AN 4.171 — Catukka Sañcetanā Sutta — Discourse on Intentions

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

Section One:

“Bhikkhus, because of the lack in mindfulness as it regards to intentions while using the body, pleasant and painful feelings arise and are experienced for oneself internally. Because of the lack in mindfulness as it regards to intentions while using speech, pleasant and painful feelings arise and are experienced for oneself internally. Because of the lack in mindfulness as it regards to intentions while thinking, pleasant and painful feelings arise and are experienced for oneself internally. All this occurs due to ignorance as their condition.

“Bhikkhus, one either performs intentional actions with the body on one's own, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally, or performs intentional actions with the body prompted by the intentions of others, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally.

“Also, one either performs those intentional bodily actions with clear understanding, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally, or performs intentional bodily actions without clear understanding, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally.

“Bhikkhus, one either performs intentional actions through speech on one's own, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally, or performs intentional actions through speech prompted by the intentions of others, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally.

“Also, one either performs those intentional verbal actions with clear understanding, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally, or performs intentional verbal actions without clear understanding, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally.

One either performs intentional actions through thought on one's own, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally, or performs intentional actions through thought prompted by the intentions of others, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally.

“Also, one either performs those intentional mental actions with clear understanding, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally, or performs intentional mental actions without clear understanding, and as a result, experiences their pleasant and painful feelings internally.

“Because these fluctuating states are influenced by ignorance, with the cessation and complete eradication of ignorance there is no more body that is conditioned by or susceptible to experiencing pleasant or painful feelings internally.

“Also, there is no more speech that is conditioned by or susceptible to experiencing pleasant or painful feelings internally.

“Also, there is no more mind that is conditioned by or susceptible to experiencing pleasant or painful feelings internally.

“The field, on account of which pleasant and unpleasant feelings arise internally, no longer exists. The object, on account of which pleasant and unpleasant feelings arise internally, no longer exists. The atmosphere, on account of which pleasant and unpleasant feelings arise internally, no longer exists. The state of affairs, on account of which pleasant and unpleasant feelings arise internally, no longer exists.”

Section Two:

“Bhikkhus, these are the four types of taking rebirth. What four?

“Bhikkhus, there is rebirth that is led by one's own intention and not those of others; there is rebirth that is led by the intention of others and not of one's own; there is rebirth that is led by both one's own intention and those of others; and there is rebirth that is neither led by one's own intention nor those of others. These are the four types of taking rebirth.”

When this was said, Venerable Sāriputta said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, I understand the detailed meaning of this short exposition given by the Blessed One to be as follows:

The rebirth that is led by one's own intention and not those of others refers to those beings, who pass away from their realm of existence into another through their own intention. The rebirth that is led by the intentions of others and not those of oneself refers to those beings, who pass away from their realm of existence into another through the intention of others. The rebirth that is led by both, one's own intention and those of others, refers to those beings, who pass away from their realm of existence into another through the intentions of both, those of themselves, as well as those of others.

“But Bhante, in the case of rebirth that is neither led by one's own intention nor those of others, what category of Devas might the Blessed One be referring to here?”

“This refers to those Devas existing in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception.”

“Bhante, what is the reason why some beings, who pass away from that realm of neither perception nor non-perception only end up coming back to this realm of existence, whereas others immediately become non-returners and thus never come back to this realm?”

“Here, Sāriputta, consider someone who has not yet abandoned the five lower fetters. While living in this realm, they develop the mind to the point where it can experience and dwell in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception, which they find enjoyable and are satisfied by and do not go beyond it. If they thus continue abiding in it and do not lose it, at the moment of death in this existence, they are reborn in the company of the Devas of the realm of neither perception nor non-perception. However, as his time eventually runs out from living in that realm, when he passes away there, the person is reborn by returning back to this realm of existence.

“But consider someone else who has indeed abandoned the five lower fetters and, while living in this realm, they develop the mind to the point where it can experience and dwell in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception, which they find enjoyable and are satisfied by and do not go beyond it. If they thus continue abiding in it and do not lose it, at the moment of death in this existence, they are reborn in the company of the Devas of the realm of neither perception nor non-perception. When his time eventually runs out from living in that realm, and when he passes away there, this person becomes a non-returner, never to return back to this realm of existence.

“This is the reason why some beings who pass away from that realm of neither perception nor non-perception, only end up coming back to this realm of existence, whereas others immediately become non-returners and thus never come back to this realm.”

Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu