

MĀLUNKYAPUTTASUTTAṀ (SAM 35. 95)

THE DISCOURSE CONCERNING MĀLUNKYAPUTTA

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THE REQUEST

Atha kho āyasmā Māluṅkyaputto yena Bhagavā tenupasaṅkami,
Then venerable Māluṅkyaputta approached the Gracious One,

upasaṅkamtivā Bhagavantaṃ abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi.
and after approaching and worshipping the Gracious One, he sat down on one side.

Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho āyasmā Māluṅkyaputto
While sitting on one side the venerable Māluṅkyaputta

Bhagavantaṃ etad-avoca:
said this to the Gracious One:

“Sādhu me bhante Bhagavā saṅkhittena dhammaṃ desetu,
“Please, reverend Sir, may the Gracious One preach the Dhamma to me in brief,

yam-ahaṃ Bhagavato dhammaṃ sutvā,
then I, having heard the Gracious One’s Dhamma,

eko vūpakaṭṭho appamatto ātāpī pahitatto vihareyyan”-ti.
may dwell solitary, secluded, heedful, ardent, and resolute.”

“Etthadāni Māluṅkyaputta kiṃ dahare bhikkhū vakkhāma,
“Now what shall we say to the young monks, Māluṅkyaputta,

yatra hi nāma tvaṃ bhikkhu jiṇṇo
if you, who are an old monk,

vuddho mahallako addhagato vayo anuppatto,
elderly, of great age, far gone, advanced in years,

saṅkhittena ovādaṃ yācasī’ ti.

ask for advice in brief?”¹

“Kiñcāpahaṃ bhante jīṇṇo

“Although I, reverend Sir, am old,

vuddho mahallako addhagato vayo anuppatto,

elderly, of great age, far gone, advanced in years,

desetu me bhante Bhagavā saṅkhittena dhammaṃ,

let the Gracious One preach the Dhamma to me in brief, reverend Sir,

desetu me Sugato saṅkhittena dhammaṃ,

let the Fortunate One preach the Dhamma to me in brief,

appeva nāmāhaṃ Bhagavato bhāsītassa atthaṃ ājāneyyaṃ,

I will surely understand the meaning of what is spoken by the Gracious One,

appeva nāmāhaṃ Bhagavato bhāsītassa dāyādo assan’ ti.

I will surely be an heir to what is spoken by the Gracious One.”

THE QUESTIONS

“Taṃ kim-maññasi Māluṅkyaputta,

“Then what do you think, Māluṅkyaputta,

ye te cakkhuvīññeyyā rūpā adiṭṭhā

those forms cognizable by the eye, which have not been seen

- adiṭṭhapubbā, na ca passasi, na ca te hoti passeyyan-ti -

- which formerly have not been seen, (which) you are not seeing, and which you do not expect to see -

atthi te tattha chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ vā?” ti.

can there be desire or passion or love relating to them?”

“No hetam bhante.”

“Surely not, reverend Sir.”

¹ The commentary says the Buddha speaks like this both to reproach Māluṅkyaputta, and to encourage him, for while on the one hand he had been heedless during his youth, here he was in his old age dwelling in the wilderness and asking for a meditation subject.

“Ye te sotaviññeyyā saddā assutā

“Those sounds cognizable by the ear, which have not been heard

- assutapubbā, na ca suṇāsi, na ca te hoti suṇeyyan-ti -

- which formerly have not been heard, (which) you are not hearing, and which you do not expect to hear -

atthi te tattha chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ vā?” ti.

can there be desire or passion or love relating to them?”

“No hetam bhante.”

“Surely not, reverend Sir.”

“Ye te ghānaviññeyyā gandhā aghāyitā

“Those smells cognizable by the nose, which have not been smelt

- aghāyitapubbā, na ca sāyasi, na ca te hoti ghāyeyyan-ti -

- which formerly have not been smelt, (which) you are not smelling, and which you do not expect to smell -

atthi te tattha chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ vā?” ti.

can there be desire or passion or love relating to them?”

“No hetam bhante.”

“Surely not, reverend Sir.”

“Ye te jivhāviññeyyā rasā asāyitā

“Those tastes cognizable by the tongue, which have not been tasted

- asāyitapubbā, na ca sāyasi, na ca te hoti ghāyeyyan-ti -

- which formerly have not been tasted, (which) you are not tasting, and which you do not expect to taste -

atthi te tattha chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ vā?” ti.

can there be desire or passion or love relating to them?”

