

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

To the Brahmin Subha (Subhasutta)

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One was abiding in the monastery offered by Anaathapindika in Jeta's grove in Saavatthi. At that time Subha the young man, the son of Todeyya, had come to Saavatthi for some purpose and was living with a certain householder. Todeyya said to that householder. 'Saavatthi is rich with arahants, what if we associate a recluse or Brahmin today?'

'Good sir, there is the Blessed One abiding in the monastery offered by Anaathapindika in Jeta's grove. We will associate that good Blessed One.'

Subha the young man the son of Todeyya agreeing approached the Blessed One, exchanged friendly greetings and sat on a side. Then Todeyya said to the Blessed One. 'Good Gotama, the Brahmins say, that householders are capable of doing noble merit and those gone forth homeless are not capable of doing merit. What does good Gotama say about that?'

'Young man, here I have to give an analytical reply, not an absolute reply. I do not praise the wrong method, of a householder or of one gone forth homeless. Whether a householder or one gone forth homeless, if fallen to the wrong method it is not possible that he should be convinced of noble merit. I praise the right method of a householder or of one gone forth homeless. Whether a householder or one gone forth homeless, if fallen to the right method it is possible that he should be convinced of noble merit.'

'Good Gotama, Brahmins say, the undertakings of householders, are with much, importance, activity, attendance and destruction and bring much merit. The undertakings of those gone forth homeless,

are with little, importance, activity, attendance and destruction, so they bring little merit. What does good Gotama say about this?’

‘Young man, here too, I have to give an analytical reply, not an absolute reply. Young man, there are undertakings of much, importance, activity, attendance, and destruction not prospering become fruitless. There are undertakings of much importance, activity, attendance and destruction, prospering become fruitful. Young man, there are undertakings of little, importance, activity, attendance and destruction, prospering, they become fruitless. There are undertakings of little, importance, activity, attendance and destruction, prospering, they become fruitful. Young man, what undertakings are of much importance, activity, attendance and destruction not prospering become fruitless? Young man, cultivation is an undertaking of much importance, activity, attendance and destruction, not prospering becomes fruitless. Young man, what undertaking is of much importance, activity, attendance and destruction, prospering becomes fruitful? Cultivation is also an undertaking of much, importance, activity, attendance and destruction, prospering becomes fruitful. What undertaking is of little importance, activity, attendance and destruction, not prospering becomes fruitless? Young man, trading is an undertaking of little, importance, activity, attendance, and destruction, not prospering becomes fruitless. What undertaking is of little, importance, activity, attendance and destruction, prospering becomes fruitful? Trading is also an undertaking of little importance, activity, attendance and destruction, prospering becomes fruitful.

Young man, just as the undertaking cultivation, of much, importance, activity, attendance and destruction not prospering becomes fruitless, so also household life is an undertaking of much, importance, activity, attendance and destruction not prospering becomes fruitless. Young man, just as the undertaking cultivation itself, of much, importance, activity, attendance and destruction prospering becomes fruitful, so also household life is an undertaking of much, importance, activity, attendance and destruction prospering becomes fruitful. Young man, just as the undertaking trading, of little, importance, activity, attendance and destruction not prospering becomes fruitless, so also the undertaking going forth homeless, of little, importance, activity, attendance and destruction not

prospering becomes fruitless. Young man just as the undertaking trading itself, of little, importance, activity, attendance and destruction prospering becomes of much fruit.'

'Good Gotama, Brahmins, make known five things for accomplishment and accumulation of merit.'

'Young man, if it is no problem to you, would you tell this gathering the five things made known by the Brahmins for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit?'

'Good Gotama, it is no problem to me, if good Gotama and this gathering wants to hear it.'

'Then young man, tell them.'

'Good Gotama, truth is the first thing, made known by the Brahmins, for accomplishment and accumulation of merit. Austerity is the second thing. Holy life is the third. Education is the fourth and benevolence is the fifth thing made known by the Brahmins for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit. What does good Gotama say about them?'

'Young man is there a single Brahmin, who says, I know these five things are with results by realisation and declare them?'

'There isn't good Gotama.'

'Young man, is there a single teacher among the Brahmins, or a teacher's teacher, up to the seventh generation, who says, I know these five things are with results by realisation and declare them?'

'There isn't good Gotama.'

‘ Is there a single sage of the Brahmins, in the past like A.t.thaka Vaamaka, Vaamadeva, Vessamitta, Yamataggi, Angiirasa, Bharadvaja, Vaase.t.tha, Kassapa and Bhagu who made and protected the ancient sayings like the Brahmins who protect reciting the verses, over and over again now. Of them did anyone say I know these five things are with results by realisation and declare them?’

‘There isn’t good Gotama.’

So then young man, a single Brahmin, among the Brahmins did not say. I know these five things are with results by realisation and declare them. A single teacher, or a teacher’s teacher up to the seventh generation did not say. I know these five things are with results by realisation and declare them. A single sage of the Brahmins, in the past like A.t.thaka Vaamaka, Vaamadeva, Vessamitta, Yamataggi, Angiirasa, Bharadvaja, Vaase.t.tha, Kassapa and Bhagu who made and protected the ancient sayings like the Brahmins who protect reciting the verses, over and over again now, did not say I know these five things are with results by realisation and declare them. Young man, it is like a line of blind men holding hands. The first does not see, the middle one does not see and the last one does not see. When this is so, the words of the Brahmins are similar to the words of a line of blind men.

When the Blessed One gave the simile of the line of blind men, the young man Subha was angry, cursing the Blessed One said. ‘The recluse Gotama says defiled words.’

Then the young man Subha said to the Blessed One. ‘Good Gotama, the Brahmin Pokkharasaati, who has a pleasant face says. Here a certain recluse or Brahmin acknowledges, some noble knowledge and vision above human. They are useless words that provoke laughter. How could humans know, see and realise some noble knowledge and vision above human?’

‘Young man, does the Brahmin Pokkharasaati, who has a pleasant face penetrate and see the minds of all recluses and braahmins?’

‘The Brahmin Pokkharasaati cannot penetrate and see the mind of his own slave woman Punnaa, how could he penetrate and see the minds of all recluses and Brahmins.’

‘Young man, like a man born blind, who does not see, black and white forms, blue forms, yellow forms, red forms, brown forms, stars, moon and sun, would say. There aren’t black and white forms, and those who have seen them. Blue forms, yellow forms, red forms and brown forms and those who have seen them. There aren’t stars, moon and sun and those who have seen them. I do not know these and I haven’t seen these. Therefore, they are not present. Young man, are these words rightly said?’

‘No, good Gotama, that is not so. There are black and white forms, and those who have seen them. There are blue forms, yellow forms, red forms and brown forms and those who have seen them. There are stars, moon and sun and those who have seen them. The words, I do not know these, I haven’t seen these. Therefore they are not present. Are not rightly said.’

Young man, in the same way, the Brahmin Pokkharasaati, with happy face, is blind, has no eyes. It is not possible that he could see, know or realise, that noble knowledge and vision above human. Young man of the Brahmin householders of Kosala, such as Cankii, Taarukkha, Pokkharasaati, Jaanussoni and your father Todeyya, who is superior, those who speak the generally accepted version, or those who do not speak the generally accepted version?’

‘Good Gotama, those who speak the accepted version are superior.’

‘Who are superior, those who think well before speaking, or those who do not think well before speaking?’

‘Good Gotama, those who think well before speaking are superior.’

‘Who are superior, those who speak after reflecting, or those who speak without reflecting?’

‘Good Gotama, those who speak after reflecting are superior.’

‘Who are superior, those who speak meaningful words or those who speak words that are not meaningful?’

‘Good Gotama, those who speak meaningful words are superior.’

‘Young man when that is so, does the Brahmin Pokkharasaati speak the generally accepted or the not generally accepted?’

‘Good Gotama, he speaks the generally not accepted.’

‘Does he speak well thought words or words not well thought?’

‘Good Gotama, he speaks words not well thought.’

‘Does he speak words after reflecting, or without reflecting?’

‘Good Gotama, he speaks words without reflecting’

‘Does he speak meaningful words, or words that are not meaningful?’

‘Good Gotama, he speaks words that are not meaningful’

‘Young man, these five are hindrances. What are the five? Interest for sensuality is a hindrance. Anger is a hindrance. Sloth and torpor is a hindrance. Restlessness and worry is a hindrance. To doubt is a hindrance. The Brahmin Pokkharasaati who has a happy face is covered up veiled and hemmed in, by these five hindrances, that he could see, know and realise some noble distinction above human is not possible.

Young man, these five are the strands of sensual pleasures. What are the five? Agreeable pleasant forms cognisable by eye consciousness, arousing fondness and sensual desires...re... sounds,...re..... smells,...re....tastes,...re...and agreeable pleasant touches, cognisable by body consciousness, arousing fondness and sensual desires. These are the five strands of sensual pleasures. The Brahmin Pokkharasaati who has a happy face partakes the five strands of sensual pleasures, bound, swooned and enslaved not seeing the danger and the escape from it, that he could see, know and realise some noble distinction above human is not possible. Young man does fire burn supported on grass and sticks, or not supported on grass and sticks? What would the fire’s flame, colour and effulgence be?’

‘Good Gotama, if fire burns without the support of grass and sticks, yet it’s flame, colour and effulgence would be present.’

‘Young man, it is not possible that fire should burn, without grass and sticks, other than by some supernormal power. The joy that arises on account of the five strands of sensual pleasures is comparable to the fire that burns supported on grass and sticks. Young man what is that joy that arises away from the five strands of sensual pleasures and away from thoughts of demerit? Here, young man, the bhikkhu away from sensual desires, and angry thoughts abides in the first jhana. This is joy away from sensual desires and angry thoughts. Again, the bhikkhu overcoming thoughts

and thought processes...re.... abides in the second jhaana This too is joy away from sensual desires and angry thoughts. Young man of the five things made known by the Brahmins, which one is most important for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit?’

‘Good Gotama, of the five things, made known by the Brahmins, for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit, the most important is benevolence.’

‘Young man, a certain Brahmin makes a great sacrifice. Two Brahmins come there, knowing about the sacrifice of that Brahmin. It occurs to one of those Brahmins. Good, if I’m offered the most prominent place in the refectory, the most prominent seat, the first vessel of water, the first morsel. It happens that some other Brahmin gains the most prominent place in the refectory, the most prominent seat, the first vessel of water and the first morsel. He becomes angry and averse, thinking another Brahmin gained the most prominent seat, the first vessel of water and the first morsel. What results does this Brahmin gain?’

‘Good Gotama, Brahmins, do not make sacrifices in such a manner, that others become angry and averse. Brahmins give gifts out of compassion.’

‘Young man when that is so, do the Brahmins have a sixth thing for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit?’

‘Good Gotama, when that is so, the Brahmins have a sixth thing for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit.’

‘Young man, the Brahmins have made known five things for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit, with whom you see these things more prevalent, is it among householders or those gone forth homeless?’

‘Good Gotama, these five things made known by the Brahmins for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit, I see mostly among those gone forth homeless and less among the householders. The undertakings of householders of much, importance, activity, attendance and destruction are always not sincere. The undertakings of those gone forth homeless, of little, importance, activity, attendance and destruction, are always sincere. Householders with undertakings of much, importance, activity, attendance and destruction, are not always, austere, of noble livelihood, not with much education and not with benevolence. Those gone forth homeless with undertakings of little, importance, activity, attendance and destruction, are always austere, of noble livelihood, with much education and benevolence. These five things made known by the Brahmins for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit, I see mostly among those gone forth and less among the householders.’

‘Young man, these five things made known by the Brahmins for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit, I declare are the accessories to develop the mind freeing it from ill will and anger. Young man, the bhikkhu becomes truthful. He experiences its meaning knowing I’m truthful, experiences the Teaching and joy, of knowing the Teaching. That joy accompanied with merit, I call the accessory of the mind, to develop the mind freeing it from ill will and anger. The bhikkhu becomes austere, leads a holy life, becomes learned, becomes benevolent He experiences its meaning knowing I’m benevolent, experiences the Teaching and joy, of knowing the Teaching. That joy accompanied with merit, I call the accessory of the mind, to develop the mind freeing it from ill will and anger. Young man, these five things made known by the Brahmins for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit, I declare are the accessories to develop the mind freeing it from ill will and anger.’

