

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

The Major Discourse to Vacchagotta (Maha Vacchagotta Sutta)

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One was living in the squirrels' sanctuary in the bamboo grove in Rajagaha. Then the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta approached the Blessed One, exchanged friendly greetings and sat on a side and said, to the Blessed One. 'It's a long time since, we could have a conversation with good Gotama. We like to know merit and demerit in short.' 'Vaccha, I will tell you merit and demerit in short and in detail as well. Now listen to it in short, I will tell you'. The wandering ascetic Vacchagotta agreed and the Blessed One said thus:

'Vaccha, greed is demerit, non-greed is merit. Anger is demerit and non-anger is merit. Delusion is demerit and non-delusion is merit. Vaccha these three are demerit, and the other three are merit. Vaccha, destroying life is demerit, abstaining from destroying life is merit. Taking what is not given is demerit, abstaining from taking what is not given is merit. Misbehaviour in sexuality is demerit, abstaining from misbehaviour in sexuality is merit. Telling lies is demerit, abstaining from telling lies is merit. Slandering is demerit, abstaining from slandering is merit. Rough talk is demerit, abstaining from rough talk is merit. Frivolous talk is demerit and abstaining from frivolous talk is merit. Coveting is demerit, abstaining from coveting is merit. Bearing an angry mind is demerit and a not angry mind is merit. Wrong view is demerit and right view is merit. Vaccha, these ten are demerit and the other ten are merit. Vaccha, when the bhikkhu, dispels craving pulls it out with the roots, makes it a palm stump, and makes it a thing that does not grow again, that bhikkhu is perfect..He is with desires destroyed, the holy life lived, done what should be done, the weight put down He has come to the highest good, with the bond 'to be' destroyed He rightfully knowing, is released.'

‘Good, Gotama, wait! Is there a single bhikkhu a disciple of Gotama, who has destroyed desires, has released the mind from desires and released through wisdom, abiding, here and now?’ ‘Vaccha, not one, not one hundred, not two hundred, not three hundred, not four hundred, not five hundred. There are many more bhikkhus, disciples of mine, who have destroyed desires, the mind released from desires and released through wisdom, here and now abiding.’ ‘Good, Gotama, wait! Let alone bhikkhus. Is there a single bhikkhuni a disciple of Gotama, who has destroyed desires has released the mind from desires and released through wisdom, here and now, have realised?’ ‘Vaccha, not one, not one hundred, not two hundred, not three hundred, not four hundred, not five hundred. There are many, more bhikkhunis, disciples of mine, who have destroyed desires, the mind released from desires and released through wisdom, here and now realising abide’. ‘Good, Gotama, wait! Other than bhikkhus, and bhikkhunis. Is there a single lay disciple of Gotama, who wearing white clothes had led the holy life, has destroyed the five lower bonds to the sensual world, and is born spontaneously, not to proceed?’ ‘Vaccha, not one, not one hundred, not two hundred, not three hundred, not four hundred, not five hundred. There are many more lay disciples of mine, who have destroyed the five lower bonds to the sensual world, and born spontaneously would not proceed.’ ‘Good, Gotama, wait! Other than bhikkhus, bhikkhunis and lay disciples of Gotama, who wear white clothes and lead the holy life. Is there a single a lay disciple, who wears white clothes, leads the holy life, while partaking sensual pleasures, and doing the work in the dispensation has dispelled doubts. Has become confident of what should and should not be done, and does not need a teacher any more in the dispensation of the Teacher. Vaccha, not one, not one hundred, not two hundred, not three hundred, not four hundred, not five hundred. There are many more lay disciples of mine, wearing white clothes leading the holy life, while partaking sensual pleasures and doing the work in the dispensation have dispelled doubts Have become confident of what should and should not be done and do not need a teacher any more.’ ‘Good, Gotama, wait! Other than the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, the lay disciples who have arisen spontaneously and will not proceed, and the ones who have entered the stream of the Teaching and are confident, is there a single female lay disciple of good Gotama. Who wears white clothes leads the holy life has destroyed the five lower bonds to the sensual world, and is born spontaneously not to proceed’ ‘Vaccha, not one, not one hundred, not two hundred, not three hundred, not four hundred, not five hundred. There are many more female lay disciples of mine, who have destroyed the five lower bonds to the sensual world, and are born spontaneously

not to proceed.’ ‘Good, Gotama, wait! Other than the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, lay disciples arisen spontaneously who would not proceed and the ones who have entered the stream of the Teaching and are confident and the lay female disciples who have arisen spontaneously not to proceed is there is a single female lay disciple. Who wears white clothes leads the holy life, while partaking sensual pleasures, and doing the work in the dispensation has dispelled doubts, has become confident, of what should and should not be done and does not need a teacher any more.’ ‘Vaccha, not one, not one hundred, not two hundred, not three hundred, not four hundred, not five hundred. There are many more female lay disciples of mine wearing white clothes lead the holy life, while partaking sensual pleasures, doing the work in the dispensation have dispelled doubts. Have become confident of what should and should not be done. They do not need a teacher any more in the dispensation of the Teacher.

Good Gotama, if in this Dispensation good Gotama only was perfect and not the bhikkhus, by that factor this holy life is incomplete. Since good Gotama, as well the bhikkhus are perfected, this holy life is complete. If in this Dispensation good Gotama and the bhikkhus only were perfected and not the bhikkhunis by that this holy life is incomplete. Since good Gotama, the bhikkhus and the bhikkhunis are perfected, this holy life is complete. If in this Teaching good Gotama, the bhikkhus and the bhikkhunis were perfected and not the lay disciples who wear white clothes and lead the holy life by that, this holy life is incomplete. Since good Gotama, the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis and the lay disciples, who wear white clothes are also perfected, this holy life is complete. If in this Dispensation good Gotama, the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis and the lay disciples who wear white clothes and lead the holy life were perfected and not the lay disciples who wear white clothes and partake sensual pleasures by that, this holy life is incomplete. Since good Gotama, the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis and the lay disciples who wear white clothes and lead the holy life and also the lay disciples who wear white clothes and partake sensual pleasures are also perfected, this holy life is complete. If in this Teaching good Gotama, the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, the lay disciples who wear white clothes and lead the holy life and the lay disciples who wear white clothes and partake sensual pleasures, were perfected and not the lay disciples female who wear white clothes and lead the holy life by that factor this holy life is incomplete. Since good Gotama, the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, lay disciples who wear white clothes and lead the holy life, lay disciple who wear white clothes and partake sensual

pleasures and also the lay disciple female who wear white clothes and lead the holy life are also perfected, this holy life is complete. If in this Teaching good Gotama, the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, lay disciples who wear white clothes and lead the holy life, and lay disciples who wear white clothes and partake sensual pleasures and the lay disciples female who wear white clothes and lead the holy life, and not the lay disciples who wear white clothes and partake sensual pleasures by that this holy life is incomplete. Since good Gotama, the bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, lay disciples who wear white clothes and lead the holy life, lay disciple who wear white clothes and partake sensual pleasures and lay disciple female who wear white clothes and lead the holy life, and also lay disciples female who partake sensual pleasures are perfected, this holy life is complete.

‘Good Gotama, like the Ganges, which bends towards the ocean, and flows straight into the ocean, likewise the gathering of good Gotama, those gone forth together with the householders are bent towards and stand close to extinction. Good Gotama, now I understand. It’s like something overturned is reinstalled. As something covered is made manifest. As the path is told to someone who had lost his way. As though an oil lamp was lighted for the darkness, for those who have sight to see forms. Good Gotama, the Teaching is explained in various ways. Now I take refuge in good Gotama, in the Teaching and the Community of bhikkhus. May I gain the going forth and the higher ordination in the dispensation of good Gotama.’ Vaccha, one of another sect desiring the going forth and the higher ordination in this dispensation, should wait four months, as a period of probation. At the end of which time the bhikkhus pleased would give him the going forth and the higher ordination. It is to test the personal differences’. ‘Venerable sir, if one of another sect desiring the going forth and the higher ordination have to wait four months, on probation. I will be on probation for four years. When, the bhikkhus are pleased may they give me the going forth and the higher ordination. The wandering ascetic Vacchagotta received the going forth and the higher ordination.

