

# NANDAKA'S ADVICE

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## Introduction

This is an important discourse from the Majjhimanikāya in which the Buddha asks one of his senior disciples to give a teaching to the five-hundred nuns who went forth with Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī at their head, at the conclusion of which they all attained at least the level of Stream-Entry.

I have also translated two full commentaries connected to this discourse, the one on the discourse itself (MA), which I have interleaved with the discourse in the Texts and Translations version; and, in the Appendix, the story of Nandaka's life as related in the Aṅguttara commentary (AA) on the Foremost Disciples.

The discourse records that the monk who gave the teaching, Nandaka, was initially reluctant to give a teaching to the nuns, but it gives no reason for his reluctance. The commentary explains that the group of nuns had been his wives in a previous existence and he thought if someone with knowledge of previous lives saw him teach them they might think he was still attached to them, so he would send another monk in his place.

However, when the Buddha asks him personally to teach he agrees to do so, and gives a teaching on the non-self nature of the internal and external sense spheres and the consciousness that arises dependent on them; which is followed by two similes that illustrate the dependent nature of all things in existence, one about an oil lamp and the other about the shadow of a tree.

That in turn is followed by a simile of a butchered cow, which shows that when attachments have been severed by wisdom, they cannot be reunited with their object again, anymore than the cow can be resuscitated once it has been slaughtered and cut apart.

Following each of these teachings, Nandaka asks if the nuns have understood the teaching, and each time they agree that formerly they had seen the truth and were aware of their significance.

Nandaka then gives a summary teaching on the seven factors of Awakening, which is apparently the only teaching new to them. At the conclusion, the nuns approach the Buddha, who understands that, although they had benefited from the teaching, their aspirations had not been fulfilled.

The Buddha therefore asks Nandaka to give the exact same teaching on the following night, and at the conclusion of that teaching, all of them attained Path and Fruit at least to the level of Stream Level, which is confirmed by the Buddha himself.

This summary is according to the discourse and its explanation as given in the Majjhima commentary. Curiously, the commentary to the Aṅguttara disagrees in certain crucial aspects of the story, and I give here a summary of some of the main differences that are found:

In the discourse, it is said that the nuns were left unfulfilled by the first teaching, and there is no indication that they had reached any level of attainment, but AA states that they attained Stream-Entry during this first teaching, and furthermore that they reported this to the Buddha, another matter which is entirely absent from the discourse.

In a similar way, in the discourse, at the conclusion of the second teaching the nuns attain at least Stream-Entry, but in AA they are said to have all attained complete Liberation (*Arahatta*).

There is another smaller discrepancy: at the conclusion of the teaching in the discourse it says that the nuns approached the Buddha, but in AA it says the Buddha approached the nuns.

As according to tradition the commentaries are both said to have been compiled by Bhadanta Buddhaghosa, it is hard to understand how such disagreements could have been left to stand. The Majjhima commentary draws on the Aṅguttara commentary almost verbatim for its story of both Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī together with the nuns, and Nandaka's own story, so he must have been aware of the discrepancies, but has allowed them to stand, and not attempted to

harmonise them, which after all, would not have been very hard to do.

In any case, as the teaching was so successful, at a later date the Buddha named Nandaka as the foremost of his monk disciples in teaching the nuns, and he has held a special position with the nuns because of that ever since.

One thing that I have long suspected I managed to confirm in making this translation: it seems that the nuns are largely absent in the discourses and that the Buddha nearly always addressed himself to the monks (*bhikkhu*).

Here, however, when Ven Nandaka addresses the nuns he says:

There are these seven Factors of Awakening, sisters, which when developed and made much of, a *bhikkhu*, through the destruction of the pollutants, without pollutants, freed in mind, freed through wisdom, dwells having known, having directly experienced, and having attained (Nibbāna) himself in this very life.

here the word *bhikkhu* must include the nuns he is addressing and encouraging with the Dhamma talk, therefore I have now now come to the conclusion that when *bhikkhu* is said in the discourses it should be taken as referring to both male and female renunciants, and that a more appropriate term for translation than *monk* would be *monastic*, unless we specifically know that the nuns are absent (something which does happen sometimes, including in this discourse).

Ānandajoti Bhikkhu  
August 2014

## Nandaka's Advice

(MN 146)

### Introduction

Thus I have heard:

at one time the Fortunate One was dwelling near Sāvattthī at Anāthapiṇḍika's grounds in Jeta's Wood. Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī together with at least five hundred nuns approached the Fortunate One, and after approaching and worshipping the Fortunate One, she stood on one side.

While standing on one side Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī said this to the Fortunate One: "The Fortunate One should advise the nuns, reverend Sir, the Fortunate One should instruct the nuns, reverend Sir, the Fortunate One should give a Dhamma talk to the nuns, reverend Sir."

Then at that time the Elder monks were advising the nuns in turns, but Venerable Nandaka did not wish to advise the nuns in (his) turn. Then the Fortunate One addressed venerable Ānanda: "Whose turn is it today, Ānanda, to advise the nuns?"

"Reverend Sir, it is Nandaka's turn to advise the nuns, (but) this venerable Nandaka does not wish to advise the nuns in (his) turn."

Then the Fortunate One addressed the venerable Nandaka: "Advise the nuns, Nandaka, instruct the nuns, Nandaka, give a Dhamma talk to the nuns, brāhmaṇa."

"Very well, reverend Sir," and venerable Nandaka, having replied to the Fortunate One, dressed in the morning time, and picked up his bowl and robe, entered Sāvattthī for alms. After walking for alms in

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Sāvattḥī, and while returning from the alms-round with his attendant after the meal, he approached the King's monastery.<sup>1</sup>

Those nuns saw the venerable Nandaka coming while still far away, and having seen (him), they prepared a seat, and had water set up for (washing) the feet. Venerable Nandaka sat down on the prepared seat, and while sitting he washed his feet. Those nuns worshipped venerable Nandaka and sat down on one side.

While sitting on one side venerable Nandaka said this to those nuns: "Sisters, this will be a talk in which I put questions, herein, when you understand, you should say: 'We understand,' when you don't understand, you should say: 'We don't understand.' But if for you there is doubt or uncertainty herein you should ask in return: 'This that you said, reverend Sir, what is its meaning?' "

"So far, reverend Sir, we are uplifted and satisfied with the noble Nandaka, and for the noble Nandaka making this invitation to us."

### The Instruction on the Internal Sense Spheres

"What do you think of this, sisters, is the eye permanent or impermanent?"<sup>2</sup>

"Impermanent, reverend Sir."

"But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?"

"Unpleasant, reverend Sir."

"But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?'"

"Certainly not, reverend Sir."

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<sup>1</sup> This was a monastery built for the nuns by King Pasenadi on the advice of the Buddha after Ven. Uppalavaṇṇa was raped while living alone in the forest.

<sup>2</sup> The following questions and answers are similar to the second recorded Discourse the Buddha gave, on the Characteristic of Non-Self, but here the questions are applied to the sense spheres rather than the constituents of mind and body.

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“What do you think of this, sisters, is the ear permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is the nose permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is the tongue permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is the body permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

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“What do you think of this, sisters, is the mind permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Previously, reverend Sir, this was well seen by us, as it really is, with perfect wisdom: ‘These six internal sense spheres are impermanent.’ ”

“Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

### **The Instruction on the External Sense Spheres**

What do you think of this, sisters, are forms permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, are sounds permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

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“What do you think of this, sisters, are smells permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, are tastes permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, are touches permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, are thoughts permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

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“Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Previously, reverend Sir, this was well seen by us, as it really is, with perfect wisdom: ‘These six external sense spheres are impermanent.’ ”

“Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

### **The Instruction on the Six Consciousnesses**

What do you think of this, sisters, is eye-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is ear-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is nose-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

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“What do you think of this, sisters, is tongue-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is body-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is mind-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Previously, reverend Sir, this was well seen by us, as it really is, with perfect wisdom: ‘These six kinds of consciousness are impermanent.’ ”

“Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

## The Oil Lamp Simile

Suppose, sisters, when an oil lamp is burning the oil is impermanent and changeable, the wick is impermanent and changeable, the flame is impermanent and changeable, the radiance is impermanent and changeable.

