

# MN 46: Mahādharmasamādāna Sutta

## *The Greater Discourse on Commitments*

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Fortunate One was living at Sāvatti, in Jeta Grove, at Anāthapiṇḍaka's Monastery. There the Fortunate One addressed the monks: "Monks!" "Venerable sir," those monks replied to the Fortunate One. The Fortunate One said this:

"Monks, most beings have this desire, this interest, this aspiration: 'May unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things diminish, and may wanted, desired, and pleasant things increase!' Monks, for those beings who have that desire, interest, and aspiration, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things increase, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things diminish. Monks, what is the reason for that?"

"Bhante, for us, the Fortunate One is the root of the Dhamma, the guide, the reference. Bhante, it would be excellent if the Fortunate One would reveal the meaning of this statement. The monks will listen to the Fortunate One and remember."

"Therefore, monks, listen and pay attention well. I will speak."

"Yes, Bhante," those monks replied to the Fortunate One. The Fortunate One said this:

"Monks, here the uneducated commoner - one who does not see noble beings, is not familiar with the teachings of noble beings, has not been trained in the teachings of noble beings, who does not see good people, is not familiar with the teachings of good people, and has not been trained in the teachings of good people - does not know what things are to be engaged in, what things are not to be engaged in, what things are to be participated in, and what things are not to be participated in. Not knowing what things are to be engaged in, what things are not to be engaged in, what things are to be participated in, and what things are not to be participated in, they engage in the things that are not to be engaged in, do not engage in the things that are to be engaged in, participate in the things that are not to be participated in, and do not participate in the things that are to be participated in. As they engage in the things that are not to be engaged in, do not engage in the things that are to be engaged in, participate in the things that are not to be participated in, and do not participate in the things that are to be participated in, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things increase, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things diminish. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who lacks wisdom.

"Monks, here the educated student of noble beings - one who sees noble beings, is familiar with the teachings of noble beings, has been well-trained in the teachings of noble beings, who sees good people, is familiar with the teachings of good people, and has been well-trained in the teachings of good people - knows what things are to be engaged in, what things are not to be engaged in, what things are to be participated in, and what things are not to be participated in. Knowing what things are to be engaged in, what things are not to be engaged in, what things are to be participated in, and what things are not to be participated in, they do not engage in the things that are not to be engaged in,

engage in the things that are to be engaged in, do not participate in the things that are not to be participated in, and participate in the things that are to be participated in. As they do not engage in the things that are not to be engaged in, engage in the things that are to be engaged in, do not participate in the things that are not to be participated in, and participate in the things that are to be participated in, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things diminish, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things increase. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who has wisdom.

“Monks, there are four kinds of commitments. What four?”

“Monks, there is a commitment which is unpleasant now and unpleasant in the future.

“Monks, there is a commitment which is pleasant now and unpleasant in the future.

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“Monks, there is a commitment which is pleasant now and pleasant in the future.

*[For One Who Lacks Wisdom]*

“Monks, when a commitment is unpleasant now and unpleasant in the future, an ignorant person is not aware of that, and does not accurately understand, ‘This is a commitment which is unpleasant now and unpleasant in the future.’ Since they are not aware of that and do not accurately understand, they engage in it and do not avoid it. As they engage in it and do not avoid it, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things increase, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things diminish. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who lacks wisdom.

“Monks, when a commitment is pleasant now and unpleasant in the future, an ignorant person is not aware of that, and does not accurately understand, ‘This is a commitment which is pleasant now and unpleasant in the future.’ Since they are not aware of that and do not accurately understand, they engage in it and do not avoid it. As they engage in it and do not avoid it, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things increase, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things diminish. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who lacks wisdom.

“Monks, when a commitment is unpleasant now and pleasant in the future, an ignorant person is not aware of that, and does not accurately understand, ‘This is a commitment which is unpleasant now and pleasant in the future.’ Since they are not aware of that and do not accurately understand, they avoid it and do not engage in it. As they avoid it and do not engage in it, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things increase, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things diminish. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who lacks wisdom.

“Monks, when a commitment is pleasant now and pleasant in the future, an ignorant person is not aware of that, and does not accurately understand, ‘This is a commitment which is pleasant now and pleasant in the future.’ Since they are not aware of that and do not accurately understand, they avoid it and do not engage in it. As they avoid it and do not engage in it, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things increase, and wanted, desired,

and pleasant things diminish. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who lacks wisdom.

*[For One Who Has Wisdom]*

“Monks, when a commitment is unpleasant now and unpleasant in the future, a knowledgeable person is aware of that, and accurately understands, ‘This is a commitment which is unpleasant now and unpleasant in the future.’ Since they are aware of that and accurately understand, they avoid it and do not engage in it. As they avoid it and do not engage in it, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things diminish, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things increase. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who has wisdom.

“Monks, when a commitment is pleasant now and unpleasant in the future, a knowledgeable person is aware of that, and accurately understands, ‘This is a commitment which is pleasant now and unpleasant in the future.’ Since they are aware of that and accurately understand, they avoid it and do not engage in it. As they avoid it and do not engage in it, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things diminish, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things increase. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who has wisdom.

“Monks, when a commitment is unpleasant now and pleasant in the future, a knowledgeable person is aware of that, and accurately understands, ‘This is a commitment which is unpleasant now and pleasant in the future.’ Since they are aware of that and accurately understand, they engage in it and do not avoid it. As they engage in it and do not avoid it, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things diminish, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things increase. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who has wisdom.

“Monks, when a commitment is pleasant now and pleasant in the future, a knowledgeable person is aware of that, and accurately understands, ‘This is a commitment which is pleasant now and pleasant in the future.’ Since they are aware of that and accurately understand, they engage in it and do not avoid it. As they engage in it and do not avoid it, unwanted, undesired, unpleasant things diminish, and wanted, desired, and pleasant things increase. For what reason? Monks, this is how it is for one who has wisdom.

*[Examples]*

“Monks, what is a commitment that is unpleasant now and unpleasant in the future?

“Here, monks, with displeasure and depression, someone kills living beings, and because of killing living beings they experience displeasure and depression.

“With displeasure and depression, they steal, and because of stealing they experience displeasure and depression.

“With displeasure and depression, they commit sexual misconduct, and because of committing sexual misconduct they experience displeasure and depression.

“With displeasure and depression, they tell lies, and because of telling lies they experience displeasure and depression.

“With displeasure and depression, they speak divisive speech, and because of speaking divisive speech they experience displeasure and depression.

“With displeasure and depression, they speak harsh speech, and because of speaking harsh speech they experience displeasure and depression.

“With displeasure and depression, they speak useless speech, and because of speaking useless speech they experience displeasure and depression.

“With displeasure and depression, they covet, and because of coveting they experience displeasure and depression.

“With displeasure and depression, they are aversive, and because of being aversive they experience displeasure and depression.

“With displeasure and depression, they hold wrong view, and because of holding wrong view they experience displeasure and depression.

“When they are separated from their body after death, they reappear in deprivation, a bad destination, downfall, hell.

“Monks, this is called ‘a commitment that is unpleasant now and unpleasant in the future.’

“Monks, what is a commitment that is pleasant now and unpleasant in the future?

“Here, monks, with pleasure and elation, someone kills living beings, and because of killing living beings they experience pleasure and elation. With pleasure and elation, they steal... tell lies... speak divisive speech... speak harsh speech... speak useless speech... covet... are aversive... hold wrong view, and because of holding wrong view they experience pleasure and elation. When they are separated from their body after death, they reappear in deprivation, a bad destination, downfall, hell.

“Monks, this is called ‘a commitment that is pleasant now and unpleasant in the future.’

“Monks, what is a commitment that is unpleasant now and pleasant in the future?

