

MN 18
Madhupindika Sutta
“The Honey Ball Discourse”
Translated by Candana Bhikkhu

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I have personally heard this.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying at Nigrodha’s Monastery, in the Sakyan city of Kapilavatthu.

Then the Blessed One put on His robes in the morning and by taking along His bowl and outer robe, He walked into the city of Kapilavatthu for alms. After the meal, and while returning from the alms round, He entered the Great Forest and in reaching a young Bilva tree, He sat under it, while resting His body, spending the day in meditation under its shade.

Then, the Sakyan Dandapāni, having gone out walking and wandering for exercise, also entered the Great Forest, and in approaching the young Bilva tree where the Blessed One was seated, he exchanged greetings. While standing there to one side, leaning on his walking stick, Dandapāni said:

“What teaching does the recluse proclaim? What does he teach?”

*“Friend, I proclaim such a teaching, through which **one does not** end up in disputes with anyone in this world of Devas, along with its Māras, Brahmās, the community of recluses, brahmins, the world with its leaders and its people; such a teaching whereby no more perceptions press upon the brahmin, who lives unyoked and free from sensuality, without experiencing any more confusion or worry, having rid oneself from craving for any kind of rebirth into any state of becoming. This, friend, is the Teaching I proclaim. This is what I teach.”*

When this was said, the Sakyan Dandapāni shook his head, stuck his tongue out, wagging it, while his forehead puckered in three lines. Then, he turned around and went away, while leaning on his stick.

Then, in the evening, the Blessed One, coming out of his seclusion, went to Nigrodha's Monastery, and sat on the prepared seat and addressed the Bhikkhus thus:

“Bhikkhus, this morning, I put on my robes and by taking along the bowl and outer robe, I walked into the city of Kapilavatthu for alms. After the meal, and while returning from the alms round, I entered the Great Forest and in reaching a young Bilva tree, I sat under it, while resting my body, spending the day in meditation under its shade.

“Meanwhile, the Sakyan Dandapāni, having gone out walking and wandering for exercise, also entered the Great Forest, and in approaching the young Bilva tree where I was seated, he

exchanged greetings. While standing there to one side, leaning on his walking stick, Dandapāni said:

“What teaching does the recluse proclaim? What does he teach?”

And I replied:

“Friend, I proclaim such a teaching, through which one does not end up in disputes with anyone in this world of Devas, along with its Māras, Brahmās, the community of recluses, brahmins, the world with its leaders and its people; such a teaching whereby no more perceptions press upon the brahmin, who lives unyoked and free from sensuality, without experiencing any more confusion or worry, having rid oneself from craving for any kind of rebirth into any state of becoming. This, friend, is the Teaching I proclaim. This is what I teach.”

“When this was said, the Sakyan Dandapāni shook his head, stuck his tongue out, wagging it, while his forehead puckered in three lines. Then, he turned around and went away, while leaning on his stick.”

When this was said, a certain Bhikkhu said thus:

“But, Bhante, what is the teaching spoken by the Blessed One, through which one does not end up in disputes with anyone in this world of Devas, along with its Māras, Brahmās, the community of recluses, brahmins, the world with its leaders and its people; such a teaching whereby no more perceptions press upon the brahmin, who lives unyoked and free from sensuality, without experiencing any more confusion or worry, having rid oneself from craving for any kind of rebirth into any state of becoming?”

And the Blessed One instructed:

“Bhikkhu, whenever harassed by the mental proliferations that are caused by getting caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, if one does not welcome them nor delight in them, nor grasp onto them, then this means one has removed the underlying tendency for lust, the underlying tendency for hatred, the underlying tendency for holding onto wrong views, the underlying tendency for doubt, the underlying tendency for conceit, the underlying tendency for the desire to be reborn, and the underlying tendency for delusion. This in itself puts an end to all disputes and the drive to resort to sticks and weapons, to taking sides, to quarreling, to fighting, to slandering, to all manners of accusations, to using vile language, and to the telling of lies. In this way, Bhikkhu, all these evil and unwholesome situations cease for such a person, without leaving any remainders behind.”

This is what the Blessed One said, and having given this brief instruction, the Sugata rose from His seat and went into His kuti.

