

1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthi 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, before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, it occurred to me: 'Suppose that I divide my thoughts into two classes.' Then I set on one side thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill will, and thoughts of cruelty, and I set on the other side thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of non-ill will, and thoughts of non-cruelty.

3. "As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of sensual desire arose in me. I understood thus: 'This thought of sensual desire has arisen in me. This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, and to the affliction of both; it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from Nibbāna.' When I considered: 'This leads to my own affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to others' affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to the affliction of both,' it subsided in me; when I considered: This obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from Nibbāna,' it subsided in me. Whenever a thought of sensual desire arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it.

4-5. "As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of ill will arose in me...a thought of cruelty arose in me. I understood thus: 'This thought of cruelty has arisen in me. This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, and to the affliction of both; it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from Nibbāna.' When I considered thus...it subsided in me. Whenever a thought of cruelty arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it.

6. "Bhikkhus, whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of sensual desire, he has abandoned the thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of sensual desire. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of ill will...upon thoughts of cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of non-cruelty to cultivate the thought of cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of cruelty.

7. "Just as in the last month of the rainy season, in the autumn when the crops thicken, a cowherd would guard his cows by constantly tapping and poking them on this side and that with a stick to check and curb them. Why is that? Because he sees that he could be flogged,

imprisoned, fined, or blamed [if he let them stray into the crops]. So too I saw in unwholesome states danger, degradation, and defilement, and in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing.

8. "As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of renunciation arose in me. I understood thus: 'This thought of renunciation has arisen in me. This does not lead to my own affliction, or to others' affliction, or to the affliction of both; it aids wisdom, does not cause difficulties, and leads to Nibbāna. If I think and ponder upon this thought even for a night, even for a day, even for a night and day, I see nothing to fear from it. But with excessive thinking and pondering I might tire my body, and when the body is tired, the mind becomes strained, and when the mind is strained, it is far from concentration.' So I steadied my mind internally, quieted it, brought it to singleness, and concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind should not be strained.

9-10. "As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of non-ill will arose in me...a thought of non-cruelty arose in me. I understood thus: 'This thought of non-cruelty has arisen in me. This does not lead to my own affliction, or to others' affliction, or to the affliction of both; it aids wisdom, does not cause difficulties, and leads to Nibbāna. If I think and ponder upon this thought even for a night, even for a day, even for a night and day, I see nothing to fear from it. But with excessive thinking and pondering I might tire my body, and when the body is tired, the mind becomes strained, and when the mind is strained, it is far from concentration.' So I steadied my mind internally, quieted it, brought it to singleness, and concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind should not be strained.

11. "Bhikkhus, whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of renunciation, he has abandoned the thought of sensual desire to cultivate the thought of renunciation, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of renunciation. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of non-ill will...upon thoughts of non-cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of cruelty to cultivate the thought of non-cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of non-cruelty.

12. "Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been brought inside the villages, a cowherd would guard his cows while staying at the root of a tree or out in the open, since he needs only to be mindful that the cows are there; so too, there was need for me only to be mindful that those states were there.

13. "Tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was tranquil and untroubled, my mind concentrated and unified.

14-23. "Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first jhāna...(as Sutta 4, §§23-32)...I directly knew: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'

24. "This was the third true knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute.

25. "Suppose, bhikkhus, that in a wooded range there was a great low-lying marsh near which a large herd of deer lived. Then a man appeared desiring their ruin, harm, and bondage, and he closed off the safe and good path to be traveled joyfully, and he opened up a false path, and he put out a decoy and set up a dummy so that the large herd of deer might later come upon calamity, disaster, and loss. But another man came desiring their good, welfare, and protection, and he reopened the safe and good path that led to their happiness, and he closed off the false path, and he removed the decoy and destroyed the dummy, so that the large herd of deer might later come to growth, increase, and fulfillment.

26. "Bhikkhus, I have given this simile in order to convey a meaning. This is the meaning: 'The great low-lying marsh' is a term for sensual pleasures. 'The large herd of deer' is a term for beings. 'The man desiring their ruin, harm, and bondage' is a term for Māra the Evil One. 'The false path' is a term for the wrong eightfold path, that is: wrong view, wrong intention wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort wrong mindfulness, and wrong concentration. 'The decoy' is a term for delight and lust. 'The dummy' is a term for ignorance. 'The man desiring their good, welfare, and protection' is a term for the Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened. 'The safe and good path to be traveled joyfully' is a term for the Noble Eightfold Path, that is: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

"So, bhikkhus, the safe and good path to be traveled joyfully has been reopened by me, the wrong path has been closed off, the decoy removed, the dummy destroyed.

27. "What should be done for his disciples out of compassion by a teacher who seeks their welfare and has compassion for them, that I have done for you, bhikkhus. There are these roots of trees, these empty huts. Meditate, bhikkhus, do not delay or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you."

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

Majjhima Nikāya 19

Part One – The Root Fifty Discourses (Mūlapaṭṭhāsapāṭi)

The Division of the Lion's Roar (Sīhanādavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi