MN 128 — Corruptions

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Source: https://suttacentral.net/mn128/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
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Text

Middle Discourses 128

Corruptions

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Kosambī in Ghosita's monastery.

Now at that time the mendicants of Kosambī were fighting, quarreling, and disputing, continually wounding each other with barbed words.

Then a mendicant went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side, and told him what was happening, adding: "Please, sir go to those mendicants out of sympathy." The Buddha consented with silence.

Then the Buddha went up to those mendicants and said, "Enough, mendicants! Stop fighting, quarreling, and disputing."

When he said this, one of the mendicants said to the Buddha, "Wait, sir! Let the Buddha, the Lord of the Dhamma, remain passive, dwelling in blissful meditation in this life. We will be known for this fighting, quarreling, arguing, and disputing."

For a second time … and a third time the Buddha said to those mendicants, "Enough, mendicants! Stop fighting, quarreling, and disputing."

For a third time, that mendicant said to the Buddha, "Wait, sir! Let the Buddha, the Lord of the Dhamma, remain passive, dwelling in blissful meditation in this life. We will be known for this fighting, quarreling, arguing, and disputing."

Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, entered Kosambī for alms. After the meal, on his return from almsround, he set his lodgings in order. Taking his bowl and robe, he recited these verses while standing right there:

"Many voices shout at once,

yet no one thinks that they're the fool.

Even as the Saṅgha splits,

they think no better of the other.

Dolts pretending to be astute,

they talk, their words out of bounds.

They blab at will, their mouths agape,
and not one knows what leads them on.
‘They abused me, they hit me!
They beat me, they robbed me!’
For those bearing such a grudge,
hatred is never laid to rest.
‘They abused me, they hit me!
They beat me, they robbed me!’
For those who bear no such grudge,
hatred is laid to rest.
For never is hatred
laid to rest by hate,
it’s laid to rest by love:
this is an ancient teaching.
When others do not understand,
let us, who do understand this,
restrain ourselves in this regard;
for that is how conflicts are laid to rest.
Breakers of bones and takers of life,
thieves of cattle, horses, wealth,
those who plunder the nation:
even they can come together,
so why can’t you?
If you find an alert companion,
an attentive friend to live happily together,
then, overcoming all adversities,
wander with them, joyful and mindful.
If you find no alert companion,
no attentive friend to live happily together,

then, like a king who flees his conquered realm,

wander alone like a tusker in the wilds.

It's better to wander alone,

there's no fellowship with fools.

Wander alone and do no wrong,

at ease like a tusker in the wilds."

After speaking these verses while standing, the Buddha went to the village of the child salt-miners, where Venerable Bhagu was staying at the time. Bhagu saw the Buddha coming off in the distance, so he spread out a seat and placed water for washing the feet. The Buddha sat down on the seat spread out, and washed his feet. Bhagu bowed to the Buddha and sat down to one side.

The Buddha said to him, "I hope you're keeping well, mendicant, I hope you're all right. And I hope you're having no trouble getting almsfood."

"I'm keeping well, Blessed One, I'm all right. And I'm having no trouble getting almsfood."

Then the Buddha educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired Bhagu with a Dhamma talk, after which he rose from his seat and set out for the Park of the East-Raftered Hall.

Now at that time the venerables Anuruddha, Nandiya, and Kimbila were staying in the Park of the East-Raftered Hall. The park keeper saw the Buddha coming off in the distance and said to the Buddha, "Don't come into this park, ascetic. There are three gentlemen staying here whose nature is to desire self-knowledge. Do not disturb them."

Anuruddha heard the park keeper conversing with the Buddha, and said to him, "Don't keep the Buddha out, good park keeper! Our Teacher, the Blessed One, has arrived."

Then Anuruddha went to Nandiya and Kimbila, and said to them, "Come forth, venerables, come forth! Our Teacher, the Blessed One, has arrived!"

Then Anuruddha, Nandiya, and Kimbila came out to greet the Buddha. One received his bowl and robe, one spread out a seat, and one set out water for washing his feet. The Buddha sat down on the seat spread out, and washed his feet. Those venerables bowed and sat down to one side.

The Buddha said to Anuruddha, "I hope you're keeping well, Anuruddha and friends, I hope you're all right. And I hope you're having no trouble getting almsfood."

"We're keeping well, Blessed One, we're getting by. And we have no trouble getting almsfood."

"I hope you're living in harmony, appreciating each other, without quarreling, blending like milk and water, and regarding each other with kindly eyes?"

"Indeed, sir, we live in harmony as you say."

"But how do you live this way?"

“In this case, sir, I think: ‘I’m fortunate, so very fortunate, to live together with spiritual companions such as these.’ I consistently treat these venerables with kindness by way of body, speech, and mind, both in public and in private. I think: ‘Why don’t I set aside my own ideas and just go along with these venerables’ ideas?’ And that’s what I do. Though we’re different in body, sir, we’re one in mind, it seems to me.”

And the venerables Nandiya and Kimbila spoke likewise, and they added: “That’s how we live in harmony, appreciating each other, without dispute, blending like milk and water, and regarding each other with kindly eyes.”

“Good, good, Anuruddha and friends! But I hope you’re living diligently, keen, and resolute?”

“Indeed, sir, we live diligently.”

“But how do you live this way?”

“In this case, sir, whoever returns first from almsround prepares the seats, and puts out the drinking water and the rubbish bin. If there’s remainder, whoever returns last eats it if they like. Otherwise they throw it out where there is little that grows, or drop it into water that has no living creatures. Then they put away the seats, drinking water, and rubbish bin, and sweep the refectory. If someone sees that the pot of water for washing, drinking, or the toilet is empty they set it up. If he can’t do it, he summons another with a wave of the hand, and they set it up by lending each other a hand to lift. But we don’t break into speech for that reason. And every five days we sit together for the whole night and discuss the teachings. That’s how we live diligently, keen, and resolute.”

