AN 7.61 — Nodding Off

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Text

Numbered Discourses 7.61

6. The Undeclared Points

Nodding Off

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Bhaggas at Crocodile's Bellow, in the deer park at Bhesakaḷā's Wood.

Now at that time, in the land of the Magadhans near Kallavāḷamutta Village, Venerable Mahāmoggallāna was nodding off while meditating. The Buddha saw him with his clairvoyance that is purified and superhuman. Then, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, he vanished from the deer park at Bhesakaḷā's Wood in the land of the Bhaggas and reappeared in front of Mahāmoggallāna near Kallavāḷamutta Village in the land of the Magadhans.

He sat down on the seat spread out and said to Mahāmoggallāna, "Are you nodding off, Moggallāna? Are you nodding off?"

"Yes, sir."

"So, Moggallāna, don't focus on or cultivate the perception that you were meditating on when you fell drowsy. It's possible that you'll give up drowsiness in this way.

But what if that doesn't work? Then think about and consider the teaching as you've learned and memorized it, examining it with your mind. It's possible that you'll give up drowsiness in this way.

But what if that doesn't work? Then rehearse in detail the teaching as you've learned and memorized it. It's possible that you'll give up drowsiness in this way.

But what if that doesn't work? Then pinch your ears and rub your limbs. It's possible that you'll give up drowsiness in this way.

But what if that doesn't work? Then get up from your seat, flush your eyes with water, look around in every direction, and look up at the stars and constellations. It's possible that you'll give up drowsiness in this way.

But what if that doesn't work? Then apply your mind to the perception of light, focusing on the perception of day: as by day, so by night; as by night, so by day. And so, with an open and unenveloped heart, develop a mind that's full of radiance. It's possible that you'll give up drowsiness in this way.

But what if that doesn't work? Then walk mindfully, focusing on the perception of before and behind, your faculties directed inwards and your mind not scattered outside. It's possible that you'll give up drowsiness in this way.

But what if that doesn't work? Then lie down in the lion's posture—on the right side, placing one foot on top of the other—mindful and aware, and focused on the time of getting up. When you wake, you should get up quickly, thinking: 'I will not live indulging in the pleasures of sleeping, lying down, and drowsing.' That's how you should train.

So you should train like this: 'I will not approach families with my head swollen with vanity.' That's how you should train. What happens if a mendicant approaches families with a head swollen with vanity? Well, families have business to attend to, so people might not notice when a mendicant arrives. In that case the mendicant thinks: 'Who on earth has turned this family against me? It seems they don't like me any more.' And so, because they don't get anything they feel dismayed. Being dismayed, they become restless. Being restless, they lose restraint. And without restraint the mind is far from immersion.

So you should train like this: 'I won't get into arguments.' That's how you should train. When there's an argument, you can expect there'll be lots of talking. When there's lots of talking, people become restless. Being restless, they lose restraint. And without restraint the mind is far from immersion. Moggallāna, I don't praise all kinds of closeness. Nor do I criticize all kinds of closeness. I don't praise closeness with laypeople and renunciates. I do praise closeness with those lodgings that are quiet and still, far from the madding crowd, remote from human settlements, and fit for retreat."

When he said this, Venerable Moggallāna asked the Buddha, "Sir, how do you briefly define a mendicant who is freed through the ending of craving, who has reached the ultimate end, the ultimate sanctuary from the yoke, the ultimate spiritual life, the ultimate goal, and is best among gods and humans?"

"Take a mendicant who has heard: 'Nothing is worth insisting on.' When a mendicant has heard that nothing is worth insisting on, they directly know all things. Directly knowing all things, they completely understand all things. Completely understanding all things, when they experience any kind of feeling—pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral— they meditate observing impermanence, dispassion, cessation, and letting go in those feelings. Meditating in this way, they don't grasp at anything in the world. Not grasping, they're not anxious. Not being anxious, they personally become extinguished.

They understand: 'Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.' That's how I briefly define a mendicant who is freed through the ending of craving, who has reached the ultimate end, the ultimate sanctuary from the yoke, the ultimate spiritual life, the ultimate goal, and is best among gods and humans."