“No hetam bhante.”

“Surely not, reverend Sir.”

“Ye te kāyaviññeyyā phoṭṭhabbā asamphuṭṭhā

“Those tangibles cognizable by the body, which have not been touched

- asamphuṭṭhapubbā, na ca phusasi, na ca te hoti phuseyyan-ti -

- which formerly have not been touched, (which) you are not touching, and which you do not expect to touch -

atthi te tattha chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ vā?” ti.

can there be desire or passion or love relating to them?”

“No hetam bhante.”

“Surely not, reverend Sir.”

“Ye te manoviññeyyā dhammā aviññātā

“Those thoughts cognizable by the mind, which have not been cognized

- aviññātapubbā, na ca vijānāsi, na ca te hoti vijāneyyan-ti, -

- which formerly have not been cognized, (which) you are not cognizing, and which you do not expect to cognize -

atthi te tattha chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ vā?” ti.

can there be desire or passion or love relating to them?”

“No hetam bhante.”

“Surely not, reverend Sir.”

THE INSTRUCTION¹

“Ettha ca te Māluṅkyaputta,

“Now here for you, Māluṅkyaputta,

diṭṭhasutamutaviññātabbesu dhammesu

in regard to things that are seen, heard, sensed, or cognized,

diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati,

in what is seen there must be only what is seen,

sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati,

in what is heard there must be only what is heard,

mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati,

in what is sensed there must be only what is sensed,

¹ The instruction given here is identical to that given to Bahiya in the Udāna (Ud 1. 10). The latter, who immediately understood the teaching, and put it into practice, attained to Arahantship then and there. Note that some of the notes given here are drawn from the Udāna commentary.

viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati.

in what is cognized there must be only what is cognized.¹

THE RESULT

Yato kho te Māluṅkyaputta

And since for you, Māluṅkyaputta,

diṭṭhasutamutaviññātabbesu dhammesu

in regard to things that are seen, heard, sensed, or cognized,

diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati,

in what is seen there will be only what is seen,

sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati,

in what is heard there will be only what is heard,

mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati,

in what is sensed there will be only what is sensed,

viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati,

in what is cognized there will be only what is cognized,

tato tvaṃ Māluṅkyaputta na tena,

therefore, Māluṅkyaputta, you will not be with that,

yato tvaṃ māluṅkyaputta na tena,

and since, Māluṅkyaputta, you will not be with that,

tato tvaṃ Māluṅkyaputta na tattha,

therefore, Māluṅkyaputta, you will not be in that,

¹ Commentary: Just as when a form comes into focus eye consciousness is not excited (not impassioned), not tainted, not deluded, so, being devoid of passion etc., in regard to the measure of eye consciousness there must be no impulsion.

Translator: Ethically impulsion (*javana*) is the most important stage in the cognitive series, because it is in the seven mind moments that are termed javana that wholesome and unwholesome volition takes place, and kamma is made. According to the instruction given here the cognitive process should be checked by mindfulness before it reaches the javana stage.

yato tvaṃ Māluṅkyaputta na tattha,
and since, Māluṅkyaputta, you will not be in that,¹

tato tvaṃ Māluṅkyaputta nevidha na hurāṃ na ubhayamantarena
therefore, Māluṅkyaputta, you will not be here or hereafter or in between the two²

- esevanto dukkhassāti.
- just this is the end of suffering.”

VERSES ON PASSION³

Imassa kho haṃ bhante Bhagavatā saṅkhittena bhāsitassa
“Of this, reverend Sir, that was spoken in brief by the Gracious One

evaṃ vitthārena atthaṃ ājānāmi.
thus do I understand the meaning in detail:

Rūpaṃ disvā sati muṭṭhā,
Having seen a form and forgotten mindfulness,

Piyaṃ nimittaṃ manasī karoto,
Applying the mind to an object held dear,

Sārattacitto vedeti, ~ tañ-ca ajjhesāya tiṭṭhati:
He feels (it) with an excited mind, and persists in indulging it:

¹ Udāna commentary: ...since you will not be excited with passion, tainted with hate, or confused with delusion...therefore you will not be in that which is seen etc. Or, you will not be adhering to, or established on, that which is seen, heard, (sensed), or cognized by way of craving, conceit, or views, thinking: ‘this is mine, this I am, this is my self’...

