MN 151 — The Purification of Alms

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Text

Middle Discourses 151

The Purification of Alms

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.

Then in the late afternoon, Sāriputta came out of retreat and went to the Buddha. He bowed and sat down to one side. The Buddha said to him, "Sāriputta, your faculties are so very clear, and your complexion is pure and bright. What kind of meditation are you usually practicing these days?"

"Sir, these days I usually practice the meditation on emptiness."

"Good, good, Sāriputta! It seems you usually practice the meditation of a great man. For emptiness is the meditation of a great man.

Now, a mendicant might wish: 'May I usually practice the meditation on emptiness.' So they should reflect: 'Along the path that I went for alms, or in the place I wandered for alms, or along the path that I returned from alms, was there any desire or greed or hate or delusion or aversion in my heart for sights known by the eye?' Suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that there was such desire or greed or hate or delusion or aversion in their heart, they should make an effort to give up those unskillful qualities. But suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that there was no such desire or greed or hate or delusion or aversion in their heart, they should meditate with rapture and joy, training day and night in skillful qualities.

Furthermore, a mendicant should reflect: 'Along the path that I went for alms, or in the place I wandered for alms, or along the path that I returned from alms, was there any desire or greed or hate or delusion or repulsion in my heart for sounds known by the ear … smells known by the nose … tastes known by the tongue … touches known by the body … ideas known by the mind?' Suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that there was such desire or greed or hate or delusion or aversion in their heart, they should make an effort to give up those unskillful qualities. But suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that there was no such desire or greed or hate or delusion or aversion in their heart, they should meditate with rapture and joy, training day and night in skillful qualities.

Furthermore, a mendicant should reflect: 'Have I given up the five kinds of sensual stimulation?' Suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have not given

them up, they should make an effort to do so. But suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have given them up, they should meditate with rapture and joy, training day and night in skillful qualities.

Furthermore, a mendicant should reflect: 'Have I given up the five hindrances?' Suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have not given them up, they should make an effort to do so. But suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have given them up, they should meditate with rapture and joy, training day and night in skillful qualities.

Furthermore, a mendicant should reflect: 'Have I completely understood the five grasping aggregates?' Suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have not completely understood them, they should make an effort to do so. But suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have completely understood them, they should meditate with rapture and joy, training day and night in skillful qualities.

Furthermore, a mendicant should reflect: 'Have I developed the four kinds of mindfulness meditation?' Suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they haven't developed them, they should make an effort to do so. But suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have developed them, they should meditate with rapture and joy, training day and night in skillful qualities.

Furthermore, a mendicant should reflect: 'Have I developed the four right efforts … the four bases of psychic power … the five faculties … the five powers … the seven awakening factors … the noble eightfold path?' Suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they haven't developed it, they should make an effort to do so. But suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have developed it, they should meditate with rapture and joy, training day and night in skillful qualities.

Furthermore, a mendicant should reflect: 'Have I developed serenity and discernment?' Suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they haven't developed them, they should make an effort to do so. But suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have developed them, they should meditate with rapture and joy, training day and night in skillful qualities.

Furthermore, a mendicant should reflect: 'Have I realized knowledge and freedom?' Suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they haven't realized them, they should make an effort to do so. But suppose that, upon checking, a mendicant knows that they have realized them, they should meditate with rapture and joy, training day and night in skillful qualities.

Whether in the past, future, or present, all those who purify their almsfood do so by continually checking in this way. So, Sāriputta, you should all train like this: 'We shall purify our almsfood by continually checking.'"

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