Snp 4.13 — Mahābyūha Sutta

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.
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Text

Snp. 4.13

Mahābyūha Sutta

“Greater Discourse on Getting

Ready for Battle”

895. “There are those, who while stuck in their own views and narratives, continue arguing by stating: ‘This alone, and nothing else, is true!’

“Would such people be inviting to themselves criticism and blame from the wise, or would they be gaining praise for this staunchly held position of theirs?

896. “I declare that these two (blame and praise) are in themselves insufficient as outcome measures, especially for the one seeking peace, detached from engaging in any kind of debates. Therefore, one should avoid getting into any disputes altogether, because peace and tranquility can never be found where debating and arguing exist.

897. “So, despite what is commonly accepted or even encouraged by ignorant folk, the wise simply stay away from becoming involved in such matters. For, how could the one who avoids having likes and dislikes of things seen and heard, end up getting involved in such foolish affairs, in the first place?

898. “Those holding on strictly to virtue, declare: ‘purity comes only as the result of having restraint throughout life,’ and having undertaken their vows, they train in them with complete dedication and undeterred focus. However, by looking at purity to be solely the result of ethical living, they claim themselves to be supreme experts; yet as a result, they continue being stuck in saṃsāra, moving from one birth to the next, loitering around.

899. “And when such a person fails in maintaining his ethical vows and virtue, he becomes distraught and starts trembling, for he has failed in his task, and therefore, feels he has ‘lost his purity.’ He feels estranged and abandoned from a happy life, longing to recapture

his sense of purity, being adrift, just like a traveler on a journey who has lost his way; left alone in the desert, wanting to get back home.

900. “But the moment you give up your avid reliance on mere virtue as your only source of true purity, you also give up all those shackles of ‘pure and impure’ deeds, the results of blindly following mere rites and rituals, together with actions that may be seen as blameworthy or blameless, by the wise. Suddenly, there is no more longing for purity over impurity, and with no more anxiety or confusion left in the heart, while living in solitude, one becomes quiet, finding true peace and tranquility.

901. “Meanwhile, many in their revulsion to having the stains of kamma, try to get rid of them by relying on their ascetic practices of self-mortification, validating and feeding their wrong views further by what is seen, heard, or deduced. As a result, they mistakenly claim that ‘purity happens as the natural outcome of continual existences in

saṃsāra.’ But, while leaving their craving untouched and as strong as ever, they keep drifting in rebirths, from one life to the next.

902. “Yet, there are those who yearn for more, experiencing anxiety as they tremble, lost in prayer when it is their time to die; unsure of what’s coming next, seeing that they still have plans that are now left ‘incomplete.’ But for those with no more passing away, nor any realms to reappear into, what need is there to tremble or be anxious about? Whom would they need to pray to, and for what?”

903. “What one calls to be the ultimate or highest, others call the ‘lowest’ and ‘most inferior.’ So, how could one tell as to which one among them could be saying the truth, seeing that each claims to be an expert in their own right?”

904. “Claiming their teaching to be the ‘most perfect,’ while calling those of others’ ‘flawed and inferior,’ they continue arguing and debating, each holding their own conclusions (and no one else’s), to be the absolute truth.

905. “Of those stating that the teaching of another is inferior, lower, or lacking in substance, whilst their own teaching happens to be the best, having substance and depth - it is safe to say that none would, in fact, be speaking the truth, merely coming from an entirely biased point of view, and in a stubborn way.

906. “But, so long as people are only interested in applying the standards found and used in their own teaching, without considering the possible benefits to be found in the teachings of others, then no one will see beyond their own path, and

thereby, truth or purity as such would remain to be a personal matter, being exclusive and ‘unique’ to each.

907. “The Noble Brahmin, however, after wisely investigating and testing, no longer attaches himself to teachings which require the authentication of someone else, in order

to be valid. Instead, by relying on his own direct experience and understanding of the Dhamma, as the ultimate 'confirmation,' he leaves all types of arguments and debating behind him, in the dust.

908. "While others claim that their confidence comes from what they know, or what they see, and what they are taught as to how things are supposed to be, in truth, for them 'purity' remains as the mere product of belief, an opinion, a point of view, and not much else. But, when one has truly seen, and therefore, directly understands, then, why would there even be a need for having views or opinions about things? Nevertheless, the ignorant ones staunchly insist that 'purity must be passed on from another, in order for it to be true.'

909. "When seeing, what in fact is being seen is none other than nāmarūpa. So, when experiencing this thing called 'seeing,' all that is being witnessed is name and form. 'That is what in fact those people are seeing,' declare the wise ones, who understand how true purity can never be experienced by way of nāmarūpa.

910. "It is nearly impossible to teach someone who is attached to their solidified worldview, as they insist on seeing reality only through their own preconceived notions about it. This, because he continues talking in reference to purity or happiness 'being there,' on one end, but while using

references and conclusions he has heard about from others, of it being 'over there,' on the opposite end (of the spectrum).

911. "However, the Noble Brahmin, having attained to Right View, does not get stuck in such conclusions, for he is no more a victim of views. Instead, having already understood the pitfalls of preconceived notions and conclusions made about things, he stands aloof and never gets his hands dirty with such matters. Thus, he remains serenely peaceful, while ignorant fools lose their composure.

912. "In this way, by having released himself from the knots, the Sage stays away with no bonds left for him to become tied to, whilst various camps of disputes continue forming around him. Thus, he remains content among the discontented; dwelling in equanimity and pleasantly calm, while others live and breathe restlessly.

913. "In giving up the contaminants of the heart carried over from the past, and not making any new ones either, the wise one finds himself no longer at the mercy of his old tendencies, nor becoming a mouthpiece for conclusions or beliefs. Instead, being freed from the net of views, he neither gets attached to the world, nor falls into the trap of self-loathing.

914. "Thus, staying uninvolved with all mental phenomena that may arise, be they the results of what is seen, heard, or thought, such a Sage who has put down his burden, is truly released, and therefore, has no further need to imagine anything, or force anything, or even yearn for anything."

This is what The Blessed One said.