

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

The Simile of the Snake (Alagagadduupamasutta)

Thus I heard

At one time the Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anaathapindika in Jeta's grove in Saavatthi. At that time to a bhikkhu named Ari.t.tha, a vulture trainer in his previous birth, this evil view had arisen. As I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments. Then many bhikkhus heard that this evil view had arisen to the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha, a vulture trainer in his previous birth. As I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments.

Then they approached the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha and asked him : Friend Ari.t.tha is it true that such an evil view has arisen to you: As I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments. Yes, friends, as I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments. Then those bhikkhus thinking to dissuade the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha from that evil view, cross questioned him, asked for reasons and discussed with him. Friend, Ari.t.tha do not say that, do not accuse the Blessed One. The Blessed One did not say that. The Blessed One has shown in various ways how these impedimental things are impediments to one who pursues them. The Blessed One has said that sensuality brings little satisfaction much unpleasantness and much trouble, there are many dangers there. The Blessed One has said that sensuality is comparable to a skeleton, a tendon of flesh, a burning grass torch, a pitful of burning charcoal, a dream, something borrowed, like a tree full of fruits, a slaughter house, the blade of a weapon, the head of a serpent. The Blessed One has said that sensuality brings much unpleasantness, much trouble and many dangers. Even when so much was told the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha held on tenaciously to

his view and would not give it up; as I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments

When the bhikkhus could not dissuade the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha from that evil view, they approached the Blessed One, worshipped, sat on a side and said thus: Venerable sir, to a bhikkhu named Ari.t.tha, a vulture trainer in his previous birth, this evil view had arisen. As I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments. Then many of us heard that this evil view had arisen to the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha, a vulture trainer in his previous birth As I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments.

Then we approached the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha and asked him : Friend Ari.t.tha is it true that such an evil view has arisen to you: As I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments. He said, yes, friends, as I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments. Then we bhikkhus thinking to dissuade the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha from that evil view, cross questioned him, asked for reasons and discussed with him. Friend, Ari.t.tha do not say that, do not accuse the Blessed One. The Blessed One did not say that. The Blessed One has shown in various ways how these impedimental things are impediments to one who pursues them. The Blessed One has said that sensuality brings little satisfaction much unpleasantness and much trouble, there are many dangers there. The Blessed One has said that sensuality is comparable to a skeleton, a tendon of flesh, a burning grass torch, a pitful of burning charcoal, a dream, something borrowed, like a tree full of fruits, a slaughter house, the blade of a weapon, the head of a serpent. The Blessed One has said that sensuality brings much unpleasantness, much trouble and many dangers. Even when so much was told the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha held on tenaciously to his view and would not give it up; as I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments are not suitable impediments As we could not dissuade the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha from that evil view, we came to inform you about it.

Then the Blessed One addressed a certain bhikkhu and said, Come bhikkhu, in my words call the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha, tell, the Teacher wants him. That bhikkhu consenting approached the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha and told him, Friend, the Teacher wants you.. The bhikkhu Ari.t.tha saying yes, friend, approached the Blessed One, worshipped and sat on a side. Then the Blessed One said, Ari.t.tha, is it true, that such a view has arisen to you, As I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things declared as impediments, are not suitable impediments. Then he said, yes, venerable sir, as I know the Teaching of the Blessed One, to one who pursues those impedimental things, declared as impediments, are not suitable impediments.- Foolish man, to whom do you know me teaching this. Haven't I in many ways told that the impedimental things are impediments, indeed to one who pursues them they are impediments. I have told that sensuality brings little satisfaction, much unpleasantness and trouble, the dangers here are many. - I have told that sensuality is comparable to a skeleton, a tendon of flesh, a burning grass torch, a pit of burning charcoal, a dream, something borrowed, a tree full of fruits, the blade of a weapon, the head of a serpent, I have told it has much unpleasantness, much trouble and the dangers there are many. Yet you foolish man, on account of your wrong view you accuse me and destroy yourself and accumulate much demerit, which will be for your unpleasantness for a long time. Then the Blessed One addressed :Bhikkhus, what do you think, shouldn't we chastise this bhikkhu Ari.t.tha, a vulture trainer in his earlier birth from this dispensation When this was said the bhikkhu Ari,t.tha a vulture trainer in his earlier birth became silent, and unable to reply back, with a drooping form sat with eyes turned down. Then the Blessed One knowing that the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha a vulture trainer in his earlier birth has become silent, unable to reply back, with a drooping form sitting with eyes turned down told him, foolish man, you will be pointed out on account of this evil view, now I will question the bhikkhus on this

Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus; Bhikkhus, do you too know of this Teaching, the wrong view of the bhikkhu Ari.t.tha, a vulture trainer in his earlier birth on account of which he brings blame on us and also destroys himself and accumulates much unpleasantness. -No venerable sir, The impedimental things are told by the Blessed One and indeed to one who pursues them, they are impediments. The Blessed One has said that there is little satisfaction in sensuality, much unpleasantness and much trouble, the dangers there are many. The Blessed One has said that

sensuality is comparable to a skeleton, a tendon of flesh, a burning grass torch, a pit of burning charcoal, a dream, something borrowed, a tree full of fruits, the blade of a weapon, and the head of a serpent. The Blessed One has said it has much unpleasantness, much trouble and the dangers there are many.. Good ! bhikkhus, Good, that you know the Teaching taught by me. In various ways I have shown the impedimental things and indeed it is impedimental to pursue them. I have told that sensuality brings little satisfaction, much unpleasantness and the dangers there are many. I have told it is comparable to skeleton--to the head of a serpent brings little satisfaction, much unpleasantness and the dangers there are many. Yet the bhikkhu Ariyaratne holding to this wrong view blames us and destroys himself and accumulates much demerit, and it will be for his unpleasantness for a long time.

Bhikkhus, someone could indulge in sensuality, without sensual perceptions, without sensual thoughts is not possible

Bhikkhus, a certain foolish man learns the prose sections, prose and verse sections, the answers and explanation expositions, stanzas, solemn utterances, thus said sections, birth stories, wonderful things, a series of questions and answers. He thoroughly learns the Teaching but does not examine the meanings with wisdom. So he cannot take pleasure in the Teaching. He learns the Teaching for the purpose of finding fault. He takes a wrong grasp of the Teaching and that conduces for his unpleasantness for a long time. The reason is the wrong grasp of the Teaching. Like a man wandering in search of a serpent would come to a huge serpent, he would take hold of the serpent by the hood or the tail and it would turn round and sting the hand or foot or any other limb. On account of this wrong grasp of the serpent he would meet death or deadly unpleasantness. In the same manner a certain foolish man learns the prose sections, prose and verse sections, the answers and explanation expositions, stanzas, solemn utterances, thus said sections, birth stories, wonderful things, a series of questions and answers. He thoroughly learns the Teaching but does not examine the meanings with wisdom. So he cannot take pleasure in the Teaching. He learns the Teaching for the purpose of finding fault. He takes a wrong grasp of the Teaching and that conduces for his unpleasantness for a long time. The reason is the wrong grasp of the Teaching.

Bhikkhus, a certain son of a clansman learns the prose sections, prose and verse sections, the answers and explanation expositions, stanzas, solemn utterances, thus said sections, birth stories, wonderful things, a series of questions and answers. He thoroughly learns the Teaching and examines the meanings with wisdom and is convinced of the Teaching. He does not learn the Teaching to find fault with it, nor does he learn it for the purpose of release through hearsay. He experiences the meanings. He has taken hold of the Teaching correctly, and it conduces for his pleasantness for a long time. It is because of the correct grasp of the Teaching. Like a man wandering in search of a serpent would come to a huge serpent and would take hold of it with a forked stick or hold it by the neck, it may coil round the man's hand or foot or any other limb small or large, yet he would not come to death or deadly unpleasantness, because of the correct hold of the snake. In the same manner, a certain son of a clansman learns the prose sections, prose and verse sections, the answers and explanation expositions, stanzas, solemn utterances, thus said sections, birth stories, wonderful things, a series of questions and answers. He thoroughly learns the Teaching and examines the meanings with wisdom and is convinced of the Teaching. He does not learn the Teaching to find fault with it, nor does he learn it for the purpose of release through hearsay. He experiences the meanings. He has taken hold of the Teaching correctly, and it conduces for his pleasantness for a long time. It is because of the correct grasp of the Teaching

