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## Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta

The Greater Discourse on Undertaking the Dharma | **M 46**

Theme: How to rightly practise the teaching for awakening

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2021

### 1 Summary and significance

#### 1.1 THE 2 DHAMMA SAMĀDĀNA SUTTAS (M 45 + 46)

**1.1.1 The Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** (M 46), the greater discourse on undertaking the Dharma, records the Buddha as speaking on the 4 ways of practising the Dharma either in a painful or a pleasant way, each of which accordingly brings future pain or future pleasure (happiness). The best of these is the practice that is pleasant now, bringing future pleasure or happiness, that is, the life of dhyana meditation.

#### 1.1.2 The 2 Suttas

**1.1.2.1** There are 2 suttas bearing the name of *Dhamma Samādāna Sutta*, the discourse on undertaking the Dharma: **the Cūḷa Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** (M 45)<sup>1</sup> and **the Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** (M 46). Both the Suttas respectively distinguish 4 ways of “undertaking the Dharma,” that is, practising Dharma either in accordance with the Buddha's teaching or in a broad religious sense. There is the wrong way of practice, that of *self-mortification*, and the right path of practice, that is, *the middle way* that avoids extremes. [2.2.4.2]

**1.1.2.2** Further, the respective tetrads of approaches to Dharma practice, in these 2 Suttas, in terms of *pleasure and pain, karma and its fruition*, are summarized as follows:

**Cūḷa Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** (M 45), SD 32.4

**ascetic practices (including rituals)**

- (1) pleasant now, future pain
- (2) painful now, future pain
- (3) painful now, future pleasure
- (4) pleasant now, future pleasure

**Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** (M 46), SD 59.8

**the 10 courses of conduct (karma)**

- (1) painful now, future pain
- (2) pleasant now, future pain
- (3) painful now, future pleasure
- (4) pleasant now, future pleasure

For further details, see [2.2.3], and the Introduction to the Cūḷa Dhamma Samādāna Sutta (M 45) translation, SD 32.4.

### 2 Comparative study

#### 2.1 LOCATION

**The Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** has 2 Chinese parallels, one of which occurs in the Madhyama Āgama (**MĀ 175**) and the other is an individual translation (**T83**).<sup>2</sup> While the venue of M 46 is Jeta's grove outside Sāvattihī, both the Chinese parallels, MĀ 175 and T83, locate the Buddha as in Kuru country.

<sup>1</sup> M 45/1:305-309 (SD 32.4).

<sup>2</sup> The parallels are MĀ 175 (T1.712c-713c) and T83 (T1.902b-903b). **MĀ 175** agrees with M 46 on the title, 受法經, *shòu fǎ jīng*, however, using the qualification “greater,” while **T83** has the title “discourse spoken by the Buddha on

## 2.2 TEACHING SEQUENCE

### 2.2.1 The untutored worldling and the noble disciple

**2.2.1.1 The Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** and its parallels begin by stating that even though beings wish for greater pleasure and less unpleasant feelings, just the opposite usually happens. According to **M 46**, the Buddha asks the monks for their opinion as to the reason for this situation, in reply to which, the monks declare their discipleship and request him to teach them [§1].

**2.2.1.2** In **MĀ 175** (T1.712c10) and **T83** (T1.902b11), however, the Buddha is portrayed as simply teaching on what leads to *an increase of pleasant feelings and a decrease of disagreeable feelings*. To explain this predicament, **M 46** distinguishes between an untutored worldling, who does not know what is to be cultivated [§2], and a well-tutored noble disciple, who knows what is to be cultivated [§3]. This distinction is not found in its 2 Chinese parallels.

The Pali sutta continues by taking up the 4 ways of undertaking Dharma in some detail, which are also presented in the Chinese versions.

### 2.2.2 The 4 ways of undertaking Dharma

**2.2.2.1** The Pali sutta (M 46) and its Chinese versions differ in presenting the sequences of the 4 modes of undertaking Dharma. **The Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** first defines the untutored worldling [§2] as the one *who does not know the 4 ways of undertaking Dharma*, and then presents the well-tutored noble disciple [§3], *one who knows the 4 ways*. Only after this does it explain what these **4 ways** actually refer to [§5].

**2.2.2.2** In contrast, **the 2 Chinese versions** first explain the 4 ways of undertaking Dharma, and then relate them to the ignorant and the wise respectively [Table 2.2]. The Chinese version apparently presents a more convenient sequence in terms of practice, since only after we understand how these 4 ways of undertaking Dharma practice will we be able to appreciate how, with *a right undertaking*, we will be able to distinguish between being a fool and being wise.

In short, this serves as a “**practice sequence.**”

M 46	MĀ 175 & T83
(1) foolish person (§2)	(3) the 4 ways of undertaking
(2) Wise person (§3)	(1) ignorant person
(3) the 4 ways of undertaking (§4 etc)	(2) wise person

**Table 2.2: Sequence of key topics of M 46 and its parallels**

**2.2.2.3** A careful look at **the Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta**, however, will reveal the natural flow of the teachings for the benefit of the audience who is being explained, in a reasoned manner, the proper way of undertaking the Dharma. First, the Buddha explains that, despite our desire for comfort and dis-

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proper things,” 佛說應法經 *fó shuō yīng fǎ jīng*. The Taisho canon says that T83 was translated by the Central Asian and multilingual monk, Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 *zhú fǎhù* (c 233-310): SD 40b.1 (1.4.2).

like for suffering, things do not usually turn out in this way for us [§1]. Moreover, an untutored worldling, on account of lacking tutelage, does *not* know how to properly undertake the Dharma. [§2]

A noble disciple—a broad term here for those who are amenable of proper instruction—having been properly tutored and who *follows* such a tutelage, will keep to the proper undertaking of Dharma. Only then, the Buddha, logically, presents **the 4 ways of undertaking the Dharma**. Naturally, we would want to avoid the undertakings whether painful or pleasant that bring future pain. A better way of undertaking Dharma is a wholesome one, even when it is painful, but which will bring future pleasure (happiness). The best of all is surely the 4<sup>th</sup> way: an undertaking that is both pleasant now and will fruit in pleasure (happiness and awakening). [§5]

### 2.2.3 Instructions on the 4 ways of undertaking Dharma

**2.2.3.1** As shown in the Table [1.1.2.2], **the Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** (M 46), starts with the undertaking of what is painful now with future pain [§6], moving on to that which is pleasant now with future pain [§7]; then, to the painful now with future pleasure [§8], and closing with what is pleasant both ways [§9].

The Chinese parallels, **MĀ 175** (T1.712c14) and **T83** (T1.902b15), however, begin with the undertaking that is pleasant now with future pain; then, with what is painful now with future pleasure; but then to what is painful in both respects; and finally to what is pleasant in both respects.<sup>3</sup>

Their configurations are here summarized in this Table:

M 46	MĀ 175 & T83
(1) painful now, future pain	(2) pleasant now, future pain
(2) pleasant now, future pain	(3) painful now, future pleasure
(3) painful now, future pleasure	(1) painful now, future pain
(4) pleasant now, future pleasure	(4) pleasant now, future pleasure

**Table 2.2.3:** Karmic configurations in M 46 and its Chinese versions

**2.2.3.2** Overall, the 3 parallel discourses agree that **an untutored worldling**, who does *not* understand the 4 ways of undertaking Dharma, will do what should *not* be done and not do what *should* be done. Hence, his pleasant feelings will lessen and unpleasant feelings will grow. **A well-tutored noble disciple**, on the other hand, understands the 4 ways of undertaking Dharma, will do what should be done, and *avoid* what should not be done. Hence, he will experience a growth in pleasure and a decrease in unpleasant feelings, and in the end, attain the goal of the path.

**2.2.3.3 The 4 ways of undertaking things** in the Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta and its parallels distinguish them according to whether a person feelings pleasure or pain when undertaking the 10 unwholesome courses of action, or else *when abstaining from them*. The 3 parallel discourses agree on the general principle that when the 10 unwholesome courses of action are undertaken, whether in a pleasant or an unpleasant way *now* will bring either pleasant or painful karmic fruits in *the future*.

<sup>3</sup> For discussions on these differences in the sequence of the 4 ways of undertaking things, see **Cūḷa Dhamma Samādāna S** (M 45), SD 32.4 (1).

**2.2.3.4** The Sutta section on the 1<sup>st</sup> way of undertaking Dharma describes **someone in pain and grief who still behaves immorally** [§14]. Although he is “in pain, in grief” (*sahâpi dukkhena sahâpi do-manassam*), he commits all the 10 unwholesome courses of action (*akusala kamma,patha*). As a result of this, he feels “pain and grief” in this life itself. After death, he arises in a subhuman state. He is said to have taken “the way of undertaking the Dharma that is painful now and ripens in pain in the future” (*dhamma,samādānam paccuppanna,dukkham āyatim dukkha,vipākam*).

**2.2.3.5** The 2<sup>nd</sup> way of undertaking Dharma describes **someone in pleasure and joy who behaves immorally** [§15]. Although he lives “with happiness and joy” (*sahâpi sukkena sahâpi somanassena*), he commits all the 10 unwholesome courses of action (*akusala kamma,patha*). As a result, like the 1<sup>st</sup> person, he feels “pain and grief” in this life itself. After death, he arises in a subhuman state. He is said to have taken “the way of undertaking the Dharma that is pleasant now and ripens in pain in the future” (*dhamma,samādānam paccuppanna,sukham āyatim dukkha,vipākam*).

**2.2.3.6** The 3<sup>rd</sup> way of undertaking the Dharma describes someone despite being **in pain and grief, still behaves morally** [§16]. Although “in pain, in grief,” he keeps to all the 10 wholesome courses of action (*kusala kamma,patha*). He continues in pain and grief in this life, living morally, but after death, he arises in a happy or heavenly rebirth. He is said to have taken “the way of undertaking the Dharma that is painful now and ripens in pleasure in the future” (*dhamma,samādānam paccuppanna,dukkham āyatim sukha,vipākam*).

**2.2.3.7** The 4<sup>th</sup> way of undertaking the Dharma describes **someone in pleasure and joy now who behaves morally** [§16]. Living happily, he keeps to all the 10 wholesome courses of action (*kusala kamma,-patha*). He continues in pleasure and joy, and after death, arises in a happy or heavenly state. He is said to have taken “the way of undertaking the Dharma that is pleasant now and ripens in pleasure in the future” (*dhamma,samādānam paccuppanna,sukham āyatim sukha,vipākam*).

## 2.2.4 Differences in the parallel texts

**2.2.4.1** In the Chinese parallels—**MĀ 175** and **T83**—all these 4 ways of undertaking are each misread as being characterized with “one’s own happiness and joy,” 自樂自喜 *zì lè zì xǐ* (MĀ 175) or 自行樂自行喜 *zì xíng lè zì xíng xǐ* (T83).<sup>4</sup> This rendering is clearly a wrong reading (wr) of the preposition *saha* or the prefix *sa*, “with,” for the reflexive pronoun *sa* or *sva*, “one’s own.”<sup>5</sup> Such an error could have easily occurred when the Indic source texts of MĀ 175 and T83 was in a Prakrit, where the 2 words are very similar.

For a clearer and fuller understanding of the text, we should carefully examine its **context** (intratextually) and **connections** (intertextually) in other usages elsewhere, and then draw out the intended meaning (*neyy’attha*). This is the principle of **contextuality** or rule of context.<sup>6</sup>

**2.2.4.2** **M 46** (like M 45) mentions rebirth in the subhuman states, such as hell, as the karmic fruit for undertaking the 10 unwholesome courses of action. On the other hand, abstaining from them (that

<sup>4</sup> Respectively, MĀ 175 (T1.712c17); T83 (T1.902c6). Cf THICH Minh Chau 1964:326.

<sup>5</sup> Both these prefixes become *sam-*, *san-*, *sam-* or *sañ-* meaning “self, one’s own,” in compounds like *sam-bodhi*, “self-awakening”; *sam-ādāna*, “take upon oneself”; *san-ditthika*, “seen for oneself”; *saṃyata* or *saññata*, “self-restrained.” These same forms can also mean “(coming) together,” such as *sam-ādhi*, “mental concentration”; *sam-yutta*, “connected”; *sañ-khāra* (lit, made together), “formations.”

<sup>6</sup> On the rule of context, see SD 32.4 (1.4.2.5).

is, keeping to the 10 wholesome courses of action) brings good karmic fruit by way of a happy or heavenly rebirth.

The Chinese parallels present the fruits of these undertakings as bringing different consequences. While **MĀ 175** speaks of “advancing in knowledge, advancing in realization, advancing towards nirvana,” 趣智, 趣覺, 趣於涅槃, *qù zhì, qù jué, qù yú nièpán*, **T83** points to “accomplishing higher knowledge, reaching the even path, being in conformity with nirvana,” 成神通, 至等道, 與涅槃相應, *chéng shéntōng, zhì děng dào, yǔ nièpán xiāngyìng*.<sup>7</sup> In other words, following the 10 unwholesome courses of action prevents the arising of knowledge and attainment of nirvana; abstaining from them brings one to the fruition of such knowledge and attainment.

Apparently, the Chinese parallels see these practices as referring mainly, even only, to monastics, as renunciants who were supposed to work to gain the path of awakening in this life itself. This seems to be the case for **the Cūḷa Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** (M 45) which mentions self-mortification (3<sup>rd</sup> way of undertaking) and dhyanas (4<sup>th</sup> way of undertaking). It mentions only the fool and the wise, without mentioning any “noble disciple,” as in **M 46**.

**The Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** (M 46), on the other hand, centres on the 10 courses of actions,<sup>8</sup> which are teachings more often presented to the laity, or for all practitioners generally (note the fruit of happy or heavenly rebirth). Hence, it distinguishes between the “untutored worldling” [§2] and the “well-tutored noble disciple” [§3].

**2.2.4.3 The Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta** and its parallels illustrate the 4 ways of undertaking the Dharma with **the parables of the 4 types of drink**, which is either sweet or bitter, and which are either poisonous or else savoury.

**M 46** lays them out as a set of 4 contiguous passages [§18-21], thus:

- |   |       |  |       |
|---|-------|--|-------|
| (1) the one in pain and grief who behaves immorally   | [§14] | the bottle-gourd vessel (poisonous)      | [§18] |
| (2) the one in pleasure and joy who behaves immorally | [§15] | the bronze cup of beverage [ <i>do</i> ] | [§19] |
| (3) the one in pain and grief who behaves morally     | [§16] | fermented (cow’s) urine (medicinal)      | [§20] |
| (4) the one in pleasure and joy who behaves morally   | [§17] | curd, honey, ghee, molasses mix          | [§21] |

(1) The crude **bottle-gourd (vessel)** (*titta, kālābu*) aptly represents one who lives in **pain and grief**. Further, he commits the 10 unwholesome courses of action, which is like drinking poison, which will have a fatal or nasty effect on him.

(2) **The goblet** [bronze cup] (*āpānīya, kaṁsa*) refers to one’s life of **pleasure and joy**. When such a person habitually commits the 10 unwholesome courses of action, it is like drinking poison from that very goblet, referring to his impending bad karmic fruit.

(3) For **the one in pain and grief**, life is like **fermented urine** (*pūti, mutta*), the basic medicinal concoction for the early monastics, especially the remote forest dwellers.<sup>9</sup> For such a suffering person to continue to live a moral life, it is as if that simple medicine is now added with various medicines, suitable for healing a jaundiced person. This refers to his future happy or heavenly life.

(4) The syrup mix of **curd, honey, ghee and molasses** (*dadhi ca madhu ca sappi ca phānitañ ca*) represents the one with a life of **pleasure and joy**. He continues to abstain from the 10 unwholesome courses of actions, creating good future karma for himself. He is like one with dysentery who recovers after taking the syrup mix.

<sup>7</sup> Respectively, MĀ 175 (T1.712c25) and T83 (T1.902c10).

<sup>8</sup> As also in eg **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114), SD 39.8.

<sup>9</sup> On the fermented urine as medicine, see SD 55.11 (3.5.2.3).

**2.2.4.4** The 3 discourses present **the similes** differently. As we have noted, **M 46** presents them as a set in the same passage [2.2.4.3]. The teaching is first given by way of instruction. Then, the 4 similes are given in parables to stress the dangers of wrong undertaking and the benefits of right undertaking. A narrator relates these parables to us.

The Chinese parallels simply present the simile after the description of each of the 4 ways of undertaking the Dharma, without any narrator. Although this at once helps the listener to picture the respective dangers or benefits of each way of undertaking, the passage on the tetrad of similes has the effect of listening to the 4 teachings again on a figurative level.

**2.2.4.5** **M 46** closes with a verse, declaring that the 4<sup>th</sup> way of undertaking the Dharma, the one that is pleasant now and pleasant in the future, outshines the teachings and practices of all other ordinary recluses and brahmins [§22]. The 2 Chinese parallels (MĀ 175 and T83), on the other hand, do not have any verse at its close. As already mentioned [2.2.4.2], they speak of the undertakings as leading to awakening itself, which is, of course, the goal of Buddhist training.

**The Mahā Samādāna Sutta**, as we have noted, has a special and remarkable emphasis: that of the “true renunciation,” by way of giving up the 10 unwholesome courses of actions, which is, in fact, a practical shorthand for the 3 trainings of the path itself. This, of course, leads us beyond even the highest heavens, to attaining nirvana itself.

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## Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta

### The Greater Discourse on Undertaking the Dharma

M 46

**1** Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park-monastery in Jeta’s grove outside Sāvattihī.

There he addressed the monks thus: “Bhikshus.”<sup>10</sup>

“Bhante,” they replied.

The Blessed One said this:

**2** “Bhikshus, for the most part, beings have this wish, desire, longing:

‘If only unwished for, undesired, disagreeable states (*dhammā*) would diminish and wished for, desired, agreeable states would increase!’

Yet although beings have this wish, desire, longing,

unwished for, undesired, disagreeable states increase for them and wished for, desired, agreeable states diminish.

<sup>10</sup> *Bhikkhavo*, a voc that is used only when addressing the 1<sup>st</sup> time: SD 59.7 (24).

2.2 Now, bhikshus, what do you think is the reason for that?”

“Bhante, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, [310] guided by the Blessed One, have the Blessed One as their resort.<sup>11</sup> It would be good if the Blessed One would explain the meaning of these words. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”<sup>12</sup>

“Then listen, bhikshus, and attend closely to what I shall speak.”

“Yes, bhante,” they replied.

The Blessed One said this:

**3** “Here, bhikshus, **an untutored worldling** [ignorant ordinary person] who has no regard for the noble ones, is unskillful, undisciplined in the noble Dharma, who has no regard for the true individuals, is unskillful, undisciplined in the true individual’s Dharma, does *not* know what states (*dharmā*) should be cultivated and what states should *not* be cultivated, does *not* know what states should be followed and what states should *not* be followed.

3.2 Not knowing this, he cultivates states that should not be cultivated and does not cultivate states that should be cultivated, he follows states that should not be followed and does not follow states that should be followed.<sup>13</sup> Because he does this, unwished for, undesired, disagreeable states increase for him, and wished for, desired, agreeable states diminish.

Why is that? That is what happens to one who does not see.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4 The well-tutored noble disciple

who has regard for noble ones and is skilled and disciplined in the noble Dharma, who has regard for true individuals and is skilled and disciplined in true individual’s Dharma, *knows* what states *should* be cultivated and what states should *not* be cultivated, *knows* what states *should* be followed and what states should *not* be followed.

4.2 Knowing this, he cultivates states that should be cultivated and does not cultivate states that should not be cultivated, he follows states that should be followed and does not follow states that should not be followed. Because he does this, unwished for, undesired, disagreeable states diminish for him and wished for, desired, agreeable states increase.

Why is that? That is what happens to one who sees.

**5** Bhikshus, there are **4 ways of undertaking the Dharma**.<sup>15</sup> What are the four?

<sup>11</sup> “The Blessed One as their resort,” *bhagavaṃ paṭisaraṇā*. Cf “Dharma as refuge,” *dhmma,paṭisaraṇā* (M 108,9-/3:9), SD 33.5; *mano,paṭisaraṇā* (M 43,21/1:295), SD 30.2.

<sup>12</sup> This is stock: **Vīmaṃsaka S** (M 47,3/1:317), SD 35.6, **Naḷakapāna S** (M 68,8/1:465) SD 37.4, **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122,19/3:115), SD 11.4; **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58,9) SD 49.10; **(Tika) Añña Tittiya S** (A 3.168/1:199), SD 16.4, **Loka S 2** (A 8.6/4:158), SD 42.3, **Sambodhi,pakkhika Dhamma S** (A 9.1/4:351), SD 82.1, **(Ekādasaka) Samādhi S 2** (A 11.20/-5:356).

<sup>13</sup> A full analysis of things related to the undertaking of the Dharma that should and should not be done is given in **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114), SD 39.8.

<sup>14</sup> Evaṃ h’etaṃ bhikkhave hoti, yathā taṃ viddasuno. Comy glosses aviddasuno as a blind foolish worldling (bāla-ssa andha, puthujjanassa, MA 2:375,17 f).

<sup>15</sup> “Ways of undertaking the Dharma,” *dhmma,samādānaṃ*, def as “keeping to such states as (the abstinence from) killing and so on” (*pāṇātipātādānaṃ dhmmaṇaṃ gahaṇaṃ*, MA 2:375,22 f). See **Cūḷa Dhamma Samādāna S** (M 45,2), where these same 4 are arranged differently (SD 32.4).

- (1) There is, bhikshus, a way of undertaking the Dharma  
that is **painful now and ripens as pain in the future.** [§14]
- (2) There is, [311] bhikshus, a way of undertaking the Dharma  
that is **pleasant now but ripens as pain in the future.** [§15]
- (3) There is, bhikshus, a way of undertaking the Dharma  
that is **painful now but ripens as pleasure in the future.** [§16]
- (4) There is, bhikshus, a way of undertaking the Dharma  
that is **pleasant now and ripens as pleasure in the future.** [§17]

## THE IGNORANT PERSON

6 (1) Now, bhikshus, there is this way of undertaking the Dharma  
that is **painful now and ripens as pain in the future,**  
one who is **ignorant, not** knowing, does not understand it as it really is, thus:  
'This way of undertaking the Dharma is *painful* now and ripens as *pain* in the future.'  
Not knowing this, not understanding it as it really is,  
the ignorant one cultivates it and does *not* avoid it;  
*cultivating it, not avoiding it, unwished for, undesired, disagreeable states increase* for him  
and wished for, desired, agreeable states *diminish*.  
Why is that? Bhikshus, that is what happens to **one who does not see.**

7 (2) Now, bhikshus, there is this way of undertaking Dharma  
that is **pleasant now but ripens as pain in the future,**  
one who is **ignorant, not** knowing, does not understand it as it really is, thus:  
'This way of undertaking the Dharma is *pleasant* now but ripens as *pain* in the future.'  
Not knowing this, not understanding it as it really is,  
the ignorant one cultivates it and does *not* avoid it;  
*cultivating it, not avoiding it, unwished for, undesired, disagreeable states increase* for him  
and wished for, desired, agreeable states *diminish*.  
Why is that? Bhikshus, that is what happens to **one who does not see.**

8 (3) Now, bhikshus, there is this way of undertaking the Dharma  
that is **painful now but ripens as pleasure in the future,**  
one who is **ignorant, not** knowing, does not understand it as it really is, thus:  
'This way of undertaking the Dharma is *painful* now but ripens as *pleasure* in the future.'  
Not knowing this, not understanding it as it really is,  
the ignorant one does not cultivate it and *avoids* it;  
*not cultivating it, avoiding it, unwished for, undesired, disagreeable states increase* for him  
and wished for, desired, agreeable states *diminish*.  
Why is that? Bhikshus, that is what happens to **one who does not see.**

9 (4) Now, bhikshus, there is this way of undertaking the Dharma  
that is **pleasant now and ripens as pleasure in the future,**  
one who is **ignorant, not** knowing, does not understand it as it really is, thus:  
'This way of undertaking the Dharma is *pleasant* now and ripens as *pleasure* in the future.'  
Not knowing this, not understanding it as it really is,  
the ignorant one does not cultivate it, and *avoids* it;



*not cultivating it, avoiding it, [312] unwished for, undesired, disagreeable states increase for him, and wished for, desired, agreeable states *diminish*.*

Why is that? Bhikshus, that is what happens to **one who does not see**.

THE WISE PERSON

**10** (1) Now, bhikshus, there is this way of undertaking the Dharma that is **painful now and ripens as *pain* in the future**,

one who is **wise**, knowing this, understands it as it really is, thus:

‘This way of undertaking the Dharma is *painful* now and ripens as *pain* in the future.’

Knowing this, understanding it as it really is,

the wise one does not cultivate it and *avoids* it;

*not cultivating it, avoiding it, undesired, disagreeable states diminish for him, and wished for, desired, agreeable states *increase*.*

Why is that? Bhikshus, that is what happens to **one who sees**.

**11** (2) Now, bhikshus, there is this way of undertaking the Dharma that is **pleasant now but ripens as *pain* in the future**,

one who is **wise**, knowing this, understands it as it really is, thus:

‘This way of undertaking the Dharma is *pleasant* now but ripens as *pain* in the future.’

Knowing this, understanding it as it really is,

the wise one does not cultivate it and *avoids* it;

*not cultivating it, avoiding it, undesired, disagreeable states diminish for him, and wished for, desired, agreeable states *increase*.*

Why is that? Bhikshus, that is what happens to **one who sees**.

**12** (3) Now, bhikshus, there is this way of undertaking the Dharma that is **painful now but ripens as *pleasure* in the future**,

one who is **wise**, knowing this, understands it as it really is, thus:

‘This way of undertaking the Dharma is *painful* now but ripens as *pleasure* in the future.’

Knowing this, understanding it, as it really is,

the wise one cultivates it and does *not* avoid it;

*cultivating it, not avoiding it, undesired, disagreeable states diminish for him, and wished for, desired, agreeable states *increase*.*

Why is that? Bhikshus, that is what happens to **one who sees**.

**13** (4) Now, bhikshus, there is this way of undertaking the Dharma that is **pleasant now and ripens as *pleasure* in the future**,

one who is **wise**, knowing this, understands it as it really is, thus:

‘This way of undertaking the Dharma is *pleasant* now and ripens as *pleasure* in the future.’

Knowing this, understanding it, as it really is,

the wise one cultivates it and does *not* avoid it;

*cultivating it, not avoiding it, undesired, disagreeable states diminish for him, and wished for, desired, agreeable states *increase*.*

Why is that? Bhikshus, that is what happens to **one who sees**. [313]

## THE 4 WAYS OF UNDERTAKING DHARMA

### I. SOMEONE IN PAIN AND GRIEF BEHAVES IMMORALLY

**14** What, bhikshus, is the way of undertaking the Dharma that is painful now and ripens as pain in the future?

Here, bhikshus, someone:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (1) <b>kills living beings,</b><br>and, on account of killing living beings,      | in pain, in grief, <sup>16</sup><br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> . |
| (2) He <b>takes the not-given,</b><br>and, on account of taking the not-given,    | in pain, in grief,<br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> .               |
| (3) He <b>commits sexual misconduct,</b><br>and, on account of sexual misconduct, | in pain, in grief,<br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> .               |
| (4) He <b>speaks falsehood,</b><br>and, on account of speaking falsehood,         | in pain, in grief,<br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> .               |
| (5) He <b>slanders,</b><br>and, on account of slander,                            | in pain, in grief,<br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> .               |
| (6) He <b>speaks harshly,</b><br>and, on account of harsh speech,                 | in pain, in grief,<br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> .               |
| (7) He <b>chatters frivolously,</b><br>and, on account of frivolous chatter,      | in pain, in grief,<br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> .               |
| (8) He <b>is covetous,</b><br>and, on account of covetousness,                    | in pain, in grief,<br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> .               |
| (9) He <b>has a mind of ill will,</b><br>and, on account of ill will,             | in pain, in grief,<br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> .               |
| (10) He <b>holds wrong views,</b><br>and, on account of wrong views,              | in pain, in grief,<br>feels <i>pain and grief</i> .               |

With the body's breaking up, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, a suffering state, the downfall, hell.<sup>17</sup>

This is called the way of undertaking the Dharma that is painful now and ripens as pain in the future.

### II. SOMEONE IN PLEASURE AND JOY BEHAVES IMMORALLY

**15** What, bhikshus, is the way of undertaking the Dharma that is pleasant now but ripens as pain in the future?

Here, bhikshus, someone:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (1) <b>kills living beings</b><br>and, on account of killing living beings,      | in pleasure, in joy. <sup>18</sup><br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (2) He <b>takes the not-given</b><br>and, on account of taking the not-given,    | in pleasure, in joy.<br>feels pleasure and joy.               |
| (3) He <b>commits sexual misconduct</b><br>and, on account of sexual misconduct, | in pleasure, in joy.<br>feels pleasure and joy.               |

<sup>16</sup> "In pain, in grief," *sahāpi dukkhena sahāpi domanassena*.

<sup>17</sup> This refers to "the 4 states of deprivation [loss]" (*catu'pāya*) or the 4 subhuman states: SD 2.22 (1.7).

