MN 68 — At Naḷakapāna

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Text

Middle Discourses 68

At Naḷakapāna

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Kosalans near Naḷakapāna in the grove of flame-of-the-forest trees.

Now at that time several very well-known gentlemen had gone forth out of faith from the lay life to homelessness in the Buddha's name— The venerables Anuruddha, Bhaddiya, Kimbila, Bhagu, Kuṇḍadhāna, Revata, Ānanda, and other very well-known gentlemen.

Now at that time the Buddha was sitting in the open, surrounded by the mendicant Saṅgha. Then the Buddha spoke to the mendicants about those gentlemen: "Mendicants, those gentlemen who have gone forth out of faith from the lay life to homelessness in my name—I trust they're satisfied with the spiritual life?" When this was said, the mendicants kept silent.

For a second and a third time the Buddha asked the same question. For a third time, the mendicants kept silent.

Then it occurred to the Buddha, "Why don't I question just those gentlemen?" Then the Buddha said to Venerable Anuruddha, "Anuruddha and friends, I hope you're satisfied with the spiritual life?"

"Indeed, sir, we are satisfied with the spiritual life."

"Good, good, Anuruddha and friends! It's appropriate for gentlemen like yourselves, who have gone forth out of faith from the lay life to homelessness, to be satisfied with the spiritual life. Since you're blessed with youth, in the prime of life, with pristine black hair, you could have enjoyed sensual pleasures; yet you have gone forth from the lay life to homelessness. But you didn't go forth to escape a summons by a king or a summons for a bandit, or because you were in debt or in fear, or in order to make a living. Rather, didn't you go forth thinking: 'I'm swamped by rebirth, old age, and death; by sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress. I'm swamped by suffering, mired in suffering. Hopefully I can make an end to this entire mass of suffering'?"

"Yes, sir."

"But, Anuruddha and friends, when a gentleman has gone forth like this, what should he do? Take someone who doesn't achieve the rapture and bliss that are secluded from sensual pleasures and unskillful qualities, or something even more peaceful than that.

Their mind is still occupied by desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, doubt, discontent, and sloth. That's someone who doesn't achieve the rapture and bliss that are secluded from sensual pleasures and unskillful qualities, or something even more peaceful than that.

Take someone who does achieve the rapture and bliss that are secluded from sensual pleasures and unskillful qualities, or something even more peaceful than that. Their mind is not occupied by desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, doubt, discontent, and sloth. That's someone who does achieve the rapture and bliss that are secluded from sensual pleasures and unskillful qualities, or something even more peaceful than that.

Is this what you think of me? 'The Realized One has not given up the defilements that are corrupting, leading to future lives, hurtful, resulting in suffering and future rebirth, old age, and death. That's why, after appraisal, he uses some things, endures some things, avoids some things, and dispels some things.'"

"No sir, we don't think of you that way. We think of you this way: 'The Realized One has given up the defilements that are corrupting, leading to future lives, hurtful, resulting in suffering and future rebirth, old age, and death. That's why, after appraisal, he uses some things, endures some things, avoids some things, and dispels some things.'"

"Good, good, Anuruddha and friends! The Realized One has given up the defilements that are corrupting, leading to future lives, hurtful, resulting in suffering and future rebirth, old age, and death. He has cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, obliterated them so they are unable to arise in the future. Just as a palm tree with its crown cut off is incapable of further growth, in the same way, the Realized One has given up the defilements so they are unable to arise in the future. That's why, after appraisal, he uses some things, endures some things, avoids some things, and dispels some things.

What do you think, Anuruddha and friends? What advantage does the Realized One see in declaring the rebirth of his disciples who have passed away: 'This one is reborn here, while that one is reborn there'?"

"Our teachings are rooted in the Buddha. He is our guide and our refuge. Sir, may the Buddha himself please clarify the meaning of this. The mendicants will listen and remember it."

"The Realized One does not declare such things for the sake of fawning or flattering people, nor for the benefit of possessions, honor, or popularity, nor thinking, 'So let people know about me!' Rather, there are gentlemen of faith who are full of sublime joy and gladness. When they hear that, they apply their minds to that end. That is for their lasting welfare and happiness.

Take a monk who hears this: 'The monk named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that he was enlightened.' And he's either seen for himself, or heard from someone else, that that venerable had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that monk's faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, he applies his mind to that end. That's how a monk lives at ease.

