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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

### Summary

This sutta recounts the experience and understanding of Gotama in the period leading up to his awakening and his attainment of Buddhahood on the night of his Enlightenment.

### Dvedhavitakka Sutta: Two Sorts of Thinking" (MN 19)

translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Sujato

"So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants: "Mendicants!" "Venerable sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:

"Mendicants, before my awakening—when I was still unawakened but intent on awakening—I thought: 'Why don't I meditate by continually dividing my thoughts into two classes?' So I assigned sensual, malicious, and cruel thoughts to one class. And I assigned thoughts of renunciation, love, and kindness to the second class.

Then, as I meditated—diligent, keen, and resolute—a sensual thought arose. I understood: 'This sensual thought has arisen in me. It leads to hurting myself, hurting others, and hurting both. It blocks wisdom, it's on the side of anguish, and it doesn't lead to extinguishment.' When I reflected that it leads to hurting myself, it went away. When I reflected that it leads to hurting others, it went away. When I reflected that it leads to hurting both, it went away. When I reflected that it blocks wisdom, it's on the side of anguish, and it doesn't lead to extinguishment, it went away. So I gave up, got rid of, and eliminated any sensual thoughts that arose.

Then, as I meditated—diligent, keen, and resolute—a malicious thought arose ... a cruel thought arose. I understood: ‘This cruel thought has arisen in me. It leads to hurting myself, hurting others, and hurting both. It blocks wisdom, it’s on the side of anguish, and it doesn’t lead to extinguishment.’ When I reflected that it leads to hurting myself ... hurting others ... hurting both, it went away. When I reflected that it blocks wisdom, it’s on the side of anguish, and it doesn’t lead to extinguishment, it went away. So I gave up, got rid of, and eliminated any cruel thoughts that arose.

Whatever a mendicant frequently thinks about and considers becomes their heart’s inclination. If they often think about and consider sensual thoughts, they’ve given up the thought of renunciation to cultivate sensual thought. Their mind inclines to sensual thoughts. If they often think about and consider malicious thoughts ... their mind inclines to malicious thoughts. If they often think about and consider cruel thoughts ... their mind inclines to cruel thoughts. Suppose it’s the last month of the rainy season, when the crops grow closely together, and a cowherd must take care of the cattle. He’d tap and poke them with his staff on this side and that to keep them in check. Why is that? For he sees that if they wander into the crops he could be executed, imprisoned, fined, or censured. In the same way, I saw that unskillful qualities have drawbacks, depravity, and corruption, and that skillful qualities have the benefit and cleansing power of renunciation.

Then, as I meditated—diligent, keen, and resolute—a thought of renunciation arose. I understood: ‘This thought of renunciation has arisen in me. It doesn’t lead to hurting myself, hurting others, or hurting both. It nourishes wisdom, it’s on the side of freedom from anguish, and it leads to extinguishment.’ If I were to keep on thinking and considering like this all night ... all day ... all night and day, I see no danger that would come from that. Still, thinking and considering for too long would tire my body. And when the body is tired, the mind is stressed. And when the mind is stressed, it’s far from immersion. So I stilled, settled, unified, and immersed my mind internally. Why is that? So that my mind would not be stressed.

Then, as I meditated—diligent, keen, and resolute—a thought of love arose ... a thought of kindness arose. I understood: ‘This thought of kindness has arisen in me. It doesn’t lead to hurting myself, hurting others, or hurting both. It nourishes wisdom, it’s on the side of freedom from anguish, and it leads to extinguishment.’ If I were to keep on thinking and considering like this all night ... all day ... all night and day, I see no danger that would come from that. Still, thinking and considering for too long would tire my

body. And when the body is tired, the mind is stressed. And when the mind is stressed, it's far from immersion. So I stilled, settled, unified, and immersed my mind internally. Why is that? So that my mind would not be stressed.

Whatever a mendicant frequently thinks about and considers becomes their heart's inclination. If they often think about and consider thoughts of renunciation, they've given up sensual thought to cultivate the thought of renunciation. Their mind inclines to thoughts of renunciation. If they often think about and consider thoughts of love ... their mind inclines to thoughts of love. If they often think about and consider thoughts of kindness ... their mind inclines to thoughts of kindness. Suppose it's the last month of summer, when all the crops have been gathered into the neighbourhood of a village, and a cowherd must take care of the cattle. While at the root of a tree or in the open he need only be mindful that the cattle are there. In the same way I needed only to be mindful that those things were there.

