

# 1 *Brahmajāla Sutta: The Supreme Net*

## What the Teaching Is Not

[1] 1.1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.**<sup>11</sup> Once the Lord was travelling along the main road between Rājagaha and Nālandā<sup>12</sup> with a large company of some five hundred monks. And the wanderer Suppiya was also travelling on that road with his pupil the youth Brahmadata. And Suppiya<sup>13</sup> was finding fault in all sorts of ways with the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, whereas his pupil Brahmadata was speaking in various ways in their praise. And so these two, teacher and pupil, directly opposing each other's arguments, followed close behind the Lord and his order of monks.

1.2. Then the Lord stopped for one night with his monks at the royal park of Ambalaṭṭhikā. And Suppiya too stopped there for the night with his pupil Brahmadata. And Suppiya went on abusing the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, while his [2] pupil Brahmadata defended them. And thus disputing, they followed close behind the Buddha and his order of monks.

1.3. Now in the early morning a number of monks, having got up, gathered together and sat in the Round Pavilion, and this was the trend of their talk: 'It is wonderful, friends, it is marvellous how the Blessed Lord, the Arahant, the fully-enlightened Buddha knows, sees and clearly distinguishes the different inclinations of beings! For here is the wanderer Suppiya finding fault in all sorts of ways with the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, while his pupil Brahmadata in various ways defends them. And, still disputing, they follow closely behind the Blessed Lord and his order of monks.'

1.4. Then the Lord, being aware of what those monks were saying, went to the Round Pavilion and sat down on the pre-

pared seat. Then he said: 'Monks, what was the subject of your conversation just now? What talk have I interrupted?' And they told him.

1.5. 'Monks, if anyone should speak in disparagement of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, [3] you should not be angry, resentful or upset on that account. If you were to be angry or displeased at such disparagement, that would only be a hindrance to you. For if others disparage me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, and you are angry or displeased, can you recognise whether what they say is right or not?' 'No, Lord.' 'If others disparage me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, then you must explain what is incorrect as being incorrect, saying: "That is incorrect, that is false, that is not our way,"<sup>14</sup> that is not found among us.'

1.6. 'But, monks, if others should speak in praise of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, you should not on that account be pleased, happy or elated. If you were to be pleased, happy or elated at such praise, that would only be a hindrance to you. If others praise me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, you should acknowledge the truth of what is true, saying: "That is correct, that is right, that is our way, that is found among us."

1.7. 'It is, monks, for elementary, inferior matters of moral practice<sup>15</sup> that the worldling<sup>16</sup> would praise the Tathāgata.<sup>17</sup> And what are these elementary, inferior matters for which the worldling would praise him?'

[*Short Section on Morality*]<sup>18</sup>

[4] 1.8. "'Abandoning the taking of life, the ascetic Gotama dwells refraining from taking life, without stick or sword, scrupulous, compassionate, trembling for the welfare of all living beings." Thus the worldling would praise the Tathāgata.<sup>19</sup> "Abandoning the taking of what is not given, the ascetic Gotama dwells refraining from taking what is not given, living purely, accepting what is given, awaiting what is given, without stealing. Abandoning unchastity, the ascetic Gotama lives far from it, aloof from the village-practice of sex."<sup>20</sup>

1.9. "'Abandoning false speech, the ascetic Gotama dwells refraining from false speech, a truth-speaker, one to be relied

on, trustworthy, dependable, not a deceiver of the world. Abandoning malicious speech, he does not repeat there what he has heard here to the detriment of these, or repeat here what he has heard there to the detriment of those. Thus he is a reconciler of those at variance and an encourager of those at one, rejoicing in peace, loving it, delighting in it, one who speaks up for peace. Abandoning harsh speech, he refrains from it. He speaks whatever is blameless, pleasing to the ear, agreeable, reaching the heart, urbane, pleasing and attractive to the multitude. Abandoning idle chatter, he speaks at the right time, what is correct and to the point,<sup>21</sup> of Dhamma and discipline. He is a speaker whose words are to be treasured, seasonable, [5] reasoned, well-defined and connected with the goal."<sup>22</sup> Thus the worldling would praise the Tathāgata.

1.10. "'The ascetic Gotama is a refrainer from damaging seeds and crops. He eats once a day and not at night, refraining from eating at improper times.<sup>23</sup> He avoids watching dancing, singing, music and shows. He abstains from using garlands, perfumes, cosmetics, ornaments and adornments. He avoids using high or wide beds. He avoids accepting gold and silver.<sup>24</sup> He avoids accepting raw grain or raw flesh, he does not accept women and young girls, male or female slaves, sheep and goats, cocks and pigs, elephants, cattle, horses and mares, fields and plots;<sup>25</sup> he refrains from running errands, from buying and selling, from cheating with false weights and measures, from bribery and corruption, deception and insincerity, from wounding, killing, imprisoning, highway robbery, and taking food by force.'" Thus the worldling would praise the Tathāgata.'

*[Middle Section on Morality]*

1.11. "'Whereas, gentlemen, some ascetics and Brahmins, feeding on the food of the faithful, are addicted to the destruction of such seeds as are propagated from roots, from stems, from joints, from cuttings, from seeds, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such destruction.'" Thus the worldling would praise the Tathāgata. [6]

1.12. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins, feeding on the

food of the faithful, remain addicted to the enjoyment of stored-up goods such as food, drink, clothing, carriages, beds, perfumes, meat, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such enjoyment.

1.13. “Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins... remain addicted to attending such shows as dancing, singing, music, displays, recitations, hand-music, cymbals and drums, fairy-shows,<sup>26</sup> acrobatic and conjuring tricks,<sup>27</sup> combats of elephants, buffaloes, bulls, goats, rams, cocks and quail, fighting with staves, boxing, wrestling, sham-fights, parades, manoeuvres and military reviews, the ascetic Gotama refrains from attending such displays.

1.14. “Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins remain addicted to such games and idle pursuits as eight- or ten-row chess,<sup>28</sup> ‘chess in the air’,<sup>29</sup> hopscotch, spillikins, dicing, hitting sticks, ‘hand-pictures’, ball-games, blowing through toy pipes, playing with toy ploughs, turning somersaults, playing with toy windmills, measures, carriages, [7] and bows, guessing letters,<sup>30</sup> guessing thoughts,<sup>31</sup> mimicking deformities, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such idle pursuits.

1.15. “Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins remain addicted to high and wide beds and long chairs, couches adorned with animal figures,<sup>32</sup> fleecy or variegated coverlets, coverlets with hair on both sides or one side, silk coverlets, embroidered with gems or without, elephant-, horse- or chariot-rugs, choice spreads of antelope-hide, couches with awnings, or with red cushions at both ends, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such high and wide beds.

1.16. “Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins remain addicted to such forms of self-adornment and embellishment as rubbing the body with perfumes, massaging, bathing in scented water, shampooing, using mirrors, ointments, garlands, scents, unguents, cosmetics, bracelets, headbands, fancy sticks, bottles, swords, sunshades, decorated sandals, turbans, gems, yak-tail fans, long-fringed white robes, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such self-adornment.

1.17. “Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins remain addicted to such unedifying conversation<sup>33</sup> as about kings, rob-

bers, ministers, armies, dangers, wars, food, drink, clothes, beds, garlands, perfumes, relatives, carriages, villages, towns and cities, countries, women, [8] heroes, street- and well-gossip, talk of the departed, desultory chat, speculations about land and sea,<sup>34</sup> talk about being and non-being,<sup>35</sup> the ascetic Gotama refrains from such conversation.

1.18. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins remain addicted to disputation such as: 'You don't understand this doctrine and discipline – I do!' 'How could *you* understand this doctrine and discipline?' 'Your way is all wrong – mine is right!' 'I am consistent – you aren't!' 'You said last what you should have said first, and you said first what you should have said last!' 'What you took so long to think up has been refuted!' 'Your argument has been overthrown, you're defeated!' 'Go on, save your doctrine – get out of that if you can!' the ascetic Gotama refrains from such disputation.<sup>36</sup>

1.19. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins remain addicted to such things as running errands and messages, such as for kings, ministers, nobles, Brahmins, householders and young men who say: 'Go here – go there! Take this there – bring that from there!' the ascetic Gotama refrains from such errand-running.

1.20. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins remain addicted to deception, patter, hinting, belittling, and are always on the make for further gains, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such deception." Thus the worldling would praise the Tathāgata.<sup>37</sup>

### [Large Section on Morality]

1.21. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins, feeding on the food of the faithful, make their living by such base arts, such wrong means of livelihood as palmistry,<sup>38</sup> divining by signs, portents, dreams, body-marks, mouse-gnawings, fire-oblations, oblations from a ladle, of husks, rice-powder, rice-grains, ghee or oil, from the mouth or of blood, reading the finger-tips, house- and garden-lore, skill in charms, ghost-lore, earth-house lore,<sup>39</sup> snake-lore, poison-lore, rat-lore, bird-

lore, crow-lore, foretelling a person's life-span, charms against arrows, knowledge of animals' cries, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such base arts and wrong means of livelihood.

1.22. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as judging the marks of gems, sticks, clothes, swords, spears, arrows, weapons, women, men, boys, girls, male and female slaves, elephants, horses, buffaloes, bulls, cows, goats, rams, cocks, quail, iguanas, bamboo-rats,<sup>40</sup> tortoises, deer, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such base arts.

1.23. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as predicting: 'The chiefs<sup>41</sup> will march out – the chiefs will march back', 'Our chiefs [10] will advance and the other chiefs will retreat', 'Our chiefs will win and the other chiefs will lose', 'The other chiefs will win and ours will lose', 'Thus there will be victory for one side and defeat for the other', the ascetic Gotama refrains from such base arts.

1.24. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as predicting an eclipse of the moon, the sun, a star; that the sun and moon will go on their proper course – will go astray; that a star will go on its proper course – will go astray; that there will be a shower of meteors, a blaze in the sky, an earthquake, thunder; a rising, setting, darkening, brightening of the moon, the sun, the stars; and 'such will be the outcome of these things', the ascetic Gotama refrains from such base arts and wrong means of livelihood. [11]

1.25. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as predicting good or bad rainfall; a good or bad harvest; security, danger; disease, health; or accounting, computing, calculating, poetic composition, philosophising, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such base arts and wrong means of livelihood.

1.26. "'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as arranging the giving and taking in marriage, engagements and divorces; [declaring the time for] saving and spending, bringing good or bad luck, procuring abortions,<sup>42</sup> using spells to bind the tongue, binding the jaw, making the hands jerk, causing deafness, getting answers

with a mirror, a girl-medium, a deva; worshipping the sun or Great Brahmā, breathing fire, invoking the goddess of luck, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such base arts and wrong means of livelihood.

1.27. “Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins, feeding on the food of the faithful, make their living by such base arts, such wrong means of livelihood as appeasing the devas and redeeming vows to them, making earth-house spells, causing virility or impotence, preparing and consecrating building-sites, giving ritual rinsings and bathings, making sacrifices, giving emetics, purges, expectorants and phlegmagogues, giving ear-, eye-, nose-medicine, ointments and counter-ointments, eye-surgery, surgery, pediatry, using balms to counter the side-effects of previous remedies, the ascetic Gotama refrains from such base arts and wrong means of livelihood.”<sup>43</sup> It is, monks, for such elementary, inferior matters of moral practice that the worldling would praise the Tathāgata.

[12] 1.28. ‘There are, monks, other matters, profound, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond mere thought, subtle, to be experienced by the wise, which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak. And what are these matters?’

*[The Sixty-Two Kinds of Wrong Views]*

1.29. ‘There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who are speculators about the past, having fixed views about the past, and who put forward [13] various speculative theories about the past, in eighteen different ways. On what basis, on what grounds do they do so?’

1.30. ‘There are some ascetics and Brahmins who are Eternalists, who proclaim the eternity of the self and the world in four ways. On what grounds?’

1.31. [Wrong view 1]<sup>44</sup> ‘Here, monks, a certain ascetic or Brahmin has by means of effort, exertion, application, earnestness and right attention attained to such a state of mental concentration that he thereby recalls past existences – one birth,

two births, three, four, five, ten births, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand births, several hundred, several thousand, several hundred thousand births. "There my name was so-and-so, my clan was so-and-so, my caste was so-and-so, my food was such-and-such, I experienced such-and-such pleasant and painful conditions, I lived for so long. Having passed away from there, I arose there. There my name was so-and-so... And having passed away from there, I arose here." Thus he remembers various past [14], lives, their conditions and details. And he says: "The self and the world are eternal, barren<sup>45</sup> like a mountain-peak, set firmly as a post. These beings rush round, circulate, pass away and re-arise, but this remains eternally. Why so? I have by means of effort, exertion, attained to such a state of mental concentration that I have thereby recalled various past existences... That is how I know the self and the world are eternal..." That is the first way in which some ascetics and Brahmins proclaim the eternity of the self and the world.

1.32. [Wrong view 2] 'And what is the second way? Here, monks, a certain ascetic or Brahmin has by means of effort, exertion... attained to such a state of mental concentration that he thereby recalls one period of contraction and expansion,<sup>46</sup> two such periods, three, four, five, ten periods of contraction and expansion... "There my name was so-and-so..." [15] That is the second way in which some ascetics and Brahmins proclaim the eternity of the self and the world.

1.33. [Wrong view 3] 'And what is the third way? Here, monks, a certain ascetic or Brahmin has by means of effort... attained to such a state of mental concentration that he recalls ten, twenty, thirty, forty periods of contraction and expansion. "There my name was so-and-so..." [16] That is the third way in which some ascetics and Brahmins proclaim the eternity of the self and the world.

1.34. [Wrong view 4] 'And what is the fourth way? Here a certain ascetic or Brahmin is a logician,<sup>47</sup> a reasoner. Hammering it out by reason, following his own line of thought, he argues: "The self and the world are eternal, barren like a mountain-peak, set firmly as a post. These beings rush round, circulate, pass away and re-arise, but this remains for ever."



That is the fourth way in which some ascetics and Brahmins proclaim the eternity of the self and the world.

1.35. 'These are the four ways in which these ascetics and Brahmins are Eternalists, and proclaim the eternity of the self and the world on four grounds. And whatever ascetics or Brahmins are Eternalists and proclaim the eternity of the self and the world, they do so on one or other of these four grounds. There is no other way.

1.36. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands: These viewpoints thus grasped and adhered to will lead to such-and-such destinations in another world. This the Tathāgata knows, and more, but he is not [17] attached to that knowledge. And being thus unattached he has experienced for himself perfect peace, and having truly understood the arising and passing away of feelings, their attraction and peril and the deliverance from them, the Tathāgata is liberated without remainder.

1.37. 'There are, monks, other matters, profound, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond mere thought, subtle, to be experienced by the wise, which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak. And what are these matters?'

*[End of first recitation-section]*

2.1. 'There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who are partly Eternalists and partly Non-Eternalists, who proclaim the partial eternity and the partial non-eternity of the self and the world in four ways. On what grounds?

2.2. 'There comes a time, monks, sooner or later after a long period, when this world contracts. At a time of contraction, beings are mostly reborn in the Ābhassara Brahmā<sup>48</sup> world. And there they dwell, mind-made,<sup>49</sup> feeding on delight,<sup>50</sup> self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious – and they stay like that for a very long time.

