

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

The Minor Discourse on the Cowherd (Cuulagopaalakasutta)

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One lived in the country of the Vajjis, in Ukkaacela on the bank of river Ganges. From there the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus.

Bhikkhus, in the past, there was a foolish cowherd, in Magadha. At the end of the rains, in Autumn he did not reflect the hither bank, nor the thither bank and even without a ford made his herd cross the river to go to the other bank. That herd in the middle of the river got caught in a whirlpool of the stream and came to destruction. What is the reason: As the foolish cowherd of Magadha at the end of the rains, in Autumn without reflecting the hither bank or the thither bank and without a ford would make his herd cross to the other bank of river Ganges. Likewise if someone listens and takes faith in such recluses and brahmins, not clever of this world, or the other world, not clever about the domain of death, or the domain of non-death, not clever about the sphere of death, or the sphere of non-death, it would be for their undoing and unpleasantness for a long time.*1).

Bhikkhus, in the past, there was a wise cowherd, in Magadha. At the end of the rainy months in Autumn reflecting the hither bank and the thither bank, and from a ford he made his herd cross river Ganges to the other bank. First he sent the bulls, the leaders of the herd, the forefathers of the herd, they cut the stream of the Ganges and safely reached the other bank. Then he sent the powerful, tamed bulls, they too cut the stream of the Ganges and safely reached the other bank. Then he sent the young bulls and cows, they too cut the stream of the Ganges and safely reached the other bank. Then he sent the young calves and weaklings, they too cut the stream of the Ganges and safely reached the other bank. It happened that even the young ones, those recently born, that had to follow the calling of the mother, cut the stream of the Ganges and safely reached the other bank. Bhikkhus, the wise cowherd of Magadha, at the end of the Autumn rains, reflecting the hither bank and the

thither bank, and from a ford made his herd cross to the other bank of river Ganges. Likewise if someone, listens and takes faith in such recluses and brahmins, clever in this world, clever in the other world, clever about the domains of death, clever about the domains of non-death, clever about the sphere of death and clever about the sphere of non-death, it would be for their well being for a long time.(*1)

Bhikkhus, the bulls, the leaders the forefathers of the herd would cut the stream of the Ganges and safely reach the other bank. Likewise the perfected bhikkhus, with desires destroyed, the holy life lived, done what should be done, put the weight down, come to the highest good, and destroyed the bindings 'to be' and released knowing rightfully, they too have cut the stream of death and have safely reached the other bank.. The powerful and tamed bulls, cut the stream of the Ganges and safely reached the other bank. Likewise the bhikkhus, who have destroyed the five bindings to the sensual world, born spontaneously,(*2) would not proceed from there, would extinguish in that same birth. They would not fall from there, cutting the stream of death would safely reach the other shore. The young bulls and cows, would cut the stream of the Ganges, and safely reach the other bank Likewise the bhikkhus, who have destroyed the three lower fetters and lessened greed hate and delusion, would come once more to this world, to make an end of unpleasantness. They too have cut the stream of death and have safely reached the other shore. The young calves and weaklings, too cut the stream of the Ganges and safely reached the other bank. Likewise the bhikkhus who have destroyed the three lower bonds enter the stream of the Teaching, not falling from there, are intent on extinction. They too have cut the stream of death and have safely reached the other shore. The young ones, born recently, and had to follow the calling of the mother, they too cut the stream of the Ganges and safely reached the other bank. Likewise those abiding in the Teaching through faith too cut the stream of death and safely reach the other shore. Bhikkhus, as for me I am clever in this world, clever in the other world, clever in the domain of death, clever in the domain of non-death, clever in the sphere of death and clever in the sphere of non-death. Bhikkhus, it will be for their well fare and good for a long time that some will think to listen and take faith in me. Then the Blessed One further said thus:

The one who knows has declared this world and the other world,
What could be attained by death and what could not be attained by death.
The rightfully enlightened one has realised the whole world,
The door is open to deathlessness, to attain appeasement and extinction
The Evil One's stream is cut, destroyed and made useless
Bhikkhus, you that have attained appeasement and highest good rejoice!

Notes.

1. If someone will think to listen and take faith in such recluses and brahmins not clever of this world, not clever of the other world, not clever of the domains of death, not clever of the domains of non-death, not clever of the sphere of death, not clever of the sphere of non-death, it would be for their undoing and unpleasantness for a long time.'ye hi keci samanaa vaa braahamanaa vaa akusalaa imassa lokassa akusalaa parassa lokassa akusalaa Maaradheyyassa akusalaa aMaaradeyyassa akusalaa Maccudheyyassa akusalaa aMaccudheyyassa, tesa.m ye sotabba.m saddahaatabba.m ma~n~nissanti tesa.m ta,m bhavissati diigharatta.m ahitaaya dukkhaaya.'

To be clever of this world is the ability to show, how one could lead an accomplished life in this world to lead a righteous life, to have a right livelihood and to be doing right actions. Clever of the other world the Blessed One shows that there is another world, another birth, and instructs to avoid misbehaviour by body, speech and mind, in expectation of avoiding a hellish birth in the future. Clever of the domains of death, the Blessed One shows the domains of death as the lurings of sensuality, and the lurings to the material world, as these are subject to death. The domain of non-death, the Blessed One shows a domain where one could overcome death. [For further reading M.1.26 Ariyapariyesanasutta.m] It is the attainment of extinction. Clever of the sphere of death., all attainments that do not group with the attainments of the eight noble beings are the sphere of death. How ever high those attainments may be, there is ultimate death for them, even Sakka and Brahmaa.comes under the sway of death. The sphere of non- death, The Blessed One shows the

sphere of the Thus Gone Ones, and the sphere of the noble disciples of the Thus Gone One as the sphere of non-death.

2. Beings born spontaneously 'opapaatika' Even in this very life one could become an enterer to the stream of the Teaching, one would not find any outward evidence, that kind of change in the mind is called a spontaneous birth.

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