

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

The Longer discourse on Voidity (Mahasunnata Sutta)

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One lived with the Sakyas in Nigrodha's monastery in Kapilavatthu. The Blessed One put on robes in the morning, taking bowl and robes entered Kapilavatthu for alms. Gone the alms round and after the meal was over, approached the Sakya Kaalakhemaka's monastery to spend the day. At that time many beds and seats were arranged in the Sakya Kaalakhemaka's monastery. It occurred to the Blessed One: Many beds and seats are arranged in the Sakya Kaalakhemaka's monastery. There should be many bhikkhus abiding here.

At that time venerable Aananda was in the Sakya Gha.taaya's monastery engaged in preparing robes. The Blessed One getting up from the seclusion in the evening approached the Sakya Gha.taaya's monastery sat on the prepared seat and addressed venerable Aananda 'Aananda, many beds and seats are arranged in the Sakya Kaalakhemaka's monastery. Are there many bhikkhus abiding there?'

'Venerable sir, many beds and seats are arranged in the Sakya Kaalakhemaka's monastery, there are many bhikkhus abiding there. Venerable sir, it is the time for preparing robes.'

'Aananda, the bhikkhu does not shine, attached to, fond of, yoked to and delighting in company and society. It is not possible that a bhikkhu attached to, fond of, yoked to and delighting in company and society, should be a quick and easy gainer for nothing of pleasures of non sensuality, seclusion, appeasement and enlightenment. It is possible that a bhikkhu withdrawn from the crowd should be a quick, easy gainer for nothing, of the pleasures of non sensuality, seclusion, appeasement and enlightenment. It is possible that he should attain the desired release of mind in stages or attain the unshakeable state instantly and abide. (*1) Aananda, I do not see the attachment to a single matter,

the change of which, thorough attachment would not arouse grief, lament, unpleasantness displeasure and distress.

Aananda, the Thus Gone One has realized this abiding, in which not attending to any signs, to abide internally in voidity. To meet the Thus Gone One abiding thus, bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, lay disciples male and female, kings, chief ministers of kings, those of other faiths and their disciples approach. To them the Thus Gone One speaks only words that slant and bend towards seclusion, withdrawl from sensuality and undoubtedly words turning away from desires. Therefore Aananda, the bhikkhu should desire to abide internally void. For that the bhikkhu should establish, settle, bring the mind to a single point and concentrate.

Aananda, how does the bhikkhu establish, settle, bring the mind to a single point and concentrate?.The bhikkhu secluding the mind from sensual desires and demerit, with thoughts and discursive thoughts and with joy and pleasantness born of seclusion attains to the first jhaana. Overcoming thoughts and discursive thoughts, the mind internally appeased and brought to a single point and with joy and pleasantness born of concentration attains to the second jhaana. ...re....third jhaana...re.... fourth jhaana. Aananda, in this manner the bhikkhu establishes, settles, brings the mind to a single point and concentrates. Then he attends to internal voidity. (*2) When internal voidity is attended to, the mind does not spring, settle and is not released. When this is so, the bhikkhu should know, attending to internal voidity, my mind does not spring, settle and is not releasedBecoming aware of this, the bhikkhu attends to external voidity and internal and external voidity. Attends to imperturbabilityWhen imperturbability is attended to, the mind does not spring, settle and is not released. When this is so, the bhikkhu should know, attending to imperturbability, my mind does not spring, settle and is not releasedBecoming aware of this, the bhikkhu should attend to the earlier sign of concentration, establish, settle, bring the mind to a single point and concentrate.Then he attends to internal voidity. When internal voidity is attended to, the mind springs, settles and is released. When this is so, the bhikkhu should know, attending to internal voidity, my mind springs, settles and is releasedBecoming aware of this, the bhikkhu attends to external voidity and internal and external voidity. Attends to imperturbabilityWhen imperturbability is attended to, the mind

springs, settles and is released. When this is so, the bhikkhu should know, attending to imperturbability, my mind springs, settles and is released. The bhikkhu becomes aware of this.

