MN 2 — Sabbasava Sutta: All the Fermentations

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Savatthi, in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. There he addressed the monks: "Monks!"

"Yes, lord," the monks replied.

The Blessed One said, "Monks, the ending of the fermentations is for one who knows & sees, I tell you, not for one who does not know & does not see. For one who knows what & sees what? Appropriate attention & inappropriate attention. When a monk attends inappropriately, unarisen fermentations arise, and arisen fermentations increase. When a monk attends appropriately, unarisen fermentations do not arise, and arisen fermentations are abandoned. There are fermentations to be abandoned by seeing, those to be abandoned by restraining, those to be abandoned by using, those to be abandoned by tolerating, those to be abandoned by avoiding, those to be abandoned by dispelling, and those to be abandoned by developing.

"[1] And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by seeing? There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person — who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not

well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma — does not discern what ideas are fit for attention or what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he does not attend to ideas fit for attention and attends [instead] to ideas unfit for attention.

"And what are the ideas unfit for attention that he attends to? Whatever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen fermentation of sensuality arises in him, and the arisen fermentation of sensuality increases; the unarisen fermentation of becoming arises in him, and arisen fermentation of becoming increases; the unarisen fermentation of ignorance arises in him, and the arisen fermentation of ignorance increases. These are the ideas unfit for attention that he attends to.

"And what are the ideas fit for attention that he does not attend to? Whatever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen fermentation of sensuality does not arise in him, and the arisen fermentation of sensuality is abandoned; the unarisen fermentation of becoming does not arise in him, and arisen fermentation of becoming is abandoned; the unarisen fermentation of ignorance does not arise in him, and the arisen fermentation of ignorance is abandoned. These are the ideas fit for attention that he does not attend to. Through his attending to ideas unfit for attention and through his not attending to ideas fit for attention, both unarisen fermentations arise in him, and arisen fermentations increase.

"This is how he attends inappropriately: 'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?' Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?'

"As he attends inappropriately in this way, one of six kinds of view arises in him: The view I have a self arises in him as true & established, or the view I have no self... or the view It is precisely by means of self that I perceive self... or the view It is precisely by means of self that I perceive not-self... or the view It is precisely by means of not-self that I perceive self arises in him as true & established, or else he has a view like this: This very self of mine — the knower that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & bad actions — is the self of mine that is constant, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will stay just as it is for eternity. This is called a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

"The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones — who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for men of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma — discerns what ideas are fit for attention and what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he does not attend to ideas unfit for attention and attends [instead] to ideas fit for attention.

"And what are the ideas unfit for attention that he does not attend to? Whatever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen fermentation of sensuality arises in him, and the arisen fermentation of sensuality increases; the unarisen fermentation of becoming arises in him, and arisen fermentation of becoming increases; the unarisen fermentation of ignorance arises in him, and the arisen fermentation of ignorance increases. These are the ideas unfit for attention that he does not attend to.

"And what are the ideas fit for attention that he does attend to? Whatever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen fermentation of sensuality does not arise in him, and the arisen fermentation of sensuality is abandoned; the unarisen fermentation of becoming does not arise in him, and the arisen fermentation of becoming is abandoned; the unarisen fermentation of ignorance does not arise in him, and the arisen fermentation of ignorance is abandoned. These are the ideas fit for attention that he does attend to. Through his not attending to ideas unfit for attention and through his attending to ideas fit for attention, unarisen fermentations do not arise in him, and arisen fermentations are abandoned.

"He attends appropriately, This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress. As he attends appropriately in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: identity-view, doubt, and grasping at precepts & practices. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by seeing.

"[2] And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by restraining? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, dwells restrained with the restraint of the eye-faculty. The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were to dwell unrestrained with the restraint of the eye-faculty do not arise for him when he dwells restrained with the restraint of the eye-faculty.

Reflecting appropriately, he dwells restrained with the restraint of the ear-faculty...

Reflecting appropriately, he dwells restrained with the restraint of the nose-faculty...

Reflecting appropriately, he dwells restrained with the restraint of the tongue-faculty...

Reflecting appropriately, he dwells restrained with the restraint of the body-faculty...

Reflecting appropriately, he dwells restrained with the restraint of the intellect-faculty. The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were to dwell unrestrained with the restraint of the intellect-faculty do not arise for him when he dwells restrained with the restraint of the intellect-faculty. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by restraining.

"[3] And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by using? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, uses the robe simply to counteract cold, to counteract heat, to counteract the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; simply for the

purpose of covering the parts of the body that cause shame.

"Reflecting appropriately, he uses almsfood, not playfully, nor for intoxication, nor for putting on bulk, nor for beautification; but simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life, thinking, 'Thus will I destroy old feelings [of hunger] and not create new feelings [from overeating]. I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.'

"Reflecting appropriately, he uses lodging simply to counteract cold, to counteract heat, to counteract the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; simply for protection from the inclemencies of weather and for the enjoyment of seclusion.

"Reflecting appropriately, he uses medicinal requisites that are used for curing the sick simply to counteract any pains of illness that have arisen and for maximum freedom from disease.

"The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to use these things [in this way] do not arise for him when he uses them [in this way]. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by using.

"[4] And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by tolerating? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, endures. He tolerates cold, heat, hunger, & thirst; the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; ill-spoken, unwelcome words & bodily feelings that, when they arise, are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable, displeasing, & menacing to life. The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to tolerate these things do not arise for him when he tolerates them. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by tolerating.

"[5] And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by avoiding? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, avoids a wild elephant, a wild horse, a wild bull, a wild dog, a snake, a stump, a bramble patch, a chasm, a cliff, a cesspool, an open sewer. Reflecting appropriately, he avoids sitting in the sorts of unsuitable seats, wandering to the sorts of unsuitable habitats, and associating with the sorts of bad friends that would make his knowledgeable friends in the holy life suspect him of evil conduct. The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to avoid these things do not arise for him when he avoids them. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by avoiding.

"[6] And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by destroying? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, does not tolerate an arisen thought of sensuality. He abandons it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence.

Reflecting appropriately, he does not tolerate an arisen thought of ill will...

Reflecting appropriately, he does not tolerate an arisen thought of cruelty...

Reflecting appropriately, he does not tolerate arisen evil, unskillful mental qualities. He abandons them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence. The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to dispel these things do not arise for him when he dispels them. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by dispelling.

"[7] And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by developing? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, develops mindfulness as a factor for Awakening dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops analysis of qualities as a factor for Awakening... persistence as a factor for Awakening... rapture as a factor for Awakening... serenity as a factor for Awakening... concentration as a factor for Awakening... equanimity as a factor for Awakening dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to develop these qualities do not arise for him when he develops them. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by developing.

"When a monk's fermentations that should be abandoned by seeing have been abandoned by seeing, his fermentations that should be abandoned by restraining have been abandoned by restraining, his fermentations that should be abandoned by using have been abandoned by using, his fermentations that should be abandoned by tolerating have been abandoned by tolerating, his fermentations that should be abandoned by avoiding have been abandoned by avoiding, his fermentations that should be abandoned by dispelling have been abandoned by dispelling, his fermentations that should be abandoned by developing have been abandoned by developing, then he is called a monk who dwells restrained with the restraint of all the fermentations. He has severed craving, thrown off the fetters, and — through the right penetration of conceit — has made an end of suffering & stress."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

See also: AN 4.24; AN 5.140.