SN 46.3 — SN 46:3 Virtue | Sīla Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Virtue

Sīla Sutta (SN 46:3)

In the detailed descriptions of how the seven factors for awakening develop, the mindfulness factor is usually associated with the practice of the four establishings of mindfulness. This discourse is interesting in that it equates mindfulness as a factor for awakening with the recollection of the Dhamma that one has heard from awakened monks. On pondering and analyzing that Dhamma (the second factor), one is inspired to follow it, abandoning unskillful qualities and developing skillful qualities (the third factor). In this way, the mind is brought to concentration, which can then act as a basis for further discernment. This would count as a case in which insight precedes tranquility (see AN 4:170).

“Monks, as for those monks who are consummate in virtue, consummate in concentration, consummate in discernment, consummate in release, consummate in knowledge & vision of release: Even seeing them is beneficial, I tell you. Even listening to them… Even approaching them… Even attending to them… Even recollecting them… Even going forth after them is beneficial, I tell you. Why is that? Having heard the Dhamma from monks like that, one remains secluded in two ways: secluded in body & secluded in mind.

“[1] Remaining secluded in this way, one recollects & thinks over that Dhamma. When a monk, remaining secluded in this way, recollects & thinks over that Dhamma, mindfulness as a factor for awakening is aroused in him. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[2] Remaining mindful in this way, he examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality with discernment. When he remains mindful in this way, examining, analyzing, & coming to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, then analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening is aroused in him. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[3] In one who examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, persistence is aroused unflaggingly. When persistence is aroused unflaggingly in one who examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, then persistence as a factor for awakening is aroused in him. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[4] In one whose persistence is aroused, a rapture not of the flesh arises. When a rapture not of the flesh arises in one whose persistence is aroused, then rapture as a factor for awakening is aroused in him. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[5] For one enraptured at heart, the body grows calm and the mind grows calm. When the body & mind of a monk enraptured at heart grow calm, then calm as a factor for awakening is aroused in him. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[6] For one who is at ease—his body calmed—the mind becomes concentrated. When the mind of one who is at ease—his body calmed—becomes concentrated, then concentration as a factor for awakening is aroused in him. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[7] He carefully watches the mind thus concentrated with equanimity. When he carefully watches the mind thus concentrated with equanimity, equanimity as a factor for awakening is aroused in him. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“When the seven factors for awakening are developed & cultivated in this way, seven fruits, seven rewards can be expected. Which seven fruits & seven rewards?

“Soon in the here & now he achieves gnosis.

“If he doesn’t achieve gnosis soon in the here & now, then at the time of death he achieves gnosis.

“If he doesn’t achieve gnosis soon in the here & now and doesn’t achieve gnosis at the time of death, then with the ending of the five lower fetters,1 he is one unbound in between.2

“If he doesn’t achieve gnosis soon in the here & now… and isn’t one unbound in between, then he is one unbound on arrival.

“If he doesn’t achieve gnosis soon in the here & now… and isn’t one unbound on arrival, then with the ending of the five lower fetters he is one unbound without fabrication (of exertion).

“If he doesn’t achieve gnosis soon in the here & now… and isn’t one unbound without fabrication (of exertion), then with the ending of the five lower fetters, he is one unbound with fabrication (of exertion).

“If he doesn’t achieve gnosis soon in the here & now… and isn’t one unbound with fabrication (of exertion), then with the ending of the five lower fetters, he is one going upstream to the Peerless [the Akaniṭṭha heaven, the highest of the Pure Abodes].

“Monks, when the seven factors for awakening are developed & cultivated in this way, these seven fruits, seven rewards can be expected.”

Notes

1. “Self-identification views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual desire, & ill will. These are the five lower fetters.” — AN 10:13

2. This and the remaining four rewards are different types of non-returners. See AN 3:88, notes 3 and 4.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 118; AN 5:26