Snp 3.12 — Sn 3:12 The Contemplation of Dualities

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

3:12 The Contemplation of Dualities

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. Now on that occasion—the uposatha day of the fifteenth, a perfect full-moon night—the Blessed One was sitting in the open air surrounded by the Saṅgha of monks. Surveying the silent Saṅgha of monks, he addressed them: “Monks, if there are any who ask, ‘Your listening to teachings that are skillful, noble, leading onward, going to self-awakening is a prerequisite for what?’ they should be told, ‘For the sake of knowing qualities of dualities as they actually are.’ Which duality are you speaking about? ‘This is stress. This is the origination of stress’: This is one contemplation. ‘This is the cessation of stress. This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right

here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Those who don't discern stress,

what brings stress into play,

& where it totally stops,

without trace;

who don't know the path,

the way to the stilling of stress:

lowly

in their awareness-release

& discernment-release,

incapable

of making an end,

they're headed

to birth & aging.

But those who discern stress,

what brings stress into play,

& where it totally stops,

without trace;

who discern the path,

the way to the stilling of stress:

consummate

in their awareness-release

& discernment-release,

capable

of making an end,

they aren't headed

to birth & aging.1

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever stress comes into play is all from acquisition2 as a requisite condition’: This is one contemplation. ‘From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very acquisition, there is no coming into play of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“From acquisition as cause

the many forms of stress

come into being in the world.

Whoever, unknowing,

makes acquisitions

—the dullard—

comes to stress

again & again.

Therefore, discerning,

you shouldn’t create acquisitions

as you stay focused on

the birth & origin of stress.”

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever stress comes into play is all from ignorance as a requisite condition’: This is one contemplation. ‘From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, there is no coming into play of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Those who journey the wandering-on

through birth & death, again & again,

in this state here

or anywhere else,

that destination is simply through ignorance.

This ignorance is a great delusion

whereby they have wandered-on

a long, long time.

While beings immersed in clear knowing

don't go to further becoming.

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from fabrication as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very fabrication, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Any stress that comes into play

is all from fabrication

as a requisite

condition.

With the cessation of fabrication,

there is no stress

coming into play.

Knowing this drawback—

that stress comes from fabrication

as a requisite

condition—

with the tranquilizing of all fabrication,

with the stopping of perception:

That's how there is

the ending of stress.

Knowing this as it actually is,

an attainer-of-knowledge

sees rightly.

Seeing rightly,

the wise—

conquering the fetter of Māra—

go to no further becoming.

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever stress comes into play is all from consciousness as a requisite condition’: This is one contemplation. ‘From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very consciousness, there is no coming into play of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Any stress that comes into play

is all from consciousness

as a requisite

condition.

With the cessation of consciousness,

there is no stress

coming into play.

Knowing this drawback—

that stress comes from consciousness

as a requisite

condition—

with the stilling of consciousness, the monk

free from hunger

is totally unbound.

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever stress comes into play is all from contact as a requisite condition’: This is one contemplation. ‘From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very contact, there is no coming into play of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“For those overcome by contact,

flowing along in the stream of becoming,

following a miserable path,

the ending of fetters

is far away.

While those who comprehend contact,

delighting in stilling through discernment,

they, by breaking through contact,

free from hunger,

are totally unbound.

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever stress comes into play is all from feeling as a requisite condition’: This is one contemplation. ‘From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very feeling, there is no coming into play of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Knowing that

whatever is felt—

pleasure, pain,

neither pleasure nor pain,

within or without—

is stressful;

seeing

its deceptive nature,

its dissolving,

its passing away

at each contact,

each

contact,

he knows it right there:

With just the ending of feeling,

there is no stress

coming into play.

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever stress comes into play is all from craving as a requisite condition’: This is one contemplation. ‘From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very craving, there is no coming into play of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“With craving his companion, a man

wanders on a long, long time.

Neither in this state here

nor anywhere else

does he go beyond

the wandering- on.

Knowing this drawback—

that craving brings stress into play—

free from craving,

devoid of clinging,

mindful, the monk

lives the mendicant life.”3

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever stress comes into play is all from clinging as a requisite condition’: This is one contemplation. ‘From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very clinging, there is no coming into play of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“From clinging as a requisite condition

comes becoming.

One who has come into being

goes

to stress.

There is death

for one who is born.

This is the coming into play

of stress.

Thus, with the ending of clinging, the wise

seeing rightly,

directly knowing

the ending of birth,

go to no further becoming.

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever stress comes into play is all from arousal4 as a requisite condition’: This is one contemplation. ‘From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very arousal, there is no coming into play of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Any stress that comes into play

is all from arousal

as a requisite

condition.

With the cessation of arousal,

there is no stress

coming into play.

Knowing this drawback—

that stress comes from arousal

as a requisite

condition—

with the relinquishing

of all arousal,

a monk released in non-arousal,

his craving for becoming crushed,

his mind at peace,

his wandering-on in birth totally ended:

He has no further becoming.

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever stress comes into play is all from nutriment5 as a requisite condition’: This is one contemplation. ‘From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very nutriment, there is no coming into play of stress’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Any stress that comes into play

is all from nutriment

as a requisite

condition.

With the cessation of nutriment,

there is no stress

coming into play.

Knowing this drawback—

that stress comes from nutriment

as a requisite

condition—

comprehending all nutriment,

independent of all nutriment,6

rightly seeing

freedom from disease

through the total ending

of effluents,

judiciously associating,

a judge,

he, an attainer-of-knowledge,

goes beyond judgment,

beyond classification.7

"Now, if there are any who ask, 'Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?' they should be told, 'There would.' How would that be? 'Whatever stress comes into play is all from what is perturbed as a requisite condition': This is one contemplation. 'From the remainderless fading & cessation of what is perturbed, there is no coming into play of stress': This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Any stress that comes into play

is all from what is perturbed

as a requisite

condition.

With the cessation of what is perturbed,

there is no stress

coming into play.

Knowing this drawback—

that stress comes from what is perturbed

as a requisite

condition—

the monk thus renouncing perturbance,

putting a stop to fabrications,

free from perturbance, free

from clinging,

mindful he lives

the mendicant life.

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘For one who is dependent, there is wavering’: This is one contemplation. ‘One who is independent doesn’t waver’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“One independent

doesn’t

waver.

One dependent,

clinging

to this state here

or anywhere else,

doesn’t go beyond

the wandering-on.

Knowing this drawback—

the great danger in

dependencies—

in-

dependent,

free from clinging,

mindful the monk

lives the mendicant life.8

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Formless phenomena are more peaceful than forms’: This is one contemplation. ‘Cessation is more peaceful than formless phenomena’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

Those beings headed to forms,

and those standing in the formless,

with no knowledge of cessation,

return to further becoming.

But, comprehending form,

not taking a stance in formless things,

those released in cessation

are people who’ve left death behind.9

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever is considered as “This is true” by the world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, by this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, is rightly seen as it has come to be with right discernment by the noble ones as “This is false”’: This is one contemplation. ‘Whatever is considered as “This is false” by the world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, by this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty &

commonfolk, is rightly seen as it has come to be with right discernment by the noble ones as “This is true”’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“See the world, together with its devas,

supposing not-self to be self.

Entrenched in name-&-form,

they suppose that ‘This is true.’

In whatever terms they suppose it

it turns into something other than that,10

and that’s what’s false about it:

Changing,

it’s deceptive by nature.

Undeceptive by nature

is unbinding11:

That the noble ones know

as true.

They, through breaking through

to the truth,

hunger-free,

are totally unbound.

“Now, if there are any who ask, ‘Would there be the right contemplation of dualities in yet another way?’ they should be told, ‘There would.’ How would that be? ‘Whatever is considered as “This is bliss” by the world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, by this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, is rightly seen as it has come to be with right discernment by the noble ones as “This is stressful”’: This is one contemplation. ‘Whatever is considered as “This is stressful” by the world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, by this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, is rightly seen as it has come to be with right discernment by the noble ones as “This is bliss”’: This is a second contemplation. For a monk rightly contemplating this duality in this way—heedful, ardent, & resolute—one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis right here-&-now, or—if there be any remnant of

clinging-sustenance—non-return."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"All sights, sounds, smells, tastes,

tactile sensations, & ideas

that are welcome,

appealing,

agreeable—

as long as they're said

to exist,

are supposed by the world

together with its devas

to be bliss.

But when they cease,

that's supposed by them

to be stress.

The stopping of self-identity

is viewed by the noble ones

as bliss.

This, when seen,

runs counter

to the whole world.

What others say is blissful,

the noble ones say is stress.

What others say is stressful,

the noble know as bliss.

See the Dhamma, hard to understand!

Here those who don't know

are confused.

For those who are veiled,

it’s darkness,

blindness

for those who don’t see.

But for the good it is blatant,

like light for those who see.

Though in its very presence,

they don’t understand it—

dumb animals, unadept in the Dhamma.

It’s not easy

for those overcome

by passion for becoming,

flowing along

in the stream of becoming,

falling under Māra’s sway,12

to wake up

to this Dhamma.

Who, apart from the noble,

is worthy to wake up

to this state?—

the state that,

through rightly knowing it,

they totally unbind,

effluent-free.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of 60 monks, through lack of clinging, were released from effluents.

vv. 724–765

Notes

1. See SN 56:22.

2. The term ‘acquisition’ (upadhi), in its everyday sense, denotes the possessions, baggage, and other paraphernalia that a nomadic family might carry around with it in its wanderings. On the psychological level, it denotes anything for which one might have a sense of ‘I’ or ‘mine’ and which, consequently, one would carry around as a kind of mental baggage. The verse following this prose passage is identical with the Buddha’s first answer to Mettagū in Sn 5:4.

3. See Iti 15.

4. Arousal = ārambha, a word with many possible alternative meanings. Among them: disruption; seizure of an object; inception of action (often with violent connotations).

5. “There are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second, intellectual intention the third, and consciousness the fourth.” — SN 12:63. For more on this topic, see SN 12:63–64.

6. See Dhp 92–93.

7. See Iti 63, SN 1:20, and SN 22:85–86.

8. See Ud 8:4.

9. See Iti 72–73.

10. See MN 113, note 3.

11. “His release, being founded on truth, does not fluctuate, for whatever is deceptive is false; unbinding—the undeceptive—is true. Thus a monk so endowed is endowed with the highest determination for truth, for this—unbinding, the undeceptive—is the highest noble truth.” — MN 140

12. On Māra’s sway, see SN 4:19, SN 35:115, SN 35:189, and SN 35:199.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 15; MN 9; MN 140; SN 12:1; SN 12:15; SN 22:94; SN 35:93; AN 4:5; AN 4:24; Iti 51; Iti 103