

ARIYAPARIYESANA SUTTA  
SIDDHARTHA'S NOBLE SEARCH FOR THE NOBLE PATH  
MAJJHIMA NIKAYA 26

On one occasion the Buddha was in Savatthi at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's Monastery. He adjusted his robes and taking his alms-bowl he left for town for his daily meal.

A large group of monks approached Ananda: "It has been a long while since we heard a Dhamma talk from the Great Teacher. It would be for our long-term benefit to hear a Dhamma talk from the Awakened One." "Venerable ones, perhaps if you went to the hermitage of Rammaka you will get to listen to a Dhamma talk from the Buddha." "We will do as you say, Venerable Ananda."

The Buddha returned from alms and asked Ananda to accompany him to the Eastern Park and the palace of Migara's mother for the days abiding. Then, having spent the day in seclusion, the Buddha asked Ananda to accompany him to the Eastern Gatehouse to bathe. Having bathed, Ananda said to his Teacher "The hermitage of Rammaka is nearby. It is pleasant and delightful. There are many there awaiting your teaching. It would be of benefit to them if, out of sympathy, you were to go there."

The Buddha agreed and they left for Rammaka's hermitage. As they approached, they heard a Dhamma discussion underway. The Buddha waited for the discussion to end. Hearing silence he cleared his throat and knocked to announce his arrival. Upon entering, he sat on a prepared seat and addressed the sangha.

"For what discussion were you all gathered here?"

"Great Teacher, we were discussing you, and then you arrived."

"Good! It is fitting that you have gone forth from good families, from home to homelessness, and gather for Dhamma discussion. When you gather as a sangha you should always discuss the Dhamma, or practice Noble Silence.

"Friends, there are two types of searching for understanding. There is ignoble searching and Noble Searching.

"And what is ignoble searching?

- Ignoble searching occurs when a person, subject to birth, seeks happiness in what is also subject to birth.
- Ignoble searching occurs when a person, subject to sickness, seeks happiness in what is also subject to sickness.
- Ignoble searching occurs when a person, subject to aging, seeks happiness in what is also subject to aging.
- Ignoble searching occurs when a person, subject to death, seeks happiness in what is also subject to death.
- Ignoble searching occurs when a person, subject to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion, seeks happiness in what is also subject to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion.

"What is subject to birth?

- Spouses and children are subject to birth.
- Men and women slaves are subject to birth.
- Animals of all types are subject to birth.
- Gold and silver (material wealth) are subject to birth.

“When these are seen as acquisitions one becomes attached and infatuated with these acquisitions. Seeking happiness with what is subject to birth is an ignoble search.

“Likewise, these are all subject to sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion. Seeking happiness with what is subject to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion is ignoble searching.

“And what is Noble Searching?

- Noble Searching is, while being subject to birth, seeking to understand the suffering of birth, seeking the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding. This is Noble Searching
- Noble Searching is, while being subject to sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion, seeking what is free of sickness, of aging, of death, free of sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, free of greed, aversion, and delusion. This is Noble Searching.
- Noble searching is seeking the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding. This is Noble searching.

“Friends, before my self-awakening, when I was still an unawakened Bodhisatta (Sanskrit: Bodhisattva) being subject to birth, to sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion, I was seeking happiness with what is subject to birth, to sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion.

"Then the thought occurred to me, 'Why do I, being subject myself to birth, to sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion, seek what is likewise subject to birth, to sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion?'

"What if I, being subject to birth, were to seek to understand the suffering of birth, seeking the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding.

"What if I, being subject to sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion, were to seek understanding of the suffering of sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion?

"What if I were to seek the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding?

"So, at a later time while still a young man, black-haired, early in my life, my parents crying, I shaved off my hair, put on a robe made of rags, and went forth from home to homelessness.

"Having gone forth seeking understanding of these things, seeking what is skillful, seeking unexcelled and lasting peace, I went to Alara Kalama. On arrival, I said to him, 'friend Alara, I want to practice your dharma and discipline – to become your disciple.'

"Alara said to me 'You may stay. My dharma is such that an observant person can soon understand and integrate my knowledge and realize it for themselves through their own direct knowledge.'

"From reciting and repetition, I quickly learned his dharma. I could affirm that I knew his dharma.

"I thought that it is not through the mere conviction that Alara Kalama declares that I understand and have integrated his dharma and realized it for myself through direct knowledge. Alara Kalama certainly understands and has integrated this dharma.

"So I went to Alara and asked him 'What is the culmination of your understanding and integration of this dharma. Alara declared that the culmination of his dharma was the dimension of nothingness.

"Then I thought 'Not only does Alara Kalama have conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment. I also have conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment. What if I were to strive to realize for myself this dharma through direct knowledge?

