

Mahā Dukkhā-k, khandha Sutta

The Greater Discourse on the Mass of Suffering

[The pains of pleasures]
(Majjhima Nikāya 13/1:83-90)
Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

The teachings of this sutta are given in response to a challenge made by some wanderers that they knew what the Buddha knows with regards to sense-desires [§§3-4]. The Buddha's response opens with a long section on the dangers of sense-desires [§§6-15], goes on to explain what is meant by the full understanding—that is the gratification, the disadvantage and the escape [§§16-17]—with regards to sense-desires, form [§§18-31] and feelings [§§32-38].

The phrasing of these key teachings reveals that sense-desires, form and feelings are not the problem (not “evil” in themselves), but our **lustful desire** (*chanda, rāga*) is. In the end, it is the giving up of this lustful desire for them that brings one spiritual liberation. It should be noted here that *kāma* as used in this sutta has a broad sense, that is, both as the subjective defilement (*kilesa*) or “sense-desire” and as the object of desire (*vatthu*) or “(objects of) sense-desire” (Nm 1.1, Vbh 256, DhsA 62; cf A 3:410 f).

The section on the gratification with regards to sense-desires [§7] is found in **the Araṇa, vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 139.9/3:234). If **the Dīgha, jānu Sutta** (8.54.5/4:282) teaches worldly happiness, its spiritual counterpart, warning of the disadvantages of such happiness, is found in the section on the disadvantages with regards to sense-desires [§§8-10]. The section on immoral conduct [§14]—describing the tortures that a criminal suffers at the hands of kings—is found in **the Bala, paṇḍita Sutta** (M 129.4/3:164) and is the fourth Divine Messenger in **the Devadūta Sutta** (M 130.7/3:171).

The section on the disadvantages with regards to form [§§19-20] has two passages paralleling the second Divine Messenger (M 130.5/3:180) and the third Divine Messenger (M 130.7/3:181). The Cemetery Meditations that follow are framed in a most dramatic and vivid way around the parable of an ideally beautiful girl fifteen or sixteen years old [§18] as she ages, dies and dissolves away.

The 3 points (*thāna*)—gratification, disadvantage (or danger), and escape (*assāda, ādīnava, nis-saraṇa*)—are also found in **the (Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa Sutta** (S 22.56), and the triad forms the latter part of the “seven cases” (*satta-ṭ, thāna*), namely, understanding of the aggregate (form etc), its arising, its ending and the way to its ending; understanding the gratification, the disadvantage and the escape in the case (*thāna*) of the aggregate (**Satta-ṭ, thāna S**, S 22.57/3:61-65).¹

Two of the most graphic similes in the Canon—the battle similes [§§12-23]—are found in this sutta. Much of this sutta is also found in other texts. The sections on the Cemetery Meditations [§§21-29] are found in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22). The section on the dhyanas [§§32-35] are stock found, for example, in **the Sāmañña, phala Sutta** (D 1:73-76=2.75-82).

In **the Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 109), the three aspects of gratification, danger and escape, are applied to the five aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*).²

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¹ See **(Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56) = SD 3.7 Intro (3) (2004).

² M 109.12/3:18 = S 22.82 = SD 17.10.

The Greater Discourse on the Mass of Suffering

(M 13/1:83-89)

[84]

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying at Anātha,piṇḍika's park in Jeta's grove near Sāvattḥī. Then, when it was morning, some monks dressed and, taking bowl and robe, entered Sāvattḥī for alms. 2

Then the monks thought:

"It is too early to go into Sāvattḥī for alms. What if we were to go to the sectarian wanderers' park?"³

Then the monks went into the sectarian wanderers' park and exchanged greetings with them. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, they sat down at one side.

The wanderers' claim

As they were sitting thus at one side, the wanderers of other faiths said this to the monks:

3 "The ascetic Gotama, avusos, declares full understanding of sense-desires,⁴ and we too declares full understanding of sense-desires;

the ascetic Gotama, avusos, declares full understanding of material forms, and we too declares full understanding of form;

the ascetic Gotama, avusos, declares full understanding of feelings, and we too declares full understanding of feelings.

What then, avusos, is the distinction, what is the difference, what is the variance here between the ascetic Gotama's Dharma teachings and instructions and those of ours?"⁵

4 Then the monks, neither approving nor disapproving of the word of the wanderers of other faiths, rose from their seats and left, thinking:

"We will learn the truth of this matter from the Blessed One himself."

5 Then the monks, having gone into Sāvattḥī for alms, having returned from alms-round and finished their meal, went up to the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, the monks *related to the Blessed One what had happened at the sectarian wanderers' park, and this topic of conversation that arose amongst the wanderers of the other faiths who had gathered together there:*

"The ascetic Gotama, avusos, declares full understanding of sense-desires, and we too declare full understanding of sense-desires;

the ascetic Gotama, avusos, declares full understanding of feelings, and we too declare full understanding of feelings.

What then, avusos, is the distinction, what is the difference, what is the variance here between the ascetic Gotama's Dharma teachings and instructions and those of ours?" [85]

³ "Sectarian wanderers," *nānā,titthiyā paribbājakā*, lit "other-fording wanderers", fully: "the wanderers of other faiths," "heterodox wanderers," ie non-Buddhist wanderers. It is interesting that this is the closest that the Buddhist texts have for "gentile" (a non-Jew), ie an "outsider".

⁴ "Sense-desires," *kāma*. It should be noted here that *kāma* as used in this sutta has a broad sense, that is, both as the subjective defilement (*kilesa*) or "sense-desire" and as the object of desire (*vatthu*) or "(objects of) sensual pleasure" (Nm 1,1, Vbh 256, DhsA 62; cf A 3:410 f) [Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:192 f]. In other words, *kāma* translates into English as "sense-desire" as well as "sensual pleasure," depending on the context, but the one sense should be taken as implicit in the other in the English translation.

⁵ *Idha no āvuso ko viseso, ko adhippayāso, kiṃ nānākaraṇaṃ samaṇassa vā gotamassa amhākaṃ vā—yadidaṃ dhamma,desanāya vā dhamma,desanaṃ, anusāsaniyā vā anusāsani 'ti.*

SENSE-DESIRES

6 “This, bhikshus, should have been said to the wanderers of other faiths who have spoken thus:

‘But, avusos, **what is the gratification, what is the disadvantage,⁶ what is the escape with regards to sense-desires?⁷** What is the gratification, what is the disadvantage, what is the escape with regards **to form?⁸** What is the gratification, what is the disadvantage, what is the escape with regards **to feelings?’**

Having been questioned thus, bhikshus, the wanderers of other faiths will not be able to explain and will even feel disturbed. What is the reason for this? Bhikshus, it is beyond their ken. Bhikshus, I see no one in this world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers⁹ and people who could satisfy the mind with an answer to the problem except for the Tathagata or the Tathagata’s disciple or one who has learned it from them.

Gratification of sense-desires¹⁰

7 (1) And what, bhikshus, is the gratification with regards to sense-desires?¹¹

Bhikshus, they are these **five cords of sense-desire.**¹² What are the five?

Visual forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

Sounds cognizable by the ear...arousing lust.

Smells cognizable by the nose...arousing lust.

Tastes cognizable by the tongue...arousing lust.

Touches cognizable by the body that are wished for, desirable, agreeable and pleasing, connected with sense-desire, arousing lust.

These, bhikshus, are the five cords of sense-desire.

⁶ “Disadvantage,” *ādīnava*, alt tr “danger.”

⁷ The 3 factors—gratification, disadvantage (or danger), and escape (*assāda*, *ādīnava*, *nissaraṇa*)—form the latter part of the “seven cases” (*satta-ṭ,ṭhāna*), viz, understanding of the aggregate (form etc), its arising, its ending and the way to its ending; understanding the gratification, the disadvantage and the escape in the case (*ṭhāna*) of the aggregate (**Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna S**, S 22.57/3:61-65).

⁸ “Form,” *rūpa*, ie physical or material form, esp as “visual form” in connection with the eyes and seeing.

⁹ *deva*, here in the sense of “devas by convention” (*sammati,deva*), ie kings. The other 2 types of *deva* are “gods by rebirth” (*upapatti,deva*) and “gods by purification” (*visuddhi,deva*), ie the Buddhas, Pratyeka Buddhas and Arhats. (Nc 307 KhA 123). See n7.

¹⁰ §§7-15 here parallels **Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha S** (M 14.6-14) = SD 4.7. The word *kāma* (sense-desire) is also tr as “sensual pleasure” and may refer to either the subjective defilement (*kilesa*) or the object of desire (*vatthu*) (Nm 1,1, Vbh 256, DhsA 62; cf A 3:410 f).

¹¹ The 3 factors—gratification [7], disadvantage (or danger) [8], and escape [M 13.16/1:85]—form the latter part of the “seven cases” (*satta-ṭ,ṭhāna*), viz, understanding of the aggregate (form etc), its arising, its ending and the way to its ending; understanding the gratification, the disadvantage and the escape in the case (*ṭhāna*) of the aggregate (**Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna S**, S 22.57/3:61-65). On this passage, cf **Saññoga S** (A 7.48 = SD 8.7) on how sexual feeling arise. The following section occurs in **Arāṇa,vibhaṅga S** (M 139.9/3:234) = 7.8, **Mahā Suññatā S** (M 122.14/-3:114) = SD 11.4.

¹² “Five cords of sense-desire” (*pañca kāma,guṇa*), so called because they are the objects of the five physical senses (V 1:3, 17, 225, 293, 3:111; D 1:172, 2:243, 3:60, 238; M 1:47; S 1:9, 132; A 3.411; Dh 48, 415; Sn 436; Tha 254; J 3:466, 4:172, 173, 469. 6:127; Ap 547; Nm 1; Vbh 256; Mvst 3.417.2; MA 1:199, 131, 2:261). They are also the qualities of desire, ie, that which brings pleasure to the senses, or desirable sense-experience, as listed in the passage here. They are “cords” (*guṇa*) because they bind one to them, and they “multiply” (*guṇa*) themselves as a result, binding one ever tighter to them. *Kāma* is also desire personified, ie the god of love, sometimes identified with Māra (Tha 3.88; BA 289). It is interesting to note here that there is no “mental pleasure” (*somanassa*) in the list. Such mental pleasures generally arise through mental focus or meditation, and as such are not regarded as *guṇa*, insofar as they provide a lasting sense of satisfaction and inner peace that lead to letting-go.

Now, bhikshus, the (physical) joy and (mental) pleasure¹³ arise on account of these five cords of sense-desire. This is the gratification with regards to sense-desires.

The disadvantage with regards to sense-desire

8 (2) And what, bhikshus, is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desire?

Here, bhikshus, a son of family earns a living by means of various skills—finger-counting or accounting or calculating or farming or trading or husbandry or archery or the civil service or some other craft—facing the cold, facing the heat, being afflicted by¹⁴ gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, creeping things [and reptiles]; (even) dying from hunger and thirst.

Now, bhikshus, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now,¹⁵ having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, [86] the cause being simply¹⁶ sense-desires.

9 Bhikshus, if he finds that no wealth accrues to him from his striving, exertion and effort, he sorrows, suffers, weeps, beats his breasts and becomes distressed, crying:

‘Alas! My striving is in vain! Alas! My effort is fruitless!’

Now, bhikshus, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires,...the cause being simply sense-desires.

10 Bhikshus, if wealth accrues to him from his striving, exertion and effort, he feels pain and displeasure on account of having to protect his wealth, thinking: ‘What (shall I do) now so that kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal it, fire would not burn it, water would not wash it away, nor unloving heirs take it away?’¹⁷

Even as he guards and protects his wealth, kings seize it, thieves steal it, fire burns it, water washes it away, unloving heirs take it away. He sorrows, suffers, weeps, beats his breasts, and becomes distressed, crying: ‘What was mine is no more!’

Now, bhikshus, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires,...the cause being simply sense-desires.

11 Again, bhikshus, with sense-desire as the cause..., kings quarrel with kings, kshatriyas quarrel with kshatriyas, brahmins quarrel with brahmins, householders quarrel with householders, mother quarrels with son, son quarrels with mother, father quarrels with son, son quarrels with father, brother quarrels with brother, sister quarrels with sister, companion quarrels with companion,

And here, having fallen into quarrels, strife and disputes, they come to blows with one another using fists, clods of earth, sticks and knives—bringing upon themselves death and deadly suffering.

Now, bhikshus, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause,...the cause being simply sense-desires.

The battle similes

12 Again, bhikshus, with sense-desires as the cause,...they, holding sword and shield, wearing quiver and arrow, they charge ahead into battle arrayed in double ranks, arrows flying, spears flying, swords flashing. Here, arrows wound them, spears wound them, swords chop off their heads. Here, they suffer death and deadly suffering.

Now, bhikshus, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause,...the cause being simply sense-desires.

¹³ “(Physical) joy and (mental) pleasure,” *sukha, somanassa*.

¹⁴ “Being afflicted by”—*samphassehi rissamāno*, lit “being hurt by the touches (of gadflies, etc)”.

¹⁵ “Here and now,” *sandiṭṭhika*, also tr “in this life.” See Brahmavaṃso, 2003b:59-62.

¹⁶ “Simply,” *eva*.

¹⁷ This quotation occurs in Dīgha, jānu S (8.54.5/4:282).

13 Again, bhikshus, with sense-desires as the cause,...they, holding sword and shield, wearing quiver and arrow, they clamber up the fortress wall freshly smeared [with lime],¹⁸ arrows flying, spears flying, [87] swords flashing. Here, arrows wound them, spears wound them, boiling cow-dung¹⁹ rain down on them, spiked weights²⁰ crush them in large numbers, swords (then) chop off their heads. Here, they suffer death and deadly suffering.

Now, bhikshus, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen here and now, having sense-desires as the cause,...the cause being simply sense-desires.

Immoral conduct

14 Again, bhikshus, with sense-desires as the cause,...they break into houses,²¹ they carry away their plunder, they commit burglary, they wait in ambush, they go with the women of others.

Kings then seize them inflicting on them various kinds of torture:²² having them whipped, caned, clubbed, their hands cut off, their feet cut off, their limbs cut off, their ears cut off, their noses cut off, their ears and noses cut off; having them subjected to ‘the porridge pot’, to ‘the polished-shell shave’, to ‘Rāhu’s mouth’, to ‘the fiery garland’, to ‘the flaming hand’, to ‘the blades of grass, to ‘the bark dress’, to [being strapped to the ground by an iron ring around each limb, fastened by iron spikes and then surrounded by fire, called]²³ ‘the black antelope’, to [having pieces of their flesh cut and hung on] ‘the meat hooks’, to ‘the coins’ [disc-slice], to ‘the lye pickling’ [immersion in strong alkaline solution], to ‘the pivoting pin [where a spike is driven in his skull from ear to ear], to ‘the rolled-up straw mat’ [being beaten up]; and having them splashed with boiling oil, and having them thrown to the dogs to be devoured, having them impaled alive on stakes, and having their heads cut off with a sword.

Now, bhikshus, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, a mass of suffering seen **here and now**, having sense-desires as the cause,...the cause being simply sense-desires.

