Snp 3.12 — Contemplating Pairs

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Source: https://suttacentral.net/snp3.12/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
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Text

Anthology of Discourses 3.12

Contemplating Pairs

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in the stilt longhouse of Migāra's mother in the Eastern Monastery. Now, at that time it was the sabbath—the full moon on the fifteenth day—and the Buddha was sitting in the open surrounded by the Saṅgha of monks. Then the Buddha looked around the Saṅgha of monks, who were so very silent. He addressed them:

"Suppose, monks, they questioned you thus: 'There are skillful teachings that are noble, emancipating, and lead to awakening. What is the real reason for listening to such teachings?' You should answer: 'Only so as to truly know the pairs of teachings.' And what pairs do they speak of?

'This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering': this is the first contemplation. 'This is the cessation of suffering; this is the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates rightly contemplating a pair of teachings in this way—diligent, keen, and resolute—they can expect one of two results: enlightenment in this very life, or if there's residue left behind, non-return."

That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, went on to say:

"There are those who don't understand suffering

and suffering's cause,

and where all suffering

ceases no residue left behind.

And they do not know the path

that leads to the stilling of suffering.

They lack the heart's release,

as well as the release by wisdom.

Unable to make an end,

they continue to be reborn and grow old.

But there are those who understand suffering

and suffering's cause,

and where all suffering

ceases with no residue left behind.

And they understand the path

that leads to the stilling of suffering.

They're endowed with the heart's release,

as well as the release by wisdom.

Able to make an end,

they don't continue to be reborn and grow old."

"Suppose, monks, they questioned you thus: 'Could there be another way to contemplate the pairs?' You should say, 'There could.' And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by attachment': this is one contemplation. 'When attachment has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"Attachment is the source of suffering

in all its countless forms in the world.

When an ignorant person builds up attachments,

that dullard returns to suffering again and again.

So let one who understands not build up attachments,

contemplating the inception of suffering and rebirth."

"Suppose, monks, they questioned you thus: 'Could there be another way to contemplate the pairs?' You should say, 'There could.' And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by ignorance': this is one contemplation. 'When ignorance has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"Those who journey again and again,

transmigrating through birth and death;

they go from this state to another,

that destination due only to ignorance.

For ignorance is the great delusion

because of which we have long transmigrated.

Those beings who have knowledge

do not proceed to a future life."

"'Could there be another way?' … And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by choices': this is one contemplation. 'When choices has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"All the suffering that originates

is caused by choices.

With the cessation of choices,

there is no origination of suffering.

Knowing this danger,

that suffering is caused by choices;

through the stilling of all choices,

and the stopping of perceptions,

this is the way suffering ends

when one has known this as it is.

Rightly seeing, knowledge masters,

the astute, understanding rightly,

having thrown off Māra's yoke,

do not proceed to a future life."

"'Could there be another way?' … And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by consciousness': this is one contemplation. 'When consciousness has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"All the suffering that originates

is caused by consciousness.

With the cessation of consciousness,

there is no origination of suffering.

Knowing this danger,

that suffering is caused by consciousness,

with the stilling of consciousness a mendicant

is hungerless, quenched."

"'Could there be another way?' … And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by contact': this is one contemplation. 'When contact has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"Those mired in contact,

swept down the stream of lives,

practicing the wrong way,

are far from the ending of fetters.

But those who completely understand contact,

who, understanding, delight in peace;

by comprehending contact

they are hungerless, quenched."

"'Could there be another way?' … And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by feeling': this is one contemplation. 'When feeling has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"Whether it's pleasant or painful,

as well as what's neutral,

whatever there is that is felt

internally and externally:

having known, 'this is suffering,

deceptive, breaking apart',

seeing feelings vanish with every contact,

that's how they understand them.

With the ending of feelings, a mendicant

is hungerless, quenched."

"'Could there be another way?' … And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by craving': this is one contemplation. 'When craving has faded away and ceased

with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"Craving is a person's partner

as they transmigrate on this long journey.

They go from this state to another,

but don't escape transmigration.

Knowing this danger,

that craving is the cause of suffering—

rid of craving, free of grasping,

a mendicant would wander mindful."

"'Could there be another way?' ... And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by grasping': this is one contemplation. 'When grasping has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"Grasping is the cause of continued existence;

one who exists falls into suffering.

Death comes to those who are born—

this is the origination of suffering.

That's why with the end of grasping,

the astute, understanding rightly,

having directly known the end of rebirth,

do not proceed to a future life."

