

60 *Apaṇṇaka Sutta*

The Incontrovertible Teaching

1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessed One was wandering in the Kosalan country with a large Sangha of bhikkhus, and eventually he arrived at a Kosalan brahmin village named Sālā.

2. The brahmin householders of Sālā heard: "The recluse Gotama, the son of the Sakyans who went forth from a Sakyan clan, has been wandering in the Kosalan country [401] with a large Sangha of bhikkhus and has come to Sālā. Now a good report of Master Gotama has been spread to this effect: 'That Blessed One is accomplished, fully enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, enlightened, blessed. He declares this world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its princes and its people, which he has himself realised with direct knowledge. He teaches the Dhamma good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, with the right meaning and phrasing, and he reveals a holy life that is utterly perfect and pure.' Now it is good to see such arahants."

3. Then the brahmin householders of Sālā went to the Blessed One. Some paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side; some exchanged greetings with him, and when this courteous and amiable talk was finished, sat down at one side; some extended their hands in reverential salutation towards the Blessed One and sat down at one side; some pronounced their name and clan in the Blessed One's presence and sat down at one side; some kept silent and sat down at one side.

4. When they were seated, the Blessed One asked them: "Householders, is there any teacher agreeable to you in whom you have acquired faith supported by reasons?"⁶¹⁹

"No, venerable sir, there is no teacher agreeable to us in whom we have acquired faith supported by reasons."

"Since, householders, you have not found an agreeable teacher, you may undertake and practise this incontrovertible teaching;⁶²⁰ for when the incontrovertible teaching is accepted and undertaken, it will lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time. And what is the incontrovertible teaching?⁶²¹

(I. THE DOCTRINE OF NIHILISM)

5. (A) "Householders, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed; no fruit or result of good and bad actions; no this world, no other world; no mother, no father; no beings who are reborn spontaneously; no good and virtuous recluses and brahmins in the world who have themselves realised by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world.'⁶²² [402]

6. (B) "Now there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine is directly opposed to that of those recluses and brahmins, and they say thus: 'There is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed; there is fruit and result of good and bad actions; there is this world and the other world; there is mother and father; there are beings who are reborn spontaneously; there are good and virtuous recluses and brahmins in the world who have themselves realised by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world.' What do you think, householders? Don't these recluses and brahmins hold doctrines directly opposed to each other?" - "Yes, venerable sir."

7. (A.i) "Now, householders, of those recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'There is nothing given...no good and virtuous recluses and brahmins in the world who have themselves realised by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world,' it is to be expected that they will avoid these three wholesome states, namely, good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, and good mental conduct, and that they will undertake and practise these three unwholesome states, namely, bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct. Why is that? Because those good recluses and brahmins do not see in unwholesome states the danger,

degradation, and defilement, nor do they see in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing.

8. (A.ii) "Since there actually is another world, one who holds the view 'there is no other world' has wrong view. Since there actually is another world, one who intends 'there is no other world' has wrong intention. Since there actually is another world, one who makes the statement 'there is no other world' has wrong speech. Since there actually is another world, one who says 'there is no other world' is opposed to those arahants who know the other world. Since there actually is another world, one who convinces another 'there is no other world' convinces him to accept an untrue Dhamma; and because he convinces another to accept an untrue Dhamma, he praises himself and disparages others. Thus any pure virtue that he formerly had is abandoned and corrupt conduct is substituted.⁶²³ And this wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, opposition to noble ones, convincing another to accept an untrue Dhamma, and self-praise and disparagement of others – these several evil unwholesome states thus come into being with wrong view as their condition. [403]

9. (A.iii) "About this a wise man considers thus: 'If there is no other world, then on the dissolution of the body this good person will have made himself safe enough.⁶²⁴ But if there is another world, then on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. Now whether or not the word of those good recluses and brahmins is true, let me assume that there is no other world: still this good person is here and now censured by the wise as an immoral person, one of wrong view who holds the doctrine of nihilism.⁶²⁵ But on the other hand, if there is another world, then this good person has made an unlucky throw on both counts: since he is censured by the wise here and now, and since on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. He has wrongly accepted and undertaken this incontrovertible teaching in such a way that it extends only to one side and excludes the wholesome alternative.'⁶²⁶

10. (B.i) "Now, householders, of those recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'There is what is given...there are good and virtuous recluses and brahmins in the world who

have themselves realised by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world,' it is to be expected that they will avoid these three unwholesome states, namely, bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct, and that they will undertake and practise these three wholesome states, namely, good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, and good mental conduct. Why is that? Because those good recluses and brahmins see in unwholesome states the danger, degradation, and defilement, and they see in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing.

11. (B.ii) "Since there actually is another world, one who holds the view 'there is another world' has right view. Since there actually is another world, one who intends 'there is another world' has right intention. Since there actually is another world, one who makes the statement 'there is another world' has right speech. Since there actually is another world, one who says 'there is another world' is not opposed to those arahants who know the other world. Since there actually is another world, one who convinces another 'there is another world' [404] convinces him to accept true Dhamma; and because he convinces another to accept true Dhamma, he does not praise himself and disparage others. Thus any corrupt conduct that he formerly had is abandoned and pure virtue is substituted. And this right view, right intention, right speech, non-opposition to noble ones, convincing another to accept true Dhamma, and avoidance of self-praise and disparagement of others – these several wholesome states thus come into being with right view as their condition.

12. (B.iii) "About this a wise man considers thus: 'If there is another world, then on the dissolution of the body, after death, this good person will reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. Now whether or not the word of those good recluses and brahmins is true, let me assume that there is no other world: still this good person is here and now praised by the wise as a virtuous person, one with right view who holds the doctrine of affirmation.⁶²⁷ And on the other hand, if there is another world, then this good person has made a lucky throw on both counts: since he is praised by the wise here and now, and since on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. He has rightly accepted and undertaken this incontrovertible

teaching in such a way that it extends to both sides and excludes the unwholesome alternative.⁶²⁸

(II. THE DOCTRINE OF NON-DOING)

13. (A) "Householders, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this:⁶²⁹ 'When one acts or makes others act, when one mutilates or makes others mutilate, when one tortures or makes others inflict torture, when one inflicts sorrow or makes others inflict sorrow, when one oppresses or makes others inflict oppression, when one intimidates or makes others inflict intimidation, when one kills living beings, takes what is not given, breaks into houses, plunders wealth, commits burglary, ambushes highways, seduces another's wife, utters falsehood – no evil is done by the doer. If, with a razor-rimmed wheel, one were to make the living beings on this earth into one mass of flesh, into one heap of flesh, because of this there would be no evil and no outcome of evil. If one were to go along the south bank of the Ganges killing and slaughtering, mutilating and making others mutilate, torturing and making others inflict torture, because of this there would be no evil and no outcome of evil. If one were to go along the north bank of the Ganges giving gifts and making others give gifts, making offerings and making others make offerings, because of this there would be no merit and no outcome of merit. By giving, by taming oneself, by restraint, by speaking truth, there is no merit and no outcome of merit.'

14. (B) "Now there are some recluses and brahmins [405] whose doctrine is directly opposed to that of those recluses and brahmins, and they say thus: 'When one acts or makes others act, when one mutilates or makes others mutilate... utters falsehood – evil is done by the doer. If, with a razor-rimmed wheel, one were to make the living beings on this earth into one mass of flesh, into one heap of flesh, because of this there would be evil and the outcome of evil. If one were to go along the south bank of the Ganges killing and slaughtering, mutilating and making others mutilate, torturing and making others inflict torture, because of this there would be evil and the outcome of evil. If one were to go along the north bank of the Ganges giving gifts and making others give gifts, making offerings and

making others make offerings, because of this there would be merit and the outcome of merit. By giving, by taming oneself, by restraint, by speaking truth, there is merit and the outcome of merit.' What do you think, householders? Don't these recluses and brahmins hold doctrines directly opposed to each other?" – "Yes, venerable sir."

15. (A.i) "Now, householders, of those recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'When one acts or makes others act...there is no merit and no outcome of merit,' it is to be expected that they will avoid these three wholesome states, namely, good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct and good mental conduct, and that they will undertake and practise these three unwholesome states, namely, bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct. Why is that? Because those good recluses and brahmins do not see in unwholesome states the danger, degradation, and defilement, nor do they see in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing.

16. (A.ii) "Since there actually is doing, one who holds the view 'there is no doing' has wrong view. Since there actually is doing, one who intends 'there is no doing' has wrong intention. Since there actually is doing, one who makes the statement 'there is no doing' has wrong speech. Since there actually is doing, one who says 'there is no doing' is opposed to those arahants who hold the doctrine that there is doing. Since there actually is doing, one who convinces another 'there is no doing' convinces him to accept an untrue Dhamma; and because he convinces another to accept an untrue Dhamma, he praises himself and disparages others. Thus any pure virtue that he formerly had is abandoned and corrupt conduct is substituted. [406] And this wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, opposition to noble ones, convincing another to accept an untrue Dhamma, and self-praise and disparagement of others – these several evil unwholesome states thus come into being with wrong view as their condition.

17. (A.iii) "About this a wise man considers thus: 'If there is no doing, then on the dissolution of the body this good person will have made himself safe enough. But if there is doing, then on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. Now whether or not the word of those good recluses and

brahmins is true, let me assume that there is no doing: still this good person is here and now censured by the wise as an immoral person, one of wrong view who holds the doctrine of non-doing. But on the other hand, if there is doing, then this good person has made an unlucky throw on both counts: since he is censured by the wise here and now, and since on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. He has wrongly accepted and undertaken this incontrovertible teaching in such a way that it extends only to one side and excludes the wholesome alternative.'

18. (B.i) "Now, householders, of those recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'When one acts or makes others act...there is merit and outcome of merit,' it is to be expected that they will avoid these three unwholesome states, namely, bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct, and that they will undertake and practise these three wholesome states, namely, good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, and good mental conduct. Why is that? Because those good recluses and brahmins see in unwholesome states the danger, degradation, and defilement, and they see in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing.

19. (B.ii) "Since there actually is doing, one who holds the view 'there is doing' has right view. Since there actually is doing, one who intends 'there is doing' has right intention. Since there actually is doing, one who makes the statement 'there is doing' has right speech. Since there actually is doing, one who says 'there is doing' is not opposed to those arahants who hold the doctrine that there is doing. Since there actually is doing, one who convinces another 'there is doing' convinces him to accept true Dhamma; [407] and because he convinces another to accept true Dhamma, he does not praise himself and disparage others. Thus any corrupt conduct that he formerly had is abandoned and pure virtue is substituted. And this right view, right intention, right speech, non-opposition to noble ones, convincing another to accept true Dhamma, and avoidance of self-praise and disparagement of others – these several wholesome states thus come into being with right view as their condition.

20. (B.iii) "About this a wise man considers thus: 'If there is doing, then on the dissolution of the body, after death, this good

person will reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. Now whether or not the word of those good recluses and brahmins is true, let me assume that there is no doing: still this good person is here and now praised by the wise as a virtuous person, one with right view who holds the doctrine of doing. And on the other hand, if there is doing, then this good person has made a lucky throw on both counts: since he is praised by the wise here and now, and since on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. He has rightly accepted and undertaken this incontrovertible teaching in such a way that it extends to both sides and excludes the unwholesome alternative.'

(III. THE DOCTRINE OF NON-CAUSALITY)

21. (A) "Householders, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this:⁶³⁰ 'There is no cause or condition for the defilement of beings; beings are defiled without cause or condition. There is no cause or condition for the purification of beings; beings are purified without cause or condition. There is no power, no energy, no manly strength, no manly endurance. All beings, all living things, all creatures, all souls are without mastery, power, and energy; moulded by destiny, circumstance, and nature, they experience pleasure and pain in the six classes.'⁶³¹

22. (B) "Now there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine is directly opposed to that of those recluses and brahmins, and they say thus: 'There is a cause and condition for the defilement of beings; beings are defiled owing to a cause and condition. There is a cause and condition for the purification of beings; beings are purified owing to a cause and condition. There is power, energy, manly strength, manly endurance. It is not the case that all beings, all living things, all creatures, all souls are without mastery, power, and energy, or that moulded by destiny, circumstance, and nature, they experience pleasure and pain in the six classes.' What do you think, householders? [408] Don't these recluses and brahmins hold doctrines directly opposed to each other?" - "Yes, venerable sir."

23. (A.i) "Now, householders, of those recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'There is no cause or condition

for the defilement of beings...they experience pleasure and pain in the six classes,' it is to be expected that they will avoid these three wholesome states, namely, good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, and good mental conduct, and that they will undertake and practise these three unwholesome states, namely, bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct. Why is that? Because those good recluses and brahmins do not see in unwholesome states the danger, degradation, and defilement, nor do they see in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing.

24. (A.ii) "Since there actually is causality, one who holds the view 'there is no causality' has wrong view. Since there actually is causality, one who intends 'there is no causality' has wrong intention. Since there actually is causality, one who makes the statement 'there is no causality' has wrong speech. Since there actually is causality, one who says 'there is no causality' is opposed to those arahants who hold the doctrine of causality. Since there actually is causality, one who convinces another 'there is no causality' convinces him to accept an untrue Dhamma; and because he convinces another to accept an untrue Dhamma, he praises himself and disparages others. Thus any pure virtue that he formerly had is abandoned and corrupt conduct is substituted. And this wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, opposition to noble ones, convincing another to accept an untrue Dhamma, and self-praise and disparagement of others – these several evil unwholesome states thus come into being with wrong view as their condition.

25. (A.iii) "About this a wise man considers thus: 'If there is no causality, then on the dissolution of the body this good person will have made himself safe enough. But if there is causality, then on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. Now whether or not the word of those good recluses and brahmins is true, let me assume that there is no causality: still this good person is here and now censured by the wise as an immoral person, one of wrong view who holds the doctrine of non-causality. But on the other hand, if there is causality, then this good person has made an unlucky throw on both counts: [409] since he is censured by the wise here and now, and since on the dissolution of the body, after death, he

will reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. He has wrongly accepted and undertaken this incontrovertible teaching in such a way that it extends only to one side and excludes the wholesome alternative.'

26. (B.i) "Now, householders, of those recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'There is a cause and condition for the defilement of beings...they experience pleasure and pain in the six classes,' it is to be expected that they will avoid these three unwholesome states, namely, bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct, and that they will undertake and practise these three wholesome states, namely, good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, and good mental conduct. Why is that? Because those good recluses and brahmins see in unwholesome states the danger, degradation, and defilement, and they see in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing.

27. (B.ii) "Since there actually is causality, one who holds the view 'there is causality' has right view. Since there actually is causality, one who intends 'there is causality' has right intention. Since there actually is causality, one who makes the statement 'there is causality' has right speech. Since there actually is causality, one who says 'there is causality' is not opposed to those arahants who hold the doctrine of causality. Since there actually is causality, one who convinces another 'there is causality' convinces him to accept true Dhamma; and because he convinces another to accept true Dhamma, he does not praise himself and disparage others. Thus any corrupt conduct that he formerly had is abandoned and pure virtue is substituted. And this right view, right intention, right speech, non-opposition to noble ones, convincing another to accept true Dhamma, and avoidance of self-praise and disparagement of others – these several wholesome states thus come into being with right view as their condition.

28. (B.iii) "About this a wise man considers thus: 'If there is causality, then on the dissolution of the body, after death, this good person will reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. Now whether or not the word of those good recluses and brahmins is true, let me assume that there is no causality: still this good person is here and now praised by the wise as a virtuous person, one with right view who holds the

doctrine of causality. And on the other hand, if there is [410] causality, then this good person has made a lucky throw on both counts: since he is praised by the wise here and now, and since on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. He has rightly accepted and undertaken this incontrovertible teaching in such a way that it extends to both sides and excludes the unwholesome alternative.'

(IV. THERE ARE NO IMMATERIAL REALMS)

29. "Householders, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'There are definitely no immaterial realms.'⁶³²

30. "Now there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine is directly opposed to that of those recluses and brahmins, and they say thus: 'There definitely are immaterial realms.' What do you think, householders? Don't these recluses and brahmins hold doctrines directly opposed to each other?" – "Yes, venerable sir."

31. "About this a wise man considers thus: 'These good recluses and brahmins hold the doctrine and view "there are definitely no immaterial realms," but that has not been seen by me. And these other good recluses and brahmins hold the doctrine and view "there definitely are immaterial realms," but that has not been known by me. If, without knowing and seeing, I were to take one side and declare: "Only this is true, anything else is wrong," that would not be fitting for me. Now as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely are no immaterial realms," if their word is true then it is certainly still possible that I might reappear [after death] among the gods of the fine-material realms who consist of mind.⁶³³ But as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely are immaterial realms," if their word is true then it is certainly possible that I might reappear [after death] among the gods of the immaterial realms who consist of perception. The taking up of rods and weapons, quarrels, brawls, disputes, recrimination, malice, and false speech are seen to occur based on material form, but this does not exist at all in the immaterial realms.' After reflecting thus, he practises the way to dispassion

towards material forms, to the fading away and cessation of material forms.⁶³⁴

(V. THERE IS NO CESSATION OF BEING)

32. "Householders, there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'There is definitely no cessation of being.'⁶³⁵

33. "Now there are some recluses and brahmins whose doctrine is directly opposed to that of those recluses and brahmins, and they say thus: 'There definitely [411] is a cessation of being.' What do you think, householders? Don't these recluses and brahmins hold doctrines directly opposed to each other?" – "Yes, venerable sir."

34. "About this a wise man considers thus: 'These good recluses and brahmins hold the doctrine and view "there is definitely no cessation of being," but that has not been seen by me. And these other good recluses and brahmins hold the doctrine and view "there definitely is a cessation of being," but that has not been known by me. If, without knowing and seeing, I were to take one side and declare: "Only this is true, anything else is wrong," that would not be fitting for me. Now as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely is no cessation of being," if their word is true then it is certainly still possible that I might reappear [after death] among the gods of the immaterial realms who consist of perception. But as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely is a cessation of being," if their word is true then it is possible that I might here and now attain final Nibbāna. The view of those good recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely is no cessation of being" is close to lust, close to bondage, close to delighting, close to holding, close to clinging; but the view of those good recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view "there definitely is cessation of being" is close to non-lust, close to non-bondage, close to non-delighting, close to non-holding, close to non-clinging. After reflecting thus, he practises the way to dispassion towards being, to the fading away and cessation of being.'⁶³⁶

(FOUR KINDS OF PERSONS)

35. "Householders, there are four kinds of persons to be found existing in the world. What four? Here a certain kind of person torments himself and pursues the practice of torturing himself. Here a certain kind of person torments others and pursues the practice of torturing others. Here a certain kind of person torments himself and pursues the practice of torturing himself, and he also torments others and pursues the practice of torturing others. Here a certain kind of person does not torment himself or pursue the practice of torturing himself, and he does not torment others or pursue the practice of torturing others. [412] Since he torments neither himself nor others, he is here and now hungerless, extinguished, and cooled, and he abides experiencing bliss, having himself become holy.

36. "What kind of person, householders, torments himself and pursues the practice of torturing himself? Here a certain person goes naked, rejecting conventions...(*as Sutta 51, §8*)...Thus in such a variety of ways he dwells pursuing the practice of tormenting and mortifying the body. This is called the kind of person who torments himself and pursues the practice of torturing himself.

37. "What kind of person, householders, torments others and pursues the practice of torturing others? Here a certain person is a butcher of sheep...(*as Sutta 51, §9*)...or one who follows any other such bloody occupation. This is called the kind of person who torments others and pursues the practice of torturing others.

38. "What kind of a person, householders, torments himself and pursues the practice of torturing himself and also torments others and pursues the practice of torturing others? Here some person is a head-anointed noble king or a well-to-do brahmin...(*as Sutta 51, §10*)...And then his slaves, messengers, and servants make preparations, weeping with tearful faces, being spurred on by threats of punishment and by fear. This is called the kind of person who torments himself and pursues the practice of torturing himself and who torments others and pursues the practice of torturing others.

39. "What kind of person, householders, does not torment himself or pursue the practice of torturing himself and does not torment others or pursue the practice of torturing others – the

one who, since he torments neither himself nor others, is here and now hungerless, extinguished, and cooled, and abides experiencing bliss, having himself become holy?

40-55. "Here, householders, a Tathāgata appears in the world...(*as Sutta 51, §§12-27*) [413]...He understands: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'

56. "This, householders, is called the kind of person who does not torment himself or pursue the practice of torturing himself and who does not torment others or pursue the practice of torturing others – the one who, since he torments neither himself nor others, is here and now hungerless, extinguished, and cooled, and abides experiencing bliss, having himself become holy."

57. When this was said, the brahmin householders of Sālā said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! Master Gotama has made the Dhamma clear in many ways, as though he were turning upright what had been overthrown, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the darkness for those with eyesight to see forms. We go to Master Gotama for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. From today let Master Gotama accept us as lay followers who have gone to him for refuge for life."