² The commentary to the Udāna is at pains to point out that in the Abhidhamma (and the tradition it embodies) there is no intermediate becoming ‘between the two’, but that what is meant here is either ‘you will not be here or hereafter or in both’ - which seems a bit strained - or, ‘you will not be here or hereafter, and nor is there anywhere in between the two.’

³ These 12 verse are also found as Māluṅkyaputta’s verses in Theragāthāpāḷi 794-817 (with minor variations). The metre is Vatta, but the 2nd line of the first 6 verses is in Tuṭṭhubha metre (with a short 8th syllable). These verses nicely illustrate some of the changes that can occur in words and word forms because of the need to meet the requirements of the metre. The first is that unusual forms sometimes appear (examples draw upon the commentary to Theragāthā): **ghātvā = ghayitvā**, **phusssa = phusitvā**. Secondly, cognate forms occasionally occur: **ḥatvā = vijānitvā**, where **ḥatvā**, absolute to **jānāti**, with the normal meaning of ‘having known’, is being used in place of **vijānitvā**, which has the meaning ‘having cognized’. Thirdly, an altogether different word may be introduced: **bhotvā = sayitvā**, where the absolute from **bhuḥjati** (to eat, to enjoy), itself an unusual form, is being made equivalent to **sayitvā**, ‘having tasted’. Needless to say, great care must be taken when translating verse to take these factors into consideration.

Tassa vaḍḍhanti vedanā ~ anekā rūpasambhavā,

So for him increase various feelings that originate with form,

Abhiḥhā ca vihesā ca ~ cittaṃ-assūpahaññati -

And by covetousness and by violence is his mind destroyed -

Evam ācinato dukkhaṃ ~ ārā nibbāṇaṃ vuccati.

For one heaping up suffering like this nibbāna is said to be far away.¹

Saddaṃ sutvā sati muṭṭhā,

Having heard a sound and forgotten mindfulness,

Piyaṃ nimittaṃ manasī karoto,

Applying the mind to an object held dear,

Sārattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an excited mind, and persists in indulging it:

Tassa vaḍḍhanti vedanā ~ anekā saddasambhavā,

So for him increase various feelings that originate with sound,

Abhiḥhā ca vihesā ca ~ cittaṃ-assūpahaññati -

And by covetousness and by violence is his mind destroyed -

Evam ācinato dukkhaṃ ~ ārā nibbāṇaṃ vuccati.

For one heaping up suffering like this nibbāna is said to be far away.

Gandhaṃ ghātvā sati muṭṭhā,

Having smelt a smell and forgotten mindfulness,

Piyaṃ nimittaṃ manasī karoto,

Applying the mind to an object held dear,

Sārattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ ajjhesāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an excited mind, and persists in indulging it:

¹ These verses bring out very clearly the crucial function that mindfulness (*sati*) plays in meditation practice, and in particular its relation to restraint (*saṃvara*), one of the four right endeavours. Someone who is un-mindful, or who for the moment forgets to be mindful, is liable to fall prey to all sorts of proliferation (*papaḥca*), which can very quickly end up in giving an opening to one of the unwholesome roots (*akusalamūla*) of lust (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*), or delusion (*moha*). It is for this reason that mindfulness, which when properly understood and applied, protects the aspirant from these roots, is regarded as basic to the practice of meditation.

Tassa vaḍḍhanti vedanā ~ anekā gandhasambhavā,

So for him increase various feelings that originate with smells,

Abhiḥhā ca vihesā ca ~ cittaṃ assūpahaññati -

And by covetousness and by violence is his mind destroyed -

Evam ācinato dukkhaṃ ~ ārā nibbāṇaṃ vuccati.

For one heaping up suffering like this nibbāna is said to be far away.

Rasaṃ bhotvā sati muṭṭhā,

Having savoured a taste and forgotten mindfulness,

Piyaṃ nimittaṃ manasī karoto,

Applying the mind to an object held dear,

Sārattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an excited mind, and persists in indulging it:

Tassa vaḍḍhanti vedanā ~ anekā rāsasambhavā,

So for him increase various feelings that originate with tastes,

Abhiḥhā ca vihesā ca ~ cittaṃ assūpahaññati -

And by covetousness and by violence is his mind destroyed -

Evam ācinato dukkhaṃ ~ ārā nibbāṇaṃ vuccati.

For one heaping up suffering like this nibbāna is said to be far away.

Phassaṃ phussa sati muṭṭhā,

Having touched a tangible and forgotten mindfulness,

Piyaṃ nimittaṃ manasī karoto,

Applying the mind to an object held dear,

Sārattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an excited mind, and persists in indulging it:

Tassa vaḍḍhanti vedanā ~ anekā phassasambhavā,

So for him increase various feelings that originate with tangibles,

Abhiḥhā ca vihesā ca ~ cittaṃ assūpahaññati -

And by covetousness and by violence is his mind destroyed -

Evam ācinato dukkhaṃ ~ ārā nibbāṇaṃ vuccati.

For one heaping up suffering like this nibbāna is said to be far away.

Dhammaṃ ñatvā sati muṭṭhā,

Having cognized a thought and forgotten mindfulness,

Piyaṃ nimittaṃ manasī karoto,

Applying the mind to an object held dear,

Sārattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ ajjhesāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an excited mind, and persists in indulging it:

Tassa vaḍḍhanti vedanā ~ anekā dhammasambhavā,

So for him increase various feelings that originate with thoughts,

Abhijjhā ca vihesā ca ~ cittamassūpahaññati -

And by covetousness and by violence is his mind destroyed -

Evaṃ ācinato dukkhaṃ ~ ārā nibbāṇaṃ vuccati.

For one heaping up suffering like this nibbāna is said to be far away.

VERSES ON DISPASSION

Na so rajjati rūpesu, ~ rūpaṃ disvā patissato,

Not being excited by forms, having seen a form he is mindful,

Virattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ nājjhosāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an unexcited mind, and does not persist in indulging it:

Yathāssa passato rūpaṃ, ~ sevato cāpi vedanaṃ,

For he who sees a form and experiences the feeling in this way,

Khīyati nopacīyati, ~ evaṃ so caratī sato -

(Corruptions) are destroyed, not heaped up, he thus lives mindfully -

Evaṃ apacinato dukkhaṃ ~ santike nibbāṇaṃ vuccati.

For one reducing suffering like this nibbāna is said to be near.¹

Na so rajjati saddesu, ~ saddaṃ sutvā patissato,

Not being excited by sounds, having heard a sound he is mindful,

¹ This and the following verse show how important it is to maintain a balanced and objective state of mind if one wishes to establish mindfulness. One who is initially dispassionate in regard to sensory contact can easily attend to mindfulness. In that case there is simply the feeling (*vedanā*), but it doesn't lead to craving (*taṇhā*), and so the arising of the whole mass of suffering as outlined in conditional arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is terminated at this point.

Virattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ nājjhosāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an unexcited mind, and does not persist in indulging it:

Yathāssa suṇato saddaṃ ~ sevato cāpi vedanaṃ.

For he who hears a sound and experiences the feeling in this way,

Khīyati no pacīyatim ~ evaṃ so caratī sato -

(Corruptions) are destroyed, not heaped up, he thus lives mindfully -

Evaṃ apacinato dukkhaṃ ~ santike nibbānaṃ vuccati.

For one reducing suffering like this nibbāna is said to be near.

Na so rajjati gandhesu, ~ gandhaṃ ghātvā patissato,

Not being excited by smells, having smelt a smell he is mindful,

Virattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ nājjhosāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an unexcited mind, and does not persist in indulging it:

Yathāssa ghāyato gandhaṃ ~ sevato cāpi vedanaṃ.

For he who smells a smell and experiences the feeling in this way,

Khīyati no pacīyati, ~ evaṃ so caratī sato -

(Corruptions) are destroyed, not heaped up, he thus lives mindfully -

Evaṃ apacinato dukkhaṃ ~ santike nibbānaṃ vuccati.

For one reducing suffering like this nibbāna is said to be near.

Na so rajjati rasesu, ~ rasaṃ bhotvā patissato,

Not being excited by tastes, having savoured a taste he is mindful,

Virattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ nājjhosāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an unexcited mind, and does not persist in indulging it:

Yathāssa sāyato rasaṃ ~ sevato cāpi vedanaṃ.

