

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Bhagga country at Suṃsumāragira in the Bhesakaṃṅkā Grove, the Deer Park.

2. Now on that occasion a palace named Kokanada had recently been built for Prince Bodhi, and it had not yet been inhabited by any recluse or brahmin or any human being at all.

3. Then Prince Bodhi addressed the brahmin student Sañjikāputta thus: “Come, my dear Sañjikāputta, go to the Blessed One and pay homage in my name with your head at his feet, and ask whether he is free from illness and affliction and is healthy, strong, and abiding in comfort, saying: ‘Venerable sir, Prince Bodhi pays homage with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, and he asks whether the Blessed One is free from illness...and abiding in comfort.’ Then say this: ‘Venerable sir, let the Blessed One together with the Sangha of bhikkhus consent to accept tomorrow’s meal from Prince Bodhi.’”

“Yes, sir,” Sañjikāputta replied, and he went to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and said: “Master Gotama, Prince Bodhi pays homage with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, and he asks whether the Blessed One is free from illness...and abiding in comfort. And he says this: ‘Let Master Gotama together with the Sangha of bhikkhus consent to accept tomorrow’s meal from Prince Bodhi.’”

4. The Blessed One consented in silence. Then, knowing that the Blessed One had consented, Sañjikāputta rose from his seat, went to Prince Bodhi, and told him what had happened, adding: “The recluse Gotama has consented.”

5. Then, when the night had ended, Prince Bodhi had good food of various kinds prepared in his own residence, and he had the Kokanada Palace spread with white cloth down to the last step of the staircase. Then he addressed the brahmin student Sañjikāputta thus: “Come, my dear Sañjikāputta, go to the Blessed One and announce that it is time thus: ‘It is time, venerable sir, the meal is ready.’”

“Yes, sir,” Sañjikāputta replied, and he went to the Blessed One and announced that it was time

thus: “It is time, Master Gotama, the meal is ready.”

6. Then, it being morning, the Blessed One dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went to Prince Bodhi’s residence.

7. Now on that occasion Prince Bodhi was standing in the outer porch waiting for the Blessed One. When he saw the Blessed One coming in the distance, he went out to meet him and paid homage to him; and then, allowing the Blessed One to precede him, he proceeded to the Kokanada Palace. But the Blessed One stopped at the lowest step of the staircase. Prince Bodhi said to him: “Venerable sir, let the Blessed One step on the cloth, let the Sublime One step on the cloth, that it may lead to my welfare and happiness for a long time.” When this was said, the Blessed One was silent.

A second time...A third time Prince Bodhi said to him: “Venerable sir, let the Blessed One step on the cloth, let the Sublime One step on the cloth, that it may lead to my welfare and happiness for a long time.”

The Blessed One looked at the venerable Ānanda. The venerable Ānanda said to Prince Bodhi: “Prince, let the cloth be removed. The Blessed One will not step on a strip of cloth; the Tathāgata has regard for future generations.”

8. So Prince Bodhi had the cloth removed, and he had seats prepared in the upper apartments of the Kokanada Palace. The Blessed One and the Sangha of bhikkhus ascended the Kokanada Palace and sat down on the seats that had been prepared.

9. Then, with his own hands, Prince Bodhi served and satisfied the Sangha of bhikkhus headed by the Buddha with the various kinds of good food. When the Blessed One had eaten and had put his bowl aside, Prince Bodhi took a low seat, sat down at one side, and said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, we have thought thus: ‘Pleasure is not to be gained through pleasure; pleasure is to be gained through pain.’”

10. “Prince, before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I too

thought thus: 'Pleasure is not to be gained through pleasure; pleasure is to be gained through pain.'

11-14. "Later, prince, while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life...(as *Sutta 26*, §§15-17)...And I sat down there thinking: 'This will serve for striving.'

15-42. "Now three similes occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before...(as *Sutta 36*, §§17-44, but in the present sutta in

§§

18-23 □ corresponding to

§§

20-25 of *Sutta 36* □ the sentence

"But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain" does not occur; and in the present sutta in

§§

37, 39, and 42 □ corresponding to

§§

39, 41, and 44 of *Sutta 36* □ the sentence

"But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain" does not occur

)...as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute.

43-53. "I considered: 'This Dhamma that I have attained is profound'...(as *Sutta 26*, §§19-29)...and the six of us lived on what those two bhikkhus brought back from their almsround.

54. "Then the bhikkhus of the group of five, not long after being thus taught and instructed by me, by realizing for themselves with direct knowledge, here and now entered upon and abided in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness."

55. When this was said, Prince Bodhi said to the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, when a bhikkhu finds the Tathāgata to discipline him, how long is it until by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, he here and now enters upon and abides in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness?"

“As to that, prince, I shall ask you a question in return. Answer it as you choose. What do you think, prince? Are you skilled in the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant?”

“Yes, venerable sir, I am.”

56. “What do you think, prince? Suppose a man came here thinking: ‘Prince Bodhi knows the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant; I shall train in that art under him.’ If he had no faith, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who has no faith; if he had much illness, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who is free from illness; if he was fraudulent and deceitful, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who is honest and sincere; if he was lazy, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who is energetic; if he was not wise, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who is wise. What do you think, prince? Could that man train under you in the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant?”

“Venerable sir, even if he had one of those deficiencies, he could not train under me, so what of the five?”

57. “What do you think, prince? Suppose a man came here thinking: ‘Prince Bodhi knows the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant; I shall train in that art under him.’ If he had faith, he could achieve what can be achieved by one who has faith; if he was free from illness, he could achieve what can be achieved by one who is free from illness; if he was honest and sincere, he could achieve what can be achieved by one who is honest and sincere; if he was energetic, he could achieve what can be achieved by one who is energetic; if he was wise, he could achieve what can be achieved by one who is wise. What do you think, prince? Could that man train under you in the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant?”

“Venerable sir, even if he had one of those qualities he could train under me, so what of the five?”

58. “So too, prince, there are these five factors of striving. What five? Here a bhikkhu has faith, he places his faith in the Tathāgata’s enlightenment thus: ‘That Blessed One is accomplished,

fully enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, enlightened, blessed.'

“Then he is free from illness and affliction, possessing a good digestion that is neither too cool nor too warm but medium and able to bear the strain of striving.

“Then he is honest and sincere, and shows himself as he actually is to the Teacher and his companions in the holy life.

“Then he is energetic in abandoning unwholesome states and in undertaking wholesome states, steadfast, launching his effort with firmness and persevering in cultivating wholesome states.

“Then he is wise; he possesses wisdom regarding rise and disappearance that is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering. These are the five factors of striving.

59. “Prince, when a bhikkhu who possesses these five factors of striving finds a Tathāgata to discipline him, he might dwell seven years until by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, he here and now enters upon and abides in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness.

“Let alone seven years, prince. When a bhikkhu who possesses these five factors of striving finds a Tathāgata to discipline him, he might dwell six years...five years...four years...three years...two years...one year...Let alone one year, prince,...he might dwell seven months...six months...five months...four months...three months...two months...one month...half a month...Let alone half a month, prince,...he might dwell seven days and nights...six days and nights...five days and nights...four days and nights...three days and nights...two days and nights...one day and night.

“Let alone one day and night, prince. When a bhikkhu who possesses these five factors of striving finds a Tathāgata to discipline him, then being instructed in the evening, he might arrive

at distinction in the morning; being instructed in the morning, he might arrive at distinction in the evening.”

60. When this was said, Prince Bodhi said to the Blessed One: “Oh the Buddha! Oh the Dhamma! Oh, how well proclaimed is the Dhamma! For one instructed in the evening might arrive at distinction in the morning, and one instructed in the morning might arrive at distinction in the evening.”

61. When this was said, the brahmin student Sañjikāputta said to Prince Bodhi: “Master Bodhi says: ‘Oh the Buddha! Oh the Dhamma! Oh, how well proclaimed is the Dhamma!’ But he does not say: ‘I go to Master Gotama for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus.’”

“Do not say that, my dear Sañjikāputta, do not say that. I heard and learned this from my mother’s lips: There was an occasion when the Blessed One was living at Kosambī in Ghosita’s Park. Then my mother, who was pregnant, went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, she sat down at one side and said to him: ‘Venerable sir, the prince or princess in my womb, whichever it may be, goes to the Blessed One for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. Let the Blessed One remember [the child] as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life.’ There was also an occasion when the Blessed One was living here in the country of the Bhaggas at Suñsumāragira in the Bhesakañā Grove, the Deer Park. Then my nurse, carrying me on her hip, went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, she stood at one side and said to him: ‘Venerable sir, this Prince Bodhi goes to the Blessed One for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. Let the Blessed One remember [the child] as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life.’ Now, my dear Sañjikāputta, for the third time I go to the Blessed One for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. Let the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life.”

---

Majjhima Nikāya 85

Part Two – The Middle Fifty Discourses (Majjhimapaññāsapāṭi)

The Division on Kings (Rājavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

Contributed by Chris Burke