"I quickly developed understanding and fully integrated Alara Kalama's dharma, having realized for myself the dimension of nothingness through direct knowledge. I then asked Alara if this was the culmination of his understanding and integration of this dharma?

"Alara told me this was the culmination of his understanding and integration of his dharma. He then said that it was a great gain for his sangha to have a companion such as myself in their sangha. He then asked me to lead their sangha together.

"Alara Kalama my teacher, placed me on the same level as himself paying me great honour. But I had the thought that this dharma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to

direct knowledge, to self-awakening, or to unbinding. This dharma only seeks to establish a reappearance in the dimension of nothingness.

"I found this dharma unsatisfactory and so I left Alara Kalama and continued the Noble Search.

"As I continued the Noble Search I went to Uddaka Ramaputta. Upon arrival I told him 'Friend Uddaka, I want to practice your dharma and discipline – to become your disciple.'

"Uddaka replied 'You may stay. My dharma is such that an observant person can soon understand and integrate my knowledge and realize it for themselves through their own direct knowledge.'

"From reciting and repetition I quickly learned his dharma. I could affirm that I knew his dharma.

"I thought that it is not through the mere conviction that Uddaka Ramaputta declares that I understand and have integrated his dharma and realized it for myself through direct knowledge. Uddaka Ramaputta certainly understands and has integrated this dharma.

"So I went to Uddaka and asked him 'What is the culmination of your understanding and integration of this dhamma. Uddaka declared that the culmination of his dhamma was the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

"Then I thought 'Not only does Uddaka Ramaputta have conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment. I also have conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment.

What if I were to strive to realize for myself this dharma through direct knowledge?

"I quickly developed understanding and fully integrated Uddaka Ramaputta's dharma, having realized for myself the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception through direct knowledge. I then asked Uddaka if this was the culmination of his understanding and integration of this dharma?

"Uddaka told me this was the culmination of his understanding and integration of his Dharma. He then said that it was a great gain for his sangha to have a companion such as myself in their sangha. He then asked me to lead their sangha together.

"Uddaka Ramaputta, my teacher, placed me on the same level as himself paying me great honour. But I had the thought that this Dharma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, or to unbinding. This Dharma only seeks to establish a reappearance in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

"I found this Dharma unsatisfactory and so I left Uddaka Ramaputta and continued the Noble Search.

"Seeking the unexcelled peace arising from skillful understanding, I wandered through the Magadhan country and arrived in Uruvela. This place was delightful with inspiring forests, a clear-flowing river with shallow banks, and nearby villages for alms. This seemed just right for developing Jhana.

"Friends, being subject to birth, to sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion, I realized the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding. Knowledge and vision arose in me: 'Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.'

"Then I had the thought 'This Dhamma that I have attained is deep, hard to see, and hard to realize. This Dhamma is peaceful, refined, and beyond mere conjecture. This Dhamma is subtle and is to be directly experienced by the wise. But the world delights in attachment, is excited by attachment, is devoted to attachment, and worships attachment. For a world delighting in attachment, excited by attachment, devoted to attachment, worshipping attachment, conditioned towards self-identification from dependence on ignorance, this Dhamma is hard to see.

"The awakened state is also hard to realize. The awakened state is:

- The resolution of all fabrications.
- The relinquishment of all acquisitions.
- The ending of craving.
- The development of dispassion.
- The development of cessation.
- The development of unbinding.
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"If I were to teach the Dhamma and others would not understand me, that would be tiresome for me, troublesome for me.

"Just then this realization, never known before, occurred to me:

'I'll dismiss teaching that which, only with great difficulty, I attained. This Dhamma is not easily realized by those overcome by greed, aversion, and delusion.



'This Dhamma is difficult to understand, subtle, deep, contrary to common belief. Those delighting in passion, their minds obscured in darkness, will not un

"Then, Brahma Sahampati became aware of my thoughts: 'The world is lost, destroyed! The Arahant, the Rightly Self-Awakened One is inclined to dwelling in ease and not teaching his Dhamma!'

"Brahma Sahampati left his realm and came to me. He knelt on his right knee, bowed, and said 'Rightly Self-Awakened One please teach your Dhamma! Please teach your Dhamma! There are those with just a little dust in their eyes. They are suffering because they will not hear your Dhamma. There are those that are able to understand your Dhamma.'

"Brahmā Sahampati continued: 'In the past, there appeared among the Magadhans an impure Dhamma devised by the ignorant. Teach your Dhamma to end the pain of birth, sickness, aging, death. Teach your Dhamma to end sorrow, regret, distress, despair, to end greed, aversion, and delusion. Teach your Dhamma so they can also realize the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding.

'Just as one standing on a high peak might see people below, you, the wise one, with profound vision, must take your place in the palace of the Dhamma. Free from suffering, look on those suffering, oppressed with birth and aging.

'You have conquered ignorance! Be a great teacher and wander without entanglements. Teach your Dhamma, there will be those who will understand.'

"Mindful of Sahampati's plea and out of compassion for all beings, from my awakened state, I looked out onto the world. I saw beings with little dust in their eyes, and beings with much. I saw uncluttered beings and dull beings. I saw beings with good qualities and beings with bad qualities.

"I looked out onto the world and I saw beings hardened in their views, disgraced, in danger.

"I looked out onto the world and I saw those who would be easy to teach my understanding, my Right View.

"It is as if a pond is permeated with red, white, and blue lotus, born and growing immersed in the water. They flourish permeated with cool water from their root to tip never standing above the surface. Even so, some might rise up and emerge from the murky water.

"Seeing thus, I decided to teach my Dhamma, to open to the world the Path To Cessation. Those with eyes to see and ears to hear could come forth in conviction. Those lacking the eyes to see or ears to hear the pure Dhamma I would not teach my refined and pure Dhamma.

"I would teach the pure Dhamma tirelessly and untroubled. Brahmā Sahampati was pleased. He bowed and disappeared

"Then the thought occurred to me, 'Who should I first teach the Dhamma to? Who will quickly understand? I thought of Alara Kalama, wise, intelligent, competent, but I heard that he had passed a week ago. I thought what a great loss it was to my friend, Alara. He would have quickly learned my Dhamma.

"Then I thought of Uddaka Rāmaputta. He too is wise, intelligent, competent. But I heard he had passed just last night. It was a great loss to my friend Uddaka, as well. He too would have quickly learned my Dhamma.

"I then thought of the five friends I wandered with while attending to ascetic practices. I knew they were in the Deer Park at Isipatana. I took my leave to wander in stages to Isipatana. Along the way, I encountered Upaka, the Ajivaka. He noticed my composure, my complexion bright. He inquired 'On whose account have you gone forth? Who is your teacher? In whose Dhamma do you delight?'

"I told Upaka 'I have left the world behind through my own understanding. I am released from all wrong views, from all phenomena. Empty of ignorance, I am free of craving. My realization is taught by none – to whom should I declare as my teacher? I have no teacher as one like me cannot be found. I have no counterpart for I am an Arahant in the world. I am the unexcelled teacher, Rightly Self-Awakened. The fires of passion are cooled. I am unbound. I will set the wheel of the true Dhamma rolling. I am traveling to Kasi. In a world afflicted with the darkness of ignorance, I beat the drum of wisdom!'

"Upaka replied 'From what you claim you must be the ultimate conqueror.'

"Conquerors like me have abandoned greed, aversion, and delusion. I have conquered all evil qualities. You are correct, Upaka, I am a conqueror."

"Upaka, unconvinced, shaking his head, took his leave.

"I continued to the Deer Park. From afar, my five friends saw me. I was no longer gaunt from ascetic self-denial. Thinking that I was living luxuriously they decided to not show me respect. As I approached they noticed my awakened state. Standing in respect, they took my robe and bowl and prepared a seat. One of my friends took a bowl and began to wash my feet. They, however, addressed me by my familiar name.

"Friends, do not address the Tathagata, a Rightly Self-Awakened One in this way. I am Rightly Self-Awakened, a worthy one. Listen carefully, my friends: I have realized the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding. I will teach you my understanding. Practice as I instruct you and shortly you will also realize the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding.

"The group of five replied: 'From your practice of the austerities you did not attain any superior state or any higher knowledge or vision worthy of a noble one. How can you now, living luxuriously, straying from your exertion and backsliding into abundance, have attained any superior state or any higher knowledge or vision worthy of a noble one?'

"I replied: 'The Tathagata is not living luxuriously, or strayed from his exertion, or backslid into abundance. The Tathagata is a worthy one, Rightly Self-Awakened. Listen carefully: I have realized the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding. I will teach you my understanding. Practice as I instruct you and shortly you will also realize the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding, for yourselves right here and now.'

"A second and a third time they doubted me and questioned me in this same manner. I then asked them 'Have I ever claimed to be a Rightly Self-Awakened One before?'

"You have never before claimed to be Rightly Self-Awakened One ."

"I replied again: 'The Tathagata is not living luxuriously, or strayed from his exertion, or backslid into abundance. The Tathagata is a worthy one, Rightly Self-Awakened. Listen carefully: I have realized the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding. I will teach you my understanding. Practice as I instruct you and shortly you will also realize the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding, for yourselves right here and now.'

"And so I convinced them of my knowledge and wisdom. Over time, living on alms, I instructed the group of five. Being subject themselves to birth, to sickness, to aging, to death, to sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, to greed, to aversion, to delusion, and (now) understanding the suffering of birth, of sickness, of aging, of death, of sorrow, regret, pain, distress, despair, of greed, of aversion, of delusion, they attained the unborn and the unexcelled release of the yoke, the unbinding.

"Friends, craving and clinging arises from the five senses:

- Forms known from the eye, agreeable, pleasing, enticing, enchanting, are linked to sensual desire.
- Sounds known from the ear, agreeable, pleasing, enticing, enchanting, are linked to sensual desire.
- Aromas known from the nose, agreeable, pleasing, enticing, enchanting, are linked to sensual desire.
- Tastes known from the tongue, agreeable, pleasing, enticing, enchanting, are linked to sensual desire.
- Tactile sensations known from the body, agreeable, pleasing, enticing, enchanting, are linked to sensual desire.

"This is the craving and clinging that arises from the five senses.

“Any contemplative, any brahman, any seeker who clings to sensuality in this manner, infatuated and enchanted with sensuality without understanding the suffering that follows, or the path to cessation, should be known as unfortunate and having met ruin.

“They have lost their minds and the world will have its way with them. It is as if a wild deer were caught in a heap of snares. This deer has met misfortune and ruin – a hunter could do with them what they will.

“In the same manner, any contemplative, any brahman, any seeker who clings to sensuality in this manner, infatuated and enchanted with sensuality without understanding the suffering that follows or the path to cessation should be known as unfortunate and having met ruin. They have lost their minds and the world will have its way with them.

“Now, know this, friends, any contemplative, any brahman, any seeker who no longer clings to sensuality in this manner, not infatuated or enchanted with sensuality, understanding the suffering that follows (craving and clinging) and the path to cessation, should be known as fortunate and will not meet ruin.

“They have control of their minds and the world will not have its way with them. It is as if a wild deer avoided a hunter’s snares. This deer has not met misfortune and has avoided ruin – a hunter could not do with them what they will.

“In the same manner, any contemplative, any brahman, any seeker who does not cling to sensuality in this manner, is not infatuated or enchanted with sensuality, who understands the suffering that follows (craving and clinging) and the path to cessation, should be known as fortunate and will not meet ruin.

"They have control of their minds and the world will not have its way with them.

"It is as if a wild deer is living carefree in all ways. Why is it carefree? Because it has gone beyond the hunter's range. In the same way, those engaged in the Noble Search established in seclusion from sensuality and unskillful mental qualities enter and remain in the First Jhana. This First Jhana is experienced as rapture born of that very seclusion. It is accompanied by directed thought and evaluation. They have become lost to Mara, lost to wrong views.

"Furthermore, those engaged in the Noble Search enter and remain in the Second Jhana. This Second Jhana is experienced as rapture and pleasure born of concentration. Free of directed thought and evaluation. With internal assurance, the joy of concentration permeates their entire mind and body. They have become lost to Mara, lost to wrong views.

"Furthermore, those engaged in the Noble Search enter and remain in the Third Jhana which is equanimous and mindful, a pleasant abiding. With the fading of rapture, this pleasant abiding permeates their entire mind and body. They have become lost to Mara, lost to (the effects of) wrong views.

"Furthermore, those engaged in the Noble Search enter and remain in the Fourth Jhana which is pure equanimity and mindful. Being pure, neither pleasure nor pain is seen. They sit permeated in mind and body with pure, bright awareness. They have become lost to Mara, lost to wrong views.

"And further still, those engaged in the Noble Search, with complete abandonment of self-identification to form, with the fading of aversion,

with the cessation of craving here and there, they enter and remain in the dimension of infinite space. They have become lost to Mara, lost to wrong views.

“And further still, those engaged in the Noble Search, with complete abandonment of the dimension of infinite space, they enter and remain in the dimension of infinite consciousness. They have become lost to Mara, lost to wrong views.

“And further still, those engaged in the Noble Search, with complete abandonment of the dimension of infinite consciousness, they enter and remain in the dimension of nothingness. Knowing ‘there is nothing,’ they have become lost to Mara, lost to wrong views.

“And further still, those engaged in the Noble Search, with complete abandonment of the dimension of nothingness, they enter and remain in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. They have become lost to Mara, lost to wrong views.

“And further still, those engaged in the Noble Search, with complete abandonment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, they enter and remain in the cessation of perception and feeling.

“Free of reaction, knowledge and wisdom well-established, greed, aversion, and delusion are completely overcome. They have become lost to Mara, lost to (the effects of) wrong views.

“Having engaged in the Noble Search, they are unattached to anything in the world. They are as carefree as a deer far removed from a hunter’s range. Why are they as carefree as a deer far removed from a hunter’s



range? Because they have completed the Noble Search and, through their own efforts, gone beyond Mara's reach, they have gone beyond the reach of ignorance .

"Those who have engaged in the Noble Search, who have completed the (Eightfold) Path are said to be Rightly Self-Awakened."

This is what the Great Teacher said. The group of five were delighted from hearing these words.

End Of Sutta