

Bhāvanā Sutta
“Dedication to Cultivating the Mind”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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“Bhikkhus, when the Bhikkhu is not determined to apply himself with dedication to properly cultivate the mind, then, even though he may keep telling himself:

‘O! May my heart be finally released from the contaminants by no more seizing and grabbing onto anything, anymore!’

“But his heart still very much continues being contaminated, as it remains not yet released but shackled tightly to the āsavas. And what is the reason for this?

“Because he is not yet developed, for he is still lacking. But lacking in what?

“He is lacking in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness; lacking in the Four Correct Efforts; lacking in the Four Bases for Psychic Effectiveness; lacking in the Five Spiritual Faculties; lacking in the Five Spiritual Powers; lacking in the Seven Factors of Awakening; and lacking in the Noble Eightfold Path.

“Imagine, Bhikkhus, a hen that has laid eight, ten, or twelve eggs, but despite laying them, she does not take care of them by protecting and incubating them properly, nor keeps them warm by sitting on them; instead, she leaves them exposed and away from her warming feathers and protection.

“Now, even if that hen were to go on wishing and yearning for those chicks to hatch and come out, even though she may keep telling herself:

‘O! May my chicks finally pierce through those eggshells with their pointy beaks, and just claw their way out and hatch already!’

“But those chicks will still be captives inside their eggshells and not hatch safely. And what is the reason for this?

“Because she has not been taking care of them by protecting and incubating her eggs properly, nor keeping them warm by sitting on them; instead, she leaves them exposed and away from her warming feathers and protection.

“Therefore, in just the same way, when the Bhikkhu is not determined to apply himself with dedication to properly cultivate the mind, then, even though he may keep telling himself:

‘O! May my heart be finally released from the contaminants by no more seizing and grabbing onto anything, anymore!’

“But his heart still very much continues being contaminated, as it remains not yet released but shackled tightly to the āsavas. And what is the reason for this?

“Because he is not yet developed, for he is still lacking. But lacking in what?

“He is lacking in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness; lacking in the Four Correct Efforts; lacking in the Four Bases for Psychic Effectiveness; lacking in the Five Spiritual Faculties; lacking in the Five Spiritual Powers; lacking in the Seven Factors of Awakening; and lacking in the Noble Eightfold Path.

“However, Bhikkhus, when the Bhikkhu is determined to apply himself with dedication to properly cultivate the mind, then, even though he may not have the thought:

‘O! May my heart be finally released from the contaminants by no more seizing and grabbing onto anything, anymore!’

“Yet, his heart will be freed from the contaminants, no more shackled but released fully from the tight grip of the āsavas. And what is the reason for this?

“Because he has been developing himself. But developing in what?

“He is developed in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness; developed in the Four Correct Efforts; developed in the Four Bases for Psychic Effectiveness; developed in the Five Spiritual Faculties; developed in the Five Spiritual Powers; developed in the Seven Factors of Awakening; and developed in the Noble Eightfold Path.

“Now, imagine Bhikkhus, a hen that has laid eight, ten, or twelve eggs, which she had been taking care of by protecting and incubating them properly, keeping them warm by sitting on them, and not leaving them exposed and away from her warming feathers and protection.

“Now, even if that hen may not wish or yearn for those chicks to hatch and come out, by telling herself:

‘O! May my chicks finally pierce through those eggshells with their pointy beaks, and just claw their way out and hatch already!’

“Yet, those chicks will still break through from inside their eggshells and hatch safely. And what is the reason for this?

“Because she has been taking care of them by protecting and incubating her eggs properly, keeping them warm by sitting on them, and not leaving them exposed; instead, having them very close to her warming feathers and protection.

“Therefore, in just the same way, when the Bhikkhu is determined to apply himself with dedication to properly cultivate the mind, then, even though he may not have the thought:

‘O! May my heart be finally released from the contaminants by no more seizing and grabbing onto anything, anymore!’

“Yet, his heart will be freed from the contaminants, no more shackled but released fully from the tight grip of the āsavas. And what is the reason for this?

“Because he has been developing himself. But developing in what?

“He is developed in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness; developed in the Four Correct Efforts; developed in the Four Bases for Psychic Effectiveness; developed in the Five Spiritual Faculties; developed in the Five Spiritual Powers; developed in the Seven Factors of Awakening; and developed in the Noble Eightfold Path.

“Bhikkhus, just as a carpenter or his apprentice being aware of the scratchy and rough surface of the wooden handle of his axe, while blistering his thumb and hand from overuse, would not think to himself:

‘Well, today I rubbed, rasped, and smoothed away this much of the scratchy and rough surface of my axe’s wooden handle, and tomorrow this much more I will be able to rub, rasp, and wear away, and the day after, this much more!’

“Nevertheless, in time, he becomes aware that the scratchy and rough surface of the wooden handle of his axe, which used to blister his thumb and hand, has now been completely worn away and smoothed out, having vanished completely.

“In just the same manner, when the determined Bhikkhu applies himself with dedication to properly cultivate the mind, then, even though he may not have the thought:

‘Today, I was able to wear away this much of the āsavas from my heart, and tomorrow, I will be able to eliminate this much more, and the day after, that much!’

“Yet, sooner or later, steadily but surely, his heart becomes totally freed from the contaminants. And when this occurs, the Bhikkhu knows and understands it directly himself, that indeed, his āsavas are all wiped out, and are now fully worn away.

“Imagine, Bhikkhus, a seafaring boat that goes out to sea, and after journeying for six months on rough waters smashing it from all sides, it continues sailing with nothing to hold it together but its fettering ropes. On its return back to dry land, it gets lifted above the water, retiring for the cold season, but while being held up, this time in the heat of the sun and the blowing wind, its

withered and tattered ropes give way and cannot hold it in place, due to the decomposition of the fetters' strength and their rotted state, and thus they just come apart.

“In the same manner, Bhikkhus, when the determined Bhikkhu applies himself with dedication to properly cultivate the mind, then his fetters break off quickly due to their decomposing and rotted state, and just fall away.”

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