He who would say this, sisters: 'For this oil lamp that is burning the oil is impermanent and changeable, the wick is impermanent and changeable, the flame is impermanent and changeable, but the radiance is permanent, constant, eternal and unchangeable,' would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?"

"Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? For while this oil lamp is burning, reverend Sir, the oil is impermanent and changeable, the wick is impermanent and changeable, the flame is impermanent and changeable, then what to say of its radiance being impermanent and changeable?"

"Just so he who would say this, sisters: 'These six internal sense-spheres are impermanent, but that which is conditioned by these six internal sense-spheres, the pleasant or painful or neither painful-nor-pleasant (feeling) that he feels, that is permanent, constant, eternal and unchangeable,' would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?"

"Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Whatever arises, reverend Sir, is conditioned by conditions, and with that arising feelings appear. With the cessation of the conditions for whatever arises, whatever feelings have arisen cease."

"Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

## The Big Tree Simile

Suppose, sisters, when there is a big tree standing, having heartwood, the root is impermanent and changeable, the trunk is impermanent and changeable, the branches and foilage are impermanent and changeable, the shadow is impermanent and changeable.

He who would say this, sisters: 'For this big tree which is stood here, having heartwood, the root is impermanent and changeable, the trunk is impermanent and changeable, the branches and foilage are impermanent and changeable, but the shadow is permanent, constant, eternal and unchangeable,' would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?"

"Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? For this big tree which is stood here, reverend Sir, having heartwood, the root is impermanent and changeable, the trunk is impermanent and changeable, the branches and foilage are impermanent and changeable, then what to say of its shadow being impermanent and changeable?"

"Just so he who would say this, sisters: 'These six external sense-spheres are impermanent, but that which is conditioned by these six external sense-spheres the pleasant or painful or neither painful-nor-pleasant (feeling) that he feels, that is permanent, constant, eternal and unchangeable,' would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?"

"Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Whatever arises, reverend Sir, is conditioned by conditions, and with that arising feelings appear. With the cessation of the conditions for whatever arises, whatever feelings have arisen cease."

"Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

## The Cow Simile

Suppose, sisters, a butcher or a butcher's apprentice, after killing a cow, were to cut through the cow with a sharp butcher's knife, without harming the flesh on the inside, and without harming the hide on the outside, (but) whatever was right there, the flesh stuck to the inside, the sinew on the inside, the teguments on the inside, (all) that he were to cut away from the cow with a sharp butcher's knife, were to cut it through, were to cut it out, and after having cut it away, cut it through, cut it out, and removed the hide on the outside, and with the hide having covered that cow (again), were he to say thus: 'This cow is connected with its hide (again),' would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?"

"Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? For, reverend Sir, (if) a butcher or a butcher's apprentice, after killing a cow, were to cut through the cow with a sharp butcher's knife, without harming the flesh on the inside, and without harming the hide on the outside, and whatever was right there, the flesh stuck to the inside, the sinew on the inside, the teguments on the inside, (all) that he were to cut away from the cow with a sharp butcher's knife, were to cut it through, were to cut it out, and after having cut it away, cut it through, cut it out, and removed the hide on the outside, and with the hide having covered that cow (again), were he to say thus: 'This cow is connected with its hide (again),' still that cow would not be connected with its hide (again)."

## The Key to the Cow Simile

"This is a simile I have made, sisters, to instruct in the meaning, and this is the meaning here:

'Flesh on the inside,' sisters, that is a designation for these six internal sense spheres,

'Hide on the outside,' sisters, that is a designation for these six external sense spheres,

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'The flesh stuck to the inside, the sinew on the inside, the teguments on the inside,' sisters, that is a designation for enjoyment and passion,

'A sharp butcher's knife,' sisters, that is a designation for noble wisdom, the noble wisdom that cuts away the internal defilements, the internal fetters, the internal bonds, cuts them through, cuts them out.