Then the young man Subha the son of Todeyya said to the Blessed One. ‘I have heard that the recluse Gotama knows the path to be born with Brahmaa.’

‘Young man, is the village Nalakaara close to this place?’

‘Yes, good Gotama, it is close to this place.’

‘Young man, from a man born and bred in the village Nalakaara, and who has moved from there is asked the way to go to the village Nalakaara. Would he hesitate or show stupidity in telling the path to go to the village Nalakaara? In the same manner, when the Thus Gone One is asked the path to be born with Brahmaa, there’s no hesitation or stupidity. I know the world of Brahmaa, and the path leading to the world of Brahmaa.’

‘Good Gotama, it’s good if I’m taught the path to be born in the world of Brahmaa.’

‘Then young man, listen carefully I will tell.’ The young man agreed and the Blessed One said. The bhikkhu pervades one direction with thoughts of loving kindness, so too the second, the third, the fourth, above, below, across, in every respect, in all circumstances, the entire world, he pervades with the thought of loving kindness grown great and immeasurable without anger and ill will. Young man, when the release of the mind in loving kindness, is developed thus, none of the measured actions remain. (* 1) Just as a clever drummer in no time would make known the message in the four directions. In the same manner, when the release of the mind in loving kindness, is developed thus, none of the measured actions remain. This is the method to be born with Brahmaa.. Again the bhikkhu pervades one direction with the thought of compassion,...re.... with intrinsic joy,...re... with equanimity, so too the second, the third, the fourth, above, below, across, in every respect, in all circumstances, the entire world, he pervades with equanimity grown great and immeasurable without anger and ill will. Young man, when the release of the mind in equanimity, is developed thus, none of the measured actions remain. (* 1) Just as a clever drummer in no time would make known the message in the four directions. In the same manner, when the release of the mind in equanimity is developed thus, none of the measured actions remain. This is the method to be born with Brahmaa..’

Then the young man Subha the son of Todeyya said. ‘Good Gotama, now I understand. It is like something overturned is reinstated. Something covered is made manifest. As though the path is told to someone who has lost his way. It is as though a light was borne for the darkness, for those who have sight to see forms. In various ways good Gotama has explained the Teaching. Now I take refuge in good Gotama, in the Teaching and the Community of bhikkhus. May good Gotama bear me as a lay disciple from today until life lasts. Good Gotama, now we go. There’s much work to be done.’

‘Young man, go! If you think it is fit.’

‘The young man Subha delighted and pleased, got up from his seat, worshipped and circumambulated the Blessed One and went away

At that time the Brahmin Jaanussoni, was going through Saavatthi in a completely white carriage yoked to a mare. Seeing the young man Subha, he asked. ‘From where does good Bhaaradvaaja come at this time?’

‘Now I come from the presence of the recluse Gotama.’

‘What does good Bhaaradvaaja think of the wisdom of, recluse Gotama? Do you think he is wise?’

‘Who am I to know the wisdom of the recluse Gotama, it should be done by one like him, who knows the depth, of his wisdom.’

‘Indeed good Bhaaradvaaja praises the recluse Gotama.’

‘Who am I, and who is the recluse Gotama. Indeed those who need praise should be praised. Good Gotama is the chief among gods and men. The five things declared by the Brahmins for the accomplishment and accumulation of merit, he says are the accessories to develop the mind, without anger and ill will.’

When this was said, the Brahmin Jaanussoni got down from his white carriage, arranged his shawl on one shoulder, turning to where the Blessed One was abiding with clasped hands said. ‘It is gain for king Pasenadi of Kosala, it is rare gain for him that the Thus Gone One perfect and rightfully enlightened abides in king Pasenadi Kosala’s kingdom.’

Notes:

(*) Young man, when the release of mind in loving kindness is developed thus, none of the measured actions remain. ‘Eva.m bhaavitaaya kho maanava mettaaya cetovimuttiyaa ya.m pamaanakata.m kamma.m na ta.m tatraavasissati, na tam tatraavatitthati.’ The measured actions that remain in the mind are small bits of greed, hate and delusion, which from time to time pollute data that come through the six doors of mental contact and promote actions and reactions through body speech and mind

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