

# MN 5: Anaṅgaṇa Sutta

## *Flawless*

Translated by Suddhāso Bhikkhu

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Jeta's Grove, at Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There Venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks: "Venerable monks!" "Venerable sir," those monks replied to Venerable Sāriputta. Venerable Sāriputta said this:

"Venerables, there are four kinds of people that can be found in the world. What four? Here, Venerables, some person who has a flaw does not understand as it really is:<sup>1</sup> 'I have an internal flaw.' Here, Venerables, some person who has a flaw understands as it really is: 'I have an internal flaw.' Here, Venerables, some person who is flawless does not understand as it really is: 'I do not have an internal flaw.' Here, Venerables, some person who is flawless understands as it really is: 'I do not have an internal flaw.' There, Venerables, regarding the person who has a flaw and does not understand as it really is 'I have an internal flaw': of the two people who have flaws, this one is declared the inferior person. There, Venerables, regarding the person who has a flaw and understands as it really is 'I have an internal flaw': of the two people who have flaws, this one is declared the best person. There, Venerables, regarding the flawless person who does not understand as it really is 'I do not have an internal flaw': of the two people who are flawless, this one is declared the inferior person. There, Venerables, regarding the flawless person who understands as it really is 'I do not have an internal flaw': of the two people who are flawless, this one is declared the best person."

When this was said, Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna said to Venerable Sāriputta, "What is the cause, Venerable Sāriputta, what is the condition on account of which, of these two people who have flaws, one is declared the inferior person, and one is declared the best person? And, Venerable Sāriputta, what is the cause, what is the condition because of which, of these two people who are flawless, one is declared the inferior person, and one is declared the best person?"

"There, Venerable, this is expected of the person who has a flaw and does not understand as it really is 'I have an internal flaw': he will not produce interest,<sup>2</sup> make an effort, and initiate energy for the abandoning of that flaw; he will die while he has lust, anger, delusion, flaws, and a defiled mind. Venerable, it is just like when a bronze dish is brought from a market or a metalsmith which is covered with dirt and stains. The owner of that dish neither uses it nor cleans it, and sets it down in a dirty place. In this way, Venerable, will that bronze dish on a later occasion be more defiled and stained?" "Yes, Venerable." "In the same way, Venerable, this is expected of the person who has a flaw and does not understand... he will die while he has lust, anger, delusion, flaws, and a defiled mind."

"There, Venerable, this is expected of the person who has flaw and understands as it really is 'I have an internal flaw': he will produce interest, make an effort, and initiate energy for

1 *Yathā-bhūtam*. Lit. "as it has come to be."

2 *Chanda*. Sometimes translated "desire" or "zeal."

the abandoning of that flaw; he will die with no lust, no anger, no delusion, flawless, with an undefiled mind. Venerable, it is just like when a bronze dish is brought from a market or a metalsmith which is covered with dirt and stains. The owner of that dish uses it and cleans it, and does not set it down in a dirty place. In this way, Venerable, will that bronze dish on a later occasion be more pure and clean?" "Yes, Venerable." "In the same way, Venerable, this is expected of the person who has flaw and understands... he will die with no lust, no anger, no delusion, flawless, with an undefiled mind.

"There, Venerable, this is expected of the flawless person who does not understand as it really is 'I do not have an internal flaw': he will pay attention to beauty,<sup>3</sup> and because of his attention to beauty lust will assault his mind; he will die while he has lust, anger, delusion, flaws, and a defiled mind. Venerable, it is just like when a bronze dish is brought from a market or a metalsmith which is pure and clean. The owner of that dish neither uses it nor cleans it, and sets it down in a dirty place. In this way, Venerable, will that bronze dish on a later occasion be more defiled and stained?" "Yes, Venerable." "In the same way, Venerable, this is expected of the flawless person who does not understand... he will die while he has lust, anger, delusion, flaws, and a defiled mind.

"There, Venerable, this is expected of the flawless person who understands as it really is 'I do not have an internal flaw': he will not pay attention to beauty, and because of his non-attention to beauty lust will not assault his mind; he will die with no lust, no anger, no delusion, flawless, with an undefiled mind. Venerable, it is just like when a bronze dish is brought from a market or a metalsmith which is pure and clean. The owner of that dish uses it and cleans it, and does not set it down in a dirty place. In this way, Venerable, will that bronze dish on a later occasion be more pure and clean?" "Yes, Venerable." "In the same way, Venerable, this is expected of the flawless person who understands... he will die with no lust, no anger, no delusion, flawless, with an undefiled mind.

"This is the cause, Venerable Moggallāna, this is the condition on account of which, of these two people who have flaws, one is declared the inferior person, and one is declared the best person. And this is the cause, Venerable Moggallāna, this is the condition on account of which, of these two people who are flawless, one is declared the inferior person, and one is declared the best person."

"Venerable, it is said 'flaw, flaw.' Venerable, what does this designation 'flaw' refer to?"

"Venerable, 'flaw' is the designation which refers to that which is harmful, unwholesome domains of desire.<sup>4</sup>

"Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'If I commit an offense,<sup>5</sup> may the [other] monks not know that I have committed an offense.' However, Venerable, it is possible that the [other] monks will know about that monk, 'He has committed an offense.' [Thinking] 'The [other] monks know that I have committed an

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3 *Subha-nimitta*. One might render this as "the mental indication of beauty." What is intended here seems to be the tendency of the mind to gravitate towards pleasing sensations and thoughts.

4 *Icchā-[a]vacara*. While translated here as "desire," for the following passages *icchā* is translated "wish."

5 *Āpatti*. This usually refers specifically to violations of the monastic code of conduct (*Vinaya*).

offense,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

“Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'If I commit an offense, may the [other] monks reprimand me in private, not in the midst of the community.' However, Venerable, it is possible that the [other] monks will reprimand that monk in the midst of the community, not in private. [Thinking] 'The [other] monks reprimand me in the midst of the community, not in private,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

“Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'If I commit an offense, may I be reprimanded by a person who is my equal, not by a person who is not my equal.' However, Venerable, it is possible that a person who is not his equal will reprimand that monk, not a person who is his equal. [Thinking] 'A person who is not my equal reprimands me, not a person who is my equal,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

“Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May the Teacher<sup>6</sup> teach Dhamma to the monks after asking me a series of questions; may he not teach Dhamma to the monks after asking another monk a series of questions.' However, Venerable, it is possible that the Teacher will teach Dhamma to the monks after asking another monk a series of questions, and not after asking that monk a series of questions. [Thinking] 'The Teacher teaches Dhamma to the monks after asking another monk a series of questions, and not after asking me a series of questions,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

“Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May the monks enter the village for a meal after placing me at the front, not after placing another monk at the front.' However, Venerable, it is possible that the monks will enter the village for a meal after placing another monk at the front, not after placing that monk at the front. [Thinking] 'The monks enter the village for a meal after placing another monk at the front, not after placing me at the front,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

“Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May I get the best meal, the best seat, the best water, the best almsfood; may another monk not get the best meal, the best seat, the best water, the best almsfood.' However, Venerable, it is possible that another monk will get the best meal, the best seat, the best water, the best almsfood, and that monk will not get the best meal... seat... water... almsfood. [Thinking] 'Another monk gets the best meal... seat... water... almsfood, and I do not get the best meal... seat... water... almsfood,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

“Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May I give the blessing<sup>7</sup> after the meal<sup>8</sup> in the refectory; may another monk not give the blessing after

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6 *Satthā*. This is often used as an epithet of the Buddha.

7 *Anumodati*. That is, to perform an “*anumodanā*” - an expression of appreciation and mutual joy.

8 This indicates that it was the custom at the time to give a blessing after the meal, rather than before.

the meal in the refectory.' However, Venerable, it is possible that another monk will give the blessing after the meal in the refectory, and that monk will not give the blessing after the meal in the refectory. [Thinking] 'Another monk gives the blessing after the meal in the refectory, and I do not give the blessing after the meal in the refectory,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

"Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May I teach Dhamma to monks who come to the monastery; may another monk not teach Dhamma to monks who come to the monastery.' However, Venerable, it is possible that another monk will teach Dhamma to monks who come to the monastery, and that monk will not teach Dhamma to monks who come to the monastery. [Thinking] 'Another monk teaches Dhamma to monks who come to the monastery, and I do not teach Dhamma to monks who come to the monastery,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

"Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May I teach Dhamma to nuns... laymen... laywomen who come to the monastery.' However, Venerable, it is possible that another monk will teach Dhamma to laywomen who come to the monastery, and that monk will not teach Dhamma to laywomen who come to the monastery. [Thinking] 'Another monk teaches Dhamma to laywomen who come to the monastery, and I do not teach Dhamma to laywomen who come to the monastery,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

"Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May the [other] monks esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate me; may the [other] monks not esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate another monk.' However, Venerable, it is possible that the [other] monks will esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate another monk, and will not esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate that monk. [Thinking] 'The [other] monks esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate another monk, and do not esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate me,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

"Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May the nuns... laymen... laywomen esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate me...' [Thinking] 'The laywomen esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate another monk, and do not esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate me,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

"Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May I get exquisite robes, and may another monk not get exquisite robes.' However, Venerable, it is possible that another monk will get exquisite robes, and that monk will not get exquisite robes. [Thinking] 'Another monk gets exquisite robes, and I do not get exquisite robes,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

"Venerable, it is possible that a wish like this might arise in some monk: 'May I get exquisite almsfood... dwellings... supports for illness and medicinal supplies...' [Thinking]

'Another monk gets exquisite supports for illness and medicinal supplies, and I do not get exquisite supports for illness and medicinal supplies,' he is disturbed and displeased. Venerable, that disturbance and that displeasure are both flaws.

