

AN 3.102: Paṃsudhovaka Sutta

Washing Away Dirt

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

“Monks, there are coarse defilements of gold, such as dirt, sand, grit, and gravel. A washer or a washer’s apprentice spreads it in a trough and washes it, completely washes it, thoroughly washes it.

“When those have been discarded and eliminated, there are still medium defilements of gold, such as fine grit and rough sand. The washer or washer’s apprentice washes it, completely washes it, thoroughly washes it.

“When those have been discarded and eliminated, there are still subtle defilements of gold, such as fine sand and black dust. The washer or washer’s apprentice washes it, completely washes it, thoroughly washes it.

“When those have been discarded and eliminated, then there remains only gold dust. A goldsmith or a goldsmith’s apprentice puts it in a crucible and smelts it, completely smelts it, thoroughly smelts it.

“However, while the gold is being smelted, but the dross has not yet been thoroughly smelted out, the gold is not yet soft, malleable, and bright; it is still brittle, and not yet ready to be shaped. Monks, then the time comes when that goldsmith or goldsmith’s apprentice smelts it, completely smelts it, thoroughly smelts it; all the dross is smelted out; the gold is soft, malleable and bright; it is no longer brittle, and it is ready to be shaped. Then no matter what kind of ornament one wants – whether a bracelet, an earring, a necklace, or a pendant – one can use it for that purpose.

“In the same way, monks, there are coarse defilements of a monk who is committed to a superior mind, such as physical misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct. A thoughtful and capable monk discards, removes, eliminates, and annihilates them.

“When those have been discarded and eliminated, there are still medium defilements of a monk who is committed to a superior mind, such as sensual thoughts, aversive thoughts, and cruel thoughts. A thoughtful and capable monk discards, removes, eliminates, and annihilates them.

“When those have been discarded and eliminated, there are still subtle defilements of a monk who is committed to a superior mind, such as thoughts about relatives, thoughts about the country, and thoughts about not being looked down upon. A thoughtful and capable monk discards, removes, eliminates, and annihilates them.

“When those have been discarded and eliminated, there remains thoughts about Dhamma. That samādhi is not yet peaceful, sublime, tranquil, and unified; it relies on active suppression. Monks, then the time comes when that mind internally stabilizes, settles, unifies, and attains [true] samādhi. That samādhi is peaceful, sublime, tranquil, and

unified; it does not rely on active suppression. Then no matter what the mind attempts to realize with higher knowledge, it is possible, depending on the circumstances.

“If one wishes, ‘May I manifest many kinds of psychic powers: having been one may I be many, having been many may I be one; may I appear and disappear; may I pass unobstructed through fences, walls, and mountains, as if it was space; may I dive in and out of the earth, as if it was water; may I move across water without sinking, as if it was earth; may I fly cross-legged through the sky, like a winged bird; with my hand may I touch and stroke the sun and moon, so powerful and majestic; may I control this body even as far as the Brahma worlds,’ then it is possible, depending on the circumstances.

“If one wishes, ‘With divine hearing, pure and superhuman, may I hear both kinds of sounds: divine and human, far and near,’ then it is possible, depending on the circumstances.

“If one wishes, ‘May I know the minds of other beings and other people by encompassing them with my own mind: may I know a lustful mind as a lustful mind, a lust-free mind as a lust-free mind, a hate-filled mind as a hate-filled mind, a hate-free mind as a hate-free mind, a delusional mind as a delusional mind, a delusion-free mind as a delusion-free mind, a contracted mind as a contracted mind, a scattered mind as a scattered mind, an enlarged mind as an enlarged mind, an unenlarged mind as an unenlarged mind, a surpassable mind as a surpassable mind, an unsurpassable mind as an unsurpassable mind, a mind in samādhi as a mind in samādhi, a mind not in samādhi as a mind not in samādhi, a liberated mind as a liberated mind, an unliberated mind as an unliberated mind,’ then it is possible, depending on the circumstances.

“If one wishes, ‘May I remember many past lives - that is, one birth, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand births; many eons of contraction, many eons of expansion, many eons of contraction and expansion - “There I had that name, that clan, that appearance, that food, that experience of pleasure and pain, that death; I fell from there and was reborn over there, where I had that name, that clan, that appearance, that food, that experience of pleasure and pain, that death; I fell from there and was reborn here,” in this way may I remember many past lives in full detail,’ then it is possible, depending on the circumstances.

“If one wishes, ‘With divine vision, pure and superhuman, may I see beings falling and being reborn, inferior or excellent, beautiful or ugly, in good places or bad places; may I know how beings go according to their karma: “These honorable beings engaged in physical misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct, they slandered noble beings, they held wrong views, they performed actions based on wrong views; and when they were separated from their bodies after death, they were reborn in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in disastrous conditions, in hell. However, those honorable beings engaged in good physical conduct, good verbal conduct, and good mental conduct, they did not slander noble beings, they held right view, they performed actions based on right view; and when they were separated from their bodies after death, they were reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.” In this way, with divine vision, pure and superhuman, may I see beings falling and being reborn, inferior or

excellent, beautiful or ugly, in good places or bad places; may I know how beings go according to their karma,' then it is possible, depending on the circumstances.

“If one wishes, ‘With the elimination of the corruptions, may I reach and remain in the immediately visible corruption-free mental liberation, wisdom liberation, having realized it with my own higher knowledge,’ then it is possible, depending on the circumstances.”