

1. Thus have I heard. One on occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattḥī 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, I shall teach you a discourse on the restraint of all the taints. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say.” -- “Yes, venerable sir,” the bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

Summary

3. “Bhikkhus, I say that the destruction of the taints is for one who knows and sees, not for one who does not know and see. Who knows and sees what? Wise attention and unwise attention. When one attends unwisely, unarisen taints arise and arisen taints increase. When one attends wisely, unarisen taints do not arise and arisen taints are abandoned.

I think ‘One who knows and sees’ here means the ones who can understand what the Buddha is going to teach next, not literally ‘one who already knows and sees’ something.

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4. “Bhikkhus, there are taints that should be abandoned by seeing. There are taints that should be abandoned by restraining. There are taints that should be abandoned by using. There are taints that should be abandoned by enduring. There are taints that should be abandoned by avoiding. There are taints that should be abandoned by removing. There are taints that should be abandoned by developing.

Taints to be abandoned by seeing

5. “What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by seeing? 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 understand what things are fit for attention and what things are unfit for attention. Since that is so, he attends to those things unfit for attention and he does not attend to those things fit for attention.

6. “What are the things unfit for attention that he attends to? They are things such that when he attends to them, the unarisen taint of sensual desire arises in him and the arisen taint of sensual desire increases, the unarisen taint of being arises in him and the arisen taint of being increases, the unarisen taint of ignorance arises in him and the arisen taint of ignorance increases. These are the things unfit for attention that he attends to. And what are the things fit for attention that he does not attend to? They are things such that when he attends to them, the unarisen taint of sensual desire does not arise in him and the arisen taint of sensual desire is abandoned, the unarisen taint of being does not arise in him and the arisen taint of being is abandoned, the unarisen taint of ignorance does not arise in him and the arisen taint of ignorance is abandoned. These are the things fit for attention that he does not attend to. By attending to things unfit for attention and by not attending to things fit for attention, both unarisen taints arise in him and arisen taints increase.

7. “This is how he attends unwisely: ‘Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what about the present thus: ‘Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where will it go?’

The Buddha is referring to ‘self-doubt,’ such that these doubts arise in a person attached to the view of self.

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8. “When he attends unwisely in this way, one of six views arises in him. The view ‘self exists for me’ arises in him as true and established; or the view ‘no self exists for me’ arises in him as true and established; or the view ‘I perceive self with self’ arises in him as true and established; or the view ‘I perceive not-self with self’ arises in him as true and established; or the view ‘I perceive self with not-self’ arises in him as true and established; or else he has some such view as this: ‘It is this self of mine that speaks and feels and experiences here and there the result of good and bad actions; but this self of mine is permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and it will endure as long as eternity.’ This speculative view, bhikkhus, is called the thicket of views, the wilderness of views, the contortion of views, the vacillation of views, the fetter of views. Fettered by the fetter of views, the untaught ordinary person is not freed from birth, aging, and death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain grief, and despair; he is not freed from suffering, I say.

The Buddha is elaborating the variances of the view of self as they exist in various other religions.

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9. “Bhikkhus, a well-taught noble discipline, 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, understands what things are fit for attention and what things are unfit for attention. Since that is so, he does not attend to those things unfit for attention and he attends to those

things fit for attention.

10. “What are the things unfit for attention that he does not attend to ? They are things such that when he attends to them, the unarisen taint of sensual desire arises in him ... (as above) ... and the arisen taint of ignorance increases. These are the things unfit for attention that he does not attend to. And what are the things fit for attention that he attends to? They are things such that when he attends to them, the unarisen taint of sensual desire does not arise in him... (as above) ... and the arisen taint of ignorance is abandoned. These are the things fit for attention that he attends to. By not attending to things unfit for attention and by attending to things fit for attention, unarisen taints do not arise in him and arisen taints are abandoned.

11. “He attends wisely: ‘This is suffering’; he attends wisely: ‘This is the origin of suffering’; he attends wisely: ‘This is the cessation of suffering’; he attends wisely: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ When he attends wisely in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: personality view, doubt, and adherence to rules and observances. These are called the taints that should be abandoned by seeing.

Taints to be abandoned by restraining

12. “What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by restraining? Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, abides with the eye faculty restrained. While taints, vexation, and fever might arise in one who abides with the eye faculty unrestrained, there are no taints, vexation, or fever in one who abides with the eye faculty restrained. Reflecting wisely, he abides with the ear faculty restrained...with the nose faculty restrained...with the tongue faculty restrained...with the body faculty restrained...with the mind faculty restrained...While taints, vexation, and fever might arise in one who abides with the faculties unrestrained, there are no taints, vexation, or fever in one who abides with the faculties restrained. These are called the taints that should be abandoned by restraining.

I think ‘passion’ is a better word than ‘fever’ here. Furthermore, I think the ‘restraining’ here refers to the practice of mindfulness such that the six faculties are well guarded and restrained.

Yi-Lei Wu **Taints to be abandoned by using**

13. “What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by using? Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, uses the robe only for protection from cold, for protection from heat, for protection from contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, and creeping things, and only for the purpose of concealing the private parts.

14. “Reflecting wisely, he uses almsfood neither for amusement nor for intoxication nor for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness, but only for the endurance and continuance of this body, for ending discomfort, and for assisting the holy life, considering: ‘Thus I shall terminate old feelings without arousing new feelings and I shall be healthy and blameless and shall live in comfort.’

15. “Reflecting wisely, he uses the resting place only for protection from cold, for protection from heat, for protection from contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, and creeping things, and only for the purpose of warding off the perils of climate and for enjoying retreat.

16. “Reflecting wisely, he uses the medicinal requisites only for protection from arisen afflicting feelings and for the benefit of good health.

17. “While taints, vexation, and fever might arise in one who does not use the requisites thus, there are no taints, vexation, or fever in one who uses them thus. These are called the taints that should be abandoned by using.

Taints to be abandoned by enduring

18. “What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by enduring? Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, bears cold and heat, hunger and thirst, and contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, and creeping things; he endures ill-spoken, unwelcome words and arisen bodily feelings that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable distressing, and menacing to life. While taints, vexation, and fever might arise in one who does not endure such things, there are no taints, vexation, or fever in one who endures them. These are called the taints that should be abandoned by enduring.

Taints to be abandoned by avoiding

19. “What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by avoiding? Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, avoids a wild elephant, a wild horse, a wild dog, a snake, a stump, a bramble patch, a chasm, a cliff, a cesspit, a sewer. Reflecting wisely, he avoids sitting on unsuitable seats, wandering to unsuitable resorts, and associating with bad friends, since if he were to do so wise companions in the holy life might suspect him of evil conduct. While taints, vexation, and fever might arise in one who does not avoid these things, there are no taints, vexation, and fever in one who avoids them. These are called the taints that should be abandoned by avoiding.

Taints to be abandoned by removing

20. “What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by removing? Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, does not tolerate an arisen thought of sensual desire; he abandons it, removes it, does away with it, and annihilates it. He does not tolerate an arisen thought of ill will...He does not tolerate an arisen thought of cruelty...He does not tolerate arisen evil unwholesome states; he abandons them, removes them, does away with them, and annihilates them. While taints, vexation, and fever might arise in one who does not remove these thoughts, there are no taints, vexation, or fever in one who removes them. These are called the taints that should be abandoned by removing.

Taints to be abandoned by developing

21. “What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by developing? Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, develops the mindfulness enlightenment factor, which is supported by seclusion, dispassion and cessation, and ripens in relinquishment. He develops the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor...the energy enlightenment factor...the rapture enlightenment factor...the tranquility enlightenment factor...the concentration enlightenment factor...the equanimity enlightenment factor, which is supported by seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, and ripens in relinquishment. While taints, vexation, and fever might arise in one who does not develop these enlightenment factors, there are no taints, vexation or fever in one who develops them. These are called the taints that should be abandoned by developing.

Conclusion

22. “Bhikkhus, when for a bhikkhu the taints that should be abandoned by seeing have been abandoned by seeing, when the taints that should be abandoned by restraining have been abandoned by restraining, when the taints that should be abandoned by using have been abandoned by using, when the taints that should be abandoned by enduring have been abandoned by enduring, when the taints that should be abandoned by avoiding have been abandoned by avoiding, when the taints that should be abandoned by developing have been abandoned by developing—then he is called a bhikkhu who dwells restrained with the restraint of all the taints. He has severed craving, flung off the fetters, and with the complete penetration of conceit he has made an end of suffering.”

‘Conceit’ is known as one of the last taints one should abandon to achieve arahantship. The threefold characteristics of conceit is ‘one is better than the other,’ ‘one is lower than the other,’ or ‘one is equal to the other.’
Yi-Lei Wu

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

Majjhima Nikāya 2

Part One – The Root Fifty Discourses (Mūlapaṭṭhāsapāṭi)

The Division of the Discourse on the Root (Mūlapariyāyavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi