

From Turmoil to Tranquility

-Venerable Bhikkhu K Ñānanda

True progress leads one from turmoil to tranquility -from din and bustle to calm and serenity. The Ocean gives us an illustration of this truth.. Nearer the shallow shore, noisy breakers, froth and foam. Further on are the waves and ripples which gradually subside as the ocean progresses in depth. Far away, towards the horizon it is all calm and serene.

True development of the sense-faculties follows the same principle. The shallow-minded revel in the dill and bustle of life, while those who go for deeper things, delight in calm and serenity. It is a systematic progress from turbulence and conflict to equanimity and peace.

Once the Brahmin youth Uttara, a disciple of the Brahmin pārāsariya, came to see the Buddha. After the usual exchange of greetings, the Buddha asked him:

"Uttara, does the Brahmin Pārāsariya teach his disciples the development of sense faculties?"

"He does, master Gotama."

"But Uttara, how does he teach his disciples the development of the sense-faculties?"

"In this concern, Master Gotama, one does not see forms with the eye, one does not hear sounds with the ear .That is how the Brahmin Pārāsariya \ teaches his disciples the development of the sense-faculties."

"In that case, Uttara, a blind man and a deaf man will have developed sense faculties - according to what the Brahmin pārāsariya says. For, a blind man does not see forms with the eye and a deaf-man does not hear sounds with the ear ."

At these words Uttara was clueless and nonplussed. Then the Buddha, addressing the Venerable Ananda, said:

“Ananda, the Brahmin Pārāsariya teaches his disciples the development of the faculties in one way, but in the Noble One's Discipline the supreme development of the sense-faculties is quite otherwise.”

Then at venerable Ananda's request, the Buddha described in detail that supreme development of sense-faculties:

"Here Ananda, when a monk sees a form with the eye, there arises in him an agreeableness or a disagreeableness or a state that is both agreeable and disagreeable. He understands thus: There has arisen in me an agreeableness. There has arisen in me a disagreeableness. There has arisen in me a state that is both agreeable and disagreeable. But that is something prepared, gross and dependently arisen. This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely, equanimity- And in him, that agreeableness that arose, the disagreeableness that arose and the state both agreeable and disagreeable that arose; cease and equanimity is established. Just as a man with good sight, having opened his eyes might shut them or having shut his eyes might open them, so quickly, so rapidly, so easily, all those states cease and equanimity is established. This, in the Noble One's Discipline is called the supreme development of the sense - faculties regarding forms cognizable by the eye.

In the same vein, the Buddha goes on to describe how a monk should adjust his attitude towards the object of the other senses including the mind. The wonderfully apt similes used with regard to each of them, are eloquent enough to drive home the principle involved. They all illustrate how soon one should find one's equilibrium when swayed by likes and dislikes.

* With regard to sounds:

.....Just as a strong man might easily snap his fingers.....

* With regard to smells:

.....Just as rain-drops on a slightly tilted lotus-leaf, roll off and do not remain there

* With regard to Tastes:

.....Just as a strong man might easily spit out a ball of spittle collected on the tip of the tongue

* With regard to touches:

.....Just as a strong man might stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm

* With regard to mind-objects:

.....As if a man were to let two or three drops of water fall on an iron plate heated a whole day (which quickly vaporise and vanish).....

(-*Indriyabhavana Sutta, M.N* -)

Even as in the middle of the ocean
No waves arise and all is steady
So steadied and unmoved should a monk be
Causing no upheaval anywhere in the world

(*V.924 Tuvataka Sutta, Sn.*)