MN 78 — MN 78 Muṇḍika the Contemplative | Samaṇa-Muṇḍika Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Muṇḍika the Contemplative

Samaṇa-Muṇḍika Sutta (MN 78)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now on that occasion Uggāhamāna, a follower of Muṇḍika the contemplative,1 together with a large following of about 500 wanderers, had taken up residence in the debating hall near the Tiṇḍuka tree in the single-pavilion park of Queen Mallikā. Then Pañcakaṅga the carpenter left Sāvatthī in the middle of the day to see the Blessed One, but the thought occurred to him, “Now is not the right time to see the Blessed One, for he is in seclusion. And it is not the right time to see the mind-developing monks, for they too are in seclusion. Why don’t I go to the debating hall near the Tiṇḍuka

tree in the single-pavilion park of Queen Mallikā to see Uggāhamāna, a follower of Muṇḍika the contemplative?" So he headed to the debating hall near the Tiṇḍuka tree in the single-pavilion park of Queen Mallikā.

Now on that occasion Uggāhamāna was sitting with his large following of wanderers, all making a great noise & racket, discussing many kinds of bestial topics of conversation: conversation about kings, robbers, & ministers of state; armies, alarms, & battles; food & drink; clothing, furniture, garlands, & scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women & heroes; the gossip of the street & the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity, the creation of the world & of the sea; talk of whether things exist or not. Then Uggāhamāna saw Pañcakaṅga the carpenter coming from afar, and on seeing him, hushed his following: "Be quiet, good sirs. Don't make any noise. Here comes Pañcakaṅga the carpenter, a disciple of Gotama the contemplative. He is one of those disciples of Gotama the contemplative, clad in white, who lives in Sāvatthī. These people are fond of quietude, trained in quietude, and speak in praise of quietude. Maybe, if he perceives our group as quiet, he will consider it worth his while to come our way." So the wanderers fell silent.

Then Pañcakaṅga went to Uggāhamāna and, on arrival, greeted him courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, Uggāhamāna said to him, "I describe an individual endowed with four qualities as being consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments. Which four? There is the case where he does no evil action with his body, speaks no evil speech, resolves on no evil resolve, and maintains himself with no evil means of livelihood. An individual endowed with these four qualities I describe as being consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments."

Then Pañcakaṅga neither delighted in Uggāhamāna's words nor did he scorn them. Expressing neither delight nor scorn, he got up from his seat & left, thinking, "I will learn the meaning of this statement in the Blessed One's presence."

Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, after bowing down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One the entire conversation he had had with Uggāhamāna.

When this was said, the Blessed One said to Pañcakaṅga: "In that case, carpenter, then according to Uggāhamāna's words a stupid baby boy, lying on its back, is consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments. For even the thought 'body' does not occur to a stupid baby boy lying on its back, so from where would it do any evil action with its body, aside from a little kicking? Even the thought 'speech' does not occur to it, so from where would it speak any evil speech, aside from a little crying? Even the thought 'resolve' does not occur to it, so from where would it resolve on any evil resolve, aside from a little bad temper? Even the thought 'livelihood' does not occur to it, so from where would it maintain itself with any evil means of livelihood, aside from its mother's milk? So, according to Uggāhamāna's words, a

stupid baby boy, lying on its back is consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments.

“If an individual is endowed with these four qualities, I do not describe him as consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments. Rather, he stands on the same level as a stupid baby boy lying on its back. Which four? There is the case where he does no evil action with his body, speaks no evil speech, resolves on no evil resolve, and maintains himself with no evil means of livelihood. If an individual is endowed with these four qualities, I do not describe him as consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments. Rather, he stands on the same level as a stupid baby boy lying on its back.

“An individual endowed with ten qualities is one whom I describe as being consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments. With regard to that point, one should know that ‘These are unskillful habits,’ I say. With regard to that point, one should know that ‘That is the cause of unskillful habits’ … ‘Here unskillful habits cease without trace’ … ‘This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful habits,’ I say.

“With regard to that point, one should know that ‘These are skillful habits’ … ‘That is the cause of skillful habits’ … ‘Here skillful habits cease without trace’ … ‘This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful habits,’ I say.

“With regard to that point, one should know that ‘These are unskillful resolves’ … ‘That is the cause of unskillful resolves’ … ‘Here unskillful resolves cease without trace’ … ‘This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves’ I say.

“With regard to that point, one should know that ‘These are skillful resolves’ … ‘That is the cause of skillful resolves’ … ‘Here skillful resolves cease without trace’ … ‘This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves,’ I say.

“Now what are unskillful habits? Unskillful bodily actions, unskillful verbal actions, evil means of livelihood. These are called unskillful habits. What is the cause of unskillful habits? Their cause is stated, and they are said to be mind-caused. Which mind?—for the mind has many modes & permutations. Any mind with passion, aversion or delusion: That is the cause of unskillful habits. Now where do unskillful habits cease without trace? Their cessation has been stated: There is the case where a monk abandons wrong bodily conduct & develops right bodily conduct, abandons wrong verbal conduct & develops right verbal conduct, abandons wrong livelihood & maintains his life with right livelihood. This is where unskillful habits cease without trace. And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful habits? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion,

increase, plenitude, development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful habits.

“And what are skillful habits? Skillful bodily actions, skillful verbal actions, purity of livelihood. These are called skillful habits. What is the cause of skillful habits? Their cause, too, has been stated, and they are said to be mind-caused. Which mind?—for the mind has many modes & permutations. Any mind without passion, without aversion, without delusion: That is the cause of skillful habits. Now where do skillful habits cease without trace? Their cessation, too, has been stated: There is the case where a monk is virtuous, but not fashioned of virtue.2 He discerns, as it has come to be, the awareness-release & discernment-release where his skillful habits cease without trace. And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful habits? There is the case where a monk generates desire… for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the… development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful habits.

“And what are unskillful resolves? Being resolved on sensuality, on ill will, on harmfulness. These are called unskillful resolves. What is the cause of unskillful resolves? Their cause, too, has been stated, and they are said to be perception-caused. Which perception?—for perception has many modes & permutations. Any sensuality-perception, ill will-perception or harmfulness-perception: That is the cause of unskillful resolves. Now where do unskillful resolves cease without trace? Their cessation, too, has been stated: There is the case where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is where unskillful resolves cease without trace. And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves? There is the case where a monk generates desire… for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the… development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves.

“And what are skillful resolves? Being resolved on renunciation [freedom from sensuality], on non-ill will, on harmlessness. These are called skillful resolves. What is the cause of skillful resolves? Their cause, too, has been stated, and they are said to be perception-caused. Which perception?—for perception has many modes & permutations. Any renunciation-perception, non-ill will-perception or harmlessness-perception: That is the cause of skillful resolves. Now where do skillful resolves cease without trace? Their cessation, too, has been stated: There is the case where a monk, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. This is where skillful resolves cease without trace. And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves? There is the case where a monk generates desire… for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful

qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the… development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves.

“Now, an individual endowed with which ten qualities is one whom I describe as being consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments? One endowed with the right view of one beyond training, the right resolve of one beyond training, the right speech… the right action… the right livelihood… the right effort… the right mindfulness… the right concentration… the right knowledge… the right release of one beyond training. An individual endowed with these ten qualities is one whom I describe as being consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments.”

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

Notes

1. This can also mean “the shaven-headed contemplative,” in which case Uggāhamāna might have belonged to one of the Jain sects.

2. The Pali here is: no ca sīla-mayo. According to the Commentary, this means that he does not regard virtue as the consummation of the path. It may also mean that he does not define himself by his virtue. This term is apparently related to the state called atammayatā, or non-fashioning. On this topic, see The Wings to awakening, especially the introduction to section II/B and passage §179.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 101; MN 113; MN 117; MN 152