MN 138 — MN 138 An Analysis of the Statement | Uddesa-vibhaṅga Sutta

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Text

An Analysis of the Statement

Uddesa-vibhaṅga Sutta (MN 138)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks: “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: “Monks, I will teach you a statement & its analysis. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “A monk should investigate in such a way that, his consciousness neither externally scattered & diffused, nor internally positioned, he would from lack of clinging/sustenance be unagitated. When—his consciousness neither externally scattered & diffused, nor internally positioned—from lack of clinging/ sustenance he would be unagitated, there is no seed for the conditions of future birth, aging, death, or stress.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said it, he—the One Well-Gone—got up from his seat and went into his dwelling.

Then, not long after the Blessed One had left, this thought occurred to the monks: “This brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he went into his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning—i.e., ‘A monk should investigate in such a way that, his consciousness neither externally scattered & diffused, nor internally positioned, he would from lack of clinging/sustenance be unagitated. When—his consciousness neither externally scattered & diffused, nor internally positioned—from lack of clinging/ sustenance he would be unagitated, there is no seed for the conditions of future birth, aging, death, or stress’: Now who might analyze the unanalyzed detailed meaning of this brief statement?” Then the thought occurred to them, “Ven. Mahā Kaccāna is praised by the Teacher and esteemed by his observant companions in the holy life. He is capable of analyzing the unanalyzed detailed meaning of this brief statement. Suppose we were to go to him and, on arrival, cross-question him about this matter.”

So the monks went to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna and, on arrival exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they [told him what had happened, and added,] “Analyze the meaning, Ven. Mahā Kaccāna!”

(He replied:) “Friends, it’s as if a man needing heartwood, looking for heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood—passing over the root & trunk of a standing tree possessing heartwood—were to imagine that heartwood should be sought among its branches & leaves. So it is with you, who—having bypassed the Blessed One when you were face to face with him, the Teacher—imagine that I should be asked about this matter. For knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees. He is the Eye, he is Knowledge, he is Dhamma, he is Brahmā. He is the speaker, the proclaimer, the elucidator of meaning, the giver of the Deathless, the lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata. That was the time when you should have cross-questioned him about this matter. However he answered, that was how you should have remembered it.”

“Yes, friend Kaccāna: Knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees. He is the Eye, he is Knowledge, he is Dhamma, he is Brahmā. He is the speaker, the proclaimer, the elucidator of meaning, the giver of the Deathless, the lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata. That was the time when we should have cross-questioned him about this matter. However he answered, that was how we should have remembered it. But you are praised by the Teacher and esteemed by your observant companions in the holy life. You are capable of

analyzing the unanalyzed detailed meaning of this brief statement. Analyze the meaning, Ven. Mahā Kaccāna, without making it difficult!"

"In that case, my friends, listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, friend," the monks responded to him.

Ven. Mahā Kaccāna said this: "Concerning the brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he entered his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning—i.e., 'A monk should investigate in such a way that, his consciousness neither externally scattered & diffused, nor internally positioned, he would from lack of clinging/sustenance be unagitated. When—his consciousness neither externally scattered & diffused, nor internally positioned—from lack of clinging/ sustenance he would be unagitated, there is no seed for the conditions of future birth, aging, death, or stress'—I understand the detailed meaning to be this:

"How is consciousness said to be scattered & diffused? There is the case where, having seen a form with the eye, consciousness follows the drift of [lit: flows after] the theme of the form, is tied to the attraction of the theme of the form, is chained to the attraction of the theme of the form, is fettered & joined to the attraction of the theme of the form: Consciousness is said to be externally scattered & diffused.

"There is the case where, having heard a sound with the ear... having smelled an aroma with the nose... having tasted a flavor with the tongue... having touched a tactile sensation with the body... having cognized an idea with the intellect, consciousness follows the drift of the theme of the idea, is tied to the attraction of the theme of the idea, is chained to the attraction of the theme of the idea, is fettered & joined to the attraction of the theme of the idea: Consciousness is said to be externally scattered & diffused.

"And how is consciousness said not to be externally scattered & diffused? There is the case where, having seen a form with the eye, consciousness does not follow the drift of the theme of the form, is not tied to... chained to... fettered, or joined to the attraction of the theme of the form: Consciousness is said not to be externally scattered & diffused.

"There is the case where, having heard a sound with the ear... having smelled an aroma with the nose... having tasted a flavor with the tongue... having touched a tactile sensation with the body... having cognized an idea with the intellect, consciousness does not follow the drift of the theme of the idea, is not tied to... chained to... fettered, or joined to the attraction of the theme of the idea: Consciousness is said not to be externally scattered & diffused.

