

## 46 *Mahādhammasamādāna Sutta* The Greater Discourse on Ways of Undertaking Things

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus." – "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Bhikkhus, for the most part beings have this wish, desire, and longing: 'If only unwished for, undesired, disagreeable things would diminish and wished for, desired, agreeable things would increase!' Yet although beings have this wish, desire, and longing, unwished for, undesired, disagreeable things increase for them and wished for, desired, agreeable things diminish. Now, bhikkhus, what do you think is the reason for that?"

"Venerable sir, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, [310] guided by the Blessed One, have the Blessed One as their resort. It would be good if the Blessed One would explain the meaning of these words. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the bhikkhus will remember it."

"Then listen, bhikkhus, and attend closely to what I shall say."

"Yes, venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

3. "Here, bhikkhus, an untaught ordinary person who has no regard for noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, who has no regard for true men and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, does not know what things should be cultivated and what things should not be cultivated, he does not know what things should be followed and what things should not be followed. Not knowing this, he cultivates things that should not be cultivated and does not cultivate things that should be cultivated, he follows things that should not be followed and does not follow things that should be followed.<sup>481</sup> It is because he does this that unwished for, undesired, disagreeable things increase for him and wished for, desired, agreeable

things diminish. Why is that? That is what happens to one who does not see.

4. "The well-taught noble disciple who has regard for noble ones and is skilled and disciplined in their Dhamma, who has regard for true men and is skilled and disciplined in their Dhamma, knows what things should be cultivated and what things should not be cultivated, he knows what things should be followed and what things should not be followed. Knowing this, he cultivates things that should be cultivated and does not cultivate things that should not be cultivated, he follows things that should be followed and does not follow things that should not be followed. It is because he does this that unwished for, undesired, disagreeable things diminish for him and wished for, desired, agreeable things increase. Why is that? That is what happens to one who sees.

5. "Bhikkhus, there are four ways of undertaking things. What are the four? There is a way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pain. There is [311] a way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain. There is a way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure. There is a way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pleasure.

(THE IGNORANT PERSON)

6. (1) "Now, bhikkhus, one who is ignorant, not knowing this way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pain, does not understand it as it actually is thus: 'This way of undertaking things is painful now and ripens in the future as pain.' Not knowing it, not understanding it as it actually is, the ignorant one cultivates it and does not avoid it; because he does so, unwished for, undesired, disagreeable things increase for him and wished for, desired, agreeable things diminish. Why is that? That is what happens to one who does not see.

7. (2) "Now, bhikkhus, one who is ignorant, not knowing this way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain, does not understand it as it actually is thus: 'This way of undertaking things is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain.' Not knowing it, not understanding it as it actually

is, the ignorant one cultivates it and does not avoid it; because he does so, unwished for...things increase for him and wished for...things diminish. Why is that? That is what happens to one who does not see.

8. (3) "Now, bhikkhus, one who is ignorant, not knowing this way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure, does not understand it as it actually is thus: 'This way of undertaking things is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure.' Not knowing it, not understanding it as it actually is, the ignorant one does not cultivate it but avoids it; because he does so, unwished for...things increase for him and wished for...things diminish. Why is that? That is what happens to one who does not see.

9. (4) "Now, bhikkhus, one who is ignorant, not knowing the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pleasure, does not understand it as it actually is thus: 'This way of undertaking things is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pleasure.' Not knowing it, not understanding it as it actually is, the ignorant one does not cultivate it but avoids it; because he does so, [312] unwished for...things increase for him and wished for...things diminish. Why is that? That is what happens to one who does not see.

(THE WISE PERSON)

10. (1) "Now, bhikkhus, one who is wise, knowing this way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pain, understands it as it actually is thus: 'This way of undertaking things is painful now and ripens in the future as pain.' Knowing it, understanding it as it actually is, the wise one does not cultivate it but avoids it; because he does so, unwished for, undesired, disagreeable things diminish for him and wished for, desired, agreeable things increase. Why is that? That is what happens to one who sees.

11. (2) "Now, bhikkhus, one who is wise, knowing this way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain, understands it as it actually is thus: 'This way of undertaking things is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain.' Knowing it, understanding it as it actually is, the wise one does

not cultivate it but avoids it; because he does so, unwished for...things diminish for him and wished for...things increase. Why is that? That is what happens to one who sees.

12. (3) "Now, bhikkhus, one who is wise, knowing this way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure, understands it as it actually is thus: 'This way of undertaking things is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure.' Knowing it, understanding it as it actually is, the wise one does not avoid it but cultivates it; because he does so, unwished for things...diminish for him and wished for...things increase. Why is that? That is what happens to one who sees.

13. (4) "Now, bhikkhus, one who is wise, knowing this way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pleasure, understands it as it actually is thus: 'This way of undertaking things is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pleasure.' Knowing it, understanding it as it actually is, the wise one does not avoid it but cultivates it; because he does so, unwished for...things diminish for him and wished for...things increase. Why is that? That is what happens to one who sees. [313]

(THE FOUR WAYS)

14. (1) "What, bhikkhus, is the way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pain? Here, bhikkhus, someone in pain and grief kills living beings, and he experiences pain and grief that have killing of living beings as condition. In pain and grief he takes what is not given...misconducts himself in sensual pleasures...speaks falsehood...speaks maliciously...speaks harshly...gossips...is covetous...has a mind of ill will...holds wrong view, and he experiences pain and grief that have wrong view as condition. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. This is called the way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pain.

