

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Sakyan country where there was a town of the Sakyans named Medaṅgumpā.

2. Now on that occasion King Pasenadi of Kosala had arrived at Nagaraka for some business or other. Then he addressed Dīgha Kārāyāṅga: “Dear Kārāyāṅga, have the state carriages prepared. Let us go to the pleasure garden to see a pleasing spot.”

“Yes, sire,” Dīgha Kārāyāṅga replied. When the state carriages were prepared, he informed the king: “Sire, the state carriages are ready for you. You may go at your own convenience.”

3. Then King Pasenadi mounted a state carriage, and accompanied by the other carriages, he drove out from Nagaraka with the full pomp of royalty and proceeded towards the park. He went thus as far as the road was passable for carriages and then dismounted from his carriage and entered the park on foot.

4. As he walked and wandered in the park for exercise, King Pasenadi saw roots of trees that were lovely and inspiring, quiet and undisturbed by voices, with an atmosphere of seclusion, remote from people, favorable for retreat. The sight of these reminded him of the Blessed One thus: “These roots of trees are lovely and inspiring, quiet and undisturbed by voices, with an atmosphere of seclusion, remote from people, favorable for retreat, like the places where we used to pay respect to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened.” Then he told Dīgha Kārāyāṅga what he had thought and asked: “Where is he living now, the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened?”

5. “There is, sire, a town of the Sakyans named Medaṅgumpā. The Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened, is now living there.”

“How far is it from Nagaraka to Medaṅgumpā?”

“It is not far, sire, three leagues. There is still daylight enough to go there.”

“Then, dear Kārāyaṃa, have the state carriages prepared. Let us go and see the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened.”

“Yes, sire,” he replied. When the state carriages were prepared, he informed the king: “Sire, the state carriages are ready for you. You may go at your own convenience.”

6. Then King Pasenadi mounted a state carriage, and accompanied by the other carriages, set out from Nagaraka towards the Sakyan town of Medaṃumpa. He arrived there while it was still daylight and proceeded towards the park. He went thus as far as the road was passable for carriages and then dismounted from his carriage and entered the park on foot.

7. Now on that occasion a number of bhikkhus were walking up and down in the open. Then King Pasenadi went to them and asked: “Venerable sirs, where is he living now, the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened? We want to see the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened.”

8. “That is his dwelling, great king, with the closed door. Go up to it quietly, without hurrying, enter the porch, clear your throat, and tap on the panel. The Blessed One will open the door for you.” King Pasenadi handed over his sword and turban to Dīgha Kārāyaṃa then and there. Then Dīgha Kārāyaṃa thought: “So the king is going into secret session now! And I have to wait here alone now!” Without hurrying, King Pasenadi went quietly up to the dwelling with the closed door, entered the porch, cleared his throat, and tapped on the panel. The Blessed One opened the door.

9. Then King Pasenadi entered the dwelling. Prostrating himself with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, he covered the Blessed One’s feet with kisses and caressed them with his hands, pronouncing his name: “I am King Pasenadi of Kosala, venerable sir; I am King Pasenadi of Kosala, venerable sir.”

“But, great king, what reason do you see for doing such supreme honor to this body and for showing such friendship?”

10. “Venerable sir, I infer according to Dhamma about the Blessed One: ‘The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples is practicing the good way.’ Now, venerable sir, I see some recluses and brahmins leading a limited holy life for ten years, twenty years, thirty years, or forty years, and then on a later occasion I see them well groomed and well anointed, with trimmed hair and beards, enjoying themselves provided and endowed with the five cords of sensual pleasure. But here I see bhikkhus leading the perfect and pure holy life as long as life and breath last. Indeed, I do not see any other holy life elsewhere as perfect and pure as this. This is why, venerable sir, I infer according to Dhamma about the Blessed One: ‘The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples is practicing the good way.’

11. “Again, venerable sir, kings quarrel with kings, nobles with nobles, brahmins with brahmins, householders with householders; mother quarrels with son, son with mother, father with son, son with father; brother quarrels with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. But here I see bhikkhus living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes. I do not see any other assembly elsewhere with such concord. This too, venerable sir, is why I infer according to Dhamma about the Blessed One: ‘The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples is practicing the good way.’

12. “Again, venerable sir, I have walked and wandered from park to park and from garden to garden. There I have seen some recluses and brahmins who are lean, wretched, unsightly, jaundiced, with veins standing out on their limbs, such that people would not want to look at them again. I have thought: ‘Surely these venerable ones are leading the holy life in discontent, or they have done some evil deed and are concealing it, so lean and wretched are they...such that people would not want to look at them again.’ I went up to them and asked: ‘Why are you venerable ones so lean and wretched...such that people would not want to look at you again?’ Their reply was: ‘It is our family sickness, great king.’ But here I see bhikkhus smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful, plainly delighting, their faculties fresh, living at ease, unruffled, subsisting on what others give, abiding with mind [as aloof] as a wild deer’s. I have thought: ‘Surely these venerable ones perceive successive states of lofty distinction in the Blessed One’s Dispensation, since they abide thus smiling and cheerful...with mind [as aloof] as a wild deer’s.’ This too, venerable sir, is why I infer according to Dhamma about the Blessed One: ‘The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples is practicing the good way.’

13. “Again, venerable sir, being a head anointed noble king, I am able to have executed those who should be executed, to fine those who should be fined, to exile those who should be exiled. Yet when I am sitting in council, they break in and interrupt me. Though I say: ‘Gentlemen, do not break in and interrupt me when I am sitting in council; wait till the end of my speech,’ still they break in and interrupt me. But here I see bhikkhus while the Blessed One is teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of several hundred followers and then there is not even the sound of a disciple of the Blessed One coughing or clearing his throat. Once the Blessed One was teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of several hundred followers and there a disciple of his cleared his throat. Thereupon one of his companions in the holy life nudged him with his knee to indicate: ‘Be quiet, venerable sir, make no noise; the Blessed One, the Teacher, is teaching us the Dhamma.’ I thought: ‘It is wonderful, it is marvellous how an assembly can be so well disciplined without force or weapon!’ Indeed, I do not see any other assembly elsewhere so well disciplined. This too, venerable sir, is why I infer according to Dhamma about the Blessed One: ‘The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples is practicing the good way.’”

14. “Again, venerable sir, I have seen here certain learned nobles who were clever, knowledgeable about the doctrines of others, as sharp as hairsplitting marksmen; they wander about, as it were, demolishing the views of others with their sharp wits. When they hear: ‘The recluse Gotama will visit such and such a village or town,’ they formulate a question thus: ‘We will go to the recluse Gotama and ask him this question. If he is asked like this, he will answer like this, and so we will refute his doctrine in this way; and if he is asked like that, he will answer like that, and so we will refute his doctrine in that way.’ They hear: ‘The recluse Gotama has come to visit such and such a village or town.’ They go to the Blessed One, and the Blessed One instructs, urges, rouses, and gladdens them with a talk on the Dhamma. After they have been instructed, urged, roused, and gladdened by the Blessed One with a talk on the Dhamma, they do not so much as ask him the question, so how should they refute his doctrine? In actual fact, they become his disciples. This too, venerable sir, is why I infer according to Dhamma about the Blessed One: ‘The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples is practicing the good way.’”

15. “Again, venerable sir, I have seen here certain learned brahmins...”

16. “Again, venerable sir, I have seen here certain learned householders...”

17. “Again, venerable sir, I have seen here certain learned recluses...They do not so much as ask him the question, so how should they refute his doctrine? In actual fact, they ask the Blessed One to allow them to go forth from the home life into homelessness, and he gives them

the going forth. Not long after they have thus gone forth, dwelling alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and resolute, by realizing for themselves with direct knowledge they here and now enter upon and abide in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness. They say thus: 'We were very nearly lost, we very nearly perished, for formerly we claimed that we were recluses though we were not really recluses; we claimed that we were brahmins though we were not really brahmins; we claimed that we were arahants though we were not really arahants. But now we are recluses, now we are brahmins, now we are arahants.' This too, venerable sir, is why I infer according to Dhamma about the Blessed One: 'The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is practicing the good way.'

18. "Again, venerable sir, Isidatta and Purāṇa, my two inspectors, eat my food and use my carriages; I provide them with a livelihood and bring them fame. Yet in spite of this, they are less respectful towards me than they are towards the Blessed One. Once when I had gone out leading an army and was testing these inspectors, Isidatta and Purāṇa, I happened to put up in very cramped quarters. Then these two inspectors, Isidatta and Purāṇa, after spending much of the night in talk on the Dhamma, lay down with their heads in the direction where they had heard that the Blessed One was staying and with their feet towards me. I thought: 'It is wonderful, it is marvellous! These two inspectors, Isidatta and Purāṇa, eat my food and use my carriages; I provide them with a livelihood and bring them fame. Yet in spite of this, they are less respectful towards me than they are towards the Blessed One. Surely these good people perceive successive states of lofty distinction in the Blessed One's Dispensation.' This too, venerable sir, is why I infer according to Dhamma about the Blessed One: 'The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is practicing the good way.'

19. "Again, venerable sir, the Blessed One is a noble and I am a noble; the Blessed One is a Kosalan and I am a Kosalan; the Blessed One is eighty years old and I am eighty years old. Since that is so, I think it proper to do such supreme honor to the Blessed One and to show such friendship.

20. "And now, venerable sir, we depart. We are busy and have much to do."

"You may go, great king, at your convenience."

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One,

keeping him on his right, he departed.

21. Then, soon after he had left, the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: “Bhikkhus, before rising from his seat and departing, this King Pasenadi uttered monuments to the Dhamma. Learn the monuments to the Dhamma, bhikkhus; master the monuments to the Dhamma; remember the monuments to the Dhamma. The monuments to the Dhamma are beneficial, bhikkhus, and they belong to the fundamentals of the holy life.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

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Majjhima Nikāya 89

Part Two – The Middle Fifty Discourses (Majjhimapaṭṭhāsapāṭi)

The Division on Kings (Rājavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

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