AN 5.58 — The Licchavi Youths

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Text

Numbered Discourses 5.58

6. Hindrances

The Licchavi Youths

At one time the Buddha was staying near Vesālī, at the Great Wood, in the hall with the peaked roof.

Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, entered Vesālī for alms. Then after the meal, on his return from almsround, he plunged deep into the Great Wood and sat at the root of a tree for the day's meditation.

Now at that time several Licchavi youths took strung bows and, escorted by a pack of hounds, were going for a walk in the Great Wood when they saw the Buddha seated at the root of a tree. When they saw him, they put down their strung bows, dispatched their hounds to one side, and went up to him. They bowed and silently paid homage to the Buddha with cupped palms.

Now at that time Mahānāma the Licchavi was going for a walk in the Great Wood when he saw those Licchavi youths silently paying homage to the Buddha with cupped palms. Seeing this, he went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and expressed this heartfelt sentiment, "They will become Vajjis! They will become Vajjis!"

"But Mahānāma, why do you say that they will become Vajjis?"

"Sir, these Licchavi youths are violent, harsh, and brash. Whenever sweets are left out for families—sugarcane, jujube fruits, pancakes, pies, or fritters—they filch them and eat them up. And they hit women and girls of good families on their backs. But now they're silently paying homage to the Buddha with cupped palms."

"Mahānāma, you can expect only growth, not decline, when you find five qualities in any gentleman—whether he's an anointed aristocratic king, an appointed or hereditary official, an army general, a village chief, a guild chief, or a ruler of his own clan.

What five?

Firstly, a gentleman uses his legitimate wealth—earned by his efforts and initiative, built up with his own hands, gathered by the sweat of the brow—to honor, respect, esteem, and venerate his mother and father. Honored in this way, his mother and father love him with a good heart, wishing: 'Live long! Stay alive for a long time!' When a gentleman is loved by

his mother and father, you can expect only growth, not decline.

Furthermore, a gentleman uses his legitimate wealth to honor, respect, esteem, and venerate his wives and children, bondservants, workers, and staff. Honored in this way, his wives and children, bondservants, workers, and staff love him with a good heart, wishing: 'Live long! Stay alive for a long time!' When a gentleman is loved by his wives and children, bondservants, workers, and staff, you can expect only growth, not decline.

Furthermore, a gentleman uses his legitimate wealth to honor, respect, esteem, and venerate those who work the neighboring fields, and those he does business with. Honored in this way, those who work the neighboring fields, and those he does business with love him with a good heart, wishing: 'Live long! Stay alive for a long time!' When a gentleman is loved by those who work the neighboring fields, and those he does business with, you can expect only growth, not decline.

Furthermore, a gentleman uses his legitimate wealth to honor, respect, esteem, and venerate the deities who receive spirit-offerings. Honored in this way, the deities who receive spirit-offerings love him with a good heart, wishing: 'Live long! Stay alive for a long time!' When a gentleman is loved by the deities, you can expect only growth, not decline.

Furthermore, a gentleman uses his legitimate wealth to honor, respect, esteem, and venerate ascetics and brahmins. Honored in this way, ascetics and brahmins love him with a good heart, wishing: 'Live long! Stay alive for a long time!' When a gentleman is loved by ascetics and brahmins, you can expect only growth, not decline.

You can expect only growth, not decline, when you find these five qualities in any gentleman— whether he's an anointed aristocratic king, an appointed or hereditary official, an army general, a village chief, a guild chief, or a ruler of his own clan.

He's always dutiful to his mother and father,

and for the good of his wives and children.

He looks after those in his household,

and those dependent on him for their livelihood.

A bountiful and ethical person

looks after the welfare of relatives—

both those who have passed away,

and those alive at present.

While living at home, an astute person

uses legitimate means to give rise to joy

for ascetics, brahmins,

and also the gods.

Having done good,

he’s venerable and praiseworthy.

They praise him in this life,

and he departs to rejoice in heaven.”