MN 74 — With Dīghanakha

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Text

Middle Discourses 74

With Dīghanakha

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha, on the Vulture's Peak Mountain in the Boar's Cave.

Then the wanderer Dīghanakha went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he stood to one side and said to the Buddha, "Worthy Gotama, this is my doctrine and view: 'Nothing is acceptable to me.'"

"This view of yours, Aggivessana— is that acceptable to you?"

"If I were to accept this view, worthy Gotama, it would make no difference, it would make no difference!"

"Well, Aggivessana, there are many more in the world who say, 'It would make no difference! It would make no difference!' But they don't give up that view, and they grasp another view. And there are a scant few in the world who say, 'It would make no difference! It would make no difference!' And they give up that view by not grasping another view.

There are some ascetics and brahmins who have this doctrine and view: 'Everything is acceptable to me.' There are some ascetics and brahmins who have this doctrine and view: 'Nothing is acceptable to me.' There are some ascetics and brahmins who have this doctrine and view: 'Some things are acceptable to me and some things are not.' Regarding this, the view of the ascetics and brahmins to whom everything is acceptable is close to greed, bondage, approving, attachment, and grasping. The view of the ascetics and brahmins to whom nothing is acceptable is far from greed, bondage, approving, attachment, and grasping."

When he said this, the wanderer Dīghanakha said to the Buddha, "Worthy Gotama commends my conviction! He recommends my conviction!"

"Now, regarding the ascetics and brahmins to whom some things are acceptable and some things are not. Their view of what is acceptable is close to greed, bondage, approving, attachment, and grasping. Their view of what is not acceptable is far from greed, bondage, approving, attachment, and grasping.

When it comes to the view of the ascetics and brahmins to whom everything is acceptable, a sensible person reflects like this: 'I have the view that everything is acceptable. Suppose I were to obstinately stick to this view and insist, "This is the only truth, anything else is futile." Then I'd argue with two individuals— an ascetic or brahmin to whom nothing is acceptable, and an ascetic or brahmin to whom some things are acceptable and some things are not. And when there's arguing, there's dispute; when there's dispute there's distress; and when there's distress there's harm.' So, considering in themselves the potential for argument, dispute, distress, and harm, they give up that view by not grasping another view. That's how those views are given up and let go.

When it comes to the view of the ascetics and brahmins to whom nothing is acceptable, a sensible person reflects like this: 'I have the view that nothing is acceptable. Suppose I were to obstinately stick to this view and insist, "This is the only truth, anything else is futile." Then I'd argue with two individuals— an ascetic or brahmin to whom everything is acceptable, and an ascetic or brahmin to whom some things are acceptable and some things are not. And when there's arguing, there's dispute; when there's dispute there's distress; and when there's distress there's harm.' So, considering in themselves the potential for argument, dispute, distress, and harm, they give up that view by not grasping another view. That's how those views are given up and let go.

When it comes to the view of the ascetics and brahmins to whom some things are acceptable and some things are not, a sensible person reflects like this: 'I have the view that some things are acceptable and some things are not. Suppose I were to obstinately stick to this view and insist, "This is the only truth, anything else is futile." Then I'd argue with two individuals— an ascetic or brahmin to whom everything is acceptable, and an ascetic or brahmin to whom nothing is acceptable. And when there's arguing, there's dispute; when there's dispute there's distress; and when there's distress there's harm.' So, considering in themselves the potential for argument, dispute, distress, and harm, they give up that view by not grasping another view. That's how those views are given up and let go.

Aggivessana, this body is formed. It's made up of the four principal states, produced by mother and father, built up from rice and porridge, liable to impermanence, to wearing away and erosion, to breaking up and destruction. You should see it as impermanent, as suffering, as diseased, as a boil, as a dart, as gloom, as an affliction, as alien, as breaking apart, as empty, as not-self. Doing so, you'll give up desire, affection, and subservience to the body.

There are these three feelings: pleasant, painful, and neutral. At a time when you feel a pleasant feeling, you don't feel a painful or neutral feeling; you only feel a pleasant feeling. At a time when you feel a painful feeling, you don't feel a pleasant or neutral feeling; you only feel a painful feeling. At a time when you feel a neutral feeling, you don't feel a pleasant or painful feeling; you only feel a neutral feeling.

Pleasant, painful, and neutral feelings are impermanent, conditioned, dependently originated, liable to end, vanish, fade away, and cease.

Seeing this, a learned noble disciple grows disillusioned with pleasant, painful, and neutral feelings. Being disillusioned, desire fades away. When desire fades away they're freed. 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.'

A mendicant whose mind is freed like this doesn't side with anyone or dispute with anyone. They use the language of the world to communicate without getting stuck on it."

Now at that time Venerable Sāriputta was standing behind the Buddha fanning him. Then he thought, "It seems the Buddha speaks of giving up and letting go of all these things through direct knowledge." Reflecting like this, Venerable Sāriputta's mind was freed from the defilements by not grasping.

And the stainless, immaculate vision of the Dhamma arose in the wanderer Dīghanakha: "Everything that is liable to arise is liable to cease." Then Dīghanakha saw, attained, understood, and fathomed the Dhamma. He went beyond doubt, got rid of indecision, and became self-assured and independent of others regarding the Teacher's instructions. He said to the Buddha:

"Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what's there, worthy Gotama has made the teaching clear in many ways. I go for refuge to the worthy Gotama, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life."