"'Could there be another way?' ... And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by instigating activity': this is one contemplation. 'When instigation has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"All the suffering that originates

is caused by instigating activity.

With the cessation of instigation,

there is no origination of suffering.

Knowing this danger,

that suffering is caused by instigating activity,

having given up all instigation,

one is freed with respects to instigation.

For the mendicant with peaceful mind,

who has cut off craving for continued existence,

transmigration through births is finished;

there'll be no more future lives for them."

"'Could there be another way?' … And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by sustenance': this is one contemplation. 'When sustenance has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"All the suffering that originates

is caused by sustenance.

With the cessation of sustenance,

there is no origination of suffering.

Knowing this danger,

that suffering is caused by sustenance,

completely understanding all sustenance,

one is independent of all sustenance.

Having rightly understood the state of health,

through the ending of defilements,

one who makes use after appraisal, firm in principle,

a knowledge master cannot be reckoned."

"'Could there be another way?' … And how could there be? 'All the suffering that originates is caused by perturbation': this is one contemplation. 'When perturbation has faded away and ceased with no residue left behind, there is no origination of suffering': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"All the suffering that originates

is caused by perturbation.

With the cessation of perturbation,

there is no origination of suffering.

Knowing this danger,

that suffering is caused by perturbation,

that's why, having relinquished perturbation,

and stopped making karmic choices,

imperturbable, free of grasping,

a mendicant would wander mindful."

"'Could there be another way?' … And how could there be? 'For the dependent there is quivering': this is the first contemplation. 'For the independent there's no agitation': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"For the independent there's no agitation.

The dependent, grasping,

goes from this state to another,

without escaping transmigration.

Knowing this danger,

the great fear in dependencies,

independent, free of grasping,

a mendicant would wander mindful."

"'Could there be another way?' … And how could there be? 'Formless states are more peaceful than states of form': this is the first contemplation. 'Cessation is more peaceful than formless states': this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return." Then the Teacher went on to say:

"There are beings in the realm of luminous form,

and others stuck in the formless.

Not understanding cessation,

they return in future lives.

But the people who completely understand form,

not stuck in the formless,

released in cessation—

they are conquerors of death."

“‘Could there be another way?’ … And how could there be? ‘What this world—with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans—focuses on as true, the noble ones have clearly seen with right wisdom to be actually false’: this is the first contemplation. ‘What this world focuses on as false, the noble ones have clearly seen with right wisdom to be actually true’: this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates in this way they can expect enlightenment or non-return.” Then the Teacher went on to say:

“See how the world with its gods

imagines not-self to be self;

habituated to name and form,

imagining this is truth.

For however they imagine it,

it turns out to be something else.

And that is what is false in it,

for the ephemeral is deceptive by nature.

Extinguishment has an undeceptive nature,

the noble ones know it as truth.

Having comprehended the truth,

they are hungerless, quenched.”

“Suppose, monks, they questioned you thus: ‘Could there be another way to contemplate the pairs?’ You should say, ‘There could.’ And how could there be? ‘What this world—with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans—focuses on as happiness, the noble ones have clearly seen with right wisdom to be actually suffering’: this is the first contemplation. ‘What this world focuses on as suffering, the noble ones have clearly seen with right wisdom to be actually happiness’: this is the second contemplation. When a mendicant meditates rightly contemplating a pair of teachings in this way—diligent, keen, and resolute—they can expect one of two results: enlightenment in this very life, or if there’s residue left behind, non-return.” That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, went on to say:

“Sights, sounds, tastes, smells,

touches, and ideas, the lot of them—

they’re likable, desirable, and pleasurable

as long as you can say that they exist.

For all the world with its gods,

this is what they deem happiness.

And where they cease

is deemed as suffering for them.

The noble ones have seen as happiness

the ceasing of substantial reality.

This insight by those who see

contradicts the whole world.

What others say is happiness

the noble ones say is suffering.

What others say is suffering

the noble ones know as happiness.

See, this teaching is hard to understand,

it confuses the ignorant.

There is darkness for the shrouded;

blackness for those who don't see.

But the good are open;

like light for those who see.

Though close, they do not understand,

those fools inexpert in the teaching.

They're mired in desire for continued existence,

flowing along the stream of lives,

mired in Māra's dominion:

this teaching isn't easy for them to understand.

Who, apart from the noble ones,

is qualified to understand this state?

Having rightly understood this state,

the undefiled are fully extinguished."

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, the monks approved what the Buddha said. And while this discourse was being spoken, the minds of sixty monks were freed from defilements by not grasping.