### **The Factors of Awakening**

There are these seven Factors of Awakening, sisters,<sup>3</sup> which when developed and made much of, a monastic, through the destruction of the pollutants, without pollutants, freed in mind, freed through wisdom, dwells having known, having directly experienced, and having attained (Nibbāna) himself in this very life.

Which seven?

Here, sisters, a monastic develops the Mindfulness Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Investigation (of the Nature) of Things Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Energy Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

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<sup>3</sup> Up till this point the nuns always say that they have previously understood the teachings, but not after this teaching, so it appears that this section about the seven Factors of Awakening is new to them, and it is through understanding this that they eventually (during the repetition) make the breakthrough.

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develops the Joy Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Tranquility Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Concentration Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Equanimity Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

There are these seven Factors of Awakening, sisters, which when developed and made much of, a monastic, through the destruction of the pollutants, without pollutants, freed in mind, freed through wisdom, dwells having known, having directly experienced, and having attained (Nibbāna) himself in this very life.”

Then venerable Nandaka, having advised the nuns with this advice, sent them off, saying: “Depart, sisters, it is time.”

### **The Fortunate One's Response**

Then those nuns, after rejoicing in and being gladdened by venerable Nandaka's speech, rising from their seats, worshipping and circumambulating venerable Nandaka, approached the Fortunate One, and after approaching and worshipping the Fortunate One, they stood on one side.

While they were standing on one side the Fortunate One said this to the nuns: “Depart, sisters, it is time.” Then those nuns, after worshipping and circumambulating the Fortunate One, departed.

Then, not long after those nuns had departed, the Fortunate One addressed the monks: saying: “Just as, monks, on the Uposatha day

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of the fourteenth for most people there is no doubt or uncertainty: 'Is the moon deficient, or is the moon full?' for then the moon is deficient; just so, monks, those nuns were uplifted by the venerable Nandaka's Dhamma preaching, but their aspirations were not fulfilled."

Then the Fortunate One addressed the venerable Nandaka, saying: "Nandaka, tomorrow also you should advise the nuns with just this advice."

"Very well, reverend Sir," venerable Nandaka replied to the Fortunate One.

### **The Following Day**

Then when the night had passed, venerable Nandaka, having dressed in the morning time, after picking up his bowl and robe, entered Sāvathī for alms.

After walking for alms in Sāvathī, and while returning from the alms-round with his attendant after the meal, he approached the King's monastery.

The nuns saw the venerable Nandaka coming while still far away, and having seen (him), they prepared a seat, and had water set up for (washing) the feet.

Venerable Nandaka sat down on the prepared seat, and while sitting he washed his feet. Those nuns worshipped venerable Nandaka and sat down on one side.

While sitting on one side venerable Nandaka said this to those nuns: "Sisters, this will be a talk in which I put questions, herein, when you understand, you should say: 'We understand,' when you don't understand, you should say: 'We don't understand.' But if for you there is doubt or uncertainty herein you should ask in return: 'This that you said, reverend Sir, what is its meaning?' "

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“So far, reverend Sir, we are uplifted and satisfied with the noble Nandaka, and for the noble Nandaka making this invitation to us.”

### **The Instruction on the Internal Sense Spheres**

“What do you think of this, sisters, is the eye permanent or impermanent?”<sup>4</sup>

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is the ear permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is the nose permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

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<sup>4</sup> It is rather odd that he repeats this same instruction when the nuns already told him they had understood all this previously.

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“What do you think of this, sisters, is the tongue permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is the body permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is the mind permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Previously, reverend Sir, this was well seen by us, as it really is, with perfect wisdom: ‘These six internal sense spheres are impermanent.’ ”

“Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

## The Instruction on the External Sense Spheres

What do you think of this, sisters, are forms permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, reverend Sir."

"But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?"

"Unpleasant, reverend Sir."

"But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?' "

"Certainly not, reverend Sir."

"What do you think of this, sisters, are sounds permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, reverend Sir."

"But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?"

"Unpleasant, reverend Sir."

"But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?' "

"Certainly not, reverend Sir."

"What do you think of this, sisters, are smells permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, reverend Sir."

"But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?"

"Unpleasant, reverend Sir."

"But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?' "

"Certainly not, reverend Sir."

"What do you think of this, sisters, are tastes permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, reverend Sir."

"But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?"

"Unpleasant, reverend Sir."

"But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?' "

"Certainly not, reverend Sir."

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“What do you think of this, sisters, are touches permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, are thoughts permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Previously, reverend Sir, this was well seen by us, as it really is, with perfect wisdom: ‘These six external sense spheres are impermanent.’ ”

“Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

### **The Instruction on the Six Consciousnesses**

What do you think of this, sisters, is eye-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

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“What do you think of this, sisters, is ear-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is nose-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is tongue-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“What do you think of this, sisters, is body-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

## Nandaka's Advice - 23

“What do you think of this, sisters, is mind-consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is impermanent, is that unpleasant or pleasant?”

“Unpleasant, reverend Sir.”

“But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Previously, reverend Sir, this was well seen by us, as it really is, with perfect wisdom: ‘These six kinds of consciousness are impermanent.’ ”

“Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

### The Oil Lamp Simile

Suppose, sisters, when an oil lamp is burning the oil is impermanent and changeable, the wick is impermanent and changeable, the flame is impermanent and changeable, the radiance is impermanent and changeable.

He who would say this, sisters: ‘For this oil lamp that is burning the oil is impermanent and changeable, the wick is impermanent and changeable, the flame is impermanent and changeable, but the radiance is permanent, constant, eternal and unchangeable,’ would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? For while this oil lamp is burning, reverend Sir, the oil is impermanent and changeable, the wick is impermanent and changeable, the flame is impermanent and changeable, then what to say of its radiance being impermanent and changeable?”

“Just so he who would say this, sisters: ‘These six internal sense-spheres are impermanent, but that which is conditioned by these six internal sense-spheres, the pleasant or painful or neither painful-nor-painful (feeling) that he feels, that is permanent, constant, eternal

## Nandaka's Advice - 24

and unchangeable,' would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?"

"Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Whatever arises, reverend Sir, is conditioned by conditions, and with that arising feelings appear. With the cessation of the conditions for whatever arises, whatever feelings have arisen cease."

"Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

### **The Big Tree Simile**

Suppose, sisters, when there is a big tree standing, having heartwood, the root is impermanent and changeable, the trunk is impermanent and changeable, the branches and foilage are impermanent and changeable, the shadow is impermanent and changeable.

He who would say this, sisters: 'For this big tree which is stood here, having heartwood, the root is impermanent and changeable, the trunk is impermanent and changeable, the branches and foilage are impermanent and changeable, but the shadow is permanent, constant, eternal and unchangeable,' would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?"

"Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? For this big tree which is stood here, reverend Sir, having heartwood, the root is impermanent and changeable, the trunk is impermanent and changeable, the branches and foilage are impermanent and changeable, then what to say of its shadow being impermanent and changeable?"

"Just so he who would say this, sisters: 'These six external sense-spheres are impermanent, but that which is conditioned by these six external sense-spheres the pleasant or painful or neither painful-nor-pleasant (feeling) that he feels, that is permanent, constant, eternal and unchangeable,' would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?"

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“Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? Whatever arises, reverend Sir, is conditioned by conditions, and with that arising feelings appear. With the cessation of the conditions for whatever arises, whatever feelings have arisen cease.”

“Very good, very good, sisters! This is the way, sisters, for a noble disciple who sees it as it really is, with perfect wisdom.

### **The Cow Simile**

Suppose, sisters, a butcher or a butcher's apprentice, after killing a cow, were to cut through the cow with a sharp butcher's knife, without harming the flesh on the inside, and without harming the hide on the outside, (but) whatever was right there, the flesh stuck to the inside, the sinew on the inside, the teguments on the inside, (all) that he were to cut away from the cow with a sharp butcher's knife, were to cut it through, were to cut it out, and after having cut it away, cut it through, cut it out, and removed the hide on the outside, and with the hide having covered that cow (again), were he to say thus: 'This cow is connected with its hide (again),' would someone speaking in this way, sisters, be speaking correctly?"

“Certainly not, reverend Sir. What is the reason for that? For, reverend Sir, (if) a butcher or a butcher's apprentice, after killing a cow, were to cut through the cow with a sharp butcher's knife, without harming the flesh on the inside, and without harming the hide on the outside, and whatever was right there, the flesh stuck to the inside, the sinew on the inside, the teguments on the inside, (all) that he were to cut away from the cow with a sharp butcher's knife, were to cut it through, were to cut it out, and after having cut it away, cut it through, cut it out, and removed the hide on the outside, and with the hide having covered that cow (again), were he to say thus: 'This cow is connected with its hide (again),' still that cow would not be connected with its hide (again).”

## **The Key to the Cow Simile**

“This is a simile I have made, sisters, to instruct in the meaning, and this is the meaning here:

‘Flesh on the inside,’ sisters, that is a designation for these six internal sense spheres,

‘Hide on the outside,’ sisters, that is a designation for these six external sense spheres,

‘The flesh stuck to the inside, the sinew on the inside, the teguments on the inside,’ sisters, that is a designation for enjoyment and passion,

‘A sharp butcher’s knife,’ sisters, that is a designation for noble wisdom, the noble wisdom that cuts away the internal defilements, the internal fetters, the internal bonds, cuts them through, cuts them out.

## **The Factors of Awakening**

There are these seven Factors of Awakening, sisters, which when developed and made much of, a monastic, through the destruction of the pollutants, without pollutants, freed in mind, freed through wisdom, dwells having known, having directly experienced, and having attained (Nibbāna) himself in this very life.

Which seven?

Here, sisters, a monastic develops the Mindfulness Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Investigation (of the Nature) of Things Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

## Nandaka's Advice - 27

develops the Energy Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Joy Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Tranquility Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Concentration Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

develops the Equanimity Factor of Complete Awakening, depending on solitude, depending on dispassion, depending on cessation, maturing in relinquishment,

There are these seven Factors of Awakening, sisters, which when developed and made much of, a monastic, through the destruction of the pollutants, without pollutants, freed in mind, freed through wisdom, dwells having known, having directly experienced, and having attained (Nibbāna) himself in this very life.”

Then venerable Nandaka, having advised the nuns with this advice, sent them off, saying: “Depart, sisters, it is time.”

## The Fortunate One's Response

Then those nuns after rejoicing in and being gladdened by venerable Nandaka's speech, rising from their seats, worshipping and circumambulating venerable Nandaka, approached the Fortunate One, and after approaching and worshipping the Fortunate One, they stood on one side.

## Nandaka's Advice - 28

While they were standing on one side the Fortunate One said this to the nuns: "Depart, sisters, it is time."

Then those nuns, after worshipping and circumambulating the Fortunate One, departed.

Then, not long after those nuns had departed, the Fortunate One addressed the monks: saying: "Just as, monks, on the Uposatha day of the fifteenth for most people there is no doubt or uncertainty: 'Is the moon deficient, or is the moon full?' for then the moon is full; just so, monks, those nuns were uplifted by the venerable Nandaka's Dhamma preaching, and their aspirations were fulfilled.

For those five hundred nuns, monks, the least nun is a Stream-Enterer, no longer subject to falling away, sure and destined for Full Awakening."

The Fortunate One said this,

and those monks were uplifted and greatly rejoiced in what was said by the Fortunate One.