2.3. [Wrong view 5] 'But the time comes, sooner or later after a long period, when this world begins to expand. In this expanding world an empty palace of Brahmā<sup>51</sup> appears. And

then one being, from exhaustion of his life-span or of his merits,<sup>52</sup> falls from the Ābhassara world and arises in the empty Brahmā-palace. And there he dwells, mind-made, feeding on delight, self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious – and he stays like that for a very long time.

2.4. 'Then in this being who has been alone for so long there arises unrest, discontent and worry, and he thinks: "Oh, if only some other beings would come here!" And other beings, [18] from exhaustion of their life-span or of their merits, fall from the Ābhassara world and arise in the Brahmā-palace as companions for this being. And there they dwell, mind-made, . . . and they stay like that for a very long time.

2.5. 'And then, monks, that being who first arose there thinks: "I am Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, the All-Powerful, the Lord, the Maker and Creator, Ruler, Appointer and Orderer, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. These beings were created by me. How so? Because I first had this thought: 'Oh, if only some other beings would come here!' That was my wish, and then these beings came into this existence!" But those beings who arose subsequently think: "This, friends, is Brahmā, Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, the All-Powerful, the Lord, the Maker and Creator, Ruler, Appointer and Orderer, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. How so? We have seen that he was here first, and that we arose after him."

2.6. 'And this being that arose first is longer-lived, more beautiful and more powerful than they are. And it may happen that some being falls from that realm and arises in this world. Having arisen in this world, he goes forth from the household life into homelessness. Having gone forth, he by means of effort, exertion, application, earnestness and right attention attains to such a degree of mental concentration that he thereby recalls his last existence, but recalls none before that. And he thinks: "That Brahmā, . . . he made us, and he is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, the same for ever and ever. But we who were [19] created by that Brahmā, we are impermanent, unstable, short-lived, fated to fall away, and we have come to this world." This is the first case where-

by some ascetics and Brahmins are partly Eternalists and partly Non-Eternalists.

2.7. [Wrong view 6] 'And what is the second way? There are, monks, certain devas called Corrupted by Pleasure.<sup>53</sup> They spend an excessive amount of time addicted to merriment, play and enjoyment, so that their mindfulness is dissipated, and by the dissipation of mindfulness those beings fall from that state.

2.8. 'And it can happen that a being, having fallen from that state, arises in this world. Having arisen in this world, he goes forth from the household life into homelessness. Having gone forth, he by means of effort, exertion, . . . recalls his last existence, but recalls none before that.

2.9. 'He thinks: "Those reverend devas who are not corrupted by pleasure do not spend an excessive amount of time addicted to merriment, play and enjoyment. Thus their mindfulness is not dissipated, and so they do not fall from that state. They are permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, the same for ever and [20] ever. But we, who are corrupted by pleasure, spent an excessive amount of time addicted to merriment, play and enjoyment. Thus we, by the dissipation of mindfulness, have fallen from that state, we are impermanent, unstable, short-lived, fated to fall away, and we have come to this world." This is the second case.

2.10. [Wrong view 7] 'And what is the third way? There are, monks, certain devas called Corrupted in Mind.<sup>54</sup> They spend an excessive amount of time regarding each other with envy. By this means their minds are corrupted. On account of their corrupted minds they become weary in body and mind. And they fall from that place.

2.11. 'And it can happen that a being, having fallen from that state, arises in this world. He . . . recalls his last existence, but recalls none before that.

2.12. 'He thinks: "Those reverend devas who are not corrupted in mind do not spend an excessive amount of time regarding each other with envy . . . They do not become corrupted in mind, or weary in body and mind, and so they do not fall from that state. They are permanent, stable, eternal . . . [21] But we, who are corrupted in mind, . . . are impermanent,

unstable, short-lived, fated to fall away, and we have come to this world." This is the third case.

2.13. [Wrong view 8] 'And what is the fourth way? Here, a certain ascetic or Brahmin is a logician, a reasoner. Hammering it out by reason, following his own line of thought, he argues: "Whatever is called eye or ear or nose or tongue or body, that is impermanent, unstable, non-eternal, liable to change. But what is called thought,<sup>55</sup> or mind or consciousness, that is a self that is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, the same for ever and ever!" This is the fourth case.

2.14. 'These are the four ways in which these ascetics and Brahmins are partly Eternalists and partly Non-Eternalists... Whatever ascetics and Brahmins...proclaim the partial eternity and the partial non-eternity of the self and the world, they do so on one or other of these four grounds. There is no other way.

2.15. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands: These [22] viewpoints thus grasped and adhered to will lead to such-and-such destinations in another world. This the Tathāgata knows, and more, but he is not attached to that knowledge. And being thus unattached he has experienced for himself perfect peace, and having truly understood the arising and passing away of feelings, their attraction and peril and the deliverance from them, the Tathāgata is liberated without remainder.

'These, monks, are those other matters, profound, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond mere thought, subtle, to be experienced by the wise, which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak.

2.16. 'There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who are Finitists and Infinitists,<sup>56</sup> and who proclaim the finitude and infinitude of the world on four grounds. What are they?

2.17. [Wrong view 9] 'Here a certain ascetic or Brahmin has by means of effort...attained to such a state of concentration that he dwells perceiving the world as finite. He thinks: "This

world is finite and bounded by a circle. How so? Because I have...attained to such a state of concentration that I dwell perceiving the world as finite. Therefore I know that this world is finite and bounded by a circle." This is the first case.

2.18. [Wrong view 10] 'And what is the second way? Here a certain ascetic or Brahmin has [23] attained to such a state of concentration that he dwells perceiving the world as infinite. He thinks: "This world is infinite and unbounded. Those ascetics and Brahmins who say it is finite and bounded are wrong. How so? Because I have attained to such a state of concentration that I dwell perceiving the world as infinite. Therefore I know that this world is infinite and unbounded." This is the second case.

2.19. [Wrong view 11] 'And what is the third way? Here a certain ascetic or Brahmin has attained to such a state of consciousness that he dwells perceiving the world as finite up-and-down, and infinite across. He thinks: "The world is finite and infinite. Those ascetics and Brahmins who say it is finite are wrong, and those who say it is infinite are wrong. How so? Because I have attained to such a state of concentration that I dwell perceiving the world as finite up-and-down, and infinite across. Therefore I know that the world is both finite and infinite." This is the third case.

2.20. [Wrong view 12] 'And what is the fourth case? Here a certain ascetic or Brahmin is a logician, a reasoner. Hammering it out by reason, he argues: "This world is neither finite nor infinite. Those who say it is finite are wrong, and so are those [24] who say it is infinite, and those who say it is finite *and* infinite. This world is neither finite nor infinite." This is the fourth case.<sup>57</sup>

2.21. 'These are the four ways in which these ascetics and Brahmins are Finitists and Infinitists, and proclaim the finitude and infinitude of the world on four grounds. There is no other way.

2.22. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands: These viewpoints thus grasped and adhered to will lead to such-and-such destinations in another world...(as verse 15).

'These, monks, are those other matters, profound, hard to

see, hard to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond mere thought, subtle, to be experienced by the wise, which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak.

2.23. 'There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who are Eel-Wrigglers.<sup>58</sup> When asked about this or that matter, they resort to evasive statements, and they wriggle like eels on four grounds. What are they?

2.24. [Wrong view 13] 'In this case there is an ascetic or Brahmin who does not in truth know whether a thing is good or bad. He thinks: "I do not in truth know whether this is good [25] or whether it is bad. Not knowing which is right, I might declare: 'That is good', or 'That is bad', and that might be a lie, and that would distress me. And if I were distressed, that would be a hindrance to me."<sup>59</sup> Thus fearing to lie, abhorring to lie,<sup>60</sup> he does not declare a thing to be good or bad, but when asked about this or that matter, he resorts to evasive statements and wriggles like an eel: "I don't say this, I don't say that. I don't say it is otherwise. I don't say it is not. I don't not say it is not." This is the first case.

2.25. [Wrong view 14] 'What is the second way? Here an ascetic or Brahmin does not in truth know whether a thing is good or bad. He thinks: "I might declare: 'That is good', or 'That is bad', and I might feel desire or lust or hatred or aversion. If I felt desire, lust, hatred or aversion, that would be attachment on my part. If I felt attachment, that would distress me, and if I were distressed, that would be a hindrance to me." [26] Thus, fearing attachment, abhorring attachment, he resorts to evasive statements. . . This is the second case.

2.26. [Wrong view 15] 'What is the third way? Here an ascetic or Brahmin does not in truth know whether a thing is good or bad. He thinks: "I might declare: 'That is good', or 'That is bad', but there are ascetics and Brahmins who are wise, skilful, practised debaters, like archers who can split hairs, who go around destroying others' views with their wisdom, and they might cross-examine me, demanding my reasons and arguing. And I might not be able to reply. Not being able to

reply would distress me, and if I were distressed, that would be a hindrance to me." Thus, fearing debate, abhorring debate, he resorts to evasive statements. This is the third case. [27]

2.27. [Wrong view 16] 'What is the fourth way? Here, an ascetic or Brahmin is dull and stupid.<sup>61</sup> Because of his dullness and stupidity, when he is questioned he resorts to evasive statements and wriggles like an eel: "If you ask me whether there is another world – if I thought so, I would say there is another world. But I don't say so. And I don't say otherwise. And I don't say it is not, and I don't not say it is not." "Is there no other world?..." "Is there both another world and no other world?..." "Is there neither another world nor no other world?..."<sup>62</sup> "Are there spontaneously-born beings?..."<sup>63</sup> "Are there not...?" "Both...?" "Neither...?" "Does the Tathāgata exist after death? Does he not exist after death? Does he both exist and not exist after death? Does he neither exist nor not exist after death?..."<sup>64</sup> "If I thought so, I would say so... I don't say it is not." This is the fourth case.

2.28. 'These are the four ways [28] in which those ascetics and Brahmins who are Eel-Wrigglers resort to evasive statements... There is no other way.

2.29. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands: These viewpoints thus grasped and adhered to will lead to such-and-such destinations in another world... (as verse 15).

'These, monks, are those other matters, profound, hard to see... which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak.

2.30. 'There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who are Chance-Originationists, and who proclaim the chance origin of the self and the world on two grounds. What are they?

2.31. [Wrong view 17] 'There are, monks, certain devas called Unconscious.<sup>65</sup> As soon as a perception arises in them, those devas fall from that realm. And it may happen that a being falls from that realm and arises in this world. He... recalls his last existence, but none [29] before that. He thinks: "The self

and the world have arisen by chance. How so? Before this I did not exist. Now from not-being I have been brought to being." This is the first case.

2.32. [Wrong view 18] 'What is the second case? Here, an ascetic or Brahmin is a logician, a reasoner. He hammers out his own opinion and declares: "The self and the world have arisen by chance." This is the second case.

2.33. 'These are the two ways in which those ascetics and Brahmins who are Chance-Originists proclaim the chance origin of the self and the world. There is no other way.

2.34. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands. . .

'These, monks, are those other matters, profound, hard to see, . . . which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, and about which those who [30] would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak.

2.35. 'And these, monks, are the eighteen ways in which these ascetics and Brahmins are speculators about the past. . . There is no other way.

2.36. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands. . .

2.37. 'There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who are speculators about the future, having fixed views about the future, and who put forward various speculative theories about the future in forty-four different ways. On what basis, on what grounds do they do so?

2.38. 'There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who [31] proclaim a doctrine of Conscious Post-Mortem Survival, and do so in sixteen different ways. On what basis?

[Wrong views 19–34] 'They declare that the self after death is healthy and conscious and (1) material,<sup>66</sup> (2) immaterial,<sup>67</sup> (3) both material and immaterial, (4) neither material nor immaterial, (5) finite, (6) infinite, (7) both, (8) neither, (9) of uniform perception, (10) of varied perception, (11) of limited perception, (12) of unlimited perception, (13) wholly happy, (14) wholly miserable, (15) both, (16) neither.

2.39. 'These are the sixteen ways in which these ascetics and Brahmins proclaim a doctrine of conscious post-mortem survival. There is no other way.

2.40. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands. . .

'These, monks, are those other matters, profound, hard to



see, . . . which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, [32] proclaims, and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak.'

[End of Second Recitation-Section]

3.1. 'There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who proclaim a doctrine of Unconscious Post-Mortem Survival, and they do so in eight ways. On what basis?

3.2. [Wrong views 35–42] 'They declare that the self after death is healthy and unconscious and (1) material, (2) immaterial, (3) both, (4) neither, (5) finite, (6) infinite, (7) both, (8) neither.<sup>68</sup>

3.3. 'These are the eight ways in which these ascetics and Brahmins proclaim a doctrine of Unconscious Post-Mortem Survival. There is no other way.

3.4. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands. . . These, monks, are those other matters, profound, hard to see, . . . which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, [33] and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak.

3.5. 'There are some ascetics and Brahmins who declare a doctrine of Neither-Conscious-nor-Unconscious Post-Mortem Survival, and they do so in eight ways. On what basis?

3.6. [Wrong views 43–50] 'They declare that the self after death is healthy and neither conscious nor unconscious and (1) material, (2) immaterial, (3) both, (4) neither, (5) finite, (6) infinite, (7) both, (8) neither.<sup>69</sup>

3.7. 'These are the eight ways in which these ascetics and Brahmins proclaim a doctrine of Neither-Conscious-Nor-Unconscious Post-Mortem Survival. There is no other way.

3.8. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands. . . These, monks, are those other matters, profound, hard to see, . . . which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak. [34]

3.9. 'There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who are Annihilationists, who proclaim the annihilation, destruction

and non-existence of beings, and they do so in seven ways. On what basis?

3.10. [Wrong view 51] 'Here a certain ascetic or Brahmin declares and holds the view: "Since this self is material, composed of the four great elements,<sup>70</sup> the product of mother and father,<sup>71</sup> at the breaking-up of the body it is annihilated and perishes, and does not exist after death. This is the way in which this self is annihilated." That is how some proclaim the annihilation, destruction and non-existence of beings.

3.11. [Wrong view 52] 'Another says to him: "Sir, there is such a self as you say. I don't deny it. But that self is not wholly annihilated. For there is another self, divine,<sup>72</sup> material, belonging to the sense-sphere,<sup>73</sup> fed on real food.<sup>74</sup> You don't know it or see it, but I do. It is this self that at the breaking-up of the body perishes..."<sup>75</sup>

3.12. [Wrong view 53] 'Another says to him: "Sir, there is such a self as you say. I don't deny it. But that self is not wholly annihilated. For there is another self, divine, material, mind-made,<sup>76</sup> complete with all its parts, not defective in any sense-organ... It is this self that at the breaking-up of the body perishes..."

3.13. [Wrong view 54] 'Another says to him: "Sir, there is such a self as you say... There is another self which, by passing entirely beyond bodily sensations, by the disappearance of all sense of resistance and by non-attraction to the perception of diversity, seeing that space is infinite, has realised the Sphere of Infinite Space."<sup>77</sup> [35] It is this self that at the breaking-up of the body perishes..."

