

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

The Noble Search (Ariyapariyesanasutta)

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One lived in the monastery offered by Anaathapindika in Jeta's grove in Saavatthi. The Blessed One putting on robes in the morning, taking bowl and robes entered Saavatthi for the alms round. At that time many bhikkhus approached venerable Aananda and said. : Friend Aananda, it is long, since we heard the Teaching from the Blessed One. Good if we could hear a discourse from the Blessed One—Then friends, approach the dwelling of the brahmin Rammaka, you will be able to hear a talk from the Blessed One himself. Those bhikkhus agreed. The Blessed One having gone the alms round and after the meal was over, returning from the alms round, addressed venerable Aananda. Let us go to the palace of Migaara's mother to spend the day. Venerable Aananda agreed and the Blessed One approached the palace of Migaara's mother with venerable Aananda, to spend the day. In the evening the Blessed One getting up from his seclusion addressed venerable Aananda and said Let us go to the eastern bath to wash the body. Having washed the body and come out of the bath stood in one robe until the body was dry. Then venerable Aananda said. Venerable sir, the brahmin Rammaka's dwelling is pleasant, shall we approach it out of compassion. At that time many bhikkhus were gathered in the dwelling of the brahmin Rammaka. Seated they were engaged in a talk on the Teaching The Blessed One stood outside the closed gate, until the talk ended and when it ended cleared his throat to make a noise. The bhikkhus opened the door for the Blessed One and he entered and sat on the prepared seat. Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus; Bhikkhus, with what talk were you seated?. Our talk was on the Teaching and about the Blessed One himself and then the Blessed One arrived. Good bhikkhus, sons of clansmen who have gone forth, leaving the household should sit with a talk on the Teaching. When gathered like this there are two things you could do, either a talk on the Teaching or maintain noble silence.

Bhikkhus, twofold are the searches: The noble search and the ignoble search. What is the ignoble search. Here, bhikkhus, one subject to birth searches birth. One subject to decay searches decay. One subject to illness searches illness. One subject to death searches death. One subject to grief, searches grief. One with defilements searches defiling things. Bhikkhus, what things are subject to birth. Sons and wife are subject to birth. Slaves, men and women, are subject to birth. Goats, cows, fowl, pigs, horses, cattle and mares, are subject to birth. Gold and silver are subject to birth. Bhikkhus, these endearments are subject to birth, enslaved and swooned by them one becomes guilty of an offence, and searches for things subject to birth. What things are subject to decay. Sons and wife are subject to decay. Slaves, men and women, are subject to decay. Goats, cows, fowl, pigs, horses, cattle and mares, are subject to decay. Gold and silver are subject to decay. Bhikkhus, these endearments are subject to decay, enslaved and swooned by them one becomes guilty of an offence, and searches for things subject to decay. What things are subject to illness. Sons and wife are subject to illness. Slaves, men and women, are subject to illness. Goats, cows, fowl, pigs, horses, cattle and mares, are subject to illness. Gold and silver are subject to illness. Bhikkhus, these endearments are subject to illness, enslaved and swooned by them one becomes guilty of an offence, and searches for things subject to illness. What things are subject to death. Sons and wife are subject to death. Slaves men and women, are subject to death. Goats, cows, fowl, pigs, horses, cattle and mares, are subject to death. Gold and silver are subject to death. Bhikkhus, these endearments are subject to death. Enslaved and swooned by them one becomes guilty of an offence, and searches for things subject to death. Bhikkhus, what is subject to grief Sons and wife are subject to grief. Slaves men and women, are subject to grief. Goats, cows, fowl, pigs, cattle and mares, are subject to grief. Gold and silver are subject to grief. Bhikkhus, these endearments are subject to grief, enslaved and swooned by them one becomes guilty of an offence, and searches for things subject to grief. What things are subject to defilements?. Sons and wife are subject to defilements. Slaves men and women, are subject to defilements. Goats, cows, fowl, pigs, horses, cattle and mares, are subject to defilement. Gold and silver are subject to defilements. Bhikkhus, these endearments are subject to defilements, enslaved and swooned by them, one become guilty of an offence, searches for things subject to defilements. Bhikkhus, this is the ignoble search.

