

MN 2: Sabbāsa Sutta

All the Taints

Translated by Suddhāso Bhikkhu

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Jeta's Grove, at Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Monks!" "Venerable sir," those monks replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

"Monks, I say that the destruction of the taints is for one who knows and sees, not for one who does not know, not for one who does not see. Monks, for one who knows what and sees what do I declare the destruction of the taints? Wise attention and unwise attention. Monks, for one who attends unwisely, unarisen taints arise, and arisen taints increase; and, monks, for one who attends wisely, unarisen taints do not arise, and arisen taints are abandoned.

"Monks, there are taints to be abandoned by seeing. There are taints to be abandoned by restraint. There are taints to be abandoned by using. There are taints to be abandoned by enduring. There are taints to be abandoned by avoiding. There are taints to be abandoned by removing. There are taints to be abandoned by developing.

[Taints to be abandoned by seeing]

"And, monks, what are the taints to be abandoned by seeing? Here, monks, an unlearned ordinary person - one who does not associate¹ with noble ones, who has not mastered the teaching of the noble ones, who is undisciplined in the qualities of the noble ones, who does not associate with true people², who has not mastered the teaching of true people, who is undisciplined in the qualities of true people - does not understand phenomena that are to be paid attention to, and does not understand phenomena that are not to be paid attention to. Not understanding phenomena that are to be paid attention to and not understanding phenomena that are not to be paid attention to, he pays attention to phenomena that are not to be paid attention to, and he does not pay attention to phenomena that are to be paid attention to.

"And, monks, what are the phenomena which are not to be paid attention to that he pays attention to? Monks, for one who pays attention to such phenomena, the unarisen sensuality-taint arises, and the arisen sensuality-taint increases; the unarisen existence-taint arises, and the arisen existence-taint increases; the unarisen ignorance-taint arises, and the arisen ignorance-taint increases - these are the phenomena which are not to be paid attention to that he pays attention to.

"And, monks, what are the phenomena which are to be paid attention to that he does not pay attention to? Monks, for one who pays attention to such phenomena, the unarisen sensuality-taint does not arise, and the arisen sensuality-taint is abandoned; the unarisen existence-taint does not arise, and the arisen existence-taint is abandoned; the unarisen

1 *Adassāvī*. Lit. "one who does not see" noble ones.

2 *Sappurisa*. This may mean "a person who knows the truth."

ignorance-taint does not arise, and the arisen ignorance-taint is abandoned – these are the phenomena which are to be paid attention to that he does not pay attention to.

“For one who pays attention to phenomena that are not to be paid attention to, and does not pay attention to phenomena that are to be paid attention to, unarisen taints arise and arisen taints increase.

“He attends unwisely in this way: 'Did I exist in the past? Did I not exist in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Will I exist in the future? Will I not exist in the future? What will I be in the future? How will I be in the future? Having been what, what will I be in the future?' Or he is internally confused about the present, [thinking] 'Do I exist? Do I not exist? What am I? How am I? Where did this being come from? Where will it be going?'

“For one who attends unwisely in this way, one of six perspectives arises:

“The perspective 'I have a self' arises for him as true and reliable.

“The perspective 'I do not have a self' arises for him as true and reliable.

“The perspective 'Possessing a self, I perceive a self' arises for him as true and reliable.

“The perspective 'Possessing a self, I perceive non-self' arises for him as true and reliable.

“The perspective 'Not possessing a self, I perceive a self' arises for him as true and reliable.

“Or this perspective occurs to him: 'There is this self of mine which can speak and feel, which experiences the results of good and bad actions. This self of mine is permanent, fixed, eternal, unchangeable, and it will remain like this forever.'

“Monks, this is called arrival at perspectives, the thicket of perspectives, the wilderness of perspectives, the agitation of perspectives, the struggle of perspectives, the fetter of perspectives. Monks, fettered by the fetter of perspectives, the unlearned ordinary person is not freed from birth, old age, dieing, sorrow, grief, pain, depression, and anguish; he is not freed from unsatisfactoriness³, I say.

