AN 4.10 — Yoga Sutta: Bondage

English translation by K. Nizamis.

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Completeness: UNKNOWN. Entire protected source unit, including notes and verses, preserved; canonical completeness has not been independently established.

Text

I. The four bonds

“Monks, there are four bonds. [1] Which four? The bond of sensual pleasure, [2] the bond of being, [3] the bond of opinion, [4] the bond of ignorance. [5]

I.1. The bond of sensual pleasure

“And which, monks, is the bond of sensual pleasure? Here, monks, someone does not understand as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of sensual pleasures. For one not understanding as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of sensual pleasures; who, with respect to sensual pleasure, is obsessed with passion for sensual pleasure, delight in sensual pleasure, affection for sensual pleasure, intoxication with sensual pleasure, thirst for sensual pleasure, fever for sensual pleasure, attachment to sensual pleasure, craving for sensual pleasure: this, monks, is called ‘the bond of sensual pleasure’. Thus the bond of sensual pleasure.

I.2. The bond of being

“And how is there the bond of being? Here, monks, someone does not understand as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of modes of being. For one not understanding as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of modes of being; who, with respect to being, is obsessed with passion for being, delight in being, affection for being, intoxication with being, thirst for being, fever for being, attachment to being, craving for being: this, monks, is called ‘the bond of being’. Thus the bond of sensual delight and the bond of being.

I.3. The bond of opinions

“And how is there the bond of opinions? Here, monks, someone does not understand as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of opinions. For one not understanding as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of modes of opinion; who, with respect to opinion, is obsessed with passion for opinion, delight in opinion, affection for opinion, intoxication with opinion, thirst for opinion, fever for opinion, attachment to opinion, craving for opinion: this, monks, is called ‘the bond of opinion’. Thus the bond of sensual pleasure, the bond of being, and the bond of opinion.

I.4. The bond of ignorance

“And how is there the bond of ignorance? Here, monks, someone does not understand as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of the six fields of sense-contact. For one not understanding as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of the six fields of sense- contact; when, with respect to ignorance about the six fields of sense-contact, one is obsessed with the denial of knowledge [6]: this, monks, is called the bond of ignorance. Thus the bond of sensual pleasure, the bond of being, the bond of opinion, and the bond of ignorance: bound up with evil, unwholesome mental phenomena — defiling, leading to renewed being, painful, having suffering as fruit, and stretching forth to future birth, old age and death — because of that, it is called ‘without peace or rest from bondage [7]’. These, monks, are the four bonds.

II. The four releases from bondage

“Monks, there are four releases from bondage [8]. Which four? The release from the bondage of the bond of sensual pleasure, the release from the bondage of the bond of being, the release from the bondage of the bond of opinion, and the release from the bondage of the bond of ignorance.

II.1 The release from the bondage of the bond of sensual pleasure

“And which, monks, is the release from the bondage of the bond of sensual pleasure? Here, monks, someone understands as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of sensual pleasures. For one who knows as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of sensual pleasures; who, with respect to sensual pleasure, is not obsessed with passion for sensual pleasure, delight in sensual pleasure, affection for sensual pleasure, intoxication with sensual pleasure, thirst for sensual pleasure, fever for sensual pleasure, attachment to sensual pleasure, craving for sensual pleasure: this, monks, is called ‘the release from bondage of the bond of sensual pleasure’. Thus the release from bondage of the bond of sensual pleasure.

II.2 The release from the bondage of the bond of being

“And how is there the release from the bondage of the bond of being? Here, monks, someone understands as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of modes of being. For one who understands as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of modes of being; who, with respect to being, is not obsessed with passion for being, delight in being, affection for being, intoxication with being, thirst for being, fever for being, attachment to being, craving for being: this, monks, is called ‘the release from bondage of the bond of being’. Thus the release from the bondage of the bond of sensual pleasure and the release from the bondage of the bond of being.

II.3 The release from the bondage of the bond of opinions

“And how is there the release from the bondage of the bond of opinions? Here, monks, someone understands as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of opinions. For one understanding as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of opinions; who, with respect to opinions, is not obsessed with passion for opinions, delight in opinions, affection for opinions, intoxication with opinions, thirst for opinions, fever for opinions, attachment to opinions, craving for opinions: this, monks, is called ‘the release from bondage of the bond of opinions’. Thus the release from the bondage of the bond of sensual pleasure, the release from the bondage of the bond of being, and the release from the bondage of the bond of opinions.

II.4 The release from the bondage of the bond of ignorance

“And how is there the release from the bondage of the bond of ignorance? Here, monks, someone understands as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of the six spheres of sense-contact. For one understanding as it really is the arising, the subsiding, the sweetness, the wretchedness, and the leaving behind of the six spheres of sense-contact; with respect to ignorance about the six fields of sense-contact, one is not obsessed with not understanding: this, monks, is called the release from the bondage of the bond of ignorance. Thus the release from the bondage of the bond of sensual pleasure, the release from the bondage of the

bond of being, the release from the bondage of the bond of opinions, and the release from the bondage of the bond of ignorance: released from the bondage of evil, unwholesome mental phenomena — defiling, leading to renewed being, painful, having suffering as fruit, and stretching forth to future birth, old age and death — because of that, it is called 'peace or rest from bondage'. [9] These, monks, are the four releases from bondage.

III. Concluding summary verses

"Bound by the bond of sensual pleasure, and also by the bond of being, Bound by the bond of opinions, and enveloped by ignorance, Beings go to wandering-on [10], destined to birth and death.

"But those fully understanding sensual pleasure, and, in every way, the bond of being, Dispelling the bond of opinions, and detached from ignorance, Are released from all bonds: they, indeed, are the wise ones going beyond bonds."

Notes

1.

Yogā (plural). From the verbal root yuj, "to yoke, join, fasten, harness". Yoga has many meanings, but its plainest senses are: "the act of yoking, joining, attaching, harnessing; a yoke". The English word "yoke" is cognate with yoga. I have translated it as "bond", "bondage", to emphasise the specifically negative connotations of the word in this sutta.

2.

Kāma-yoga.

3.

Bhava-yoga: the noun form of the verbal root bhū, "to become, to be", is often translated as "becoming", i.e., "coming into being", referring to the process of repeated birth and death. Literally, however, the word can also be translated just as "being"; and in this sense, it is often used to refer to the three major "states" or "modes" of "being" (life, existence) into which beings may be born: namely, kāma-bhava, or the mode of being characterised by sensual pleasure and desire; rūpa-bhava, the mode of being characterised by phenomenal form purified from the attachments and distortions of desire; and arūpa-bhava, the mode of being characterised by phenomenal formlessness (and which may therefore be described as a kind of abstract, purely mental mode of being no longer dependent upon material or phenomenal form). Although these are traditionally associated with three distinct planes or realms of "birth", they may also be understood as three distinct modes or levels of consciousness. These three modes or levels of consciousness are in fact necessarily always already present in all sentient beings; however, beings have a deep tendency, through their own kamma and their own consequent stage of mental development, to remain attached and bound to a particular

mode or level of consciousness.

4.

Diṭṭhi-yoga. Diṭṭhi is the Pali form of the equivalent Sanskrit noun dṛṣṭi , from the verbal root dṛṣ, “to see”. It suggests a way of seeing or looking at things: hence, “view, theory, doctrine, belief, opinion, dogma”. The usual translation is “view”. The early Buddhadhamma makes a fundamentally important distinction between “knowing and seeing” things “as they really are [yathābhūtaṃ]”, or right knowledge, and not knowing and not seeing things as they really are, or “ignorance”. (Compare, for example, the typical formula: “Tassa evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati, bhavāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati, avijjāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati.” “Of one knowing thus and seeing thus, his mind [citta] is liberated from the inflows or intoxicants of sensuality, his mind is liberated from the inflows or intoxicants of being, his mind is liberated from the inflows or intoxicants of ignorance.” From MN 7 (Vatthūpama Sutta; PTS MN i.38).) The translation “opinion” is useful, here, because it emphasises that the “views” in question are not founded upon the nature of reality, nor are they in accord with it.

5.

Avijjā-yoga.

6.

Aññāṇaṃ: the negative particle a- + ñāṇa, “knowledge”. The dictionaries translate this plainly as “ignorance, lack of knowledge”. The commentary gives the following interpretation: “Through being opposed to knowledge, ignorance is characterised as aññāṇa.” (“Avijjā aññāṇa nti ñāṇa-paṭipakkha-bhāvena aññāṇa-saṅkhātā avijjā.” (PTS Mp iii.14)) This would seem to suggest that the commentator took the term aññāṇa to imply a sense of “opposition” or “contrariness”.

7.

Ayogakkhema.

8.

Visaṃyogā.

9.

Yogakkhema.

10.

Saṃsāra.