“Here, monks, with displeasure and depression, someone refrains from killing living beings, and because of refraining from killing living beings they experience displeasure and depression. With displeasure and depression, they refrain from stealing... refrain from sexual misconduct... refrain from telling lies... refrain from speaking divisive speech... refrain from speaking harsh speech... refrain from speaking useless speech... do not covet... are not aversive... hold right view, and because of holding right view they

experience displeasure and depression. When they are separated from their body after death, they reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world.

“Monks, this is called ‘a commitment that is unpleasant now and pleasant in the future.’

“Monks, what is a commitment that is pleasant now and pleasant in the future?

“Here, monks, with pleasure and elation, someone refrains from killing living beings, and because of refraining from killing living beings they experience pleasure and elation. With pleasure and elation, they refrain from stealing... refrain from sexual misconduct... refrain from telling lies... refrain from speaking divisive speech... refrain from speaking harsh speech... refrain from speaking useless speech... do not covet... are not aversive... hold right view, and because of holding right view they experience pleasure and elation. When they are separated from their body after death, they reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world.

“Monks, this is called ‘a commitment that is pleasant now and pleasant in the future.’

“Monks, these are the four kinds of commitments.

*[Simile of the Poisoned Drink]*

“Monks, it is just as if there was a bitter drink mixed with poison. Then a person would come who wanted to live and did not want to die, who wanted pleasure and avoided pain. Someone would say to them, ‘Person, this is a bitter drink mixed with poison. You can drink it if you want to. As you drink it, you will not enjoy its appearance, its fragrance, or its flavor, after you drink it, you will die or experience death-like pain.’ Without considering, they would drink it, they would not reject it. As they drank it, they would not enjoy its appearance, fragrance, or its flavor; and after drinking it, they would die or experience death-like pain. Monks, this is like the commitment which is unpleasant now and unpleasant in the future.

“Monks, it is just as if there was an attractive, fragrant, and delicious drink in a bronze cup, but it was mixed with poison. Then a person would come who wanted to live and did not want to die, who wanted pleasure and avoided pain. Someone would say to them, ‘Person, this is an attractive, fragrant, and delicious drink in a bronze cup, but it is mixed with poison. You can drink it if you want to. As you drink it, you will enjoy its appearance, its fragrance, and its flavor, but after you drink it, you will die or experience death-like pain.’ Without considering, they would drink it, they would not reject it. As they drank it, they would enjoy its appearance, its fragrance, and its flavor; but after drinking it, they would die or experience death-like pain. Monks, this is like the commitment which is pleasant now and unpleasant in the future.

“Monks, it is just as if there was a fermented decoction mixed with medicine. Then a person would come who was diseased. Someone would say to them, ‘Person, this fermented decoction is mixed with medicine. You can drink it if you want to. As you drink it, you will not enjoy its appearance, its fragrance, or its flavor. After you drink it, you will

feel good.' After considering, they would drink it, they would not reject it. As they drank it, they would not enjoy its appearance, fragrance, or its flavor; but after drinking it, they would feel good. Monks, this is like the commitment which is unpleasant now and pleasant in the future.

"Monks, it is just as if there was a mixture of curds, honey, ghee, and molasses. Then a person with dysentery came. Someone would say to them, 'Person, this is a mixture of curds, honey, ghee, and molasses. You can drink it if you want to. As you drink it, you will enjoy its appearance, its fragrance, and its flavor. After you drink it, you will feel good.' After considering, they would drink it, they would not reject it. As they drank it, they would enjoy its appearance, its fragrance, and its flavor; and after drinking it, they would feel good. Monks, this is like the commitment which is pleasant now and pleasant in the future.

"Monks, just as in the last month of summer, at the beginning of autumn, when the sky is clear and cloudless, the rising sun drives away all darkness and brightens, warms, and illuminates, in the same way, monks, the commitment which is pleasant now and pleasant in the future drives away the teachings of ordinary contemplatives and priests, and brightens, warms, and illuminates."

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