*The Discourse giving Nandaka's Advice is Finished*

## The Story about the Elder Nandaka

### AN 1.4.7 (text)

**This is the foremost of my monk disciples, monks,  
amongst those who advise the nuns, that is to say, Nandaka.**

### AA 1.4.7 (commentary)

In the seventh (story), “Amongst those who advise the nuns, that is to say, Nandaka,” while this Elder monk was giving a talk on Dhamma altogether five hundred nuns attained Liberation. Therefore he became known as the foremost amongst those who advise the nuns.

This is the exposition concerning the enquiry into his (previous) deeds:

### **His Aspiration and Good Deeds**

At the time of the Buddha Padumuttara, he was reborn in a good family house in Hamsavatī, and while listening to the Teacher’s teaching of the Dhamma, he saw the Teacher set a certain monk aside as being foremost amongst those who advise the nuns, did a great deed, and aspired for that position himself.

### **His Last Life**

He did wholesome (deeds) for the rest of his life, and being reborn amongst gods and humans (only), when this (Gotama) Buddha arose, after being conceived in a good family home in Sāvattthī, when he was mature he heard the Teacher teach the Dhamma, gained faith and went forth in the presence of the Teacher, developed insight and attained Liberation, and became one who had mastered knowledge of his former lives.

## The Story about the Elder Nandaka - 30

Within the four assemblies (it was said): “He was able to preach so as to capture everyone’s mind,” and he became known as Nandaka the Dhamma Preacher.

The Realised One departed from the string of quarrels on the bank of the River Rohiṇī, and discontent having arisen for the five hundred Sākiyan Princes who went forth, he took those monks and went to the Kuṇāla Lake, and understanding their spiritual anxiety because of the talk on the Kuṇāla Birth Story, and preaching a talk on the Four Truths, he established them in the fruit of Stream-Entry.

Later he preached the Discourse on the Great Assembly and made them attain the supreme fruit of Liberation.

Those Elders’ former wives saying: “What do we have to do here now?” had but one thought, and after approaching Mahāpajāpatī they requested the going forth. In the presence of that Elder nun all five hundred received the going forth and the higher ordination.

### His Past Life

In his immediately past life they all had been the wives of the Elder Nandaka when he was a Prince.

At that time the Teacher said: “Monks must advise the nuns.”

When the Elder’s turn arrived, knowing they were his wives in a previous existence he thought: ‘Sitting in the midst of this Community of nuns and bringing forward similes and reasons, and being seen preaching the Dhamma, (if) another monk who also had knowledge of previous lives looked at the reason for it, he might think he could say: “Venerable Nandaka up to this day did not send off his concubines, this venerable is resplendent when surrounded by his concubines.”’

Therefore when it came to his (turn) he sent another monk.

## Teaching the Nuns

But those five hundred nuns desired the Elder's advice.

For this reason the Fortunate One said to the Elder monk: "When your turn arrives, without sending another, having gone yourself, advise the Community of nuns."

He was unable to refuse the Teacher's speech, and when his turn arrived on the fourteenth he gave advice to the Community of nuns, and with a Dhamma teaching elaborating on the six sense spheres he established all the nuns in the fruit of Stream-Entry.

Those nuns, being uplifted by the Elder's Dhamma teaching, went into the presence of the Teacher and informed him of their penetration (of the Dhamma).

The Teacher thought: 'With what Dhamma teaching will these nuns attain the further Paths and Fruits?' and reflecting further: 'Listening again to Nandaka's Dhamma teaching surely these five hundred will attain Liberation.'

Having seen (that), on another day he sent them into the Elder's presence to listen to the Dhamma, and on that day they listened to Dhamma and attained Liberation.

On that day the Fortunate One came into the presence of those nuns, he understood (they had attained) the fruition state with that Dhamma teaching, and he said: "Nandaka's Dhamma teaching yesterday, was like the moon on the fourteenth day, today it is like the moon on the fifteenth day," and having given his approval to the Elder monk, for that reason as the occasion had arisen, he placed this Elder monk in the foremost position amongst those who advise the nuns.