3.14. [Wrong view 55] 'Another says to him: "There is another self which, by passing entirely beyond the Sphere of Infinite Space, seeing that consciousness is infinite, has realised the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness. It is this self that at the breaking-up of the body perishes..."

3.15. [Wrong view 56] 'Another says to him: "There is another self which, by passing entirely beyond the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness, seeing that there is no thing, has realised the Sphere of No-Thingness. It is this self that at the breaking-up of the body perishes..."

3.16. [Wrong view 57] 'Another says to him: "Sir, there is

such a self as you say. I don't deny it. But that self is not wholly annihilated. For there is another self which, by passing entirely beyond the Sphere of No-Thingness and seeing: 'This is peaceful, this is sublime', has realised the Sphere of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception. You don't know it or see it, but I do. It is this self that at the breaking-up of the body is annihilated and perishes, and does not exist after death. This is the way in which the self is completely annihilated." That is how some proclaim the annihilation, destruction and non-existence of beings.

3.17. 'These are the seven ways in which these ascetics and Brahmins proclaim a doctrine of annihilation, destruction and non-existence of beings...[36] There is no other way.

3.18. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands...These, monks, are those other matters, profound, hard to see,... which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak.

3.19. 'There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who are proclaimers of Nibbāna Here and Now, and who proclaim Nibbāna here and now for an existent being in five ways. On what grounds?

3.20. [Wrong view 58] 'Here a certain ascetic or Brahmin declares and holds the view: "In as far as this self, being furnished and endowed with the fivefold sense-pleasures, indulges in them, then that is when the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now."'<sup>78</sup> So some proclaim it.

3.21. [Wrong view 59] 'Another says to him: "Sir, there is such a self as you say. I don't deny it. But that is not where the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now. Why so? Because, sir, sense-desires are impermanent, painful and subject to change, and from their change and transformation there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and distress. But [37] when this self, detached from sense-desires, detached from unwholesome states, enters and abides in the first jhāna,<sup>79</sup> which is accompanied by thinking and pondering,<sup>80</sup> and the delight<sup>81</sup> and happiness<sup>82</sup> born of detachment, that is when the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now."

3.22. [Wrong view 60] 'Another says to him: "Sir, there is

such a self as you say. But that is not when the self attains Nibbāna. How so? Because on account of thinking and pondering, that state is considered gross. But when the self by the subsiding of thinking and pondering enters and abides in the second jhāna, with inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, which is free from thinking and pondering and is born of concentration,<sup>83</sup> and accompanied by delight and joy, that is when the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now."

3.23. [Wrong view 61] 'Another says to him: "Sir, there is such a self as you say. But that is not when the self attains Nibbāna. How so? Because on account of the presence of delight there is mental exhilaration, and that state is considered gross. But when the self, with the waning of delight, dwells in equanimity,<sup>84</sup> mindful and clearly aware,<sup>85</sup> experiencing in his own body that joy of which the Noble Ones say: 'Happy dwells one who has equanimity and mindfulness', and so enters and abides in the third jhāna, that is when the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now."

3.24. [Wrong view 62] 'Another says to him: "Sir, there is such a self as you say. I don't deny it. But that is not where the self experiences the highest Nibbāna here and now. Why so? Because the mind contains the idea of joy, and that state is considered gross. But when, with the abandonment of pleasure and pain, with the disappearance of previous joy and grief, [38] one enters and abides in a state beyond pleasure and pain in the fourth jhāna, which is purified by equanimity and mindfulness, that is where the self realises the highest Nibbāna here and now." That is how some proclaim the highest Nibbāna here and now for an existent being.

3.25. 'These are the five ways in which these ascetics and Brahmins proclaim a doctrine of Nibbāna here and now. There is no other way.

3.26. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands...

3.27. 'These are the forty-four ways in which those ascetics and Brahmins who are speculators about the future, having fixed ideas about the future, put forward various speculative views about the future. There is no other way.

3.28. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands... [39]

3.29. 'These are the sixty-two ways in which those ascetics and Brahmins who are speculators about the past, the future, or both, put forward views about these. There is no other way.

3.30. 'This, monks, the Tathāgata understands: These viewpoints thus grasped and adhered to will lead to such-and-such destinations in another world. This the Tathāgata knows, and more, but he is not attached to that knowledge. And being thus unattached he has experienced for himself perfect peace, and having truly understood the arising and passing away of feelings, their attraction and peril and the deliverance from them, the Tathāgata is liberated without remainder.

3.31. 'These, monks, are those other matters, profound, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond mere thought, subtle, to be experienced by the wise, which the Tathāgata, having realised them by his own super-knowledge, proclaims, and about which those who would truthfully praise the Tathāgata would rightly speak.'

### [Conclusion]

3.32. [Wrong views 1–4] 'Thus, monks, when those ascetics and Brahmins who are Eternalists proclaim the eternity of the self and the world in four [40] ways, that is merely the feeling of those who do not know and see, the worry and vacillation of those immersed in craving.

3.33. [Wrong views 5–8] 'When those who are partly Eternalists and partly Non-Eternalists proclaim the partial eternity and the partial non-eternity of the self and the world in four ways, that is merely the feeling of those who do not know and see...