Soon after the Blessed One had left, it occurred to those Bhikkhus:

“Friends, the Blessed One has now gone back to his kuti, but without giving us a detailed explanation of what He mentioned in brief to us. That is:

“Bhikkhu, whenever harassed by the mental proliferations that are caused by getting caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, if one does not welcome them nor delight in them, nor grasp onto them, then this means one has removed the underlying tendency for lust, the underlying tendency for hatred, the underlying tendency for holding onto wrong views, the underlying tendency for doubt, the underlying tendency for conceit, the underlying tendency for the desire to be reborn, and the underlying tendency for delusion. This in itself puts an end to all disputes and the drive to resort to sticks and weapons, to taking sides, to quarreling, to fighting, to slandering, to all manners of accusations, to using vile language, and to the telling of lies. In this way, Bhikkhu, all these evil and unwholesome situations cease for such a person, without leaving any remainders behind.”

And the Bhikkhus reflected: “Now, **who** could give us a detailed explanation for this short summary?”

Then, it occurred to those Bhikkhus:

“The Venerable Mahākaccāna is praised by the Teacher, as well as considered wise and held in such high regard by his fellow companions in the Holy Life. The Venerable Mahākaccāna is capable in giving us the detailed explanation for this short summary given by the Blessed One. What if we approached the Venerable Mahākaccāna and asked him about this?”

Then, those Bhikkhus went and approached the Venerable Mahākaccāna, and after exchanging friendly greetings him, they sat down to one side and said:

“Friend, Mahākaccāna, the Blessed One gave us a short summary but without giving the detailed explanation for it, and right after uttering His words, He arose from His seat and returned to His kuti. Now, this is the summary of the Teaching He gave us:

“Bhikkhu, whenever harassed by the mental proliferations that are caused by getting caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, if one does not welcome them nor delight in them, nor grasp onto them, then this means one has removed the underlying tendency for lust, the underlying tendency for hatred, the underlying tendency for holding onto wrong views, the underlying tendency for doubt, the underlying tendency for conceit, the underlying tendency for the desire to be reborn, and the underlying tendency for delusion. This in itself puts an end to all disputes and the drive to resort to sticks and weapons, to taking sides, to quarreling, to fighting, to slandering, to all manners of accusations, to using vile language, and to the telling of lies. In this way, Bhikkhu, all these evil and unwholesome situations cease for such a person, without leaving any remainders behind.”

“Now, we have come asking if the Venerable Mahākaccāna could please provide us with the detailed explanation for this short summary.”

Then the Venerable Mahākaccāna addressed the Bhikkhus thus:

“Friends, much like a man in need of heartwood going in search of it and coming across a standing huge tree that is full of heartwood, he ignores the heartwood, the roots and the trunk,

and instead considers the branches or leaves to be its heartwood. In the same way, Venerable ones, while being face to face with the Teacher, you have completely ignored Him and have come instead asking me for the explanation! For He is the Buddha, the Blessed One, who knows and sees. He is vision itself, He is knowledge, He is Truth, He has become the Dhamma, and is Brahmā. He is The Teacher, the One who instructs, and is the clarifier of meanings; He has given us the Deathless. He is the Lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata. You must have approached the Blessed One and asked the Teacher Himself, for then it was the right time to ask for the detailed explanation of this summary. And as the Blessed One explains it, so should you remember and bear it in your hearts.”

“Indeed, friend Mahākaccāna, the Teacher is the Buddha, the Blessed One, who knows and sees. He is vision itself, He is knowledge, He is Truth, He has become the Dhamma, and is Brahmā. He is The Teacher, the One who instructs, and is the clarifier of meanings; He has given us the Deathless. He is the Lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata. We must have approached the Blessed One and asked the Teacher Himself, for then it was the right time to ask for the detailed explanation of this summary. Nevertheless, the Venerable Mahākaccāna is praised by the Blessed One Himself, as well as considered wise and held in such high regard by his fellow companions in the Holy Life. The Venerable Mahākaccāna is capable in giving us the detailed explanation for this short summary given by the Blessed One.

“We kindly ask that friend Mahākaccāna may not find our request troublesome, and please explain this to us.”

“In that case, friends, listen carefully to what I shall say, and pay close attention.”

“Yes, friend,” those Bhikkhus replied.

And the Venerable Mahākaccāna continued:

“In returning back to His kuti, the Blessed One, not having given you the detailed explanation to His short summary that instructs:

“Bhikkhu, whenever harassed by the mental proliferations that are caused by getting caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, if one does not welcome them nor delight in them, nor grasp onto them, then this means one has removed the underlying tendency for lust, the underlying tendency for hatred, the underlying tendency for holding onto wrong views, the underlying tendency for doubt, the underlying tendency for conceit, the underlying tendency for the desire to be reborn, and the underlying tendency for delusion. This in itself puts an end to all disputes and the drive to resort to sticks and weapons, to taking sides, to quarreling, to fighting, to slandering, to all manners of accusations, to using vile language, and to the telling of lies. In this way, Bhikkhu, all these evil and unwholesome situations cease for such a person, without leaving any remainders behind.”

