

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

The Minor Discourse of the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint (Cuulahatthipadopamasutta)

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One lived in the monastery offered by Anaathapindika in Jeta's grove in Saavatthi. At that time the brahmin Jaanussoni was travelling in a chariot completely covered in white and seeing the brahmin Pilotika walking in the distance. asked him, from where is good Vacchaayana coming at this time of the day

Friend, I am now come from the presence of the Blessed One. What does good Vacchaayana think of the recluse Gotama's accomplishment of wisdom? Does he think he is wise? Who am I to know the wisdom of the recluse Gotama? It should be somebody like him to know the level of wisdom of the recluse Gotama. Indeed good Vacchaayana praises the recluse Gotama much Who am I to praise the recluse Gotama?. Out of the praiseworthy the recluse Gotama is one. He is chief among gods and men. Good Vacchaayana, seeing what good in the recluse Gotama praises him in this manner? Like a clever elephant hunter, who has entered an elephant grove, seeing the footprint of an elephant huge in length and breadth would come to the conclusion, indeed this is the foot print of a huge elephant. In the same manner I seeing these four characteristics in the recluse Gotama conclude. Indeed the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching of the Blessed One is well proclaimed and the Community of bhikkhus are well established: What four?

Friend, I see a certain wise warrior, a clever forceful disputer who could even split a hair, wandering about, thinking he is wise. Then he hears that the recluse Gotama had gone to a certain village or hamlet. Then they build up a question, approach the recluse Gotama and ask this question from him. Then he replies in this manner and by that they draw him for a dispute. Then he hears that the recluse Gotama has come to a certain village or hamlet so forming a question approaches the recluse Gotama. The recluse Gotama advises, instructs, makes the heart light and pleasant, He does not even ask the

question, so where is a dispute, they become all round disciples of the recluse Gotama. Seeing this first characteristic of the recluse Gotama I have come to the conclusion that the recluse Gotama is rightfully enlightened, the Blessed One's Teaching is well proclaimed and the community of bhikkhus have come to the right path.

Again, I see a certain wise brahmin a forceful clever disputer, who could even split a hair, wandering about, thinking he is wise. Then he hears that when the recluse Gotama had gone to a certain village or hamlet. they had built up a question, and approached the recluse Gotama, asked this question, when asked he had replied in this manner and they had drawn him to a dispute .Then he hears that the recluse Gotama has come to a certain village or hamlet and making up a question approaches the recluse Gotama. The recluse Gotama advises, instructs, makes the heart light and pleasant, he does not even ask the question, so where is a dispute, they become all round disciples of the recluse Gotama. Seeing this second characteristic of the recluse Gotama I have come to the conclusion that the recluse Gotama is rightfully enlightened. The Blessed One's Teaching is well proclaimed and the community of bhikkhus has come to the right path..

Again I see a certain wise householder, a clever forceful disputer who could even split a hair, wandering about, thinking he is wise. He hears that the recluse Gotama had gone to a certain village or hamlet. Then they made up a question, approached the recluse Gotama, asked this question, and he had replied in this manner had drawn him to a dispute thus. Then he hears that the recluse Gotama has come to a certain village or hamlet and making up a question approaches the recluse Gotama. The recluse Gotama advises, instructs, makes the heart light and pleasant. He does not even ask the question, so where is a dispute, they become all round disciples of the recluse Gotama. Seeing this third characteristic of the recluse Gotama I have come to the conclusion that the recluse Gotama is rightfully enlightened. The Blessed One's Teaching is well proclaimed and the community of bhikkhus have come to the right path..

Again, I see a certain wise recluse, a clever forceful disputer who could even split a hair, wandering about, thinking he is wise. Then he hears that when the recluse Gotama had gone to a certain village

or hamlet. they had made up a question, had approached the recluse Gotama and asked this question. He had replied in this manner and had drawn him to a dispute. Then he hears that the recluse Gotama has come to a certain village or hamlet and building up a question approaches the recluse Gotama. The recluse Gotama advises, instructs, makes the heart light and pleasant, he does not even ask the question, so where is a dispute, they become all round disciples of the recluse Gotama. They ask for the going forth, to leave the household and become homeless. Withdrawn from the crowd would abide diligent for dispelling. For whatever purpose sons of clansmen leave the household and become homeless, that highest end of the holy life they here and now realise, and abide. They say, our mind nearly perished, now it is happy. Earlier we were not recluses although we thought we were recluses. Earlier we were not brahmins, yet we thought we were recluses and brahmins. Not perfect, we acknowledged we were perfect. Now we are perfect. Seeing this fourth characteristic of the recluse Gotama I have come to the conclusion that the recluse Gotama is rightfully enlightened, the Blessed One's Teaching is well proclaimed and the community of bhikkhus has come to the right path..

