MN 75 — MN 75 To Māgaṇḍiya | Māgaṇḍiya Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

To Māgaṇḍiya

Māgaṇḍiya Sutta (MN 75)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in the Kuru country near a town of the Kurus called Kammāsadhamma,1 on a spread of grass in the fire hall of a brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan.

Then early in the morning, the Blessed One adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Kammāsadhamma for alms. Having gone for alms in Kammāsadhamma, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he went to a certain forest grove for the day’s abiding. Plunging into the forest grove, he sat at the root of a certain tree for the day’s abiding.

Then Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer—walking back & forth & around to exercise his legs—went to the fire hall of the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan. There he saw the spread of grass laid out, and on seeing it, he said to the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan, "Dear Master Bhāradvāja, whose spread of grass is laid out in the fire hall? One would think it fit to be a contemplative's bed."

"Māgaṇḍiya, there is the Master Gotama, of whom this admirable reputation has spread: 'He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.' This is that Master Gotama's bed laid out."

"What a bad thing to see that we see, Master Bhāradvāja!—that we see the bed of Master Gotama, that destroyer of growth!"

"Be careful of your words, Māgaṇḍiya! Be careful of your words! Many wise noble warrior, wise brahmans, wise householders, & wise contemplatives have full confidence in that Master Gotama and have been disciplined by him in the noble method, the Dhamma that is skillful."

"Master Bhāradvāja, even if we saw Master Gotama face to face, we would say to him face to face: 'Gotama the contemplative is a destroyer of growth.' Why is that? Because it has come down in our scripture."

"If it wouldn't be burdensome to you, Master Māgaṇḍiya, I will report this to Master Gotama."

"Go ahead, Master Bhāradvāja. You may tell him what was said."

Now, the Blessed One—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—heard the conversation of the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan with Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer. Then, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, he went to the fire hall of the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan. On arrival, he sat down on the spread of grass laid out.

Then the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Bhāradvāja, did you have a conversation with Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer about this very same spread of grass?"

Terrified, his hair standing on end, the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan said to the Blessed One, "We wanted to report this very thing to Master Gotama, but Master Gotama, without having been told at all, has told us!"

But this exchange between the Blessed One and the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan was interrupted when Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer—walking back & forth & around to exercise his legs—went to the fire hall of the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan and approached the Blessed One. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat to one side.

As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Māgaṇḍiya, the eye that finds pleasure in forms, that delights in forms, that rejoices in forms: That has been tamed, guarded, protected, & restrained by the Tathāgata, and he teaches the Dhamma for its restraint. Was it in reference to that that you said, 'Gotama the contemplative is a destroyer of growth'?"

"It was precisely in reference to that, Master Gotama, that I said, 'Gotama the contemplative is a destroyer of growth.' Why is that? Because it has come down in our scripture."

"Māgaṇḍiya, the ear that finds pleasure in sounds…

"The nose that finds pleasure in aromas…

"The tongue that finds pleasure in flavors…

"The body that finds pleasure in tactile sensations…

"The intellect that finds pleasure in ideas, that delights in ideas, that rejoices in ideas: That has been tamed, guarded, protected, & restrained by the Tathāgata, and he teaches the Dhamma for its restraint. Was it in reference to that that you said, 'Gotama the contemplative is a destroyer of growth'?"

"It was precisely in reference to that, Master Gotama, that I said, 'Gotama the contemplative is a destroyer of growth.' Why is that? Because it has come down in our scripture."

"What do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? There is the case where someone may have formerly enjoyed himself with forms cognizable via the eye: agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire. But then—having known at a later time, as they have come to be, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, & the escape from those very same forms—he would dwell having abandoned craving for forms, having removed fever for forms, free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace. What criticism would he deserve from you?"

"None, Master Gotama."

"What do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? There is the case where someone may have formerly enjoyed himself with sounds cognizable via the ear… aromas cognizable via the nose… flavors cognizable via the tongue… tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable,

pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire. But then—having known at a later time, as they have come to be, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, & the escape from those very same tactile sensations—he would dwell having abandoned craving for ideas, having removed fever for ideas, free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace. What criticism would he deserve from you?"

"None, Master Gotama."

"Before, Māgaṇḍiya, when I was a house-dweller, I went about, endowed & provided with the five strings of sensuality: with forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire; with sounds cognizable via the ear… with aromas cognizable via the nose… with flavors cognizable via the tongue… with tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire.

"I had three palaces: one for the cold season, one for the hot season, one for the rainy season. During the four months of the rainy season, I was entertained in the rainy-season palace by minstrels without a single man among them, and I did not once come down from that palace.

"But having known at a later time—as they have come to be—the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, & the escape from those very same sensualities,2 I now dwell having abandoned craving for sensuality, having removed fever for sensuality, free from thirst, my mind inwardly at peace.

"I see other beings who are not devoid of passion for sensualities, who are chewed up by sensual craving, burning with sensual fever, partaking of sensualities, and I don't envy them or delight there [in the sensualities]. Why is that? Because there is a delight apart from sensualities, apart from unskillful qualities, surpassing even heavenly bliss. Finding pleasure in that delight, I don't envy what is inferior, nor do I delight there.

"Māgaṇḍiya, suppose that there was a rich householder or householder's son of great wealth, great possessions, who went about endowed & provided with the five strings of sensuality: with forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire; with sounds cognizable via the ear… with aromas cognizable via the nose… with flavors cognizable via the tongue… with tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire. Having performed good conduct with the body, good conduct with speech, & good conduct with the intellect, he would—with the breakup of the body, after death—reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world, in the company of the devas of the Thirty-three. There, surrounded by a group of nymphs in the Nandana forest, he would go about, endowed & provided with the five strings of heavenly sensuality. He would see a householder or householder's son going about, endowed & provided with the five strings of sensuality. What do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Would that deva-son—surrounded by a group of nymphs in the Nandana forest, going about, endowed & provided with the five strings of heavenly sensuality—envy that householder or householder's son's five strings

of human sensuality, or would he be seduced by those sensualities?"

"No, Master Gotama. Why is that? Because heavenly sensualities are more excellent than human sensualities, and more sublime."

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, before—when I was a house-dweller, I went about, endowed & provided with the five strings of sensuality…

"But having known at a later time—as they have come to be—the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, & the escape from those very same sensualities, I now dwell having abandoned craving for sensuality, having removed fever for sensuality, free from thirst, my mind inwardly at peace.

"I see other beings who are not devoid of passion for sensualities, who are chewed up by sensual craving, burning with sensual fever, partaking of sensualities, and I don't envy them or delight there. Why is that? Because there is a delight apart from sensualities, apart from unskillful qualities, surpassing even heavenly bliss. Finding pleasure in that delight, I don't envy what is inferior, nor do I delight there.

"Māgaṇḍiya, suppose that there was a leper covered with sores & infections, chewed up by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a pit of glowing embers. His friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him, and thanks to the medicine he would be cured of his leprosy: well & happy, free, master of himself, going wherever he liked. He would see another leper covered with sores & infections, chewed up by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a pit of glowing embers. What do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Would that man envy that leper's pit of glowing embers or his partaking of medicine?"

"No, Master Gotama. Why is that? Because when there is disease, there is a use for medicine. But when there is no disease, there is no use for medicine."

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, before—when I was a house-dweller, I went about, endowed & provided with the five strings of sensuality…

"But having known at a later time—as they have come to be—the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, & the escape from those very same sensualities, I now dwell having abandoned craving for sensuality, having removed fever for sensuality, free from thirst, my mind inwardly at peace.

"I see other beings who are not devoid of passion for sensualities, who are chewed up by sensual craving, burning with sensual fever, partaking of sensualities, and I don't envy them or delight there. Why is that? Because there is a delight apart from sensualities, apart from unskillful qualities, surpassing even heavenly bliss. Finding pleasure in that delight, I don't envy what is inferior, nor do I delight there.

“Māgaṇḍiya, suppose that there was a leper covered with sores & infections, chewed up by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a pit of glowing embers. His friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him, and thanks to the medicine he would be cured of his leprosy: well & happy, free, master of himself, going wherever he liked. Then suppose two strong men, having seized hold of him by both arms, were to drag him to a pit of glowing embers. What do you think? Wouldn’t he twist his body this way & that?”

