

HOW TO DIE A GOOD DEATH SUTTA STUDY WORKBOOK

Aggacitta Bhikkhu

Name : _____
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*This workbook is given on a complimentary basis to participants of
How to Die a Good Death Sutta Study with Meditation Workshop.
We hope that you will treasure this workbook and make good use of it to
straighten your views and practise the Dhamma more effectively.*

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Abstract

This workbook is specially designed for the **Sutta Study with Meditation Workshop on How to Die a Good Death**. The topic of the workshop is built upon the Buddha's pronouncement in Arakkhita Sutta (AN 3.110) that when one's mind is protected, one will have a good death.

The workbook hopes to facilitate the task of finding out how to protect the mind through the study of relevant excerpts from the suttas, arranged in a structured way, guided by discussion topics. Similarly, it also focuses on the issue of what happens after death from the perspective of the Pāli suttas of Early Buddhism, including two important topics: *When Does Rebirth Occur?* and *Properly Orienting the Mind*. The latter explores excerpts from the suttas with details on how to prepare for a good death, including occasions of death-bed scenarios.

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Workshop Outline

- 1 Root Sutta: Unprotected / Peaked Roof (1)
 - 1.1 Discussion Interspersed with Meditation
 - 1.2 Presentation of Findings
 - 1.3 Q & A
 - 1.4 Facilitator's Summary & Conclusion
- 2 How to Protect or Guard the Mind
 - 2.1 Discussion Interspersed with Meditation
 - 2.2 Presentation of Findings
 - 2.3 Q & A
 - 2.4 Facilitator's Summary & Conclusion
- 3 What is Kāyagatāsati?
 - 3.1 Discussion Interspersed with Meditation
 - 3.2 Presentation of Findings
 - 3.3 Q & A
 - 3.4 Facilitator's Summary & Conclusion
- 4 When Does Rebirth Occur?
 - 4.1 Discussion Interspersed with Meditation
 - 4.2 Presentation of Findings
 - 4.3 Q & A
 - 4.4 Facilitator's Summary & Conclusion
- 5 Properly Orienting the Mind
 - 5.1 Discussion Interspersed with Meditation
 - 5.2 Presentation of Findings
 - 5.3 Q & A
 - 5.4 Facilitator's Summary & Conclusion
- 6 Comprehension, Retention & Benefit
 - 6.1 Discussion
 - 6.2 Presentation of Findings
- 7 Final Summary and Conclusion
- 8 Sharing Merits, Making Aspirations

Preface

Why do we fear death? I can think of two very universally basic reasons. Firstly, we don't want to be permanently separated from what we cherish and love, whether animate (e.g. people, pets, garden), inanimate (e.g. home, wealth, sights, sounds) or conceptual (e.g. status, power, popularity). Secondly, we don't know what will happen to us after death, particularly if we do not lead moral lives or we have done some grievous misdeeds.

The Pāli suttas of Early Buddhism¹ can directly help to address these two issues. The first issue can be effectively addressed by constant reflection on the imminence of ageing, illness, death and separation from whatever one cherishes, and on self-responsibility for one's own actions, which is often encouraged in the suttas.² But for better efficacy, such reflection should be supplemented and complemented by the continual practice of introspective mindfulness for impactful insights into the impermanence of all things.

This workbook is specially designed for the Sutta Study with Meditation Workshop on How to Die a Good Death, which explores introspective mindfulness in theory and practice. At the same time, it also focuses on the second issue from the perspective of Early Buddhism, without getting embroiled in popular myths and superstitions surrounding dying, death and beyond.

1 "The Early Buddhist material in the Pali canon mainly consists of the first four Pali Nikāyas, the Patimokkha and other Vinaya material as well as some parts of the Khuddaka Nikāya (mainly Sutta Nipata, Itivuttaka, Dhammapada, Therīgatha, Theragatha, and the Udāna).[12][13][14]" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Buddhist_Texts

2 E.g. Abhiṇhapaccavekkhitabbāhāna Sutta (AN 5.57) / Themes (NDB p 686-9)

Structure of this Workbook

As most of the participants (90% or more) in previous workshops have very meagre knowledge of Pāḷi terms, let alone whole Pāḷi passages, I have completely dispensed with the latter. Instead, I have inserted only important Pāḷi terms within parentheses after their relevant English translations. Thus excerpts from the suttas are all in English and are on both left and right pages while the right page is sometimes reserved for explanatory notes and discussion topics (indicated by **D1**, **D2**, etc.), and for you to write your own notes. Due to space and layout considerations, however, there are a few exceptions where an explanatory note is placed at the bottom of the sutta excerpt on the left page

There are 5 sections in this workbook. Section 1, “Root Sutta”, contains the English translation of Arakkhita Sutta (AN 3.110 in DPR, but AN 3.109 in NDB) which pronounces that the unprotected or unguarded mind cannot result in a good death and conversely, the guarded mind can result in a good death. However, details about how to protect or guard the mind are not mentioned.

Section 2, “How to Protect or Guard the Mind”, attempts to fill this gap by surveying selected excerpts from the suttas. In two of these excerpts two central terms are used synonymously: *kāyassati* and *kāyagatāsati*. These are popularly translated as “mindfulness of the body” and “mindfulness of / directed to the body” respectively. Such translations can be misleading because, to me, there is more to this than meets the eye.

For this reason, Section 3, “What is Kāyagatāsati?”, investigates their occurrence and usage in other canonical sources in order to get a clearer idea of what they mean.

Section 4 then goes on to enquire into an age-old controversial topic: “When Does Rebirth Occur?” Relevant excerpts from 12 suttas are presented for scrutiny so that we can arrive at a conclusion that accords with the Pāli suttas of Early Buddhism. This section is important because our beliefs on death and beyond will definitely influence our preparation for a smooth and happy transition.

Besides introspective mindfulness, another very significant and practicable part of this workshop is Section 5, “Properly Orienting the Mind”, which explores details from the suttas on how to prepare for a good death, including occasions of death-bed scenarios.

Finally, I wish to remind all participants that textual and doctrinal analysis is not an end in itself. On the contrary, it is just a means for us to better understand the Buddha’s teachings so that we can practise more effectively to achieve our primary aim: to progressively reduce suffering and increase happiness, from the mundane to the supramundane.

About the English Translations

Most of the translations for Saṃyutta Nikāya and Aṅguttara Nikāya are those of Āyasmā (Bhikkhu) Bodhi; those for Majjhima Nikāya of Āyasmā (Bhikkhu) Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi. These translations are extracts from their works cited at the end of this booklet. Regarding the notes, I have reproduced only the portions relevant to our workshop, but retained their original numbering for the convenience of those who want to further pursue other notes in the original works. Some of the numbering in superscript have been retained in the excerpts but the notes are not reproduced because they are too lengthy and rather digressive for the purposes of this workshop. Interested readers are advised to consult the actual book for the details. I have also supplemented with my own notes wherever required and these are

indicated by § and * instead of numbers.

Translations of the excerpts from *Dīgha Nikāya* are by Maurice Walsh. A few translations do not have source citations because they are mine.

The Pāli name of a sutta is followed by the source citation based on that found in Digital Pali Reader (DPR), which sometimes differs from that in Āyasmā Bodhi's translation.

Formatting and Punctuation

In some excerpts, I have *italicised phrases or sentences* to highlight their special relevance to this workshop. Throughout the workbook, Pāli terms are set in a *san serif font* to differentiate them from the main text. However, because discussion topics are rendered in italics, the Pāli terms used here are set in regular font instead. I use parentheses () to insert (a) the relevant Pāli terms or (b) a clarification on the meaning of an English translation. I use square brackets [] to insert (a) elided text not found in the excerpt but necessary to make the passage more comprehensible or (b) a clarification on an abbreviation for the name of a commentary in the notes. However, Āyasmā Bodhi may have his own additional reasons for using these two punctuation symbols in his notes, thus my usage does not necessarily always overlap or correspond with his.

I am grateful to Āyasmā Ariyadhammika and Ayyā Dhammadinnā for vetting my first draft and giving useful suggestions to improve this workbook. My thanks must also go to my long-time editor, Looi Sow Fei, for a thorough polishing of the English.

Aggacitta Bhikkhu
September 2018

1

ROOT SUTTA

ARAKKHITA SUTTA (AN 3.110)

UNPROTECTED

Arakkhita Sutta (AN 3.110)

Peaked Roof (1) (AN 3.109 in NDB p 343)

Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, and sat down to one side. The Blessed One then said to him:

“Householder, when the mind is unprotected (*citte arakkhite*), bodily, verbal, and mental actions are unprotected (*arakkhitam*).

