AN 3.66 — Sāḷha Sutta (Discourse to Sāḷha)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

66. Sāḷha Sutta (Discourse to Sāḷha) I have personally heard this.

At one time, the Venerable Nandaka was abiding at Sāvatthī's Eastern Park, in the monastery of Migāra's Mother.

Then Sāḷha, the grandson of Migāra, and Rohana, who was a grandson of Pekhuṇiya, both went and approached the Venerable Nandaka, and after paying homage to him, sat to one side.

Then, the Venerable Nandaka said to them:

"Come Sāḷha, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through an oral tradition; by lineage of the teaching; by hearsay; by its scriptures; by logical reasoning alone; by inferential reasoning alone; on the grounds of some authority; by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker; or by the eloquent and entertaining nature of their words, whereby you think: 'I have to follow such a teacher because they are my 'teacher.'"

"However, Sāḷha, when you ponder and know for yourselves thus:

'These thoughts are harmful and damaging; these thoughts are blameworthy; these thoughts are reproved and criticized by all those considered to be truly wise; once acted upon and undertaken, these thoughts would certainly not lead to our welfare or happiness, but instead, they will bring about more suffering, indeed.'

"Then, Sāḷha, you should abandon those thoughts.

"Sāḷha, what do you think? Is there such a thing as greed?"

"Yes, Venerable sir."

"Greed has the meaning of covetousness. A greedy person, with a mind obsessed with greed, destroys living beings; takes what is not given; covets and then goes to other's

wives; tells lies, and encourages others to do the same. Now, do such actions conduce to his ruin and suffering for a long time?"

"Yes, Venerable sir."

"Sāḷha, what do you think? Is there such a thing as anger?"

"Yes, Venerable sir."

"Anger has the meaning of hatred and ill will. An angry person, with a mind obsessed with ill will, destroys living beings; takes what is not given; covets and then goes to other's wives; tells lies, and encourages others to do the same. Now, do such actions conduce to his ruin and suffering for a long time?"

"Yes, Venerable sir."

"Sāḷha, what do you think? Is there such a thing as delusion?"

"Yes, Venerable sir."

"Delusion has the meaning of ignorance. A deluded person, with a mind drenched in ignorance, destroys living beings; takes what is not given; covets and then goes to other's wives; tells lies, and encourages others to do the same. Now, do such actions conduce to his ruin and suffering for a long time?"

"Yes, Venerable sir."

"What do you think, Sāḷha? Are such thoughts and actions wholesome or unwholesome?"

"Venerable sir, they are unwholesome."

"Are they blameworthy or blameless?"

"Venerable sir, they are blameworthy."

"Are they reproved or praised by the wise?"

"Venerable sir, they are reproved by the wise."

"And how do you understand it, when such actions are undertaken and committed, do they conduce to evil and suffering or not?"

"Venerable sir, as I understand it, when such actions are undertaken and committed, they conduce to evil and suffering."

"In this way, Sāḷha, we have stated to you earlier:

‘Come Sāḷha, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through an oral tradition; by lineage of the teaching; by hearsay; by its scriptures; by logical reasoning alone; by inferential reasoning alone; on the grounds of some authority; by the charisma or

apparent competence of the speaker; or by the eloquent and entertaining nature of their words, whereby you think: ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my ‘teacher.’”

“However, Sāḷha, when you ponder and know for yourselves thus:

‘These thoughts are harmful and damaging; these thoughts are blameworthy; these thoughts are reproved and criticized by all those considered to be truly wise; once acted upon and undertaken, these thoughts would certainly not lead to our welfare or happiness, but instead, they will bring about more suffering, indeed.’

“Then, Sāḷha, you should abandon those thoughts. It was for this reason that it was thus said:

“Come ‘Sāḷha, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through an oral tradition; by lineage of the teaching; by hearsay; by its scriptures; by logical reasoning alone; by inferential reasoning alone; on the grounds of some authority; by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker; or by the eloquent and entertaining nature of their words, whereby you think: ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my ‘teacher.’”

“However, Sāḷha, when you ponder and know for yourselves thus:

‘These thoughts are wholesome; these thoughts are blameless; these thoughts are praised by all those considered to be truly wise; once acted upon and undertaken, these thoughts are conducive to our welfare, and they bring about happiness, for sure.’

“Then, Sāḷha, you should grow such thoughts further and live in harmony with them.”

“What do you think, Sāḷha? Is the arising of non-greed in a person conducive to his benefit or to his ruin?”

“Venerable sir, it is for his benefit, and not for his ruin.”

“Sāḷha, a person lacking greed, not overcome by greed, with a mind not obsessed by greed, does not destroy living beings; does not take what is not given; he does not covet nor goes to other’s wives; he does not tell lies, nor encourages others to engage in unwholesome behavior. Now, do such actions conduce to his benefit and happiness for a long time?”

“Yes, Venerable sir.”

“What do you think, Sāḷha? Is the arising of non-anger in a person conducive to his benefit or to his ruin?”

“Venerable sir, it is for his benefit, and not for his ruin.”

“Sāḷha, a person lacking anger, not overcome by anger, with a mind not obsessed by anger, does not destroy living beings; does not take what is not given; he does not covet nor goes to other’s

wives; he does not tell lies, nor encourages others to engage in unwholesome behavior. Now, do such actions conduce to his benefit and happiness for a long time?”

“Yes, Venerable sir.”

“What do you think, Sāḷha? Is the arising of non-delusion in a person conducive to his benefit or to his ruin?”

“Venerable sir, it is for his benefit, and not for his ruin.”

“Sāḷha, a person lacking delusion, not overcome by delusion, with a mind not drenched in delusion, does not destroy living beings; does not take what is not given; he does not covet nor goes to other’s wives; he does not tell lies, nor encourages others to engage in unwholesome behavior. Now, do such actions conduce to his benefit and happiness for a long time?”

“Yes, Venerable sir.”

“What do you think, Sāḷha? Are such thoughts and actions wholesome or unwholesome?”

“Venerable sir, they are wholesome.”

“Are they blameworthy or blameless?”

“Venerable sir, they are blameless.”

“Are they reproved or praised by the wise?”

“Venerable sir, they are praised by the wise.”

“And how do you understand it, when such actions are undertaken and committed, do they conduce to benefit and happiness, or not?”

“Venerable sir, as I understand it, when such actions are undertaken and committed, they conduce to benefit and happiness, indeed.”

“In this way, Sāḷha, we have stated earlier:

“Come Sāḷha, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through an oral tradition; by lineage of the teaching; by hearsay; by its scriptures; by logical reasoning alone; by inferential reasoning alone; on the grounds of some authority; by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker; or by the eloquent and entertaining nature of their words, whereby you think: ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my ‘teacher.’”

“However, Sāḷha, when you ponder and know for yourselves thus:

‘These thoughts are wholesome; these thoughts are blameless; these thoughts are praised by all those considered to be truly wise; once acted upon and undertaken, these thoughts are conducive to our welfare, and they bring about happiness, for sure.’

Then, Sāḷha, you should grow such thoughts further and live in harmony with them. It was for this reason that it was thus said.

“In this manner, Sāḷha, the Noble Disciple – who is thus free from covetousness, free from anger, free from delusion; clearly comprehending and aware, with mindfulness firmly established – pervades one quarter direction with Universal Benevolent Loving Kindness, so too the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter; so above, below and across, in every respect, while radiating with a heart that is fully drenched in Universal Benevolent Loving Kindness, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurably, and without any sense of forcefulness, resentment, compulsion, or the slightest antagonism towards anyone or anything.

“Further, he abides pervading one quarter direction with Universal Compassion, so too the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter; so above, below and across, in every respect, while radiating with a heart that is fully drenched in Universal Compassion, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurably, and without any sense of forcefulness, resentment, compulsion, or the slightest antagonism towards anyone or anything.

“Further, he abides pervading one quarter direction with Universal Altruistic Joy, so too the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter; so above, below and across, in every respect, while radiating with a heart that is fully drenched in Universal Altruistic Joy, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurably, and without any sense of forcefulness, resentment, compulsion, or the slightest antagonism towards anyone or anything.

“Further, he abides pervading one quarter direction with Equanimity, so too the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter; so above, below and across, in every respect, while radiating with a heart that is fully drenched in Equanimity, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurably, and without any sense of forcefulness, resentment, compulsion, or the slightest antagonism towards anyone or anything.

“Then, he knows and understands: ‘There is this which is inferior. There is this that is superior. And there is an escape beyond this world of perceptions.’

“When he knows and sees thus, his mind is released and liberated from the contaminant of sensual desires, from the contaminant of becoming, and from the contaminant of ignorance. When it is thus liberated, there arises in him the knowledge that birth is destroyed, indeed, the Holy Life has been fully lived, what should have been done is now done, with no more becoming to any state of being.

“He also sees and understands thus:

‘Earlier, when there was greed, and because of that, what was experienced was unwholesome, but now with greed being no more, there is only wholesomeness. Earlier there was anger, and because of that, what was experienced was unwholesome, but now with anger being no more, there is only wholesomeness. Earlier there was delusion, and because of that, what was experienced was unwholesome, but now with delusion being no more, there is only wholesomeness.’

“Thus, he lives his life in the here and now, while fully quenched, contented, extinguished, and cooled, abiding even beyond the divine state of Brahmā.”