MN 152 — The Development of the Faculties

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/mn152/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
License: CC0-1.0 — https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/

Text

Middle Discourses 152

The Development of the Faculties

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Kajaṅgalā in a bamboo grove.

Then the student Uttara, a pupil of the brahmin Pārāsariya, approached the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side. The Buddha said to him, “Uttara, does Pārāsariya teach his disciples the development of the faculties?”

“He does, worthy Gotama.”

“But how does he teach it?”

“Worthy Gotama, it’s when the eye sees no sight and the ear hears no sound. That’s how Pārāsariya teaches his disciples the development of the faculties.”

“In that case, Uttara, a blind person and a deaf person will have developed faculties according to what Pārāsariya says. For a blind person sees no sight with their eyes and a deaf person hears no sound with their ears.” When he said this, Uttara sat silent, dismayed, shoulders drooping, downcast, depressed, with nothing to say.

Knowing this, the Buddha addressed Venerable Ānanda, “Ānanda, the development of the faculties taught by Pārāsariya is quite different from the supreme development of the faculties in the training of the Noble One.”

“Now is the time, Blessed One! Now is the time, Holy One. Let the Buddha teach the supreme development of the faculties in the training of the Noble One. The mendicants will listen and remember it.”

“Well then, Ānanda, listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.”

“Yes, sir,” Ānanda replied. The Buddha said this:

“And how, Ānanda, is there the supreme development of the faculties in the training of the Noble One? When a mendicant sees a sight with their eyes, in them arises what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable. They understand: ‘What is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable have arisen in me. That’s conditioned, crude, and dependently originated. But this is peaceful and sublime, namely equanimity.’ Then the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and

equanimity becomes stabilized. It's like how a person with clear eyes might open their eyes then shut them; or might shut their eyes then open them. Such is the speed, the swiftness, the ease with which anything agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. In the training of the Noble One this is called the supreme development of the faculties regarding sights known by the eye.

Furthermore, when a mendicant hears a sound with their ears, the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable arise in them. They understand: 'What is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable have arisen in me. That's conditioned, crude, and dependently originated. But this is peaceful and sublime, namely equanimity.' Then the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. It's like how a strong person can effortlessly snap their fingers. Such is the speed, the swiftness, the ease with which anything agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. In the training of the Noble One this is called the supreme development of the faculties regarding sounds known by the ear.

Furthermore, when a mendicant smells an odor with their nose, the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable arise in them. They understand: 'What is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable have arisen in me. That's conditioned, crude, and dependently originated. But this is peaceful and sublime, namely equanimity.' Then the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. It's like how a drop of water would roll off a gently sloping lotus leaf, and would not stay there. Such is the speed, the swiftness, the ease with which anything agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. In the training of the Noble One this is called the supreme development of the faculties regarding smells known by the nose.

Furthermore, when a mendicant tastes a flavor with their tongue, the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable arise in them. They understand: 'What is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable have arisen in me. That's conditioned, crude, and dependently originated. But this is peaceful and sublime, namely equanimity.' Then the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. It's like how a strong person who's formed a glob of spit on the tip of their tongue could easily spit it out. Such is the speed, the swiftness, the ease with which anything agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. In the training of the Noble One this is called the supreme development of the faculties regarding tastes known by the tongue.

Furthermore, when a mendicant encounters a touch with their body, the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable arise in them. They understand: 'What is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable have arisen in me. That's conditioned, crude, and dependently originated. But this is

peaceful and sublime, namely equanimity.' Then the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. It's like how a strong person can extend or contract their arm. Such is the speed, the swiftness, the ease with which anything agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. In the training of the Noble One this is called the supreme development of the faculties regarding touches known by the body.

Furthermore, when a mendicant knows a thought with their mind, the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable arise in them. They understand: 'What is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable have arisen in me. That's conditioned, crude, and dependently originated. But this is peaceful and sublime, namely equanimity.' Then the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. It's like how a strong person could let two or three drops of water fall onto an iron cauldron that had been heated all day. The drops would be slow to fall, but they'd quickly dry up and evaporate. Such is the speed, the swiftness, the ease with which anything agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. In the training of the Noble One this is called the supreme development of the faculties regarding ideas known by the mind. That's how there is the supreme development of the faculties in the training of the Noble One.

And how are they a practicing trainee? When a mendicant sees a sight with their eyes, the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable arise in them. They are horrified, repelled, and disgusted by that. When they hear a sound with their ears … When they smell an odor with their nose … When they taste a flavor with their tongue … When they feel a touch with their body … When they know a thought with their mind, the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable arise in them. They are horrified, repelled, and disgusted by that. That's how they are a practicing trainee.

And how are they a noble one with developed faculties? When a mendicant sees a sight with their eyes, the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable arise in them. If they wish: 'May I meditate perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive,' that's what they do. If they wish: 'May I meditate perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive,' that's what they do. If they wish: 'May I meditate perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive and the unrepulsive,' that's what they do. If they wish: 'May I meditate perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive and the repulsive,' that's what they do. If they wish: 'May I meditate staying equanimous, mindful and aware, shunning both the repulsive and the unrepulsive,' that's what they do.

When they hear a sound with their ear … When they smell an odor with their nose … When they taste a flavor with their tongue … When they feel a touch with their body … When they know a thought with their mind, the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable arise in them. If they wish: 'May I meditate perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive,' that's what they do. If they wish: 'May I meditate perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive,' that's what they do. If they wish: 'May I meditate perceiving the

unrepulsive in the repulsive and the unrepulsive,' that's what they do. If they wish: 'May I meditate perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive and the repulsive,' that's what they do. If they wish: 'May I meditate staying equanimous, mindful and aware, shunning both the repulsive and the unrepulsive,' that's what they do. That's how they are a noble one with developed faculties.

So, Ānanda, I have taught the supreme development of the faculties in the training of the Noble One, I have taught the practicing trainee, and I have taught the noble one with developed faculties.

Out of sympathy, I've done what a teacher should do who wants what's best for their disciples. Here are these roots of trees, and here are these empty huts. Practice absorption, Ānanda! Don't be negligent! Don't regret it later! This is my instruction to you."

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, Venerable Ānanda approved what the Buddha said.

The Middle Discourses are complete.