MN 40 — MN 40 The Shorter Discourse at Assapura | Cūḷa-Assapura Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN40.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

The Shorter Discourse at Assapura

Cūḷa-Assapura Sutta (MN 40)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Aṅgas. Now, the Aṅgas have a town named Assapura. There the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks!”

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

The Blessed One said, “‘Contemplatives, contemplatives’: That is how people perceive you. And when asked, ‘What are you?’ you claim that ‘We are contemplatives.’ So, with this

being your designation and this your claim, this is how you should train yourselves: 'We will practice the practice proper to a contemplative, so that our designation will be true and our claim accurate; so that the services of those whose robes, alms-food, lodging, & medicinal requisites we use will bring them great fruit & great reward; and so that our going forth will not be barren, but fruitful & fertile.'1

"And how, monks, does a monk not practice the practice proper to a contemplative? When the possessiveness of a possessive monk has not been abandoned; when the ill will of an ill-will-minded one has not been abandoned; when the anger of an angry one has not been abandoned; when the spitefulness of a spiteful one has not been abandoned; when the dismissiveness of a dismissive one has not been abandoned; when the antagonism of an antagonistic one has not been abandoned; when the envy of an envious one has not been abandoned; when the selfishness of a selfish one has not been abandoned; when the deceit of a deceitful one has not been abandoned; when the pretentiousness of a pretentious one has not been abandoned;2 when the evil wishes of one with evil wishes have not been abandoned; when the wrong view of one of wrong view has not been abandoned—when these stains of a contemplative, these flaws in a contemplative, these defects3 in a contemplative that are grounds for rebirth in a state of deprivation and are to be experienced in a bad destination have not been abandoned, then, I tell you, one is not practicing the practice proper to a contemplative. Just as if a weapon called a mataja, well sharpened on both edges, were wrapped & enclosed in patchwork sheath: The going forth of such a monk, I tell you, is similar to that.

"Monks, I don't say that a patchwork-robe-wearer's status as a contemplative is through merely wearing a patchwork robe. I don't say that a clothless ascetic's status as a contemplative is through merely being without cloth… that a dust-&-dirt-caked ascetic's status as a contemplative is through merely being caked with dust & dirt… that a ritual bather's status as a contemplative is through merely taking ritual baths… that a tree-root dweller's status as a contemplative is through merely dwelling at the root of a tree… that an open-air dweller's status as a contemplative is through merely dwelling in the open air… that regulated-eater's status as a contemplative is through merely regulating his meals… that an incantation reciter's status as a contemplative is through merely reciting incantations. I don't say that a dreadlock ascetic's status as a contemplative is through merely wearing dreadlocks.

"If through merely wearing a patchwork robe a possessive individual would abandon possessiveness, an ill-will-minded one would abandon ill will… an individual with wrong view would abandon wrong view, then his friends & companions, his kinsmen & relatives would make him a patchwork-robe-wearer right from birth. They would get him to undertake the practice of simply wearing a patchwork robe, (saying,) 'Come, you of the auspicious face: Be a patchwork-robe-wearer. Being a patchwork-robe-wearer, when you are possessive, your possessiveness will be abandoned; when you are ill-will-minded, your ill will will be abandoned… when you have wrong view, your wrong view will be abandoned.' But because there is the case where I see a patchwork-robe-wearer who is possessive, ill-will-minded, angry, spiteful, dismissive, antagonistic, envious, selfish, pretentious—one of evil wishes & wrong view, that's why I don't say that a

patchwork-robe-wearer's status as a contemplative is through merely wearing a patchwork robe.

"If through merely being without cloth...

"If through merely being caked with dust & dirt...

"If through merely taking ritual baths...

"If through merely dwelling at the root of a tree...

"If through merely dwelling in the open air...

"If through merely regulating one's meals...

"If through merely reciting incantations...

"If through merely wearing dreadlocks a possessive individual would abandon possessiveness, an ill-will-minded one would abandon ill will... an individual with wrong view would abandon wrong view, then his friends & companions, his kinsmen & relatives would make him a dreadlock ascetic right from birth. They would get him to undertake the practice of simply wearing dreadlocks, (saying,) 'Come, you of the auspicious face: Be a dreadlock ascetic. Being a dreadlock ascetic, when you are possessive, your possessiveness will be abandoned; when you are ill-will-minded, your ill will will be abandoned... when you have wrong view, your wrong view will be abandoned.' But because there is the case where I see a dreadlock ascetic who is possessive, ill-will-minded, angry, spiteful, dismissive, antagonistic, envious, selfish, pretentious—one of evil wishes & wrong view, that's why I don't say that a dreadlock ascetic's status as a contemplative is through merely wearing dreadlocks.

"And how, monks, does a monk practice the practice proper to a contemplative? When the possessiveness of a possessive monk has been abandoned; when the ill will of an ill-will-minded one has been abandoned; when the anger of an angry one has been abandoned; when the spitefulness of a spiteful one has been abandoned; when the dismissiveness of a dismissive one has been abandoned; when the antagonism of an antagonistic one has been abandoned; when the envy of an envious one has been abandoned; when the selfishness of a selfish one has been abandoned; when the deceit of a deceitful one has been abandoned; when the pretentiousness of a pretentious one has been abandoned; when the evil wishes of one with evil wishes have been abandoned; when the wrong view of one of wrong view has been abandoned—when these stains of a contemplative, these flaws in a contemplative, these defects in a contemplative that are grounds for rebirth in a state of deprivation and are to be experienced in a bad destination have been abandoned, then, I tell you, one is practicing the practice proper to a contemplative.

“He sees himself purified of all these evil, unskillful qualities; he sees himself released from them. As he sees himself purified of all these evil, unskillful qualities, as he sees himself released from them, joy is born. When he is joyful, rapture is born. In one who is enraptured at heart, the body grows calm. When the body is calm, one feels pleasure. Feeling pleasure, the mind becomes concentrated.

“He keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with goodwill, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with goodwill—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. He keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion… empathetic joy… equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will.

“Suppose that there were a lotus pond with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water. If a man were to come from the east—scorched with heat, overcome by heat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty—on coming to that lotus pond he would subdue his thirst for water, he would subdue his heat-induced fever. If a man were to come from the west… If a man were to come from the north… If a man were to come from the south… If a man were to come from anywhere at all—scorched with heat, overcome by heat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty—on coming to that lotus pond he would subdue his thirst for water, he would subdue his heat-induced fever.

“In the same way, if a person from a noble-warrior family goes forth from the home life into homelessness and, on coming to this Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata and thus developing goodwill, compassion, empathetic joy, & equanimity, he gains stilling within, then he, I tell you, is practicing the practice proper to a contemplative.

“If a person from a brahman family goes forth…

“If a person from a merchant family goes forth…

“If a person from a worker family goes forth…

“If a person from any family at all goes forth from the home life into homelessness and, on coming to this Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata and thus developing goodwill, compassion, empathetic joy, & equanimity, he gains stilling within, then he, I tell you, is practicing the practice proper to a contemplative.

“If a person from a noble-warrior family goes forth and—through the ending of the effluents—enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now, then he, I tell you, is a contemplative through the ending of the effluents.

“If a person from a brahman family goes forth…

“If a person from a merchant family goes forth…

“If a person from a worker family goes forth…

“If a person from any family at all goes forth and—through the ending of the effluents—enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now, then he, I tell you, is a contemplative through the ending of the effluents.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

Notes

1. Given the widespread misperception that arahantship is a selfish goal, it’s important to take note of this statement—that part of the motivation to become an arahant is how it will benefit other people.

2. The first ten stains of a contemplative are identical with the first ten of the sixteen defilements listed in MN 7.

3. Reading samaṇa-kasāvānaṁ with the Thai edition. Other editions read samaṇa-kasaṭānaṁ: dregs of a contemplative.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 2; MN 29–30; MN 39; MN 61; AN 3:83; AN 3:123; Dhp 258–261; Dhp 264–269