

MN 47
Vīmaṃsaka Sutta
“Examination”
Translated by Candana Bhikkhu

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I have personally heard this.

On one occasion, the Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anāthapindika at Jeta's park, in the city of Sāvatti. Then, the Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus and said:

“Bhikkhus!”

“Yes, Bhante!” replied the Bhikkhus present.

“Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu who desires to know and examine someone, but who lacks the ability to blend his own mind with another's mind, to clearly observe their inner thoughts, should carefully examine and scrutinize the Tathāgata, in order to see for himself whether He is Perfectly Awakened or not.”

And the Bhikkhus responded,

“Bhante, we are anchored in our learning on the Blessed One Himself, for He is our Guide and Refuge. To this end, we request that the Blessed Lord, please clarify the meaning of what He stated, as this would greatly benefit the Bhikkhus, who will remember and carry it in their hearts, once having learned it from the Blessed One Himself.”

“Well then, Bhikkhus, listen and pay careful attention to what I shall say.”

“Yes, Lord,” replied the Bhikkhus.

“Bhikkhus, when the Bhikkhu who desires to know or examine someone closely, but who lacks the ability to blend his own mind with another's mind to clearly observe their inner thoughts, he should carefully examine and scrutinize the Tathāgata in two ways. That is, by observing Him through the eyes and ears. In other words, the Bhikkhu scrutinizes to see whether he could see or hear any evidence in the Tathāgata's behavior that reveals the presence of any defilements within Him. And after having examined the Tathāgata thus, the Bhikkhu reaches the conclusion: *“There are no defilements found within the Tathāgata that can be scrutinized or observed whether through the eyes or ears!”*

“Having tested and known this firsthand, the Bhikkhu then investigates Him further, by trying to see if there are any signs or evidence of confusion or inconsistencies found within the Tathāgata's behavior that can be scrutinized or observed whether through the eyes or ears. And after having examined the Tathāgata thus, the Bhikkhu reaches the conclusion: *“There are no*

signs or evidence of confusion or inconsistencies found within the Tathāgata that can be scrutinized or observed whether through the eyes or ears!”

“Having tested and known this firsthand, the Bhikkhu then investigates Him further, by trying to see if the Tathāgata truly has within Him undefiled and pure states that can be scrutinized, whether through observations made with the eyes or ears. And after having examined the Tathāgata thus, the Bhikkhu reaches the conclusion: *“There are indeed undefiled and pure states found within the Tathāgata that can be scrutinized or observed whether through the eyes or ears!”*

“Having tested and known this firsthand, the Bhikkhu then investigates further, by trying to see if the venerable one has attained to this wholesome Dhamma for a long time or just recently. And after having examined the venerable one thus, the Bhikkhu reaches the conclusion: *“The venerable one has indeed attained to this wholesome Dhamma for a long time now, and not just recently.”*

“Having tested and known this firsthand, the Bhikkhu then investigates further, by trying to see if the venerable one has acquired fame and renown, and whether there are present in his heart the dangers associated with acquiring fame and renown. Here, Bhikkhus, it is important to consider that so long as the venerable one has not yet acquired fame and renown, the dangers associated with these two are too early to be detected or found within him. It is *only* after the venerable one has already acquired fame and renown that the dangers associated with these two may be detected or found within him. And after having examined the venerable one thus, then the Bhikkhu may reach the conclusion: *“The venerable one has indeed acquired fame and renown, but the dangers associated with these two are not detected or found within him.”*

“Having tested and known this firsthand, the Bhikkhu then investigates further, by trying to see if the venerable one restrains himself from indulging in sensual pleasures, as a result of having destroyed lust within himself, or does he merely restrain himself because of fear of being discovered? And after having examined the venerable one thus, the Bhikkhu then may reach the conclusion: *“The venerable one indeed is restrained from indulging in sensual pleasures, as a result of having destroyed lust within himself, and not because of any fear of being discovered.”*

