

MN 128
Upakkilesa Sutta
“Discourse on the Deceptions in the Mind”
Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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I have personally heard this.

At one time, the Blessed One lived in Ghosita's monastery in Kosambi. It was during that time when the Bhikkhus of Kosambi had started to argue and quarrel with each other, constantly fighting and disputing while using mean and harsh words towards each other.

Then, a certain Bhikkhu approached the Blessed One and, after paying homage to Him, he stood to one side and said:

“Bhante, the Bhikkhus of Kosambi have started to argue and quarrel with each other, constantly fighting and disputing while using mean and harsh words towards each other. It would be great if The Blessed One would intervene by approaching those Bhikkhus, out of compassion.”

The Blessed One accepted in silence and, not long after, approaching those Bhikkhus, The Blessed One said:

“Bhikkhus, enough already! Give up this argument and quarrelling! Enough with these verbal daggers, this usage of harsh words you keep hurling at each other! Put an end to this!”

When this was said, a certain Bhikkhu turned to the Blessed One and said:

“Bhante, You are the Lord of the Dhamma! Please, do not concern yourself with this matter and stay out of this! Instead, let the Blessed One just go and dwell peacefully in happiness, here and now! Meanwhile, we will continue to dispute and argue, and if need be, continue to be seen as using harsh words against each other.”

For the second time, the Blessed One said:

“Bhikkhus, enough already! Give up this argument and quarrelling! Enough with these verbal daggers, this usage of harsh words you keep hurling at each other! Put an end to this!”

And for the second time, that Bhikkhu said to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, You are the Lord of the Dhamma! Please, do not concern yourself with this matter and stay out of this! Instead, let the Blessed One just go and dwell peacefully in happiness, here and now! Meanwhile, we will continue to dispute and argue, and if need be, continue to be seen as using harsh words against each other.”

For the third time, the Blessed One said:

“Bhikkhus, enough already! Give up this argument and quarrelling! Enough with these verbal daggers, this usage of harsh words you keep hurling at each other! Put an end to this!”
And for the third time, that Bhikkhu turned to the Blessed One and said:

“Bhante, You are the Lord of the Dhamma! Please, do not concern yourself with this matter and stay out of this! Instead, let the Blessed One just go and dwell peacefully in happiness, here and now! Meanwhile, we will continue to dispute and argue, and if need be, continue to be seen as using harsh words against each other.”

And the Blessed One became silent, turned around, and left them.

Then, when it was morning, having put on his robes and by taking his alms bowl and outer robes, the Blessed One went for the alms round in Kosambi. Later, on His return, and after having already taken His meal, The Blessed One put His dwelling place in order, and by taking His alms bowl and outer robe, stood at the entrance of His kuti, and uttered these verses:

*“When so many voices are screaming at each other
None stops a moment to consider
Whether they are indeed being ignorant and foolish.
Even as they witness the Sangha being torn apart,
None stops for a moment, to consider
Whether they indeed are the ones at fault.*

*Having completely forgotten about considerate and loving speech,
These fools who are pretending to be wise
Obsessively keep hurling out of their unrestrained mouths
Words that are intended only for injuring and causing harm,
Without asking or realizing as to the true reasons behind.*

*“He insulted me, he hit me, he defeated me, he robbed me!”
Whoever lives with these begrudging thoughts,
The fires of hatred in their hearts
Will never cease nor be extinguished.*

*“He insulted me, he hit me, he defeated me, he robbed me!”
Whoever does not live with these begrudging thoughts,
The fires of hatred in their hearts
Will surely cease and be extinguished.*

*After all, the fires of hatred could never be extinguished
Nor come to an end by further hatred.
For they can only be extinguished and come to an end by non-hatred.
This itself is an unshakably eternal law.*

*Many do not comprehend,
How we have come here to live lives that are restrained.*

*But there are those, who being wise, realize this fact,
And quickly settle their differences, before it is too late.*

*Those, who are into breaking of others' bones,
Destroyers of life, who rob others' horses, cattle, and wealth,
Not to mention ruin an entire country,
When even those come together in harmony,
Why shouldn't you be able to do the same?*

*If you are fortunate enough to have by your side a wise companion,
A true friend, who lives with faith, virtue, and wisdom,
Then you are safe, for by overcoming all troubles and threats,
You may walk with him, fearlessly, and mindfully.*

*But, if you do not find yourself such a wise companion,
No true friend who lives with faith, virtue, and wisdom,
Then, like a deposed king, fleeing from his conquered realm,
You may walk, much like the tusker elephant, alone in the jungle.*

*It is much better to be living alone,
For there should be no association with fools.
Living and roaming about alone, one lives without any worries about doing evil,
Much like the tusker elephant, alone in the jungle."*

Immediately after having uttered these words while standing, The Blessed One began walking towards the village of Bālakaloṇakāra.

Now, at that time the Venerable Bhagu lived in that village, and on seeing the Blessed One approaching in the distance, the Venerable Bhagu quickly prepared a seat for Him, and placed water for the washing of the feet. Then, The Blessed One sat on the prepared seat and washed His feet. Afterwards, the Venerable Bhagu paid homage to the Blessed One and then sat to one side.

The Blessed One asked,

“Bhikkhu, are you keeping well? Are you getting your requisites met? Do you have any fatigue owing to any lack in alms food?”

And the Venerable Bhagu replied:

“Bhante, I am keeping well. I am getting my requisites met. I have no fatigue owing to any lack in alms food.”

Then, the Blessed One encouragingly spoke, as he inspired, roused, and lightened the Venerable Bhagu's heart with an enlivening Talk on the Dhamma, and then He rose from His seat and left, as he approached the Eastern Bamboo Park.

At that time, the Venerables Anuruddha, Nandiya, and Kimbila were living close by within the Eastern Bamboo Park.

Now, on seeing the Blessed One coming in the distance, the forest keeper called out to him:

“Recluse, do not enter this forest! There are three sons of clansmen staying here, seeking and working on their own good. Do not enter and disturb them!”

Meanwhile, the Venerable Anuruddha heard these words being spoken by the forest keeper, who was addressing the Blessed One, and he immediately called out the forest keeper:

“Forest keeper, do not stop The Blessed One! It is our Teacher whom you’re obstructing! He is the Blessed One!”

And quickly, the Venerable Anuruddha addressed the Venerables Nandiya and Kimbila:

“Come, Friends! Venerable ones, Our Teacher has arrived!”

Then, the Venerables Anuruddha, Nandiya, and Kimbila rushed to greet the Blessed One, as one received His bowl and outer robe, the other prepared His seat, and another brought water to the Blessed One for washing the feet.

The Blessed One then sat on the prepared seat and washed His feet.

Those Bhikkhus then paid their respect by worshipping the Blessed One and sat to one side.

Then, The Blessed One addressed the Venerable Anuruddha by saying:

“Anuruddha, are you all keeping well? Are you getting your requisites met? Do you have any fatigue owing to any lack in alms food?”

“Bhante, we are keeping well. We all are getting our requisites met. We have no fatigue owing to any lack in alms food.”

“Very good, Anuruddha. Are you united and in harmony, amicable, considerate towards and friendly with each other, without having any disputes? Are you like milk and water, blending together? Do you look upon each other with kindly and friendly eyes?”

“Bhante, we are united and in harmony, amicable, considerate towards and friendly with each other, without having any disputes. We are indeed like milk and water, blending together, looking upon each other with kindly and friendly eyes.”

“And how is it, Anuruddha, that you are able to live together in such harmony?”

“Bhante, this is how I look at it: ‘It is truly such a great gain, such a privilege for me to live with these caring companions in the Holy Life!’

“In this way, whether openly or in private, I live while engaging in and behaving with bodily actions that are beaming with loving kindness towards these venerable ones. I live while engaging in and behaving with verbal actions that are beaming with loving kindness towards these venerable ones. I live while engaging in and behaving with mental actions that are beaming with loving kindness towards these venerable ones.

“I often reflect thus: ‘What if I put aside the thoughts and desires I have in my own heart, and just go along with the thoughts and desires of these venerable ones?’ So, I do just that, and forego my own thoughts and desires, and instead follow along with those of my dear companions in the Holy Life.

“Bhante, in just this manner, we find ourselves to be different in our bodies, but one in our hearts.”

Then, both the Venerable Nandiya and the Venerable Kimbila in turn responded to the Blessed One, by giving the same reply:

“Bhante, this is how I look at it: ‘It is truly such a great gain, such a privilege for me to live with these caring companions in the Holy Life!’

“In this way, whether openly or in private, I live while engaging in and behaving with bodily actions that are beaming with loving kindness towards these venerable ones. I live while engaging in and behaving with verbal actions that are beaming with loving kindness towards these venerable ones. I live while engaging in and behaving with mental actions that are beaming with loving kindness towards these venerable ones.

“I often reflect thus, Bhante: ‘What if I put aside the thoughts and desires I have in my own heart, and just go along with the thoughts and desires of these venerable ones?’ So, I do just that, and forego my own thoughts and desires, and instead follow along with those of my dear companions in the Holy Life.

“Bhante, in just this manner, we find ourselves to be different in our bodies, but one in our hearts.”

Then the Venerable Anuruddha added:

“Bhante, it is just in this manner that we find ourselves united and in harmony, amicable, considerate towards and friendly with each other, without having any disputes. Therefore, we are indeed like milk and water, blending together, looking upon each other with kindly and friendly eyes.”

“Excellent, Anuruddha, excellent! And do you live diligently, keenly ardent, and resolute?”

“Indeed, Bhante, we all live diligently, keenly ardent, and resolute.”

“And how, Anuruddha, do you all live diligently, keenly ardent, and resolute?”

“Bhante, after having gone for alms, whoever would return first from the village prepares the seats and sees to it that water for drinking and washing of the feet is available, as well as empties the trash bin. And whoever is the last to return from the village eats whatever is left over if he so desires, and if he does not, then he throws it into a barren area, where nothing grows, or puts it into some water, where no life is apparent. Then, he puts away the seats, the water vessels and, after emptying and washing the trash bin, he sweeps the meal area.

“Furthermore, Bhante, whoever sees the water vessels used for drinking, washing, or for the toilets when running low, he would go and fill them up. And if he finds the buckets to be too heavy to carry, then he calls out to one of the others to come and help him, but he does so with a gesture of the hands. He would not utter or say a single word on account of it.

We maintain noble silence during the week, except for every fifth day where we sit throughout the night, discussing a topic on the Dhamma.

“Bhante, in this manner, we all live diligently, keenly ardent, and resolute.

“Excellent, Anuruddha, excellent! And while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, have you attained to any superhuman levels of knowledge and vision worthy of the Noble Ones, as a result of meditative and peacefully contented living?”

“Bhante, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, in our meditation, we perceive both lights and various forms. But soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms disappear, and we do not understand as to why this is happening.

“Anuruddha, you must strive to understand the very cause for the disappearance of that sign. Before my Awakening, while being still a seeker intent on awakening, I too would perceive both lights and various forms. But soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to the arising of doubts in me. It was because of doubt as a condition that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubts would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to arising of inattention towards my meditation object. It was because of inattention towards my meditation object as a condition that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt and inattention would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to the arising of laziness and drowsiness in me. It was because of laziness and drowsiness that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt, inattention, laziness, and drowsiness would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to the arising of panic and fear in me. It was because of panic and fear that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared. Anuruddha, imagine someone was travelling through an unfamiliar land, and he was ambushed and attacked by murderers coming at him from both sides. Then, he would be overwhelmed by both panic and fear as a result.

In just the same way, I felt panic and fear arising in me. It was because of panic and fear that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt, inattention, laziness, drowsiness, panic, and fear would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to the arising of excitement in me. It was because of excitement that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared. Anuruddha, imagine someone who, while looking for treasure, suddenly came upon not just one entrance to a hidden treasure, but *five* entrances to five separate hidden treasures. Then, he would be overwhelmed by excitement as a result.

In just the same way, I felt excitement arising in me. It was because of excitement that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt, inattention, laziness, drowsiness, panic, fear, and excitement would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to the arising of inertia in me, in feeling stuck. It was because of inertia, in feeling stuck that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt, inattention, laziness, drowsiness, panic, fear, excitement, and the inertia of feeling stuck would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to the arising of excessive effort in me. It was because of excessive effort that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared. Anuruddha, imagine someone who, while holding a quail tightly with both hands, would surely notice the quail dying right there in his hands.