3.34. [Wrong views 9–12] 'When those who are Finitists and Infinitists proclaim the finitude and infinitude of the world on four grounds, that is merely the feeling of those who do not know and see...

3.35. [Wrong views 13–16] 'When those who are Eel-Wrigglers resort to evasive statements, and wriggle like eels on four grounds, that is merely the feeling...

3.36. [Wrong views 17–18] ‘When those who are Chance Originationists proclaim the chance origin of the self and the world on two grounds, this is merely the feeling. . .

3.37. [Wrong views 1–18] ‘When those who are speculators about the past, having fixed views about the past, put forward various speculative theories about the past in eighteen different ways, this is merely the feeling of those who do not know and see, the worry and vacillation of those immersed in craving.

3.38. [Wrong views 19–34] ‘When those who proclaim a doctrine of Conscious Post-Mortem Survival do so in sixteen different ways, that is merely the feeling. . . [41]

3.39. [Wrong views 35–42] ‘When those who proclaim a doctrine of Unconscious Post-Mortem Survival do so in eight different ways, that is merely the feeling. . .

3.40. [Wrong views 43–50] ‘When those who proclaim a doctrine of Neither-Conscious-nor-Unconscious Post-Mortem survival do so in eight ways, that is merely the feeling. . .

3.41. [Wrong views 51–57] ‘When those who are Annihilationists proclaim the annihilation, destruction and non-existence of beings in seven ways, that is merely the feeling. . .

3.42. [Wrong views 58–62] ‘When those who are proclaimers of Nibbāna Here and Now proclaim Nibbāna here and now for an existent being on five grounds, that is merely the feeling. . .

3.43. [Wrong views 19–62] ‘When those who are speculators about the future in forty-four different ways. . .

3.44. [Wrong views 1–62] ‘When those ascetics and Brahmins who are speculators about the past, the future, or both, having fixed views, put forward views in sixty-two different ways, that is merely the feeling of those who do not know and see, the worry and vacillation of those immersed in craving.

3.45. ‘When those ascetics and Brahmins who are [42] Eternalists proclaim the eternity of the self and the world in four ways, that is conditioned by contact.’<sup>86</sup>

3.46. ‘When those who are partly Eternalists and partly Non-Eternalists. . .

3.47. ‘When those who are Finitists and Infinitists. . .

3.48. 'When those who are Eel-Wrigglers...

3.49. 'When those who are Chance-Originationists...

3.50. 'When those who are speculators about the past in eighteen ways...

3.51. 'When those who proclaim a doctrine of Conscious Post-Mortem Survival...

3.52. 'When those who proclaim a doctrine of Unconscious Post-Mortem Survival...

3.53. 'When those who proclaim a doctrine of Neither-Conscious-Nor-Unconscious Post-Mortem Survival...

3.54. 'When those who are Annihilationists...

3.55. 'When those who are proclaimers of Nibbāna Here and Now...

3.56. 'When those who are speculators about the future... [43]

3.57. 'When those ascetics and Brahmins who are speculators about the past, the future, or both, having fixed views, put forward views in sixty-two different ways, that is conditioned by contact.

3.58–70. 'That all of these (*Eternalists and the rest*) should experience that feeling without contact is impossible. [44]

3.71. 'With regard to all of these..., [45] they experience these feelings by repeated contact through the six sense-bases;<sup>87</sup> feeling conditions craving; craving conditions clinging; clinging conditions becoming; becoming conditions birth; birth conditions ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, sadness and distress.<sup>88</sup>

'When, monks, a monk understands as they really are the arising and passing away of the six bases of contact, their attraction and peril, and the deliverance from them, he knows that which goes beyond all these views.

3.72. 'Whatever ascetics and Brahmins who are speculators about the past or the future or both, having fixed views on the matter and put forth speculative views about it, these are all trapped in the net with its sixty-two divisions, and wherever they emerge and try to get out, they are caught and held in this net. Just as a skilled fisherman or his apprentice might cover a small piece of water with a fine-meshed net, thinking: "Whatever larger creatures there may be in this water, they are all

trapped in the net, [46] caught, and held in the net", so it is with all these: they are trapped and caught in this net.

3.73. 'Monks, the body of the Tathāgata stands with the link that bound it to becoming cut.<sup>89</sup> As long as the body subsists, devas and humans will see him. But at the breaking-up of the body and the exhaustion of the life-span, devas and humans will see him no more. Monks, just as when the stalk of a bunch of mangoes has been cut, all the mangoes on it go with it, just so the Tathāgata's link with becoming has been cut. As long as the body subsists, devas and humans will see him. But at the breaking-up of the body and the exhaustion of the life-span, devas and humans will see him no more.'

3.74. At these words the Venerable Ānanda said to the Lord: 'It is marvellous, Lord, it is wonderful. What is the name of this exposition of Dhamma?'

'Ānanda, you may remember this exposition of Dhamma as the Net of Advantage,<sup>90</sup> the Net of Dhamma, the Supreme Net, the Net of Views, or as the Incomparable Victory in Battle.'

Thus the Lord spoke, and the monks rejoiced and were delighted at his words. And as this exposition was being proclaimed, the ten-thousand world-system shook.