“Monks, a noble disciple – one who associates with noble ones, who has mastered the teaching of the noble ones, who is well-disciplined in the qualities of the noble ones, who associates with true people, who has mastered the teaching of true people, who is well-disciplined in the qualities of true people – understands phenomena that are to be paid attention to, and understands phenomena that are not to be paid attention to. Understanding phenomena that are to be paid attention to and understanding phenomena that are not to be paid attention to, he does not pay attention to phenomena that are not to be paid attention to, and he does pay attention to phenomena that are to be paid attention to.

“And, monks, what are the phenomena which are not to be paid attention to that he does not pay attention to? Monks, for one who pays attention to such phenomena, the unarisen sensuality-taint arises, and the arisen sensuality-taint increases; the unarisen existence-taint arises, and the arisen existence-taint increases; the unarisen ignorance-taint arises,

3 *Dukkha*. Lit. “that which is difficult to endure.” Often translated as “suffering.”

and the arisen ignorance-taint increases – these are the phenomena which are not to be paid attention to that he does not pay attention to.

“And, monks, what are the phenomena which are to be paid attention to that he does pay attention to? Monks, for one who pays attention to such phenomena, the unarisen sensuality-taint does not arise, and the arisen sensuality-taint is abandoned; the unarisen existence-taint does not arise, and the arisen existence-taint is abandoned; the unarisen ignorance-taint does not arise, and the arisen ignorance-taint is abandoned – these are the phenomena which are to be paid attention to that he does pay attention to.

“For one who does not pay attention to phenomena that are not to be paid attention to, and does pay attention to phenomena that are to be paid attention to, unarisen taints do not arise and arisen taints are abandoned.

“He wisely attends, ‘This is unsatisfactoriness.’ He wisely attends, ‘This is the source of unsatisfactoriness.’ He wisely attends, ‘This is the cessation of unsatisfactoriness.’ He wisely attends, ‘This is the practice which leads to the cessation of unsatisfactoriness.’ For one who wisely attends in this way, three fetters are abandoned – the perspective of self-identity⁴, doubt, and wrong grasp of habitual practices. Monks, these are called the taints to be abandoned by seeing.

[Taints to be abandoned by restraint]

“And, monks, what are the taints to be abandoned by restraint? Here, monks, from a basis of wise consideration, a monk abides with the eye-faculty restrained; because, monks, taints, disturbances, and fevers⁵ may arise for one who abides with the eye-faculty unrestrained, and those taints, disturbances, and fevers do not arise for one who abides with the eye-faculty restrained.

“from a basis of wise consideration, a monk abides with the ear-faculty... nose-faculty... tongue-faculty... body-faculty... mind-faculty restrained; because, monks, taints, disturbances, and fevers may arise for one who abides with the mind-faculty unrestrained, and those taints, disturbances, and fevers do not arise for one who abides with the mind-faculty restrained.

“Monks, taints, disturbances, and fevers may arise for one who abides unrestrained, and those taints, disturbances, and fevers do not arise for one who abides restrained. Monks, these are called the taints to be abandoned by restraint.

[Taints to be abandoned by using]

“And, monks, what are the taints to be abandoned by using? Here, monks, from a basis of wise consideration, a monk uses a robe only for the sake of fending off cold, fending off

⁴ *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*.

⁵ *Parīlāha*. Lit. “completely burning.” This resembles the idiom “hot-headed.”

heat, fending off contact with flies, mosquitoes, wind, sunburn, and reptiles; only for the sake of modesty.

“from a basis of wise consideration, he uses almsfood – not for fun, not for intoxication, not for adornment, not for beautification; only for the stability and continuance of this body, for avoiding physical harm, for supporting the spiritual life; [thinking] ‘I will remove the old feeling [of hunger] and I will not produce a new feeling [of overeating]; in this way I will be blameless and comfortable.’

“from a basis of wise consideration, he uses sleeping and sitting places only for the sake of fending off cold, fending off heat, fending off contact with flies, mosquitoes, wind, sunburn, and reptiles; only for the sake of removing the danger of seasonal [weather], and for the purpose of retreat.

“from a basis of wise consideration, he uses supports for the ill and medicinal supplies only for the sake of fending off oppressive feelings that have arisen, for the utmost freedom from affliction.

“Monks, taints, disturbances, and fevers may arise for one who does not use [these things in this way], and taints, disturbances, and fevers do not arise for one who uses [these things in this way]. Monks, these are called the taints to be abandoned by using.