15 Again, bhikshus, with sense-desires as the cause,...they misconduct themselves through body, through speech and through mind. Having misconducted themselves through body, through speech and through mind, after death, with the body’s breaking up, they re-appear in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

Now, bhikshus, this is the disadvantage with regards to sense-desires, **a mass of suffering in the life to come**,²⁴ having sense-desires as the cause, sense-desires as the source, sense-desires as the basis, the cause being simply sense-desires.

The escape with regards to sense-desires

16 (3) And what, bhikshus, is **the escape (nissaraṇa) with regards to sense-desires?**

Bhikshus, it is the removal of lustful desire for sense-pleasures,²⁵ the giving up of lustful desire. This is the escape with regards to sense-desires.

¹⁸ “They clamber up the fortress wall freshly smeared [with lime],” *addāva,lapenā upakāriyo*. M:ÑB has “they charge slippery bastions”. See Comy (MA 2:58).

¹⁹ “Boiling cowdung,” *pakkatthiyā* (boiling), Be *chakanakāyā* (which Comy glosses as *kuthita,gomaya*, which could mean “cooked cowdung” or “stinking cowdung”.)

²⁰ “Spiked weights,” *abhivaggena* (lit “with large heavy objects”) = *sata,dantena* (with a hundred teeth) (MA 2:58).

²¹ “They break into houses,” *sandhim pi chindanti* (J 1:187 f, 2:388).

²² As at **Bala,paṇḍita S** (M 129.4/3:164 = SD 2.22) & as the 4th Divine Messenger in **Devadūta S** (M 130.7/-3:171 = SD 2.23). Also at **Kamma,kāraṇa (or Vajja) S** (A 2.1/1:47-49). For other details (Comy) of the tortures, see nn in A:WH 1:42 f.

²³ NmA 278 ad Nm 154 = M 13.14 (1:87,15).

²⁴ It should be noted that while in the previous cases, the dangers in sense-desires are called “a mass of suffering seen here and now” (*sandiṭṭhiko dukkha-k,khandho*), this particular one is described as “a mass of suffering in the life to come” (*samparāyiko dukkha-k,khandho*).

17 It is truly²⁶ impossible for those ascetics and brahmins who do not understand according to reality gratification as gratification, disadvantage as disadvantage, escape as escape with regards to sense-desires either to fully understand sense-desires through their own practice or to instruct another so that one can fully understand sense-desires.

It is indeed²⁷ possible for those ascetics and brahmins who do understand according to reality [88] gratification as gratification, disadvantage as disadvantage, escape as escape with regards to sense-desires either to fully understand sense-desires through their own practice or to instruct another so that one fully understands sense-desires.

FORM

The ideal girl

18 (1) And what, bhikshus, is **the gratification with regards to form**?

Now, bhikshus, suppose there were a kshatriya girl or a brahmin girl or a householder's girl, fifteen or sixteen years old, not too tall, not too short, not too thin, not too fat, not too dark, not too pale. Is this the time, bhikshus, when her beauty and complexion would be at its height?"²⁸

"Yes, venerable sir."

"Now, bhikshus, the joy and pleasure that arise on account of that beauty and complexion is the gratification with regards to form.

19 (2) And what, bhikshus, is **the disadvantage with regards to form**?

This same woman here, later on, at eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old, crooked as a rafter, doubled up, supported by a walking-stick, tottering, frail, youth long gone, teeth broken, grey-haired, having little hair, bald, wrinkled, limbs all blotchy.²⁹

What do you think, bhikshus? Have her previous beauty and complexion vanished, the disadvantage (now) evident?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"This, bhikshus, is the disadvantage with regards to form."³⁰

20 Again, bhikshus, you might see this very same woman, afflicted, suffering and gravely ill, lying fouled in her own excrement and urine, lifted up by some and set down by others.³¹

What do you think, bhikshus? Have her previous beauty and complexion vanished, the disadvantage (now) evident?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"This, bhikshus, is the disadvantage with regards to form.

²⁵ "Lustful desire," *chanda, rāga* = *bahala, rāga* ("thick passion," MT:Be 1:72) = *sineha* (NmA 2:347). All Comys specifically refer to *rāga* in their glosses (DA 2:499; AA 4:190; PmA 1:119; Vbh 512). Hence, I take the term as *karmadharaya* ("superman") rather than *dvandva* ("lust and desire"). *Chanda* by itself is neutral, "translated, depending on context, as 'impulse,' 'excitement,' 'intention,' or 'will' (Silva 1995: 113 f.), but often used in a wholesome sense, eg in "path of accomplishment" or "bases of success" (*iddhi, pāda*): will (*chanda*), effort (*virīya*), mind (*citta*), investigation (*vīmaṃsā*) (D 3:221, 213 = M 1:1-3 = 2:11; Vbh 216). See Gethin 2001:81-103 (ch 3) esp 90 f.

²⁶ "Truly," *vata*.

²⁷ "Indeed," *vata*.

²⁸ There are at least 2 other canonical similes of a beautiful girl, but in different contexts: **Tevijja S** (D 13.19/1:241 f = SD 1.8) on idle speculation, and **Janapada Kalyāṇī S** (S 47.20/5:169 f) on how a man carrying a bowl brimful of oil followed by another with a drawn sword would pay full attention to his action and not be distracted.

²⁹ This description occurs as the 2nd Divine Messenger in *Devadūta S* (M 130.5/3:180).

³⁰ "Form" here can also be rendered as "beauty".

³¹ This description occurs as the 3rd Divine Messenger in *Devadūta S* (M 130.7/3:181).

The cemetery meditations³²

21 Again, bhikshus, you might see this very same woman as a corpse, cast aside in a charnel ground, dead for a day, dead for two days, dead for three days, bloated up, livid, and oozing with impurities.³³

What do you think, bhikshus? Have her previous beauty and complexion vanished, the disadvantage (now) evident?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"This, bhikshus, is the disadvantage with regards to form.

22 Again, bhikshus, you might see this very same woman as a corpse, cast aside in a charnel ground, eaten by crows, or being eaten by hawks, or being eaten by vultures, or being eaten by dogs, or being eaten by jackals, or being eaten by various worms and bugs. [89]

23 ...as a skeleton with flesh and blood, connected by sinews,

24 ...as a skeleton, fleshless, smeared with blood, connected by sinews.

25 ...as a skeleton, flesh and blood all gone, connected by sinews,

26 Again, bhikshus, you might see this very same woman as random disconnected bones,³⁴ scattered in all directions, a hand-bone here, a foot-bone there, a shin-bone here, a rib there, a thigh-bone here, a pelvic bone there, a back-bone here, a shoulder-bone there, neck-bone here, a jaw-bone there, a tooth here, a skull there.

What do you think, bhikshus? Have her previous beauty and complexion vanished, the disadvantage (now) evident?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"This, bhikshus, is the disadvantage with regards to form.

27 Again, bhikshus, you might see this very same woman as a corpse, cast aside in a charnel ground, the bones bleached, looking like conch-shells,

28 ...the bones piled up over a year old,

29 ...the bones reduced to a powder;

What do you think, bhikshus? Have her previous beauty and complexion vanished, the disadvantage (now) evident?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"This, bhikshus, is the disadvantage with regards to form.

30 (3) And what, bhikshus, is **the escape with regard to form**?

It is the removal of lustful desire, the giving up of lustful desire for form. This is the escape with regards to form.

31 It is truly impossible for those ascetics and brahmins who do not understand according to reality gratification as gratification, disadvantage as disadvantage, escape as escape with regards to sense-desires either to fully understand sense-desires through their own practice or to instruct another so that one can fully understand sense-desires.

It is indeed possible for those ascetics and brahmins who do understand *them* according to reality... either to fully understand sense-desires through their own practice or to instruct another so that one fully understands sense-desires.

FEELINGSThe four dhyanas³⁵

32 (1) And what, bhikshus, is **the gratification with regards to feelings**?

³² The main materials in this section are found in the 9 charnel-ground meditations of **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.7-10/2:296 f),

³³ "Dead for a day...oozing with impurities," this occurs as the 5th Divine Messenger in *Devadūta S* (M 130.8/3:182).

³⁴ For variant readings, see PTS ed, D 2:296 f.

³⁵ For a more detailed description of the *jhāna* with similes, see **Sāmaññaphala S** (D 2.75-82/1:73-76 = SD 8.10).

Here, bhikshus, quite secluded from sense-desires, secluded from unwholesome mental states, a monk enters and dwells in the first dhyana, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness, born of seclusion.

Bhikshus, when a monk, quite secluded from sense-desires, secluded from unwholesome mental states, enters and dwells in the first dhyana, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness, born of seclusion, bhikshus, he does not think of his own suffering, nor of another's suffering, nor of both of them. [90]

At that time, he feels only feelings that are free from suffering.

The highest gratification with regards to feelings is freedom from suffering, I say!³⁶

33 Again, bhikshus, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he enters and dwells in the second dhyana, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.³⁷

Bhikshus, when a monk, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he enters and dwells in the second dhyana, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration, he does not think of his own suffering, nor of another's suffering, nor of both of them.

At that time, he feels only feelings that are free from suffering.

The highest gratification with regards to feelings is freedom from suffering, I say!

34 Again, with the fading away of zest, he remains equanimous, mindful and fully aware, and experiences happiness with the body, he enters and dwells in the third dhyana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.'

Bhikshus, when a monk, with the fading away of zest, he remains equanimous, mindful and fully aware, and experiences happiness with the body, he enters and dwells in the third dhyana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness,' he does not think of his own suffering, nor of another's suffering, nor of both of them.

At that time, he feels only feelings that are free from suffering.

The highest gratification with regards to feelings is freedom from suffering, I say!

35 Again, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain—and with the earlier disappearance of joy and grief—he enters and abides in the fourth dhyana, that is neither pleasant nor painful, with a mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.³⁸

Bhikshus, when a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain—and with the earlier disappearance of joy and grief—he enters and abides in the fourth dhyana, that is neither pleasant nor painful, with a mindfulness fully purified by equanimity, he does not think of his own suffering, nor of another's suffering, nor of both of them.

At that time, he feels only feelings that are free from suffering.

The highest gratification with regards to feelings is freedom from suffering, I say!

36 (2) And what, bhikshus, is **the disadvantage with regards to feelings?**

Feelings are impermanent, suffering and subject to change. This is the disadvantage with regards to feelings.

37 (3) And what, bhikshus, is **the escape with regards to feelings?**

It is the removal of lustful desire, the giving up of lustful desire for feelings. This is the escape with regards to feelings.

38 It is truly impossible for those ascetics and brahmins who do not understand according to reality gratification as gratification, disadvantage as disadvantage, escape as escape with regards to sense-desires either to fully understand sense-desires through their own practice or to instruct another so that one can fully understand sense-desires.

³⁶ *Abyābajjha, paramā'ham, bhikkhave, vedanānam assādam vadāmi.*

³⁷ The 2nd *jhāna* is known as "the noble silence" (*ariya, tuṅhī, bhāva*): see n3.

³⁸ Vbh 245, Vism 165=4.183.

It is indeed possible for those ascetics and brahmins who do understand according to reality gratification as gratification, disadvantage as disadvantage, escape as escape with regards to sense-desires either to fully understand sense-desires through their own practice or to instruct another so that one fully understands sense-desires.

The Blessed One said this. The monks joyfully approved of the Blessed One's word.

— evaṃ —

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