

Anguttara Nikāya

The Numerical Discourses

Aṭṭhakanipāta
(Book of the Eights)

AN 8.11

Verañjā Sutta
“At Verañjā”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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I have personally heard this.

Once, while The Blessed One was living at Verañjā, He was sitting at the root of a Neem tree dedicated to Naḷeru, when a brahmin from Verañjā approached The Blessed One, and after exchanging friendly greetings with Him, sat to one side and said:

“Master Gautama, I have heard the following report about you:

‘The recluse Gautama does not pay homage to, nor worships, nor respects elders; he does not offer a seat nor stands out of respect, nor bows down to brahmin elders, who are advanced in years, burdened by age, having come to the end of their lives.’

“And now, I see that this indeed is true! For, the recluse Gautama does not pay homage to, nor worships, nor respects brahmin elders, as I see him not offering a seat nor standing out of respect, nor bowing down to brahmin elders, who are advanced in years, burdened by age, having come to the end of their lives.

“Now, Master Gautama, this is quite an inappropriate and disrespectful conduct!”

“Brahmin, in this world, together with its gods, Māras, Brahmā and the Community of recluses and religious practitioners, I do not see *anyone* for me to pay homage to, or worship, or offer a seat or bow down to. For, *if* The Tathāgata were to pay homage to, or worship, or offer a seat or bow down to anyone, that person’s head would simply explode, splitting into pieces!”

“I see, Master Gautama lacks modesty or tact!”

1. “Brahmin, there might be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that I lack modesty or tact –

“Brahmin, as it relates to enjoying pleasures gained from visible forms, sounds, odors, flavors and touches, all of which The Tathāgata has pulled out from their roots, eradicating them all, ending them like a palm tree stump that’s cut in half, making it a thing that could never grow or rise again; now *that*, Brahmin, would be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that the Recluse Gautama lacks modesty or tact, but this, of course, is *not* what you are referring to in your accusation.”

“I see, Master Gautama is inconsiderate and unamiable!”

2. “Brahmin, there might be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that I am inconsiderate –

“Brahmin, as it relates to enjoying pleasures gained from visible forms, sounds, odors, flavors and touches, all of which The Tathāgata has pulled out from their roots, eradicating them all, ending them like a palm tree stump that’s cut in half, making it a thing that could never grow or rise again; now *that*, brahmin, would be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that the Recluse Gautama is inconsiderate and unamiable, but this, of course, is *not* what you are referring to in your accusation.”

“I see, Master Gautama teaches indifference, encouraging inaction and passivity!”

3. “Brahmin, there might be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that I teach indifference, encouraging inaction and passivity –

“After all, brahmin, I *do* teach indifference, encouraging inaction and impassivity towards all evil and unwholesome bodily misbehavior; towards all evil and unwholesome verbal misbehavior; and towards all evil and unwholesome mental misbehavior, in addition to any and all kinds of harmful and bad actions.

“Therefore, brahmin, this would be the situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that the Recluse Gautama teaches indifference, encouraging inaction and impassivity, but this, of course, is *not* what you are referring to in your accusation.”

“I see, Master Gautama teaches annihilationism.”

4. “Brahmin, there might be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that I teach annihilationism –

“You see, brahmin, I *do* teach the annihilation of lust, hatred, and delusion, in addition to the annihilation of any and all kinds of harmful and bad actions.

“Therefore, brahmin, this would be the situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that the Recluse Gautama teaches annihilationism, but this, of course, is *not* what you are referring to in your accusation.”

“I see, Master Gautama lives with disgust towards all things!”

5. “Brahmin, there might be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that I teach and live with disgust –

“You see, brahmin, I *do* live with disgust towards all types of bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct, in addition to any and all kinds of harmful and evil actions.

“Therefore, brahmin, this would be the situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that the Recluse Gautama lives with disgust, but this, of course, is *not* what you are referring to in your accusation.”

“I see, Master Gautama is a destroyer of families, driving them apart.”

6. “Brahmin, there might be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that I am a destroyer –

“After all, brahmin, I *am* a destroyer, for I do teach individuals and their families the Dhamma that dismantles and drives out lust, hatred, and delusion from people’s hearts. That, in addition to any and all kinds of harmful and evil qualities that are driven out from them.

“Therefore, brahmin, this would be the situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that the Recluse Gautama is a destroyer, but this, of course, is *not* what you are referring to in your accusation.”

“I see, Master Gautama teaches crushing through self-burnout.”

7. “Brahmin, there might be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that I teach crushing –

“You see, brahmin, I *do* teach and emphasize the crushing and burning out of evil and unwholesome bodily conduct, verbal unwholesome conduct, and mental unwholesome conduct. This, because I declare, that the one who has completely removed the unwholesome and evil qualities from one’s heart, *is* in fact ‘a crusher,’ someone who has burned out and cut off all evil and harmful qualities from their very roots, just like a palm tree, turning it into a dead stump, having obliterated it from ever growing any shoots again.

The Tathāgata, therefore, has destroyed and eliminated all manner of evil and unwholesome qualities from His heart, by crushing, burning out, and cutting off all evil and harmful qualities from their very roots, just like a palm tree, turning it into a dead stump, having obliterated it from ever growing any shoots again.

“Therefore, brahmin, this would be the situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that the Recluse Gautama teaches crushing, but this again, of course, is *not* what you are referring to in your accusation.”

“I see, Master Gautama teaches the ending of life.”

8. “Brahmin, there might be a situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that I teach the ending of life –

“After all, brahmin, I *do* teach the ending of perpetually existing; giving up the desire to keep going from womb to womb in the endless cycles of rebecoming; putting a final stop to *all* future rebirths from taking place again. This, because I declare, that the one who has completely eradicated and removed the desire for rebecoming from one’s heart, *is* in fact ‘an ender,’ someone who has given up and cut off any chances for a future rebirth to take place; having cut it off just like a palm tree, turning it into a dead stump, obliterating it from ever growing any shoots again.

“The Tathāgata, therefore, has completely given up and thus ended all perpetual future existences, putting a final stop to *all* future rebirths from taking place again. This, because He has eradicated and removed completely from His heart the desire for rebecoming and therefore, *is*, in fact, ‘an ender,’ the One who has given up and cut off any chances for a future rebirth from taking place; having cut it off just like a palm tree, turning it into a dead stump, obliterating it from ever growing any shoots again.

“Therefore, brahmin, this would be the situation, according to which it may be possible to claim that the Recluse Gautama teaches the ending of life, but this, of course, is *not* what you are referring to in your accusation.”

“Imagine, brahmin, a hen that has laid eight, ten, or twelve eggs, which she had been taking care of by protecting and incubating them properly, keeping them warm by sitting on them, and not leaving them exposed or away from her warming feathers and protection.

“Now, the first chick hatches safely, as it finally breaks free by coming out of its eggshell, piercing its way out with its beak and claws. Would you call this chick the youngest of the chicks to come out, or their most senior?”

“Master Gautama, that chick *must* be called their most senior, for it is the very first among the other chicks to hatch safely, and break free.”

“In the same manner, brahmin, amidst this blind and deluded population that is shrouded in darkness, locked in their shell of ignorance, I alone have broken free, by piercing through the shell of ignorance, realizing for myself this Noble and Perfect Awakening, and with direct knowledge and understanding. So, you see, brahmin, it is I, who am the Senior to all, the Chief among all beings in existence!

“This, brahmin, took place as my persevering effort was roused and continued while being unshaken and unfluctuating, with mindfulness firmly established, unperplexed and unconfused, as my body remained appeased and without any movement, and my heart fully collected and brought to unified oneness.

“It was then, brahmin, that while living secluded and removed from sensual desires and unwholesome thoughts, I entered upon and remained in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by thinking and pondering, with joy and pleasure that arise from such seclusion.

“Next, through the disappearance of both thinking and pondering, I entered upon and remained in the second *jhāna*, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind, in the absence of thinking and pondering, with joy and pleasure that are the result of collectedness of mind.

“Further, with the detachment from and fading away of joy, I remained in equanimity, while being mindful and fully aware with pristine clarity, experiencing pleasure and happiness within the body, as I entered and remained in the third *jhāna*, about which the Noble Ones declare: *‘It is such a one indeed who is serenely mindful; abiding in happiness; with an ever-present sense of equanimity.’*

“Afterwards, by giving up both pleasure and pain, and having already gone beyond joy and anguish, I remained in a state of purifying mindfulness with the ever-growing sense of equanimity, while experiencing neither pleasure nor pain, having gone beyond both, as I attained to the fourth *jhāna*.

“And when the heart was thus collected and concentrated, purified, without any blemish, malleable and in an imperturbable state, I directed the mind to recollect the manifold past lives I have lived. Thus, I recollected my many past lives in all their details and features; 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 them all in this manner:

‘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 was my life-span; 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.’

