Snp 5.8 — Nandamāṇavapucchā Sutta — Questions of the Brahmin Nanda

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.
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Text

Snp. 5.8

Nandamāṇavapucchā Sutta

“Questions of the Brahmin Nanda”

1077. Then, the brahmin Nanda addressed The Blessed One by saying:

“People call this or that person a ‘holy man’ or a ‘sage’ in the world, but I would like to know on what basis it is truly so, that the person in question may truly be a ‘holy person’ or a ‘sage’? Is it the accumulation of knowledge that makes one a sage, or is it actually because of the manner in which one lives one’s life?”

1078. The Blessed One replied:

“Nanda, it is not through learning, or adherence to a particular viewpoint, or tradition that has been passed on, or hearsay, or the accumulation of knowledge that makes one a sage in the world. However, it is the one who lives wandering without the need to socialize, nor seeking companionship here or there, whom I declare a True Sage; the one who dwells unconfused, without any expectations, wishes or desires left in his heart.”

1079. Then, the brahmin Nanda said:

“O! Blessed One, there are and have been in the past countless recluses and brahmins, who declare that purity is achieved through whatever it is they see or hear; through following this or that tradition; or by means of living with mere virtuous conduct; or this many rules; or the performance of rites, rituals, and chanting, and various other ways. But I ask you, O! Speaker of Truth, have such people truly attained to purity? Have they really crossed over to the farther shore and overcome birth and aging?”

1080. And The Blessed One replied:

“Those countless recluses and brahmins, who declare that purity is achieved through whatever it is they see or hear; through following this or that tradition; or by means of living with mere virtuous conduct; or this many rules; or the performance of rites, rituals, and chanting, and various other ways,

“Despite the length of time whereby they dedicate themselves to engage in all those practices they claim as modes for attaining to purity, such people have not attained to purity at all, nor therefore, crossed over to the farther shore, nor overcome birth and aging at all. This, I declare.”

1081. Then, the brahmin Nanda inquired further:

“If, despite the length of time spent by those recluses and brahmins, who declare that purity is achieved through whatever it is they see or hear; through following this or that

tradition; or by means of living with mere virtuous conduct; or this many rules; or the performance of rites, rituals, and chanting, and various other ways, as I am now understanding from The Blessed One’s declaration, contrary to their claims, those people have not in fact attained to purity at all, nor therefore, crossed over to the farther shore and overcome birth and aging, then who, may I ask, has indeed crossed over, Sir? Please help me understand this, O! Blessed One.”

1082. And The Blessed One replied:

“Nanda, I do not say that all recluses and brahmins are shrouded and thus inescapably stuck in birth and aging.

“There are those, however, who have given up whatever it is they see or hear; having abandoned views and the following of this or that tradition, or the belief that purity comes as a natural outcome of living with mere virtuous conduct, or by adhering to this many rules, or the performance of rites, rituals, and chanting, and various other ways. It is they, who, through understanding and then giving up of craving entirely, have now freed themselves from the āsavas, the contaminants of the heart. They indeed are the ‘Flood-Crossing Men,’ I declare!”

1083. And the brahmin Nanda added:

“My heart is brimful with joy in having heard the life-giving instructions from The Blessed One Himself! The Great Sage, Gautama, has meticulously and exquisitely explained to me what it means to be living with purity without any assets or acquisitions!

“Those who have given up whatever they see or hear; abandoned views and the following of this or that tradition; or the belief that purity comes as a natural outcome of living with mere virtuous conduct; or by adhering to this many rules; or the performance of rites, rituals, and chanting, and various other ways, and who, through understanding and then giving up of craving entirely, have now freed themselves from the āsavas, the

contaminants of the heart!

“I also call such noble beings the real ‘Flood-Crossing Men!’”