MN 2: Sabbāsava Sutta *(Annotated)*

All the Defilements

Translated and Annotated by Suddhāso Bhikkhu

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatthi, 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:

> *This is a standard opening sequence for a Sutta – the location is identified, and the Buddha addresses his audience. As the Buddha spent most of his time with other monks, most of his discourses are addressed to monks (as in this case). This does not mean that the teachings within this discourse are only for monks, however; they are equally applicable to all dedicated Buddhist practitioners of any gender, whether or not they are ordained.*

"Monks, I say that the destruction of the defilements is for one who knows and sees, not for one who does not know, not for one who does not see.

> *In Buddhism, "knowing" and "seeing" are verbs that indicate direct knowledge. This is not mere faith based on hearsay, but rather knowledge based on one's own personal experience.*
>
> *We also see here the first appearance of the word "defilement" (Pāli: āsava), which is the central concept of this discourse. "Defilements" are the mental tendencies which lead to dissatisfaction, dejection, depression, despair – all the various forms of suffering which we experience. All defilements are based on the three roots of unwholesome behavior: desire, aversion, and delusion (lobha, dosa, moha).*

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

> *The subject of "wise attention" (Pāli: yoniso manasikāra) is vitally important in Buddhist practice. There are many things we can direct our minds toward, and what we choose to focus on determines the habitual tendencies of the mind. For example, if we focus our minds on things that tend to produce harmful tendencies (such as anger, hatred, infatuation, and obsession), then those tendencies will be strengthened, and we will more easily fall prey to such destructive habits. Conversely, if we focus our attention on things that produce beneficial tendencies (such as mindfulness, compassion, equanimity, and renunciation), then those tendencies become strong, which protects the mind from harmful states.*

"Monks, there are defilements to be abandoned by seeing. There are defilements to be abandoned by restraint. There are defilements to be abandoned by using.

There are defilements to be abandoned by enduring. There are defilements to be abandoned by avoiding. There are defilements to be abandoned by removing. There are defilements to be abandoned by developing.

> *This is effectively a table of contents for this discourse. However, it also underlines a very important point: namely, that the appropriate course of action varies depending on the present set of conditions. There is no single "swiss-army knife" technique that works equally well at all times; instead, we must carefully examine our present conditions and determine what practice is most relevant.*

[Defilements to be abandoned by seeing]

"And, monks, what are the defilements to be abandoned by seeing? Here, monks, an unlearned ordinary person – one who does not associate[1] 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 people[2], 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.

> *Here we see one very important element of the Buddha's path emphasized: namely, the importance of associating with good people, and particularly with good spiritual practitioners who have made progress on the path of self-development. When one associates with people who are materialistic, superficial, and/or immoral, then one tends to take on those same characteristics and neglect one's own spiritual development. However, when one associates with dedicated spiritual practitioners, then one naturally tends to find it easier to develop one's practice.*

"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.

> *This is pointing to what can happen when one makes little or no effort to understand spiritual self-development and does not spend time with good spiritual companions (Pāli: kalyāṇa-mitta): one tends to focus one's mind in harmful ways; one tends to get involved in physical and mental activities that lead to one's own detriment and to the detriment of others.*

"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-defilement arises, and the arisen sensuality-defilement increases; the unarisen existence-defilement arises, and the arisen existence-defilement increases; the unarisen ignorance-defilement arises, and the arisen ignorance-defilement increases – these are the phenomena which are not to be paid attention to that he pays attention to.

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

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

In other words: If paying attention to a particular phenomenon – such as a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or a thought – leads to obsession with sensuality, egotism, and delusion, then one should not allow one's mind to linger on that phenomenon. However, the unwise person does not recognize the danger in allowing the mind to dwell on such experiences and therefore makes no effort to restrain or redirect the mind.

In this discourse, three categories of defilements are given: obsession with sensuality (Pāli: kāmāsava, translated here as "sensuality-defilement"), obsession with self-existence (Pāli: bhavāsava, translated here as "existence-defilement"), and obsession with wrong ideas (Pāli: avijjāsava, translated here as "ignorance-defilement").

"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-defilement does not arise, and the arisen sensuality-defilement is abandoned; the unarisen existence-defilement does not arise, and the arisen existence-defilement is abandoned; the unarisen ignorance-defilement does not arise, and the arisen ignorance-defilement is abandoned – these are the phenomena which are to be paid attention to that he does not pay attention to.

