

RENUCIATION – QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY AND INVESTIGATION

A householder came to Ananda and said, “We are householders who indulge, delight, enjoy and rejoice in sensuality. For us renunciation seems like a sheer drop-off. Yet I’ve heard that in this doctrine & discipline the hearts of the very young monks leap up at renunciation, grow confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing it as peace. So this...is contrary to the great mass of people: in this issue of renunciation.”

And when Ananda took this to the Buddha he said, “So it is. Even I myself, before my self-awakening, thought: ‘Renunciation is good. Seclusion is good.’ But my heart didn’t leap up at renunciation, didn’t grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing it as peace. Then I asked: ‘What is the cause, the reason, my heart doesn’t leap up at renunciation?’ And the thought occurred to me: ‘I haven’t seen the drawbacks of sensual pleasures and I haven’t understood the rewards of renunciation and haven’t familiarized myself with this. That’s why my heart doesn’t leap up at renunciation’

“Then I thought: ‘If, having seen the drawbacks of sensual pleasures and having understood the rewards of renunciation, there’s the possibility that my heart would leap up at renunciation, grow confident, steadfast, & firm, and see it as peace”

— AN 9:4

In Buddhist cosmology Mara is the personification of all that goes against enlightenment; the forces of ignorance and delusion in the mind.

“Under the Bodhi tree the Buddha’s response to Māra’s threats, cajolings, temptations, and attempts to cause doubt was fearless awareness. As soon as he was aware of the malefactor’s presence, he said: “I SEE you, Māra.” And the game was over. When Māra knows the Buddha has seen the hook inside the bait, he knew his victim was not going to bite. Māra is defeated in the gesture of knowing.” (Ajahn Amaro)

- 1. What harmful behaviors, beliefs or thinking patterns bring you the most suffering right now? As you look at them with fearless awareness - what have been the drawbacks of these behaviors? How has there been suffering in following this wanting?**
- 2. Looking fearlessly toward seeing the hook inside the bait – what is the bait that I come in contact with? What internal or external triggers lead me into these behaviors?**
- 3. What rewards do I imagine might come if I can heal and let go of these behaviors? What rewards have I already seen from my renunciation? What steps can I take to familiarize myself with these rewards more?**