For he who tastes a taste and experiences the feeling in this way,

Khīyati no pacīyati ~ evaṃ so caratī sato -

(Corruptions) are destroyed, not heaped up, he thus lives mindfully -

Evaṃ apacinato dukkhaṃ ~ santike nibbānaṃ vuccati.

For one reducing suffering like this nibbāna is said to be near.

Na so rajjati phassesu, ~ phassaṃ phussa patissato,

Not being excited by tangibles, having touched a tangible he is mindful,

Virattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ nājjhosāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an unexcited mind, and does not persist in indulging it:

Yathāssa phusato phassaṃ ~ sevato cāpi vedanaṃ.

For he who touches a tangible and experiences the feeling in this way,

Khīyati no pacīyati ~ evaṃ so caratī sato -

(Corruptions) are destroyed, not heaped up, he thus lives mindfully -

Evaṃ apacinato dukkhaṃ ~ santike nibbānaṃ vuccati.

For one reducing suffering like this nibbāna is said to be near.

Na so rajjati dhammesu, ~ dhammaṃ ñatvā patissato,

Not being excited by thoughts, having cognized a thought he is mindful,

Virattacitto vedeti tañ-ca, ~ nājjhosāya tiṭṭhati:

He feels (it) with an unexcited mind, and does not persist in indulging it:

Yathāssa vijānato dhammaṃ ~ sevato cāpi vedanaṃ.

For he who cognizes a thought and experiences the feeling in this way,

Khīyati no pacīyati, ~ evaṃ so caratī sato -

(Corruptions) are destroyed, not heaped up, he thus lives mindfully -

Evaṃ apacinato dukkhaṃ ~ santike nibbānaṃ vuccatī ti.

For one reducing suffering like this nibbāna is said to be near.

Imassa kho haṃ bhante Bhagavatā saṅkhittena bhāsītassa

Of this, reverend Sir, that was spoken in brief by the Gracious One

evaṃ vitthārena atthaṃ ājānāmī” ti.

so do I understand the meaning in detail.”

“Sādhu sādhu Māluṅkyaputta sādhu kho tvaṃ Māluṅkyaputta

“Good, good, Māluṅkyaputta, it is good, Māluṅkyaputta,

mayā saṅkhittena bhāsītassa vitthārena atthaṃ ājānāsi:

of what was spoken in brief by me so do you understand the meaning in detail:

(The Buddha here repeats all 12 verses that were spoken
by venerable Māluṅkyaputta, and then adds:)

Imassa kho Māluṅkyaputta mayā saṅkhittena bhāsitaṃ

Of this, Māluṅkyaputta, that was spoken in brief by me

evaṃ vitthārena attho daṭṭhabbo” ti.

so should you understand the meaning in detail.”

Atha kho āyasmā Māluṅkyaputto

Then venerable Māluṅkyaputta

Bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinanditvā anumoditvā,

having rejoiced in and been gladdened by the Gracious One’s speech,

uṭṭhāyāsanā Bhagavantam abhivādetvā, padakkhiṇam katvā pakkāmi.

having risen from his seat and worshipped the Gracious One, after circumambulating (him) departed.

Atha kho āyasmā Māluṅkyaputto

Then venerable Māluṅkyaputta

eko vūpakaṭṭho appamatto ātāpī pahitatto viharanto,

while dwelling solitary, secluded, heedful, ardent, and resolute,

na cirasseva yassatthāya kulaputtā

after no long time (attained) that good for which young gentlemen

sammad-eva āgārasmā anagāriyam pabbajanti,

rightly go forth from the house to the houseless life,

tad-anuttaram brahmacariyapariyosānam,

that unsurpassed conclusion to the spiritual life,

diṭṭheva dhamme sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja vihāsi.

and dwelt having known, experienced, and attained (it) himself in this very life.

Khīṇa jāti,

Destroyed is (re)birth

vusitam brahmacariyam,

accomplished is the spiritual life

kataṃ karaṇīyam,

done is what ought to be done

nāparam itthattāyāti abbhaññāsi.

there is no more of being in this mundane state - this he knew.

Aññataro ca panāyasmā Māluṅkyaputto arahatam ahoṣi ti.

And venerable Māluṅkyaputta became another of the Worthy Ones.