There are also phenomena which, when one pays attention to them, tends to reduce one's obsession with sensuality, egotism, and delusion. These are worth keeping the mind focused on, for one's own sake. However, the unwise person is not interested in such things – possibly considering them boring, unprofitable, or even repugnant – and thus makes no effort to keep them in mind.

"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 defilements arise and arisen defilements increase.

Thus this is the natural result of unwise attention: one's mental conditions worsen.

"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?'

These are a few examples of useless speculative thinking. Pondering these kinds of questions does nothing to improve one's mental conditions and does not help to free one from dissatisfaction and discontent.

"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.'

> *These six perspectives are six examples of egotism or self-obsession. Most people believe in their own individual existence; in some kind of “soul” or “personal essence” which exists eternally. However, one of the primary doctrines of Buddhism is that there is no such soul; there is no eternally existent essence to be found in any being. Instead, what we perceive to be an individual is simply a temporary collection of transient conditions, none of which are immutable or eternal. Thus in Buddhism, suffering is inherently rooted in our tendency to identify with this mass of temporary conditions; to regard it as who and what we are. Then when it changes in ways we dislike, we become distraught. If instead we regard the mind and body as a temporary set of temporary conditions and not as “me” or “mine,” then when those conditions change we are not disturbed.*

“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, dying, sorrow, grief, pain, depression, and anguish; he is not freed from suffering[3], I say.

> *Here the Buddha sums up the basic problem of getting stuck on such self-centric perspectives: one remains stuck in the ongoing cycle of birth and death, of pain and loss, of depression and anguish.*

“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.

> *This is the positive scenario: a person who is committed to spiritual practice; one who does make an effort to seek out and connect with advanced practitioners, and tries to understand and apply the teachings of spiritual self-development.*

3 *Dukkha*. Lit. “that which is difficult to endure.” This can also be translated “unsatisfactoriness.”

Accordingly, such a person begins to recognize that there are certain phenomena which it is best to avoid focusing on, for one's own sake.

"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-defilement arises, and the arisen sensuality-defilement increases; the unarisen existence-defilement arises, and the arisen existence-defilement increases; the unarisen ignorance-defilement arises, and the arisen ignorance-defilement 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-defilement does not arise, and the arisen sensuality-defilement is abandoned; the unarisen existence-defilement does not arise, and the arisen existence-defilement is abandoned; the unarisen ignorance-defilement does not arise, and the arisen ignorance-defilement is abandoned – these are the phenomena which are to be paid attention to that he does pay attention to.

So when one realizes that there are phenomena to be avoided, that there are unwholesome tendencies of mind which need to be reduced and ultimately eliminated if we are to be truly happy, then it is natural that one makes an effort to develop oneself accordingly.

"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 defilements do not arise and arisen defilements are abandoned.

This is the natural result of wise attention: one's mental conditions improve.

"He wisely attends, 'This is suffering.' He wisely attends, 'This is the source of suffering.' He wisely attends, 'This is the cessation of suffering.' He wisely attends, 'This is the practice which leads to the cessation of suffering.' For one who wisely attends in this way, three fetters are abandoned – the perspective of self-identity[4], doubt, and wrong grasp of habitual practices. Monks, these are called the defilements to be abandoned by seeing.

These are the Four Noble Truths: recognizing that life is not always satisfying; that the cause of dissatisfaction is our desires; that the ending of desire leads to the ending of dissatisfaction; and that spiritual self-development in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the end of desire and dissatisfaction.

The three fetters listed here are the three obstacles to Stream-Entry (the first stage of enlightenment). The first is belief in self-existence: believing that this temporary mass of impermanent conditions that we call "body and mind" is actually who and what we are. The second is doubt: namely, doubt in the efficacy of spiritual practice, in its ability to lead us to true peace and unshakable happiness. The third

4 *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi.*

is misunderstanding habitual practices and rituals: particularly the mistaken idea that ritual and ceremony can bring one to enlightenment. So we make an effort to overcome these three obstacles by practicing Anicca-Saññā (the perception of impermanence) and Anattā-Saññā (the perception of not-self) to break down the first. And when we achieve success with those practices, when we see the truth of the Four Noble Truths for ourselves, then we naturally have confidence in the efficacy of the practice: so doubt falls away. And since we reached this realization through meditation and mental self-development rather than through rituals and ceremonies, the third fetter falls away as well.

[Defilements to be abandoned by restraint]

"And, monks, what are the defilements to be abandoned by restraint? Here, monks, from a basis of wise consideration, a monk abides with the eye-faculty restrained; because, monks, defilements, disturbances, and fevers[5] may arise for one who abides with the eye-faculty unrestrained, and those defilements, 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, defilements, disturbances, and fevers may arise for one who abides with the mind-faculty unrestrained, and those defilements, disturbances, and fevers do not arise for one who abides with the mind-faculty restrained.

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

Sense-restraint is another valuable tool in the Buddhist workshop. As long as we are awake, we see sights, hear sounds, smell odors, taste flavors, touch objects, and think thoughts. This is normal; it just comes along with having a body and a mind. So what is sense-restraint? Sense-restraint is not allowing oneself to get caught up in the sensory objects we perceive. Sense-restraint is not allowing oneself to become obsessed or infatuated with anything we sense. So when we sense something pleasant or interesting, we just recognize it for what it is and let it go. When we sense something unpleasant or uninteresting, we just recognize it for what it is and let it go. In this way the mind remains unattached and unrepelled; it remains equanimous – firmly grounded and stable in the midst of constant change.

If we like what we sense, we remind ourselves that it is temporary and unreliable, so that we don't put too much importance on it. If we don't like what we sense, we remind ourselves that it is temporary and unreliable, so that we don't put too much importance on it. Whether or not we like what we experience, we don't allow it to overcome the mind; we preserve our mental and emotional stability. In this way we remain undisturbed regardless of what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or think.

5 *Pariḷāha*. Lit. "completely burning." This resembles the idiom "hot-headed."

[Defilements to be abandoned by using]

“And, monks, what are the defilements 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 heat, fending off contact with flies, mosquitoes, wind, sunburn, and reptiles; only for the sake of modesty.

> *In this section the Buddha discusses the “Four Requisites” - food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. With the exception of very severe ascetics, everyone uses these four basic things in order to survive in the world. However, we tend to get caught up in them, to get overly involved in them; so it's worth considering our relationship to these basic necessities of life.*
>
> *The first one the Buddha mentions here is clothing. So the reflection is to consider what the practical value of clothing is: to keep us warm, to protect us from insects and sunburn, and to preserve the social norms of modesty. This is what clothing is for: these simple, practical purposes. But most people put far more importance on clothing than just this; they use clothing as an expression of their personality, an externalization of their individual identity. This is based in conceit and self-obsession. When we instead return our focus to the basic purpose of clothing, we weaken the tendency towards conceit and develop the attitude of renunciation - the willingness to say to ourselves “These clothes are good enough” rather than constantly seeking new garments, new ways of displaying our conceit.*
>
> *The basic minimum the Buddha recommends for clothing is “discarded garments” (Pāli: paṁsukūla-cīvara); so even if it's cast-off second-hand clothes, as long as it fulfills its function, it is enough.*

“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.'

> *Similarly, we examine our attitudes towards food. Food is an undeniable necessity; we quite literally can't live without it. Once again, however, we tend to get obsessed with food – seeking out particular flavors and textures, seeking out particular kinds of food, forming strong opinions about food… And often we eat purely for the sensual enjoyment of eating and for the pleasant feelings of satiation. This leads to craving and obsessiveness, which correspondingly lead to dissatisfaction when we don't get the food we want, or when it's not as good as we want it to be, or when it doesn't satisfy us in quite the way we want it to.*
>
> *The remedy to this is to reflect once again on the actual purpose of food: to keep the body alive and healthy so that we may continue our spiritual practice. It doesn't matter what kind of food we're eating as long as it serves that purpose. If we get food we don't like, then we eat it anyway, reminding ourselves that the*

purpose of eating is not to entertain ourselves but just to keep the body healthy. If we get food we do like, then we eat it with a sense of detachment, not getting lost in enjoyment; we maintain our composure and preserve our equanimity, so that the mind remains clear, calm, and undisturbed.

The basic minimum the Buddha recommends for food is "donated food" (Pāli: piṇḍapāta). So we practice being content with whatever food we're given, grateful that we are able to continue our practice. We may not always get our favorite foods, but as long as it keeps us alive and healthy it is sufficient.

"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.

Another basic support in our lives is shelter – whether it be a house, an apartment, a tent, a cave, or any other structure or enclosure which serves to protect us from weather conditions, temperature, and pests. It doesn't matter how big or small it is, how luxurious or spartan it is – as long as it serves the basic function of shelter it is sufficient.

The basic minimum the Buddha recommends for shelter is "sitting and sleeping under a tree" (Pāli: rukkha-mūla-sen'āsana). Most of us live in much more comfortable conditions, and thus there is no reason to get caught up in discontent and craving regarding our dwelling places.

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

Finally we have medicines and medical supplies. One aspect of having a human body is that it is not always perfectly healthy; it is prone to illness and affliction of various kinds. When we experience sickness it can be more difficult to practice, so it is acceptable to seek out treatments and palliatives that reduce or eliminate the symptoms of illness so that we may continue our practice. Sometimes there will be no suitable treatment available; and in those situations the practice is to develop equanimity towards unpleasant feelings: to remain fully mindful and aware of our experience without falling into aversion or apathy. So whether we get the medicines we want or not, we are able to practice with whatever arises.

The basic minimum the Buddha recommends for medicine is "natural fermented medicine" (Pāli: pūti-mutta-bhesajja). In this era of advanced medical knowledge we are usually able to access much more effective treatments, so even if we can't get exactly the kind of treatment we want, we can still develop contentment with what we have.

"Monks, defilements, disturbances, and fevers may arise for one who does not use [these things in this way], and defilements, disturbances, and fevers do not arise

for one who uses [these things in this way]. Monks, these are called the defilements to be abandoned by using.

In some spiritual traditions, devotees practice extreme asceticism – completely refraining from clothing, shelter, and medicine, and severely restricting their intake of food. In Buddhism the practice is instead one of moderation – knowing the right amount (Pāli: mattaññū). So we use clothing, shelter, medicine, and food, not to excess, but to the extent necessary to maintain our health and a reasonable level of comfort, so that we may continue to practice self-development with a minimum of distraction.

[Defilements to be abandoned by enduring]

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

There will be times when we experience unpleasant conditions, such as cold, heat, hunger, thirst, insect bites, insults, and physical pain. While we can avoid such experiences to a certain extent, sometimes we are unable to stave them off and we find ourselves undergoing discomfort of one sort of another. In this situation we have a few options:

1) Get upset – indulge in being angry, irritated, annoyed, etc.
2) Fantasize – daydream about the pleasant things we wish we were experiencing.
3) Ignore – try to shut out the experience and pretend it isn't happening.
4) Endure – maintain full awareness of the experience without letting it bother us.

Of these options, the first three are completely self-destructive, as they fuel the "Three Poisons" (desire, aversion, and delusion), which strengthens those three underlying habits and makes them more difficult to restrain in the future. Only the fourth option is truly beneficial, as we preserve our mindfulness and develop the habit of equanimity, which allows us to maintain mental and emotional stability in the midst of any experience, regardless of its severity.

That said, if you're experiencing genuinely harmful conditions, it's still a good idea to try to remove yourself from those conditions. And if you're in a situation that is beyond the limits of what you can endure without falling into unwholesome thoughts or actions, then it may be best to avoid the situation until your equanimity is stronger.

[Defilements to be abandoned by avoiding]

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

> *This provides a useful counterpart to the previous section. Here the Buddha lists several examples of physically harmful situations which are worth avoiding. It is generally easier to practice if one is relatively healthy, so we try to avoid putting our body in harm's way. And we certainly try to avoid life-threatening situations, as although we may be interested in spiritual practice in this life, we cannot be certain that will still be interested in future lives – so it's best to try to keep this body alive for as long as we continue our practice.*
>
> *The Buddha also raises another vital issue: what kinds of friends and companions one keeps, and where one spends one's time. It's generally wise to avoid spending time with unwholesome, unvirtuous people; we tend to take on the behaviors of the people we associate with, so if we associate with people who have no interest in spiritual practice or moral conduct, we may find our own practice slipping and our own virtue diminishing. And even if we maintain our own purity, others may suspect that we are just as unprincipled as the people we associate with.*
>
> *So instead we make an effort to associate with wholesome, upright, virtuous people; people who are committed to practicing meditation and developing wisdom. This supports our own development and helps keep us pointed in the right direction.*

[Defilements to be abandoned by removing]

"And, monks, what are the defilements 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, annihilates[6] 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.

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6 *Anabhāvaṁ gameti*. More literally "renders it completely non-existent."

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

Here we see another useful counterpart to the section on enduring. While there are some things which we should endure, there are also things which we should not endure: thoughts of sensuality, aversion, and cruelty. It is not enough just to be mindful of such thoughts, it is vital that we make an active effort to eliminate them from the mind as soon as we notice them. These thoughts are poisonous! They damage and corrupt the mind if we allow them to persist, and doubly so if we participate in them. So we remain continually vigilant; we constantly watch our minds, and the moment we see such thoughts arise we eliminate them.

Five techniques for eliminating such thoughts (from MN20 Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta):

1. *Replacement – one replaces the unwholesome thought with a wholesome one, such as a thought of kindness, compassion, or renunciation.*
2. *Reflection – one reflects on the harmful, poisonous, self-destructive nature of such unwholesome thoughts.*
3. *Non-participation – one completely ceases to participate in the unwholesome thought; it usually fades almost immediately when we stop feeding it.*
4. *Reduction – one gradually reduces the intensity of the unwholesome thought, such as by reducing anger to pity.*
5. *Domination – one overpowers the unwholesome thought by sheer force of will; for example, by repeating a short phrase over and over in one's mind until the unwholesome thought has disappeared.*

[Defilements to be abandoned by developing]

“And, monks, what are the defilements to be abandoned by developing? Here, monks, from a basis of wise consideration, a monk develops the mindfulness enlightenment-factor[7], which is dependent[8] upon seclusion, dependent upon dispassion, dependent upon cessation[9], and matures in relinquishment[10]. 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.

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7 *Bojjhaṅga*. 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-pariṇāmiṁ*. This could be rendered “results in release.”

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

The final category in this discourse is the “Seven Factors of Enlightenment” (Pāli: satta-bojjhaṅgā). This is a list of seven mental qualities which are extremely beneficial for developing the path, and are particularly relevant to meditation practice. Here is a brief description of the seven factors:

1. *Mindfulness (sati) – maintaining clear awareness in the present moment.*
2. *Investigation of Phenomena (dhamma-vicaya) – considering and examining the contents of the present moment, particularly in light of the Three Characteristics (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self).*
3. *Energy (vīriya) – a sense of alertness and wakefulness, and making a genuine effort to follow the Buddha's instructions*
4. *Rapture (pīti) – a powerful feeling of euphoric joy permeating one's body and mind; this often arises as a result of concentration.*
5. *Tranquility (passaddhi) – a calm, stable, peaceful mind and body.*
6. *Concentration (samādhi) – mental collectedness; the state of focus and clarity that comes when the mind is free of distracting thoughts and is devoted to a particular object of awareness.*
7. *Equanimity (upekkhā) – the balanced state of a mind which is free of both desire and aversion; the mind which neither pursues pleasant feelings nor avoids unpleasant feelings, without ignoring either.*

In SN 46.53, The Buddha divides them into two categories – energizing and calming – and explains that, while all seven factors are beneficial to the path, there are times when some factors will be more useful to focus on than others:

The energizing factors are “Investigation of Phenomena,” “Energy,” and “Rapture.” When the mind is sluggish, sleepy, unfocused, or dull, then one focuses on these three energizing factors to perk it up.

The calming factors are “Tranquility,” “Concentration,” and “Equanimity.” When the mind is agitated, restless, or overactive, then one focuses on these three calming factors to settle it down.

The seventh factor, “Mindfulness,” is always beneficial, regardless of what state the mind is in.

[Conclusion]

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

avoiding have been abandoned by avoiding, the defilements to be abandoned by removing have been abandoned by removing, and the defilements 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 defilements, 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 summarizes the categories and emphasizes the benefit of following the instructions contained within this discourse: namely, one who practices accordingly will be free of craving, completely liberated, and immune to all forms of suffering.*

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

> *It is natural to express appreciation when one has heard a valuable and useful Dhamma teaching. However, what is most important is that we make a genuine effort to take the lessons we have learned and apply them to our lives; to sincerely attempt in every moment to diminish unwholesome mindstates and to develop wholesome mindstates. Merely hearing the Dhamma is not enough; it is when we embody it in our lives that we experience its benefits: unshakable happiness and contentment.*