AN 3.58 — Tikaṇṇa Sutta (Discourse to Tikaṇṇa)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

58. Tikaṇṇa Sutta (Discourse to Tikaṇṇa) At one time, the brahmin Tikaṇṇa approached The Blessed One, and after exchanging friendly greetings with Him, he sat to one side and began extolling the three Vedas in the presence of The Blessed One, speaking in praise of those brahmins as masters of the Vedas' threefold knowledge.

Then The Blessed One said:

"But brahmin, in what way do the brahmins describe a 'brahmin' as being a master of the Vedas' threefold knowledge?"

The brahmin Tikaṇṇa then said:

"Here, Venerable Sir, the brahmin should be of good birth on both sides, with his maternal and paternal sides being unblemished and pure in their brahmin lineage, as far back as the seventh generation. He should also be a learned preserver and reciter, able to repeat the sequence of words and sounds, the hymns of the three Vedas, together with the rites and rituals, with their vocabularies, etymology, phonology, and histories as the fifth. He should be skilled in their philosophy and grammar too. He should also know how to interpret the marks of a Great Man.

"So, Venerable Sir, it is in this way that the brahmins describe a 'brahmin,' as being a master of the Vedas' threefold knowledge."

And The Blessed One said:

"But, brahmin, to be a master of the Threefold Knowledge in the Noble One's Dhamma and Discipline is understood quite differently than the one described by the brahmins."

"Then, tell me, Venerable Sir, how such a master of the threefold Knowledge in the Noble One's Dhamma and Discipline is understood to be different than the one described by the brahmins. It would be beneficial and good if Master Gautama taught me The Dhamma in such a way, that I may clearly know how one becomes a master of the threefold Knowledge in The Noble One's discipline."

“Then, brahmin, listen carefully to what I shall say.”

“Yes, Sir,” the brahmin Tikaṇṇa said, and The Blessed One continued speaking:

“Here, brahmin, by secluding his mind from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states, the Bhikkhu enters upon and dwells in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thinking and planning, along with joy and pleasure, which manifest when he is appropriately in seclusion.

“Further, with the stilling of thinking and planning, the Bhikkhu enters upon and dwells in the second jhāna, which brings about self-confidence and unification of mind, but in the absence of

thinking and planning, while the joy and pleasure continue in him due to the deepening of his collected stability of mind (samādhi).

“Further, with the fading away of joy too, he dwells in equanimity, remaining mindful and fully aware, while still feeling pleasure with the body, as he enters upon and dwells in the third jhāna, on account of which the noble ones declare:

‘He has indeed a pleasant disposition; the one who has equanimity, while being mindful.’

“Further, by moving beyond both pleasure and pain altogether, and with the previous disappearance of joy and resistance, he enters upon and dwells in the fourth jhāna, which has neither pain nor pleasure, but the purity of mindfulness that is pervading, along with continued deepening of equanimity.

a. “In this manner, with his mind collected and purified, bright, unblemished, freed from the contaminants, nimble, malleable, strong, steady, and attained to security, he then directs it to the knowledge of the recollection of his past lives. Soon, he remembers his numerous past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty, forty, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many eons of world-contractions, many eons of world expansions, many eons of world contractions and expansions, recalling thus:

‘There, I was so named, of such a family, with such an appearance; such was my food and sustenance; such were my experiences of pleasure and pain; such as my lifespan; and after passing away from there, I was reborn elsewhere, and there too, I was so named, of such a family, with such an appearance; such was my food and sustenance; such were my experiences of pleasure and pain; and such was my life-span; and passing away from there, I was reborn here.’

“This, brahmin, is the first true knowledge attained by such a Bhikkhu, whose ignorance is banished with true knowledge having arisen; where darkness is expelled and light has arisen, as he lives heedful, diligent, committed, and unrelentingly resolute.

b. “Then, as his mind becomes further and further collected, stable, purified, bright, freed from the contaminants and unblemished, nimble, malleable, strong, steady, and attained to security, such a Bhikkhu then directs it to the knowledge of the death and rebirth destinations of beings. Thus, with the Divine Eye, which is superior to those of human beings, he sees beings dying and being reborn into exalted or un-exalted states, becoming beautiful or ugly, fortunate or unfortunate in their new becomings. He sees and knows how beings die and are reborn into different states according to their actions thus:

‘These beings who did not live with virtue in body, speech, and mind, being disrespectful of the Noble Ones, wrong in their views, on account of those wrong views in their actions, upon the dissolution of their body, after death, were reborn into a state of deprivation, in a bad

destination, in evil states, even in hell. But these worthy beings who lived with virtue in body, speech, and mind, who were respectful of the Noble Ones, right in their views, on account of those right views in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, are now reborn in a good destination, even in the heavenly world.’

“In this manner, with the Divine Eye, which is superior to those of human beings, he sees beings passing away and being reborn into exalted or un-exalted states, becoming beautiful or ugly, landing into fortunate or miserable situations and surrounding. He thus sees and knows clearly how beings die and are reborn into different states according to their intentional actions (kammā).”

“This is the second true knowledge attained by such a Bhikkhu, whose ignorance is banished with true knowledge having arisen; where darkness is expelled and light has arisen, as he lives heedful, diligent, committed, and unrelentingly resolute.

c. “Then, with his collected mind thus purified, bright, freed from the contaminants and unblemished, being so nimble, malleable, strong, steady, and attained to security, the Bhikkhu directs it to the knowledge of the destruction of the contaminants.

“In this manner, he directly knows and sees as it actually is: ‘This is suffering.’ He directly knows and sees as it actually is: ‘This is the origin of suffering.’ He directly knows and sees as it actually is: ‘This is the cessation of suffering.’ He directly knows and sees as it actually is: ‘This is the Path leading to the cessation of suffering.’ He directly knows and sees as it actually is: ‘These are the contaminants (āsavas).’ He directly knows and sees as it actually is: ‘This is the origin of the contaminants.’ He directly knows and sees as it actually is: ‘This is the cessation of the contaminants.’ He directly sees and knows as it actually is: ‘This is the Path leading to the cessation of the contaminants.’

“And at that moment, when the Bhikkhu knows and sees thus, his mind becomes fully liberated from the contaminant of sensual desire, from the contaminant of becoming, and from the contaminant of ignorance.

“When thus liberated, there arises the knowledge in him: ‘It is now finally Released!’ “And he directly knows:

‘Birth is now completely destroyed, The Holy Life has been lived to its end! What had to be done, is done and finished! There is nothing more for me to wish for or do, Nor any state of becoming waiting for me.’

“And this is the third true knowledge, brahmin, that is attained by such a Bhikkhu, whose ignorance is banished with true knowledge having arisen; where darkness is expelled and light has arisen, as he lives heedful, diligent, committed, and unrelentingly resolute.”

‘The collected mind of the virtuous meditator, steady, alert and unshakeable, The Secure and Wise One, dispelling the darkness with The Threefold Knowledges, Conqueror of death, clinging to nothing, He now stands benefiting both Devas and humans, Bearing His very last body, dwelling in wisdom, it is Gautama whom he worships.

Remembering His previous births, Seeing the whereabouts of beings between the heavens and hells, This is The True Sage, who having destroyed birth, Possesses The Threefold knowledges.

It is in this way that one is understood to be a true Brahmin, A master of The Threefold Knowledges, According to The Noble One’s Dhamma and Discipline, Not the one described by those who go on chanting or singing hymns.’

“So, it is in this way, brahmin, that one is considered to be a master of The Threefold Knowledges in The Noble One’s Dhamma and Discipline, and as you can see, it is quite different from the one described by the brahmins.”

Then, once this was spoken by The Blessed One, the brahmin Tikaṇṇa exclaimed with delight:

“Indeed Master Gautama, indeed!

“Blessed One, surely, I now see how the brahmin who is looked upon as a master of the three Vedas as described by the brahmins, is quite different indeed, from the one considered to be a Master of The Threefold Knowledges within The Noble One’s Dhamma and Discipline!

“I also see, Master Gautama, that the brahmins’ description of a brahmin as a master of the Vedas’ threefold knowledge is not even worth one-sixteenth of the one who is considered to be a true Master of The Threefold Knowledges within The Noble One’s Dhamma and Discipline.

“It is truly, Magnificent, Venerable sir! Quite remarkable and amazing indeed, Venerable sir!

“The Blessed One has made The Dhamma clear to me in many ways! It is as though He turned upright what had been turned upside-down, and revealed to me what was hidden; showing the way to one who was lost; holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see.

“I go to The Blessed One for refuge, and to The Dhamma, and to The Saṅgha of Bhikkhus!

“From this day forward, may The Blessed One kindly remember me as a lay disciple of His, who has taken refuge in Him, until the end of life.”