MN 106 — Aneñja-sappaya Sutta: Conducive to the Imperturbable

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 in the Kuru country. Now there is a town of the Kurus called Kammasadhamma. There the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Monks!"

"Yes, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said: "Monks, sensuality is inconstant, hollow, vain, deceptive. It is illusory, the babble of fools. Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come: both are Mara's realm, Mara's domain, Mara's bait, Mara's range. They lead to these evil, unskillful mental states: greed, ill will, & contentiousness. They arise for the obstruction of a disciple of the noble ones here in training.

"In that case, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come: both are Mara's realm, Mara's domain, Mara's bait, Mara's range. They lead to these evil, unskillful mental states: greed, ill will, & contentiousness. They arise for the

obstruction of a disciple of the noble ones here in training. What if I — overpowering the world [of the five senses] and having determined my mind — were to dwell with an awareness that was abundant & enlarged? Having done so, these evil, unskillful mental states — greed, ill will, & contentiousness — would not come into being. With their abandoning, my mind would become unlimited, immeasurable, & well developed.' Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the imperturbable[1] now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the imperturbable. This is declared to be the first practice conducive to the imperturbable.

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come: whatever is form, every form, is the four great elements or a form derived from the four great elements.' Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the imperturbable now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the imperturbable. This is declared to be the second practice conducive to the imperturbable.

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come; forms here & now; forms in lives to come; form-perceptions here & now; form-perceptions in lives to come: both are inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is not worth relishing, is not worth welcoming, is not worth remaining fastened to." Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the imperturbable now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the imperturbable. This is declared to be the third practice conducive to the imperturbable.

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come; forms here & now; forms in lives to come; form-perceptions here & now; form-perceptions in lives to come; perceptions of the imperturbable: all are perceptions. Where they cease without remainder: that is peaceful, that is exquisite, i.e., the dimension of nothingness.' Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of nothingness now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of nothingness. This is declared to be the first practice conducive to the dimension of nothingness.

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones, having gone into the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or into an empty dwelling, considers this: 'This is empty of self or of anything pertaining to self.' Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires

confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of nothingness now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of nothingness. This is declared to be the second practice conducive to the dimension of nothingness.

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'I am not anyone's anything anywhere; nor is anything of mine in anyone anywhere.' Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of nothingness now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of nothingness. This is declared to be the third practice conducive to the dimension of nothingness.

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come; forms here & now; forms in lives to come; form-perceptions here & now; form-perceptions in lives to come; perceptions of the imperturbable; perceptions of the dimension of nothingness: all are perceptions. Where they cease without remainder: that is peaceful, that is exquisite, i.e., the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.' Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is declared to be the practice conducive to the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

When this was said, Ven. Ananda said to the Blessed One: "There is the case, lord, where a monk, having practiced in this way — 'It should not be, it should not occur to me;[2] it will not be, it will not occur to me.[3] What is, what has come to be, that I abandon' — obtains equanimity. Now, would this monk be totally unbound, or not?"

"A certain such monk might, Ananda, and another might not.'

"What is the cause, what is the reason, whereby one might and another might not?"

"There is the case, Ananda, where a monk, having practiced in this way — (thinking) 'It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon' — obtains equanimity. He relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it. As he relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it, his consciousness is dependent on it, is sustained by it (clings to it). With clinging/sustenance, Ananda, a monk is not totally unbound."

"Being sustained, where is that monk sustained?"

"The dimension of neither perception nor non-perception."

"Then, indeed, being sustained, he is sustained by the supreme sustenance."

"Being sustained, Ananda, he is sustained by the supreme sustenance; for this — the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception — is the supreme sustenance. There is [however] the case where a monk, having practiced in this way — 'It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon' — obtains equanimity. He does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain fastened to it. As he does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain fastened to it, his consciousness is not dependent on it, is not sustained by it (does not cling to it). Without clinging/sustenance, Ananda, a monk is totally unbound."

"It's amazing, lord. It's astounding. For truly, the Blessed One has declared to us the way to cross over the flood by going from one support to the next. But what is the noble liberation?"

"There is the case, Ananda, where a disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come; forms here & now; forms in lives to come; form-perceptions here & now; form-perceptions in lives to come; perceptions of the imperturbable; perceptions of the dimension of nothingness; perceptions of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception: that is an identity, to the extent that there is an identity. This is deathless: the liberation of the mind through lack of clinging/sustenance.'

"Now, Ananda, I have taught the practice conducive to the imperturbable. I have taught the practice conducive to the dimension of nothingness. I have taught the practice conducive to the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. I have taught the way to cross over the flood by going from one support to the next, the noble liberation. Whatever a teacher should do — seeking the welfare of his disciples, out of sympathy for them — that have I done for you. Over there are the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings. Practice jhana, Ananda. Don't be heedless. Don't later fall into regret. This is our message to you all."

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

Notes

1.

The "imperturbable" usually denotes the four formless attainments. In this context, though, it means the fourth jhana and the first two formless attainments based on it: the dimension of the infinitude of space and the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness.

2.

I.e., "should not be mine."

3.

I.e., "will not be mine."

See also: SN 22.55; MN 140