When this was said, the brahmin Jaanussoni got down from his completely white chariot, arranged his shawl on one shoulder and clasping his hands towards where the Blessed One was repeated the words 'I worship that Blessed One perfect and rightfully enlightened ' three times. And said some day we will see good Gotama and have a conversation on this with him. Then the brahmin Jaanussoni approached the Blessed One, exchanged friendly greetings and sat on a side. Seated the brahmin Jaanussoni repeated the complete conversation between himself and the brahmin Pilotika. Then the Blessed One said brahmin, the simile of the elephant's footprint is not complete. I will explain it to you completely, listen and attend carefully.

Brahmin, like the elephant hunter gone to the elephant grove would see a footprint of an elephant huge in length and breadth. If he is clever he would not come to the conclusion, indeed this is the foot- print of a huge elephant. What is the reason: In the elephant grove there are she elephants by the name Vaamanikaa, they too have huge footprints like that. He ignores it and sees the footprint of an elephant huge by the length and breadth and placed at a high altitude. If he is a clever elephant

hunter, he would not come to the conclusion, indeed this is the foot print of a huge elephant. What is the reason? In the elephant grove there are she elephants by the name uccaakaalarikaa, Who also have huge footprints..Ignoring that, he sees the foot- print of an elephant huge by the length and breadth placed at a high altitude and also furrows made with the tusk at a high altitude. If he is clever, he would not come to the conclusion, indeed this is the footprint of a huge elephant: What is the reason?. In the elephant grove, there are she elephants, by the name uccaakanerukaa. They too have huge footprints. Ignoring that he sees the footprint of an elephant placed at a high altitude and also furrows made with the tusk at a high altitude, and branches broken from a high altitude and sees the elephant himself at the root of a tree, in the open, standing, sitting or lying. Then he comes to the conclusion indeed this is the huge elephant. In the same manner brahmin, the Thus Gone One arises in the world, perfect, rightfully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, well gone, knower of the worlds, the incomparable tamer of those to be tamed, Teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed. He declares to the world together with its Maaras, Brahmaas, the community of recluses and brahmins gods and men, that Teaching good at the beginning, in the middle and at the end full of meaning even in the letter, complete in every way stating the pure holy life. Hearing this a householder or a householder's son, born to some clan, gains faith in the Thus Gone One. With that faith he reflects. The life in a household is full of defilements, going forth is like open space. It is not easy for one living a household life to lead the holy life complete and pure without defilements. What if I shave head and beard, don yellow robes and go forth as a homeless. Later he gives up a little wealth, or much wealth, a small circle of friends, or a large circle of friends, shaving head and beard, and donning yellow robes goes forth as a homeless.

Gone forth he becomes a trainer in the life of a bhikkhu, gives up hurting living things, throwing away stick and weapon, ashamed and compassion aroused, abides with compassion for all beings. Abstaining from taking what is not given, desires the given, the self made pure without thieving he abides. .Abstaining from low sexual intercourse leads the holy life .Abstaining from telling lies becomes reliable and trustworthy and abides without a dispute with the world. Giving up slandering, hearing here does not say it elsewhere, to split these, hearing elsewhere does not say it here to split those, Thus he unites the split, promotes unity, fond of unity talks words to unite. Giving up rough talk, says pleasant words pleasing to the ears, .and words going straight to the heart of the populace

at large. Abstains from frivolous talk. Says appropriate words, that are truthful, meaningful, in accordance with the Teaching and Discipline, those words that could be treasured.

Abstains from destroying seed groups and vegetable groups. Partaking one meal a day, abstains from food at night and at untimely hours. Abstains from dance, singing, music, decorations, flowers and scents, ointments and adornments. Abstains from high and stately beds. Abstains from accepting gold and silver, uncooked rice and uncooked flesh,. Abstains from accepting women and girls, slaves, men or women, Abstains from accepting goats and cows, fowl and pigs, elephants, cattle, .horses and mares.

Abstains from accepting fields and wealth, and abstains from doing the work of a messenger. Abstains from buying and selling. Abstains from unfair ways of weighing and measuring. Abstains from cutting, severing, destroying, highway robbery, and wrong ways of obtaining morsel food.

Satisfied, covering the body with robes, and feeding the belly with morsel food, goes with all the belongings where ever he goes. Like the birds small and large that go with the weight of their wings. Likewise satisfied covering the body with robes and feeding the belly with morsel food, goes with all the belongings where ever he goes. Endowed with this mass of virtues, he experiences the pleasure of blamelessness internally. Seeing a form with the eye, does not take the sign or the elements .To him that abides with the mental faculty of the eye uncontrolled, may trickle demeritorious things of covetousness and displeasure, he abides protecting the mental faculty of the eye..Hearing a sound with the ear,- Cognizing a smell with the nose- tasting a taste with the tongue,- Cognizing a touch with the body- Cognizing an idea with the mind, does not take the sign or the element. To him that abides with the mental faculty of the mind uncontrolled, may trickle demeritorious things of covetousness and displeasure, he abides protecting the mental faculty of the mind. Endowed with the noble ones' control of the mental faculties, he experiences the untouched pleasure of the mental faculties (1). Coming forward and returning is aware, looking on and looking aside is aware, bending and stretching is aware, bearing bowl and the three robes is aware, tasting,

drinking, eating and enjoying is aware, going, standing, sitting, lying, awake, and keeping silence is aware.

Endowed with this mass of virtues, with this control of the mental faculties of the noble ones, with the mindful awareness of the noble ones abides in a secluded dwelling, a forest, the root of a tree, a mountain grotto or cave, a charnel ground, a jungle forest, an open space, or a heap straw.. Returning from the alms round and after the meal is over, sits in a cross legged position, the body placed straight and mindfulness established in front.

Dispelling covetousness for the world he abides, cleaning the mind of covetousness .Dispelling anger he abides cleaning the mind of anger, compassionate for all born lives. Dispelling sloth and torpor he abides, mindful and aware of a perception of light, mindfully cleaning sloth and torpor from the mind. Dispelling restlessness and worry he abides with a mind internally appeased and cleans the mind of restlessness and worry. Abides with doubts dispelled without doubts of meritorious things that should be done

The bhikkhu having dispelled the five hindrances of the mind, making the minor defilements weak through wisdom, away from sensual thoughts and away from demeritorious things, with thoughts and thought processes and with joy and pleasantness born of seclusion attained to abides in the first jhaana. Brahmin, to this is called the footprint of the Thus Gone One, the dwelling of the Thus Gone One, the delight of the Thus Gone One. The noble disciple does not conclude .yet, that the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching of the Blessed One is well proclaimed, the Community of bhikkhus have gone the right path. Again brahmin, the bhikkhu overcoming thoughts and thought processes, the mind internally appeased, brought to a single point, without thoughts and thought processes and with joy and pleasantness born of concentration attained to abides in the second jhaana. To this is called the footprint of the Thus Gone One, the dwelling of the Thus Gone One, the delight of the Thus Gone One. The noble disciple does not conclude yet that the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching of the Blessed One is well proclaimed, the Community of bhikkhus have gone the right path. Again, brahmin, the bhikkhu with equanimity to joy and

detachment abides mindful and aware, and experiencing pleasantness with the body attained to abides in the third jhaana. To this the noble ones say abiding in pleasantness mindful of equanimity. This is called the footprint of the Thus Gone One, the dwelling of the Thus gone One, the delight of the Thus Gone One. The noble disciple does not conclude yet that the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching of the Blessed One is well proclaimed, the community of bhikkhus have gone the right path. Again, brahmin, the bhikkhu dispelling pleasantness and unpleasantness and earlier having dispelled pleasure and displeasure, without unpleasantness and pleasantness, and mindfulness purified with equanimity attained to abides in the fourth jhaana. Brahmin. This also, is called the footprint of the Thus Gone One, the dwelling of the Thus Gone One, the delight of the Thus Gone One. The noble disciple does not conclude yet that the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching of the Blessed One is well proclaimed, the community of bhikkhus has gone the right path.

When the mind is concentrated, pure, free from minor defilements, is malleable workable not disturbed, he directs the mind for the knowledge of previous births. Recollects the manifold previous births, one birth, two births, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, innumerable forward cycles of births, innumerable backward cycles of births, innumerable forward and backward cycles of births. There, I was of such name, clan, disposition, supports, experiencing such pleasant and unpleasant feelings and with such a life span. Disappearing from there was born there with such name, clan, disposition, supports, experiencing such pleasant and unpleasant feelings, with such a life span, disappearing from there, is born here. Thus with all modes and all details manifold previous births are recollected. Brahmin, this too is called the footprint of the Thus Gone One, the dwelling of the Thus Gone One, the delight of the Thus Gone One. The noble disciple does not conclude yet, the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching of the Blessed One is well proclaimed, the Community of bhikkhus has gone the right path.

When the mind is concentrated, pure, free from minor defilements malleable workable not disturbed, he directs the mind for the knowledge of the disappearing and appearing of beings. With the

heavenly eye purified beyond human, he sees beings disappearing and appearing unexalted and exalted, beautiful and ugly. Saw them arising in good and bad states according to their actions: These good beings misbehaving by body, speech and mind, blaming noble ones, with the wrong view of actions, after death are born in loss, in decrease, in hell. As for these good beings, well behaved in body speech and mind , not blaming noble ones, with the right view of actions after death are born in heaven. Thus with the heavenly eye purified beyond human he sees beings disappearing and appearing. Brahmin, this too is called the footprint of the Thus Gone One, the dwelling of the Thus Gone One, the delight of the Thus Gone One. The noble disciple does not conclude yet, that the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened. The Teaching of the Blessed One is well proclaimed, the Community of bhikkhus has gone the right path.

When the mind is concentrated, pure, free from minor defilements, is malleable workable not disturbed, he directs the mind for the destruction of desires. Knows, this is unpleasant, this is the arising of unpleasantness, this is the cessation of unpleasantness, this is the path to the cessation of unpleasantness, as it really is. Knows these are desires, these are the arising of desires, these are the cessation of desires, and this is the path, to the cessation of desires as it really is. Brahmin, this too is called the footprint of the Thus Gone One, the home of the Thus Gone One, the delight of the Thus Gone One. The noble disciple at this point concludes, the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened. The Teaching of the Blessed One is well proclaimed, the Community of bhikkhus have gone the right path. When he knows this and sees this, his mind is released from sensual desires. It's released from the desires to be, and from desires of ignorance (2) When released knows, am released, knowledge arose, birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived to the end. What should be done is done, there is nothing more to wish. Brahmin, this too is called the footprint of the Thus Gone One, the home of the Thus Gone One, the delight of the Thus Gone One. The noble disciple at this point concludes, the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching of the Blessed One is well proclaimed, the Community of bhikkhus have gone the right path..Brahmin, in this manner, the simile of the footprint of the Blessed One is complete.

Then the brahmin Jaanussoni said, good Gotama, now I know, it is like something overturned is reinstalled, something covered is made manifest, it is as the path is told to one who has lost his way, as an oil lamp was lighted for those who have eyes to see forms. Thus good Gotama has explained the Teaching in various ways. Now I take refuge in good Gotama, in the Teaching and the Community of bhikkhus. May I be remembered as a lay disciple from today until life lasts.

Notes.

1. Experiences the untouched pleasure of the mental faculties ‘ ajjhattam abyaasekasukha.m pa.tisa.m vedeti’ A person who controls the mental faculties aims to experience this pleasure, with much pressure, that is his mind should not change on account of any data that come through the six spheres of mental contact. When the bhikkhu becomes an ‘arahant ‘ a perfected one this becomes a constant pleasure to him. Whatever the circumstance may be his mind does not change on account of a contact at one or the other door of the mental faculties.

2. Is released from the desires of ignorance.’avijjaasavaapi citta.m vimuccati‘ The desires of ignorance always come through the six spheres of contact. Whatever data we collect through seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touch of the body, and cognizing ideas, we take that data as agreeable, pleasant, and mine, and this is called ignorance.

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