite Victor!”

“There are surely Victors like me,
who have attained the destruction of the pollutants.
I have been victorious over all wicked things,
therefore, Upaka, I am a Victor.”

When this was said the Abstainer Upaka, after saying: “It may be so, friend,” shaking his head, and taking the wrong path, went away.

17. The Meeting at Isipatana²⁶

Then while I was walking gradually on walking tour, I approached Bārāṇasī, Isipatana, the Deer Park, and the group-of-five monks.

The group-of-five monks saw me coming from afar, and after seeing me, they resolved among themselves: “This Ascetic Gotama who is coming, friends, is given to luxury, forsaking the striving he has gone back to luxury.

He should certainly not be worshipped or stood up for, nor should his bowl and robe be taken, however, we can prepare a seat, if he wishes he will sit down.”

As I approached the group-of-five monks were unable to continue with their own agreement, and after coming out to meet me, some took my bowl and robe, some prepared the seat, some placed the water for washing the feet.

²⁶ Vin. Mv. 1, MN 26, 85.

Beginning to Teach - 43

Then they addressed me by name and with the word 'friend'.

When this was said I said this to the group-of-five monks: "Do not address the Gracious One, monks, by name and by the word 'friend', the Realised One, monks, is a Worthy One, a Perfect Sambuddha. Lend an ear, monks, I will instruct you about the attainment of the Deathless, I will teach the Dhamma, and following the path as it has been preached, after no long time in regard to that good for which young men of good family rightly go forth from the home to the homeless life, that unsurpassed conclusion to the spiritual life, you will dwell having known, experienced, and attained it yourselves in this very life."

When this was said the group-of-five monks said this to me:

"But you, friend Gotama, by that ascetic lifestyle, that practice, that difficult way of living, did not attain states beyond ordinary human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight.

So how can you now, given to luxury, forsaking the striving, gone back to luxury, attain states beyond ordinary human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight?"

When this was said I said this to the group-of-five monks: "The Realised One, monks, is not given to luxury, is not forsaking the striving, and has not gone back to luxury, the Realised One, monks, is a Worthy One, a Perfect Sambuddha. Lend an ear, monks, I will instruct you about the attainment of the Deathless, I will teach the Dhamma, and following the path as it has been preached, after no long time in regard to that good for which young men of good family rightly go forth from the home to the homeless life, that unsurpassed conclusion to the spiritual life, you will dwell having known, experienced, and attained it yourselves in this very life."

For a second time the group-of-five monks said this to me: "But you, friend Gotama, by that ascetic lifestyle, that practice, that difficult way of living, did not attain states beyond ordinary human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight.

Beginning to Teach - 44

So how can you now, given to luxury, forsaking the striving, gone back to luxury, attain a state beyond ordinary human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight?”

For a second time I said this to the group-of-five monks: “The Realised One, monks, is not given to luxury, is not forsaking the striving, and has not gone back to luxury, the Realised One, monks, is a Worthy One, a Perfect Sambuddha. Lend an ear, monks, I will instruct you about the attainment of the Deathless, I will teach the Dhamma, and following the path as it has been preached, after no long time in regard to that good for which young men of good family rightly go forth from the home to the homeless life, that unsurpassed conclusion to the spiritual life, you will dwell having known, experienced, and attained it yourselves in this very life.”

For a third time the group-of-five monks said this to me: “But you, friend Gotama, by that ascetic lifestyle, that practice, that difficult way of living, did not attain states beyond ordinary human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight.

So how can you now, given to luxury, forsaking the striving, gone back to luxury, attain states beyond ordinary human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight?”

When this was said I said this to the group-of-five monks: “Are you aware, monks, of my having spoken to you like this before?”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“The Realised One, monks, is a Worthy One, a Perfect Sambuddha. Lend an ear, monks, I will instruct you about the attainment of the Deathless, I will teach the Dhamma, and following the path as it has been preached, after no long time in regard to that good for which young men of good family rightly go forth from the home to the homeless life, that unsurpassed conclusion to the spiritual life, you will dwell having known, experienced, and attained it yourselves in this very life,” and I was able to persuade the group-of-five monks.

Beginning to Teach - 45

Then I advised two monks and three monks wandered for alms, and after those three monks had wandered for alms, on what they brought the group-of-six kept going.

Then I advised three monks and two monks wandered for alms, and after those two monks had wandered for alms, on what they brought the group-of-six kept going.

18. Liberation of Mind for the Group-of-Five Monks²⁷

Then the group-of-five monks,
while being advised by me, while being instructed,
being themselves subject to birth,
after understanding the danger in being subject to birth,
while seeking the birthless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the birthless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

Being themselves subject to old-age,
after understanding the danger in being subject to old-age,
while seeking the ageless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the ageless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

Being themselves subject to sickness,
after understanding the danger in being subject to sickness,
while seeking the sickless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the sickless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

Being themselves subject to death,
after understanding the danger in being subject to death,
while seeking the deathless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the deathless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

Being themselves subject to grief,
after understanding the danger in being subject to grief,
while seeking the griefless, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the griefless, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

²⁷ MN 26.

Beginning to Teach - 46

Being themselves subject to defilements,
after understanding the danger in being subject to defilements,
while seeking the undefiled, supreme, secure Nibbāna,
attained the undefiled, supreme, secure Nibbāna.

To them knowledge and insight arose:

Sure is my liberation of mind,
this is my last birth,
now there is no continuation of existence.

From Buddha-to-be to Teacher is Finished