The mind of the bhikkhu abiding thus, bends to walking. He walks and becomes aware, when walking, coveting, displeased thoughts of demerit do not seep. He becomes aware of this. The mind of the bhikkhu abiding thus, bends to standing. He stands and becomes aware, when standing, coveting, displeased thoughts of demerit do not seep. He becomes aware of this. The mind of the bhikkhu abiding thus, bends to walking. He walks and becomes aware, when walking coveting, displeased thoughts of demerit do not seep. He becomes aware of this. The mind of the bhikkhu abiding thus, bends to lying. He lies and becomes aware, when lying coveting displeased thoughts of demerit do not seep. He becomes aware of this.

The mind of the bhikkhu abiding thus, bends to talking. He becomes aware, I will not talk such low things of the ordinary people not conducive, to good, to giving up, to detachment, to cessation, to appeasement, to knowledge, to enlightenment and extinction. Such as talk about kings, robbers, ministers, armies, fears, wars, eatables and drinks, clothes, beddings, flowers, scents, relations, conveyances, villages, hamlets, towns, states, women, heroes, gossip at the street corner and at the well, of those dead and gone, various talk about the beginning of, the world, the ocean, talk of things that should and should not happen. Ananda, you should become aware, I will talk of austerities, talk, that is suitable to analyse the mind, talk conducive to only giving up, to detachment, to cessation, to appeasement, to knowledge, to enlightenment and extinction. Such as talk about few desires, satisfaction, seclusion, non attachment, talk that arouse, effort, virtues, concentration, wisdom, release and knowledge of release. The mind of the bhikkhu abiding thus, bends to thinking. Ananda, you should be aware, I will not think of such low things of the ordinary people not conducive, to good, to giving up, to detachment, to cessation, to appeasement, to knowledge, to enlightenment and extinction. Such as sensual thoughts, angry thoughts and hurting thoughts. Becomes aware of his thoughts. Ananda, think thoughts that are noble, thoughts that lead to the destruction of unpleasantness when logically thought, such as thoughts of non sensuality, non anger, and not hurting. Be aware in this manner.

Aananda, these five are the strands of sensual pleasures. What are the five? Agreeable pleasant forms cognizable by eye consciousness arousing fondness and sensual desires agreeable pleasant sounds cognizable by ear consciousness arousing fondness and sensual desires Agreeable pleasant smells cognizable by nose consciousness arousing fondness and sensual desires Agreeable pleasant tastes cognizable by tongue consciousness arousing fondness and sensual desires Agreeable pleasant touches cognizable by body consciousness arousing fondness and sensual desires. Aananda, these are the five strands of sensual pleasures, for which the bhikkhu should constantly search his mind. Is there the arising and behaviour of these five strands of sensual pleasures in one or the other of my mental spheres.

Aananda, if they are present, the bhikkhu knows, the interest and greed for the five strands of sensual pleasures are not dispelled in me. Thus he becomes aware of it. Aananda, when the bhikkhu reflects if he knows. There are no arisings and behaviours of any of the five strands of sensual pleasures in one or the other of my mental spheres. Then Aananda, the bhikkhu knows, the interest and greed for the five strands of sensual pleasures are dispelled in me. He becomes aware of it.

Aananda, these five are the holding masses, of which the bhikkhu should abide reflecting arising and fading. This is matter, this the arising of matter and this the fading of matter. These are feelings, this the arising of feelings and this the fading of feelings. These are perceptions, this the arising of perceptions and this the fading of perceptions. These are determinations, this is the arising of determinations and this is the fading of determinations. This is consciousness, this is the arising of consciousness and this the fading of consciousness. When abiding reflecting the arising and fading of the five holding masses, the conceit 'I am' gets dispelled. Then he becomes aware, the conceit 'I am' in the five holding masses is dispelled. Aananda, you should know that these things are completely merit, noble, beyond this world, not trespassed by Death.

Aananda, seeing what good, should the disciple follow after the Teacher even when chased away?

‘Venerable sir, the Blessed One is the origin of the Teaching, our refuge and leader, good that the meaning occurs to the Blessed One. Hearing it from the Blessed One we will bear it’

‘Aananda, it is not suitable that the disciple should follow the Teacher for explanations of discourses and verses. What is the reason? You have heard this Teaching since long, borne it, recited it verbally, experienced it in the mind and penetratingly seen it. As for these talks of austerities, talk suitable to analyse the mind, talk conducive to giving up, to detachment, to cessation, to appeasement, to knowledge, to enlightenment and extinction. Such as talk about few desires, satisfaction, seclusion, non attachment, talk that arouse, effort, virtues, concentration, wisdom, release and knowledge of release. For such talk, it is suitable that the dicciple should follow the Teacher even when chased.

Even when this is so, there comes misfortune to the Teacher, misfortune to the disciple and misfortune to the holy life. Aananda, how comes, misfortune to the Teacher? A certain Teacher abounds a secluded dwelling, a remote place, the root of a tree, a mountain grotto, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a jungle forest, an open space a heap of straw. When abiding thus secluded, he is enticed by brahmin householders of hamlets and states. thus possessed, he greeds for sensuality and turns to abundance. Aananda, this is the Teacher in misfortune. With the misfortune of the Teacher burst out defiled things of demerit with rebirth, troubles, unpleasant results of again and again birth decay and death. Aananda, these are the misfortunes of the teacher. Aananda, how comes, misfortune to the disciple? Ananda, that same teacher’s disciple as told by the Teacher abounds a secluded dwelling, a remote place, the root of a tree, a mountain grotto, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a jungle forest, an open space a heap of straw. When abiding thus secluded, he is enticed by brahmin householders of hamlets and states. thus possessed, he greeds for sensuality and turns to abundance. Aananda, this is the disciple in misfortune. With the misfortune of the disciple burst out defiled things of demerit with rebirth, troubles, unpleasant results of again and again birth decay and death. Aananda, these are the misfortunes of the disciple. Aananda, how comes, misfortune to the holy life? Ananda, the Thus Gone One is born in the world, perfect, rightfully enlightened, well gone, knowing the worlds, the incomparable tamer of those to be tamed, Teacher of gods and men

enlightened and blessed. He abounds a secluded dwelling, a remote place, the root of a tree, a mountain grotto, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a jungle forest, an open space a heap of straw. When abiding thus secluded, he is enticed by brahmin householders of hamlets and states, not possessed, he does not greed for sensuality and turn to abundance. Aananda, that same Teacher's disciple as yoked by the Teacher to seclusion abounds a secluded dwelling, a remote place, the root of a tree, a mountain grotto, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a jungle forest, an open space a heap of straw. When abiding thus secluded, he is enticed by brahmin householders of hamlets and states, thus possessed, he greeds for sensuality and turns to abundance. Aananda, this is the misfortune of the holy life. With the misfortune of the holy life burst out defiled things of demerit with rebirth, troubles, unpleasant results of again and again birth decay and death. Aananda, these are the misfortunes of the holy life. Aananda, of misfortunes the worst is the misfortune of the holy life. It brings the worst of sharp unpleasant feelings and decrease. Therefore Aananda, associate me with friendliness without anger. It will be for your good and well being for a long time. Aananda how do the disciples of the Teacher associate the Teacher with anger and not with friendliness? The Teacher gives the Teaching with aroused compassion, saying this is for your good and well being. The disciples do not listen do not lend ear, do not attend to realize, they also leave the dispensation of the Teacher. Aananda, in this manner the disciples of the Teacher associate the Teacher with anger and not with friendliness. Aananda how do the disciples of the Teacher associate the Teacher with friendliness and not with anger? The Teacher gives the Teaching with aroused compassion, saying this is for your good and well being. The disciples listen, lend ear, with attention to realize it, they do not leave the dispensation of the Teacher. Aananda, in this manner the disciples of the Teacher associate the Teacher with friendliness and without anger. Therefore Aananda, associate me with friendliness without anger. It will be for your good and well being for a long time. Aananda, I do not advance on you, as the potter would with the raw clay. I constantly press you blaming, saying take the essence'

The Blessed One said thus and venerable Aananda delighted in the words of the Blessed One.

Notes.

1.It is possible that he should attain the desired release of mind, in stages, or attain the unshakeable state instantly and abide ‘saamaayika.m vaa kanta.m cetovimutti.m upasampajja viharati asaamaayika.m vaa akuppanti’. The unshakeable state is perfection ‘arahanta’

2. Then he attends to internal voidity ‘so ajjhata.m su~n~nata.m manasikaroti’ To see the internal as void is to give up the self view. It has to be done with much practice. Here it was done practising the jhaanas.

3.The bhikkhu attends to external voidity, and internal and external voidity. ‘so bahiddhaa su~n~nata.m manasikaroti so ajjhatabhiddhaa su~n~nata.m manasikaroti’ External voidity is to see that there are no belongings of the person. This is the gradual training to dispel the self view.

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