Thag 16.10 — Pārāsariya (3rd)

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Text

Verses of the Senior Monks 16.10

The Book of the Twenties

Chapter One

Pārāsariya (3rd)

This thought came to the ascetic
in the forest full of flowers,
as he was seated alone
meditating in seclusion:
“The behavior of the mendicants
these days seems different
from when the protector of the world,
the best of men, was still here.
Their robes were only for covering the private parts,
and protection from the cold and wind.
They ate in moderation,
content with whatever they were offered.
Whether food was fine or coarse,
a little or a lot,
they ate only for sustenance,
without greed or gluttony.
They weren’t so very eager
for the requisites of life,
such as tonics and other necessities,

as they were for the ending of defilements.
In the wilderness, at a tree's root,
in caves and caverns,
fostering seclusion,
they lived with that as their final goal.
They were used to simple things, unburdensome,
gentle, not pompous at heart,
unsullied, not scurrilous,
their thoughts were intent on the goal.
That's why they inspired confidence,
in their movements, eating, and practice;
their deportment was as smooth
as a stream of oil.
With the utter ending of all defilements,
those senior monks have now been quenched.
They were great meditators and great benefactors—
there are few like them today.
With the ending
of good principles and understanding,
the victor's teaching,
full of all excellent qualities, falls apart.
This is the season
for bad principles and defilements.
Those who are ready for seclusion
are all that's left of the true Dhamma.
As they grow, the defilements
possess most people;
they play with fools, it seems to me,
like monsters with the mad.

Overcome by defilements,
they run here and there
among the bases for defilement,
as if they had declared war on themselves.
Having forsaken the true teaching,
they argue with each other.
Following wrong views
they think, ‘This is better.’
They cut off their wealth,
children, and wife to go forth.
But then they do what they shouldn’t,
for the sake of a measly spoon of almsfood.
They eat until their bellies are full,
and then they lie to sleep on their backs.
When they wake up, they keep on chatting,
the kind of talk the Teacher criticized.
Valuing all the arts and crafts,
they train themselves in them.
Not being settled internally, they think,
‘This is the goal of the ascetic life.’
They provide clay, oil, and talcum powder,
water, lodgings, and food
for householders,
expecting more in return.
And in addition, tooth-picks of white fig,
flowers, food to eat,
well-cooked almsfood,
mangoes and myrobalans.
In medicine they are like doctors,

in business like householders,
in makeup like prostitutes,
in sovereignty like aristocrats.
Cheats, frauds,
false witnesses, sly:
using multiple plans,
they enjoy things of the flesh.
Pursuing shams, contrivances, and plans,
by such means
they accumulate a lot of wealth
for the sake of their own livelihood.
They assemble the community
for business rather than Dhamma.
They teach the Dhamma to others
for gain, not for the goal.
Those barred from the Saṅgha
quarrel over the Saṅgha's property.
Lacking conscience, they do not care
that they live on the earnings of others.
Some with shaven head and robe
are not devoted to practice,
but wish only to be honored,
besotted with property and reverence.
When things have come to this,
it's not easy these days
to realize what has not yet been realized,
or to preserve what has been realized.
When shoeless on a thorny path,
one would walk

very mindfully;
that’s how a sage should walk in the village.
Remembering the meditators of old,
and recollecting their conduct,
even in the latter days,
it’s still possible to realize freedom from death.”
That is what the ascetic, whose faculties
were fully developed, said in the sāl tree grove.
The brahmin, the seer, became fully extinguished,
putting an end to all future lives.