Snp 2.4 — Maha-mangala Sutta: Blessings

English translation by Narada Thera.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: UNKNOWN. Entire protected source unit, including notes and verses, preserved; canonical completeness has not been independently established.

Text

Thus have I heard.[1] On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling at Anathapindika's monastery, in Jeta's Grove,[2] near Savatthi.[3] Now when the night was far spent, a certain deity whose surpassing splendor illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Exalted One and, drawing near, respectfully saluted him and stood at one side. Standing thus, he addressed the Exalted One in verse:

"Many deities and men, yearning after good, have pondered on blessings.[4] Pray, tell me the greatest blessing!"

[The Buddha:]

"Not to associate with the foolish,[5] but to associate with the wise; and to honor those who are worthy of honor — this is the greatest blessing.

To reside in a suitable locality,[6] to have done meritorious actions in the past and to set oneself in the right course[7] — this is the greatest blessing.

To have much learning, to be skillful in handicraft,[8] well-trained in discipline,[9] and to be of good speech[10] — this is the greatest blessing.

To support mother and father, to cherish wife and children, and to be engaged in peaceful occupation — this is the greatest blessing.

To be generous in giving, to be righteous in conduct,[11] to help one's relatives, and to be blameless in action — this is the greatest blessing.

To loathe more evil and abstain from it, to refrain from intoxicants,[12] and to be steadfast in virtue — this is the greatest blessing.

To be respectful,[13] humble, contented and grateful; and to listen to the Dhamma on due occasions[14] — this is the greatest blessing.

To be patient and obedient, to associate with monks and to have religious discussions on due occasions — this is the greatest blessing.

Self-restraint,[15] a holy and chaste life, the perception of the Noble Truths and the realisation of Nibbana — this is the greatest blessing.

A mind unruffled by the vagaries of fortune,[16] from sorrow freed, from defilements cleansed, from fear liberated[17] — this is the greatest blessing.

Those who thus abide, ever remain invincible, in happiness established. These are the greatest blessings."[18]

Notes

(Derived mainly from the Commentaries.)

1.

This Sutta appears in the Sutta-Nipata (v.258ff) and in the Khuddakapatha. See Maha-mangala Jataka (No. 453). For a detailed explanation see Life's Highest Blessing by Dr. R.L. Soni, WHEEL No. 254/256.

2.

Anathapindika, lit., 'He who gives alms to the helpless'; his former name was Sudatta. After his conversion to Buddhism, he bought the grove belonging to the Prince Jeta, and established a monastery which was subsequently named Jetavana. It was in this monastery that the Buddha observed most of his vassana periods (rainy seasons — the three months' retreat beginning with the full-moon of July). Many are the discourses delivered and many are the incidents connected with the Buddha's life that happened at Jetavana. It was here that the Buddha ministered to the sick monk neglected by his companions, advising them: "Whoever, monks, would wait upon me, let him wait upon the sick." It was here that

the Buddha so poignantly taught the law of impermanence, by asking the bereaved young woman Kisagotami who brought her dead child, to fetch a grain of mustard seed from a home where there has been no bereavement.

3.

Identified with modern Sahet-Mahet, near Balrampur.

4.

According to the Commentary, mangala means that which is conducive to happiness and prosperity.

5.

This refers not only to the stupid and uncultured, but also includes the wicked in thought, word and deed.

6.

Any place where monks, nuns and lay devotees continually reside; where pious folk are bent on the performance of the ten meritorious deeds, and where the Dhamma exists as a living principle.

7.

Making the right resolve for abandoning immorality for morality, faithlessness for faith and selfishness for generosity.

8.

The harmless crafts of the householder by which no living being is injured and nothing unrighteous done; and the crafts of the homeless monk, such as stitching the robes, etc.

9.

Vinaya means discipline in thought, word and deed. The commentary speaks of two kinds of discipline — that of the householder, which is abstinence from the ten immoral actions (akusala-kammapatha), and that of the monk which is the non-transgression of the offences enumerated in the Patimokkha (the code of the monk's rules) or the 'fourfold moral purity' (catu-parisuddhi-sila).

10.

Good speech that is opportune, truthful, friendly, profitable and spoken with thoughts of loving-kindness.

11.

Righteous conduct is the observance of the ten good actions (kusala-kammapatha) in thought, word and deed: freeing the mind of greed, ill-will and wrong views; avoiding speech that is untruthful, slanderous, abusive and frivolous; and the non- committal acts of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

12.

Total abstinence from alcohol and intoxicating drugs.

13.

Towards monks (and of course also to the clergy of other religions), teachers, parents, elders, superiors, etc.

14.

For instance, when one is harassed by evil thoughts.

15.

Self-restraint (tapo): the suppression of lusts and hates by the control of the senses; and the suppression of indolence by the rousing of energy.

16.

Loka-dhamma, i.e., conditions which are necessarily connected with life in this world; there are primarily eight of them: gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pain and joy.

17.

Each of these three expressions refers to the mind of the arahant: asoka: sorrowless; viraja: stainless, i.e., free from lust, hatred and ignorance; khema: security from the bonds of sense desires (kama), repeated existence (bhava), false views (ditthi) and ignorance (avijja).

18.

The above-mentioned thirty-eight blessings.