MN 5 — MN 5 Unblemished | Anaṅgaṇa Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Unblemished

Anaṅgaṇa Sutta (MN 5)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There Ven. Sāriputta addressed the monks: “Friend monks!”

“Yes, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Sāriputta said, “There are these four individuals to be found existing in the world. Which four?

“There is the case where a certain individual, being blemished, does not discern as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish.’ Then there is the case where a certain individual, being blemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish.’ Then there is the case where a certain individual, being unblemished, does not discern as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish.’ Then there is the case where a certain individual, being unblemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish.’

“With regard to that, the individual who, being blemished, doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish’ is called the inferior man of the two individuals who are blemished. The individual who, being blemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish’ is called the superior man of the two individuals who are blemished.

“Then again, the individual who, being unblemished, doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish’ is called the inferior man of the two individuals who are unblemished. The individual who, being unblemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish’ is called the superior man of the two individuals who are unblemished.”

When this was said, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Friend, what is the reason, what is the cause, that of the two individuals who are blemished, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man? And what is the reason, what is the cause, that of the two individuals who are unblemished, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man?”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “With regard to that, my friend, when an individual, being blemished, doesn’t discern that ‘I have an inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will not generate desire, endeavor, or arouse persistence for the abandoning of that blemish. He will die with passion, with aversion, with delusion—blemished & with a mind defiled.

“Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths all covered with dust & dirt, that the owners would neither use nor clean, but would throw away in a dusty place: Wouldn’t that bronze bowl eventually become even more dirty & defiled with time?”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “Yes, my friend.”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “In the same way, friend, when an individual, being blemished, doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will not generate desire, endeavor, or arouse persistence for the abandoning of that blemish. He will die with passion, with aversion, with delusion—blemished & with a mind defiled.

“Then again, when an individual, being blemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will generate desire, endeavor, & arouse persistence for the abandoning of that blemish. He will die without passion, without aversion, without delusion—unblemished & with a mind undefiled.

“Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths all covered with dust & dirt, that the owners would both use & clean, and would not throw away in a dusty place: Wouldn’t that bronze bowl eventually become clean & pure with time?”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “Yes, my friend.”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “In the same way, friend, when an individual, being blemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will generate desire, endeavor, & arouse persistence for the abandoning of that blemish. He will die without passion, without aversion, without delusion—unblemished & with a mind undefiled.

“Then again, when an individual, being unblemished, doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will attend to the theme of beauty. As he attends to the theme of beauty, passion will assault his mind. He will die with passion, with aversion, with delusion—blemished & with a mind defiled.

“Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths clean & pure, that the owners would neither use nor clean, but would throw away in a dusty place. Wouldn’t that bronze bowl eventually become dirty & defiled with time?”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “Yes, my friend.”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “In the same way, when an individual, being unblemished, doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will attend to the theme of beauty. As he attends to the theme of beauty, passion will assault his mind. He will die with passion, with aversion, with delusion—blemished & with a mind defiled.

“Then again, when an individual, being unblemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will not attend to the theme of beauty. As he doesn’t attend to the theme of beauty, passion won’t assault his mind. He will die without passion, without aversion, without delusion—unblemished & with a mind undefiled.

“Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths clean & pure, that the owners would both use & clean, and would not throw away in a dusty place: Wouldn’t that bronze bowl eventually become even more clean & pure with time?”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “Yes, my friend.”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “In the same way, friend, when an individual, being unblemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will not attend to the theme of beauty. As he doesn’t attend to the theme of beauty, passion won’t assault his mind. He will die without passion, without aversion, without delusion—unblemished & with a mind undefiled.

“This, friend Moggallāna, is the reason, this is the cause why, of the two individuals who are blemished, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man. This is the reason, this is the cause why, of the two individuals who are unblemished, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man.”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “‘Blemish, blemish’ it’s said. What does ‘blemish’ stand for?”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “The influences of evil, unskillful wishes: That’s what ‘blemish’ stands for.

“It’s possible, friend, that there’s the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: ‘O, should I have fallen into an offense, may the monks not know about me, that I have fallen into an offense.’ But it’s possible that the monks would know about that monk that he had fallen into an offense. (Thinking,) ‘The monks know about me that I have fallen into an offense,’ he is angry & disgruntled. Anger & disgruntlement are both a blemish.

“It’s possible, friend, that there’s the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: ‘O, should I have fallen into an offense, may the monks accuse me in private, and not in the middle of the Saṅgha.’ But it’s possible that the monks would accuse him in the middle of the Saṅgha, not in private. (Thinking,) ‘It’s in the middle of the Saṅgha that the monks accuse me, and not in private,’ he is angry & disgruntled. Anger & disgruntlement are both a blemish.

