AN 3.39 — Sukhamāla Sutta (Garlanded by Happiness and Comfort)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

39. Sukhamāla Sutta (Garlanded by Happiness and Comfort) Bhikkhus, I was very delicately raised and pampered in my upbringing, being garlanded with happiness and comfort throughout my lay life.

In my father's home there was a pond just for blue lotuses, another for only red lotuses, and yet another for white lotuses, all of them built just for me and for my own enjoyment. I never used sandalwood other than the very best, which meant they had to come from Varaṇasi. My head dress, ornately embroidered close-fitting jacket, my garment and outer robe were all made of Varaṇasi's finest silk.

Wherever I went, a white parasol was held over me, both day and night, so that I would not be touched by heat or cold, dust, grass or even dew drops. There were three grand palaces built just for me: one for winter, one for summer, and yet another for the rainy, monsoon season.

Bhikkhus, I spent the four months of the rainy season inside the mansion entirely, with no other male in sight other than myself, for I was only surrounded by females to keep me company and entertain me.

Also, whereas in other households the servants and workmen are normally served second-rate meals like gruel, in contrast, in my father's home they were all offered the finest of rice, meat, and various curries.

Nevertheless, Bhikkhus, while being so carefully taken care of and delicately nurtured, the thought occurred to me:

'An uninstructed ordinary person, although himself being subject to decay and old age and thus not at all immune to decay and old age, on seeing another who is decayed and aging, becomes repulsed and feels disgust, especially because he neglects to consider the simple fact of his own similar predicament, while he forgets to consider:

“I too am subject to becoming old, ageing and decaying, because I am not immune to old age. Therefore, to become repulsed or feel disgusted whenever I see someone who is already old and decaying, is truly improper of me and quite foolish.”

As I pondered thus, the intoxication and vanity I felt towards my youth, suddenly lost its grip on me, and I became disenchanted.

Furthermore, Bhikkhus, I pondered how an uninstructed ordinary person, although himself being subject to illness and not immune to illness, on seeing another who is suffering from an illness becomes repulsed and feels disgusted by what he witnesses, but without considering his own similar predicament, as in:

“I too am subject to becoming ill, for I am not immune to getting sick. Therefore, if I am now repulsed and feel disgusted in seeing someone who is already suffering from illness, this is truly improper of me and quite foolish.”

As I pondered thus, the intoxication and vanity I felt towards my health and vigor, suddenly lost its grip on me, and I became disenchanted.

Furthermore, Bhikkhus, I reflected on how an uninstructed ordinary person, although himself being subject to death and not immune to the inevitability of death, on seeing another who is dead or about to die, becomes repulsed and feels disgusted by what he witnesses, but without considering his own similar predicament, as in:

“I too am subject to death, as I am not immune to death. Therefore, if I am now repulsed and feel disgusted in seeing someone who is already dead or about to die, this is truly improper of me and definitely unwise!”

As I pondered thus, the intoxication I felt towards my life suddenly lost its grip on me, and I became disenchanted.

As such, Bhikkhus, there are these three intoxications. What three?

Being intoxicated by youth; intoxicated with health; and intoxicated with life itself.

Here, Bhikkhus, an uninstructed ordinary person (puthujjana), being intoxicated by youth and its vanity, misbehaves through body, speech and mind, and on account of that misbehavior, at the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in a realm of misery, in a lower state, in hell.

Similarly, an uninstructed ordinary person, being intoxicated with health and lost in its vanity, misbehaves through body, speech, and mind, and on account of that misbehavior, at the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in a realm of misery, in a lower state, in hell.

Also, an uninstructed ordinary person, being intoxicated with life and lost in its vanity, misbehaves through body, speech and mind, and on account of that misbehavior, at the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in a realm of misery, in a lower state, in hell.

After all, it is through intoxication with youthfulness that a Bhikkhu relinquishes his training and reverts back to the lower life of a layperson. Also, it is through intoxication with health and vigor that a Bhikkhu relinquishes his training and reverts back to living the lower life of a layperson. And it is through intoxication with life that a Bhikkhu relinquishes his training and reverts back to living the lower life of a layperson.

‘Ordinary and average beings, Who themselves are subject and not immune To decay, old age, sickness and death, Become repulsed and disgusted by the sight of others Who are decaying, old, suffering from illness, dead, or dying. But, seeing and knowing that I too am subject to these unavoidable factors, It is improper for me to become repulsed or disgusted by others, Who are decaying, old, suffering from illness, dead, or about to die.

‘While dwelling thus, having experienced the state beyond all assets, Seeing the security that comes from renouncing, No longer was I intoxicated with youth, with health or vigor, or even with life. Thus, through diligent resolve, I clearly saw Nibbāna. No longer can I indulge in sense pleasure, For it is only by relying on the sublime Holy Life, That there is no more coming to any state of being.’