

AN 3.40: Ādhipateyya Sutta

Motivations

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

“Monks, there are three kinds of motivation. What three? Self-motivation, world-motivation, and Dhamma-motivation.

“Monks, what is self-motivation? Here, monks, a monk in a forest, or at the foot of a tree, or in an empty building, considers, ‘I did not leave lay life and become a homeless renunciate for the sake of robes, or food, or housing, or to become anything in particular. It was just because I was overcome by birth, decay, death, sorrow, grief, pain, depression, and anguish; overcome by suffering and enveloped in suffering; and I thought that perhaps a way could be found to end this mass of suffering. If I were to seek out sensual experiences similar or inferior to what I left behind when I left lay life and became a homeless renunciate, that would not be appropriate for me.’ He thinks, ‘Unrelenting energy will be initiated, unblurred mindfulness will be established, the body will be tranquil and undisturbed, the mind will be concentrated and unified!’ So, motivated by himself, he abandons the unwholesome, develops the wholesome, abandons the blameworthy, develops the blameless, and maintains his purity. Monks, this is called ‘self-motivation.’

“Monks, what is world-motivation? Here, monks, a monk in a forest, or at the foot of a tree, or in an empty building, considers, ‘I did not leave lay life and become a homeless renunciate for the sake of robes, or food, or housing, or to become anything in particular. It was just because I was overcome by birth, decay, death, sorrow, grief, pain, depression, and anguish; overcome by suffering and enveloped in suffering; and I thought that perhaps a way could be found to end this mass of suffering. Although I have become a renunciate in this way, I might think sensual thoughts, aversive thoughts, or cruel thoughts. However, there are a great number of people in this world; and among them there are contemplatives and holy people who have spiritual vision and can read minds. They see others from afar, but others cannot see them even when they are close by. They know the minds of others using their own minds. They could know me in this way: “Look, even though this gentleman faithfully left lay life and became a homeless renunciate, he lives all mixed up with evil, unwholesome thoughts.” There are also powerful angels who have spiritual vision and can read minds. They also see others from afar, but others cannot see them even when they are close by. They also know the minds of others using their own minds. They also could know me in this way: “Look, even though this gentleman faithfully left lay life and became a homeless renunciate, he lives all mixed up with evil, unwholesome thoughts.”’ He thinks, ‘Unrelenting energy will be initiated, unblurred mindfulness will be established, the body will be tranquil and undisturbed, the mind will be concentrated and unified!’ So, motivated by the world, he abandons the unwholesome, develops the wholesome, abandons the blameworthy, develops the blameless, and maintains his purity. Monks, this is called ‘world-motivation.’

“Monks, what is Dhamma-motivation? Here, monks, a monk in a forest, or at the foot of a tree, or in an empty building, considers, ‘I did not leave lay life and become a homeless renunciate for the sake of robes, or food, or housing, or to become anything in particular.

It was just because I was overcome by birth, decay, death, sorrow, grief, pain, depression, and anguish; overcome by suffering and enveloped in suffering; and I thought that perhaps a way could be found to end this mass of suffering. The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Fortunate One - visible, timeless, apparent, transformative, to be personally experienced by the wise. I have co-practitioners who know and see. As a renunciate in such a well-expounded system of teachings and trainings, if I were to live lazily and negligently, that would not be appropriate for me.' He thinks, 'Unrelenting energy will be initiated, unblurred mindfulness will be established, the body will be tranquil and undisturbed, the mind will be concentrated and unified!' So, motivated by the Dhamma, he abandons the unwholesome, develops the wholesome, abandons the blameworthy, develops the blameless, and maintains his purity. Monks, this is called 'Dhamma-motivation.'

"Monks, these are the three kinds of motivation.

"There is no secrecy in the world for one who does evil things
A person knows for themselves what is true and what is false.

"The goodness within you despises what it sees of you,
And the evil within that you try to hide.

"Angels and Buddhas also see
All the fools living unpeacefully in the world.

"Therefore, motivated by oneself and by the world,
A clever person should practice meditation.

"Motivated by the Dhamma, practicing according to it,
A wise person committed to truth does not falter.

"One who subdues Māra, overpowering the Ender,
Contacts the elimination of birth through striving.

"A wise person who knows the world in this way
Is a sage who cannot be defined in terms of anything."