

# MN 139: Araṇavibhaṅga Sutta

## *Analysis of Non-Conflict*

Translated by Suddhāso Bhikkhu

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Jeta's Grove, at 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, I will teach an analysis of non-conflict<sup>1</sup> for you. Listen to this and carefully pay attention; I will speak." "Yes, Bhante," those monks replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

"One should not be committed to sensual pleasure, which is inferior, [the behavior] of villagers<sup>2</sup>, [the behavior] of commoners<sup>3</sup>, ignoble, and unbeneficial. One should also not be committed to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial. Monks, without approaching either of these two extremes, a moderate path of practice<sup>4</sup> has been awakened to by the Tathāgata, which produces vision, produces knowledge, and leads to tranquility, higher knowledge, awakening, and Nibbāna. One should understand flattery and one should understand disparagement. Having understood flattery and disparagement, one should neither flatter nor disparage; one should just teach the Dhamma. One should understand the definition of happiness. Having understood the definition of happiness, one should be committed to internal happiness. One is not to gossip<sup>5</sup>, and one is not to make critical remarks about a person who is present. One is to speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly. One is not to insist on using the language of a [particular] country, and one is not to override conventional [terminology]. This is the table of contents for the analysis of non-conflict.

### [*Sensual Pleasure and Self-torment*]

"One should not be committed to sensual pleasure, which is inferior, [the behavior] of villagers, [the behavior] of commoners, ignoble, and unbeneficial. One should also not be committed to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial.' This is what was said; what does this refer to?

"Devotion to the elation that arises from pleasure that is connected with sensuality, which is inferior, [the behavior] of villagers, [the behavior] of commoners, ignoble, and unbeneficial - this phenomenon brings suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice.

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1 *Araṇa*. Usually this word means "solitude." However, in this context it appears to be the negation of *raṇa* (conflict), and thus means "non-conflict."

2 *Gamma*. Lit. "of the village." From the word *gāma* (village).

3 *Pothujanika*. Lit. "connected (*ika*) with many/most (*puthu*) people (*jana*)."

4 *Majjhimā paṭipadā*. More commonly rendered as "middle path."

5 *Raho-vāda*. Lit. "secret statement." As this is given as the opposite of making critical remarks about a person when they are present, it is reasonable to conclude that it refers to making remarks about a person when they are not present - that is, gossip.

“Non-devotion to the elation that arises from pleasure that is connected with sensuality, which is inferior, [the behavior] of villagers, [the behavior] of commoners, ignoble, and unbeneficial – this phenomenon is free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice.

“Commitment to self-torment is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – this phenomenon brings suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice.

“Non-commitment to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – this phenomenon is free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice.

“One should not be committed to sensual pleasure, which is inferior, [the behavior] of villagers, [the behavior] of commoners, ignoble, and unbeneficial. One should also not be committed to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial.’ This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

#### *[The Moderate Path of Practice]*

“Without approaching either of these two extremes, a moderate path of practice has been awakened to by the Tathāgata, which produces vision, produces knowledge, and leads to tranquility, higher knowledge, awakening, and Nibbāna.’ This is what was said; what does this refer to?

“Just this noble eightfold path; that is, right perspective, right attitude, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

“Without approaching either of these two extremes, a moderate path of practice has been awakened to by the Tathāgata, which produces vision, produces knowledge, and leads to tranquility, higher knowledge, awakening, and Nibbāna.’ This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

#### *[Flattery and Disparagement]*

“One should understand flattery and one should understand disparagement. Having understood flattery and disparagement, one should neither flatter nor disparage; one should just teach the Dhamma.’ This is what was said; what does this refer to?

“Monks, how is there flattery and disparagement, and not the teaching of Dhamma?

“When one says, ‘There are those who are committed to sensual pleasure, which is inferior, [the behavior] of villagers, [the behavior] of commoners, ignoble, and unbeneficial. They all have suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; they are all practicing wrongly,’ then one disparages some people.

“When one says, 'There are those who are not committed to sensual pleasure, which is inferior, [the behavior] of villagers, [the behavior] of commoners, ignoble, and unbeneficial. They are all free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; they are all practicing rightly,' then one flatters some people.

“When one says, 'There are those who are committed to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial. They all have suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; they are all practicing wrongly,' then one disparages some people.

“When one says, 'There are those who are not committed to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial. They are all free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; they are all practicing rightly,' then one flatters some people.

“When one says, 'There are those who have not abandoned the fetter of existence. They all have suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; they are all practicing wrongly,' then one disparages some people.

“When one says, 'There are those who have abandoned the fetter of existence. They are all free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; they are all practicing rightly,' then one flatters some people.

“Monks, this is how there is flattery and disparagement, and not the teaching of Dhamma.

“Monks, how is there neither flattery nor disparagement, and just the teaching of Dhamma?

“One does not say 'There are those who are committed to sensual pleasure... they are all practicing wrongly.' When one says, 'This commitment brings suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice,' then one just teaches the Dhamma.

“One does not say 'There are those who are not committed to sensual pleasure... they are all practicing rightly.' When one says, 'The absence of this commitment is free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice,' then one just teaches the Dhamma.

“One does not say 'There are those who are committed to self-torment... they are all practicing wrongly.' When one says, 'This commitment brings suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice,' then one just teaches the Dhamma.

“One does not say 'There are those who are not committed to self-torment...they are all practicing rightly.' When one says, 'The absence of this commitment is free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice,' then one just teaches the Dhamma.

“One does not say 'There are those who have not abandoned the fetter of existence... they are all practicing wrongly.' When one says, 'When the fetter of existence is not abandoned, then existence is also not abandoned,' then one just teaches the Dhamma.

“One does not say 'There are those who have abandoned the fetter of existence... they are all practicing rightly.' When one says, 'When the fetter of existence has been abandoned, then existence is also abandoned,' then one just teaches the Dhamma.

“One should understand flattery and one should understand disparagement. Having understood flattery and disparagement, one should neither flatter nor disparage; one should just teach the Dhamma.' This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

### [Defining Happiness]

“One should understand the definition of happiness. Having understood the definition of happiness, one should be committed to internal happiness.' This is what was said; what does this refer to?

“Monks, there are these five cords of sensuality. What five? Visible objects cognizable by the eye which are desirable, appealing, pleasing, enjoyable, sensual, and exciting. Sounds cognizable by the ear... fragrances cognizable by the nose... flavors cognizable by the tongue... tangible objects cognizable by the body which are desirable, appealing, pleasing, enjoyable, sensual, and exciting. Monks, these are the five cords of sensuality. Monks, any pleasure and elation that arises dependent on these five cords of sensuality is called sensual pleasure, dirty<sup>6</sup> pleasure, vulgar pleasure, ignoble pleasure. I say that such pleasure is not to be cultivated, not to be developed, not to be made much of; such pleasure is to be regarded as dangerous.

“Monks, here a monk who is secluded from sensuality and secluded from unskillful phenomena attains and remains in the first *jhāna*, which has thought, has consideration, and has rapture and happiness produced by seclusion. With the tranquilizing of thought and consideration, he attains and remains in the second *jhāna*, which has internal composure, mental unification, is free of thought, is free of consideration, and has rapture and happiness produced by concentration. With the dissipation of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, and clearly aware, experiencing pleasure with the body; what the noble ones describe as 'Equanimous, mindful, and dwelling happily' - he attains and remains in the third *jhāna*. With the abandoning of pleasure, the abandoning of pain, and the previous disappearance of elation and dejection, he attains and remains in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither pain nor pleasure, and has purity of mindfulness and equanimity. This is called the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of tranquility, the pleasure of awakening. I say that such pleasure is to be cultivated, is to be developed, is to be made much of; such pleasure is not to be regarded as dangerous.<sup>7</sup>

“One should understand the definition of happiness. Having understood the definition of happiness, one should be committed to internal happiness.' This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

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6 *Mīḥa*. Lit. “excrement.”

7 This statement stands in sharp contrast to the opinion that *jhāna* practice is dangerous and best avoided, which is an opinion found in some contemporary meditation traditions. Here we clearly see the exact opposite opinion coming the Buddha himself - namely, that *jhāna* practice should not be considered dangerous and most certainly should be engaged in.

[*Gossip and Open Criticism*]

“One is not to gossip, and one is not to make critical remarks about a person who is present.’ This is what was said; what does this refer to?

“Monks, when one knows that a piece of gossip is nonfactual, untrue, and unbeneficial, then to the extent of one's ability one is not to speak that gossip. When one knows that a piece of gossip is factual, true, and unbeneficial, then one is to train oneself to avoid saying it. When one knows that a piece of gossip is factual, true, and beneficial, then one is to know the proper time for saying that gossip.

“Monks, when one knows that a critical remark about a person who is present is nonfactual, untrue, and unbeneficial, then to the extent of one's ability one is not to speak that critical remark. When one knows that a critical remark about a person who is present is factual, true, and unbeneficial, then one is to train oneself to avoid saying it. When one knows that a critical remark about a person who is present is factual, true, and beneficial, then one is to know the proper time for saying that critical remark about a person who is present.

“One is not to gossip, and one is not to make critical remarks about a person who is present.’ This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

[*Hurried Speech*]

“One is to speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly.’ This is what was said; what does this refer to?

“Monks, when one speaks hurriedly, one's body becomes tired, one's mind becomes agitated, one's voice becomes unclear, one's throat becomes sore, and one's statements are indistinct and difficult to understand. Monks, when one speaks unhurriedly, one's body does not become tired, one's mind does not become agitated, one's voice does not become unclear, one's throat does not become sore, and one's statements are distinct and understandable.

“One is to speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly.’ This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

[*Insistence on Regional Terminology*]

“One is not to insist on using the language of a [particular] country, and one is not to override conventional [terminology].’ This is what was said; what does this refer to?

“Monks, how is there insistence on using the language of a [particular] country, and the overriding of conventional [terminology]? Monks, in some countries it is called a 'dish,' in

some a 'bowl,' in some a 'vessel,' in some a 'saucer,' in some a 'pan,' in some a 'pot,' in some a 'basin.' Regardless of what it is called in those countries, one stubbornly, graspingly insists [on using a particular term], and says 'Only this is correct, everything else is wrong.' Monks, it is in this way that there is insistence on using the language of a [particular] country, and the overriding of conventional [terminology].

“Monks, how is there no insistence on using the language of a [particular] country, and no overriding of conventional [terminology]? Monks, in some countries it is called a 'dish,' in some a 'bowl,' in some a 'vessel,' in some a 'saucer,' in some a 'pan,' in some a 'pot,' in some a 'basin.' Whatever it is called in those countries, one thinks 'Apparently these venerables are referring to that when they speak,' and one speaks accordingly without grasping. Monks, it is in this way that there is no insistence on using the language of a [particular] country, and no overriding of conventional [terminology].

“One is not to insist on using the language of a [particular] country, and one is not to override conventional [terminology].’ This is what was said, and this is what it refers to.

### [Summary]

“Monks, devotion to the elation that arises from pleasure that is connected with sensuality, which is inferior, [the behavior] of villagers, [the behavior] of commoners, ignoble, and unbeneficial – this phenomenon brings suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict<sup>8</sup>.

“Monks, non-devotion to the elation that arises from pleasure that is connected with sensuality, which is inferior, [the behavior] of villagers, [the behavior] of commoners, ignoble, and unbeneficial – this phenomenon is free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice. Therefore this phenomenon is free of conflict.

“Monks, commitment to self-torment is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – this phenomenon brings suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict.

“Monks, non-commitment to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – this phenomenon is free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice. Therefore this phenomenon is free of conflict.

“Monks, the moderate path of practice which has been awakened to by the Tathāgata, and it produces vision, produces knowledge, and leads to tranquility, higher knowledge, awakening, and Nibbāna – this is a phenomenon which is free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice. Therefore this phenomenon is free of conflict.

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8 *Saraṇa*. While usually this means “refuge,” in this case it is a compound of *sa* (with) + *raṇa* (conflict).

“Monks, there is flattery and disparagement and not the teaching of Dhamma - this phenomenon brings suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict.

“Monks, there is neither flattery nor disparagement, and just the teaching of Dhamma - this phenomenon is free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice. Therefore this phenomenon is free of conflict.

“Monks, there is sensual pleasure, dirty pleasure, vulgar pleasure, ignoble pleasure - this phenomenon brings suffering, infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict.

“Monks, there is the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of tranquility, the pleasure of awakening - this phenomenon is free of suffering, free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice. Therefore this phenomenon is free of conflict.

“Monks, there is gossip that is nonfactual, untrue, and unbeneficial - this phenomenon brings infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict.

“Monks, there is gossip that is factual, true, and unbeneficial - this phenomenon brings infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict.

“Monks, there is gossip that is factual, true, and beneficial - this phenomenon is free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice. Therefore this phenomenon is free of conflict.

“Monks, there is a critical remark about a person who is present, that is nonfactual, untrue, and unbeneficial - this phenomenon brings infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict.

“Monks, there is a critical remark about a person who is present, that is factual, true, and unbeneficial - this phenomenon brings infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict.

“Monks, there is a critical remark about a person who is present, that is factual, true, and beneficial - this phenomenon is free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice. Therefore this phenomenon is free of conflict.

“Monks, there is hurried speech - this phenomenon brings infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict.

“Monks, there is unhurried speech - this phenomenon is free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice. Therefore this phenomenon is free of conflict.

“Monks, there is insistence on using the language of a [particular] country, and the overriding of conventional [terminology] – this phenomenon brings infliction, anguish, and fever; it is the wrong practice. Therefore this phenomenon brings conflict.

“Monks, there is non-insistence on using the language of a [particular] country, and non-overriding of conventional [terminology] – this phenomenon is free of infliction, free of anguish, free of fever; it is the right practice. Therefore this phenomenon is free of conflict.

“Therefore, monks, this is how you are to train: 'We will understand phenomena that bring conflict, and we will understand phenomena that are free of conflict. Having known phenomena that bring conflict and phenomena that are free of conflict, we will practice the path of non-conflict.' Monks, the clansman Subhūti practices the path of non-conflict.”

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