“Now, the way I understand and explain the Blessed One’s short summary here, is as follows:

“Friends, when the eyes meet with forms, as a result, there occurs sense awareness of eyesight. And when these three come together, there is contact. In the presence of contact, feelings arise; what is felt is then perceived; and as a result, one engages in thinking; entertaining thoughts and memories, there takes place mental proliferation. Now, whatever one thus mentally proliferates is the very source of what harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation, whether from the past, future, or present, all triggered by the experience of eyesight.

“In the same way, when the ears meet with sounds, as a result, there occurs sense awareness of hearing. And when these three come together, there is contact. In the presence of contact, feelings arise; what is felt is then perceived; and as a result, one engages in thinking; entertaining thoughts and memories, there takes place mental proliferation. Now, whatever one thus mentally proliferates is the very source of what harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation, whether from the past, future, or present, all triggered by the experience of hearing.

“In the same way, when the nose meets with odors, as a result, there occurs sense awareness of smelling. And when these three come together, there is contact. In the presence of contact, feelings arise; what is felt is then perceived; and as a result, one engages in thinking; entertaining thoughts and memories, there takes place mental proliferation. Now, whatever one thus mentally proliferates is the very source of what harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation, whether from the past, future, or present, all triggered by the experience of smelling.

“In the same way, when the tongue meets with flavors, as a result, there occurs sense awareness of tasting. And when these three come together, there is contact. In the presence of contact, feelings arise; what is felt is then perceived; and as a result, one engages in thinking; entertaining thoughts and memories, there takes place mental proliferation. Now, whatever one thus mentally proliferates is the very source of what harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation, whether from the past, future, or present, all triggered by the experience of tasting.

“In the same way, when the body meets with tactile objects, as a result, there occurs sense awareness of touching. And when these three come together, there is contact. In the presence of contact, feelings arise; what is felt is then perceived; and as a result, one engages in thinking; entertaining thoughts and memories, there takes place mental proliferation. Now, whatever one thus mentally proliferates is the very source of what harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation, whether from the past, future, or present, all triggered by the experience of touching.

“In the same way, when the mind meets with thoughts, as a result, there occurs sense awareness of thinking. And when these three come together, there is contact. In the presence of contact, feelings arise; what is felt is then perceived; and as a result, one engages in thinking; entertaining thoughts and memories, there takes place mental proliferation. Now, whatever one thus mentally

proliferates is the very source of what harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation, whether from the past, future, or present, all triggered by the experience of thinking.

“Friends, in the presence of a functioning eye, visible forms, and the sense awareness of eyesight, contact becomes possible. When contact is present thus, feelings manifest; and when there is feeling, then perception becomes possible. As a result of perception, thinking becomes possible, and when there is thinking, then it becomes possible to point out what it is that harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the presence of a functioning ear, audible sounds, and the sense awareness of hearing, contact becomes possible. When contact is present thus, feelings manifest; and when there is feeling, then perception becomes possible. As a result of perception, thinking becomes possible, and when there is thinking, then it becomes possible to point out what it is that harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the presence of a functioning nose, odors, and the sense awareness of smelling, contact becomes possible. When contact is present thus, feelings manifest; and when there is feeling, then perception becomes possible. As a result of perception, thinking becomes possible, and when there is thinking, then it becomes possible to point out what it is that harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the presence of a functioning tongue, flavors, and the sense awareness of tasting, contact becomes possible. When contact is present thus, feelings manifest; and when there is feeling, then perception becomes possible. As a result of perception, thinking becomes possible, and when there is thinking, then it becomes possible to point out what it is that harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the presence of a body, tactile objects, and the sense awareness of touching, contact becomes possible. When contact is present thus, feelings manifest; and when there is feeling, then perception becomes possible. As a result of perception, thinking becomes possible, and when there is thinking, then it becomes possible to point out what it is that harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the presence of a cognizant mind, thoughts, and the sense awareness of thinking, contact becomes possible. When contact is present thus, feelings manifest; and when there is feeling, then perception becomes possible. As a result of perception, thinking becomes possible, and when there is thinking, then it becomes possible to point out what it is that harasses a person, who gets caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“But friends, in the absence of a functioning eye, absence of visible forms, where the sense awareness of eyesight is no longer present, then contact becomes impossible. When contact is absent thus, feelings do not manifest; and in the absence of feelings, perceptions do not occur. In the absence of perceptions, thinking becomes impossible; and when there is no more thinking, then it is impossible to point out anything that would harass a person, who is no more caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the absence of a functioning ear, absence of audible sounds, where the sense awareness of hearing is no longer present, then contact becomes impossible. When contact is absent thus, feelings do not manifest; and in the absence of feelings, perceptions do not occur. In the absence of perceptions, thinking becomes impossible; and when there is no more thinking, then it is impossible to point out anything that would harass a person, who is no more caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the absence of a functioning nose, absence of odors, where the sense awareness of smelling is no longer present, then contact becomes impossible. When contact is absent thus, feelings do not manifest; and in the absence of feelings, perceptions do not occur. In the absence of perceptions, thinking becomes impossible; and when there is no more thinking, then it is impossible to point out anything that would harass a person, who is no more caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the absence of a functioning tongue, absence of flavors, where the sense awareness of tasting is no longer present, then contact becomes impossible. When contact is absent thus, feelings do not manifest; and in the absence of feelings, perceptions do not occur. In the absence of perceptions, thinking becomes impossible; and when there is no more thinking, then it is impossible to point out anything that would harass a person, who is no more caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the absence of a body, and in the absence of tactile objects, where the sense awareness of touching is no longer present, then contact becomes impossible. When contact is absent thus, feelings do not manifest; and in the absence of feelings, perceptions do not occur. In the absence of perceptions, thinking becomes impossible; and when there is no more thinking, then it is impossible to point out anything that would harass a person, who is no more caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Similarly, in the absence of a cognizing mind, absence of thoughts, where the sense awareness of thinking is no longer present, then contact becomes impossible. When contact is absent thus, feelings do not manifest; and in the absence of feelings, perceptions do not occur. In the absence of perceptions, thinking becomes impossible; and when there is no more thinking, then it is impossible to point out anything that would harass a person, who is no more caught up in

personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, which themselves are the products of mental proliferation.

“Friends, in returning back to His kuti, the Blessed One, not having given you the detailed explanation to His short summary that instructs:”

“Bhikkhu, whenever harassed by the mental proliferations that are caused by getting caught up in personalizing memories of the world and its experiences, if one does not welcome them nor delight in them, nor grasp onto them, then this means one has removed the underlying tendency for lust, the underlying tendency for hatred, the underlying tendency for holding onto wrong views, the underlying tendency for doubt, the underlying tendency for conceit, the underlying tendency for the desire to be reborn, and the underlying tendency for delusion. This in itself puts an end to all disputes and the drive to resort to sticks and weapons, to taking sides, to quarreling, to fighting, to slandering, to all manners of accusations, to using vile language, and to the telling of lies. In this way, Bhikkhu, all these evil and unwholesome situations cease for such a person, without leaving any remainders behind.”

“This is how I understand and explain the Blessed One’s short summary.

“Now friends, if you wish, please go and approach the Blessed One and ask Him about this. And as the Blessed Lord explains it to you, you should listen carefully, remembering and bearing it in your hearts.

“Yes, friend,” replied those Bhikkhus, being delighted and grateful in hearing the Venerable Mahākaccāna’s words, as they arose from their seats, and went to the Blessed One. And after paying homage to the Teacher, they sat down to one side and recounted all that had taken place, while adding:

“Bhante, having requested from the Venerable Mahākaccāna the meaning of the summary given to us earlier by the Blessed One, the Venerable Mahākaccāna explained it in detail, which he did in this manner, while using these words, meanings, and phrases.”

In hearing their words, the Blessed One replied:

*“Mahākaccāna is wise, Bhikkhus. Mahākaccāna possesses penetrating insight. If you had approached and asked **me** instead, for the detailed explanation to this summary, I would have explained it to you in the **exact same** manner as did Mahākaccāna. For, **that indeed** is its meaning, and that is how you should remember and bear it in your hearts.”*

When this was said, the Venerable Ānanda asked the Blessed One:

*“Bhante, just like a man, being weak and starved by hunger, were to be offered a honey ball, whichever part of the dessert he may bite into, he would **only** taste its sweetness and delicious flavor.*

*“In the same manner, Bhante, whenever a competently skilled Bhikkhu might carefully examine the meaning of this discourse on the Dhamma, **and** with wisdom, he would **only** find satisfaction, joy, and tranquility of the heart.*

“Bhante, what should be the name of this discourse on the Dhamma?”

“Well, Ānanda, as you put it, you may remember this discourse on the Dhamma as “The Honey Ball Discourse.”

This is what the Blessed One said, and the Venerable Ānanda was satisfied and delighted in hearing the Teacher’s words.

Sadhu

Sadhu

Sadhu