In just the same way, I felt excessive effort arising in me. It was because of excessive effort that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt, inattention, laziness, drowsiness, panic, fear, excitement, the inertia of feeling stuck, and excessive effort would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to the arising of insufficient and weak effort in me. It was because of insufficient and weak effort that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared. Anuruddha, imagine someone who, while holding a quail too loosely with his hands, would surely notice the quail flying right out of his hands. In just the same way, I felt insufficient and weak effort arising in me. It was because of insufficient and weak effort that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt, inattention, laziness, drowsiness, panic, fear, excitement, the inertia of feeling stuck, excessive effort, and insufficient and weak effort would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to the arising of longing in me. It was because of longing that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt, inattention, laziness, drowsiness, panic, fear, excitement, the inertia of feeling stuck, excessive effort, insufficient and weak effort, and longing would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to my focusing on too many things. It was because of focusing on too many things that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt, inattention, laziness, drowsiness, panic, fear, excitement, the inertia of feeling stuck, excessive effort, insufficient and weak effort, longing, and focusing on too many things, would cease from ever arising again.

“Thus, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely in this manner, I perceived both lights and various forms. But again, soon after seeing them, both the lights and the forms would disappear. Then it occurred to me: ‘Why did those lights and various forms again disappear? What is the condition for them to be vanishing like this?’

“And I understood how, it was due to becoming fixated on forms. It was because of my fixation on forms that my collectedness and stability of mind fell away. And it was because of my collectedness and stability of mind falling away, that the lights and various forms disappeared.

“Based on this newly gained understanding, I then made the resolution to continuously practice by paying attention in such a manner, so that doubt, inattention, laziness, drowsiness, panic, fear, excitement, the inertia of feeling stuck, excessive effort, insufficient and weak effort, longing, focusing on too many things, and fixation on forms, would cease from ever arising again.

And when, Anuruddha, I knew that having doubts is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I knew that inattention is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I knew that laziness and drowsiness are deceptions in the mind, I dismissed them. When I knew that panic and fear are deceptions in the mind, I dismissed them. When I knew that excitement is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I knew that the inertia of feeling stuck is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I knew that excessive effort is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I knew that insufficient and weak effort is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I knew that longing is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I knew that focusing on too many things is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. And when I knew that fixation on forms is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it.

Then, Anuruddha, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely, I perceived lights, but I did not perceive any forms; and when I did see forms, I did not perceive any lights. This went on whether I meditated during the whole night, the whole day, or even during both night and day. Then, I began reflecting: ‘What is the reason or condition for this to be happening?’ Then, it occurred to me: ‘Whenever I do not pay attention to any signs of forms, but only turn my attention to light, then I only see light but no forms. And whenever I do not pay attention to any signs of light, but only turn my attention to forms, then I only see forms but no lights. This goes on whether I meditate during the whole night, the whole day, or even during both night and day.’

Later, Anuruddha, while living diligently, keenly ardent, and resolutely, I perceived boundless lights and was able to see *limited* forms and shapes; furthermore, I perceived boundless lights and was able to see limitless forms and shapes, as well. This went on whether I meditated during the whole night, the whole day, or even during both night and day. Then, I began reflecting: ‘What is the reason or condition for this to be happening?’ Then, it occurred to me: ‘Whenever my collectedness and stability of mind is limited in its scope, I only perceive limited lights and am able to only see limited forms; but whenever my collectedness and stability of mind is

boundless in its scope, I perceive boundless lights and am able to see limitless forms and shapes. This goes on whether I meditate during the whole night, the whole day, or even during both night and day.’

At this point, Anuruddha, when I understood how, having doubts is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I understood how inattention is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I understood how laziness and drowsiness are deceptions in the mind, I dismissed them. When I understood how panic and fear are deceptions in the mind, I dismissed them. When I understood how excitement is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I understood how the inertia of feeling stuck is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I understood how excessive effort, is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I understood how insufficient and weak effort, is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I understood how longing is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. When I understood how focusing on too many things is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it. And when I understood how fixation on forms, is a deception in the mind, I dismissed it.

Then, I thought: ‘Now that I have given up and dismissed these deceptions in the mind, I should develop collectedness of mind in its three aspects.’

Therefore, Anuruddha, I developed collectedness of mind while supported by both thinking and pondering. I then developed the collectedness of mind without having any thoughts or pondering, while having joy within it. And I developed the collectedness of mind that is without joy, beyond pleasure and pain, while having equanimity throughout.

Then, the knowledge and vision of the Dhamma arose in me, and I knew it in my heart, for certain: “My heart’s release is unshakeable! This is my very last birth. There is no more rebirth for me, anywhere, anymore!”

This is what The Blessed One said, and the Venerables Anuruddha, Nandiya, and Kimbila were all delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

Sadhu

Sadhu

Sadhu