

Vattha Sutta

MN 7 The Analogy of the Cloth

Translated by Ānanda

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This I have heard,

*Once, the Awakened One was living at Sāvatti
In Jeta's grove, at Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.
There, he addressed the monks saying:*

"Monks!"

"Bhadante" they replied.

The Awakened One said this:

*"Monks, just as if a piece of cloth were stained and full of dirt¹
And a dyer would soak it in any kind of dye;
Whether it was blue or yellow or orange or red,
It would look badly dyed and dull in color."²*

Why?

Because of the dirtiness of the cloth.³

*In the same way monks,
When the mind is soiled,
a difficult life can be expected,*

*Just as if a piece of cloth were clean and bright,
And a dyer would soak it in any kind of dye;
Whether it was blue or yellow or orange or red,
It would look well dyed and bright in color.*

¹ *vatthaṃ saṅkiliṭṭhaṃ malaggahitaṃ*

² *durattavaṇṇamevassa aparisuddhavaṇṇamevassa.*

³ *Aparisuddhattā, bhikkhave, vatthassa.*

Why?

Because of the cleanliness of the cloth.

*In the same way monks,
When the mind is clean and bright,
a happy life can be expected,*

[1. The Stains of the Mind]

What are the stains of the mind?

- (1) *Clinging to selfish desires is a stain of the mind,⁴*
- (2) *Impatience is a stain of the mind,*
- (3) *Anger is a stain of the mind,*
- (4) *Holding grudge is a stain of the mind,*
- (5) *Pretention is a stain of the mind,*
- (6) *Retaliation is a stain of the mind,*
- (7) *Jealousy is a stain of the mind,*
- (8) *Selfishness is a stain of the mind,*
- (9) *Deceit is a stain of the mind,*
- (10) *Dishonesty is a stain of the mind,*
- (11) *Obstinacy is a stain of the mind,*
- (12) *Arrogance is a stain of the mind,*
- (13) *Pride is a stain of the mind,*
- (14) *Self-aggrandizement is a stain of the mind,*
- (15) *Intoxication is a stain of the mind,*
- (16) *Carelessness is a stain of the mind.⁵*

[2. Understanding & Letting go]

- (1) *When one understands:
Clinging to selfish desires is a stain of the mind;⁶*

⁴ *Abhijjhāvisamalobho cittaṣa upakkileso*

⁵ 1- *Abhijjhāvisamalobho* 2- *byāpādo* 3- *kodho* 4- *upanāho* 5- *makkho* 6- *paḷāso* 7- *issā* 8- *macchariyaṃ* 9- *māyā* 10- *sāṭṭheyyaṃ* 11- *thambho* 12- *sārambho* 13- *māno* 14- *atimāno* 15- *mado* 16- *pamādo*

⁶ *‘abhijjhāvisamalobho cittaṣa upakkileso’ti—iti veditvā*

*One lets it go.*⁷

- (2) *When one understands:
Impatience is a stain of the mind;
One lets it go.*
- (3) *When one understands:
Anger is a stain of the mind;
One lets it go.*
- (4) *When one understands:
Holding grudge is a stain of the mind;
One lets it go.*
- (5) *When one understands:
Pretention is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*
- (6) *When one understands:
Retaliation is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*
- (7) *When one understands:
Jealousy is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*
- (8) *When one understands:
Selfishness (Envy) is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*
- (9) *When one understands:
Deceit is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*
- (10) *When one understands:
Dishonesty is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*
- (11) *When one understands:
Obstinacy is a stain of the mind,*

⁷ *abhijjhāvisamālobhaṃ cittaṣṣa upakkilesaṃ pajahati;*

One lets it go.

(12) *When one understands:
Arrogance is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*

(13) *When one understands:
Pride is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*

(14) *When one understands:
Self-aggrandizement is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*

(15) *When one understands:
Intoxication is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*

(16) *When one understands:
Carelessness is a stain of the mind,
One lets it go.*

[3. Having Understood & Abandoned]

At that time monks,

(1) *Having understood that:
Clinging to selfish desires is a stain of the mind,⁸
It gets to be given up.⁹*

(2) *Having understood that:
Impatience is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*

(3) *Having understood that:
Anger is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*

⁸ *'abhijjhāvisamalobho cittassa upakkilesō'ti—iti vīditvā*

⁹ *abhijjhāvisamalobho cittassa upakkilesō pahīno hoti,*

- (4) *Having understood that:
Holding grudge is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (5) *Having understood that:
Pretention is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (6) *Having understood that:
Retaliation is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (7) *Having understood that:
Jealousy is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (8) *Having understood that:
Selfishness (Envy) is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (9) *Having understood that:
Deceit is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (10) *Having understood that:
Dishonesty is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (11) *Having understood that:
Obstinacy is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (12) *Having understood that:
Arrogance is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (13) *Having understood that:
Pride is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*
- (14) *Having understood that:
Self-aggrandizement is a stain of the mind,*

It gets to be given up.

(15) *Having understood that:
Intoxication is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*

(16) *Having understood that:
Carelessness is a stain of the mind,
It gets to be given up.*

[4. Uplifted Understanding]

[1. Buddha]

Then, one arrives at the joyful understanding about the Buddha:¹⁰

*The Exalted One is an Arahant,
Perfectly All-Awakened,
Endowed with knowledge and conduct,
Living happily,
Knower of the worlds,
Unsurpassed guide for those who seek self-mastery,
Teacher of Devas and humans,
Awakened and Blessed.*

[2. Dhamma]

One arrives at the joyful understanding about the Dhamma:

*'The Awakened One's Teaching is:
Well explained,
Directly visible,
Immediate,
Inviting,
Leading upwards,
To be experienced by the wise for oneself.*

¹⁰ *So buddhe avecca ppasādena samannāgato hoti:*

[3. Saṅgha]

One arrives at the joyful understanding about the saṅgha:

*Good is the practice of the Awakened One's saṅgha,
Straight is the practice of the Awakened One's saṅgha,
Wise is the practice of the Awakened One's saṅgha,
Meaningful is the practice of the Awakened One's saṅgha.*

*That is, the four pairs of people,
The eight kinds of persons.*

*The saṅgha of the Awakened One is
Worthy support,
Worthy of hospitality,
Worthy of generosity,
Worthy of respect,
An unsurpassed field of goodness for the universe.*

[Remembering the Buddha]

*At that time, when one has given up
Left behind,
Released,
Relaxed
And broke free [from these unwholesome states],¹¹
One knows: "I experience this joyful understanding of the Buddha,"¹²*

*Then, one knows and experiences the meaning,¹³
Knows and experiences the Dhamma,¹⁴
Knows and experiences the natural gladness of Dhamma¹⁵*

[Natural Samādhi]¹⁶

From that gladness, bliss arises in the mind;

¹¹ *Yathodhi kho panassa cattaṃ hoti vantaṃ muttaṃ pahīnaṃ paṭinissaṭṭhaṃ*

¹² *so 'buddhe aveccappasādena samannāgatomhī'ti*

¹³ *Labhati atthavedaṃ: Gets a feel of the goal or meaning, the purpose. Gets to know...*

¹⁴ *Labhati dhammavedaṃ*

¹⁵ *Labhati dhammūpasaṅhitaṃ pāmojjaṃ.*

¹⁶ *Dhamma Samādhi*

*From that blissful mind, the body becomes calm;
Calm in body, one experiences happiness;
With a happy mind comes Samādhi.¹⁷*

[Remembering the Dhamma]

*At that time, when one has
Given up
Left behind,
Released,
Relaxed
And broke free [from these unwholesome states],
One knows: "I experience this joyful understanding of the Dhamma,"*

*Then, one knows and experiences the meaning,¹⁸
Knows and experiences the Dhamma,¹⁹
Knows and experiences the natural gladness of Dhamma²⁰*

[Natural Samādhi]

*From that gladness, bliss arises in the mind;
From that blissful mind, the body becomes calm;
Calm in body, one experiences happiness;
With a happy mind comes Samādhi.*

[Remembering the Saṅgha]

*At that time, when one has
Given up
Left behind,
Released,
Relaxed
And broke free [from these unwholesome states],
One knows: "I experience this joyful understanding of the Saṅgha,"*

¹⁷ *sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati.*

¹⁸ *Labhati atthavedaṇṇi: Gets a feel of the goal or meaning, the purpose. Gets to know...*

¹⁹ *Labhati dhammavedaṇṇi*

²⁰ *Labhati dhammūpasaṅghitaṇṇi pāmojjaṇṇi.*

*Then, one knows and experiences the meaning,
Knows and experiences the Dhamma,
Knows and experiences the natural gladness of Dhamma.*

[Natural Samādhi]

*From that gladness, bliss arises in the mind;
From that blissful mind, the body becomes calm;
Calm in body, one experiences happiness;
With a happy mind comes Samādhi.*

[Remembering the Release]

At that time, when one realizes:

*“I have given up
Left behind,
Released,
Relaxed*

And broke free [from these unwholesome states]:

*Then, one knows and experiences the meaning,
Knows and experiences the Dhamma,
Knows and experiences the natural gladness of Dhamma.*

[Natural Samādhi]

*From that gladness, bliss arises in the mind;
From that blissful mind, the body becomes calm;
Calm in body, one experiences happiness;
With a happy mind comes Samādhi.*

[Unimpeded by Food]

*If a monk of such virtue,
such Dhamma and such wisdom,²¹
Were to eat the finest, handpicked rice for alms,
With endless curry and dahl,
This would not impede him.*

²¹ *evaṃsīlo evaṃdhammo evaṃpañño*

*Just as a cloth would be stained and full of dirt
Becomes clean and bright with clean water,
Just as gold become clear and bright from a smith's forge;*

*If a monk of such virtue,
Such Dhamma and such wisdom,
Were to eat the finest handpicked rice for alms,
With endless curry and dahl,
This would not impede him.*

[Boundless Love]

*One Meditates,
With a heart filled with Boundless Love;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.²²*

*Above, below,
And everywhere across.
To all living beings
In this boundless universe.²³*

*One meditates with a heart filled with Love,
Vast, expansive, measureless,²⁴
Free from anger and impatience.*

[Boundless Compassion]

*One Meditates,
With a heart filled with Boundless Compassion;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.*

²² So mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ, tathā tatiyaṃ, tathā catutthaṃ.

²³ Iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ

²⁴ mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharitvā viharati;

*Above, below,
And everywhere across.
To all living beings
In this boundless universe.*

*One meditates with a heart filled with Boundless Compassion,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience*

[Boundless Joy]

*One Meditates,
With a heart filled with Boundless Joy;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.*

*Above, below,
And everywhere across.
To all living beings
In this boundless universe.*

*One meditates with a heart filled with Boundless Joy,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience*

[Boundless Calm]

*One Meditates,
With a heart filled with Boundless Calm;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.*

*Above, below,
And everywhere across.
To all living beings
In this boundless universe.*

One meditates with a heart filled with Boundless Calm,

*Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience*

[Beyond Concepts]

*One understands:*²⁵

*“There is this,²⁶
There is the base,²⁷
There is the sublime,²⁸
And there is a release beyond this field of conception.”²⁹*

[Release]

*Continually observing and understanding in this way,³⁰
One’s mind is released,
From the inclination for clinging outwardly,
From the inclination to projecting in the future,
And from the inclination to carelessness.³¹*

*In that release, one knows:
“This is Release.”*

²⁵ So ‘atthi idaṃ, atthi hīnaṃ, atthi paṇītaṃ, atthi imassa saññāgatassa uttari nissaraṇan’ti pajānāti.

²⁶ Starting from the very wholesome mental states of the brāhmvihāras, one can assess and tell wholesome states from unwholesome states better. This is called wisdom or discernment.

²⁷ The worldly mind, entangled in sense desires, dislikes and carelessness. (Lobha, dosa, moha)

²⁸ He mind of the brāhmvihāras upwards. The jhānic mind, the higher mind (Adhicitte). Unaffected by sense desires, dislikes and carelessness. (Alobha, adosa, amoha). Generosity, letting go, contentment, Boundless Love, Boundless Compassion, Boundless Joy, Boundless Calm and beyond.

²⁹ “This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, the stilling of all conditioned processes, breaking free from mental limitations, the complete calming of Tension, appeasement, release, Nibbāna.” AN III 32 Ānanda Sutta

³⁰ This truly is the path of practice as taught by the Buddha. That is, understanding how the mind works and abandoning unskillful, unwholesome states of mind in order to move towards greater awareness, happiness and peace. The cultivation of wisdom and release. Samatha-Vipassanā, Tranquility and wise observation, yoked together, supporting each other.

³¹ The three inclinations or main outflows of the mind. Kāmāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati, bhavāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati, avijjāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati.

One directly knows:

*[Unwholesome states] have been overcome,³²
Lived is the spiritual life,
Done, is what should be done,
There is no more conceit here.*

I say monks:
This monk is cleansed by inner bathing.³³

[Ritual Bathing]

At that time,
The brāhmaṇa Sundarika Bhāradvāja was sitting near and said:

[Sundarika Bhāradvāja]

“Does the Respected Gotama sometimes go to the Bāhuka river to bathe?”

[The Buddha]

Why brāhmaṇa, go bathe in the Bāhukā?
What will the Bhāhukā river do?

[Sundarika Bhāradvāja]

Dear Gotama, the Bāhukā river is believed by most people
To bring luck,³⁴ to bring goodness³⁵
Most people go to the Bhāhukā river
to wash away unrighteous actions they have committed.

To this, the Awakened One replied in verses:

[The Buddha]

³² I have replaced “Rebirth or “birth” here by the more practical “unwholesome states.” For the sake of adapting these instructions to be more accessible to a broader audience. “*Khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparaṃ itthattāyā*”^{ti} *abbhaññāsi*.”

³³ *‘bhikkhu sināto antarena sinānenā’*”^{ti}.

³⁴ *Lokkhasammata*

³⁵ *puññasammata*

*“Bhāhukā and Adhikakka
Gaya and Sundarika also;
Sarassati and Payāga
And the river Bāhumati;
The misguided may forever jump into
Without brushing off dark actions.*

*What will the Sundarikā do?
What will the Payāgā, what the Bāhukā?
They do not cleanse those who have done hurtful actions,
The hateful men bent on harmful deeds.*

*For those bright [in heart], it is ever spring,
For those bright [in heart], the day is ever sacred;
Those bright [in heart], bright in actions,
Are ever practicing.³⁶*

*Here Brāhmaṇa you should bathe,
And be a refuge for all living-beings.³⁷*

*And if you speak no lie,
And if you harm not the living,
If you take not what isn't yours
And if you be faithful and not selfish,*

*What need you to go to Gaya?
When all the wells will be your Gaya.”*

³⁶ *Suddhassa ve sadā phaggu, Suddhassuposatho sadā, Suddhassa sucikamma, Sadā sampajjate vataṃ;*

³⁷ *Idheva sināhi brāhmaṇa,
Sabbabhūtesu karohi khemataṃ.*

When this was said, Sundarika Bhāradvāja said:

[Refuge]

Excellent Dear Gotama!

Excellent Dear Gotama!

*Just as if what had fallen over had been set upright,
or as what had been hidden was uncovered,
or as if the way was shown to someone who was lost,
or as if a light was shone in the darkness, thinking:
“Let those with vision see!”*

*In the same way Bhante,
The Awakened One Has brought forth
And elucidated the Dhamma in countless ways.*

*Respected Gotama,
I go to the Awakened One as a refuge
to the Dhamma
and to the bhikkhu saṅgha.*

*I would like to go forth directly from master Gotama,
May I receive the higher ordination.*

*Then, the Brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja received the going forth,
And received the higher ordination.*

*Then, the Venerable Bhāradvāja;
Dwelling alone,
Secluded,
Attentive,
Intent
And resolute,*

*In no long time,
attained the purpose for which
sons of good families
honestly leave their home
and become [spiritual wanderers],
seeking for the highest:*

The complete perfection of the holy life.

And having realized the Dhamma by his own direct knowledge,

He abided in it.

He directly knew:

[Unwholesome states] are vanquished,

Lived is the holy life,

Done is what should be done,

There is no more conceit here.

And the Venerable Bhāradvāja became another one of the Arahants.