AN 3.73 — Mahānāmasakka Sutta (Mahānāma, the Sakyan)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

Source: https://www.mindreleased.com/s/Book-3_Anguttara-Nikya-A-New-Translation.pdf#page=170

Source revision: ee5230c458ad6c1566f518d5909916ad92d12aebf1240750c5357dd9b5699f30

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Candana source labels: 73. Site text ID: AN 3.73.

Text

73. Mahānāmasakka Sutta (Mahānāma, the Sakyan) At one time, The Blessed One was staying at the Nigrodha monastery, in the Sakyan city of Kapilavatthu. It was during this time, that The Blessed One had just recovered from an illness. Then, Mahānāma the Sakyan approached The Blessed One, and having paid homage to Him, sat down to one side and said to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, a long time ago, I remember The Blessed One saying: ‘Knowledge comes for the one who has a collected mind, not to the who is distracted.’

“But, Bhante, does the collected stability of mind come first and then the knowledge, or does knowledge come first, followed by the collected stability of mind?”

Then, it occurred to the Venerable Ānanda:

‘The Blessed One is still recovering from his illness but the Sakyan Mahānāma is here, asking a very deep question. What if I lead the Sakyan Mahānāma aside and explain it to him?’

Then, the Venerable Ānanda held the Sakyan Mahānāma by the arm and led him away, as he said this to him:

“Mahānāma, The Blessed One has spoken on the virtuous behavior of a Noble Disciple in Training and the virtuous behavior of the one who has gone beyond the Training. He has spoken about the collected stability of mind of the Noble Disciple in Training, and the collected stability of mind of the one who has gone beyond the Training, too. He has also spoken extensively about the wisdom of a Noble Disciple in Training, and the wisdom of the one who has gone beyond the Training, as well.

a. “Now what, Mahānāma, is meant by the virtuous behavior of a Noble Disciple in Training?

“Here Mahānāma, the Bhikkhu lives a virtuous life while observing and being restrained by the Pātimokkha; he is disciplined, possessing a wholesome and beneficial conduct, shunning the possibility of even the slightest misconduct in himself. Thus, having taken on the training rules, he practices the Bhikkhu’s Code of Discipline.

“This is what is meant by the virtuous behavior of the Noble Disciple in Training.

b. “And what, Mahānāma, is the collected stability of mind of a Noble Disciple in Training?

“Here, Mahānāma, overcoming the obstructive five hindrances, the Bhikkhu trains by secluding his mind from running after things that have to do with sensuality; he pulls his attention inwards and becomes quite secluded from sensual pleasures. Thus secluded from unwholesome and bad merit-making states, he enters upon and remains in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thinking and planning, while experiencing a strong flood of spiritual joy and ecstasy, all resulting from such seclusion.

“Later, by stilling his thinking process and without fighting with himself, he turns his attention away from his thoughts by not engaging with them any further, and comes to experience the disappearance of both thinking and planning. In this way, he enters upon and remains in the second jhāna, which continues to be accompanied by a strong flood of spiritual joy and ecstasy, that are now the result of his growing and stable collectedness of heart (samādhi).

“Furthermore, the Bhikkhu goes deeper in his meditation by not holding on to anything, including the experience of spiritual joy, as he witnesses it beginning to vanish and cease. Thus, he abides in a state of equanimity, while being mindful and fully aware, still feeling a subtle ecstasy throughout, as he enters upon and abides in the third jhāna, for which reason the Noble Ones declare:

‘It is such a one indeed, who is serenely mindful; Abiding in happiness, with an ever-present sense of equanimity.’

“Going further, the Bhikkhu gives up both pleasure and pain, and having already gone beyond joy and anguish, he remains in the continuous state of purifying mindfulness, with an ever-

present sense of equanimity, as he enters upon and abides in the fourth jhāna, while experiencing neither pleasure nor pain, having now gone beyond both of them.

“Now, Mahānāma, this is the collected stability of mind of a Noble Disciple in Training.

c. “And what, Mahānāma, is the wisdom of a Noble Disciple in Training?

“Here Mahānāma, the Noble Disciple in Training knows as it really is: This is suffering. The Noble Disciple in Training knows as it really is: This is the cause of suffering. The Noble Disciple in Training knows as it really is: This is the cessation of suffering. And the Noble

Disciple in Training knows as it really is: This is The Path that leads to the very ending and cessation of suffering.

“This then, Mahānāma, is the wisdom of the Noble Disciple in Training.

“Now, Mahānāma, when the Noble Disciple in Training thus lives and behaves with virtue, becoming collected and stable in mind, while possessing wisdom, then with the destruction of the heart’s contaminants, his heart is finally released through wisdom, whereby he here and now realizes, personally, on his own, and with direct knowledge, the Liberation of Heart through Wisdom.

“So, you see, Mahānāma, The Blessed One has spoken on the virtuous behavior of a Noble Disciple in Training and the virtuous behavior of the one who has gone beyond the Training. He has spoken about the collected stability of mind of the Noble Disciple in Training, and the collected stability of mind of the one who has gone beyond the Training, too. He has also spoken extensively about the wisdom of a Noble Disciple in Training, and the wisdom of the one who has gone beyond the Training, as well.”