Bhikkhus, this Teaching is for giving up not for taking hold of, listen to it carefully. Like a man come to the highway would see a large stretch of water, the hither shore dangerous and fearful, the thither shore peaceful and without fear. There is no ship or overhead bridge to cross over from the hither shore to the thither. What if I build a raft collecting grass, sticks, branches and creepers. So he built a raft collecting grass sticks branches and creepers, and making effort with hands and feet reached the other shore safely. Then to the one who has crossed over this thought occurred This raft was of great service to me, I safely crossed over to the other shore boarding it and putting forth effort with my hands and feet. What if I balance it on my head or haul it on my back and go where I like. Bhikkhus, is he doing the right thing if he does so with the raft.- Doing what will he be doing the right thing with the raft.. Bhikkhus, to the man who has crossed over it occurs thus: This raft was of great service to me, I safely crossed over to the other shore boarding it and putting forth effort with my hands and feet. What if I pulled it up to dry ground, or sink it in the water and go where I like.

A man doing that would be doing the right thing. Just so, bhikkhus, my Teaching is comparable to a raft for the purpose of crossing over and not for getting hold of. You should give up even the Teaching that should be known, and what about that which should not be known. . .

Bhikkhus, these six are the views. What six. Bhikkhus, the ordinary man who has not seen the noble ones and Great Beings, not clever in their Teaching, and not trained in their Teaching Sees matter : that is me, I am that, that is my self. Sees feelings,; that is me, I am that, that is my self. Sees determinations: that is me, I am that, that is my self. Whatever seen, heard, tasted, smelt and bodily felt, cognized, attained, sought after, and reflected in the mind: that is me, I am that, that is my self The world, the self, I will be in the future, permanent, not changing, an eternal thing.; that is me, I am that, that is my self.

Bhikkhus, the learned noble disciple, who has seen noble ones and Great Beings, clever in their Teaching, and trained in their Teaching sees mstter: that is not me, am not that, that is not my self. Sees feelings: that is not me ,am not that, that is not my self. Sees determinations: that is not me,am not that, that is not my self, Whatever seen, heard, tasted, smelt, bodily felt, cognized, attained, sought after, and reflected in the mind: that is not me, am not that, that is not my self. The world, the self, I will be in the future, permanent, not changing, an eternal thing, that is not me, am not that, that is not my self.. Seeing it is not present, is not excited. .

When this was said, a certain bhikkhu said to the Blessed One: Venerable sir, is there excitement for external non presence. The Blessed One said, there is bhikhu. Here, bhikkhu, it occurs to someone thus: There was to me, now it is not to me, I had, now I do not gain, he grieves, laments and beats the breast and comes to bewilderment of mind. Thus there is excitement for external non-presence. - Venerable sir, is there non-excitement for external non-presence. The Blessed One said, there is bhikkhu. Here, bhikkhu, it does not occur to someone: There was to me, now it is not to me, I had, now I do not gain, he does not grieve or lament, does not beat the breast and come to bewilderment of mind. Thus there is no excitement for external non-presence. -Venerable sir, is there excitement for internal non-presence: The Blessed One said, there is bhikkhu. Here, bhikkhu,

to a certain one there is this view. The world, the self, I will be in the future, permanent, not changing, an eternal thing. Then he hears this Teaching from the Thus Gone One or from a disciple of the Thus Gone One for the complete abolishment of views, determinant resolutions, prepossessions, latent tendencies for settlements, for the appeasement of all determinations, for the giving up of all endearments, for the destruction of craving, for non attachment, cessation and extinction. Then it occurs to him, indeed it will be my annihilation, my destruction, I will not be. He grieves, laments, beats the breast and comes to bewilderment of mind. Thus, there is excitement for internal non-presence. Venerable sir, is there non-excitement for internal non-presence. There is bhikkhu, said the Blessed One: Here bhikkhu. to a certain one there is not this view. This world, this self, I will be in the future, permanent, not changing, an eternal thing. Then he hears this Teaching from the Thus Gone One or from a disciple of the Thus Gone One for the complete abolishment of views, determinant resolutions, prepossessions, latent tendencies for settlements, for the appeasement of all determinations, for the giving up of all endearments, for the destruction of craving, for non attachment, cessation and extinction. Then it does not occur to him, indeed it will be my annihilation, my destruction, I will not be. He does not grieve, lament, beat the breast and come to bewilderment of mind. Thus, there is non-excitement for internal non-presence. Thus there is non-excitement for internal non-presence.

Bhikkhus, do you see anything permanent, not changing, eternal, to seize. No, venerable sir. Good! I too do not see anything to seize that which is permanent, not changing, and stands eternity. Bhikkhus, is there the holding of a self view which does not give birth to grief, lament, unpleasantness, displeasure and distress. No, venerable sir. Good! I too do not see a self view which does not give birth to grief, lament, unpleasantness, displeasure and distress. Bhikkhus, is there a settled view which does not give birth to grief, lament, unpleasantness, displeasure and distress. No, venerable sir. Good! I too do not see a settled view which does not give birth to grief, lament, unpleasantness, displeasure and distress.

.Bhikkhus, when there are belongings of a self, is there a satisfaction, these are mine. Yes, venerable sir.. A self or the belongings of a self, in reality and truth cannot be gained. Bhikkhus, this settled

view, about the world, and the self, I will be in the future, permanent, not changing, standing eternity, isn't it a completely foolish notion- Why isn't it, venerable sir, it is a completely foolish notion- What do you think:-- Is matter permanent or impermanent.-- Impermanent, venerable sir.-- That which is impermanent, is it unpleasant or pleasant.-- -Unpleasant venerable sir. --That which is impermanent, unpleasant, a changing thing is it good to be considered that is me, that I am, that is my self.-- No, venerable sir.-- Is feeling permanent or impermanent.-- Impermanent, venerable sir.- - That which is impermanent, is it unpleasant or pleasant.-- -Unpleasant venerable sir. --That which is impermanent, unpleasant, a changing thing is it good to be considered that is me, that I am, that is my self.-- No, venerable sir --Are perceptions permanent or impermanent.-- Impermanent, venerable sir.-- That which is impermanent, is it unpleasant or pleasant.-- -Unpleasant venerable sir. --That which is impermanent, unpleasant, a changing thing is it good to be considered that is me, that I am, that is my self.-- No, venerable sir.- -Are determinations permanent or impermanent.-- Impermanent, venerable sir.-- That which is impermanent, is it unpleasant or pleasant.-- -Unpleasant venerable sir. --That which is impermanent, unpleasant, a changing thing is it good to be considered that is me, that I am, that is my self.-- No, venerable sir. --Is consciousness permanent or impermanent.-- Impermanent, venerable sir.-- That which is impermanent, is it unpleasant or pleasant.-- -Unpleasant venerable sir. --That which is impermanent, unpleasant, a changing thing is it good to be considered that is me, that I am, that is my self.-- No, venerable sir. -- Therefore bhikkhus, whatever matter, in the past, future or present, internal or external, exalted or unexalted, far or near, all matter is not me, that am not, that is not my self- should be realized as it really is, with right wisdom. Whatever feelings-- whatever perceptions, --whatever determinations--whatever consciousness, in the past, future or present, internal or external, exalted or unexalted, far or near, all consciousness is not me, that am not, that is not my self, should be realized as it really is, with right wisdom.

The learned noble disciple seeing thus detaches from matter, detaches from feelings, detaches from perceptions, detaches from determinations, detaches from consciousness. Detached is released. Released knowledge arises am released. Birth destroyed, the holy life lived to the end, what should be done is done, there is nothing more to wish for, he knows. To this is called removing the obstacle, filling the trenches, pulling out desires, seeing results, the noble one puts down the flag and is

unyoked Bhikkhus, how does the bhikkhu remove the obstacle; Here the bhikkhu's ignorance is dispelled, pulled out from the roots, and made a palm stump of it, so that it may not rise again. Thus the obstacle is removed. How does the bhikkhu fill up the trenches; Here the bhikkhu dispels the recurring births, making a palm stump of it so that it may not rise again. Thus the bhikkhu fills up the trenches. How does the bhikkhu pull out desires. Here the bhikkhu dispels greed, together with the roots, makes it a palm stump, so that it may not rise again. Thus the bhikkhu pulls out desires. How does the bhikkhu see results. Here the bhikkhu dispels the bonds to the sensual world, cuts them up completely, so that they may not rise again. Thus the bhikkhu sees results. How does the noble one put down the flag and unyoke. Here the bhikkhu dispels the conceit 'I be' pulling it out from the roots makes a palm stump of it, so that it may not rise again. Thus the bhikkhu puts down the flag and unyokes.

Bhikkhus, if that released mind of the bhikkhu was to be searched by Inda, Brahmaa, Pajaapati and their retinue, it would not be found; thus unsupported is the consciousness of the Thus Gone One. What is the reason: I say that the Thus Gone One cannot be found even here and now. To me who says thus and preaches thus, certain recluses and brahmins ingenuinely, untruthfully blame, the recluse Gotama the discipliner, purposefully shows the annihilation, destruction, and non evidence of beings. Bhikkhus, whatever I am not, that I do not proclaim, as a result these good recluses and brahmins ingenuinely, untruthfully blame, the recluse Gotama the discipliner purposefully shows the annihilation, destruction and non-evidence of beings. Earlier and now also I declare -Unpleasant and its cessation. Others abuse, blame and annoy the Thus Gone One, for that the Thus Gone One has no ill feeling, aversion or discontent. Some others honour, revere and worship the Thus Gone One, for that the Thus Gone One has no blissful pleasurable joy. When others honour, revere and worship the Thus Gone One, it occurs to him, it is on account of what I have thoroughly understood that they do it. Bhikkhus, when others abuse, blame and annoy you, ill feeling, aversion and discontent should not be to you. Again bhikkhus, when others honour, revere and worship you, a blissful pleasurable joy should not be to you. It should occur to you, it is on account of what I have thoroughly understood, that they do it..

Therefore bhikkhus, if people carry away, burn or do what they like to grass-sticks-branches-creepers in this same Jeta's grove, would it occur to you; People are carrying away, burning and doing what they like to us-- No, venerable sir.- What is the reason: Venerable sir, they are not our selves or the belongings of ourselves. -- Bhikkhus, in the same manner, whatever is not yours, dispel it., for your good welfare and pleasantness for a long time. Bhikkhus, what is not yours. Matter is not yours, dispel it for your good, welfare and pleasantness for a long time. Feeling is not yours, dispel it for your good, welfare and pleasantness for a long time. Perception is not yours, dispel it for your good, welfare and pleasantness for a long time. Determinations are not yours, dispel it for your good, welfare and pleasantness for a long time. Consciousness is not yours, dispel it for your good welfare and pleasantness for a long time.

Bhikkhus, my Teaching is well proclaimed, made manifest, open and threadbare Those bhikkhus, who have perfected, destroyed desires, lived the holy life, done what should be done, put down the weight, attained to the highest good, destroyed the bonds of being, and released rightfully knowing , they have no further proceeding to show them. My Teaching is so well proclaimed, made manifest, open and threadbare

Those bhikkhus who have dispelled the five lower fetters, they all arise spontaneously, and extinguish there itself, do not proceed from that world. My Teaching is so well proclaimed, made manifest, open and threadbare. Those bhikkhus, who have dispelled the three fetters and diminishing greed, hate and delusion, they all become once returners, coming only once more to this world, to make an end of unpleasantness. My Teaching is so well proclaimed, made manifest, open and threadbare. Those bhikkhus who have dispelled the three fetters, all of them enter the stream of the Teaching, do not fall from there intending only extinction. My Teaching is so well proclaimed, made manifest, open and threadbare. Those who have some faith in me, some love for me they all are intent on heaven.

The Blessed One said thus and those bhikkhus delighted in the words of the Blessed One.

