

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattḥī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṅṅika’s Park. There the venerable Sāriputta addressed the bhikkhus thus. “Friends, bhikkhus.” — “Friend,” they replied. The venerable Sāriputta said this:

2. “Friends, there are these four kinds of persons found existing in the world. What four? Here some person with a blemish does not understand it as it actually is thus: ‘I have a blemish in myself.’ Here some person with a blemish understands it as it actually is thus: ‘I have a blemish in myself.’ Here some person with no blemish does not understand it as it actually is thus: ‘I have no blemish in myself.’ Here some person with no blemish understands it as it actually is thus: ‘I have no blemish in myself.’

“Herein, the person with a blemish who does not understand it as it actually is thus: ‘I have a blemish in myself’ is called the inferior of these two persons with a blemish. Herein, the person with a blemish who understands it as it actually is thus: ‘I have a blemish in myself’ is called the superior of these two persons with a blemish.

“Herein, the person with no blemish who does not understand it as it actually is thus: ‘I have no blemish’ is called the inferior of these two persons with no blemish. Herein, the person with no blemish who understands it as it actually is thus: ‘I have no blemish’ is called the superior of these two persons with no blemish.”

3. When this was said, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna asked the venerable Sāriputta: “Friend Sāriputta, what is the cause and reason why, of these two persons with a blemish, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man? What is the cause and reason why, of these two persons with no blemish, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man?”

4. “Herein, friend, when a person with a blemish does not understand it as it actually is thus: ‘I have a blemish in myself,’ it can be expected that he will not arouse zeal, make effort, or instigate energy to abandon that blemish, and that he will die with lust, hate, and delusion, with a blemish, with mind defiled. Suppose a bronze dish were brought from a ship or a smithy covered with dirt and stains, and the owners neither used it nor had it cleaned but put it away in a dusty corner. Would the bronze dish thus get more defiled and stained later on?” -- “Yes, friend.” -- “So too, friend, when a person with a blemish does not understand it as it actually is

thus: 'I have a blemish in myself,' it can be expected ... that he will die ... with mind defiled.

5. "Herein, when a person with a blemish understands it as it actually is thus: 'I have a blemish in myself,' it can be expected that he will arouse zeal, make effort, and instigate energy to abandon that blemish, and that he will die without lust, hate, and delusion, without blemish, and that he will die without lust, hate, and delusion, without blemish, with mind undefiled. Suppose a bronze dish were brought from a shop or a smithy covered with dirt and stains, and the owners used it and had it cleaned and did not put it in a dusty corner. Would the bronze dish thus get cleaner and brighter later on?" -- "Yes, friend." -- "So too, friend, when a person with a blemish understands it as it actually is thus: 'I have a blemish in myself,' it can be expected ... that he will die ... with mind undefiled.

6. "Herein, when a person with no blemish does not understand it as it actually is thus: 'I have no blemish in myself,' it can be expected that he will give attention to the sign of the beautiful, that by his doing so lust will infect his mind, and that he will die with lust, hate, and delusion, with a blemish, with mind defiled. Suppose a bronze dish were brought from a shop or smithy clean and bright, and the owners neither used it nor had it cleaned but put it in a dusty corner. Would the bronze dish thus get more defiled and more stained later on?" -- "Yes, friend." -- "So too, friend, when a person with no blemish does not understand it as it actually is thus: 'I have no blemish in myself,' it can be expected that he will die ... with mind defiled.

7. "Herein, when a person with no blemish understands it as it actually is thus: 'I have no blemish in myself,' it can be expected that he will not give attention to the sign of the beautiful, that by his not doing so lust will not infect his mind, and that he will die without lust, hate, and delusion, without blemish, with mind undefiled. Suppose a bronze dish were brought from a shop or smithy clean and bright, and the owners used it and had in cleaned and did not put it in a dusty corner. Would the bronze dish thus get cleaner and brighter later on?" -- "Yes, friend." -- "So too, friend, when a person with no blemish understands it as it actually is thus: 'I have no blemish in myself,' it can be expected ... that he will die ... with mind undefiled.

8. "This is the cause and reason why, of these two persons with a blemish, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man. This is the cause and reason why, of these two persons with no blemish, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man.

