

SN 47.8

Saṃyutta Nikāya
The Connected Discourses

Mahāvagga Saṃyutta
(Connected Discourses on the Great Section)
Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta
(Connected Discourses on the Establishments of Mindfulness)
Ambapālī Vagga
(The Section on Ambapālī, the Courtesan)

Sūda Sutta
“Simile of the Kitchen Chef”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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“Bhikkhus, imagine there was a rather talentless kitchen chef, who while being incompetent, unintuitive, unskilled, and stupid, decided to prepare a meal for the king or his royal minister by cooking a spread of a variety of curries.

“However, due to his lack of knowledge and understanding of flavors, all his dishes were terribly prepared as they were excessive in the quantity of spices and seasonings; being unbalanced in their flavor, they came out heavy in their sour taste, their bitterness, their spicy and pungent flavor, their sweet or salty taste, and were thus utterly unappetizing, let alone palatable, and in the case of some dishes, completely tasteless and bland.

“That talentless kitchen chef, being incompetent, unintuitive, unskilled, and stupid, is too self-absorbed to even look at the king’s behavior at the table, nor is he curious about the king’s expressions while eating, not getting the hint from his body language while he sits there tasting the dishes he had prepared; thus, he does not try to observe nor see as to which curry dish the king reached for more, or did not care much about, and those he totally avoided.

“Thus, he remains clueless as to which dish received praises, if any, and which ones did not, as he is unconcerned to even consider:

‘Today, this curry dish was pleasing to my master,’ or ‘... he reached for this one, or kept reaching for that one over there,’ or ‘... he kept complimenting me on this dish here,’ or ‘... the sour curry pleased my master today,’ or ‘... he reached for the spicy dishes more,’ or ‘... he took

a lot of the sweet-tasting one,' or '... he spoke in praise of the bitter one,' or '... the bland curry' or '... the pungent curry' or '... the sweet curry' or '... the salty curry' or '... the mild curry' or '... the bitter curry' or '... I see my master is more pleased with these kinds of sauces and curries more than the others.'

“And, because of his lack in concern, and inattention, that talentless, unintuitive, unskilled, incompetent, and stupid kitchen chef does not obtain any special gifts from his master, be it gifts of money, clothing, promotions, or any kind of perks and bonuses from the court.

“And what is the reason for this?

“It is because that talentless, unintuitive, unskilled, incompetent and stupid kitchen chef is uninterested to even look at the behavior of his master or his body language. Thus, he has no clue as to what is taking place, nor does he get the hint.

a. “In just the same manner, Bhikkhus, the incompetent, unintuitive, unskilled, and stupid Bhikkhu, in trying to meditate by being fully attentive and aware of the body, attempts to stay with it, while observing whatever he detects as *the* most pronounced bodily sensation occurring at the time. He does so, but *without* any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“However, as he does so, he is easily distracted, for he is not driven, hence he is unable to enter into *samādhi*; therefore, he does not even come close to eradicating the defilements that corrupt the heart. This, because he is uninterested to even look at the behavior of his mind. Thus, he has no clue as to what is taking place, nor does he get the hint.

b. “Also, such a Bhikkhu, in trying to meditate by being fully attentive and aware of feelings, attempts to stay with them, while observing whatever he detects as *the* most pronounced feeling that is occurring at the time. He does this, but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“However, as he does so, he is easily distracted, for he is not driven, hence he is unable to enter into *samādhi*; therefore, he does not even come close to eradicating the defilements that corrupt the heart. This, because he is uninterested to even look at the behavior of his mind. Thus, he has no clue as to what is taking place, nor does he get the hint.

c. “Also, such a Bhikkhu, in trying to meditate by being fully attentive and aware of states that are occurring in the heart (*citta*), attempts to stay with them, while observing whatever he detects as *the* most pronounced state that is occurring in the *citta*, at the time. He does this, but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“However, as he does so, he is easily distracted, for he is not driven, hence he is unable to enter into *samādhi*; therefore, he does not even come close to eradicating the defilements that corrupt the heart. This, because he is uninterested to even look at the behavior of his mind. Thus, he has no clue as to what is taking place, nor does he get the hint.

d. “Also, such a Bhikkhu, in trying to meditate by being fully attentive and aware of whatever mental objects he witnesses, as they occur, attempts to stay with them, while observing whatever he detects as *the* most pronounced mental phenomenon or object occurring at the time. He does this, but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“However, as he does so, he is easily distracted, for he is not driven, hence he is unable to enter into *samādhi*; therefore, he does not even come close to eradicating the defilements that corrupt the heart. This, because he is uninterested to even look at the behavior of his mind. Thus, he has no clue as to what is taking place, nor does he get the hint.

“In this manner, that incompetent, unintuitive, unskilled, and stupid Bhikkhu is then not able to, here in this very life, enter into, nor dwell in happy and soothing states of being, for he is unable to grow and develop in his mindfulness and full awareness.

“And what is the reason for this?

“It is because that incompetent, unintuitive, unskilled, and stupid Bhikkhu is uninterested to even look at the behavior of his mind. Thus, he has no clue as to what is taking place, nor does he get the hint.

“On the other hand, Bhikkhus, imagine there was a rather talented kitchen chef, who while being intuitive, skilled, competent and dedicated in his craft, decided to prepare a meal for the king or his royal minister by cooking a spread of a variety of curries.

“Thus, with his vast knowledge and expertise, he prepares a variety of dishes that are perfectly orchestrated, with just the right quantity of spices and seasonings in them, not too much, not too little; being well-balanced in their flavor thus, they came out perfect in their sour taste, their bitterness, their spicy and pungent flavor, their sweet or salty taste, being both appetizing and delicious.

“Now, that kitchen chef, being talented, intuitive, skilled, competent and dedicated, is quite interested in the outcome of his work, and thus he carefully looks at the king’s behavior at the table, for he is curious about his expressions while eating; and thus, he keeps getting the hint from his master’s body language, as he sits there tasting the dishes he had prepared; he observes to see as to which curry dish the king reached for more, as well as those he did not care much about, and those he totally avoided.

“Thus, he keeps gathering clues as to which dish received praises, and which ones did not, as a result of which he concludes, while considering:

‘Today, this curry dish was pleasing to my master,’ or ‘... he reached for this one, or kept reaching for that one over there,’ or ‘... he kept complimenting me on this dish here,’ or ‘... the sour curry pleased my master today,’ or ‘... he reached for the spicy dishes more,’ or ‘... he took a lot of the sweet-tasting one,’ or ‘... he spoke in praise of the bitter one;’ or ‘... the bland curry’ or ‘... the pungent curry’ or ‘... the sweet curry’ or ‘... the salty curry’ or ‘... the mild curry’ or

‘... the bitter curry’ or ‘... I see my master is more pleased with these kinds of sauces and curries more than the others.’

“Therefore, because of his concern and attention, that talented, intuitive, skilled, competent and dedicated kitchen chef does obtain many special gifts from his master, be it as gifts of money, clothing, promotions, and all kind of perks and bonuses, received from the king’s court.

“And what is the reason for this?

“It is because that talented, intuitive, skilled, competent, and dedicated kitchen chef is quite interested in the behavior of his master, as he closely observes the king’s body language during the meal. Thus, he keeps gathering many clues as to what is taking place, and how to proceed in the future, and therefore, he is one who *does* get the hint.

a. “In just the same manner, Bhikkhus, the intuitive, skilled, competent, and dedicated Bhikkhu, in trying to meditate by being fully attentive and aware of the body, enthusiastically stays with it, while observing whatever he detects as *the* most pronounced bodily sensation occurring, at the time. He does this, but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“Now, as he does so, he maintains his resolve while carefully navigating through the mental hindrances along the way; thus, he is able to enter into *samādhī*. He is then able to even eradicate the defilements, that are responsible for corrupting the heart. This, because he is interested to look at the very behavior of his mind. Thus, he keeps getting clues as to what is taking place and how to proceed next, and therefore, he is one who *does* get the hint.

b. “Also, such a Bhikkhu, in trying to meditate by being fully attentive and aware of feelings, enthusiastically stays with them, while observing whatever he detects as *the* most pronounced feeling that is occurring, at the time. He does this, but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“Now, as he does so, he maintains his resolve while carefully navigating through the mental hindrances along the way; thus, he is able to enter into *samādhī*. He is then able to even eradicate the defilements, that are responsible for corrupting the heart. This, because he is interested to look at the very behavior of his mind. Thus, he keeps getting clues as to what is taking place and how to proceed next, and therefore, he is one who *does* get the hint.

c. “Also, such a Bhikkhu, in trying to meditate by being fully attentive and aware of whatever state that is manifesting within the heart (*citta*), enthusiastically stays with it, while observing whatever he detects as *the* most pronounced state that is occurring in the *citta*, at the time. He does this, but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“Now, as he does so, he maintains his resolve while carefully navigating through the mental hindrances along the way; thus, he is able to enter into *samādhī*. He is then able to even eradicate the defilements, that are responsible for corrupting the heart. This, because he is interested to

look at the very behavior of his mind. Thus, he keeps getting clues as to what is taking place and how to proceed next, and therefore, he is one who *does* get the hint.

d. “Also, such a Bhikkhu, in trying to meditate by being fully attentive and aware of mental objects he witnesses as they occur, enthusiastically stays with them, while observing whatever he detects as *the* most pronounced mental phenomenon that is occurring, at the time. He does this, but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“Now, as he does so, he maintains his resolve while carefully navigating through the mental hindrances along the way; thus, he is able to enter into *samādhī*. He is then able to even eradicate the defilements, that are responsible for corrupting the heart. This, because he is interested to look at the very behavior of his mind. Thus, he keeps getting clues as to what is taking place and how to proceed next, and therefore, he is one who *does* get the hint.

“In this manner, that intuitive, skilled, competent, and dedicated Bhikkhu is then able to, here in this very life, enter into *and* dwell in numerous happy and soothing states of being, for he constantly grows and develops in his mindfulness and full awareness.

“And what is the reason for this?

“It is because that intuitive, skilled, competent, and dedicated Bhikkhu is always curiously interested to look at the very behavior of his mind. Thus, he keeps getting clues as to what is taking place and how to proceed next, and therefore, he is one who *does* get the hint.”

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