“Good, good, Anuruddha and friends! But as you live diligently like this, have you achieved any superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, a comfortable meditation?”

“Well, sir, while meditating diligent, keen, and resolute, we perceive both light and vision of forms. But before long the light and the vision of forms vanish. We haven’t worked out the basis of that.”

“Well, you should work out the basis of that. Before my awakening—when I was still unawakened but intent on awakening—I too perceived light and vision of forms. But before long my light and vision of forms vanished. It occurred to me: ‘What’s the cause, what’s the reason why my light and vision of forms vanish?’ It occurred to me: ‘Doubt arose in me, and because of that my immersion fell away. When immersion falls away, the light and vision of forms vanish. I’ll make sure that doubt will not arise in me again.’

While meditating diligent, keen, and resolute, I perceived light and vision of forms. But before long my light and vision of forms vanished. It occurred to me: ‘What’s the cause, what’s the reason why my light and vision of forms vanish?’ It occurred to me: ‘Loss of focus arose in me, and because of that my immersion fell away. When immersion falls away, the light and vision of forms vanish. I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus will arise in me again.’

While meditating … ‘Dullness and drowsiness arose in me … I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus nor dullness and drowsiness will arise in me again.’

While meditating … ‘Terror arose in me, and because of that my immersion fell away. When immersion falls away, the light and vision of forms vanish. Suppose a person was traveling along a road, and killers were to spring out at them from both sides. They’d feel terrified because of that. In the same way, terror arose in me … I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus nor dullness and drowsiness nor terror will arise in me again.’

While meditating … ‘Elation arose in me, and because of that my immersion fell away. When immersion falls away, the light and vision of forms vanish. Suppose a person was looking for the entrance to a treasure trove. And all at once they’d come across five entrances! They’d feel excited because of that. In the same way, elation arose in me … I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus nor dullness and drowsiness nor terror nor elation will arise in me again.’

While meditating … ‘Discomfort arose in me … I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus nor dullness and drowsiness nor terror nor elation nor discomfort will arise in me again.’

While meditating … ‘Excessive energy arose in me, and because of that my immersion fell away. When immersion falls away, the light and vision of forms vanish. Suppose a person was to grip a quail too tightly in their hands—it would die right there. I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus nor dullness and drowsiness nor terror nor elation nor discomfort nor excessive energy will arise in me again.’

While meditating … ‘Overly lax energy arose in me, and because of that my immersion fell away. When immersion falls away, the light and vision of forms vanish. Suppose a person was to grip a quail too loosely—it would fly out of their hands. I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus nor dullness and drowsiness nor terror nor elation nor discomfort nor excessive energy nor overly lax energy will arise in me again.’

While meditating … ‘Longing arose in me … I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus nor dullness and drowsiness nor terror nor elation nor discomfort nor excessive energy nor overly lax energy nor longing will arise in me again.’

While meditating … ‘Perceptions of diversity arose in me … I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus nor dullness and drowsiness nor terror nor elation nor discomfort nor excessive energy nor overly lax energy nor longing nor perception of diversity will arise in me again.’

While meditating diligent, keen, and resolute, I perceived light and vision of forms. But before long my light and vision of forms vanished. It occurred to me: ‘What’s the cause, what’s the reason why my light and vision of forms vanish?’ It occurred to me: ‘Excessive concentration on forms arose in me, and because of that my immersion fell away. When immersion falls away, the light and vision of forms vanish. I’ll make sure that neither doubt nor loss of focus nor dullness and drowsiness nor terror nor elation nor discomfort nor excessive energy nor overly lax energy nor longing nor perception of diversity nor excessive concentration on forms will arise in me again.’

When I understood that doubt is a corruption of the mind, I gave it up. When I understood that loss of focus, dullness and drowsiness, terror, elation, discomfort, excessive energy, overly lax energy, longing, perception of diversity, and excessive concentration on forms are corruptions of the mind, I gave them up.

While meditating diligent, keen, and resolute, I perceived light but did not see forms, or I saw forms, but did not see light. And this went on for a whole night, a whole day, even a whole night and day. I thought: 'What is the cause, what is the reason for this?' It occurred to me: 'When I don't focus on the basis of the forms, but focus on the basis of the light, then I perceive light and do not see forms. But when I don't focus on the basis of the light, but focus on the basis of the forms, then I see forms and do not perceive light. And this goes on for a whole night, a whole day, even a whole night and day.'

While meditating diligent, keen, and resolute, I perceived limited light and saw limited forms, or I perceived limitless light and saw limitless forms. And this went on for a whole night, a whole day, even a whole night and day. I thought: 'What is the cause, what is the reason for this?' It occurred to me: 'When my immersion is limited, then my vision is limited, and with limited vision I perceive limited light and see limited forms. But when my immersion is limitless, then my vision is limitless, and with limitless vision I perceive limitless light and see limitless forms. And this goes on for a whole night, a whole day, even a whole night and day.'

After understanding that doubt, loss of focus, dullness and drowsiness, terror, excitement, discomfort, excessive energy, overly lax energy, longing, perception of diversity, and excessive concentration on forms are corruptions of the mind, I had given them up.

I thought: 'I've given up my mental corruptions. Now let me develop immersion in three ways.' I developed immersion while placing the mind and keeping it connected; without placing the mind, merely keeping it connected; without placing the mind or keeping it connected; with rapture; without rapture; with pleasure; with equanimity.

When I had developed immersion in these ways, the knowledge and vision arose in me: 'My freedom is unshakable; this is my last rebirth; now there'll be no more future lives.'"

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, Venerable Anuruddha approved what the Buddha said.