MN 106 — Conducive to the Imperturbable

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Text

Middle Discourses 106

Conducive to the Imperturbable

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Kurus, near the Kuru town named Kammāsadamma. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, “Mendicants!”

“Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this:

“Mendicants, sensual pleasures are impermanent, hollow, false, and deceptive. This is made by illusion, mendicants, lamented by fools. Sensual pleasures in this life and in lives to come, sensual perceptions in this life and in lives to come; both of these are Māra’s dominion, Māra’s domain, Māra’s lair, and Māra’s range. They conduce to bad, unskillful notions such as desire, ill will, and aggression. And they create an obstacle for a noble disciple training here.

A noble disciple reflects on this: ‘Sensual pleasures in this life and in lives to come, sensual perceptions in this life and in lives to come; both of these are Māra’s dominion, Māra’s domain, Māra’s lair, and Māra’s range. They conduce to bad, unskillful notions such as desire, ill will, and aggression. And they create an obstacle for a noble disciple training here. Why don’t I meditate with an abundant, expansive heart, having mastered the world and stabilized the mind? Then I will have no more bad, unskillful notions such as desire, ill will, and aggression. And by giving them up my mind, no longer limited, will become limitless and well developed.’

Practicing in this way and meditating on it often their mind becomes confident in this dimension. Being confident, they either attain the imperturbable now, or are freed by wisdom. When their body breaks up, after death, it’s possible that that conducive consciousness will be reborn in the imperturbable. This is said to be the first way of practice suitable for attaining the imperturbable.

Furthermore, a noble disciple reflects: ‘Sensual pleasures in this life and in lives to come, sensual perceptions in this life and in lives to come; whatever form there is, all form is the four principal states, or form derived from the four principal states.’ Practicing in this way and meditating on it often their mind becomes confident in this dimension. Being confident, they either attain the imperturbable now, or are freed by wisdom. When their body breaks up, after death, it’s possible that that conducive consciousness will be reborn in the imperturbable. This is said to be the second way of practice suitable for attaining the imperturbable.

Furthermore, a noble disciple reflects: ‘Sensual pleasures in this life and in lives to come, sensual perceptions in this life and in lives to come, visions in this life and in lives to come, perceptions of visions in this life and in lives to come; all of these are impermanent. And what’s impermanent is not worth approving, welcoming, or clinging to.’ Practicing in this way and meditating on it often their mind becomes confident in this dimension. Being confident, they either attain the imperturbable now, or are freed by wisdom. When their body breaks up, after death, it’s possible that that conducive consciousness will be reborn in the imperturbable. This is said to be the third way of practice suitable for attaining the imperturbable.

Furthermore, a noble disciple reflects: ‘Sensual pleasures in this life and in lives to come, sensual perceptions in this life and in lives to come, visions in this life and in lives to come, perceptions of visions in this life and in lives to come, and perceptions of the imperturbable; all are perceptions. Where they cease without remainder, that is peaceful, that is sublime, namely the dimension of nothingness.’ Practicing in this way and meditating on it often their mind becomes confident in this dimension. Being confident, they either attain the dimension of nothingness now, or are freed by wisdom. When their body breaks up, after death, it’s possible that that conducive consciousness will be reborn in the dimension of nothingness. This is said to be the first way of practice suitable for attaining the dimension of nothingness.

Furthermore, a noble disciple has gone to a wilderness, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut, and reflects like this: ‘This is empty of a self or what belongs to a self.’ Practicing in this way and meditating on it often their mind becomes confident in this dimension. Being confident, they either attain the dimension of nothingness now, or are freed by wisdom. When their body breaks up, after death, it’s possible that that conducive consciousness will be reborn in the dimension of nothingness. This is said to be the second way of practice suitable for attaining the dimension of nothingness.

Furthermore, a noble disciple reflects: ‘I don’t belong to anyone anywhere! And nothing belongs to me anywhere!’ Practicing in this way and meditating on it often their mind becomes confident in this dimension. Being confident, they either attain the dimension of nothingness now, or are freed by wisdom. When their body breaks up, after death, it’s possible that that conducive consciousness will be reborn in the dimension of nothingness. This is said to be the third way of practice suitable for attaining the dimension of nothingness.

Furthermore, a noble disciple reflects: ‘Sensual pleasures in this life and in lives to come, sensual perceptions in this life and in lives to come, visions in this life and in lives to come, perceptions of visions in this life and in lives to come, perceptions of the imperturbable, and perceptions of the dimension of nothingness; all are perceptions. Where they cease without remainder, that is peaceful, that is sublime, namely the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.’ Practicing in this way and meditating on it often their mind becomes confident in this dimension. Being confident, they either attain the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception now, or are freed by wisdom. When their body breaks up, after death, it’s possible that that conducive consciousness will be reborn in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is said to be the

way of practice suitable for attaining the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception."

When he said this, Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha: "Sir, take a mendicant who practices like this: 'It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be, and it will not be mine. I am giving up what exists, what has come to be.' In this way they gain equanimity. Would that mendicant become extinguished or not?"

"One such mendicant might become extinguished, Ānanda, while another might not."

"What is the cause, sir, what is the reason for this?"

"Ānanda, take a mendicant who practices like this: 'It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be, and it will not be mine. I am giving up what exists, what has come to be.' In this way they gain equanimity. They approve, welcome, and keep clinging to that equanimity. Their consciousness has that as support and fuel for grasping. A mendicant with fuel for grasping does not become extinguished."

"But sir, what is that mendicant grasping?"

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

"Sir, it seems that mendicant is grasping the best thing to grasp!"

"Indeed, Ānanda. For the best thing to grasp is the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

Take a mendicant who practices like this: 'It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be, and it will not be mine. I am giving up what exists, what has come to be.' In this way they gain equanimity. They don't approve, welcome, or keep clinging to that equanimity. So their consciousness doesn't have that as support and fuel for grasping. A mendicant free of grasping becomes extinguished."

"It's incredible, sir, it's amazing! It seems the Buddha has explained to us how to cross over the flood by relying on one support or another. But sir, what is noble liberation?"

"Ānanda, it's when a noble disciple reflects like this: 'Sensual pleasures in this life and in lives to come, sensual perceptions in this life and in lives to come, visions in this life and in lives to come, perceptions of visions in this life and 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 substantial reality as far as substantial reality extends. But this is freedom from death, namely the liberation of the mind by not grasping.'

So, Ānanda, I have taught the ways of practice suitable for attaining the imperturbable, the dimension of nothingness, and the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. I have taught how to cross the flood by relying on one support or another, and I have taught noble liberation.

Out of sympathy, I've done what a teacher should do who wants what's best for their disciples. Here are these roots of trees, and here are these empty huts. Practice

absorption, Ānanda! Don’t be negligent! Don’t regret it later! This is my instruction to you.”

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, Venerable Ānanda approved what the Buddha said.