MN 65 — With Bhaddāli

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Text

Middle Discourses 65

With Bhaddāli

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, "Mendicants!"

"Venerable sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:

"Mendicants, I eat my food in one sitting per day. Doing so, I find that I'm healthy and well, nimble, strong, and living comfortably. You too should eat your food in one sitting per day. Doing so, you'll find that you're healthy and well, nimble, strong, and living comfortably."

When he said this, Venerable Bhaddāli said to the Buddha, "Sir, I'm not going to attempt to eat my food in one sitting per day. For when eating once a day I might feel remorse and regret."

"Well then, Bhaddāli, eat one part of the meal in the place where you're invited, and bring the rest back to eat. Eating this way, too, you will sustain yourself."

"Sir, I'm not going to attempt to eat that way, either. For when eating that way I might also feel remorse and regret." Then, as this rule was being laid down by the Buddha and the Saṅgha was undertaking it, Bhaddāli announced he would not attempt to keep it. Then for the whole of that three months Bhaddāli would not see the Buddha face to face, as happens when someone doesn't fulfill the training according to the Teacher's instructions.

At that time several mendicants were making a robe for the Buddha, thinking that when his robe was finished and the three months of the rains residence had passed the Buddha would set out wandering.

Then Bhaddāli went up to those mendicants, and exchanged greetings with them. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side. The mendicants said to Bhaddāli, "Reverend Bhaddāli, this robe is being made for the Buddha. When it's finished and the three months of the rains residence have passed the Buddha will set out wandering. Come on, Bhaddāli, learn your lesson. Don't make it hard for yourself later on."

"Yes, reverends," Bhaddāli replied. He went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him, "I made a mistake, sir. It was foolish, stupid, and unskillful of me that, as this rule was being laid down by the Buddha and the Saṅgha was undertaking it, I announced I would not attempt to keep it. Please, sir, accept my mistake for what it is, so I will restrain myself in future."

“Indeed, Bhaddāli, you made a mistake. It was foolish, stupid, and unskillful of you that, as this rule was being laid down by the Buddha and the Saṅgha was undertaking it, you announced you would not attempt to keep it.

And you didn’t realize this situation: ‘The Buddha is staying in Sāvatthī, and he’ll know me as the mendicant named Bhaddāli who doesn’t fulfill the training according to the Teacher’s instructions.’

And you didn’t realize this situation: ‘Several monks have commenced the rains retreat in Sāvatthī … several nuns have commenced the rains retreat in Sāvatthī … several laymen reside in Sāvatthī … several laywomen reside in Sāvatthī, and they’ll know me as the mendicant named Bhaddāli who doesn’t fulfill the training according to the Teacher’s instructions. …

Several ascetics and brahmins who follow various other religions have commenced the rains retreat in Sāvatthī, and they’ll know me as the mendicant named Bhaddāli, one of the senior disciples of Gotama, who doesn’t fulfill the training according to the Teacher’s instructions.’ You also didn’t realize this situation.”

“I made a mistake, sir. It was foolish, stupid, and unskillful of me that, as this rule was being laid down by the Buddha and the Saṅgha was undertaking it, I announced I would not attempt to keep it. Please, sir, accept my mistake for what it is, so I will restrain myself in future.”

“Indeed, Bhaddāli, you made a mistake. It was foolish, stupid, and unskillful of you that, as this rule was being laid down by the Buddha and the Saṅgha was undertaking it, you announced you would not attempt to keep it.

What do you think, Bhaddāli? Suppose I was to say this to a mendicant who is freed both ways: ‘Please, mendicant, be a bridge for me to cross over the mud.’ Would they cross over themselves, or struggle to get out of it, or just say no?”

“No, sir.”

“What do you think, Bhaddāli? Suppose I was to say the same thing to a mendicant who is freed by wisdom, or a direct witness, or attained to view, or freed by faith, or a follower of teachings, or a follower by faith: ‘Please, mendicant, be a bridge for me to cross over the mud.’ Would they cross over themselves, or struggle to get out of it, or just say no?”

“No, sir.”

“What do you think, Bhaddāli? At that time were you freed both ways, freed by wisdom, a direct witness, attained to view, freed by faith, a follower of teachings, or a follower by faith?”

“No, sir.”

“Weren’t you vacuous, hollow, and mistaken?”

“Yes, sir.

I made a mistake … Please, sir, accept my mistake for what it is, so I will restrain myself in future."

"Indeed, Bhaddāli, you made a mistake. … But since you have recognized your mistake for what it is, and have dealt with it properly, I accept it. For it is growth in the training of the Noble One to recognize a mistake for what it is, deal with it properly, and commit to restraint in the future.

Bhaddāli, take a mendicant who doesn't fulfill the training according to the Teacher's instructions. They think, 'Why don't I frequent a secluded lodging—a wilderness, the root of a tree, a hill, a ravine, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a forest, the open air, a heap of straw. Hopefully I'll realize a superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones.' So they frequent a secluded lodging. While they're living withdrawn, they're reprimanded by the Teacher, by sensible spiritual companions after examination, by deities, and by themselves. Being reprimanded in this way, they don't realize any superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones. Why is that? Because that's how it is when someone doesn't fulfill the training according to the Teacher's instructions.

But take a mendicant who does fulfill the training according to the Teacher's instructions. They think, 'Why don't I frequent a secluded lodging—a wilderness, the root of a tree, a hill, a ravine, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a forest, the open air, a heap of straw. Hopefully I'll realize a superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones.' They frequent a secluded lodging—a wilderness, the root of a tree, a hill, a ravine, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a forest, the open air, a heap of straw. While they're living withdrawn, they're not reprimanded by the Teacher, by sensible spiritual companions after examination, by deities, or by themselves. Not being reprimanded in this way, they realize a superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones.

Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, they enter and remain in the first absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of seclusion, while placing the mind and keeping it connected. Why is that? Because that's what happens when someone fulfills the training according to the Teacher's instructions.

Furthermore, as the placing of the mind and keeping it connected are stilled, a mendicant enters and remains in the second absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of immersion, with internal clarity and mind at one, without placing the mind and keeping it connected. Why is that? Because that's what happens when someone fulfills the training according to the Teacher's instructions.

Furthermore, with the fading away of rapture, a mendicant enters and remains in the third absorption, where they meditate with equanimity, mindful and aware, experiencing for themselves the bliss of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous and mindful, one meditates in bliss.' Why is that? Because that's what happens when someone fulfills the training according to the Teacher's instructions.

Furthermore, with the giving up of pleasure and pain and the disappearance of former happiness and sadness, a mendicant enters and remains in the fourth absorption, without

pleasure or pain, with pure equanimity and mindfulness. Why is that? Because that's what happens when someone fulfills the training according to the Teacher's instructions.

When their mind has become immersed in samādhi like this—purified, bright, flawless, rid of corruptions, pliable, workable, steady, and imperturbable—they extend it toward recollection of past lives. They recollect many kinds of past lives, that is, one, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand rebirths; many eons of the world contracting, many eons of the world expanding, many eons of the world contracting and expanding. … They recollect their many kinds of past lives, with features and details. Why is that? Because that's what happens when someone fulfills the training according to the Teacher's instructions.

When their mind has become immersed in samādhi like this—purified, bright, flawless, rid of corruptions, pliable, workable, steady, and imperturbable—they extend it toward knowledge of the death and rebirth of sentient beings. With clairvoyance that is purified and superhuman, they see sentient beings passing away and being reborn—inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, in a good place or a bad place. They understand how sentient beings pass on according to their deeds: 'These dear beings did bad things by way of body, speech, and mind. … they're reborn in the underworld, hell. These dear beings, however, did good things by way of body, speech, and mind. … they're reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm.' And so, with clairvoyance that is purified and superhuman … they understand how sentient beings pass on according to their deeds. Why is that? Because that's what happens when someone fulfills the training according to the Teacher's instructions.

When their mind has become immersed in samādhi like this—purified, bright, flawless, rid of corruptions, pliable, workable, steady, and imperturbable—they extend it toward knowledge of the ending of defilements. They truly understand: 'This is suffering' … 'This is the origin of suffering' … 'This is the cessation of suffering' … 'This is the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering'. They truly understand: 'These are defilements' … 'This is the origin of defilements' … 'This is the cessation of defilements' … 'This is the practice that leads to the cessation of defilements'.

Knowing and seeing like this, their mind is freed from the defilements of sensuality, desire to be reborn, and ignorance. When they're freed, they know they're freed.

They understand: 'Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.' Why is that? Because that's what happens when someone fulfills the training according to the Teacher's instructions."

When he said this, Venerable Bhaddāli said to the Buddha, "What is the cause, sir, what is the reason why they punish some monk, repeatedly pressuring him? And what is the cause, what is the reason why they don't similarly punish another monk, repeatedly pressuring him?"

"Take a monk who is a frequent offender with many offenses. When admonished by the monks, he dodges the issue, distracting the discussion with irrelevant points. He displays annoyance, hate, and bitterness. He doesn't proceed properly, he doesn't fall in line, he doesn't proceed to get past it, and he doesn't say: 'I'll do what pleases the Saṅgha.' In such

a case, the monks say: ‘Reverends, this monk is a frequent offender, with many offenses. When admonished by the monks, he dodges the issue, distracting the discussion with irrelevant points. He displays annoyance, hate, and bitterness. He doesn’t proceed properly, he doesn’t fall in line, he doesn’t proceed to get past it, and he doesn’t say: “I’ll do what pleases the Saṅgha.” It’d be good for the venerables to examine this monk in such a way that this disciplinary issue is not quickly settled.’ And that’s what they do.

Take some other monk who is a frequent offender with many offenses. When admonished by the monks, he doesn’t dodge the issue, distracting the discussion with irrelevant points. He doesn’t display annoyance, hate, and bitterness. He proceeds properly, he falls in line, he proceeds to get past it, and he says: ‘I’ll do what pleases the Saṅgha.’ In such a case, the monks say: ‘Reverends, this monk is a frequent offender, with many offenses. When admonished by the monks, he doesn’t dodge the issue, distracting the discussion with irrelevant points. He doesn’t display annoyance, hate, and bitterness. He proceeds properly, he falls in line, he proceeds to get past it, and he says: “I’ll do what pleases the Saṅgha.” It’d be good for the venerables to examine this monk in such a way that this disciplinary issue is quickly settled.’ And that’s what they do.

Take some other monk who is an occasional offender without many offenses. When admonished by the monks, he dodges the issue … In such a case, the monks say: ‘Reverends, this monk is an occasional offender without many offenses. When admonished by the monks, he dodges the issue … It’d be good for the venerables to examine this monk in such a way that this disciplinary issue is not quickly settled.’ And that’s what they do.

Take some other monk who is an occasional offender without many offenses. When admonished by the monks, he doesn’t dodge the issue … In such a case, the monks say: ‘Reverends, this monk is an occasional offender without many offenses. When admonished by the monks, he doesn’t dodge the issue … It’d be good for the venerables to examine this monk in such a way that this disciplinary issue is quickly settled.’ And that’s what they do.

Take some other monk who gets by with mere faith and fondness. In such a case, the monks say: ‘Reverends, this monk gets by with mere faith and fondness. Suppose we punish him, repeatedly pressuring him— no, let him not lose what little faith and fondness he has!’

Suppose there was a person with one eye. Their friends and colleagues, relatives and kin would protect that one eye: ‘Let them not lose the one eye that they have!’ In the same way, some monk gets by with mere faith and fondness. In such a case, the monks say: ‘Reverends, this monk gets by with mere faith and fondness. Suppose we punish him, repeatedly pressuring him— no, let him not lose what little faith and love he has!’ This is the cause, this is the reason why they punish some monk, repeatedly pressuring him. And this is the cause, this is the reason why they don’t similarly punish another monk, repeatedly pressuring him.”

“What is the cause, sir, what is the reason why there used to be fewer training rules but more enlightened mendicants? And what is the cause, what is the reason why these days there are more training rules and fewer enlightened mendicants?”

“That’s how it is, Bhaddāli. When sentient beings are in decline and the true teaching is disappearing there are more training rules and fewer enlightened mendicants. The Teacher does not lay down training rules for disciples as long as certain defiling influences have not appeared in the Saṅgha. But when such defiling influences appear in the Saṅgha, the Teacher lays down training rules for disciples to protect against them.

And they don’t appear until the Saṅgha has attained a great size, an abundance of material support and fame, learning, and seniority. But when the Saṅgha has attained these things, then such defiling influences appear in the Saṅgha, and the Teacher lays down training rules for disciples to protect against them.

There were only a few of you there at the time when I taught the exposition on the simile of the thoroughbred colt. Do you remember that, Bhaddāli?”

“No, sir.”

“What do you believe the reason for that is?”

“Sir, it’s surely because for a long time now I haven’t fulfilled the training according to the Teacher’s instructions.”

“That’s not the only reason, Bhaddāli. Rather, for a long time I have encompassed your mind and known: ‘While I’m teaching, this futile man doesn’t pay attention, apply the mind, concentrate wholeheartedly, or actively listen to the teaching.’ Still, Bhaddāli, I shall teach the exposition on the simile of the thoroughbred colt. Listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.”

“Yes, sir,” Bhaddāli replied. The Buddha said this:

“Suppose a deft horse trainer were to obtain a fine thoroughbred. First of all he’d make it get used to wearing the bit. Because it has not done this before, it still resorts to some twists, ducks, and dodges. But with regular and gradual practice its bad behavior is extinguished.

When it has done this, the horse trainer next makes it get used to wearing the harness. Because it has not done this before, it still resorts to some twists, ducks, and dodges. But with regular and gradual practice its bad behavior is extinguished.

When it has done this, the horse trainer next makes it get used to walking in procession, circling, prancing, galloping, charging, the protocols and customs of court, and in the very best speed, fleetness, and camaraderie. Because it has not done this before, it still resorts to some twists, ducks, and dodges. But with regular and gradual practice its bad behavior is extinguished.

When it has done this, the horse trainer next rewards it with a grooming and a rub down. A fine royal thoroughbred with these ten factors is worthy of a king, fit to serve a king, and reckoned as a factor of kingship.

In the same way, a mendicant with ten qualities is worthy of offerings dedicated to the gods, worthy of hospitality, worthy of a religious donation, worthy of veneration with cupped palms, and is the supreme field of merit for the world. What ten? It’s when a

mendicant has an adept's right view, right purpose, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right immersion, right knowledge, and right freedom. A mendicant with these ten qualities is worthy of offerings dedicated to the gods, worthy of hospitality, worthy of a religious donation, worthy of veneration with cupped palms, and is the supreme field of merit for the world."

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