AN 8.25 — Mahanama Sutta: Being a Lay Buddhist

English translation by Kumara Bhikkhu.

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Text

Once the Blessed One was dwelling among the Sakyas in Nigrodha Park at Kapilavatthu. There, Mahanama the Sakyan approached the Blessed One. Having approached and paid respect to the Blessed One, he sat aside. Then, seated aside, Mahanama the Sakyan said thus to the Blessed One:

"Venerable sir, in what way is one a lay follower?"[1]

"Mahanama, inasmuch as one has gone to the Buddha for refuge, has gone to the Dhamma for refuge, has gone to the Sangha for refuge; in that way, Mahanama, one is a lay follower."

"Then, venerable sir, in what way is a lay follower virtuous?"

"Mahanama, inasmuch as a lay follower abstains from destroying living beings; abstains from taking what is not given; abstains from sexual misconduct; abstains from lying; and abstains from wine, liquor and intoxicants that are causes for heedlessness; in that way, Mahanama, a lay follower is virtuous."

"Then, venerable sir, in what way is a lay follower engaged in his own welfare, but not in others' welfare?"

"Mahanama, inasmuch as a lay follower is possessed of faith himself, but rouses not others to possess faith; is possessed of virtue himself, but rouses not others to possess virtue; is possessed of liberality himself, but rouses not others to possess liberality; is himself desirous of meeting with monks, but rouses not others to meet with monks; is himself desirous of hearing the true Dhamma, but rouses not others to hear the true Dhamma; is himself habitually mindful of the Dhamma that is heard, but rouses not others to be mindful of the Dhamma; has himself ascertained the meaning/benefit of the Dhamma that is heard, but rouses not others to ascertain the meaning/benefit; having known the meaning/benefit, having known the Dhamma, is himself committed to the practice according to the Dhamma, but rouses not others to be committed to the practice according to the Dhamma; in that way, Mahanama, a lay follower is engaged in his own welfare, but not in others' welfare."

"Then, venerable sir, in what way is a lay follower engaged in his own welfare and in others' welfare?"

"Mahanama, inasmuch as a lay follower is possessed of faith himself, and rouses others to possess faith; is possessed of virtue himself, and rouses others to possess virtue; is possessed of liberality himself, and rouses others to possess liberality; is himself desirous of meeting with monks, and rouses others to meet with monks; is himself desirous of hearing the true Dhamma, and rouses others to hear the true Dhamma; is himself habitually mindful of the Dhamma that is heard, and rouses others to be mindful of the Dhamma; is himself ascertained of the meaning/benefit of the Dhamma that is heard, and rouses others to ascertain the meaning/benefit; having known the meaning/benefit, having known the Dhamma, is himself committed to the practice according to the Dhamma, and rouses others to be committed to the practice according to the Dhamma; in that way, Mahanama, a lay follower is engaged in his own welfare and in others' welfare."

Notes

1.

Pali: upasaka.