

## 139 *Araṇavibhanga Sutta* The Exposition of Non-Conflict

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

2. "Bhikkhus, I shall teach you an exposition of non-conflict. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say." – "Yes, venerable sir," the bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

3. "One should not pursue sensual pleasure, which is low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial; and one should not pursue self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial. The Middle Way discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both extremes; giving vision, giving knowledge, it leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.<sup>1257</sup> One should know what it is to extol and what it is to disparage, and knowing both, one should neither extol nor disparage but should teach only the Dhamma. One should know how to define pleasure, and knowing that, one should pursue pleasure within oneself. One should not utter covert speech, and one should not utter overt sharp speech. One should speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly. One should not insist on local language, and one should not override normal usage. This is the summary of the exposition of non-conflict.

4. "'One should not pursue sensual pleasure, which is low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial; and one should not pursue self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

"The pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires<sup>1258</sup> – low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial – is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair,

and fever, and it is the wrong way.<sup>1259</sup> [231] Disengagement from the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial – is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way.

"The pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Disengagement from the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way.

"So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'One should not pursue sensual pleasure, which is low, vulgar, coarse, ignoble, and unbeneficial; and one should not pursue self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial.'

5. "'The Middle Way discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both these extremes; giving vision, giving knowledge, it leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'The Middle Way discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both these extremes...to Nibbāna.'

6. "'One should know what it is to extol and what it is to disparage, and knowing both, one should neither extol nor disparage but should teach only the Dhamma.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

7. "How, bhikkhus, does there come to be extolling and disparaging and failure to teach only the Dhamma? When one says: 'All those engaged in the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low...and unbeneficial – are beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the wrong way,' one thus disparages some. When one says: 'All those disengaged from the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low...and unbeneficial – are without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the right way,' one thus extols some.

"When one says: 'All those engaged in the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – [232] are

beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the wrong way,' one thus disparages some. When one says: 'All those disengaged from the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – are without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the right way,' one thus extols some.

"When one says: 'All those who have not abandoned the fetter of being<sup>1260</sup> are beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the wrong way,' one thus disparages some. When one says: 'All those who have abandoned the fetter of being are without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and they have entered upon the right way,' one thus extols some. This is how there comes to be extolling and disparaging and failure to teach only the Dhamma.

8. "And how, bhikkhus, does there come to be neither extolling nor disparaging but teaching only the Dhamma? When one does not say: 'All those engaged in the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires...have entered upon the wrong way,' but says instead: 'The pursuit is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way,' then one teaches only the Dhamma.<sup>1261</sup> When one does not say: 'All those disengaged from the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires...have entered upon the right way,' but says instead: 'The disengagement is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way,' then one teaches only the Dhamma.

"When one does not say: 'All those engaged in the pursuit of self-mortification...have entered upon the wrong way,' but says instead: 'The pursuit is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way,' then one teaches only the Dhamma. When one does not say: 'All those disengaged from the pursuit of self-mortification...have entered upon the right way,' but says instead: 'The disengagement is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way,' then one teaches only the Dhamma.

"When one does not say: 'All those who have not abandoned the fetter of being...have entered upon the wrong way,' [233] but says instead: 'As long as the fetter of being is unabandoned, being too is unabandoned,' then one teaches only the Dhamma.

When one does not say: 'All those who have abandoned the fetter of being...have entered upon the right way,' but says instead: 'When the fetter of being is abandoned, being also is abandoned,' then one teaches only the Dhamma.

"So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'One should know what it is to extol and what it is to disparage, and knowing both, one should neither extol nor disparage but should teach only the Dhamma.'

9. "'One should know how to define pleasure, and knowing that, one should pursue pleasure within oneself.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

"Bhikkhus, there are these five cords of sensual pleasure. What five? Forms cognizable by the eye...sounds cognizable by the ear...odours cognizable by the nose...flavours cognizable by the tongue...tangibles cognizable by the body that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. These are the five cords of sensual pleasure. Now the pleasure and joy that arise dependent on these five cords of sensual pleasure are called sensual pleasure – a filthy pleasure, a coarse pleasure, an ignoble pleasure. I say of this kind of pleasure that it should not be pursued, that it should not be developed, that it should not be cultivated, and that it should be feared.