“Brahmin, this was the first True Knowledge that occurred in the first watch of the night, wherein the darkness of ignorance completely vanished and the brilliant light of True Knowledge arose in me, as I remained diligent in my perseverance with aroused energy, and resolute in my practice, which is what would happen in the case of any meditator, who is equally diligent, resolute, and dedicated.

“This, brahmin, was my first ‘break-through’ just like that chick’s, that freed itself from the eggshell.

“Further, with the heart that had become so purified and collected, free from any defilements and without any blemishes in it, workable, flexible, soft but steady, and also imperturbable, I directed it to know the disappearance and reappearance of beings.

Thus, by utilizing the Divine Eye, which is pure and far superior to those of human and other beings, I applied the psychic power of knowing the destinations of beings, as they die and reappear into the different realms of existence. Thus, I clearly saw all types of beings dying at the end of life, whether being reborn into exalted or miserable states, beautiful or ugly, fortunate, or unfortunate, as I witnessed by seeing directly, and therefore, understanding clearly how beings pass on to different states according to their actions, and thus I knew how:

‘These beings who behaved badly through their bodily actions, their speech, and their mental actions, being disrespectful towards the Noble Ones, while grasping onto their wrong views, and on account of their wrong views in action, with the breakup of the body, after death, are now reborn in a state of misery, utter deprivation, in a bad destination, in evil states, and in the hells; but these worthy beings who behaved virtuously through their bodily actions, their speech, and their mental actions, being respectful towards the Noble Ones, being right in their views, and on account of their right views in action, with the breakup of the body, after death, are now reborn in a state of happiness, in a good destination, even in the heavenly world.’

“Therefore, with the Divine Eye, which is far superior to those of human beings and other animals, I saw clearly beings dying at the end of their life and being reborn into either exalted or miserable states, beautiful or ugly, fortunate, or unfortunate, as I witnessed by seeing directly and understanding clearly, how beings pass on to different states according to their actions.

“Brahmin, this was the second True Knowledge that occurred in the middle watch of the night, wherein the darkness of ignorance completely vanished, and the brilliant light of True Knowledge arose in me, as I remained diligent in my perseverance with aroused energy, and resolute in my practice, which is what would happen in the case of any meditator, who is equally diligent, resolute, and dedicated.

“This, brahmin, was my second ‘break-through’ just like that chick’s, that freed itself from the eggshell.

“Later, as the heart continued dwelling in that purified and collected state, free from any defilements and without any blemishes in it; workable, flexible, soft but steady, and also imperturbable, I directed it towards the knowledge of seeing and experiencing the destruction and end of the contaminants of the heart (*āsavas*). Thus,

“I directly and finally saw clearly, as it truly is: *‘This is suffering.’*

I directly knew and saw as it truly is: *‘This is the origin of suffering.’*

I directly knew and saw as it truly is: *‘This is the cessation of suffering.’*

I directly knew and saw as it truly is: *‘This is the Path leading to the cessation of suffering.’*

“Also,

I directly and finally saw as it truly is: *‘These are the contaminants.’*

I directly and finally saw as it truly is: *‘This is the origin of the contaminants.’*

I directly and finally saw as it truly is: *‘This is the cessation of the contaminants.’*

I directly and finally saw as it truly is: *‘This is the Path leading to the cessation of the contaminants.’*

“And when I knew and saw directly in this manner, my heart was liberated from the contaminant of sensual desire, from the contaminant of the desire to rebecome, and from the contaminant of ignorance.

“When it was released thus, there arose the sublime knowledge in me: *‘I am Liberated!’*

“And I directly knew, immediately:

*‘Birth is now finally destroyed.
The Holy Life has been fully lived.
What had to be done has now been done.
There is nothing more to be done, nor there is any further state of becoming for me.’*

“Brahmin, this was the third True Knowledge that occurred in the last watch of the night, wherein the darkness of ignorance completely vanished, and the brilliant light of True Knowledge arose in me, as I remained diligent in my perseverance with aroused energy, and resolute in my practice, which is what would happen in the case of any meditator, who is equally diligent, resolute, and dedicated.

“This, brahmin, was my third ‘break-through’ just like that chick’s, that freed itself from the eggshell.”

When this was said, the brahmin of Verañjā exclaimed to The Blessed One:

“Master Gautama is the Chief! Master Gautama is the Eldest indeed! Now, I see and understand Master Gautama.

“It is marvelous! It truly is wonderful! Master Gautama has clarified the Dhamma in many ways, as though He were to turn upright what had been turned upside-down, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see. Bhante, I go to The Blessed One for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of Bhikkhus. May The Blessed One accept me as his lay disciple, who has taken refuge in Him from today until the end of life.”

Sādhū

Sādhū

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