

## Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

### Advice to the Wandering Ascetic Vekhanassa (Vekhanassasutta)

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 Vekhanassa approached the Blessed One, exchanged friendly greetings and stood on a side and uttered a solemn utterance. 'This is the most excellent appearance.'

'Kaccayana, why do you say, this is the most excellent appearance? What is that most excellent appearance?'

'Good Gotama, when there is no other appearance more noble and exalted than that, it is the most excellent appearance.'

'Kaccayana, how is that appearance, which has no other appearance more noble and exalted than that.'

'Good Gotama, when there is no other appearance more noble and exalted than that, it is the most excellent appearance.'

'Kaccayana, does it extend lengthwise?'

'Good Gotama, as there is no other appearance more noble and exalted than that, it is said to be the highest appearance, and it cannot be pointed out.'

‘Kaccaayana, it is like this. There is a man who says, I desire and love the most beautiful woman in this state: Then he is asked Good man, the most beautiful woman you desire, is she of warrior clan, brahmin clan, householder clan or from an out caste clan? When asked, he would say No. Then he is asked. Good man, the most beautiful woman you desire and love, do you know, of what clan she is. do you know whether she is tall, short or medium. Do you know whether she is dark, fair or brown? Do you know in which village, hamlet or town she lives? When asked he says, No. Then he is told, good man, do you desire and love someone whom you do not know and have not seen? Then he would say, yes. ‘What do you think Kaccaayana. Doesn’t this talk turn out to be stupid talk?’

‘Good Gotama, when that is so, that man’s talk turns out to be stupid talk.’

‘In the same manner Kaccaayana, you say, good Gotama, when there is no other appearance more noble and exalted than that, it is the most excellent appearance, and that appearance you do not point out.’

‘Good Gotama, it is like a lapis gem of good birth, with eight facets, well completed and when placed in the orange coloured blanket, shines, emits heat and illuminates. The self would be of that appearance, healthy after death.’

‘Kaccayana, what do you think, of these two, the lapis gem of good birth, with eight facets, well completed and placed in the orange coloured blanket, and the worms and fire flies in the darkness of the night, which give the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances the more excellent appearance would be the worms and fire flies in the darkness of the night.’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, the worms and fire flies in the darkness of the night and a lighted oil lamp, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances, the more excellent appearance would be the lighted oil lamp.’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, the lighted oil lamp for the darkness of the night, and a large mass of fire, for the darkness of the night, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances, the more excellent appearance would be a large mass of fire for the darkness.’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, a large mass of fire for the darkness, and the morning star, in the last watch of the night, when the sky is clear, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’.

‘Good Gotama, of these appearances, the more excellent appearance would be the morning star in the last watch of the night, when the sky is clear.’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, the morning star in the last watch of the night, when the sky is clear, and the full moon at mid night when the sky is clear without clouds, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances, the more excellent appearance would be the full moon at mid night when the sky is clear without clouds?’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, the full moon at mid night when the sky is clear without clouds and the sun in the sky at mid day in Summer, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances, the more excellent would be the sun in the sky at mid day in Summer time.’

‘Kaccayana, the excellence of many of these gods surpasses the excellence of the moon and sun, I know them, yet I would not tell whose appearance is more noble and more excellent than the other’s appearance. Yet, you say, this appearance, which is inferior even to the appearance of the worms and fireflies, is the most noble and excellent appearance. That too you would not point out..’..

‘Kaccayana, five are the strands of sensual pleasures. What are the five? Pleasing agreeable forms cognizable by eye consciousness arousing fondness and sensual desires. Pleasing agreeable sounds, --Pleasing agreeable smells, -Pleasing agreeable tastes, --- Pleasing agreeable touches cognizable by body consciousness arousing fondness and sensual desires. Kaccayana, these are the five strands of sensual pleasures on account of them arises pleasantness and pleasure. Thus from the senses is sensual pleasures, of sensual pleasures the highest sensual pleasure is declared’. (\*)

When this was said the wandering ascetic Vekhanassa said thus to the BlessedOne-‘Indeed wonderful are the words of good Gotama, from the senses is sense pleasures, of sensual pleasures the highest pleasure is told by me..’.

‘Kaccayana, you of another faith, another liking, another yoking, without knowing the training, would not know the senses, the sense pleasures, and of sensual pleasures the highest sensual pleasure. Kaccayana, those perfected bhikkhus, desires destroyed, lived the holy life, done what should be done, put down the weight, have attained the highest good, have destroyed the desires ‘to be’ and

knowing rightly released, would know the senses, the sensual pleasures, and the highest sensual pleasure.’.

When this was said the wandering ascetic Vekhanassa was angry and displeased and cursed and reviled the Blessed One.’It is the recluse gotama who says evil words. In this manner certain recluses and brahmins, not knowing the beginning and not seeing the end acknowledge birth is destroyed. The holy life is lived, what should be done is done, there is nothing more to wish. These their words are empty and foolish.’

‘There Kaccayana, those recluses and brahmins who not knowing the beginning and not seeing the end, acknowledge birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, what should be done is done, there is nothing more to wish. They should be rightfully blamed. YetKaccaayana, leave alone the beginning and the end.Let any wise man come, not crafty and fraudulent, is straightforward I will instruct him and advise him. If he follows the method as instructed, before long he himself will rightfully know. Thus he will be rightfully released from this bond of ignorance. Kaccayana, like a toddler who would have strings tied on his arms, legs and the neck and when he is grown up and his mental faculties are mature those bonds would be broken and he would know. I am free of those bonds. In the same manner let any wise man come, who is not crafty and fraudulent, is straightforward, I will instruct him and advise him, and if he follows the method as instructed, before long he himself will rightfully know. Thus he will be rightfully released from this bond of ignorance.’

When this was said, the wandering ascetic Vekhanassa said thus:’Good Gotama, now I understand. It is as though something over turned is reinstalled. As something covered is made manifest. It is as though the path is shown to someone who has lost his way. As though an oil lamp is lighted for those who have sight to see forms in the darkness. In various ways, the Teaching is explained, by good Gotama.. Now I take refuge in good Gotama, in the Teaching and the Community of bhikkhus. May I be remembered as a lay disciple who has taken refuge from today until I die..

## Notes

(\* ) Of sensual pleasures the highest sensual pleasure is declared. 'kaamasukhaa kaamagga sukha.m tattha aggam akkhaayatiti' This is explained in many a sutta as the sensual pleasures enjoyed by a man seeing a young girl of warrior clan, brahmin clan or householder clan, of about the age of fifteen or sixteen years. Seeing her, touching her etcetra.

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