“For one whose bodily, verbal, and mental deeds are unprotected, bodily, verbal, and mental actions (*manokamma*) become tainted.⁵⁷¹ For one whose bodily, verbal, and mental deeds become tainted, bodily, verbal, and mental actions become rotten. One whose bodily, verbal, and mental deeds become rotten will not have a good death (*bhaddikā kālaṅkiriya*).

“Suppose a house with a peaked roof is badly thatched: then the roof peak, the rafters, and the walls are unprotected; the roof peak, the rafters, and the walls become tainted; the roof peak, the rafters, and the walls become rotten.

“So too, householder, when the mind is unprotected, bodily, verbal, and mental actions are unprotected.... One whose bodily, verbal, and mental deeds are rotten will not have a good death.

“When, householder, the mind is protected (*citte rakkhite*), bodily, verbal, and mental actions are protected (*rakkhitam*). For one whose bodily, verbal, and mental deeds are protected, bodily, verbal, and mental actions do not become tainted. For one whose bodily, verbal, and mental deeds do not become tainted, bodily, verbal, and mental actions do not become rotten. One whose bodily, verbal, and mental deeds do not become rotten will have a good death.

“Suppose a house with a peaked roof is well thatched: then the roof peak, the rafters, and the walls are protected; the roof peak, the rafters, and the walls do not become tainted; the roof peak, the rafters, and the walls do not become rotten.

“So too, householder, when the mind is protected, bodily, verbal, and mental actions are protected.... One whose bodily, verbal, and mental deeds do not become rotten will have a good death.”

⁵⁷¹ “Tainted” renders *avassuta*, past participle of *avassavati*, related via the verb *savati*, “to flow,” to the noun *āsavā*.

D1. *What, do you think, is the difference between citta and mano, particularly in the relationship between mind (citta) and mental action (manokamma)?*

2

HOW TO PROTECT OR GUARD THE MIND

EXCERPTS FROM
4 SOURCES

What to Look Out for

The discussion topic at the end of this section will ask if you see any link between restraint of the sense faculties and kāyassati (mindfulness of the body) / kāyagatāsati (mindfulness directed to the body). You have to give reasons for your answer based on the four excerpts in this section.

Gaṇakamoggallāna Sutta (MN 107)

‘Come, monk, be one with doors guarded (*guttadvāro*) in respect of the sense faculties. Having seen a form with the eye, do not be one who grasps at its signs, do not be one who grasps at its features. Since evil unwholesome states of longing and dejection might invade one dwelling with the eye faculty unrestrained, practise the way of its restraint, guard (*rakkhāhi*)[§] the eye faculty, undertake restraint in respect of the eye faculty.

Having heard a sound with the ear, ... Having smelt an odour with the nose, ... Having tasted a flavour with the tongue, ... Having touched a tangible with the body, ... Having cognised a dhamma with the intellect, do not be one who grasps at its signs, do not be one who grasps at its features. Since evil unwholesome states of longing and dejection might invade one dwelling with the intellect faculty unrestrained, practise the way of its restraint, guard the intellect faculty, undertake restraint in respect of the intellect faculty.

[§] *Rakkhāhi*, here rendered as “guard” is a verb form of *rakkhita*, its past participle, translated as “protected” and *arakkhita* as “unprotected” in our root sutta.

Chappāṇakopama Sutta (SN 35.200)

The Simile of the Six Animals (SN 35.247 in CDB p 1255-7)

“And how, bhikkhus is there nonrestraint? Here, having seen a form with the eye, a bhikkhu is intent upon a pleasing form and repelled by a displeasing form. He dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body (*anupaṭṭhitakāyassati*), with a limited mind (*parittacetaso*),* and he does not understand as it really is that liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.

“Having heard a sound with the ear, ... Having smelt an odour with the nose, ... Having tasted a flavour with the tongue, ... Having touched a tangible with the body, ...

“Having cognized a mental phenomenon with the mind, he is intent upon a pleasing mental phenomenon and repelled by a displeasing mental phenomenon. He dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body, with a limited mind, and he does not understand as it really is that liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.

“Suppose, bhikkhus, a man would catch six animals—with different domains and different feeding grounds—and tie them by a strong rope. He would catch a snake, a crocodile, a bird, a dog, a jackal, and a monkey, and tie each by a strong rope. Having done so, he would tie the ropes together with a knot in the middle and release them.

“Then those six animals with different domains and different feeding grounds would each pull in the direction of its own feeding ground and domain. The snake would pull one way, thinking, ‘Let me enter an anthill.’ The crocodile would pull another way,

thinking, 'Let me enter the water.' The bird would pull another way, thinking, 'Let me fly up into the sky.' The dog would pull another way, thinking, 'Let me enter a village.' The jackal would pull another way, thinking, 'Let me enter a charnel ground.' The monkey would pull another way, thinking, 'Let me enter a forest.'

"Now when these six animals become worn out and fatigued, they would be dominated by the one among them that was strongest; they would submit to it and come under its control.

"So too, bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu has not developed and cultivated mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*), the eye pulls in the direction of agreeable forms and disagreeable forms are repulsive; the ear pulls in the direction of agreeable sounds and disagreeable sounds are repulsive; the nose pulls in the direction of agreeable odours and disagreeable odours are repulsive; the tongue pulls in the direction of agreeable tastes and disagreeable tastes are repulsive; the body pulls in the direction of agreeable tactile objects and disagreeable tactile objects are repulsive; the mind pulls in the direction of agreeable mental phenomena and disagreeable mental phenomena are repulsive. It is in such a way that there is nonrestraint.

"And how, bhikkhus, is there restraint? Here, having seen a form with the eye, a bhikkhu is not intent upon a pleasing form and not repelled by a displeasing form. He dwells having set up mindfulness of the body (*upaṭṭhitakāyassati*), with a measureless mind (*appamāṇacetaso*),* and he understands as it really is that liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.

“Having heard a sound with the ear, ... Having smelt an odour with the nose, ... Having tasted a flavour with the tongue, ... Having touched a tangible with the body, ... Having cognized a mental phenomenon with the mind, he is not intent upon a pleasing mental phenomenon and not repelled by a displeasing mental phenomenon. He dwells having set up mindfulness of the body, with a measureless mind, and he understands as it really is that liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder. It is in such a way that there is restraint.

“Suppose, bhikkhus, a man would catch six animals—with different domains and different feeding grounds—and tie them by a strong rope. He would catch a snake, a crocodile, a bird, a dog, a jackal, and a monkey, and tie each by a strong rope. Having done so, he would bind them to a strong post or pillar.

“Then those six animals with different domains and different feeding grounds would each pull in the direction of its own feeding ground and domain. The snake would pull one way, thinking, ‘Let me enter an anthill’ ... (as above) ... The monkey would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me enter a forest.’

“Now when these six animals become worn out and fatigued, they would stand close to that post or pillar, they would sit down there, they would lie down there.

“So too, bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu has developed and cultivated mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*), the eye does not pull in the direction of agreeable forms nor are disagreeable forms repulsive; the ear does not pull in the direction of agreeable sounds nor are disagreeable sounds repulsive; the nose does not pull in the

direction of agreeable odours nor are disagreeable odours repulsive; the tongue does not pull in the direction of agreeable tastes nor are disagreeable tastes repulsive; the body does not pull in the direction of agreeable tactile objects nor are disagreeable tactile objects repulsive; the mind does not pull in the direction of agreeable mental phenomena nor are disagreeable mental phenomena repulsive. It is in such a way that there is restraint.

“A strong post or pillar’: this, bhikkhus, is a designation for mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will develop and cultivate mindfulness directed to the body, make it our vehicle, make it our basis, stabilize it, exercise ourselves in it, and fully perfect it.’ Thus should you train yourselves.”

- * “Limited mind”, a rendering of *parittacetaso*, means the mind is limited by defilements and its opposite, “measureless mind” *appamāṇacetaso*, is such because it is unlimited by defilements.

Janapadakalyāṇī Sutta (SN 47.20)

The Most Beautiful Girl of the Land (CDB p 1649)

“Bhikkhus, suppose that on hearing, ‘The most beautiful girl of the land! The most beautiful girl of the land!’ a great crowd of people would assemble. Now that most beautiful girl of the land would dance exquisitely and sing exquisitely. On hearing, ‘The most beautiful girl of the land is dancing! The most beautiful girl of the land is singing!’ an even larger crowd of people would assemble.

“Then a man would come along, wishing to live, not wishing to die, wishing for happiness, averse to suffering. Someone would say to him: ‘Good man, you must carry around this bowl of oil filled to the

brim between the crowd and the most beautiful girl of the land. A man with a drawn sword will be following right behind you, and wherever you spill even a little of it, right there he will fell your head.’

“What do you think, bhikkhus, would that man stop attending to that bowl of oil and out of negligence turn his attention outwards?”

“No, venerable sir.”

“I have made up this simile, bhikkhus, in order to convey a meaning. This here is the meaning: ‘The bowl of oil filled to the brim’: this is a designation for mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will develop and cultivate mindfulness directed to the body, make it our vehicle, make it our basis, stabilize it, exercise ourselves in it, and fully perfect it.’ Thus, bhikkhus, should you train yourselves.”

Mahāmoggallāna Sutta (KN 3.25) / Ud 3.5)

The Blessed One saw Āyasmā Mahā Moggallāna sitting not far away, with legs crossed and body held erect, having mindfulness gone to the body (*kāyagatāya satiyā*) well-established within. Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One at that time joyously uttered:

With mindfulness gone to the body well-established,

(sati kāyagatā upaṭṭhitā)

restrained in the six bases of sense experience—

continually composed, a monk

would know nibbāna for himself.

D2. *Can you see any link between restraint of the sense faculties and kāyassati (mindfulness of the body) / kāyagatāsati (mindfulness directed to the body)? Give reasons for your answer based on the four excerpts in this section.*

3

WHAT IS KĀYAGATĀSATI?

EXCERPTS FROM
8 SOURCES

NOTE ON THE SELECTION IN THIS SECTION

Kāyagatāsaṭi Sutta (MN 119) contains all the 14 exercises under contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) found in Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22, MN 10) as well as a detailed description of the four jhānas together with their similes. Nonetheless, it is not included in this selection because of its length and more importantly, because it has been argued (quite convincingly, in my opinion) by Kuan Tse-fu (see bibliography) that it is most probably a later composition comprising fragments from different suttas.

What to Look Out for

Although the term “kāya” usually refers to the physical body, it can have other meanings as well. Scrutinise the contexts where it is used in the excerpts in this section so that—together with what you’ve learned from the previous section—you can better understand what kāyassati / kāyagatāsaṭi actually mean. You will need to substantiate your answer with a summary of the main points in the relevant excerpts.

Ekadhamma (AN 1.296-297)

One Thing (AN 1.296–305 in NDB p 116)

296. “Bhikkhus, there is one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to nibbāna. What is that one thing? [1] Recollection of the Buddha. This is that one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment ... to nibbāna.”

297. “Bhikkhus, there is one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to nibbāna. What is that one thing? [2] Recollection of the Dhamma....

- (298) [3] Recollection of the Saṅgha....
 (299) [4] Recollection of virtuous behavior....
 (300) [5] Recollection of generosity....
 (301) [6] Recollection of the devas....
 (302) [7] *Mindfulness of breathing*....
 (303) [8] Mindfulness of death....
 (304) [9] *Mindfulness directed to the body (kāyagatāsati)*....
 (305) [10] Recollection of peace. This is that one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment ... to nibbāna.”

Aparāccharāsaṅghātavaggo (AN 1.382-493-562)

Finger Snap (AN 1.394, 485-494 in NDB p 124, 128)

394 (1). “Bhikkhus, if for just the time of a finger snap a bhikkhu develops the first jhāna, he is called a bhikkhu who is not devoid of jhāna, who acts upon the teaching of the Teacher, who responds to his advice, and who does not eat the country’s almsfood in vain. How much more, then, those who cultivate it!”

485 (92)-494 (101).

[“Bhikkhus, if for just the time of a finger snap a bhikkhu]

- (485) develops recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*)....
 (486) develops recollection of the Dhamma (*dharmānussati*)....
 (487) develops recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*)....
 (488) develops recollection of virtuous behavior (*sīlānussati*)....
 (489) develops recollection of generosity (*cāgānussati*)....
 (490) develops recollection of the deities (*devatānussati*)....
 (491) develops *mindfulness of breathing* (*ānāpānassati*)....
 (492) develops mindfulness of death (*marāṇassati*)....

(493) develops *mindfulness directed to the body (kāyagatāsatī)*....

(494) develops recollection of peace (*upasamānussatī*) ...

[he is called a bhikkhu who is not devoid of jhāna,[§] who acts upon the teaching of the Teacher, who responds to his advice, and who does not eat the country's almsfood in vain. How much more, then, those who cultivate it!]"

§ *Jhāna* is here used to mean meditation in general, not a specific meditative attainment, such as in 1st-4th *jhāna*.

Ānanda Sutta (SN 8.4)

(CDB p 283-4)

Then the Venerable Vaṅṅisa addressed the Venerable Ānanda in verse:

"I am burning with sensual lust,
My mind is engulfed by fire.
Please tell me how to extinguish it,
Out of compassion, O Gotama."

[The Venerable Ānanda:]

"It is through an inversion of perception⁵⁰³

That your mind is engulfed by fire.

Turn away from the sign of beauty

Provocative of sensual lust.

"See formations as alien,

As suffering, not as self.

Extinguish the great fire of lust;

Don't burn up again and again.

"Develop the mind on foulness,

One-pointed, well concentrated (*ekaggam susamāhitam*);

Apply your mindfulness to the body (*sati kāyagatā tyatthu*),
Be engrossed in revulsion (*nibbidābahulo bhava*).

“Develop meditation on the signless,⁵⁰⁶
And discard the tendency to conceit.
Then, by breaking through conceit,
You will be one who fares at peace.”

Rāhula Sutta (KN 5.23 / Sn 2.11)

“... Be restrained according to the Pātimokkha
and in the five sense-faculties.

Let your mindfulness be gone to the body (*sati kāyagatā tyatthu*).
Be one with much weariness (of the world) (*nibbidābahulo bhava*).

“Avoid the sign—
beautiful, connected with passion.
In (the perception of) non-beauty, develop the mind,
one-placed [and] well collected (*ekaggaṃ susamāhitam*).

“Develop the Signless.
Give up the latent tendency of conceit.
From that thorough understanding of conceit,
you will live in peace.”

The lines highlighted in light grey are two different translations (SN 8.4 by Bhikkhu Bodhi and Sn 2.11 by myself) of the similarly expressed exhortations.

⁵⁰³ ... The “inversion of perception” (*saññāya vipariyesā*) is fourfold: perceiving permanence, happiness, selfhood, and beauty in what is actually impermanent, suffering, nonself, and foul....

⁵⁰⁶ The signless (*animitta*), according to Spk [the commentary], is insight (*vipassanā*), so called because it strips away the “signs” of permanence, etc.

Kimsukopama Sutta (SN 35.198)

The Kimsuka Tree (SN 35.245 in CDB p 1252-3)

“Suppose, bhikkhu, a king had a frontier city with strong ramparts, walls, and arches, and with six gates. The gatekeeper posted there would be wise, competent, and intelligent; one who keeps out strangers and admits acquaintances. A swift pair of messengers would come from the east and ask the gatekeeper: ‘Where, good man, is the lord of this city?’ He would reply: ‘He is sitting in the central square.’ Then the swift pair of messengers would deliver a message of reality to the lord of the city and leave by the route by which they had arrived. Similarly, messengers would come from the west, from the north, from the south, deliver their message, and leave by the route by which they had arrived.

“I have made up this simile, bhikkhu, in order to convey a meaning. This is the meaning here: ‘The city’: this is a designation for this *body (kāya) consisting of the four great elements, originating from mother and father*, built up out of boiled rice and gruel, subject to impermanence, to being worn and rubbed away, to breaking apart and dispersal. ‘The six gates’: this is a designation for *the six internal sense bases*. ‘The gatekeeper’: this is a designation for *mindfulness*. ‘The swift pair of messengers’: this is a designation for *serenity and insight (samathavipassanā)*. ‘The lord of the city’: this is designation for *consciousness (viññāṇa)*. ‘The central square’: this is a designation for *the four great elements*—the earth element, the water element, the heat element, the air element. ‘A message of reality (*yathā-bhūta*)’: this is a designation for *Nibbāna*. ‘The route by which they had arrived’: this is a designation for *the Noble Eightfold Path*; that is, right view ... right concentration.”