My energy was roused up and vigorous, my mindfulness was established and lucid, my body was tranquil and undisturbed, and my mind was immersed in samādhi. Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered and remained in the first absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of seclusion, while placing the mind and keeping it connected. As the placing of the mind and keeping it connected were stilled, I entered and remained in the second absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of immersion, with internal clarity and confidence, and unified mind, without placing the mind and keeping it connected. And with the fading away of rapture, I entered and remained in the third absorption, where I meditated with equanimity, mindful and aware, personally experiencing the bliss of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous and mindful, one meditates in bliss.' With the giving up of pleasure and pain, and the ending of former happiness and sadness, I entered and remained in the fourth absorption, without pleasure or pain, with pure equanimity and mindfulness.

When my mind had immersed in samādhi like this—purified, bright, spotless, rid of taints, pliable, workable, steady, and imperturbable—I extended it toward recollection of past lives. I recollected many kinds of past lives, with features and details. This was the first knowledge, which I achieved in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed and light arose, as happens for a meditator who is diligent, keen, and resolute.

When my mind had become immersed in samādhi like this, I extended it toward knowledge of the death and rebirth of sentient beings. With clairvoyance that is purified and superhuman, I saw sentient beings passing away and being reborn—inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, in a good place or a bad place. I understood how sentient beings are reborn according to their deeds. This was the second knowledge, which I achieved in the middle watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed and light arose, as happens for a meditator who is diligent, keen, and resolute.

When my mind had become immersed in samādhi like this, I extended it toward knowledge of the ending of defilements. I truly understood: ‘This is suffering’ ... ‘This is the origin of suffering’ ... ‘This is the cessation of suffering’ ... ‘This is the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering.’ I truly understood: ‘These are defilements’ ... ‘This is the origin of defilements’ ... ‘This is the cessation of defilements’ ... ‘This is the practice that leads to the cessation of defilements.’ Knowing and seeing like this, my mind was freed from the defilements of sensuality, desire to be reborn, and ignorance. I understood: ‘Rebirth is ended; the spiritual journey has been completed; what had to be done has been done; there is no return to any state of existence.’ This was the third knowledge, which I achieved in the last watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed and light arose, as happens for a meditator who is diligent, keen, and resolute.

Suppose that in a forested wilderness there was an expanse of low-lying swampland, and a large herd of deer lived nearby. Then along comes a person who wants to harm, injure, and threaten them. They close off the safe, secure path that leads to happiness, and open the wrong path. There they plant domesticated male and female deer as decoys so that, in due course, that herd of deer would come to ruin and disaster. Then along comes a person who wants to help keep the herd of deer safe. They open up the safe, secure path that leads to happiness, and close off the wrong path. They get rid of the decoys so that, in due course, that herd of deer would grow, increase, and mature.

I’ve made up this simile to make a point. And this is what it means. ‘An expanse of low-lying swampland’ is a term for sensual pleasures. ‘A large herd of deer’ is a term for sentient beings. ‘A person who wants to harm, injure, and threaten them’ is a term for Māra the Wicked. ‘The wrong path’ is a term for the wrong eightfold path, that is, wrong view, wrong thought,

wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, and wrong immersion. ‘A domesticated male deer’ is a term for desire with relishing. ‘A domesticated female deer’ is a term for ignorance. ‘A person who wants to help keep the herd of deer safe’ is a term for the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha. ‘The safe, secure path that leads to happiness’ is a term for the noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion.

So, mendicants, I have opened up the safe, secure path to happiness and closed off the wrong path. And I have got rid of the male and female decoys. Out of compassion, I’ve done what a teacher should do for the benefit of their disciples. Here are these roots of trees, and here are these empty huts. Practice absorption, mendicants! Don’t be negligent! Don’t regret it later! This is my instruction to you.”

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, the mendicants were happy with what the Buddha said.”

### Reference

Dvedhavitakka Sutta: Two Sorts of Thinking (MN 19), translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Sujato for [www.suttacentral.net](http://www.suttacentral.net).

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