Bhikkhus, what is the noble search. Here a certain one subject to birth, knowing its dangers searches the not decaying noble end of the yoke extinction. One subject to decay, knowing the dangers of decay searches the not decaying noble end of the yoke extinction. One subject to illness, knowing the dangers of illness searches the non-ailing noble end of the yoke extinction. One subject to death, knowing the dangers of death searches the deathless noble end of the yoke extinction. One subject to grief, knowing the dangers of grief, searches the non-grieving noble end of the yoke extinction. One subject to defiling, knowing its dangers searches the non-defiled noble end of the yoke extinction. Bhikkhus, this is the noble search.

Bhikkhus, when I was not enlightened, yet a seeker of enlightenment, a subject of birth sought after birth. A subject of decay sought after decay. A subject of illness sought after illness.. A subject of death sought after death. A subject of grief sought after grief. A subject of defilements, sought after defilements. Bhikkhus, I reflected, subject to birth, why should I seek birth? Subject to illness, why should I seek illness. Subject to death, why should I seek death? Subject to grief, why should I seek that. Subject to defiling things, why should I seek that? A subject of birth, who knows the dangers of birth; why shouldn't I seek that non-born noble end of the yoke extinction? A subject of decay, who knows the dangers of decay, why shouldn't I seek that not decaying noble end of the yoke? A subject of illness, .who knows the dangers of illness, why shouldn't I seek that non-ailing noble end of the yoke? A subject of death who knows its dangers, why shouldn't I seek that deathless noble end of the yoke? A subject of grief, who knows its dangers, why shouldn't I seek that griefless noble end of the yoke extinction?. A subject to defiling, knowing its dangers, why shouldn't I seek that not defiling noble end of the yoke extinction?

When in the prime of youth, even with black hair, against the wish of mother and father, when they were crying with tearing eyes, I shaved head and beard, donned yellow robes left the household and became homeless. Become a seeker of good and a seeker of the incomparable peaceful state, I approached Aalāra Kālāma and said. Venerable one, I want to lead the holy life in this dispensation. Come friend, the wise ones, before long, realise this teaching and abide like the teacher. Bhikkhus, I quickly learned that Teaching, to acknowledge I know and I see by uttering and reciting

as the elders did. Then it occurred to me merely with this faith Aalaara Kaalaama would not acknowledge, I abide knowing and realising this Teaching. Indeed he abides knowing and seeing this teaching. Then I approached Aalaara Kaalaama and asked him. Venerable one, how do you abide having realised this teaching? Then Aalaara Kaalaama declared the sphere of no-thingness. Then it occurred to me, it is not only Aalaara Kaalaama who has faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. I too have faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. What, if I arouse effort to realise this Teaching realised by him. Before long I realised that Teaching and abode. Then I approached Aalaara Kaalaama and asked him. Venerable one, is it this much, the teaching you have realised and abide. Friend, it is this much only, the teaching that I have realised, declare and abide in. Then I said, I too have realised this much and abide in it. Venerable one, it is rare gain for us to meet co-associates like you in the holy life, That whatever Teaching I have realised, that, you too have realised So whatever Teaching I know, that, you too know. Now the two of us are on equal grounds. Let the two of us together guide this following. Bhikkhus, it was in this manner that my teacher, Aalaara Kaalaama honoured me, his pupil, offering me equal status. Then it occurred to me: this teaching does not lead to giving up, detachment, cessation, appeasement, knowledge enlightenment and extinction. It leads up to the sphere of no-thingness only. Not satisfied with it I turned away from it.

Becoming a seeker of good, and in search of the incomparable peaceful state, I approached Uddaka Raamaputta and said. Venerable one, I want to lead the holy life in this dispensation. Come friend, wise ones, before long realise this teaching and abide like the teacher. Bhikkhus, I quickly learned that teaching to acknowledge I know and I see by uttering and reciting as the elders did. Then it occurred to me merely with this faith, Uddaka Raamaputta would not acknowledge I abide knowing and realising this Teaching. Indeed he abides knowing and seeing this Teaching. Then I approached Uddaka Raamaputta and asked him. Venerable one, how do you abide knowing and realising this teaching? Uddaka Raamaputta declared the sphere of neither perception-nor non-perception. Bhikkhus, then it occurred to me, it is not only Uddaka Raamaputta who has faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. I too have faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. What if I put forth effort to realise this teaching realised by him. Before long I realised that teaching and abode. Then I approached Uddaka Raamaputta and asked him: Venerable one, is it this

much, the Teaching you have realised and abide? Friend, it is this much only, the Teaching, that I have realised, declare and abide Then I said, I too have realised this much and abide in it. Venerable one, it is rare gain for us to meet co-associates like you in the holy life. That whatever, I have realised and abide, that you too have realised and abide. So that whatever Teaching I know, that you too know. Now the two of us are on equal grounds. Come friend, you guide this following. Thus Uddaka Raamaputta my co-associate honoured me as his teacher. Then it occurred to me, this Teaching does not lead to giving up, detachment, cessation, appeasement, knowledge enlightenment and extinction. It leads up to the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception only, not satisfied I turned away from it.

Becoming a seeker of good, and in search of the incomparable peaceful state, wandering in stages, I came to the village of Senaani in Uruwela. There I saw a pleasant plot of land, with a stretch of forest close to it. There, a river with well formed white banks was flowing and in the vicinity was a village to pasture. Then it occurred to me: Indeed this stretch of land is pleasant, there is a forest, and a flowing river. In the vicinity is a village to pasture. Then I sat thinking this is the ideal place for a clansman to make effort.

Then bhikkhus, I a subject of death, knowing the dangers of death was searching the not born noble end of the yoke* and attained extinction. I, a subject of decay, knowing the dangers of decay was searching the non-decaying noble end of the yoke* and attained extinction. I, a subject of illness, knowing the dangers of illness was searching the not ailing noble end of the yoke* and attained extinction. I, a subject of death, knowing the dangers of death was searching the not dying noble end of the yoke* and attained extinction, I, a subject of grief, knowing the dangers of grief was searching, the not grieving noble end of the yoke* and attained extinction. I, a subject to defiling, knowing its dangers, was searching the not defiling noble end of the yoke* and attained extinction. Then knowledge and vision arose to me, my release is unchanged, this is my last birth, there is no more birth (*1).

Bhikkhus, it occurred to me. This Teaching that I have realised is deep, difficult to see, and understand, appeasing and exalted, it cannot be realised logically. It is clever and should be understood by the wise. The populace fond of settling and attached to settling, does not see this difficult point, that dependent arising is from this cause.(2) This point too is difficult to see, that is the appeasement of all determinations (3).and the giving up of all endearments (4) destruction of craving, detachment, cessation and extinction. If I teach this to others they would not understand it, and I would only reap fatigue.Then this wonderful stanza occurred to me.

I attained it with difficulty, why should I proclaim it,

By those overcome by greed and hate, this is difficult to be understood

Clever and going against the stream is deep and difficult to see

The greedily attached, do not see it shrouded with a mass of darkness.

Bhikkhus, when I reflected this, my mind bent to non-action, and not to teach. Then to Brahmaa Sahampathi who knew my mind, this thought occurred, the world will disappear, it will vanish, that the Thus gone One has made up the mind to non-action and not declaring the Teaching. Then Brahmaa Sahampatii vanished from the brahmaa world and appeared before me, as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm. Brahmaa Sahampatii arranging the shawl on one shoulder and clasping hands towards the Blessed One entreated me,,: May the Blessed One preach. There are beings with little defilements, who would fall on account of not hearing the Teaching. There will be those who would realise the Teaching, and Brahmaa Sahampati further said thus.

In the past the Teaching arose in Magadha, impure with blemish.

Open the door to deathlessness sir, by making the pure Teaching to be heard. .

Like a man on top of a rocky mountain would see the populace on all sides

Wise one, the comparison is that, do ascend the rock and teach

Remove the grief of the populace drenched in grief,

Look at them overcome by birth and decay.

Hero, steady and win the battle, leading charioteer,

Abide in the world without a debt.

May the Blessed One teach, there will be those who understand.

Heeding the entreaty of Brahmaa and out of compassion for beings I looked with the eye of the Enlightened One and saw beings with little defilements and with much defilements. Saw beings with sharp mental faculties and weak mental faculties, with good dispositions and weak dispositions. Saw certain ones abiding fearing the other world. Like in a set of blue lotuses, red lotuses and white lotuses, a certain one would be born in the water grow and develop in the water and would bloom below the level of the water. Some others born in the water would grow, develop and bloom, in level with the water and certain others born in the water, grow and develop and stand right above the water and bloom. In the same manner I saw beings with little defilement and with much defilement, with sharp mental faculties, and weak mental faculties, with good dispositions and weak dispositions and certain ones fearing the other world. Then I replied to Brahmaa Sahampati saying a stanza.

Brahmaa, I have opened the doors of deathlessness,

May those who have ears be released through faith,

With practice we will speak words with the perception of non hurting

And the populace will get the exalted Teaching.

Then Brahmaa Sahampati knowing I have made it possible for the Teaching to be heard, worshipped and circumambulated me and vanished from there it self.

Then it occurred to me to whom shall I give the first discourse? Then I thought this Aalaara Kaalaama is very wise, has been with few defilements for a long time, if I give the first discourse to

him, he will indeed realise this Teaching very quickly. Then the gods approached me and told. Venerable sir, he passed away seven days ago. Then the knowledge arose its seven days since he passed away. Then it occurred to me, Aalāra Kālaama is wise if he had heard this Teaching, he would have realised it quickly. Again, it occurred to me. To whom shall I give the first discourse? Uddaka Rāmaputta is very wise and has long been with few defilements. If I give the first discourse to him, he will learn the Teaching quickly. Then the gods approached me and told. Venerable sir, he passed away last night.. Then knowledge arose to me, he passed away, last night. Again it occurred to me, to whom shall I preach the first discourse and who will know this Teaching quickly? Then it occurred to me, these fivefold bhikkhus were of great help, they attended on me until I gave up resolute striving. Then it occurred to me, where are the fivefold bhikkhus living at present? With my purified heavenly eye I saw them abiding in the deer park in Isipatana in Benares. After living as long as I wished in Uruwela, I left to go to Benares by stages . On the way I met, the wandering ascetic Upaka, between Gayā and the Bo tree and he said. Friend, your mental faculties are pure and your skin colour is pure. Under whom do you lead the holy life, who is your Teacher and whose Teaching appeals to you? I replied him with this verse.

I have overcome everything, know everything. I'm not soiled by anything,

Giving up everything, with the destruction of craving I'm released,

I realised this by myself and have no Teacher.

Or an equal among gods and men

I'm perfect in this world. I'm the incomparable Teacher

By myself I rightfully realised Enlightenment. Cooled and extinguished.

I go to the city of Kaasi, to set the wheel of the Teaching rolling

It is to sound the drum of deathlessness to the blindfolded world.

Friend, as you acknowledge, it seems you are the world winner.

Upaka, all my demeritorious things are overcome, therefore I'm winner.

When this was said the wandering ascetic Upaka, shook his head and said: Friend, it may be so, and turning to a side track, went away.

Then bhikkhus, in stages I went to Benares, to Isipatana and to the deer park, and approached the fivefold bhikkhus. They seeing me approach in the distance settled among themselves. This is that recluse Gotama who gave up striving and returned to a life of abundance. We should not worship or attend on him and should not accept his bowl and robes. We will prepare a seat, if he likes he may sit. Bhikkhus, as I approached, the fivefold bhikkhus, they could not keep to their settlement. One approached to accept the bowl and robes, another prepared a seat, and the third placed water to wash the feet. Yet they addressed me by name. Then I told the fivefold bhikkhus: Bhikkhus, do not address the Thus Gone One by name or as friend. The Thus Gone One is perfect and rightfully enlightened. Bhikkhus, listen, I will advise to attain deathlessness Those following the method, according to the advice given, before long will attain, the highest end of the holy life here and now. .When this was said the fivefold bhikkhus said thus: Friend, Gotama, with that deportment, that method, and that difficult striving, you did not attain any distinct knowledge and vision above human. Having abandoned that striving and gone to abundance, what distinct knowledge and vision above human have you attained.. Bhikkhus, the Thus Gone One is perfect, rightfully enlightened. Listen, I will advise to attain deathlessness. Those following the method according to the advice given, before long, will attain, the highest end of the holy life here and now.

For the second time, the fivefold bhikkhus told me. Friend, Gotama, with that deportment, that method, and that difficult striving, you did not attain any distinct knowledge and vision above human. Having abandoned that striving and gone to abundance, what distinct knowledge and vision above human have you attained?. For the second time I told the fivefold bhikkhus. Bhikkhus, I have not gone to abundance or abandoned striving. I'm perfect, rightfully enlightened. Listen I will advise, to attain deathlessness. Those following the method according to the advice given, before long will attain, the highest end of the holy life here and now.

For the third time the fivefold bhikkhus said thus: Friend, Gotama, with that deportment, that method, and that difficult striving, you did not attain any distinct knowledge and vision above human. Now having abandoned that striving and gone to abundance, what distinct knowledge and vision above human have you attained? When this was said, Bhikkhus, I asked the fivefold bhikkhus. Do you know me of talking like this before?. They said, No, venerable sir. I said, bhikkhus, .the Thus Gone One is perfect, rightfully enlightened. I will advice to attain deathlessness. Those following the method according to the advice given, before long, will attain that highest end of the holy life, here and now and abide. Bhikkhus, I could convince the fivefold bhikkhus. Then I advised two bhikkhus, and three would go for alms. Out of what is brought by three, each one partook one sixth..I sometimes advised three bhikkhus, and two went for alms. Out of what was brought by two, each one partook one sixth.

Bhikkhus, thus advised by me the fivefold bhikkhus themselves subject to birth, knowing the danger of birth, searched for the non-born noble end of the yoke, and attained it. Subject to decay, knowing the danger of decay, searched for the not decaying noble end of the yoke and attained it. Subject to ailing, knowing the danger of ailing searched for the non-ailing noble end of the yoke and attained extinction. Subject to death, knowing the danger of death, in search of the deathless noble end of the yoke attained extinction. Subject to grief, knowing the danger of grief, in search of the griefless noble end of the yoke attained extinction. Themselves subject to defiling, knowing the danger of defiling, in search of the undefiled noble end of the yoke attained extinction. Knowledge and vision arose to them. Their release, was not changeable. They knew this is our last birth, now there is no more birth.

Bhikkhus, these five are the strands of sensual pleasures.What five?. Pleasant agreeable forms arousing fondness cognizable by eye consciousness. Pleasant agreeable sounds arousing fondness cognizable by ear consciousness. Pleasant agreeable smells arousing fondness cognizable by nose consciousness. Pleasant agreeable tastes arousing fondness cognizable by tongue consciousness. Pleasant agreeable touches arousing fondness cognizable by body consciousness. Bhikkhus, these are the five strands of sensual pleasures. Bhikkhus, whoever recluse or brahmin was to partake these

five strands of sensual pleasures enslaved, swooned, guilty of an offence, not seeing the danger, and not wise about the escape should know we are in misfortune, have come to destruction and are in the power of death. Like the wild animals that partake of food bound, know we have come to destruction, are in danger, when the hunter comes we will be in his power. Whoever recluse or brahmin was to partake these five strands of sensual pleasures not enslaved, not swooned, not guilty of an offence, seeing the danger and wise about the escape, should know we are not in misfortune, have not come to destruction and are not in the power of death. Like the wild animals in the forest that partake of food unbound. They should know we do not come to destruction and are not in danger. When the hunter comes we will not be in his power. In the same manner those recluses or brahmins will not be in the power of death,

Like the wild animals wandering in the declivity would go with confidence, stand with confidence, sit with confidence and would lie with confidence. What is the reason. Bhikkhus, they are out of sight of the hunter. Bhikkhus, in the same manner, the bhikkhu secluded from sensual desires and evil thoughts with thoughts and thought processes and with joy and pleasantness born of seclusion abides in the first jhana. Bhikkhus, to this is said, the bhikkhu has blindfolded death. Having destroyed the feetless one has gone beyond the sight of death.

Again the bhikkhu, over coming, thoughts and thought processes, the mind internally settled and brought to one point, will be without thoughts and thought processes. With joy and pleasantness born of concentration he would attain to, abide in the second jhana.. Bhikkhus, to this is said, the bhikkhu has blindfolded death. Having destroyed the feetless one has gone beyond the sight of death.

Again the bhikkhu with equanimity to joy and detachment abides mindful and aware and also experiences pleasantness with the body and attained to abides in the third jhana. To this abiding the noble ones say, abiding mindfully in equanimity. Bhikkhus, to this is said, the bhikkhu has blindfolded death. Having destroyed the feetless one, has gone beyond the sight of death.

Again the bhikkhu, dispelling pleasantness and unpleasantness, and earlier having dispelled pleasure and displeasure, purifies mindfulness with equanimity. Without unpleasantness and pleasantness and mindfulness purified with equanimity he attained to, abides in the fourth jhana. Bhikkhus, to this is said, the bhikkhu has blindfolded death. Having destroyed the feetless one has gone beyond the sight of death.

Again the bhikkhu having overcome all perceptions of matter and perceptions of anger, not attending to various perceptions, with space is boundless, attained to, abides in the sphere of space. Bhikkhus, to this said, the bhikkhu has blindfolded death. Having destroyed the feetless one has gone beyond the sight of death. Having overcome all the sphere of space with consciousness is boundless attained to, abides in the sphere of consciousness. Bhikkhus, to this is said, the bhikkhu has blindfolded death. Having destroyed the feetless one has gone beyond the sight of death. Having overcome all the sphere of consciousness, with there is nothing abides in the sphere of no-thingness. Having overcome all the sphere of no-thingness attained to abides in the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. Overcoming all the sphere of neither-perception –nor-non-perception attains to the cessation of perceptions and feelings.. Seeing it with wisdom too desires get destroyed. Bhikkhus, to this is said, the bhikkhu has blindfolded death. Destroying the feetless one has gone beyond the sight of death. Crossing over to the beyond he goes with confidence, stands with confidence, sits with confidence and lies with confidence .What is the reason Has gone beyond the sight of death.

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

Notes

1. The not born, not decaying, not ailing, not dying, not grieving, not defiled end of the yoke which is extinction ‘ajaata.m, ajara.m, abhyadhi.m, amata.m, asokam, asankhilittha.m anuttara.m yogakhema.m nibbaana.m. It is by realising these things, that the fivefold bhikkhus attained extinction. It’s clear that it’s to one born that the rest comes, ie decay, ailments, death, grief, and

defiling . So it is the cause for birth that has to be dispensed. Isn't the desire to be this and that the reason for birth.

2 The populace fond of settling and attached to settling, does not see this difficult point that dependent arising is from this cause.'Aalayaraamaa kho panaaya,m pajaa aalayarataa aalayasammudita. Aalayaraamaaya kho pana pajaaya aalayarataaya aalayasammuditaaya duddasa.m ida.m .thaana.m yadida.m idappaccayataa pa.ticcasamuppaado. The Blessed One tells clearly that dependent arising is a result of our settling in various ways. The undoing of this settlement is dependent cessation. This is a mental settlement

.3 The appeasement of all determinations.'sabbasankhaarasamatho'Determinations are threefold, as bodily, verbal and mental. Bodily determinations are in-breaths and out breaths, as these are bound up with the body and always with the body, they are bodily determinations. Verbal determinations are thinking and pondering, It is always after thinking and pondering that one speaks. So thinking and pondering are verbal determinations. Perceptions and feelings are bound up with the mind and are mental determinations. To appease these the Blessed One recommends the jhaanas, in the order of rising, and it is after attaining to the highest attainment that one could experience cessation of perceptions and feelings.This if done with the right knowledge, the Blessed One says one could attain extinction.

4, Giving up of all endearments.'sabbuupadhipa.tinissaggo.' endearments are explained in this Sutta, and it is their relinquishing that has to be done.