

Sutta References

[What do the Buddhist Suttas have to Teach Us about Addiction and Recovery]

Two Kinds of Disease ~ Roga Sutta [extract] (AN 4.157)

"Monks, there are two kinds of illness. What two? Mental and physical. Some sentient beings are seen who can claim to be free of physical illness for a year, or two, or three years, or four years, or five years, or ten, twenty, thirty, forty or fifty years... even up to a hundred years or more. But it's very hard to find any sentient beings in the world who can claim to be free of mental illness even for a moment, apart from those who have overcome the intoxicating inclinations¹."

Rewards ~ Abhisanda Sutta [extract] (Aṅguttara Nikāya 8.39)

Furthermore, a noble disciple gives up alcoholic drinks that cause negligence. By so doing they give to countless sentient beings the gift of freedom from fear, freedom from enmity, and freedom from ill will. And they themselves also enjoy unlimited freedom from fear, freedom from enmity, and freedom from ill will. This is the fifth gift that is a great offering, original, long-standing, traditional, and ancient. It is uncorrupted, as it has been since the beginning. It's not being corrupted now nor will it be. Sensible ascetics and brahmins don't look down on it.

Pure Hearkeners' Conduct ~ Dhammika Sutta [extract] (SNP 2.14)

"He should not take intoxicating drinks. The householder who likes this teaching does not urge others to drink nor does he condone drinking, knowing that it ends in madness. Through drunkenness foolish people commit evils and cause them to be committed by other foolish people. Avoid that which is a realm of evils, maddening, deluding, and the delight of the foolish."

Two Kinds of Thought ~ Dvedhāvitakka Sutta [extract] (MN 19)

"Monks, 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 relinquishment, good will, and harmlessness to the second class.

...

Whatever a monk 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 relinquishment 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."

¹ Intoxicating inclinations are "karmic propensities for sensual pleasures (kāmaśava), karmic propensities for existence (bhavāśava), and karmic propensities for ignorance (avijjāśava)" ~ Bhikkhu Bodhi

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Advice to Sigāla ~ Sigāla Sutta [extract] (DN 31)

Six Drains on Wealth

"What six drains on wealth do they avoid? Habitually engaging in the following things is a drain on wealth: drinking alcohol; roaming the streets at night; frequenting festivals; gambling; bad friends; laziness.

Six Drawbacks of Drinking

There are these six drawbacks of habitually drinking alcohol. Immediate loss of wealth, promotion of quarrels, susceptibility to illness, disrepute, indecent exposure; and weakened wisdom is the sixth thing. These are the six drawbacks of habitually drinking alcohol.

Six Drawbacks of Roaming the Streets at Night

There are these six drawbacks of roaming the streets at night. Yourself, your partners and children, and your property are all left unguarded. You're suspected of bad deeds. Untrue rumours spread about you. You're at the forefront of many things that entail suffering. These are the six drawbacks of roaming the streets at night.

Six Drawbacks of Festivals

There are these six drawbacks of frequenting festivals. You're always thinking: 'Where's the dancing? Where's the singing? Where's the music? Where are the stories? Where's the applause? Where are the kettle-drums?' These are the six drawbacks of frequenting festivals.

Six Drawbacks of Gambling

There are these six drawbacks of habitually gambling. Victory breeds enmity. The loser mourns their money. There is immediate loss of wealth. A gambler's word carries no weight in public assembly. Friends and colleagues treat them with contempt. And no-one wants to marry a gambler, for they think: 'This individual is a gambler—they're not able to support a partner.' These are the six drawbacks of habitually gambling.

Six Drawbacks of Bad Friends

There are these six drawbacks of bad friends. You become friends and companions with those who are scoundrels, drunkards, addicts, frauds, swindlers, and thugs. These are the six drawbacks of bad friends.

Six Drawbacks of Laziness

There are these six drawbacks of habitual laziness. You don't get your work done because you think: 'It's too cold! It's too hot. It's too late! It's too early! I'm too hungry! I'm too full!' By dwelling on so many excuses for not working, you don't make any more money, and the money you already have runs out. These are the six drawbacks of habitual laziness."

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Then the Teacher, went on to say:

*"Some are just drinking buddies,
some call you their dear, dear friend,
but a true friend is one
who stands by you in need.*

*Sleeping late, adultery,
making enemies, harmfulness,
bad friends, and avarice:
these six grounds ruin a person.*

*With bad friends, bad companions,
bad behaviour and alms-resort,
a man falls to ruin
in both this world and the next.*

*Dice, women, drink, song and dance;
sleeping by day and roaming at night;
bad friends, and avarice:
these six grounds ruin a person.*

*They play dice and drink liquor,
and consort with women loved by others.
Associating with the worse, not the better,
they diminish like the waning moon.*

*A drunkard, broke, and destitute,
thirsty, drinking in the bar,
drowning in debt,
will quickly lose their way.*

*When you're in the habit of sleeping late,
seeing night as time to rise,
and always getting drunk,
you can't keep up the household life.*

*'Too cold, too hot,
too late,' they say.
When the young neglect their work like this,
riches pass them by.*

*But one who considers hot and cold
as nothing more than blades of grass—
he does his manly duty,
and happiness never fails."*

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The Dhammapada : Chapter XXIV CRAVING [extracts]

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*As water falls from a lotus leaf
so sorrow drops from those
who are free of toxic craving.*

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*There are those who have begun
on the path to freedom
yet return, out of desire, to bondage.*

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*The bonds
of deluded habits and craving
are strengthened
by one who lets the mind heedlessly dwell
on objects of desire.*

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*The gift of truth is beyond giving.
The taste of truth is beyond sweetness,
The joy of truth is beyond all joy.
The end of craving is the end of sorrow.*

The Relaxation of Thoughts ~ Vitakkasanthana Sutta [excerpt from 'The Abhidhamma in Practice by N.K.G. Mendis] (MN:20)

Sometimes, however, unwholesome thoughts keep recurring and mere observation of the state of the mind may not be enough to deal with them. In such situations there are five methods proposed by the Buddha, described in the 20th Middle Length Discourse (Majjhima Nikaaya), MN 20. These are, briefly, as follows:

- *to give one's attention to a different object of a wholesome nature;*
- *to reflect on the danger in those unwholesome thoughts;*
- *to try not to give any attention to them;*
- *to give attention to the removal of the source of those thoughts;*
- *to clench the teeth, press the tongue against the palate and restrain, subdue, and suppress the mind with the mind.*

Lust and So Forth Repetition Series (Aṅguttara Nikāya 2.XIX)

"Monks, for direct knowledge of intoxication, for the full understanding of intoxication, for the utter destruction of intoxication, for the vanishing of intoxication, for the fading away of intoxication, for the cessation of intoxication, for the giving up of intoxication, for the abandonment of intoxication, these two things are to be developed. Which two? Serenity and insight. For the abandonment of intoxication, these two things should be developed."