Ud 5.3 — With Suppabuddha the Leper

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/ud5.3/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
License: CC0-1.0 — https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/

Text

Heartfelt Sayings 5.3

With Suppabuddha the Leper

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground. At that time in Rājagaha there was a leper called Suppabuddha. He was a poor person, destitute, and pitiful. Now, at that time the Buddha was teaching Dhamma, surrounded by a large assembly.

Suppabuddha saw the crowd seated off in the distance and thought, "Surely some fresh and cooked foods will be distributed there. Why don't I approach the crowd? Hopefully I'll get something to eat."

So he approached the crowd where he saw the Buddha teaching Dhamma, surrounded by a large assembly. When he saw this he thought, "There's no food being distributed here. The ascetic Gotama is teaching Dhamma in an assembly. Why don't I also listen to the teaching?" Right there he sat down to one side, thinking, "I also will listen to the teaching."

Then the Buddha focused on encompassing the minds of everyone in the assembly, thinking, "Who here is capable of understanding the teaching?" He saw Suppabuddha sitting in the assembly, and thought, "He is capable of understanding the teaching." He gave a step by step talk especially for Suppabuddha on giving, ethical conduct, and heaven. He revealed the drawbacks of sensual pleasures, so sordid and corrupt, and the benefit of renunciation. When the Buddha knew that Suppabuddha's mind was ready, pliable, rid of hindrances, elated, and confident he revealed the special teaching of the Buddhas: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path. Just as a clean cloth rid of stains would properly absorb dye, in that very seat the stainless, immaculate vision of the Dhamma arose in Suppabuddha: "Everything that is liable to arise is liable to cease."

Then Suppabuddha saw, attained, understood, and fathomed the Dhamma. He went beyond doubt, got rid of indecision, and became self-assured and independent of others regarding the Teacher's instructions. He rose from his seat and went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said:

"Excellent, sir! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what's there, the Buddha has made the teaching clear in many ways. I go for refuge to the Buddha, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. From this day forth, may the Buddha remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life."

After Suppabuddha had been educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired with a Dhamma talk by the Buddha, he got up from his seat, bowed, and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before leaving. But soon after Suppabuddha had left, a cow with a baby calf charged at him and took his life.

Then several mendicants went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said, "The leper named Suppabuddha, after being educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired with a Dhamma talk by the Buddha, has passed away. Where has he been reborn in his next life?"

"Mendicants, Suppabuddha was astute. He practiced in line with the teaching, and did not trouble me about the teachings. With the ending of three fetters, Suppabuddha is a stream-enterer, not liable to be reborn in the underworld, assured, destined for awakening."

When he said this, one of the mendicants said to the Buddha, "What is the cause, sir, what is the reason why Suppabuddha became a leper, a poor person, destitute, and pitiful?"

"Once upon a time, mendicants, Suppabuddha used to be a financier's son right here in Rājagaha. On his way to visit a park, he saw Tagarasikhī, an independent Buddha, entering the city for alms. When he saw this he thought, "Who is this leper wandering about with his leper's robe?" Before leaving, he spat on the ground and turned his left side to Tagarasikhī. As a result of that deed he burned in hell for many years, for many hundreds, many thousands, many hundreds of thousands of years. And as a residual result of that same deed, he became a leper right here in Rājagaha, a poor person, destitute and pitiful. But owing to faith in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One, he undertook ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom. After undertaking these things, when his body broke up, after death, he was reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm, in the company of the gods of the thirty-three. There he outshines the other gods in beauty and glory."

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha expressed this heartfelt sentiment:

"As a clear-eyed man would avoid rough paths,

so long as strength is found;

an astute person in the living world,

would shun bad deeds."