"And how is the mind said to be internally positioned? There is the case where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. His consciousness follows the drift of the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, is tied to... chained... fettered, & joined to the attraction of the rapture & pleasure born of

seclusion. Or further, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. His consciousness follows the drift of the rapture & pleasure born of composure, is tied to… chained… fettered, & joined to the attraction of the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. Or further, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' His consciousness follows the drift of the equanimity & pleasure, is tied to… chained… fettered, & joined to the attraction of the equanimity & pleasure. Or further, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. His consciousness follows the drift of the neither pleasure nor pain, is tied to… chained to… fettered, & joined to the attraction of the neither pleasure nor pain: The mind is said to be internally positioned.

"And how is the mind said not to be internally positioned? There is the case where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. His consciousness does not follow the drift of the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, is not tied to… chained to… fettered, or joined to the attraction of the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. Or further, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. His consciousness does not follow the drift of the rapture & pleasure born of concentration, is not tied to… chained… fettered, or joined to the attraction of the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. Or further, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' His consciousness does not follow the drift of the equanimity & pleasure, is not tied to… chained… fettered, or joined to the attraction of the equanimity & pleasure. Or further, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. His consciousness does not follow the drift of the neither pleasure nor pain, is not tied to… chained to… fettered, or joined to the attraction of the neither pleasure nor pain: The mind is said to be not internally positioned.

"And how is agitation caused by clinging/sustenance? 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 people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. His form changes & is unstable. Because of the change & instability of form, his consciousness alters in accordance with the change in form. With the agitation born from the alteration in accordance with the change in form and coming from the co-arising of (unskillful mental) qualities, his mind stays consumed. And because of the consumption of awareness, he

feels fearful, threatened, & solicitous.

“He assumes feeling to be the self….

“He assumes perception to be the self….

“He assumes fabrications to be the self….

“He assumes consciousness to be the self, of the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. His consciousness changes & is unstable. Because of the change & instability of consciousness, his consciousness alters in accordance with the change in consciousness. With the agitation born from the alteration in accordance with the change in consciousness and coming from the co-arising of (unskillful mental) qualities, his mind stays consumed. And because of the consumption of awareness, he feels fearful, threatened, & solicitous.

“This, friends, is how agitation is caused by clinging/sustenance.

“And how is non-agitation caused by lack of clinging/sustenance? There is the case where an instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for people of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—doesn’t assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. His form changes & is unstable, but his consciousness doesn’t—because of the change & instability of form—alter in accordance with the change in form. His mind is not consumed with any agitation born from an alteration in accordance with the change in form or coming from the co-arising of (unskillful mental) qualities. And because his awareness is not consumed, he feels neither fearful, threatened, nor solicitous.

“He doesn’t assume feeling to be the self….

“He doesn’t assume perception to be the self….

“He doesn’t assume fabrications to be the self….

“He doesn’t assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. His consciousness changes & is unstable, but his consciousness doesn’t—because of the change & instability of consciousness—alter in accordance with the change in consciousness. His mind is not consumed with any agitation born from an alteration in accordance with the change in consciousness or coming from the co-arising of (unskillful mental) qualities. And because his awareness is not consumed, he feels neither fearful, threatened, nor solicitous.

“This, friends, is how non-agitation is caused by lack of clinging/sustenance.

“So, concerning the brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he entered his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning—i.e., ‘A monk should investigate in such a way that, his consciousness neither externally scattered & diffused, nor internally positioned, he would from lack of clinging/sustenance be unagitated. When—his consciousness neither externally scattered & diffused, nor internally positioned—from lack of clinging/ sustenance he would be unagitated, there is no seed for the conditions of future birth, aging, death, or stress’—this is how I understand the detailed meaning. Now, friends, if you wish, having gone to the Blessed One, cross-question him about this matter. However he answers is how you should remember it.”

Then the monks, delighting in & approving of Ven. Mahā Kaccāna’s words, rose from their seats and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they [told him what had happened after he had gone into his dwelling, and ended by saying,] “Then Ven. Mahā Kaccāna analyzed the meaning using these words, these statements, these phrases.”

“Mahā Kaccāna is wise, monks. He is a person of great discernment. If you had asked me about this matter, I too would have answered in the same way he did. That is its meaning, and that is how you should remember it.”

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

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 18; AN 4:178; AN 4:192; AN 6:13; AN 7:64; AN 8:54; Ud 6:2