“Now, Bhikkhus, if others should come and ask the examining Bhikkhu: *“And based on what evidence have you concluded that the venerable one indeed is restrained from indulging in sensual pleasures, as a result of having destroyed lust within himself, and not because of any fear of being discovered?”* And if he were to answer correctly, the Bhikkhu would reply to them by saying: *“It has been observed that whether the venerable one is living along with his companions in the Holy Life or completely alone, whether he is unsupported or being fully supported, or whether instructing others in a crowd, on seeing those that are indulging in sensual pleasures, engrossed and defiled by material possessions, or not, nevertheless, the venerable one does not look down on them. For I have heard this in the presence of the Blessed One, as He declared: **“I behave restrained by not indulging in sensuality as a result of lust being fully destroyed within me, and not because of fear of being discovered.”***”

“Then the Tathāgata Himself may be questioned further on this, by asking Him directly: *“Are there within the Tathāgata any defilements that may be scrutinized or observed whether through the eyes or ears?”*”

“Then, I would respond by saying: *“There are no defilements within the Tathāgata that may be scrutinized or observed whether through the eyes or ears.”*”

“And if the Tathāgata were to be asked further: *“Are there any confusions or inconsistencies found within the Tathāgata’s behavior that can be scrutinized or observed whether through the eyes or ears?”*”

“Then, I would respond by saying: *“There are no confusions or inconsistencies found within the Tathāgata’s behavior that can be scrutinized or observed whether through the eyes or ears?”*”

“And if the Tathāgata were to be asked further: *“Are there any undefiled or pure states within the Tathāgata that can be scrutinized or observed whether through the eyes or ears?”*”

“Then, I would respond by saying: *“Undefiled and pure states are indeed found within the Tathāgata that can be scrutinized, whether through observations made with the eyes or ears. Furthermore, although these states are my range and scope of experience, nevertheless, I do not identify with them.”*”

“Bhikkhus, a disciple desiring to learn the Dhamma should approach a Teacher who declares Himself in this manner. The Teacher will then instruct and teach him the Dhamma sequentially, stage by stage, leading him to more and more exalted states, elucidating and revealing to him its dark and white counterparts. And as the Teacher instructs and explains the Dhamma to the Bhikkhu, the time comes whereby the disciple, through his own personal and direct understanding, becomes firmly established in the Dhamma. Then, he suddenly and naturally develops the unshakable faith in the Tathāgata, as he knows in his heart: ***“The Blessed One is Perfectly Awakened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed, and the Sangha of Bhikkhus are practicing the Holy Path.”***”

“Now, Bhikkhus, if other Bhikkhus should come and ask the Bhikkhu: *“And based on what evidence have you concluded that ‘The Blessed One is Perfectly Awakened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed, and the Sangha of Bhikkhus are practicing the Holy Path?’* In answering them correctly, the Bhikkhu would reply to them by saying:

“Friends, in desiring to learn the Dhamma, I approached the Blessed One, and The Teacher instructed and taught me the Dhamma sequentially, stage by stage, leading me to more and more exalted states, elucidating and revealing to me it’s dark and white counterparts. And as the Teacher instructed and explained the Dhamma to me, through my own personal and direct understanding, I became firmly established in the Dhamma. Then, I suddenly and naturally developed the unshakable faith in the Tathāgata, as I knew in my heart: *“The Blessed One is*

Perfectly Awakened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed, and the Sangha of Bhikkhus are practicing the Holy Path.”

And the Blessed One continued,

“Bhikkhus, when someone finds in his heart such strong faith, being firmly established in the Tathāgata, while using similar expressions and phrases, then his faith and confidence is hereby declared as being well-established, thoroughly rooted in vision and understanding. And once the heart is thus finally settled in this invincible state, it is impossible for it to be shaken or converted by any recluse, brahmin, Deva, Māra, Brahmā, or anyone else in existence.

“It is in this manner, Bhikkhus, that one examines The Teacher; The Tathāgata and His qualities, according to the Dhamma. That is, through the validation of one’s own understanding that is directly experienced in one’s heart, by seeing for oneself the proof of the Dhamma, taught by the Tathāgata.”

This is what the Blessed One said, and the Bhikkhus were delighted in hearing the Blessed One’s words.

Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu