

SN 12.61
Saṃyutta Nikāya
The Connected Discourses

Nidānavagga Saṃyutta
Group of Discourses Connected to Causation
Nidāna Saṃyutta
Connected Discourses on Causation
Mahā Vagga
The Great Section

Assutavā Sutta
“The Unlearned in The Dhamma”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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This is what I personally heard.

At one time, when The Blessed One was living at the monastery offered by Anāthapiṇḍika, at Jeta’s Park in Sāvattihī, He addressed the Bhikkhus by saying:

“Bhikkhus, there might come a time, when the unlearned in The Dhamma, the *putujjana*, would come to experience revulsion towards the physical body, that is made of the four prime elements, as he becomes disenchanted with it, disinterested in it, while desiring to be freed from it. And what is the reason for this?

“It is because he would see that, eventually, this body that is made up of the four prime elements, does and will deteriorate, weaken, and lose its vigor, as it will decline and need to be moved around and finally, to be disposed of and cremated.

“In this way, the unlearned in The Dhamma, the *putujjana*, might come to experience revulsion towards the physical body, that is made of the four prime elements, as he becomes disenchanted with it, disinterested in it, while desiring to be freed from it.

“But Bhikkhus, when it comes to understanding the heart, the mind, or sense awareness, the unlearned in The Dhamma, the *putujjana*, remains oblivious and ignorant, unable to experience revulsion or become disenchanted, disinterested, nor have the desire to be freed from them. And what is the reason for this?

“It is because for limitless lives, he has been deeply attached to them, looking upon all these as belonging to him, viewing them and himself as ‘one-and-the-same, thus mistakenly believing: *‘This is mine. This, I am. This is my self!’*”

“Because of this, Bhikkhus, when it comes to understanding the heart, the mind, or sense awareness, the unlearned in The Dhamma, the *putujjana*, remains oblivious and ignorant, unable to experience revulsion or become disenchanted, disinterested, nor have the desire to be freed from them.

“That is why, Bhikkhus, it is far easier for the unlearned in The Dhamma, the *putujjana*, to look upon his physical body, that is made of the four prime elements, and witness its changeability and painful unreliability, rather than that of the heart. And what is the reason for this?

“Because, Bhikkhus, even though this body, made up of the four prime elements, may last for only one year, two years, three, four, five, or ten years, or twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years, or even for a hundred years, or even longer than a hundred years, nevertheless, he sees that it is always fleeting, always undergoing change, and is therefore, ultimately unreliable.

“However, as it relates to the heart, the mind, or sense awareness, the unlearned in The Dhamma, the *putujjana*, is unable to see how these are ceaselessly changing and never stay the same; arising as one thing in one instance, and ceasing as totally something else, in another. Thus, he remains clueless as to how this is continuously taking place, day and night!

“Imagine a monkey, Bhikkhus, jumping in the forest from one tree to the next, grabbing one branch after another; letting go of one, only to go to the next, and then another, then grabbing still another. It is exactly the same with the heart, the mind, or sense awareness; arising in one moment, and ceasing in another, continuously, day and night!

“On the other hand, Bhikkhus, the learned Noble Disciple of The Dhamma, closely pays attention to what is happening and being done in the mind, by carefully discerning dependent origination itself, in this manner:

‘When this is, it conditions the other to exist. So, when this arises, it becomes the cause for the other to arise too, as a result. And in turn, when this is not, it becomes a condition for the other to not exist also. And therefore, when this has ceased, then, the other too ceases, as a result.

‘In this manner, when ignorance is present, then it becomes the condition for generative causes or habitual drives to exist. On account of habitual drives being there, consciousness or sense awareness is brought into existence. When consciousness exists, then mentality and materiality are given the condition to be. Because of mentality and materiality being present as causes, the six sense spheres arise. As a result of the six sense spheres arising, contact becomes possible. And when contact takes place, feelings appear. Because of the presence of feelings, craving emerges. On account of craving’s presence, grabbing surfaces. As a result of grabbing, there now occurs the desire for rebecoming. When there is the desire to rebecome, then birth is inevitable. And when there is birth, then aging, illness and death, along with grieving, wailing, distress, torment, depression, and anguish are sure to follow as a result.

‘After all, this is how the entire mass of suffering starts and continues.

‘But when ignorance is no longer present and ceases altogether, then the condition necessary for generative causes or habitual drives to exist is no more, either. On account of the habitual drives no longer being present, consciousness or sense awareness ceases and exists no more. When consciousness is no more, then mentality and materiality do not have the condition to be. And because of mentality and materiality having ceased to be as causes, the six sense spheres also end and cease. As a result of the six sense spheres existing no more, contact becomes impossible, and it too ceases. And when contact thus no longer takes place, feelings also disappear and cease. Because of the absence of feelings, craving does not happen, and thus ceases to be altogether. On account of craving’s end, grabbing too, simply dissolves and is no more. As a result of the ending of grabbing, now there is no longer any desire for rebecoming. When there is no desire to rebecome, then birth itself ceases. And when there is no more birth, then aging, illness and death, along with grieving, wailing, distress, torment, depression, and anguish also, altogether cease and come to their final end, as a result.

‘And this is how that entire mass of suffering comes to its end and completely ceases.’

“Now, Bhikkhus, in seeing and understanding all this, the learned Noble Disciple of The Dhamma experiences revulsion and becomes disenchanted with the forms he sees and experiences; he becomes disenchanted with the feelings he experiences; he becomes disenchanted with the perceptions he experiences; he becomes disenchanted with the habitual drives he experiences; he becomes disenchanted with consciousnesses, or sense awareness, he experiences through all of his sense doors.

“As a result of all these experiences fading in their luster for him, and with the ever-increasing expansion of his disenchantment, he becomes dispassionate. And with lust and passions, altogether, having lost their influence on him, his heart becomes finally released.

“Now, when his heart is thus released and liberated, there dawns in him, and for the first time ever, the very knowing: *‘It is indeed liberated!’*

“At that instant, the learned Noble Disciple of The Dhamma knows for himself, with certainty unparalleled, and through his direct understanding, that:

*“‘Birth is now finally destroyed.
The Holy Life has been fully lived
With its True Goal... finally achieved.
Now, there is no more coming back
To any state of becoming.’”*

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