Two weeks after venerable Vacchagotta received the higher ordination, he approached the Blessed One, worshipped, sat on a side and said to the Blessed One. ‘Venerable sir, I have gained the knowledge of a trainer. May the Blessed One instruct me further.’ ‘Then Vaccha, you should develop

two things further. Develop calm and insight. Vaccha, when calm and insight is developed, it conduces to experiencing the various elements..

Vaccha, when you desire, experience the various super-normal powers. One, becoming many and many becoming one. Go unobstructed through walls, embankments and mountains, as going through air. Dive, in and come out of earth as in water. Walk, unbroken on water, as on earth. Sit with legs crossed, in space, as birds small and large do. Touch the moon and sun, as powerful as they are. Wield power with the body as far as the world of brahma. That will be the eye-witness for the development of that and other mental faculty.

Vaccha, when you desire, with the heavenly ear element purified beyond human, hear the various sounds, heavenly and human, far or near, to you that mindfulness becomes the eye-witness in that mental faculty..

Vaccha, if you desire, penetrate and know the mental states of others. Know, the mind with greed and without greed, the angry mind and the not angry mind. the deluded mind and the non-deluded mind, the attentive mind and the distracted mind, the developed mind and the undeveloped mind, the mind with a compare and the mind without a compare, the concentrated mind, and the unconcentrated mind, the released mind, and the unreleased mind. To you that mindfulness becomes the eye-witness in that mental faculty.

Vaccha, if you desire, recollect the various manifold previous births. Such as one birth, two births, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, an innumerable forward cycle of births, an innumerable backward cycle of births and an innumerable forward and backward cycle of births. There I was of such name, clan, disposition, supports and experiencing these pleasant and unpleasant feelings and with such a life span. Disappearing from there was born here, with such name, clan, disposition, supports and experiencing, these pleasant and unpleasant feelings. With such a life span.. Disappearing from there

is born here. Thus recollect the various manifold previous births that mindfulness, is the eye witness, in that mental faculty.

Vaccha, if you so desire with the heavenly eye element purified beyond human, see beings disappearing and appearing unexalted and exalted, beautiful and ugly, in good and bad states. Know beings according their actions. These good beings, misbehaving by body, speech and mind, blaming noble ones, with wrong view and with the wrong view of actions, after death go to loss, go to decrease and are born in hell. These good beings, with right conduct by body, speech and mind, not blaming noble ones, with right view and with the right view of actions, after death go to increase and are born in heaven. Thus with the heavenly eye element purified beyond human see beings disappearing and appearing according their actions, and that mindfulness becomes the eye-witness to you in that mental faculty.

Vaccha, if you so desire, with the destruction of desires, release the mind of desires, and be released through wisdom, realising it here and now. That mindfulness becomes eye witness, in that mental faculty.

Then venerable Vacchagotta, delighted with the words of the Blessed One, got up from his seat, worshipped and circumambulated the Blessed One and went away. Venerable Vacchagotta secluded and withdrawn from the crowd abode diligent for dispelling. For whatever reason sons of clansmen leave the household rightfully and go forth as a homeless that incomparable end of the holy life he, here and now realised and abode. He knew, birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, what should be done is done, there is nothing more to wish. Venerable Vacchagotta became one of the perfect ones..

At that time many bhikkhus were going to see the Blessed One, and venerable Vacchagotta saw those bhikkhus in the distance, approached them and said to them: ‘Venerable ones, where are you going now?’. ‘Friend, we are going to see the Blessed One’. ‘If that is so, worship the feet of the Blessed One for me and tell – ‘Venerable sir, the bhikkhu Vacchagotta worships the feet of the

Blessed One and says, I'm a perfect one'. The bhikkhus agreed, approached the Blessed One, worshipped, sat on side and said. 'Venerable sir, venerable Vacchagotta says he worships the feet of the Blessed One and says that he is perfected' 'Bhikkhus, even before, I knew that venerable Vacchagotta is perfect, I knew it by penetrating his mind. Bhikkhus, he is very powerful, knows the three knowledges. Even the gods informed me about this'.

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

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