

MN 15: Anumāna Sutta

The Discourse on Inference

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

Thus have I heard. On one occasion venerable Mahā-Moggallāna was living among the Bhaggas, at Crocodile Hill, in the deer park at Bhesakalā Grove. There Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna addressed the monks: “Venerable monks!” “Venerable sir,” those monks replied to Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna. Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna said this:

“Venerables, if a monk gives the invitation, ‘Let the Venerables admonish¹ me, I am to be admonished by the Venerables,’ but he is hard to admonish and has traits that make him hard to admonish, if he is intolerant and does not respectfully receive instruction, then his companions in the spiritual life think of him as someone who is not to be admonished, instructed, or trusted.

“Venerables, what traits make a person hard to admonish? Venerables, here a monk has harmful wishes, he is under the power of harmful wishes. Venerables, if a monk has harmful wishes and is under the power of harmful wishes, then this is a trait that makes him hard to admonish.

“Furthermore, Venerables, there is a monk who praises himself and disparages others...who is angry and overcome by anger... who is angry and resentful on account of that anger... who is angry and obstinate because of that anger... who is angry and speaks words bordering on anger... who, when criticized, rejects the criticism... who, when criticized, insults the criticizer... who, when criticized, responds with criticism of the criticizer... who, when criticized, leads the talk aside, talks about unrelated things, and manifests anger, hatred, and grudge-bearing... who, when criticized, does not heed the advice... who denigrates and is malicious... who is envious and stingy... who is fraudulent and deceitful... who is stubborn and conceited... who holds tightly to his opinions and relinquishes them with difficulty. Venerables, if a monk holds tightly to his opinions and relinquishes them with difficulty, then this is a trait that makes him hard to admonish.

“Venerables, these are the traits that make a person hard to admonish.

“Venerables, even if a monk does not give the invitation, ‘Let the Venerables admonish me, I am to be admonished by the Venerables,’ if he is easy to admonish and has traits that make him easy to admonish, if he is tolerant and respectfully receives instruction, then his companions in the spiritual life think of him as someone to be admonished, instructed, and trusted.

“Venerables, what traits make a person easy to admonish? Venerables, here a monk does not have harmful wishes and is not under the power of harmful wishes... does not praise himself or disparage others... is not angry or overcome by anger... is not angry or resentful on account of that anger... is not angry or obstinate on account of that anger... is not angry or does not speak words bordering on anger... when criticized, does not reject the criticism... when criticized, does not insult the criticizer... when criticized, does not

¹ Lit. “speak to.” However, the context indicates that this refers to pointing out faults or shortcomings.

respond with criticism of the criticizer... when criticized, does not lead the talk aside, talk about unrelated things, or manifest anger, hatred, and grudge-bearing... when criticized, heeds the advice... does not denigrate and is not malicious... is not envious or stingy... is not fraudulent or deceitful... is not stubborn or conceited... does not hold tightly to his opinions, and relinquishes them easily. Venerables, if a monk does not hold tightly to his opinions and relinquishes them easily, this is a trait that makes him easy to admonish.

“Venerables, these are the traits that make a person easy to admonish.

“Venerables, a monk is to infer about himself in this way: ‘A person who has harmful wishes and is under the power of harmful wishes is disliked by me and not pleasing to me; if I have harmful wishes and am under the power of harmful wishes, then I will be disliked by others and not pleasing to them.’ Venerables, knowing this, a monk is to establish the thought, ‘I will not have harmful wishes, and I will not be under the power of harmful wishes.’

“‘A person who praises himself and criticizes others... holds tightly to his opinions and relinquishes them with difficulty is disliked by me and not pleasing to me; if I hold tightly to my opinions and relinquish them with difficulty, I will be disliked by others and not pleasing to them.’ Venerables, knowing this, a monk is to establish the thought, ‘I will not hold tightly to my opinions and I will relinquish them easily.’

“Venerables, a monk is to examine himself in this way: ‘Do I have harmful wishes, am I under the power of harmful wishes?’ Venerables, if when examining himself a monk knows, ‘I have harmful wishes, I am under the power of harmful wishes,’ then that monk is to make an effort to abandon that harmful unwholesome trait. However, venerables, if when examining himself a monk knows, ‘I do not have harmful wishes, I am not under the power of harmful wishes,’ then that monk is to live with rapture and gladness, training day and night in accord with wholesome phenomena.

“Furthermore, Venerables, a monk is to examine himself in this way: ‘Do I praise myself and disparage others?’ ... ‘Do I hold tightly to my opinions and relinquish them with difficulty?’ Venerables, if when examining himself a monk knows, ‘I hold tightly to my opinions and relinquish them with difficulty,’ then that monk is to make an effort to abandon that harmful unwholesome trait. However, venerables, if when examining himself a monk knows, ‘I do not hold tightly to my opinions and relinquish them easily,’ then that monk is to live with rapture and gladness, training day and night in accord with wholesome phenomena.

“Venerables, if when examining himself a monk sees that not all of these harmful unwholesome traits have been abandoned by him, then that monk is to make an effort to abandon all these harmful unwholesome traits. However, venerables, if when examining himself a monk sees that all of these harmful unwholesome traits have been abandoned by him, then that monk is to live with rapture and gladness, training day and night in accord with wholesome phenomena.

“Venerables, it just as if there was a woman or man who was young, youthful, and fond of beautification. When examining the reflection of their face in a clean mirror or clear pool

of water, if they see a speck of dirt or a blemish there, they make an effort to remove that dirt or blemish; and if they do not see any dirt or blemish, they are satisfied and think, 'It is wonderful that I am completely pure!' In the same way, Venerables, if when examining himself a monk sees that not all of these harmful unwholesome traits have been abandoned by him, then that monk is to make an effort to abandon all these harmful unwholesome traits. However, venerables, if when examining himself a monk sees that all of these harmful unwholesome traits have been abandoned by him, then that monk is to live with rapture and gladness, training day and night in accord with wholesome phenomena."

This is what Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna said. Satisfied, those monks delighted in Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna's speech.