<sup>18</sup> "In pleasure, in joy," *sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena*.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (4) He <b>speaks falsehood</b><br>and, on account of speaking falsehood,    | in pleasure, in joy.<br>feels pleasure and joy.               |
| (5) He <b>slanders</b><br>and, on account of slander,                       | in pleasure, in joy.<br>feels pleasure and joy.               |
| (6) He <b>speaks harshly</b><br>and, on account of harsh speech,            | in pleasure, in joy.<br>feels <i>pleasure and joy</i> .       |
| (7) He <b>chatters frivolously</b><br>and, on account of frivolous chatter, | in pleasure, in joy.<br>feels <i>pleasure and joy</i> .       |
| (8) He <b>is covetous</b><br>and, on account of covetousness,               | in pleasure, in joy.<br>feels <i>pleasure and joy</i> .       |
| (9) He <b>has a mind of ill will</b><br>and, on account of ill will,        | in pleasure, in joy.<br>feels <i>pleasure and joy</i> . [314] |
| (10) He <b>holds wrong views</b><br>and, on account of wrong views,         | in pleasure, in joy.<br>feels <i>pleasure and joy</i> .       |

With the body's breaking up, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, a suffering state, the downfall, hell.

This is called the way of undertaking the Dharma that is **pleasant now** but ripens as **pain in the future**.

### III. SOMEONE IN PAIN AND GRIEF BEHAVES MORALLY

**16** And what, bhikshus, is the way of undertaking the Dharma that is **painful now** but ripens as **pleasure in the future**?

Here, bhikshus, someone

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (1) <b>abstains</b> from <u>killing living beings</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from killing living beings,  | even in pain, in grief,<br>feels pain and grief        |
| (2) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>taking the not-given</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from taking the not-given, | even in pain, in grief.<br>feels pain and grief.       |
| (3) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>sexual misconduct</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from sexual misconduct,       | even in pain, in grief.<br>feels pain and grief.       |
| (4) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>speaking falsehood</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from speaking falsehood,     | even in pain, in grief.<br>feels pain and grief.       |
| (5) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>slander</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from slander,                           | even in pain, in grief.<br>feels pain and grief.       |
| (6) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>harsh speech</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from harsh speech,                 | even in pain, in grief.<br>feels pain and grief.       |
| (7) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>frivolous chatter</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from frivolous chatter,       | even in pain, in grief.<br>feels pain and grief.       |
| (8) He <u>is not covetous</u> ,<br>and, on account of being not covetous,   | even in pain, in grief.<br>feels pain and grief.       |
| (9) He <u>has a mind without ill will</u> , and,<br>and, on account of not having ill will,                           | even in pain, in grief.<br>feels pain and grief. [315] |
| (10) He <u>has right view</u> ,<br>and, on account of having right view,  | even in pain, in grief.<br>feels pain and grief.       |

With the body's breaking up, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, in the heavenly world.

This is called the way of undertaking the Dharma that is **painful now** but ripens as **pleasure in the future**.

## IV. SOMEONE IN PLEASURE AND JOY BEHAVES MORALLY

**17** What, bhikshus, is the way of undertaking the Dharma that is pleasant now and ripens as pleasure in the future?

Here, bhikshus, someone

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (1) <b>abstains</b> from <u>killing living beings</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from killing living beings, | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (2) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>taking the not-given</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining taking the not-given,     | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (3) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>sexual misconduct</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from sexual misconduct,      | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (4) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>speaking falsehood</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from speaking falsehood,    | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (5) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>slander</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from slander,                          | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (6) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>harsh speech</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from harsh speech,                | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (7) He <u>abstains</u> from <u>frivolous chatter</u> ,<br>and, on account of abstaining from frivolous chatter,      | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (8) He is <u>not covetous</u> ,<br>and, on account of being not covetous,  | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (9) He has <u>a mind without ill will</u> ,<br>and, on account of not having ill will,                               | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |
| (10) He <u>has right view</u> ,<br>and, on account of having right view,   | with pleasure, in joy,<br>feels pleasure and joy. |

With the body's breaking up, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world.

This is called the way of undertaking the Dharma that is pleasant now and ripens as pleasure in the future.

## THE PARABLES

**18** (1) Suppose, bhikshus, there were **a bottle-gourd**<sup>19</sup> filled [mixed] with poison,<sup>20</sup> and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure, averse to pain, and they told him:

‘Good man, this bottle gourd is mixed with poison. Drink from it if you wish. **[316]**

As you drink from it, its colour, smell and taste will not agree with you;

and after drinking from it, you will come to death or deadly pains.’

<sup>19</sup> *Tittakālābu*: Comy glosses it with “(bitter) bottle-gourd” (*tittakālābūti tittako alābu*, MA 2:376,26; *tittaka, rasa, alābu*, bitter (bottle) gourd, Be 2:275). Clearly here a bottle-gourd water-vessel is meant [foll n]. The bitter gourd or bottle gourd is neither eaten nor (its juice) drunk raw. In **Mahā Sīha, nāda S** (M 12) it occurs in a simile describing the Bodhisattva's emaciated frame on account of self-mortification: “because of eating so little ... my scalp shrivelled and withered like green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun” (M 12,52.3/1:80,22), SD 49.1. See DP: titta<sup>1</sup> + tittaka.

<sup>20</sup> *Visena saṃsaṭṭho*. Text only mentions *tittakālābu* (bitter bottle-gourd) without any kind of drink, which is, however, mentioned in simile of the bronze cup [below]. Although *saṃsaṭṭha* (Skt *saṃsṛṣṭa*, SED) means “connected, mixed with, entangled” (Andersen, *A Pāli Glossary*; not in PED). A sense of the Skt component *sṛṣṭa* is “provided or filled or covered with” (SED); hence, “a bottle-gourd filled with poison.” Cf foll n on “the bronze cup” [§19].

Then, he drank from it without reflecting and did not relinquish it.

As he drank from it, its colour, smell, and taste did not agree with him;  
and after drinking from it, he came to death or deadly pains.

Just like that, I say, bhikshus, is the way of undertaking the Dharma that is **painful** now and ripens as pain in the future.

**19** (2) Suppose, bhikshus, there were **a goblet of drink**,<sup>21</sup> possessing a good colour, smell, and taste, but it was *mixed with poison*, and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure and recoiled from pain,<sup>22</sup> and they told him:

‘Good man, this goblet of beverage possesses a good colour, smell and taste, but it is mixed with poison. Drink from it if you want;  
as you drink from it, its colour, smell, and taste will agree with you,  
but after drinking from it, you will come to death or deadly suffering.’

Then, he drank from it without reflecting and did not relinquish it.

As he drank from it, its colour, smell, and taste agreed with him,  
but after drinking from it, he came to death or deadly suffering.

Just like that, I say, bhikshus, is the way of undertaking the Dharma that is **pleasant** now but ripens as pain in the future.

**20** (3) Suppose, bhikshus, there were **fermented urine** infused with various medicines,<sup>23</sup> and a man sick with jaundice came, and they told him:

‘Good man, this fermented urine is infused with various medicines.  
Drink from it, if you wish. As you drink from it, its colour, smell, and taste will not agree with you,  
but after drinking from it, you will be well.’

Then, he drank from it after reflecting, and did not relinquish it.

As he drank from it, its colour, taste and smell did not agree with him,  
but after drinking from it, he became well.

Just like that, I say, bhikshus, is the way of undertaking the Dharma that is **painful** now but ripens as pleasure in the future.

**21** (4) Suppose, bhikshus, there were **curd, honey, ghee and molasses mixed together**, and a man with dysentery came, and they told him:

‘Good man, **[317]** this is curd, honey, ghee and molasses mixed together.

<sup>21</sup> *Āpānīya,kaṁsa*, a broze or metal cup for drinking. *Kaṁsa* mean “a metal cup or vessel; a (metal) cymbal; metal, esp bronze or bell metal” (DP). Bell metal is a hard bronze alloy for making bells, cymbals, etc; a kind of bronze with a higher content of tin, approx. ratio of 4:1 ratio of copper to tin. A higher tin content gives the metal more rigidity and better resonance. This parable of the bronze cup of poison recurs in **Sunakkhatta S** (M 105,29/2:260,27), SD 94.3; **Sammāsa S** (S 12.66/2:110 f passim), SD 107.9.

<sup>22</sup> As at **Sunakkhatta S** (M 105,30/2:261), SD 94.3; **Janapada,kalyāṇī S** (S 47.20/5:170), SD 115.7.

<sup>23</sup> This is, of course, fermented cow’s urine serving as basic medicine for monastics: V 1:58, 96; **Sulabha S** (It 4.2/-103), SD 59.16.

Drink from it if you want; as you drink from it, its colour, smell, and taste will agree with you, and after drinking from it you will be well.’

Then, he drank from it after reflecting, and did not relinquish it.

As he drank from it, its colour, smell and taste agreed with him, and after drinking from it, he became well.

Just like that, I say, bhikshus, is the way of undertaking the Dharma that is **pleasant** now and ripens as pleasure in the future.

**22 Bhikshus**, just as in **autumn**,<sup>24</sup> in the last month of the rains, when the sky is clear and cloudless, the sun rises above the earth, shining and beaming and radiant, dispelling all darkness from the sky.

Even so, bhikshus, the way of undertaking the Dharma that is **pleasant** now and ripens as pleasure in the future, dispels with its shining and beaming and radiance any other doctrines whatsoever of ordinary recluses and brahmins.”

**23** That is what the Blessed One said. The monks were satisfied and approved of the Blessed One’s words.

*chaṭṭham*

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<sup>24</sup> On this passage, see **Aniccata Sañña S** (S 22.102/3:156), SD 12.12; **(Magga) Suriya S** (S 45.147/5:44), SD 106.20; **Mettā Bhāvanā S** (It 1.3.7/20), SD 30.7.