

MN 19: Dvedhāvitakka Sutta

Two Kinds of Thought

Translated by Suddhāso Bhikkhu

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Jeta's Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Monks." "Auspicious sir," those monks replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

"Monks, before my awakening, when I was an unenlightened Bodhisatta¹, this [thought] occurred to me: 'What if I were to abide continually dividing my thoughts into two [categories]?' Monks, any thought of sensuality, aversion, or cruelty I put in one category; any thought of renunciation, non-aversion, and non-cruelty I put in the second category.

"Monks, while I was abiding in this way, vigilant, ardent, and resolute, a sensual thought arose in me. I understand it in this way: 'A sensual thought has arisen in me. This leads to my own affliction, to the affliction of others, and to the affliction of both. It destroys wisdom, brings irritation, and does not lead to Nibbāna.' Monks, by reflecting 'It leads to my own affliction,' it disappeared. Monks, by reflecting 'It leads to the affliction of others,' it disappeared. Monks, by reflecting 'It leads to the affliction of both,' it disappeared. Monks, by reflecting 'It destroys wisdom, brings irritation, and does not lead to Nibbāna,' it disappeared. Monks, I abandoned, removed, and destroyed all arisen sensual thoughts.

"Monks, while I was abiding in this way, vigilant, ardent, and resolute, an aversive thought... a thought of cruelty arose in me. I understand it in this way: 'A thought of cruelty has arisen in me... Monks, I abandoned, removed, and destroyed all thoughts of cruelty.

"Monks, whatever a monk frequently thinks about and considers becomes the inclination of his mind. Monks, if a monk frequently thinks about and considers sensual thoughts, then thoughts of renunciation are abandoned, sensual thoughts become frequent, and his mind inclines towards sensual thoughts. Monks, if a monk frequently thinks about and considers aversive thoughts... thoughts of cruelty, then thoughts of non-cruelty are abandoned, thoughts of cruelty become frequent, and his mind inclines towards thoughts of cruelty. Monks, it is like the last month of the rainy season, at the beginning of autumn, when [fields are] crowded with crops, and a cow-herder is herding cows. Using a stick, he fends off, forces back, obstructs, and keeps those cows away from that [field of crops]. For what reason? Monks, it is because the cow-herder sees that it would be a cause of execution, imprisonment, fining, or reprimand. In the same way, monks, I saw the drawback, degradation, and defilement of unwholesome mindstates, and the blessing of renunciation and the factor of purification of wholesome mindstates.

"Monks, while I was abiding in this way, vigilant, ardent, and resolute, a thought of renunciation arose in me. I understand it in this way: 'A thought of renunciation has arisen in me. This does not lead to my own affliction, to the affliction of others, or to the

¹ A being who is seeking enlightenment.

affliction of both. It nurtures wisdom, eliminates irritation, and leads to Nibbāna.' Monks, even if I thought about and considered that [thought] at night, I saw no danger² with that as its cause. Monks, even if I thought about and considered that [thought] during the day, I saw no danger with that as its cause. Monks, even if I thought about and considered that [thought] during both night and day, I saw no danger with that as its cause. However, when I thought about and considered for too long, my body became tired. When the body is tired the mind is disturbed. A disturbed mind is far from concentration. Monks, I internally settled, relaxed, focused, and concentrated my mind. For what reason? 'May my mind not be disturbed.'

"Monks, while I was abiding in this way, vigilant, ardent, and resolute, a thought of non-aversion... of non-cruelty arose in me. I understand it in this way: 'A thought of non-cruelty has arisen in me... Monks, I internally settled, relaxed, focused, and concentrated my mind. For what reason? 'May my mind not be disturbed.'

"Monks, whatever a monk frequently thinks about and considers becomes the inclination of his mind. Monks, if a monk frequently thinks about and considers thoughts of renunciation, then sensual thoughts are abandoned, thoughts of renunciation become frequent, and his mind inclines towards thoughts of renunciation. Monks, if a monk frequently thinks about and considers thoughts of non-aversion... thoughts of non-cruelty, then thoughts of cruelty are abandoned, thoughts of non-cruelty become frequent, and his mind inclines towards thoughts of non-cruelty. Monks, it is like the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been brought into the villages, and a cow-herder is herding cows. While sitting at the root of a tree or in the open air, he only needs to maintain mindfulness that 'The cows are there.' In the same way, monks, there only needed to be mindfulness that 'Mindstates are there.'

"Monks, unrelenting energy was aroused in me, clear mindfulness was established, the body was unagitated and tranquil, the mind was concentrated and focused. Monks, secluded from sensuality, secluded from unwholesome phenomena, I attained and remained in the first *jhāna*, which has thought and consideration, and has rapture and pleasure produced by seclusion. With the calming of thought and consideration, and with internal composure³ and mental focus⁴, I attained and remained in the second *jhāna*, which is free of thought and free of consideration, and has rapture and pleasure born from concentration. With the fading away of rapture, I remained equanimous, mindful, and clearly comprehending, and I experienced pleasure with the body; I attained and remained in the third *jhāna*, which the noble ones describe as 'Equanimous, mindful, and dwelling happily.' With the abandoning of pleasure, the abandoning of pain, and the prior disappearance of elation and depression, I attained and remained in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither pain nor pleasure, and has purity due to mindfulness and equanimity⁵.

2 *Bhaya*. This can also mean "fear."

3 *Sampasādana*. This relatively broad term can mean clarity, purity, peacefulness, happiness, etc.

4 *Ekodi-bhāva*. This could also be translated "unification."

5 *Upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhī*. This compound word allows for multiple interpretations, and thus has been rendered in various ways by various translators.. It may be simply a list - "equanimity, mindfulness, and purity."

“When the mind was concentrated in this way - completely pure, clean, spotless, free of defilement, soft, flexible, stable, and imperturbable - I directed the mind towards recollection of past lives. I recalled many past lives; that is, one birth, two births, three... four... five... ten... twenty... thirty... forty... fifty... one hundred... one thousand... one hundred thousand births, many eons of universal contraction, many eons of universal expansion, many eons of universal expansion and contraction - 'There, such was my name, such was my clan, such was my appearance, such was my food, such was my experience of pleasure and pain, such was the ending of my lifespan. When I fell from there, I arose over there; there, such was my name... such was the ending of my lifespan. When I fell from there, I arose here.' In this way I remember many past lives, in every characteristic and detail. Monks, this is the first knowledge, which I attained in the first portion of the night. Ignorance was destroyed, knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed, light arose - as it is for one who dwells vigilant, ardent, and resolute.

“When the mind was concentrated in this way - completely pure, clean, spotless, free of defilement, soft, flexible, stable, and imperturbable - I directed the mind towards knowledge of the death and rebirth of beings. With the divine eye which is pure and surpasses human [vision], I saw beings dieing and being reborn - inferior, superior, beautiful, ugly, fortunate, unfortunate; I understood how beings fare according to their actions: 'These honorable beings were endowed with bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct. They criticized noble ones, they held false perspectives, and they undertook actions based on false perspectives⁶. After dieing, when they were separated from their body, they arose in [a state of] deprivation, a bad destination, downfall, hell. However, these honorable beings were endowed with good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, and good mental conduct. They did not criticize noble ones, they had correct perspectives, and they undertook actions based on correct perspectives. After dieing, when they were separated from their body, they arose in a good destination, a heavenly world.' Thus, with the divine eye which is pure and surpasses human [vision], I saw beings dieing and being reborn - inferior, superior, beautiful, ugly, fortunate, unfortunate; I understood how beings fare according to their actions. Monks, this is the second knowledge, which I attained in the middle portion of the night. Ignorance was destroyed, knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed, light arose - as it is for one who dwells vigilant, ardent, and resolute.

“When the mind was concentrated in this way - completely pure, clean, spotless, free of defilement, soft, flexible, stable, and imperturbable - I directed the mind towards knowledge of the elimination of the taints. I accurately knew 'This is suffering.' I accurately knew 'This is the source of suffering.' I accurately knew 'This is the cessation of suffering.' I accurately knew 'This is the practice which leads to the cessation of suffering.' I accurately knew 'These are the taints.' I accurately knew 'This is the source of the taints.' I accurately knew 'This is the cessation of the taints.' I accurately knew 'This is the practice which leads to the cessation of the taints.' Knowing in this way, seeing in this way, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensuality, from the taint of existence, and from the taint of ignorance. When there was liberation, there was the knowledge 'Liberated.' I knew, 'Birth has been eliminated. The Holy Life has been lived.

6 *Dit̐hi*. Lit. “view.” This refers to one's beliefs, opinions, etc.

What was to be done has been done. There will be no further existence here.' Monks, this is the third knowledge, which I attained in the third portion of the night. Ignorance was destroyed, knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed, light arose - as it is for one who dwells vigilant, ardent, and resolute.

"Monks, it is like a pond in a large valley in the forest, which a large community of deer live in dependence on. Some man might arise who desires their detriment, harm, and entrapment. He might close the safe, secure path that leads to bliss, open a false path, put in a decoy, and set up a distraction. In this way, monks, at a later occasion that large community of deer might attain misfortune and disaster. However, monks, another might arise who desires their benefit, welfare, and security. He might open the safe, secure path that leads to bliss, close the false path, take away the decoy, and remove the distraction. In this way, monks, at a later occasion that large community of deer might attain prosperity, growth, and abundance.

"Monks, I have made this simile to demonstrate a meaning. And this is the meaning in this case: Monks, 'a pond in a large valley in the forest' is a designation for sensuality. Monks, 'a large community of deer' is a designation for beings. Monks, 'a person who desires [their] detriment, harm, and entrapment' is a designation for Māra, the Evil One. Monks, 'false path' is a designation for the eightfold wrong path, that is, wrong view, wrong thought, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, and wrong concentration. Monks, 'decoy' is a designation for delight and passion. Monks, 'distraction' is a designation for ignorance. Monks, 'a person who desires [their] benefit, welfare, and security' is a designation for the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One. Monks, 'safe, secure path that leads to bliss' is a designation for the noble eightfold path, that is, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

"Monks, I have opened the safe, secure path that leads to bliss, closed the false path, taken away the decoy, and removed the distraction. Monks, what is to be done out of compassion by a teacher who seeks the welfare of his disciples has been done by me for you. Monks, there are these tree-roots, there are these empty buildings. Meditate, monks! Do not be negligent. Do not be one who later falls into regret. This is my instruction for you."

This is what the Blessed One said. Satisfied, those monks delighted in the Blessed One's speech.