MN 87 — MN 87 From One Who Is Dear | Piyajātika Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

From One Who Is Dear

Piyajātika Sutta (MN 87)

Many discourses depict King Pasenadi Kosala as a Buddhist. This discourse relates how—through the astuteness of Queen Mallikā—he first became favorably disposed toward the Buddha.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now at that time a certain householder’s dear &

beloved little son, his only child, had died. Because of his death, the father had no desire to work or to eat. He kept going to the cemetery and crying out, "Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?"

Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, "Householder, your faculties are not those of one who is steady in his own mind. There is an aberration in your faculties."

"Lord, how could there not be an aberration in my faculties? My dear & beloved little son, my only child, has died. Because of his death, I have no desire to work or to eat. I keep going to the cemetery and crying out, 'Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?'"

"That's the way it is, householder. That's the way it is—for sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

"But lord, who would ever think that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear? Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear." So the householder, not delighting in the Blessed One's words, rejecting the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and left.

Now at that time a large number of gamblers were playing dice not far from the Blessed One. So the householder went to them and, on arrival, said to them, "Just now, venerable sirs, I went to Gotama the contemplative and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As I was sitting there, Gotama the contemplative said to me, 'Householder, your faculties are not those of one who is steady in his own mind. There is an aberration in your faculties.'

"When this was said, I said to him, 'Lord, how could there not be an aberration in my faculties? My dear & beloved little son, my only child, has died. Because of his death, I have no desire to work or to eat. I keep going to the cemetery and crying out, "Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?"'

"'That's the way it is, householder. That's the way it is—for sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'

"'But, lord, who would ever think that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear? Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.' So, not delighting in the words of Gotama the contemplative, rejecting them, I got up from my seat and left."

"That's the way it is, householder (said the gamblers). That's the way it is. Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

So the householder left, thinking, "I agree with the gamblers."

Eventually, word of this conversation made its way into the king's inner chambers. Then King Pasenadi Kosala addressed Queen Mallikā, "Mallikā, your contemplative, Gotama, has said this: 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'"

"If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is."

"No matter what Gotama the contemplative says, Mallikā endorses it: 'If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is.' Just as, no matter what his teacher says, a pupil endorses it: 'That's the way it is, teacher. That's the way it is.' In the same way, no matter what Gotama the contemplative says, Mallikā endorses it: 'If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is.' Go away, Mallikā! Out of my sight!"

Then Queen Mallikā called for the brahman Nāḷijaṅgha: "Come, brahman. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, showing reverence with your head to his feet in my name, ask whether he is free from illness & affliction, is carefree, strong, & living in comfort, saying: 'Queen Mallikā, lord, shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort.' And then say: 'Lord, did the Blessed One say that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear?' Whatever the Blessed One says, remember it well and tell it to me—for Tathāgatas do not speak untruthfully."

"Yes, madam," the brahman Nāḷijaṅgha responded to Queen Mallikā. Going to the Blessed One, on arrival he exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "Master Gotama, Queen Mallikā shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort. And she says further: 'Lord, did the Blessed One say that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear?'"

"That's the way it is, brahman. That's the way it is. Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear. And it's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a woman whose mother died. Owing to her mother's death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my mother? Have you seen my mother?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a woman whose father died… whose brother died… whose sister died… whose son died… whose daughter died… whose husband died. Owing to his death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my husband? Have you seen my

husband?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a man whose mother died. Owing to her death he went mad, out of his mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my mother? Have you seen my mother?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a man whose father died… whose brother died… whose sister died… whose son died… whose daughter died… whose wife died. Owing to her death he went mad, out of his mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my wife? Have you seen my wife?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvatthī there was a wife who went to her relatives' home. Her relatives, having separated her from her husband, wanted to give her to another against her will. So she said to her husband, 'These relatives of mine, having separated us, want to give me to another against my will,' whereupon he cut her in two and slashed himself open, thinking, 'Dead we will be together.' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

Then the brahman Nāḷijaṅgha, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and went to Queen Mallikā. On arrival, he told her all that had been said in his conversation with the Blessed One.

Then Queen Mallikā went to King Pasenadi Kosala and on arrival said to him, "What do you think, great king? Is Princess Vajirī dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallikā, Princess Vajirī is dear to me."

"And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in Princess Vajirī?"

"Mallikā, any change & aberration in Princess Vajirī would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?"

"Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—said, 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'

"Now what do you think, great king? Is the noble Queen Vāsabhā dear to you? …. Is [your son] General Viḍūḍabha dear to you? …. Am I dear to you?"

“Yes, Mallikā, you are dear to me.”

“And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in me?”

“Mallikā, any change & aberration in you would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?”

“Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—said, ‘Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.’

“Now what do you think, great king? Are [your subjects] the Kāsis & Kosalans dear to you?”

“Yes, Mallikā, the Kāsis & Kosalans are dear to me. It’s through the might of the Kāsis & Kosalans that we use Kāsi sandalwood and wear garlands, scents, & ointments.”

“And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in the Kāsis & Kosalans?”

“Mallikā, any change & aberration in the Kāsis & Kosalans would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?”

“Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—said, ‘Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.’”

“It’s amazing, Mallikā. It’s astounding: how deeply the Blessed One sees, having pierced through, as it were, with discernment. Come Mallikā: Give me the ablution water.” Then King Pasenadi Kosala, rising from his seat and arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, paid homage in the direction of the Blessed One with his hands palm-to-palm in front of his heart, and exclaimed three times:

“Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!

Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!

Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 21; SN 3; SN 4:8; SN 42:11; AN 3:63; AN 4:200; AN 5:49; Ud 2:7; Ud 5:1; Ud 8:8; Sn 1:3; Sn 4:11; Thig 3:5; Thig 6:1