

Anguttara Nikāya

The Numerical Discourses

Dasakanipāta
(Book of the Tens)

AN 10.53

Thiti Sutta
“Becoming Stuck”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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“Bhikkhus, I do not praise ‘becoming stuck’ as it relates to growth in wholesome qualities, let alone falling behind or declining in cultivating them. Therefore, Bhikkhus, I only praise your continued growth in wholesome qualities, not you becoming stagnant or declining in them.

“And how, Bhikkhus, can you decline in wholesome qualities, as opposed to becoming stuck or growing in wholesome qualities?

“Here, Bhikkhus, whatever the Bhikkhu has developed within himself through faith, virtuous behavior, learning, generosity, and wisdom, while possessing direct knowledge and understanding, these qualities, however, neither remain in limbo, nor does he grow in them. Bhikkhus, this is what I declare to be a decline in wholesome qualities, as opposed to becoming stuck or growing in them. In this manner, there is no growth taking place in wholesome qualities, as the Bhikkhu is declining in them, not even becoming stuck.

“And how, Bhikkhus, can you get stuck in wholesome qualities, as opposed to declining or growing, in wholesome qualities?

“Here, Bhikkhus, whatever the Bhikkhu has developed within himself through faith, virtuous behavior, learning, generosity, and wisdom, while possessing direct knowledge and understanding, yet he neither declines nor grows in his wholesome qualities. Bhikkhus, this is what I declare as becoming stuck in wholesome qualities, as opposed to declining or growing in them. In this manner, there is no growth taking place in wholesome qualities, as the Bhikkhu is stuck, no longer moving forward or declining.

“And how, Bhikkhus, can you grow in wholesome qualities, as opposed to declining or becoming stuck in wholesome qualities?

“Here, Bhikkhus, whatever the Bhikkhu has developed within himself through faith, virtuous behavior, learning, generosity, and wisdom, while possessing direct knowledge and understanding, he does not allow himself to become stuck nor to decline in his wholesome qualities. Bhikkhus, this is what I declare as growth in wholesome qualities, as opposed to declining or becoming stuck in them. In this manner, there is growth taking place in wholesome qualities, as the Bhikkhu is no longer stuck nor declining, but continuing to move forward.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, before training yourself to become able to penetrate and understand the hearts of others, first, you must train yourself to become able to penetrate and understand *your own* heart. *This* is the right kind of practice.

“And how, Bhikkhus, should you train yourself to become able to penetrate and understand *your own* heart?

“Bhikkhus, just like a woman or a man who is young and youthful, fond of wearing adornments would take a clean mirror, or pour water into a vessel and look at the reflection of their face in it, and if they were to see some dirt or blemish on it, they would quickly try their best to remove it. And, if they do not see any dirt or blemish on their face, they would be completely satisfied on account of it, as they consider to themselves: *‘I’m so glad for being fortunate, since I am without any blemishes, seeing that my face is clean.’*

“In the same manner, Bhikkhus, self-examining as you check the level of your heart, is crucial for the Bhikkhu to grow in his wholesome qualities. Therefore, you should pause and check the quality of your heart by asking:

‘Is there greed and longing in my heart most of the time, or is there not?’

Am I dwelling on angry thoughts most of the time, or am I not?’

Am I overcome by drowsiness and boredom most of the time, or am I not?’

Am I often restless, worrying about things most of the time, or am I not?’

Is the heart plagued by skeptical doubts most of the time, or is it not?’

Am I irritable and contentious most of the time, or am I not?’

Do I live with a corrupted and defiled heart most of the time, or do I not?’

Is my body agitated, unable to be still most of the time, or is it still and unagitated?’

Am I lazy most of the time, or am I determined with aroused effort most of the time?’

Am I distracted most of the time, or is the heart collected and stable most of the time?’

“If the Bhikkhu, while self-examining, sees that there is in fact greed and longing in his heart, that he dwells on angry thoughts, how he is overcome by drowsiness and boredom, how he is often restless, worrying about things, that his heart is plagued by skeptical doubts, how he is irritable and contentious, how he lives with a corrupted and defiled heart, with an agitated body, unable to be still, while being lazy and distracted, without the ability to become collected or stable, then he should immediately put forth exceptional fervency, dedicated effort, zeal, determination, and unremitting energy, along with consistent mindfulness and clear comprehension, in order to abandon those evil and unwholesome qualities.

“Bhikkhus, just like someone whose head hairs and clothes had caught fire would immediately put forth exceptional fervency, dedicated effort, zeal, determination, and unremitting energy, along with consistent mindfulness and clear comprehension, in order to extinguish the fire blazing over his head and clothes.

“But, if the Bhikkhu, while self-examining, sees that there is in fact no greed or longing in his heart, that he does not dwell on angry thoughts, how he is neither overcome by drowsiness nor by boredom, how he is not restless, nor worrying about things, that his heart is free from skeptical doubts, how he is neither irritable nor contentious, how he lives with a pure heart that is uncorrupted, living in an unagitated body that remains still, not being lazy nor distracted, and with the ability to become collected and stable, then, while being grounded on these wholesome states, he should further apply himself in order to destroy the mental contaminants.”

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