Take a monk who hears this: ‘The monk named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of the five lower fetters, he’s been reborn spontaneously and will become extinguished there, not liable to return from that world.’ And he’s either seen for himself, or heard from someone else, that that venerable had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that monk’s faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, he applies his mind to that end. That too is how a monk lives at ease.

Take a monk who hears this: ‘The monk named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of three fetters, and the weakening of greed, hate, and delusion, he’s a once-returner. He’ll come back to this world once only, then make an end of suffering.’ And he’s either seen for himself, or heard from someone else, that that venerable had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that monk’s faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, he applies his mind to that end. That too is how a monk lives at ease.

Take a monk who hears this: ‘The monk named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of three fetters he’s a stream-enterer, not liable to be reborn in the underworld, assured, destined for awakening.’ And he’s either seen for himself, or heard from someone else, that that venerable had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that monk’s faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, he applies his mind to that end. That too is how a monk lives at ease.

Take a nun who hears this: ‘The nun named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that she was enlightened.’ And she’s either seen for herself, or heard from someone else, that that sister had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that nun’s faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, she applies her mind to that end. That’s how a nun lives at ease.

Take a nun who hears this: ‘The nun named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of the five lower fetters, she’s been reborn spontaneously and will become extinguished there, not liable to return from that world.’ And she’s either seen for herself, or heard from someone else, that that sister had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that nun’s faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, she applies her mind to that end. That too is how a nun lives at ease.

Take a nun who hears this: ‘The nun named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of three fetters, and the weakening of greed, hate, and delusion, she’s a once-returner. She’ll come back to this world once only, then make an end of suffering.’ And she’s either seen for herself, or heard from someone else, that that sister had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that nun’s faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, she applies her mind to that end. That too is how a nun lives at ease.

Take a nun who hears this: ‘The nun named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of three fetters she’s a stream-enterer, not liable to be

reborn in the underworld, assured, destined for awakening.' And she's either seen for herself, or heard from someone else, that that sister had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that nun's faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, she applies her mind to that end. That too is how a nun lives at ease.

Take a layman who hears this: 'The layman named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of the five lower fetters, he's been reborn spontaneously and will become extinguished there, not liable to return from that world.' And he's either seen for himself, or heard from someone else, that that venerable had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that layman's faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, he applies his mind to that end. That's how a layman lives at ease.

Take a layman who hears this: 'The layman named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of three fetters, and the weakening of greed, hate, and delusion, he's a once-returner. He'll come back to this world once only, then make an end of suffering.' And he's either seen for himself, or heard from someone else, that that venerable had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that layman's faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, he applies his mind to that end. That too is how a layman lives at ease.

Take a layman who hears this: 'The layman named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of three fetters he's a stream-enterer, not liable to be reborn in the underworld, assured, destined for awakening.' And he's either seen for himself, or heard from someone else, that that venerable had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that layman's faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, he applies his mind to that end. That too is how a layman lives at ease.

Take a laywoman who hears this: 'The laywoman named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of the five lower fetters, she's been reborn spontaneously and will become extinguished there, not liable to return from that world.' And she's either seen for herself, or heard from someone else, that that sister had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that laywoman's faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, she applies her mind to that end. That's how a laywoman lives at ease.

Take a laywoman who hears this: 'The laywoman named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of three fetters, and the weakening of greed, hate, and delusion, she's a once-returner. She'll come back to this world once only, then make an end of suffering.' And she's either seen for herself, or heard from someone else, that that sister had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that laywoman's faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, she applies her mind to that end. That too is how a laywoman lives at ease.

Take a laywoman who hears this: 'The laywoman named so-and-so has passed away. The Buddha has declared that, with the ending of three fetters she's a stream-enterer, not

liable to be reborn in the underworld, assured, destined for awakening.' And she's either seen for herself, or heard from someone else, that that sister had such ethics, such qualities, such wisdom, such meditation, or such freedom. Recollecting that laywoman's faith, ethics, learning, generosity, and wisdom, she applies her mind to that end. That too is how a laywoman lives at ease.

So it's not for the sake of fawning or flattering people, nor for the benefit of possessions, honor, or popularity, nor thinking, 'So let people know about me!' that the Realized One declares the rebirth of his disciples who have passed away: 'This one is reborn here, while that one is reborn there.' Rather, there are gentlemen of faith who are full of joy and gladness. When they hear that, they apply their minds to that end. That is for their lasting welfare and happiness."

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