

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

To Vacchagotta –The simile of the fire (Aggi-vacchagotta Sutta)

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anathapindika in Jeta's grove in Savatthi. Then the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta approached the Blessed One exchanged friendly greetings, sat on a side and said to the Blessed One.

'Good Gotama, the world is eternal this only is the truth and all else is false. Does good Gotama hold this view?' 'No, Vaccha, I'm not of that view, the world is eternal, this only is the truth all else is false'. 'Good Gotama, the world is not eternal, this only is the truth and all else is false Does good Gotama hold this view?' 'No, Vaccha, I'm not of that view, the world is not eternal, this only is the truth all else is false'. 'Good Gotama, the world is limited, this only is the truth and all else is false. Does good Gotama hold this view?' 'No, Vaccha, I'm not of that view, the world is limited, this only is the truth all else is false.' 'Good Gotama, the world is not-limited, this only is the truth and all else is false. Does good Gotama hold this view?' 'No, Vaccha, I'm not of that view, the world is not limited, this only is the truth all else is false'. 'Good Gotama, the soul is the body, this only is the truth and all else is false. Does good Gotama hold this view?' 'No, Vaccha, I'm not of that view, the soul is the body, this only is the truth all else is false.' 'Good Gotama, the soul is different from the body, this only is the truth and all else is false. Does good Gotama hold this view?' 'No, Vaccha, I'm not of that view, the soul is different from the body, this only is the truth all else is false.' 'Good Gotama, the Thus Gone One is after death- this only is the truth all else is false. Does good Gotama hold this view?' 'No, Vaccha, I'm not of that view, the Thus Gone One is after death, this only is the truth all else is false.' 'Good Gotama, the Thus Gone One is not after death, this only is the truth and all else is false. Does good Gotama hold this view?' 'No, Vaccha, I'm not of that view, the Thus Gone One is not after death, this only is the truth all else is false.' 'Good Gotama, the Thus Gone One is, and is not, after death, this only is the truth, all else is false. Does good Gotama hold this

view.’ ‘No, Vaccha, I’m not of that view, the Thus Gone One is, and is not after death, this only is the truth all else is false.’ ‘Good Gotama, the Thus Gone One neither is, nor is not after death, this only is the truth and all else is false. Does good Gotama hold this view?’ ‘No, Vaccha, I’m not of that view, the Thus Gone One neither is, nor is not after death, this only is the truth all else is false.’

‘Good Gotama, when asked, is good Gotama of the view, the world is eternal, this only is the truth, all else is false, it was said you were not of that view. When asked, is good Gotama of the view, the world is not eternal, this only is the truth, all else is false, it was said, you were not of that view. When asked, is good Gotama of the view, the world is limited, this only is the truth, all else is false, it was said you were not of that view. When asked, is good Gotama of the view, the world is not limited, this only is the truth, all else is false, it was said you were not of that view. When asked, is good Gotama of the view, the Thus Gone One is and is not after death, this only is the truth, all else is false, it was said you were not of that view. When asked, is good Gotama of the view, the Thus Gone One neither is, nor is not after death, this only is the truth, all else is false, it was said you were not of that view. Good Gotama, seeing what danger has thrown out all these views?’

‘Vaccha, the view, the world is eternal, is a bond of views, is a speculation in views, it is with unpleasantness, with trouble, with burning, not leading to giving up, to detachment, to appeasement, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to cessation and to extinction. The view the world is not eternal,--re - The world is limited,-re- the world is not limited ..re..the soul is the body..re..the soul is different from the body, ..re.. the Thus Gone One is, after death, ..re..the Thus Gone One is not, after death,-re -the Thus Gone One is and is not after death...re.. the Thus Gone One neither is, nor is not after death is a bond of views, is a speculation in views, it is with unpleasantness, with trouble, with burning, not leading to giving up, to detachment, to appeasement, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to cessation and to extinction.Vaccha, seeing these dangers I have thrown out all these views.’. ‘Does good Gotama hold any other view?’

‘Vaccha, The Thus Gone One has overcome views. This is the view of the Thus Gone One. This is matter, this is the arising of matter, and this is the fading of matter. This is feeling, this is the arising

of feelings and this is the fading of feelings. This is perception, this is the arising of perceptions and this is the fading of perceptions. These are determinations, this is the arising of determinations and this, the fading of determinations. This is consciousness, this is the arising of consciousness and this is fading of consciousness. Therefore, I say the Thus Gone One has destroyed, is detached, has given up and is released, from all imaginings, recollections, and all latent tendencies of me and mine.'

'Good Gotama, where is the thus released mind born?' 'Vaccha, is born does not apply.' 'Then good Gotama, is he not born?' 'Vaccha, is not born does not apply.' 'Gotama, is he born and not born?' 'Vaccha, is born and is not born does not apply.' 'Then Gotama, is he neither born, nor not born?' 'Vaccha, is neither born, nor is not born, is not applicable..'

'When asked where is the thus released mind born, it was said, is born does not apply. When asked is it not born, it was said not born does not apply. When asked is it born and not born, it was said, born and not born does not apply. When asked, is it neither born, nor is not born, it was said neither born nor not born, does not apply. Good Gotama, in this I am completely ignorant and deluded. Whatever little understanding I had with the earlier conversation, has now vanished.'

'Vaccha, your ignorance and delusion is nothing strange. This is deep, difficult to understand peaceful and exalted, not for logical thinking. Is clever and should be experienced by the wise. By one of another sect like you, with some other liking, without being yoked in it and living in it, it cannot be understood. So then Vaccha, I will question you, on this and you may reply as it pleases you. There is a fire burning in front of you, would you know, there is a fire burning in front of me?' 'Good Gotama, if a fire burns in front of me, I would know, there's a fire burning in front of me.' 'Vaccha, if you were asked, this fire burning in front of you, on account of what is it burning, how would you reply?' 'Good Gotama, if I was asked, this fire burning in front of you, on account of what is it burning, I would reply, this fire burning in front of me is burning on account of grass and sticks.' 'Vaccha, if the fire in front of you extinguishes, would you know, this fire in front of me has extinguished?' 'Good Gotama, if the fire in front of me extinguishes, I would know, this fire has extinguished.' 'Vaccha, if you were asked, this fire that has extinguished in which direction did it go,

to the east, west, north or south?’ ‘Good, Gotama, it does not apply. That fire burnt on account of grass and sticks, those supports finished, no other supports were supplied, without supports the fire, went out.’.

‘Vaccha, in that same manner, the matter with which the Thus Gone One is pointed out, is dispelled, uprooted, made a palm stump, made a thing not to grow again: Vaccha, the Thus Gone One is released from the reckonings of matter. It is deep, difficult to fathom, like the great ocean. Is born, does not apply, is not born does not apply. Is born and is not born does not apply, neither is born, nor is not born does not apply. The feelings, with which the Thus Gone One is pointed, are dispelled, uprooted, made palm stumps made things not to grow again: Vaccha, the Thus Gone One is released from the reckonings of feelings. It is deep, difficult to fathom, like the great ocean. Is born does not apply, is not born does not apply. Is born and is not born does not apply. Neither is born nor is not born does not apply. The perceptions, with which the Thus Gone One is pointed are dispelled, uprooted, made palm stumps, made things not to grow again. Vaccha, the Thus Gone One is released from the reckonings of perceptions. It is deep, difficult to fathom, like the great ocean. Is born does not apply, is not born does not apply, is born and is not born does not apply. Neither is born nor is not born does not apply. The determinations with which the Thus Gone One is pointed out, are dispelled, uprooted, made palm stumps, made things not to grow again: Vaccha, the Thus Gone One is released from the reckonings of determinations. It is deep, difficult to fathom like the great ocean. Is born does not apply, is not born does not apply Is born and is not born does not apply. Neither is born nor is not born does not apply. The consciousness with which the Thus Gone One is pointed out, is dispelled, uprooted, made a palm stump, made a thing not to grow again. Vaccha, the Thus Gone One is released from the reckonings of consciousness. It is deep, difficult to fathom like the great ocean. Is born does not apply, is not born does not apply. Is born and is not born does not apply. Neither is born nor is not born does not apply.’

When this was said the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta said thus to the Blessed One, close to the village or hamlet, there is a huge Sala tree, because of impermanence, its leaves, branches, bark, shoots and sapwood fall off and is left with only the heartwood. In the same manner, on account of

the words of good Gotama, with myleaves and branches pulled out, shoots pulled out, the bark removed, the sap removed, I stand as the pure heartwood. I understand good Gotama, it is as though something over turned is reinstalled, something covered is made manifest. As though the path is shown to someone who had lost his way. As though an oil lamp is lighted, for those who have sight to see forms in the dark. Now, I take refuge in good Gotama, in the Teaching, in the Community of bhikkhus. May the Blessed One bear me as a lay disciple who has taken refuge from today until life lasts.

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