[Taints to be abandoned by enduring]

“And, monks, what are the taints to be abandoned by enduring? Here, monks, from a basis of wise consideration, a monk is tolerant of cold, heat, hunger, and thirst; of contact with flies, mosquitoes, wind, sunburn, and reptiles; of ill-spoken, unwelcome statements; of arisen bodily sensations that are painful, sharp, rough, bitter, disagreeable, unpleasant, and life-threatening – he is one who endures [such things].

“Monks, taints, disturbances, and fevers may arise for one who does not endure [such things], and taints, disturbances, and fevers do not arise for one who endures [such things]. Monks, these are called the taints to be abandoned by enduring.

[Taints to be abandoned by avoiding]

“And, monks, what are the taints to be abandoned by avoiding? Here, monks, from a basis of wise consideration, a monk avoids a wild elephant, a wild horse, a wild ox, a wild dog, a snake, a stump, a thorn-bush, a pit, a precipice, a cesspool, a sewer. There are unsuitable seats that one might sit in, there are unsuitable locations that one might wander in, and there are bad friends that one might associate with, such that one's wise co-practitioners might suspect one of bad conduct – from a basis of wise consideration, he avoids those kinds of unsuitable seats, unsuitable locations, and bad friends.

“Monks, taints, disturbances, and fevers may arise for one who does not avoid [such things], and taints, disturbances, and fevers do not arise for one who avoids [such things]. Monks, these are called the taints to be abandoned by avoiding.

[Taints to be abandoned by removing]

“And, monks, what are the taints to be abandoned by removing? Here, monks, from a basis of wise consideration, a monk does not tolerate an arisen sensual thought; he abandons it, removes it, destroys it, annihilates⁶ it. He does not tolerate an arisen aversive thought... cruel thought... any kind of harmful, unskillful mindstate; he abandons it, removes it, destroys it, annihilates it.

“Monks, taints, disturbances, and fevers may arise for one who does not remove [such things], and taints, disturbances, and fevers do not arise for one who removes [such things]. Monks, these are called the taints to be abandoned by removing.

[Taints to be abandoned by developing]

“And, monks, what are the taints to be abandoned by developing? Here, monks, from a basis of wise consideration, a monk develops the mindfulness enlightenment-factor⁷, which is dependent⁸ upon seclusion, dependent upon dispassion, dependent upon cessation⁹, and matures in relinquishment¹⁰. From a basis of wise consideration, he develops the investigation-of-phenomena enlightenment-factor... the energy enlightenment-factor... the rapture enlightenment-factor... the tranquility enlightenment-factor... the concentration enlightenment-factor... the equanimity enlightenment-factor, which is dependent upon seclusion, dependent upon dispassion, dependent upon cessation, and matures in relinquishment.

“Monks, taints, disturbances, and fevers may arise for one who does not develop [such things], and taints, disturbances, and fevers do not arise for one who develops [such things]. Monks, these are called the taints to be abandoned by developing.

[Conclusion]

“Monks, when there is a monk for whom the taints to be abandoned by seeing have been abandoned by seeing, the taints to be abandoned by restraint have been abandoned by restraint, the taints to be abandoned by using have been abandoned by using, the taints to be abandoned by enduring have been abandoned by enduring, the taints to be abandoned by avoiding have been abandoned by avoiding, the taints to be abandoned by removing

⁶ *Anabhāvaṃ gameti*. More literally “renders it completely non-existent.”

⁷ *Bojjihaṅga*. From *bodhi* (awakening) *aṅga* (factor).

⁸ *Nissita*. This is sometimes translated “supported by” in this context; however, it comes from the verb *nissayati*, which means “lean against” or “rely on.” Thus the implied meaning is more one of dependence than merely support. This is also where the word *nissaya* (dependence) comes from.

⁹ That is, the cessation of unskillful mindstates.

¹⁰ *Vossagga-pariṇāmiṃ*. This could be rendered “results in release.”

have been abandoned by removing, and the taints to be abandoned by developing have been abandoned by developing – monks, this is called 'a monk who abides restrained by the restraint of all the taints, who has cut off craving, who has severed the fetter, and by means of the appropriate penetration of conceit has made an end of suffering.'"

This is what the Blessed One said. Satisfied, those monks delighted in the Blessed One's speech.