15. (2) "What, bhikkhus, is the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain? Here, bhikkhus, someone in pleasure and joy kills living beings, and he

experiences pleasure and joy that have killing of living beings as condition. In pleasure and joy he takes what is not given... [314]...holds wrong view, and he experiences pleasure and joy that have wrong view as condition. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. This is called the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain.

16. (3) "What, bhikkhus, is the way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure? Here, bhikkhus, someone in pain and grief abstains from killing living beings, and he experiences pain and grief that have abstention from killing living beings as condition. In pain and grief he abstains from taking what is not given...from misconduct in sensual pleasures...from speaking falsehood...from speaking maliciously...from speaking harshly...from gossiping...he is not covetous...he does not have a mind of ill will...[315]...he holds right view, and he experiences pain and grief that have right view as condition. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. This is called the way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure.

17. (4) "What, bhikkhus, is the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pleasure? Here, bhikkhus, someone in pleasure and joy abstains from killing living beings, and he experiences pleasure and joy that have abstention from killing living beings as condition. In pleasure and joy he abstains from taking what is not given...he holds right view, and he experiences pleasure and joy that have right view as condition. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. This is called the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pleasure.

(THE SIMILES)

18. (1) "Bhikkhus, suppose there were a bitter gourd mixed with poison, and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure and recoiled from pain, and they told him: 'Good man, this bitter gourd is mixed with poison. Drink from it

if you want; [316] as you drink from it, its colour, smell, and taste will not agree with you, and after drinking from it, you will come to death or deadly suffering.' Then he drank from it without reflecting and did not relinquish it. As he drank from it, its colour, smell, and taste did not agree with him, and after drinking from it, he came to death or deadly suffering. Similar to that, I say, is the way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pain.

19. (2) "Suppose there were a bronze cup of beverage possessing a good colour, smell, and taste, but it was mixed with poison, and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure and recoiled from pain, and they told him: 'Good man, this bronze cup of beverage possesses a good colour, smell, and taste, but it is mixed with poison. Drink from it if you want; as you drink from it, its colour, smell, and taste will agree with you, but after drinking from it, you will come to death or deadly suffering.' Then he drank from it without reflecting and did not relinquish it. As he drank from it, its colour, smell, and taste agreed with him, but after drinking from it, he came to death or deadly suffering. Similar to that, I say, is the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain.

20. (3) "Suppose there were fermented urine mixed with various medicines, and a man came sick with jaundice, and they told him: 'Good man, this fermented urine is mixed with various medicines. Drink from it if you want; as you drink from it, its colour, smell, and taste will not agree with you, but after drinking from it, you will be well.' Then he drank from it after reflecting, and did not relinquish it. As he drank from it, its colour, taste, and smell did not agree with him, but after drinking from it, he became well. Similar to that, I say, is the way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure.

21. (4) "Suppose there were curd, honey, ghee, and molasses mixed together, and a man with dysentery came, and they told him: 'Good man, [317] this is curd, honey, ghee, and molasses mixed together. Drink from it if you want; as you drink from it, its colour, smell, and taste will agree with you, and after drinking from it you will be well.' Then he drank from it after reflecting, and did not relinquish it. As he drank from it, its colour,

smell, and taste agreed with him, and after drinking from it, he became well. Similar to that, I say, is the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pleasure.

22. “Just as, in autumn, in the last month of the rainy season, when the sky is clear and cloudless, the sun rises above the earth dispelling all darkness from space with its shining and beaming and radiance, so too, the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pleasure dispels with its shining and beaming and radiance any other doctrines whatsoever of ordinary recluses and brahmins.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

- 475 MA identifies “that base” (*tadāyatana*), as well as “the supreme liberations,” with arahantship. The grief that arises because of that longing is elsewhere called “the grief based on renunciation” (MN 137.13). MA explains that one does not actually abandon the tendency to aversion by means of that grief; rather, spurred on by the longing for the supreme liberations, one takes up the practice with firm determination and eradicates the tendency to aversion by attaining the path of the non-returner.
- 476 MA: The bhikkhu suppresses the tendency to ignorance with the fourth jhāna, makes it well suppressed, and then eradicates the tendency to ignorance by attaining the path of arahantship.
- 477 The word “counterpart” (*paṭibhāga*) is used to express the relationships of both opposition and supplementation.
- 478 Ignorance is its counterpart because neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is subtle and difficult to recognise.
- 479 MṬ: Nibbāna does have an opposite counterpart, namely, conditioned states. But in the strict sense it has no supplementary counterpart, for how can there be anything to supplement Nibbāna, the unconditioned?
- 480 MA: By saying this, the Buddha makes this sutta Word of the Conqueror, stamped as it were with the seal of the Conqueror.

## SUTTA 46

- 481 A full analysis of the things that should and should not be followed is presented in MN 114.

## SUTTA 47

- 482 *Parassa cetopariyāyari ajānantena*, reading the last word with the BBS and SBJ eds. rather than with the PTS ed. as *ājānantena*, which gives the positive sense “knowing.” In the context the negative is clearly required, since the bhikkhu who cannot know by direct cognition of the Buddha’s mind that he is fully enlightened must arrive at this conclusion by inference from his bodily