"Here, bhikkhus, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhāna...the second jhāna...the third jhāna...the fourth jhāna. This is called the bliss of renunciation, the bliss of seclusion, the bliss of peace, the bliss of enlightenment. I say of this kind of pleasure that it should be pursued, that it should be developed, that it should be cultivated, and that it should not be feared. [234]

"So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'One should know how to define pleasure, and knowing that, one should pursue pleasure within oneself.'

10. "'One should not utter covert speech, and one should not utter overt sharp speech.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

"Here, bhikkhus, when one knows covert speech to be untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, one should on no account utter it. When one knows covert speech to be true, correct, and

unbeneficial, one should try not to utter it. But when one knows covert speech to be true, correct, and beneficial, one may utter it, knowing the time to do so.

"Here, bhikkhus, when one knows overt sharp speech to be untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, one should on no account utter it. When one knows overt sharp speech to be true, correct, and unbeneficial, one should try not to utter it. But when one knows overt sharp speech to be true, correct, and beneficial, one may utter it, knowing the time to do so.

"So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'One should not utter covert speech, and one should not utter overt sharp speech.'

11. "'One should speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

"Here, bhikkhus, when one speaks hurriedly, one's body grows tired and one's mind becomes excited, one's voice is strained and one's throat becomes hoarse, and the speech of one who speaks hurriedly is indistinct and hard to understand.

"Here, bhikkhus, when one speaks unhurriedly, one's body does not grow tired nor does one's mind become excited, one's voice is not strained nor does one's throat become hoarse, and the speech of one who speaks unhurriedly is distinct and easy to understand.

"So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'One should speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly.'

12. "'One should not insist on local language, and one should not override normal usage.' So it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

"How, bhikkhus, does there come to be insistence on local language and overriding of normal usage? Here, bhikkhus, in different localities they call the same thing a 'dish' [*pāti*], [235] a 'bowl' [*patta*], a 'vessel' [*vittha*], a 'saucer' [*serāva*], a 'pan' [*dhāropa*], a 'pot' [*poṇa*], a 'mug' [*hana*] or a 'basin' [*pisīla*]. So whatever they call it in such and such a locality, one speaks accordingly, firmly adhering [to that expression] and insisting: 'Only this is correct; anything else is wrong.' This is how there comes to be insistence on local language and overriding normal usage.<sup>1262</sup>

"And how, bhikkhus, does there come to be non-insistence on local language and non-overriding of normal usage? Here, bhikkhus, in different localities they call the same thing a 'dish'...or a 'basin.' So whatever they call it in such and such a

locality, without adhering [to that expression] one speaks accordingly, thinking: 'These venerable ones, it seems, are speaking with reference to this.' This is how there comes to be non-insistence on local language and non-overriding of normal usage.

"So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'One should not insist on local language, and one should not override normal usage.'

13. "Here, bhikkhus, the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low...and unbeneficial – is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, disengagement from the pursuit of the enjoyment of one whose pleasure is linked to sensual desires – low...and unbeneficial – is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, disengagement from the pursuit of self-mortification – painful, ignoble, and unbeneficial – is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way. [236] Therefore this is a state without conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, the Middle Way discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both these extremes; giving vision, giving knowledge, it leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. It is a state without suffering...and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, extolling and disparaging and failure to teach only the Dhamma is a state beset by suffering...and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, not extolling and not disparaging and teaching only the Dhamma is a state without suffering...and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, sensual pleasure – a filthy pleasure, a coarse pleasure, an ignoble pleasure – is a state beset by suffering...and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, the bliss of renunciation, the bliss of seclusion, the bliss of peace, the bliss of enlightenment, is a state

without suffering...and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, covert speech that is untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, covert speech that is true, correct, and unbeneficial is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, covert speech that is true, correct, and beneficial is a state without suffering...Therefore this is a state without conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, overt sharp speech that is untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, overt sharp speech that is true, correct, and unbeneficial is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, overt sharp speech [237] that is true, correct, and beneficial is a state without suffering...Therefore this is a state without conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, the speech of one who speaks hurriedly is a state beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the wrong way. Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, the speech of one who speaks unhurriedly is a state without suffering...Therefore this is a state without conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, insistence on local language and overriding of normal usage is a state beset by suffering...Therefore this is a state with conflict.

"Here, bhikkhus, non-insistence on local language and non-overriding of normal usage is a state without suffering, vexation, despair, and fever, and it is the right way. Therefore this is a state without conflict.

14. "Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: 'We shall know the state with conflict and we shall know the state without conflict, and knowing these, we shall enter upon the way without conflict.' Now, bhikkhus, Subhūti is a clansman who has entered upon the way without conflict."<sup>1263</sup>

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

- 1252 MA: The mind is “stuck internally” by way of attachment to an internal object. The text of the sutta itself makes the shift from *vinñāṇa* in the Buddha’s summary to *citta* in Mahā Kaccāna’s exposition.
- 1253 All known editions of the Pali text of MN 138 read here *anupādā paritassanā*, literally “agitation due to non-clinging,” which obviously contradicts what the Buddha consistently teaches: that agitation arises from clinging, and ceases with the removal of clinging. However, this reading apparently precedes the time of the commentaries, for MA accepts *anupādā* as correct and offers the following explanation: “In what sense is there agitation due to non-clinging? Through the non-existence of anything to cling to. For if there existed any formation that were permanent, stable, a self, or the belonging of a self, it would be possible to cling to it. Then this agitation would be agitation due to clinging (something to cling to). But because there is no formation that can be clung to thus, then even though material form, etc., are clung to with the idea ‘material form is self,’ etc., they are not clung to (in the way they are conceived). Thus, what is here called ‘agitation due to non-clinging’ is in meaning agitation due to clinging by way of views.” N̄m had followed this reading, and on the basis of MA’s explanation, had rendered the phrase “anguish [agitation] due to not finding anything to cling to.” He did not discuss the problem in his notes.
- A sutta in the Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN 22:7/iii, 16) is virtually identical with this passage of MN 138, except that here it reads, as we should expect, *upādā paritassanā*, “agitation due to clinging.” From the Saṃyutta text we may safely infer that the Majjhima reading is an ancient error that should be discounted. My rendering here is based on the reading of SN 22:7. Horner too follows the latter text in MLS.
- 1254 MA explains the unusual phrase *paritassanā dhammasamuppādā* as “the agitation of craving and the arising of (other) unwholesome states.”
- 1255 The agitation thus results from the lack of any permanent essence in things that could provide a refuge from the suffering precipitated by their change and instability.
- 1256 This phrase is identical in both the Majjhima and Saṃyutta versions.

SUTTA 139

- 1257 This is substantially identical with the proclamation with which the newly enlightened Buddha opened his first discourse to the five bhikkhus, before teaching them the Four Noble Truths.
- 1258 This is a more complicated expression for the pursuit of sensual pleasure.
- 1259 MA: It is "beset by suffering, vexation," etc., through the suffering and vexation, etc., of its results and the suffering and vexation, etc., of its attendant defilements.
- 1260 This is craving for being.
- 1261 That is, extolling and disparaging come about when one frames one's statements in terms of persons, some of whom are praised and others blamed. One teaches "only the Dhamma" when one frames one's statements in terms of the state (*dhamma*) – the mode of practice – without explicit references to persons.
- 1262 This problem of "insistence on local language" must have been particularly acute in the Sangha, when the bhikkhus lived a life of constant wandering and had to pass through many localities each with their distinct dialects.
- 1263 Ven. Subhūti was the younger brother of Anāthapiṇḍika and became a bhikkhu on the day Jeta's Grove was offered to the Sangha. The Buddha appointed him the foremost disciple in two categories – those who live without conflict and those who are worthy of gifts.

SUTTA 140

- 1264 According to MA, Pukkusāti had been the king of Takkaṣilā and had entered into a friendship with King Bimbisāra of Magadha through merchants who travelled between the two countries for purposes of trade. In an exchange of gifts Bimbisāra sent Pukkusāti a golden plate on which he had inscribed descriptions of the Three Jewels and various aspects of the Dhamma. When Pukkusāti read the inscription, he was filled with joy and decided to renounce the world. Without taking formal ordination, he shaved his head, put on yellow robes, and left the palace. He went to Rājagaha intending to meet