9. "Blemish, blemish,' is said, friend, but what is this word 'blemish' a term for? 'Blemish,' friend, is a term for the spheres of evil unwholesome wishes.

10. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘If I commit an offence, let the bhikkhus not know that I have committed an offence.’ And it is possible that the bhikkhus come to know that that bhikkhu has committed an offence. So he is angry and bitter thus: ‘The bhikkhus know I have committed an offence.’ The anger and bitterness are both a blemish.

11. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘If I commit an offence, let the bhikkhus admonish me in private, not in the midst of the Sangha.’ And it is possible that the bhikkhus admonish that bhikkhu in the midst of the Sangha, not in private. So he is angry and bitter thus: ‘The bhikkhus admonish me in the midst of the Sangha, not in private.’ The anger and bitterness are both a blemish.

12. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘If I commit an offence, let a person who is my equal admonish me, not a person who is not my equal.’ And it is possible that a person not his equal admonishes him, not a person his equal. So he is angry and bitter thus: ‘A person not my equal admonishes me, not a person my equal.’ The anger and bitterness are both a blemish.

13. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘Oh that the Teacher might teach the Dhamma to the bhikkhus by asking a series of questions of me, not of some other bhikkhu!’ And it is possible that the Teacher teaches the Dhamma to the bhikkhus by asking a series of questions of some other bhikkhu, not of that bhikkhu. So he is angry and bitter thus: ‘The Teacher teaches the Dhamma to the bhikkhus by asking a series of questions of some other bhikkhu, not of me.’ The anger and bitterness are both a blemish.

14. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘Oh that the bhikkhus might enter the village for alms putting me in the forefront, not some other bhikkhu!’ And it is possible that the bhikkhus enter the village for alms putting some other bhikkhu in the forefront, not that bhikkhu. So he is angry and bitter thus: ‘The bhikkhus enter the village for alms putting some other bhikkhu in the forefront, not me.’ The anger and bitterness are both a blemish.

15. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘Oh that I might get the best seat, the best water, the best almsfood in the refectory, not some other bhikkhu!’ And it is possible that some other bhikkhu gets the best seat...

16. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘Oh that I might give the blessing in the refectory after the meal, not some other bhikkhu!’ And it is possible that some other bhikkhu gives the blessing...

17-20. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘Oh that I might teach the Dhamma to the bhikkhus...that I might teach the Dhamma to the bhikkhunis...men lay followers...women lay followers visiting the monastery, not some other bhikkhus!’ And it is possible that some other bhikkhu teaches the Dhamma...

21-24. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘Oh that the bhikkhus...bhikkhunis...men lay followers...women lay followers might honor, respect, revere, and venerate me, not some other bhikkhu!’ And it is possible that they honor...some other bhikkhu...

25-28. “It is possible that a bhikkhu here might wish: ‘Oh that I might be the one to get a superior robe, ... superior almsfood...a superior resting place...superior medicinal requisites, not some other bhikkhu!’ And it is possible that some other bhikkhu is the one to get superior medicinal requisites, not that bhikkhu. So he is angry and bitter thus: ‘Another bhikkhu is the one to get superior medicinal requisites, not me.’ The anger and the bitterness are both a blemish.

“‘Blemish,’ friend, is a term for the spheres of these evil unwholesome wishes.

29. “If the spheres of these evil unwholesome wishes are seen and heard to be unabandoned in any bhikkhu, then for all he may be a forest dweller, a frequenter of remote abodes, an almsfood eater, a house-to-house seeker, a refuse-rag wearer, a wearer of rough robes, still his fellows in the holy life do not honor, respect, revere, and venerate him. Why is that? Because the spheres of these evil unwholesome wishes are seen and heard to be unabandoned in that venerable one.

“Suppose a bronze dish were brought from a shop or a smithy clean and bright; and the owners put the carcass of a snake or a dog or a human being in it and, covering it with another dish, went back to the market; then people seeing it said: ‘What is that you are carrying about like a treasure?’ Then, raising the lid and uncovering it, they looked in, and as soon as they saw they were inspired with such loathing, repugnance, and disgust that even those who were hungry

would not want to eat, not to speak of those who were full.

“So too, if the spheres of these evil unwholesome wishes are seen and heard to be unabandoned in any bhikkhu, then for all he may be a forest dweller...unabandoned in that venerable one.

30. “If the spheres of these evil unwholesome wishes are seen and heard to be abandoned in any bhikkhu, then for all he may be a village dweller, an acceptor of invitations, a wearer of robes given him by householders, yet his fellows in the holy life honor, respect, revere, and venerate him. Why is that? Because the spheres of these evil unwholesome wishes are seen and heard to be abandoned in that venerable one.

“Suppose a bronze dish were brought from a shop or a smithy clean and bright; and the owners put clean boiled rice and various soups and sauces into it, and, covering it with another dish, went back to the market; then people seeing it said: ‘What is that you are carrying about like a treasure?’ Then raising the lid and uncovering it, they looked in, and as soon as they saw they were inspired with such liking, appetite, and relish that even those who were full would want to eat, not to speak of those who were hungry.

“So too, friend, if the spheres of these evil unwholesome wishes are seen and heard to be abandoned in any bhikkhu, then for all he may be a village dweller...abandoned in that venerable one.”

31. When this was said, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna said to the venerable Sāriputta: “A simile occurs to me, friend Sāriputta.”—“State it, friend Moggallāna.”—“On one occasion, friend, I was living at the Hill Fort at Rājagaha. Then, when it was morning, I dressed, and taking my bowl and outer robe, I went into Rājagaha for alms. Now on that occasion Samīti the cartwright’s son was planning a fellow and the Ājivaka Paṇḍuputta, son of a former cartwright, was standing by. Then this thought arose in the Ājivaka Paṇḍuputta’s mind: ‘Oh that this Samīti the cartwright’s son might plane this bend, this twist, this fault, out of the fellow so that it would be without bends, twists, or faults, and come to consist purely of heartwood.’ And just as this thought came to pass in his mind, so did Samīti the cartwright’s son plane that bend, that twist, that fault, out of the fellow. Then the Ājivaka Paṇḍuputta, son of a former cartwright, was glad and he voiced his gladness thus: ‘He planes just as if he knew my heart with his heart!’

32. “So too, friend there are persons who are faithless and have gone forth from the home life into homelessness not out of faith but seeking a livelihood, who are fraudulent, deceitful, treacherous, haughty, hollow, personally vain, rough-tongued, loose-spoken, unguarded in their sense faculties, immoderate in eating, undevoted to wakefulness, unconcerned with recluseship, not greatly respectful of training, luxurious, careless, leaders in backsliding, neglectful of seclusion, lazy, wanting in energy, unmindful, not fully aware, unconcentrated, with straying minds, devoid of wisdom, drivellers. The venerable Sāriputta with his discourse on the Dhamma planes out their faults just as if he knew my heart with his heart!

“But there are clansmen who have gone forth out of faith from the home life into homelessness, who are not fraudulent, deceitful, treacherous, haughty, hollow, personally vain, rough-tongued, or loose-spoken; who are guarded in their sense faculties, moderate in eating, devoted to wakefulness, concerned with recluseship, greatly respectful of training, not luxurious or careless, who are keen to avoid backsliding, leaders in seclusion, energetic, resolute, established in mindfulness, fully aware, concentrated, with unified minds, possessing wisdom, not drivellers. These, on hearing the venerable Sāriputta’s discourse on the Dhamma, drink it in and eat it, as it were, by word and thought. Good indeed it is that he makes his fellows in the holy life emerge from the unwholesome and establish themselves in the wholesome.

33. “Just as a woman—or a man—young, youthful, fond of adornments, with head bathed, having received a garland of lotuses, jasmine, or roses, would take it with both hands and place it on the head, so too there are clansmen who have gone forth out of faith...not drivellers. These, on hearing the venerable Sāriputta’s discourse on the Dhamma, drink it in and eat it, as it were, by word and thought. Good indeed it is that he makes his fellows in the holy life emerge from the unwholesome and establish themselves in the wholesome.”

Thus it was that these two great beings rejoiced in each other’s good words.

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Majjhima Nikāya 5

Part One – The Root Fifty Discourses (Mūlapaññāsapāṇi)

The Division of the Discourse on the Root (Mūlapariyāyavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi