

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.

2. Now on that occasion the venerable Moliya Phagguna was associating overmuch with bhikkhunis. He was associating so much with bhikkhunis that if any bhikkhu spoke dispraise of those bhikkhunis in his presence, he would become angry and displeased and would make a case of it; and if any bhikkhu spoke dispraise of the venerable Moliya Phagguna in those bhikkhunis' presence, they would become angry and displeased and would make a case of it. So much was the venerable Moliya Phagguna associating with bhikkhunis.

3. Then a certain bhikkhu went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and told the Blessed One what was taking place.

4. Then the Blessed One addressed a certain bhikkhu thus: "Come, bhikkhu, tell the bhikkhu Moliya Phagguna in my name that the Teacher calls him."—"Yes, venerable sir," he replied, and he went to the venerable Moliya Phagguna and told him: "The Teacher calls you, friend Phagguna."—"Yes, friend," he replied, and he went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, sat down at one side. The Blessed One asked him:

5. "Phagguna, is it true that you are associating overmuch with bhikkhunis, that you are associating so much with bhikkhunis that if any bhikkhu speaks dispraise of those bhikkhunis in your presence, you become angry and displeased and make a case of it; and if any bhikkhu speaks dispraise of you in those bhikkhunis' presence, they become angry and displeased and make a case of it? Are you associating so much with bhikkhunis, as it seems?"—"Yes, venerable sir."—"Phagguna, are you not a clansman who has gone forth out of faith from home life into homelessness?"—"Yes, venerable sir."

6. "Phagguna, it is not proper for you, a clansman gone forth out of faith from the home life into homelessness, to associate overmuch with bhikkhunis. Therefore, if anyone speaks dispraise of those bhikkhunis in your presence, you should abandon any desires and any thoughts based on the household life. And herein you should train thus: 'My mind will be unaffected, and I shall utter no evil words; I shall abide compassionate for his welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate.' That is how you should train, Phagguna.

"If anyone gives those bhikkhus a blow with his hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife in your presence, you should abandon any desires and any thoughts based on the household life. And herein you should train thus: 'My mind will be unaffected...' If anyone speaks dispraise in your presence, you should abandon any desires and any thoughts based on the household life. And herein you should train thus: 'My mind will be unaffected...' If anyone should give you a blow with his hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife, you should abandon any desires and any thoughts based on the household life. And herein you should train thus: 'My mind will be unaffected, and I shall utter no evil words; I shall abide compassionate for his welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate.' That is how you should train, Phagguna.

7. Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus, there was an occasion when the bhikkhus satisfied my mind. Here I addressed the bhikkhus thus: 'Bhikkhus, I eat at a single session. By so doing, I am free from illness and affliction, and I enjoy lightness, strength, and a comfortable abiding. Come, bhikkhus, eat at a single session. By so doing, you will be free from illness and affliction, and you will enjoy lightness, strength, and a comfortable abiding.' And I had no need to keep on instructing those bhikkhus; I had only to arouse mindfulness in them. Suppose there were a chariot on even ground at the crossroads, harnessed to thoroughbreds, waiting with goad lying ready, so that a skilled trainer, a charioteer of horses to be tamed, might mount it, and taking the reins in his left hand and the goad in his right hand, might drive out and back by any road whenever he likes. So too, I had no need to keep on instructing those bhikkhus; I had only to arouse mindfulness in them

8. "Therefore, bhikkhus, abandon what is unwholesome and devote yourselves to wholesome states, for that is how you will come to growth, increase, and fulfillment in this Dhamma and Discipline. Suppose there were a big sāla-tree grove near a village or town, and it was choked with castor-oil weeds, and some man would appear desiring its good, welfare, and protection. He would cut down and throw out the crooked saplings that robbed the sap, and he would clean up the interior of the grove and tend the straight well-formed saplings, so that the sāla-tree grove later on would come to growth, increase, and fulfillment. So too, bhikkhus, abandon what is unwholesome and devote yourselves to wholesome states, for that is how you will come to growth, increase, and fulfillment in this Dhamma and Discipline.

9. "Formerly, bhikkhus, in this same Sāvattihī there was a housewife named Vedehikā. And a good report about Mistress Vedehikā had spread thus: 'Mistress Vedehikā is gentle, mistress Vedehikā is meek, Mistress Vedehikā is peaceful.' Now Mistress Vedehikā had a maid named Kālī, who was clever, jumble, and neat in her work. The maid Kālī thought: 'A good report about my lady has spread thus: "Mistress Vedehikā is gentle, Mistress Vedehikā is meek, Mistress Vedehikā is peaceful." How is it now, while she does not show anger, is it nevertheless actually

present in her or is it absent? Or else is it just because my work is neat that my lady shows no anger though it is actually present in her? Suppose I test my lady.'

"So the maid Kālī got up late. Then Mistress Vedehikā said: 'Hey, Kālī!'—'What is it, madam?'—'What is the matter that you get up so late?'—'Nothing is the matter, madam.'—'Nothing is the matter, you wicked girl, yet you get up so late!' and she was angry and displeased, and she scowled. Then the maid Kālī thought: 'The fact is that while my lady does not show anger, it is actually present in her, not absent; and it is just because my work is neat that my lady shows no anger though it is actually present in her, not absent. Suppose I test my lady a little more.'

"So the maid Kālī got up later in the day. Then Mistress Vedehikā said: 'Hey, Kālī!'—'What is it, madam?'—'What is the matter that you get up later in the day?'—'Nothing is the matter, madam.'—'Nothing is the matter, you wicked girl, yet you get up later in the day!' and she was angry and displeased, and she spoke words of displeasure. Then the maid Kālī thought: 'The fact is that while my lady does not show anger, it is actually present in her, not absent; and it is just because my work is neat that my lady shows no anger though it is actually present in her, not absent. Suppose I test my lady a little more.'

"So the maid Kālī got up still later in the day. Then Mistress Vedehikā said: 'Hey, Kālī!'—'What is it, madam?'—'What is the matter that you get up still later in the day?'—'Nothing the matter, madam.'—'Nothing is the matter, you wicked girl, yet you get up still later in the day!' and she was angry and displeased, and she took a rolling-pin, gave her a blow on the head, and cut her head.

"Then the maid Kālī, with blood running from her cut head denounced her mistress to the neighbors: 'See, ladies, the gentle lady's work! See, ladies, the meek lady's work! See, ladies, the peaceful lady's work! How can she become angry and displeased with her only maid for getting up late? How can she take a rolling-pin, give her a blow on the head, and cut her head?' Then later on a bad report about Mistress Vedehikā spread thus: 'Mistress Vedehikā is rough, Mistress Vedehikā is violent, Mistress Vedehikā is merciless.'

10. "So too, bhikkhus, some bhikkhu is extremely gently, extremely meek, extremely peaceful, so long as disagreeable courses of speech do not touch him. But it is when disagreeable courses of speech touch him that it can be understood whether that bhikkhu is really kind, gentle, and peaceful. I do not call a bhikkhu easy to admonish who is easy to admonish and

makes himself easy to admonish only for the sake of getting robes, almsfood, a resting place, and medicinal requisites. Why is that? Because that bhikkhu is not easy to admonish nor makes himself easy to admonish when he gets no robes, almsfood, resting place, and medicinal requisites. But when a bhikkhu is easy to admonish and makes himself easy to admonish because he honors, respects, and reveres the Dhamma, him I call easy to admonish. Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'We shall be easy to admonish and make ourselves easy to admonish because we honor, respect, and revere the Dhamma.' That is how you should train, bhikkhus.

11. "Bhikkhus, there are these five courses of speech that others use when they address you: their speech may be timely or untimely, true or untrue, gentle or harsh, connected with good or with harm, spoken with a mind of loving-kindness or with inner hate. When others address you, their speech may be timely or untimely; when others address you, their speech may be true or untrue; when others address you, their speech may be gentle or harsh; when others address you, their speech may be connected with good or with harm; when others address you, their speech may be spoken with a mind of loving-kindness or with inner hate. Herein, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'Our minds will remain unaffected, and we shall utter no evil words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate. We shall abide pervading that person with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, and starting with him, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.' That is how you should train, bhikkhus.

12. "Bhikkhus, suppose a man came with a hoe and a basket and said: 'I shall make this great earth to be without earth.' He would dig here and there, strew the soil here and there, spit here and there, and urinate here and there, saying: 'Be without earth, be without earth!' What do you think, bhikkhus? Could that man make this great earth to be without earth?"—"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because this great earth is deep and immeasurable; it is not easy to make it be without earth. Eventually the man would reap only weariness and disappointment."

13. "So too, bhikkhus, there are these five courses of speech...(as in §11)...Herein, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'Our minds will remain unaffected...and starting with him, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind similar to the earth, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.' That is how you should train, bhikkhus.

14. "Bhikkhus, suppose a man came with crimson, turmeric, indigo, or carmine and said: 'I shall draw pictures and make pictures appear on empty space.' What do you think, bhikkhus? Could that man draw pictures and make pictures appear on empty space?"—"No, venerable sir. Why

is that? Because empty space is formless and non-manifestive; it is not easy to draw pictures there or make pictures appear there. Even the man would reap only weariness and disappointment."

15. "So too, bhikkhus, there are these five courses of speech...Herein, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'Our minds will remain unaffected...and starting with him, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind similar to empty space, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.' That is how you should train, bhikkhus

16. "Bhikkhus, suppose a man came with a blazing grass-torch and said: 'I shall heat up and burn away the river Ganges with this blazing grass-torch.' What do you think, bhikkhus? Could that man heat up and burn away the river Ganges with that blazing grass-torch?"—"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because the river Ganges is deep and immense; it is not easy to heat it up or burn it away with a blazing grass-torch. Eventually the man would reap only weariness and disappointment."

17. "So too, bhikkhus, there are these five courses of speech...Herein, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'Our minds will remain unaffected...and starting with him, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind similar to the river Ganges, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.' That is how you should train, bhikkhus.

18. "Bhikkhus, suppose there were a catskin bag that was rubbed, well rubbed, thoroughly well rubbed, soft, silky, rid of rustling, rid of crackling, and a man came with a stick or a potsherd and said: 'There is this catskin bag that is rubbed...rid of rustling, rid of crackling. I shall make it rustle and crackle.' What do you think, bhikkhus? Could that man make it rustle or crackle with the stick or the potsherd?"—"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because that catskin bag being rubbed...rid of rustling, rid of crackling, it is not easy to make it rustle or crackle with the stick or the potsherd. Eventually the man would reap only weariness and disappointment."

19. "So too, bhikkhus, there are these five courses of speech that others may use when they address you: their speech may be timely or untimely, true or untrue, gentle or harsh, connected with good or with harm, spoken with a mind of loving-kindness or with inner hate. When others address you, their speech may be timely or untimely, true or untrue, gentle or harsh, connected with good or with harm, spoken with a mind of loving-kindness or with inner hate. When others address you, their speech may be timely or untimely; when others address you, their speech may be true or untrue; when others address you, their speech may be gentle or harsh; when

others address you, their speech may be connected with good or with harm; when others address you, their speech may be spoken with a mind of loving-kindness or with inner hate. Herein, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'Our minds will remain unaffected, and we will utter no evil words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate. We shall abide pervading that person with a mind imbued with loving-kindness; and starting with him, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind similar to a catskin bag, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.' That is how you should train, bhikkhus.

20. "Bhikkhus, even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handed saw, he who gave rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be carrying out my teaching. Herein, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'Our minds will remain unaffected, and we shall utter no evil words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate. We shall abide pervading them with a mind imbued with loving-kindness; and starting with them, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.' That is how you should train, bhikkhus.

21. "Bhikkhus, if you keep this advice on the simile of the saw constantly in mind, do you see any course of speech, trivial or gross, that you could not endure?"—"No, venerable sir."—"Therefore, bhikkhus, you should keep this advice on the simile of the saw constantly in mind. That will lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time."

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 21

Part One – The Root Fifty Discourses (Mūlapaṇṇāsapāṇi)

The Division of Similes (Opammavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi