

# The Discourse about the Belief Systems

(Aṅg 3:61)

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## The Three Belief Systems

There are these three belief systems, monks, and though questioned, queried, and discussed by wise men, (because they) have come down from others, they persist in inaction. Which three?

There are some ascetics and brahmins, monks, who are of this argument, this view: “Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that is due to what was done in the past.”

There are some ascetics and brahmins, monks, who are of this argument, this view: “Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that is due to the power of God.”

There are some ascetics and brahmins, monks, who are of this argument, this view: “Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that has no cause or condition.”

### Those who Believe in What was Done in the Past

Here, monks, (as for) those ascetics and brahmins who are of this argument, this view: “Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that is due to what was done in the past,” having approached them, I say: “Is it true that you venerables are of this argument, this view: “Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that is due to what was done in the past?”, and if they agree with me when questioned thus, (saying) “yes”, I say to them:

“Then, venerables,  
(people) will be killers of living creatures because of what was done in the past,  
they will be takers of what is not given because of what was done in the past,  
they will be unchaste because of what was done in the past,  
they will be speakers of what is false because of what was done in the past,  
they will be utterers of divisive words because of what was done in the past,  
they will be utterers of harsh words because of what was done in the past,  
they will be frivolous talkers because of what was done in the past,  
they will be avaricious because of what was done in the past,  
they will be malevolent because of what was done in the past,  
they will hold to wrong views because of what was done in the past.

But, monks, for he who holds what was done in the past as the essential thing, there is no desire nor effort (thinking): “this should be done, or this should not be done”, but there being no truth or

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trust in what should be done or what should not be done, he lives without mindfulness, without protection, and that individual cannot reasonably be called an ascetic. This, monks, for the ascetics and brahmins who are of these arguments, these views, is my first reasonable reproach.

### **Those who Believe in the Power of God**

Here, monks, (as for) those ascetics and brahmins who are of this argument, this view: “Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that is due to the power of God,” having approached them, I say: “Is it true that you venerables are of this argument, this view: “Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that is due to the power of God?”, and if they agree with me when questioned thus, (saying) “yes”, I say to them:

“Then, venerables,  
(people) will be killers of living creatures due to the power of God,  
they will be takers of what is not given due to the power of God,  
they will be unchaste due to the power of God,  
they will be speakers of what is false due to the power of God,  
they will be utterers of divisive words due to the power of God,  
they will be utterers of harsh words due to the power of God,  
they will be frivolous talkers due to the power of God,  
they will be avaracious due to the power of God,  
they will be malevolent due to the power of God,  
they will hold to wrong views due to the power of God.

But, monks, for he who holds the power of God as the essential thing, there is no desire nor effort (thinking): “this should be done, or this should not be done”, but there being no truth or trust in what should be done or what should not be done, he lives without mindfulness, without protection, and that individual cannot reasonably be called an ascetic. This, monks, for the ascetics and brahmins who are of these arguments, these views, is my second reasonable reproach.

### **Those who Believe there is No Cause or Condition**

Here, monks, (as for) those ascetics and brahmins who are of this argument, this view: “Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that has no cause or condition,” having approached them, I say: “Is it true that you venerables are of this argument, this view: “Whatever an individual experiences, whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, all of that has no cause or condition?”, and if they agree with me when questioned thus, (saying) “yes”, I say to them:

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“Then, venerables,  
(people) will be killers of living creatures with no cause or condition,  
they will be takers of what is not given with no cause or condition,  
they will be unchaste with no cause or condition,  
they will be speakers of what is false with no cause or condition,  
they will be utterers of divisive words with no cause or condition,  
they will be utterers of harsh words with no cause or condition,  
they will be frivolous talkers with no cause or condition,  
they will be avaricious with no cause or condition,  
they will be malevolent with no cause or condition,  
they will hold to wrong views with no cause or condition.

But, monks, for he who holds no cause or condition as the essential thing, there is no desire nor effort (thinking): “this should be done, or this should not be done”, but there being no truth or trust in what should be done or what should not be done, he lives without mindfulness, without protection, and that individual cannot reasonably be called an ascetic. This, monks, for the ascetics and brahmins who are of these arguments, these views, is my third reasonable reproach.

These are the three belief systems, monks, and though questioned, queried, and discussed by wise men, (because they) have come down from others, they persist in inaction.

## The Buddha’s Teaching

But this is the Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unreviled by wise ascetics and brahmins. What is the Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unreviled by wise ascetics and brahmins?

“These are the six elements” is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unreviled by wise ascetics and brahmins.

“These are the six spheres of contact” is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unreviled by wise ascetics and brahmins.

“These are the eighteen investigations of mind” is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unreviled by wise ascetics and brahmins.

“These are the four noble truths” is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unreviled by wise ascetics and brahmins.

## **The Six Elements**

“ ‘These are the six elements’ is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unrevised by wise ascetics and brahmins.

This is what was said, but in regard to what was it said?

There are these six elements, monks: the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the wind element, the space element, the consciousness element.

‘These are the six elements’ is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unrevised by wise ascetics and brahmins. This is that which was said, and this is the reason it was said.

## **The Six Spheres of Contact**

‘These are the six spheres of contact’ is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unrevised by wise ascetics and brahmins. This is what was said, but in regard to what was it said?

There are these six spheres of contact, monks: the eye sphere of contact, the ear sphere of contact, the nose sphere of contact, the tongue sphere of contact, the body sphere of contact, the mind sphere of contact.

‘These are the six spheres of contact’ is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unrevised by wise ascetics and brahmins. This is that which was said, and this is the reason it was said.

## **The Eighteen Investigations of Mind**

‘These are the eighteen investigations of mind’ is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unrevised by wise ascetics and brahmins. This is what was said, but in regard to what was it said?

Having seen a form with the eye he investigates whether it is to be classified as a pleasant form, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a unpleasant form, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a neutral form.

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Having heard a sound with the ear he investigates whether it is to be classified as a pleasant sound, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a unpleasant sound, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a neutral sound.

Having smelt a smell with the nose he investigates whether it is to be classified as a pleasant smell, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a unpleasant smell, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a neutral smell.

Having tasted a taste with the tongue he investigates whether it is to be classified as a pleasant taste, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a unpleasant taste, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a neutral taste.

Having touched a tangible with the body he investigates whether it is to be classified as a pleasant tangible, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a unpleasant tangible, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a neutral tangible.

Having cognised a mental object with the mind he investigates whether it is to be classified as a pleasant mental object, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a unpleasant mental object, he investigates whether it is to be classified as a neutral mental object.

‘These are the eighteen investigations of mind’ is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unreveiled by wise ascetics and brahmins. This is that which was said, and this is the reason it was said.

## The Four Noble Truths

‘These are the four noble truths’ is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unreveiled by wise ascetics and brahmins. This is what was said, but in regard to what was it said?

Having attachment to the six elements, monks, there is entry into the womb, with the appearance (in the womb) there is mind and body, because of mind and body: the six sense spheres, because of the six sense spheres: contact, because of contact: feeling, now to one who has feeling, monks, I declare ‘this is suffering’, I declare ‘this is the arising of suffering’, I declare ‘this is the cessation of suffering’, I declare ‘this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering’.

Now what, monks, is the noble truth of suffering?

Birth is suffering

also old age is suffering

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also death is suffering

also grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair, is suffering

also not to obtain what one longs for is suffering

in brief, the five constituent groups (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment are suffering.

This I say, monks, is the noble truth of suffering.

Now what, monks, is the noble truth of the arising of suffering?

Because of ignorance there are (volitional) processes,  
because of (volitional) processes: consciousness,  
because of consciousness: mind and body,  
because of mind and body: the six sense spheres,  
because of the six sense spheres: contact,  
because of contact: feeling,  
because of feeling: craving,  
because of craving: attachment,  
because of attachment: continuation,  
because of continuation: birth,  
because of birth: old age, death,  
grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair (all) arise,  
and so there is an origination of this whole mass of suffering.

This I say, monks, is the noble truth of the arising of suffering.

Now what, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering?

From the complete fading away and cessation of ignorance, there is the cessation of (volitional) processes,  
from the cessation of (volitional) processes, the cessation of consciousness,  
from the cessation of consciousness, the cessation of mind and body,  
from the cessation of mind and body, the cessation of the six sense spheres,  
from the cessation of the six sense spheres, the cessation of contact,  
from the cessation of contact, the cessation of feeling,  
from the cessation of feeling, the cessation of craving,  
from the cessation of craving, the cessation of attachment,  
from the cessation of attachment, the cessation of continuation,  
from the cessation of continuation, the cessation of birth,  
from the cessation of birth, old age, death,  
grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair (all) cease,  
and so there is a cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

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This I say, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

Now what, monks, is the noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering?

It is this noble path with eight factors, as follows:

right view

right thought

right speech

right action

right livelihood

right endeavour

right mindfulness

right concentration.

This I say, monks, is the noble truth of path leading to the cessation of suffering.

'These are the four noble truths' is a Teaching, monks, taught by me that is without reproach, undefiled, blameless, and unreviled by wise ascetics and brahmins. This is that which was said, and this is the reason it was said