“It’s possible, friend, that there’s the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: ‘O, should I have fallen into an offense, may a friend accuse me, and not an enemy.’ But it’s possible that an enemy would accuse him, and not a friend. (Thinking,) ‘An enemy accuses me, and not a friend,’ he is angry & disgruntled. Anger & disgruntlement are both a blemish.

“It’s possible, friend, that there’s the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: ‘O, may the Teacher instruct the monks, cross-questioning just me again & again, and not cross-questioning another monk again & again.’ But it’s possible that the Teacher would instruct the monks, cross-questioning another monk again & again, and not cross-questioning that monk again & again. (Thinking,) ‘The Teacher instructs the monks, cross-questioning another monk again & again, and not cross-questioning me again & again,’ he is angry & disgruntled. Anger & disgruntlement are both a blemish.

“It’s possible, friend, that there’s the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: ‘O, may the monks enter the village for alms following just me, and not following another monk.’ But it’s possible that the monks would enter the village for alms following another monk, and not following that monk. (Thinking,) ‘It’s following another monk, and not me, that the monks enter the village for alms,’ he is angry & disgruntled. Anger & disgruntlement are both a blemish.

“It’s possible, friend, that there’s the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: ‘O, may I alone receive the foremost meals, the foremost seat, the foremost water,

the foremost alms, and not another monk.' But it's possible that another monk would receive the foremost meals, the foremost seat, the foremost water, the foremost alms. (Thinking,) 'It's another monk who receives the foremost meals, the foremost seat, the foremost water, the foremost alms, and not me' he is angry & disgruntled. Anger & disgruntlement are both a blemish.

"It's possible, friend, that there's the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: 'O, may I alone give the blessing in the dining hall after the meal, and not another monk.' But it's possible that another monk would give the blessing in the dining hall after the meal. (Thinking,) 'It's another monk who gives the blessing in the dining hall after the meal, and not me' he is angry & disgruntled. Anger & disgruntlement are both a blemish.

"It's possible, friend, that there's the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: 'O, may I alone, and not another monk, teach the Dhamma to monks… nuns… men lay followers… women lay followers who have come to the monastery.' But it's possible that another monk would teach the Dhamma, and not that monk…

"It's possible, friend, that there's the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: 'O, may the monks… nuns… men lay followers… women lay followers pay honor, respect, reverence, & veneration to me alone, and not to another monk.' But it's possible that the monks… nuns… men lay followers… women lay followers would pay honor, respect, reverence, & veneration to another monk, and not to that monk…

"It's possible, friend, that there's the case where this sort of wish might arise in a certain monk: 'O, may I alone, and not another monk, be the one who receives exquisite robes… exquisite alms… exquisite lodgings… exquisite medicinal requisites for curing the ill. But it's possible that another monk, and not that monk, is the one who receives exquisite medicinal requisites for curing the ill. (Thinking,) 'It's another monk who receives exquisite medicinal requisites for curing the ill, and not me,' he is angry & disgruntled. Anger & disgruntlement are both a blemish.

"Now friend, if these influences of evil, unskillful wishes are seen or heard to be unabandoned in any monk, then even though he's a wilderness dweller, a dweller in isolated lodgings, an alms-goer, a house-to-house alms-goer, a refuse-rag wearer, a wearer of coarse robes, still his companions in the holy life don't pay him honor, respect, reverence, or veneration. Why is that? Because these influences of evil, unskillful wishes are seen or heard to be unabandoned in him.

"Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths clean & pure, into which the owners would arrange the carcass of a snake, a dog, or a human being and—covering it with another bronze bowl—would carry back into the market: A person, seeing them, would say, ' Well, what's this, being carried around as if it were so splendid?' He, raising & opening the lid, would look in. As soon as he saw, he would be inspired with displeasure, with loathing, with disgust, so that even if he were hungry, he would not want to eat—to say nothing of if he were full.

“In the same way, if these influences of evil, unskillful wishes are seen or heard to be unabandoned in any monk, then even though he’s a wilderness dweller, a dweller in isolated lodgings, an alms-goer, a house-to-house alms-goer, a refuse-rag wearer, a wearer of coarse robes, still his companions in the holy life don’t pay him honor, respect, reverence, or veneration. Why is that? Because these influences of evil, unskillful wishes are seen or heard to be unabandoned in him.

“But, friend, if these influences of evil, unskillful wishes are seen or heard to be abandoned in any monk, then even though he’s a village dweller, a receiver of meal invitations, a wearer of robes given by lay people, still his companions in the holy life pay him honor, respect, reverence, or veneration. Why is that? Because these influences of evil, unskillful wishes are seen or heard to be abandoned in him.

“Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths clean & pure, into which the owners would arrange boiled white rice with various sauces and curries and—covering it with another bronze bowl—would carry back into the market: A person, seeing them, would say, ‘ Well, what’s this, being carried around as if it were so splendid?’ He, raising & opening the lid, would look in. As soon as he saw, he would be inspired with enticement, with non-loathing, & with non-disgust, so that even if he were full, he would want to eat—to say nothing of if he were hungry.

“In the same way, if these influences of evil, unskillful wishes are seen or heard to be abandoned in any monk, then even though he’s a village dweller, a receiver of meal invitations, a wearer of robes given by lay people, still his companions in the holy life pay him honor, respect, reverence, or veneration. Why is that? Because these influences of evil, unskillful wishes are seen or heard to be abandoned in him.”

When this was said, Ven. Moggallāna said to Ven. Sāriputta, “A simile occurs to me, friend Sāriputta.”

“Let it occur to you, friend Moggallāna.”

“On one occasion I was staying near Rājagaha, at the Hill Fort. Then, early in the morning, I adjusted my lower robe and—taking my bowl & outer robe—went into Rājagaha for alms. And on that occasion Samīti the cartwright was planing the rim of a chariot wheel, and the Ājīvaka Paṇḍuputta, a former cartwright, was standing by. Then this line of thinking arose in the awareness of Ājīvaka Paṇḍuputta, the former cartwright: ‘O, may Samīti the cartwright plane away this bend, this twist, this fault in this rim, so that this rim would be clean—its bends, twists, and faults removed—standing in heartwood.’ And just as the line of thinking occurred to Ājīvaka Paṇḍuputta, the former cartwright, in just the same way did Samīti the cartwright plane away that bend, that twist, that fault in the rim. So Ājīvaka Paṇḍuputta, the former cartwright, gratified, uttered words of gratification: ‘He planes, knowing my heart with his heart, as it were!’

“In the same way, any individuals without conviction, who—for the sake of a livelihood and not out of conviction—have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; who are

fraudulent, deceitful, wily, restless, rowdy, flighty, talkative, of loose words; who leave their faculties unguarded; who know no moderation in food, are undevoted to wakefulness, unconcerned with the qualities of a contemplative, with no respect for the training; who are luxurious, lethargic, foremost in falling back; who shirk the duties of solitude; who are lazy, lowly in their persistence, of muddled mindfulness, unalert, unconcentrated, their minds scattered, undiscerning, drivelers: Ven. Sāriputta, with this Dhamma discourse, planes away their (faults), knowing my heart with his heart, as it were!

"But as for those sons of good families who, out of conviction, have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; who are unfraudulent, undeceitful, not wily, not restless, not rowdy, not flighty, not talkative or of loose words; who guard their faculties, know moderation in food, are devoted to wakefulness, are concerned with the qualities of a contemplative, have fierce respect for the training; who are not luxurious, not lethargic, not foremost in falling back; who observe the duties of solitude; who are not lazy; who are aroused in their effort, of unmuddled mindfulness, alert, concentrated, their minds unified, discerning, not drivelers: They, hearing this Dhamma discourse from Ven. Sāriputta, drink it up & devour it, as it were, both by word & by mind: 'How good it is that, having made his companions in the holy life rise up from what's unskillful, he establishes them in what's skillful!'1

"Just as a young & youthful woman or man—fond of adornment, with head bathed—on receiving a garland of blue lotuses, jasmine, or camellias, would take it with both hands and place it on top of his or her head; in the same way, those sons of good families who, out of conviction, have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; who are unfraudulent, undeceitful, not wily, not restless, not rowdy, not flighty, not talkative or of loose words; who guard their faculties, know moderation in food, are devoted to wakefulness, are concerned with the qualities of a contemplative, have fierce respect for the training; who are not luxurious, not lethargic, not foremost in falling back; who observe the duties of solitude; who are not lazy; who are aroused in their effort, of unmuddled mindfulness, alert, concentrated, their minds unified, discerning, not drivelers: They, hearing this Dhamma discourse from Ven. Sāriputta, drink it up & devour it, as it were, both by word & by mind: 'How good it is that, having made his companions in the holy life rise up from what's unskillful, he establishes them in what's skillful!'"

Thus did those two great beings [nāgas] rejoice in each other's well-spoken words.

Note

1. Both MLS and MLDB miss the fact that Ven. Moggallāna is here quoting the words of the good monks.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: Iti 88