Uppaṭipāṭika Sutta (SN 48.40)

Irregular Order (CDB p 1683-6)

“Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five? The pleasure faculty, [the pain faculty, the joy faculty, the displeasure faculty,] the equanimity faculty.

“And where does the arisen pain faculty cease without remainder? Here, bhikkhus, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thought and examination, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. And it is here that the arisen pain faculty ceases without remainder....

“And where does the arisen displeasure faculty cease without remainder? With the subsiding of thought and examination, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the second jhāna, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without thought and examination, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. And it is here that the arisen displeasure faculty ceases without remainder....²¹⁹

“And where does the arisen pleasure faculty cease without remainder? With the fading away as well of rapture, a bhikkhu dwells equanimous and, mindful and clearly comprehending, *experiences happiness with the body (sukhañca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti)*; he enters and dwells in the third jhāna of which the noble ones declare: ‘He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.’ And it is here that the arisen pleasure faculty ceases without remainder....²²⁰

“And where does the arisen joy faculty cease without remainder? With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous

passing away of joy and displeasure, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the fourth jhāna, which is neither painful nor pleasant and includes the purification of mindfulness by equanimity. And it is here that the arisen joy faculty ceases without remainder....

“And where does the arisen equanimity faculty cease without remainder? Here, bhikkhus, having completely transcended the base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the cessation of perception and feeling. And it is here that the arisen equanimity faculty ceases without remainder....”

- ²¹⁹ This seems difficult to square with the usual jhāna formula, which indicates that the first jhāna is already free from all unwholesome states, including *domanassa*. Spk [the commentary]: The faculty of displeasure is abandoned in the access to the second jhāna but arises again when there is bodily fatigue and mental strain on account of thought and examination. But in the second jhāna, which is devoid of thought and examination, it does not arise at all.
- ²²⁰ The pleasure faculty (*sukhindriya*) here is bodily pleasant feeling, not the happiness (also called *sukha*) the meditator is said to “experience with the body” in the third jhāna. The latter *sukha* is actually mental happiness, identical with *somanassa*. Spk [the commentary]: The pleasure faculty is abandoned already in the access to the third jhāna, but it may arise when the body is touched by the sublime physical phenomena originating from rapture; but it does not arise in the third jhāna itself, for there the rapture that is a condition for bodily pleasure has entirely ceased.

Kiṭāgiri Sutta (MN 70)

(MLDB p 580, 581)

“What kind of person is one liberated-in-both-ways? Here some person *contacts with the body* (*kāyena phusitvā*) and abides in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, transcending forms, and his taints are destroyed by his seeing with wisdom. This kind of person is called one liberated-in-both-ways....⁷⁰²

“What kind of person is a *body-witness*? Here some person *contacts with the body* (*kāyena phusitvā*) and abides in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, transcending forms, and some of his taints are destroyed by his seeing with wisdom. This kind of person is called a *body-witness*....”⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰² *Ubhatobhāgavimutta*. MA: He is “liberated-in-both-ways” because he is liberated from the physical body by the immaterial attainments and from the mental body by the path (of arahantship). The Pug[ala Paññatti] definition reads: “He contacts with the body and abides in the eight liberations, and his taints are destroyed by his seeing with wisdom.” MA says that the *ubhatobhāgavimutta* includes those who attain arahantship after emerging from one or another of the four immaterial attainments and the one who attains it after emerging from the attainment of cessation.

⁷⁰⁴ *Kāyasakkhin*. MA: This type includes the six individuals—from the one established in the fruit of stream-entry up to the one on the path of arahantship—who first contact the (immaterial) jhānas and subsequently realise Nibbāna. M [the sub-commentary] stresses that one or another of the immaterial attainments including cessation is needed to qualify as *kāyasakkhin*. The Pug[ala Paññatti] definition merely substitutes the eight liberations.

Kāyasakkhī Sutta (AN 9.43)

Body Witness (NDB pp1320-1)

“It is said, friend, ‘a *body witness*, a *body witness*.’¹⁹⁵⁵ In what way has the Blessed One spoken of a *body witness*?”

(1) “Here, friend, secluded from sensual pleasures ... a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the first jhāna He dwells having contacted that base with the body in whatever way [it is attained].¹⁹⁵⁶ To this extent the Blessed One has spoken of a *body witness* in a provisional sense.

(2)–(4) “Again, friend, with the subsiding of thought and examination, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the second jhāna ... the third jhāna ... the fourth jhāna He dwells having contacted that base with the body in whatever way [it is attained]. To this extent, too, the Blessed One has spoken of a *body witness* in a provisional sense.

(5)–(8) “Again, friend, with the complete surmounting of perceptions of forms, with the passing away of perceptions of sensory impingement, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, aware that ‘space is infinite,’ a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the base of the infinity of space ... the base of the infinity of consciousness ... the base of nothingness ... the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. He dwells having contacted that base with the body in whatever way [it is attained]. To this extent, too, the Blessed One has spoken of a *body witness* in a provisional sense.

(9) “Again, friend, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, he enters and dwells in the cessation of perception and feeling, and having seen with wisdom, his taints are utterly destroyed. He dwells having contacted that base

with the body in whatever way [it is attained]. To this extent, friend, the Blessed One has spoken of a *body witness* in a non-provisional sense.”¹⁹⁵⁷

¹⁹⁵⁵ MN 70.17, I 478,4–8 offers a formal definition of the body witness (*kāya-sakkhi*) as a person who “contacts with the body and abides in those emancipations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and some of his taints are destroyed by his seeing with wisdom.” In the present sutta, however, the term “body witness” does not conform to this formal definition but is explained on the basis of a word play. Strictly speaking, the one who attains the complete destruction of the taints is no longer a body witness, a category restricted to those still in training.

¹⁹⁵⁶ *Yathā yathā ca tadāyatanaṃ tathā tathā naṃ kāyena phusitvā viharati.* Mp [the commentary]: “Through whatever means or in whatever way there is that base consisting in the first jhāna, by that same means, or in that same way, he dwells having contacted that attainment *with the coexistent mental body* (*sahajātanāmakāyena phusitvā*).

¹⁹⁵⁷ As suggested by the previous note, here the term “non-provisional sense” is itself being used in a loose, “provisional” sense. In the strict, non-provisional sense, such a disciple is not a body witness, for the real body witness has still not reached arahantship.

D3. *Based on what we have covered so far, how do you understand kāyassati/kāyagatāsati? Substantiate your answer with a summary of the main points in the relevant excerpts.*

4

WHEN DOES REBIRTH OCCUR?

EXCERPTS FROM
12 SOURCES

What to Look Out for

Theravāda orthodoxy maintains that rebirth occurs immediately after death. Scrutinise the excerpts in this section to verify whether such a doctrine tallies with the Pāḷi suttas of Early Buddhism. You need to substantiate your answer with a summary of the main points from the relevant excerpts. Consider also how your answer could influence your preparation for a good death.

Sāmaññaphala Sutta (DN 2)

The Fruits of the Contemplative Life (LDB p 107)

“Just as if there were a tall building in the central square [of a town], and a man with good eyesight standing on top of it were to see people entering a house, leaving it, walking along the street, and sitting in the central square. The thought would occur to him, ‘These people are entering a house, leaving it, walking along the streets, and sitting in the central square.’

“In the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability — the monk directs and inclines it to knowledge of the passing away and re-appearance of beings. He sees — by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human — beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma....”

Sampasādaniya Sutta (DN 28)

Serene Faith (LDB p 419)

‘Also unsurpassed is the Blessed Lord’s way of teaching Dhamma in regard to the modes of rebirth in four ways: thus, *one descends into the mother’s womb* unknowing, *stays there* unknowing, and *leaves it* unknowing. That is the first way. Or, one enters the womb knowing, stays there unknowing, and leaves it unknowing. That is the second way. Or, one enters the womb knowing, stays there knowing, and leaves it unknowing. That is the third way. Or, one enters the womb knowing, stays there knowing, and leaves it knowing. That is the fourth way.* This is the unsurpassed teaching in regard to the modes of rebirth....’

* According to the commentary, these refer (1) to ordinary human beings, (2) to the eighty ‘Great Elders’, (3) to the two chief disciples of a Buddha, to Pacceka-Buddhas-to-be, 4) to bodhisattas in their last rebirth.

Bhūmicāla Sutta (AN 8.70)

Earthquakes (NDB p 1216)

(3) “Again, when the bodhisatta passes away from the Tusita order and, mindful and clearly comprehending, *enters his mother’s womb*, this earth shakes, shudders, and trembles. This is the third cause and condition for a powerful earthquake.

(4) “Again, when the bodhisatta, mindful and clearly comprehending, *emerges from his mother’s womb*, this earth shakes, shudders, and trembles. This is the fourth cause and condition for a powerful earthquake.”[§]

[§] Also mentioned in Mahāpadāna Sutta (DN 14) (only entering but not emerging); Acchariyaabbhuta Sutta (MN 123); Paṭhamatathāgata-acchariya Sutta (AN 4.127).

Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya Sutta (MN 38)

The Greater Discourse on the Destruction of Craving
(MDB p 358)

“Bhikkhus, the descent of the embryo takes place through the union of three things. Here, there is the union of the mother and father, but the mother is not in season, and the *gandhabba*⁴¹¹ is not present—in this case no descent of an embryo takes place. Here, there is the union of the mother and father, and the mother is in season, but the *gandhabba* is not present—in this case too no descent of the embryo takes place. But when there is the union of the mother and father, and the mother is in season, and *the gandhabba is present*, through the union of these three things the descent of the embryo takes place.”

⁴¹¹ MA: The *gandhabba* is the being arriving there. It is not someone (i.e., a disembodied spirit) standing nearby watching the future parents having intercourse, but a being driven on by the mechanism of kamma, due to be reborn on that occasion.

Assalāyana Sutta (MN 93)

To Assalāyana (MLD p 769)

“But, sirs, do you know how the descent of an embryo comes about?”

“Sir, we know how the descent of an embryo comes about. Here, there is the union of the mother and father, and the mother is in season, and *the gandhabba is present*. Thus the descent of an embryo comes about through the union of these three things.”

Kutūhalasālā Sutta (SN 44.9)

The Debating Hall (CDB p 1393)

“It is fitting for you to be perplexed, Vaccha, it is fitting for you to doubt. Doubt has arisen in you about a perplexing matter. I declare, Vaccha, rebirth for one with fuel (*upādāna*), not for one without fuel. Just as a fire burns with fuel, but not without fuel, so, Vaccha, I declare rebirth for one with fuel, not for one without fuel.”

“Master Gotama, when a flame is flung by the wind and goes some distance, what does Master Gotama declare to be its fuel on that occasion?”

“When, Vaccha, a flame is flung by the wind and goes some distance, I declare that it is fuelled by the wind. For on that occasion the wind is its fuel.”

“And, Master Gotama, when a being has *laid down this body but has not yet been reborn in another body*, what does Master Gotama declare to be its fuel on that occasion?”

“When, Vaccha, a being has *laid down this body but has not yet been reborn in another body*, I declare that it is fuelled by craving.³⁸² For on that occasion craving is its fuel.”

³⁸² *Tam ahaṃ taṇhūpādānaṃ vadāmi* The Buddha’s statement seems to imply that a temporal gap can intervene between the death moment and reconception. Since this contradicts Theravāda orthodoxy, Spk [the commentary] contends that at the death moment itself the being is said to be “not yet reborn” because the rebirth-consciousness has not yet arisen.

Paṭhamavitthāra Sutta (SN 48.15)

In Detail (1) (CDB p 1674)

“Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five?

The faculty of faith, [the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration,] the faculty of wisdom.

These are the five faculties.

“One who has completed and fulfilled these five faculties is an arahant. If they are weaker than that, one is an *attainer of Nibbāna in the interval*; if still weaker, an *attainer of Nibbāna upon landing*; if still weaker, an attainer of Nibbāna without exertion; if still weaker, an attainer of Nibbāna with exertion; if still weaker, one who is bound upstream, heading towards the Akaniṭṭha realm (*uddhamsota akaniṭṭhagāmī*); if still weaker, a once-returner; if still weaker, a stream-enterer; if still weaker, a Dhamma-follower; if still weaker, a faith-follower.” * §

* The *uddhamsota akaniṭṭhagāmī* is one who takes rebirth in successive Pure Abodes (the brahmā realms of non-returners), completes the full life span in each, and finally attains arahantship in the Akaniṭṭha realm, the highest Pure Abode.

According to SN 25.1-10, the Dhamma-follower is a committed follower by virtue of intellectual understanding and acceptance of the teaching that any of the following are impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise: (1) the six sense faculties (base, object, consciousness), (2) the contact, feeling, perception, volition, or craving related to each of the sense faculties, (3) the six elements (four plus space and consciousness), (4) the five aggregates. The faith-follower is a committed follower by virtue of faithful acceptance of this same teaching.

§ Similar list in Ekabījī Sutta (SN 48.24), Dutiyaphala Sutta (SN 48.66), Dutiyaphala Sutta (51.26), Dutiyaphala Sutta (54.5), Dutiyasaraṇānisakka Sutta (55.25).

Purisagati Sutta (AN 7.55)

(2) Destinations of Persons (NDB p 1048-51)

“Bhikkhus, I will teach you seven destinations of persons and attainment of nibbāna through non-clinging ... And what, bhikkhus, are the seven destinations of persons?

(1) “Here, a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be; it will not be mine.¹⁵³² I am abandoning what exists, what has come to be.’ He obtains equanimity. He is not attached to existence; he is not attached to origination. He sees with correct wisdom: ‘There is a higher state that is peaceful,’ yet he has not totally realized that state. He has not totally abandoned the underlying tendency to conceit; he has not totally abandoned the underlying tendency to lust for existence; he has not totally abandoned ignorance. With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters^s he becomes an *attainer of nibbāna in the interval*.

“For example, when an iron bowl has been heated all day and is struck, a chip might fly off and be extinguished. So too, a bhikkhu is practicing thus ... he has not totally abandoned ignorance. With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an *attainer of nibbāna in the interval*.

2) “Then a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine....’ ... yet he has not totally realized that state. He has not totally abandoned the underlying tendency to conceit; he has not totally abandoned the underlying tendency to lust for existence; he has not totally abandoned ignorance. With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an *attainer of nibbāna in the interval*.

“For example, when an iron bowl has been heated all day and is struck, *a chip might fly off, rise up, and be extinguished*. So too, a bhikkhu is practicing thus.... With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters^s he becomes an *attainer of nibbāna in the interval*.

(3) “Then a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine....’ With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an *attainer of nibbāna in the interval*.

“For example, when an iron bowl has been heated all day and is struck, *a chip might fly off, rise up, and be extinguished just before it lands on the ground*. So too, a bhikkhu is practicing thus.... With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an *attainer of nibbāna in the interval*.

(4) “Then a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be; it will not be mine....’ With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an *attainer of nibbāna upon landing*.¹⁵³⁷

“For example, when an iron bowl has been heated all day and is struck, *a chip might be produced and fly up, and upon landing on the ground it would be extinguished*. So too, a bhikkhu is practicing thus.... With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an *attainer of nibbāna upon landing*.

(5) “Then a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be; it will not be mine....’ With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an *attainer of nibbāna without exertion*.

“For example, when an iron bowl has been heated all day and is struck, *a chip might fly off, rise up, and fall on a small pile of straw or sticks. There it would produce a fire and smoke, but when it has exhausted*

- § The five lower fetters are (1) view that there is a permanent, unchanging entity associated with the five aggregates (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), (2) doubt about the experientially verifiable Dhamma teachings (*vicikicchā*), (3) clinging to mere moral conduct and observances as though they could intrinsically lead to liberation (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*), (4) sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*) and (5) illwill (*byāpāda*).

¹⁵³⁷ Mp [the commentary] interprets this person as one who attains nibbāna between the midpoint of the life span and its end. However, the word *upahacca*, “having struck, having hit,” and the simile of the chip that goes out on hitting the ground, suggest that this type is one who attains nibbāna almost immediately after rebirth.

*that small pile of straw or sticks, if it gets no more fuel, it would be extinguished. So too, a bhikkhu is practicing thus.... With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an attainer of nibbāna without exertion.*¹⁵³⁸

(6) “Then a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be; it will not be mine....’ With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an attainer of nibbāna through exertion.

“For example, when an iron bowl has been heated all day and is struck, a chip might fly off, rise up, and then fall upon a wide pile of straw or sticks. There it would produce a fire and smoke, but when it has exhausted that wide pile of straw or sticks, if it gets no more fuel, it would be extinguished. So too, a bhikkhu is practicing thus.... With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes an attainer of nibbāna through exertion.

7) “Then a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be; it will not be mine....’ With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes one bound upstream, heading toward the Akaniṭṭha realm.

“For example, when an iron bowl has been heated all day and is struck, a chip might fly off, rise up, and then fall upon a large pile of straw or sticks. There it would produce a fire and smoke, and when it has exhausted that large pile of straw or sticks, it would burn up a woods or a grove until it reaches the edge of a field, the edge of a road, the edge of a stone mountain, the edge of water, or some delightful piece of land, and then, if it gets no more fuel, it would be extinguished. So too, a bhikkhu is practicing thus....

¹⁵³⁸ Whereas the standard Theravāda commentarial interpretation takes the next two types—one who attains nibbāna without exertion (*asaṅkhāra-parinibbāyī*) and one who attains nibbāna through exertion (*sasaṅkhāra-parinibbāyī*)—to be two alternative ways by which the *antarāparinibbāyī* and *upahaccaparinibbāyī* attain the goal, the similes of the chip suggest, unambiguously, that the five types (or seven, counting separately the three subdivisions of the first) are distinct, forming a series from the sharper to the more sluggish. Thus if, as Mp [the commentary] alleges, the *upahaccaparinibbāyī* were one who attains nibbāna between the midpoint of the life span and its end, there would be no scope for the other two types, those who attain nibbāna without exertion and those who attain nibbāna through exertion.

With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes *one bound upstream, heading toward the Akaniṭṭha realm*.

“These, bhikkhus, are the seven destinations of persons.

“And what, bhikkhus, is attainment of nibbāna through non-clinging? Here, a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be; it will not be mine. I am abandoning what exists, what has come to be.’ He obtains equanimity. He is not attached to existence; he is not attached to origination. He sees with correct wisdom: ‘There is a higher state that is peaceful,’ and he has totally realized that state. He has totally abandoned the underlying tendency to conceit; he has totally abandoned the underlying tendency to lust for existence; he has totally abandoned ignorance. With the destruction of the taints, he has realized for himself with direct knowledge, in this very life, the taintless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, and having entered upon it, he dwells in it. This is called attainment of nibbāna through non-clinging.

“These, bhikkhus, are the seven destinations of persons and attainment of nibbāna through non-clinging.”

Samyojana Sutta (AN 4.131)

Fetters (NDB p 514-5)

“Bhikkhus, there are these four kinds of persons found existing in the world. What four?

(1) Here, bhikkhus, some person has not abandoned the lower fetters, *the fetters for obtaining rebirth (upapattiapaṭilābhiyāni)*, or *the fetters for obtaining existence (bhavapaṭilābhiyāni)*.

(2) Some other person has abandoned the lower fetters, but not *the fetters for obtaining rebirth or the fetters for obtaining existence*.

(3) Still another person has abandoned the lower fetters and *the fetters for obtaining rebirth, but not the fetters for obtaining existence*.

(4) And still another person has abandoned the lower fetters, *the fetters for obtaining rebirth, and the fetters for obtaining existence*.

(1) “What kind of person has not abandoned the lower fetters, *the fetters for obtaining rebirth, or the fetters for obtaining existence*? The once-returner. This person has not abandoned the lower fetters, *the fetters for obtaining rebirth, or the fetters for obtaining existence*.

(2) “What kind of person has abandoned the lower fetters, but not *the fetters for obtaining rebirth or the fetters for obtaining existence*? The one bound upstream, heading toward the Akaniṭṭha realm.

This person has abandoned the lower fetters but not *the fetters for obtaining rebirth or the fetters for obtaining existence*.

(3) “What kind of person has abandoned the lower fetters and *the fetters for obtaining rebirth but not the fetters for obtaining existence*? The one who attains final nibbāna in the interval. This person has abandoned the lower fetters and *the fetters for obtaining rebirth but not the fetters for obtaining existence*.

(4) “What kind of person has abandoned the lower fetters, *the fetters for obtaining rebirth, and the fetters for obtaining existence*? The arahant. For this person has abandoned the lower fetters, *the fetters for obtaining rebirth, and the fetters for obtaining existence*.

“These, bhikkhus, are the four kinds of persons found existing in the world.”

Channovāda Sutta (MN 144)

Advice to Channa (MLDB p 1116)

When this was said, the venerable Mahā Cunda said to the venerable Channa: “Therefore, friend Channa, this instruction of the Blessed One is to be constantly given attention: ‘There is wavering in one who is dependent, there is no wavering in one who is independent; when there is no wavering, there is tranquillity; when there is tranquillity, there is no bias; when there is no bias, there is no coming and going; when there is no coming and going, there is no passing away and reappearing; when there is no passing away and reappearing, *there is no here nor beyond nor in between*. This is the end of suffering.’”[§]

[§] Also in Channa Sutta (SN 35.70) & Catutthanibbānapaṭisaṃyutta Sutta (KN 3.74/Ud 74).

Māluṅkyaputta Sutta (SN 35.78)

(SN 35.95 in CBD p 1175)

“Here, Māluṅkyaputta, regarding things seen, heard, sensed, and cognized by you: in the seen there will be merely the seen; in the heard there will be merely the heard; in the sensed there will be merely the sensed; in the cognized there will be merely the cognized.

“When, Māluṅkyaputta, regarding things seen, heard, sensed, and cognized by you, in the seen there will be merely the seen, in the heard there will be merely the heard, in the sensed there will be merely the sensed, in the cognized there will be merely the cognized, then, Māluṅkyaputta, you will not be ‘by that.’ When, Māluṅkyaputta, you are not ‘by that,’ then you will not be ‘therein.’

“When, Mālun̄kyaputta, you are not ‘therein,’ *then you will be neither here nor beyond nor in between the two*. This itself is the end of suffering.”⁷⁵

- ⁷⁵ You will not be “by that” (*na tena*): you will not be aroused by that lust, or irritated by that hatred, or deluded by that delusion. *Then you will not be “therein” (na tattha)*: When you are not aroused by that lust, etc., then “you will not be therein”—bound, attached, established in what is seen, heard, sensed, and cognized.”

Bāhiya Sutta (KN 3.10 / Ud 1.10)

“Then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In the seen, there shall be only the seen; in the heard, only the heard; in the sensed, only the sensed; in the cognised, only the cognised. That is how, Bāhiya, you should train yourself.

“When for you, Bāhiya, there will be only the seen in the seen, only the heard in the heard, only the sensed in the sensed, only the cognised in the cognised, then, Bāhiya, you are not with that. When, Bāhiya, you are not with that, you are not therein. When, Bāhiya, you are not therein, *you are neither here nor beyond nor between the two*. This, itself, is the end of suffering.” §

- § Just after listening to this, Bahiya attained arahantship. Interestingly, Āyasmā Mālun̄kyaputta was given this same succinct instruction, but he interpreted it as mere sense restraint and had to practise for quite a while before attaining the same goal whereas Bahiya understood it in a more profound way.

D4. (a) *Theravāda orthodoxy maintains that rebirth occurs immediately after death. Having scrutinised the excerpts in this section, can you conclude whether such a doctrine is consonant with the Pāli suttas of Early Buddhism? Substantiate your answer with a summary of the main points from the relevant excerpts.*

(b) *Do what the excerpts say about the transition from death to rebirth impact your belief and view on preparing for a good death? If so, in what way?*

5

PROPERLY ORIENTING THE MIND

EXCERPTS FROM
8 SOURCES

Dhammapada 1 & 2

Things have mind as the forerunner,
Mind as the chief; they are mind-made.
If with a base mind, one speaks or acts,
Through that, suffering follows one,
Like a wheel the foot of the ox.

Things have mind as the forerunner,
Mind as the chief; they are mind-made.
If with a clear mind, one speaks or acts,
Through that, happiness follows one,
Like one's shadow that never departs.

Dvedhāvitakka Sutta (MN 19)

Two Kinds of Thought (MLDB p 208, 209)

“Bhikkhus, whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of sensual desire, he has abandoned the thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of sensual desire. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of ill will ... upon thoughts of cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of non-cruelty to cultivate the thought of cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of cruelty.

“Just as in the last month of the rainy season, in the autumn, when the crops thicken, a cowherd would guard his cows by constantly tapping and poking them on this side and that with a stick to check and curb them. Why is that? Because he sees that he could be flogged, imprisoned, fined, or blamed [if he let them stray into the crops]. So too I saw in unwholesome states danger, degradation, and defilement, and in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing....

“Bhikkhus, whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of renunciation, he has abandoned the thought of sensual desire to cultivate the thought of renunciation, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of renunciation. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of non-ill will ... upon thoughts of non-cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of cruelty to cultivate the thought of non-cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of non-cruelty.

“Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been brought inside the villages, a cowherd would guard his cows while staying at the root of a tree or out in the open, since he needs only to be mindful that the cows are there; so too, there was need for me only to be mindful that those states were there....”

Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta (MN 136)

The Greater Exposition of Action (MLDB p 1064-5)

“Therein, Ānanda, as to the person here who kills living beings, [takes what is not given, misconducts himself in sensual pleasures, speaks falsehood, speaks maliciously, speaks harshly, gossips; he is covetous, has a mind of ill will,] and holds wrong view, and on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappears in a state of deprivation, [in an unhappy destination, in perdition,] even in hell: either earlier he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or later he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or *at the time of death he acquired and undertook wrong view*. Because of that, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he has reappeared in a state of deprivation ... even in hell. And since he has here killed living beings ... and held wrong view, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

“Therein, Ānanda, as to the person here who kills living beings ... and holds wrong view, and on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world: either earlier he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or later he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or *at the time of death he acquired and undertook right view*. Because of that, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he has reappeared in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But since he has here killed living beings ... and held wrong view, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

“Therein, Ānanda, as to the person here who abstains from killing living beings, [from taking what is not given, from misconduct in

sensual pleasures, from false speech, from malicious speech, from harsh speech, from gossip; he is not covetous, his mind is without ill will,] and holds right view, and on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world: either earlier he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or later he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or *at the time of death he acquired and undertook right view*. Because of that, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he has reappeared in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. And since he has here abstained from killing living beings ... and held right view, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

“Therein, Ānanda, as to the person here who abstains from killing living beings and holds right view, and on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappears in a state of deprivation ... even in hell: either earlier he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or later he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or *at the time of death he acquired and undertook wrong view*. Because of that, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he has reappeared in a state of deprivation ... even in hell. But since he has here abstained from killing living beings ... and held right view, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

“Thus, Ānanda, there is action that is incapable and appears incapable; there is action that is incapable and appears capable; there is action that is capable and appears capable; and there is action that is capable and appears incapable.”

Phagguna Sutta (AN 6.56)

(NDB p 938-9)

“There are, Ānanda, these six benefits of listening to the Dhamma at the proper time and of examining the meaning at the proper time. What six?

(1) “Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu’s mind is not yet liberated from the five lower fetters, but *at the time of his death he gets to see the Tathāgata*. The Tathāgata teaches him the Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, with the right meaning and phrasing; he reveals a spiritual life that is perfectly complete and pure. *When the bhikkhu hears that discourse on the Dhamma*, his mind is liberated from the five lower fetters. This is the first benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the proper time.

(2) “Again, a bhikkhu’s mind is not yet liberated from the five lower fetters. *At the time of his death* he does not get to see the Tathāgata, but *he gets to see a disciple of the Tathāgata*. The Tathāgata’s disciple teaches him the Dhamma ... reveals a spiritual life that is perfectly complete and pure. *When the bhikkhu hears that discourse on the Dhamma*, his mind is liberated from the five lower fetters. This is the second benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the proper time.

(3) “Again, a bhikkhu’s mind is not yet liberated from the five lower fetters. *At the time of his death* he does not get to see the Tathāgata or a disciple of the Tathāgata, but *he ponders, examines, and mentally inspects the Dhamma as he has heard it and learned it*. As he does so, his mind is liberated from the five lower fetters. This is the third benefit of examining the meaning at the proper time.

(4) “Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu’s mind is liberated from the five lower fetters but not yet liberated in the unsurpassed extinction of the acquisitions.[§] *At the time of his death he gets to see the Tathāgata.* The Tathāgata teaches him the Dhamma ... he reveals a spiritual life that is perfectly complete and pure. *When the bhikkhu hears that discourse on the Dhamma,* his mind is liberated in the unsurpassed extinction of the acquisitions. This is the fourth benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the proper time.

(5) “Again, a bhikkhu’s mind is liberated from the five lower fetters but not yet liberated in the unsurpassed extinction of the acquisitions. *At the time of his death he does not get to see the Tathāgata,* but he gets to see a disciple of the Tathāgata. The Tathāgata’s disciple teaches him the Dhamma ... reveals a spiritual life that is perfectly complete and pure. *When the bhikkhu hears that discourse on the Dhamma,* his mind is liberated in the unsurpassed extinction of the acquisitions. This is the fifth benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the proper time.

(6) “Again, a bhikkhu’s mind is liberated from the five lower fetters but not yet liberated in the unsurpassed extinction of the acquisitions. *At the time of his death he does not get to see the Tathāgata or a disciple of the Tathāgata,* but *he ponders, examines, and mentally inspects the Dhamma as he has heard it and learned it.* As he does so, his mind is liberated in the unsurpassed extinction of the acquisitions. This is the sixth benefit of examining the meaning at the proper time.

“These, Ānanda, are the six benefits of listening to the Dhamma at the proper time and of examining the meaning at the proper time.”

[§] This refers to the attainment of arahantship.

Gilāna Sutta (SN 55.54)

Ill (CDB p 1835-6)

“A wise lay follower,³⁶⁷ Mahānāma, who is sick, afflicted, and gravely ill should be consoled by another wise lay follower with four consolations: ‘Let the venerable one be consoled. You have *confirmed confidence* (*aveccappasādo*)¹²⁰ in the Buddha thus: “The Blessed One is ... teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.” You have *confirmed confidence in the Dhamma* ... in the Saṅgha.... You have the virtues dear to the noble ones, unbroken, [untorn, unblemished, unmottled, freeing, praised by the wise, ungrasped, leading to concentration].’¹²¹

“After a wise lay follower, who is sick, afflicted, and gravely ill has been consoled by a wise lay follower with these four consolations, he should be asked: ‘*Are you anxious about your mother and father?*’ If he says: ‘I am,’ he should be told: ‘But, good sir, you are subject to death. Whether you are anxious about your mother and father or not, you will die anyway. So please abandon your anxiety over your mother and father.’

“If he says: ‘I have abandoned my anxiety over my mother and father,’ he should be asked: ‘*Are you anxious about your wife and children?*’ If he says: ‘I am,’ he should be told: ‘But, good sir, you are subject to death. Whether you are anxious about your wife and children or not, you will die anyway. So please abandon your anxiety over your wife and children.’

“If he says: ‘I have abandoned my anxiety over my wife and children,’ he should be asked: ‘*Are you anxious about the five cords of human sensual pleasure?*’ If he says: ‘I am,’ he should be told: ‘Celestial sensual pleasures, friend, are more excellent and sublime

³⁶⁷ *Sappañño upāsako*. Spk [the commentary]: A stream-enterer is intended.

¹²⁰ ... Confirmed confidence is unshakable confidence (gained) through what has been achieved [... namely, the path] ... *Aveccappasāda* is a syntactical compound ..., with *avecca* (Skt *avetya*) absolutive of **aveti*, to undergo, to know, to experience.

¹²¹ ... Spk [the commentary]: The virtues dear to the noble ones (*ariyakantāni sīlāni*) are the five precepts, which the noble ones do not forsake even when they pass on to a new existence ... These virtues are “ungrasped” (*aparāmaṭṭha*) in the sense that they are not adhered to with craving and wrong view.

than human sensual pleasures. So please withdraw your mind from human sensual pleasures and resolve on the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings.’

“If he says: ‘My mind has been withdrawn from human sensual pleasures and resolved on the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings,’ he should be told: *‘The Tāvatiṃsa devas, friend, are more excellent and sublime than the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings. So please withdraw your mind from the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings and resolve on the Tāvatiṃsa devas.’*

“If he says: ‘My mind has been withdrawn from the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings and resolved on the Tāvatiṃsa devas,’ he should be told: *‘More excellent and sublime, friend, than the Tāvatiṃsa devas are the Yāma devas ... the Tusita devas ... the Nimmānā-rati devas ... the Paranimmitavasavattī devas.... The brahmā world, friend, is more excellent and sublime than the Paranimmitavasavattī devas. So please withdraw your mind from the Paranimmitavasavattī devas and resolve on the brahmā world.’*³⁶⁹

“If he says: ‘My mind has been withdrawn from the Paranimmitavasavattī devas and resolved on the brahmā world,’ he should be told: *‘Even the brahmā world, friend, is impermanent, unstable, included in identity. So please withdraw your mind from the brahmā world and direct it to the cessation of identity.’*³⁷⁰

“If he says: ‘My mind has been withdrawn from the brahmā world; I have directed my mind to the cessation of identity,’ then, Mahānāma, I say there is no difference between a lay follower who is thus liberated in mind and a bhikkhu who has been liberated in mind for a hundred years, that is, between one liberation and the other.”³⁷²

- ³⁶⁹ At MN II 194-95 [Dhanañjāni Sutta (MN 97)], Sāriputta guides a dying brahmin through a similar sequence of reflections, but stops after directing him to the brahmā world. For stopping there he is later reproached by the Buddha.
- ³⁷⁰ *Sakkāyanirodha*, i.e., Nibbāna. This injunction is intended to turn the mind of the dying lay follower away from a rebirth in the brahmā world and direct it towards the attainment of Nibbāna.
- ³⁷² The Buddha's statement thus indicates that the lay follower has become an arahant. Apart from the few instances of lay people who attained arahantship just before renouncing the household life (like Yasa at Vin I 17,1-3), this may be the only mention of a lay arahant in the Nikāyas, and in his case the attainment occurs on the verge of death. Miln [Milinda-pāñhā] 264-66 lays down the thesis that a lay person who attains arahantship either goes forth that day (i.e., becomes a monk or nun) or passes away into final Nibbāna.

Dīghāvūpāsaka Sutta (SN 55.3)

(CBD p 1790-1)

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrel Sanctuary. Now on that occasion the lay follower Dīghāvu was sick, afflicted, gravely ill. Then the lay follower Dīghāvu addressed his father, the householder Jotika, thus: “Come, householder, approach the Blessed One, pay homage to him in my name with your head at his feet, and say: ‘Venerable sir, the lay follower Dīghāvu is sick, afflicted, gravely ill; he pays homage to the Blessed One with his head at the Blessed One’s feet.’ Then say: ‘It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One would come to the residence of the lay follower Dīghāvu out of compassion.’”

“Yes, dear,” the householder Jotika replied, and he approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and delivered his message. The Blessed One consented by silence.

Then the Blessed One dressed and, taking bowl and robe, went to the residence of the lay follower Dīghāvu. He then sat down in the appointed seat and said to the lay follower Dīghāvu: “I hope you are bearing up, Dīghāvu, I hope you are getting better. I hope your painful feelings are subsiding and not increasing, and that their subsiding, not their increase, is to be discerned.”

“Venerable sir, I am not bearing up, I am not getting better. Strong painful feelings are increasing in me, not subsiding, and their increase, not their subsiding, is to be discerned.”

“Therefore, Dīghāvu, you should train yourself thus: *‘I will be one who possesses confirmed confidence in the Buddha* thus: “The Blessed One is ... teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.” *I will be one who possesses confirmed confidence in the*

Dhamma ... in the Saṅgha.... I will be one who possesses the virtues dear to the noble ones, unbroken ... leading to concentration.’ It is in such a way that you should train yourself.”

“Venerable sir, as to these six things that partake of true knowledge that have been taught by the Blessed One, these things exist in me, and I live in conformity with those things. For, venerable sir, *I dwell contemplating impermanence in all formations, perceiving suffering in what is impermanent, perceiving nonself in what is suffering, perceiving abandonment, perceiving fading away, perceiving cessation.* However, venerable sir, the thought occurs to me: ‘After I am gone, may this householder Jotika not fall into distress.’”

“Don’t be concerned about this, dear Dīghāvu. Come now, dear Dīghāvu, pay close attention to what the Blessed One is saying to you.”

Then the Blessed One, having given this exhortation to the lay follower Dīghāvu, rose from his seat and departed. Then, not long after the Blessed One had left, the lay follower Dīghāvu died.

Then a number of bhikkhus approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, that lay follower named Dīghāvu to whom the Blessed One gave a brief exhortation has died. What is his destination, what is his future bourn?”

“Bhikkhus, the lay follower Dīghāvu was wise. He practised in accordance with the Dhamma and did not trouble me on account of the Dhamma. Bhikkhus, with the utter destruction of the five lower fetters the lay follower Dīghāvu has become one of spontaneous birth, due to attain Nibbāna there without returning from that world.”

Sirivaḍḍha Sutta (SN 47.29)

(CDB p 1654-5)

On one occasion the Venerable Ānanda was dwelling at Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrel Sanctuary. Now on that occasion the householder Sirivaḍḍha was sick, afflicted, gravely ill. Then the householder Sirivaḍḍha addressed a man thus:

“Come, good man, approach the Venerable Ānanda, pay homage to him in my name with your head at his feet, and say: ‘Venerable sir, the householder Sirivaḍḍha is sick, afflicted, gravely ill; he pays homage to the Venerable Ānanda with his head at his feet.’ Then say: ‘It would be good, venerable sir, if the Venerable Ānanda would come to the residence of the householder Sirivaḍḍha out of compassion.’”

“Yes, master,” that man replied, and he approached the Venerable Ānanda, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and delivered his message. The Venerable Ānanda consented by silence.

Then, in the morning, the Venerable Ānanda dressed and, taking bowl and robe, went to the residence of the householder Sirivaḍḍha. He then sat down in the appointed seat and said to the householder Sirivaḍḍha: “I hope you are bearing up, householder, I hope you are getting better. I hope your painful feelings are subsiding and not increasing, and that their subsiding, not their increase, is to be discerned.”

“Strong painful feelings are increasing in me, not subsiding, and their increase, not their subsiding, is to be discerned.”

“Well then, householder, you should train thus: *‘I will dwell contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending,*

mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. I will dwell contemplating feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world.' It is in such a way that you should train."

"Venerable sir, as to these four establishments of mindfulness taught by the Blessed One—these things exist in me, and I live in conformity with those things. I dwell, venerable sir, contemplating the body in the body ... feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. And as to these five lower fetters taught by the Blessed One, I do not see any of these unabandoned in myself."

"It is a gain for you, householder! It is well gained by you, householder! You have declared, householder, the fruit of non-returning."

Bāḥagilāna Sutta (SN 52.10)

Gravely Ill (CDB p 1757-8)

On one occasion the Venerable Anuruddha was dwelling at Sāvathī in the Blind Men's Grove, sick, afflicted, gravely ill. Then a number of bhikkhus approached the Venerable Anuruddha and said to him:

“In what dwelling does the Venerable Anuruddha usually dwell so that the arisen bodily painful feelings do not persist obsessing his mind?”

“It is, friends, *because I dwell with a mind well established in the four establishments of mindfulness that the arisen bodily feelings do not persist obsessing my mind.* What four? Here, friend, I dwell contemplating the body in the body ... feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world.

“It is, friends, because I dwell with a mind well established in these four establishments of mindfulness that the arisen bodily painful feelings do not persist obsessing my mind.”

- D5.** (a) *How would you, prior to lying on your death bed, attempt to properly orientate your mind in preparation for a good death?*
- (b) *List the Pāḷi canonical methods of helping a dying Buddhist prepare for a good death and comment on the practicality or efficacy of each.*
- (c) *Modify the list for application to a dying non-Buddhist.*

D6. (a) Give a rough percentage of how much you can understand and remember from the

(i) guided meditations

(ii) material in the workbook

(iii) discussions

(iv) presentations

(v) concluding summaries of this workshop.

(b) What have you learnt from this workshop and how much of it is applicable to your life?

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Abbreviations

	Pāli Text	Reference according to
AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya	Book number : Sutta number
DN	Dīgha Nikāya	Sutta number
KN	Khuddaka Nikāya	Book number : Sutta number
MN	Majjhima Nikāya	Sutta number
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya	Saṃyutta number : Sutta number
Sn	Sutta Nipāta	Chapter number : Sutta number
Ud	Udāna	Chapter number : Sutta number
CBD	The Connected Discourses of the Buddha	
DN	The Long Discourses of the Buddha	
DPR	Digital Pali Reader 4.7.1	
M	Majjhima Nikāya Ṭīkā (Sub-commentary to MN)	
MA	Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Commentary to MN)	
MLDB	The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha	
NDB	The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha	
Spk	Sāratthapakāsinī (Commentary to SN)	

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