“Yes, Master Gotama. Why is that? Because the fire is painful to the touch, very hot & scorching.”

“But what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Is the fire painful to the touch, very hot & scorching, only now, or was it also that way before?”

“Both now & before is it painful to the touch, very hot & scorching, Master Gotama. It’s just that when the man was a leper covered with sores & infections, chewed up by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, his faculties were impaired, which was why, even though the fire was actually painful to the touch, he had the skewed perception of ‘pleasant.’”

“In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, sensualities in the past were painful to the touch, very hot & scorching; sensualities in the future will be painful to the touch, very hot & scorching; sensualities at present are painful to the touch, very hot & scorching; but when beings are not free from passion for sensualities—chewed up by sensual craving, burning with sensual fever—their faculties are impaired, which is why, even though sensualities are actually painful to the touch, they have the skewed perception of ‘pleasant.’

“Now, suppose that there was a leper covered with sores & infections, chewed up by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a pit of glowing embers. The more he cauterized his body over the pit of glowing embers, the more unclean, foul-smelling, & putrid the openings of his wounds would become, and yet he would feel a modicum of enjoyment & satisfaction because of the itchiness of his wounds. In the same way, beings not free from passion for sensualities—chewed up by sensual craving, burning with sensual fever—partake of sensualities. The more they partake of sensualities, the more their sensual craving increases and the more they burn with sensual fever, and yet they feel a modicum of enjoyment & satisfaction dependent on the five strings of sensuality.

“Now what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Have you ever seen or heard of a king or king’s minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strings of sensuality, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Very good, Māgaṇḍiya. Neither have I ever seen or heard of a king or king’s minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strings of sensuality, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace. But whatever contemplatives or brahmans who have dwelt or will dwell or are dwelling free from thirst, their minds inwardly at peace, all have done so having realized—as it has come to be—the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks, & the escape from sensuality, having abandoned sensual craving and removed sensual fever.”

Then at that moment the Blessed One exclaimed,

“Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune.

Unbinding: the foremost ease.

The eightfold: the foremost of paths

going to the

deathless,

secure.”

When this was said, Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer said to the Blessed One, “It’s amazing, Master Gotama. It’s astounding, how this, too, is well-stated by Master Gotama: ‘Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease.’ We have also heard this said by earlier wanderers in the lineage of our teachers: ‘Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease.’ This agrees with that.”

“But as for what you have heard said by earlier wanderers in the lineage of your teachers, Māgaṇḍiya—‘Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease’—which freedom from disease is that, which unbinding?”

When this was said, Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer rubbed his own limbs with his hand. “This is that freedom from disease, Master Gotama,” he said. “This is that unbinding. For I am now free from disease, happy, and nothing afflicts me.”

“Māgaṇḍiya, it’s just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn’t see black objects… white… blue… yellow… red… or pink objects; who couldn’t see even or uneven places, the stars, the sun, or the moon. He would hear a man with good eyesight saying, ‘How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.’ He would go in search of something white. Then another man would fool him with a grimy, oil-stained rag: ‘Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.’ The blind man would take it and put it on. Having put it on, gratified, he would exclaim words of gratification, ‘How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.’ Now, what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? When that man blind from birth took the grimy, oil-stained rag and put it on; and, having put it on, gratified, exclaimed words of gratification, ‘How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean’: Did

he do so knowing & seeing, or out of faith in the man with good eyesight?"

"Of course, he did it not knowing & not seeing, Master Gotama, but out of faith in the man with good eyesight."

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. Without knowing freedom from disease, without seeing unbinding, they still speak this verse:

"Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune.

Unbinding: the foremost ease.

This verse was stated by earlier worthy ones, rightly self-awakened:

"Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune.

Unbinding: the foremost ease.

The eightfold: the foremost of paths

going to the

deathless,

secure.'

"But now it has gradually become a verse of run-of-the-mill people.

"This body, Māgaṇḍiya, is a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction. And yet you say, with reference to this body which is a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction: 'This is that freedom from disease, Master Gotama. This is that unbinding,' for you don't have the noble vision with which you would know freedom from disease and see unbinding."

"I'm convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I would know freedom from disease, that I would see unbinding."

"Māgaṇḍiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects... white... blue... yellow... red... or pink objects; who couldn't see even or uneven places, the stars, the sun, or the moon. His friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him, but in spite of the medicine his eyesight would not appear or grow clear. What do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Would that doctor have nothing but his share of weariness & trouble?"

"Yes, Master Gotama."

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, if I were to teach you the Dhamma—'This is that freedom from disease; this is that unbinding'—and you on your part did not know freedom from disease or see unbinding, that would be wearisome for me; that would be troublesome for

me."

"I'm convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I would know freedom from disease, that I would see unbinding."

"Māgaṇḍiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects… white… blue… yellow… red… or pink objects; who couldn't see even or uneven places, the stars, the sun, or the moon. Now, suppose that a certain man were to take a grimy, oil-stained rag and fool him, saying, 'Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' The blind man would take it and put it on.

"Then his friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him: purges from above & purges from below, ointments & counter-ointments and treatments through the nose. And thanks to the medicine, his eyesight would appear & grow clear. Then together with the arising of his eyesight, he would abandon whatever passion & delight he felt for that grimy, oil-stained rag. And he would regard that man as an enemy & no friend at all, and think that he deserved to be killed. 'My gosh, how long have I been fooled, cheated, & deceived by that man & his grimy, oil-stained rag!—"Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean."'

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, if I were to teach you the Dhamma—'This is that freedom from disease; this is that unbinding'—and you on your part were to know that freedom from disease and see that unbinding, then together with the arising of your eyesight you would abandon whatever passion & delight you felt with regard for the five clinging-aggregates. And it would occur to you, 'My gosh, how long have I been fooled, cheated, & deceived by this mind! For in clinging, it was just form that I was clinging to… it was just feeling… just perception… just fabrications… just consciousness that I was clinging to. From my clinging as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition, birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.'"

"I'm convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might rise up from this seat cured of my blindness."

"In that case, Māgaṇḍiya, associate with people of integrity. When you associate with people of integrity, you will hear the true Dhamma. When you hear the true Dhamma, you will practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. When you practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, you will know & see for yourself: 'These things are diseases, cancers, arrows. And here is where diseases, cancers, & arrows cease without trace. From the cessation of my clinging comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming, the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress."

When this was said, Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer said, “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. Let me obtain the going forth in Master Gotama’s presence! Let me obtain the acceptance!”

“Anyone, Māgaṇḍiya, who has previously belonged to another sect and who desires the going forth & acceptance in this Dhamma & Vinaya, must first undergo probation for four months. If, at the end of four months, the monks feel so moved, they give him the going forth & accept him into the monk’s state. But I know distinctions among individuals in this matter.”

“Master Gotama, if anyone who has previously belonged to another sect and desires the going forth & acceptance in this Dhamma & Vinaya must first undergo probation for four months; and if, at the end of four months, the monks feeling so moved, give him the going forth & accept him into the monk’s state; then I am willing to undergo probation for four years. If, at the end of four years, the monks feel so moved, let them give me the going forth & accept me into the monk’s state.”

Then Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer received the going forth & the acceptance in the Blessed One’s presence. And not long after his acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And thus Ven. Māgaṇḍiya became another one of the arahants.

Notes

1. The same town where the events recounted in DN 15, DN 22, and MN 10 took place.

2. “There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire; sounds cognizable via the ear… aromas cognizable via the nose… flavors cognizable via the tongue… tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire. But these are not sensuality. They are called strings of sensuality in the discipline of the noble ones.

The passion for his resolves is a man’s sensuality,

not the beautiful sensual pleasures

found in the world.

The passion for his resolves is a man’s sensuality.

The beauties remain as they are in the world,

while, in this regard,

the enlightened

subdue their desire. — AN 6:63

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 13; MN 14; MN 105; MN 125; SN 22:1; AN 3:39; AN 6:63; Sn 4:1; Dhp 203–204; Thig 13:5