“Venerable, 'flaw' is the designation which refers to these harmful, unwholesome domains of desire.

“Venerable, if it is seen and heard that any of these harmful, unwholesome domains of desire have not been abandoned by a monk, then even if he is a forest-dweller, one who sits and sleeps in seclusion, one who goes for alms, one who goes to each dwelling during almsround, one who uses discarded items, and one who wears coarse robes, his companions in the Holy Life will not esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate him. For what reason? Because it is seen and heard that these harmful, unwholesome domains of desire have not been abandoned by that monk. Venerable, it is just like when a bronze dish has been brought from a market or a metalsmith which is pure and clean. Its owner arranges the corpse of a snake, dog, or human on it, covers it with another bronze dish, and enters the marketplace. After seeing this, someone might say, “Sir, what is being carried about as though it were the best of the best?” After lifting it up and opening it, they would look. With the sight of it, displeasure would set in, revulsion would set in, disgust would set in. Even those who were hungry would have no desire to eat, let alone those who were satiated. In the same way, Venerable, if it is seen and heard that any of these harmful, unwholesome domains of desire have not been abandoned by a monk, then even if he is a forest-dweller, one who sits and sleeps in seclusion, one who goes for alms, one who goes to each dwelling during almsround, one who uses discarded items, and one who wears coarse robes, his companions in the Holy Life will not esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate him. For what reason? Because it is seen and heard that these harmful, unwholesome domains of desire have not been abandoned by that monk.

“Venerable, if it is seen and heard that these harmful, unwholesome domains of desire have been abandoned by a monk, then even if he if a village-dweller, one who accepts meal-invitations, and one who wears robes given by householders, his companions in the Holy Life will esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate him. For what reason? Because it is seen and heard that these harmful, unwholesome domains of desire have been abandoned by that monk. Venerable, it is just like when a bronze dish has been brought from a market or a metalsmith which is pure and clean. Its owner arranges high-quality rice with many curries and sauces on it, covers it with another bronze dish, and enters the marketplace. After seeing this, someone might say, “Sir, what is being carried about as though it were the best of the best?” After lifting it up and opening it, they would look. With the sight of it, pleasure would set in, non-revulsion would set in, non-disgust would set in. Even those who were satiated would have a desire to eat, let alone those who were hungry. In the same way, Venerable, if it is seen and heard that these harmful, unwholesome domains of desire have been abandoned by a monk, then even if he if a village-dweller, one who accepts meal-invitations, and one who wears robes given by householders, his companions in the Holy Life will esteem, revere, honor, respect, and venerate him. For what reason? Because it is seen and heard that these harmful, unwholesome domains of desire have been abandoned by that monk.”

When this was said, Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna said to Venerable Sāriputta, “Venerable, a simile occurs to me.” “Then let it occur, Venerable Moggallāna.” “Venerable, on one occasion I was dwelling at Rājagaha, at Giribbaja. Then, Venerable, after dressing in the morning and taking my bowl and robe, I entered Rājagaha for alms. Now on that occasion Samīti the cartwright's son was carving a wheel for a chariot. The Ājīvaka Paṇḍuputta, who was formerly a cartwright, was present as well. Then, Venerable, this line of thought arose in the mind of the Ājīvaka Paṇḍuputta: 'Oh, may Samīti the cartwright's son carve away the crookedness, deformity, and flaws of this wheel, such that it may be free of crookedness, free of deformity, free of flaws, pure, established in its ideal state<sup>9</sup>.' While this line of thought was present in the Ājīvaka Paṇḍuputta's mind, Samīti the cartwright's son carved away the crookedness, deformity, and flaws of that wheel. Then, Venerable, the Ājīvaka Paṇḍuputta was satisfied, and uttered this statement of satisfaction: 'Having known [my mind] from heart to heart, it seems, he carves.'

“In the same way, Venerable, those people who lack faith, who have gone forth from the household life into homelessness for the sake of a livelihood and not from a basis of faith, and are fraudulent, deceitful, treacherous, restless, arrogant, fickle, prone to harsh speech, prone to scattered speech, unguarded in their [sense-]faculties, immoderate in eating, not devoted to wakefulness, uninterested in the qualities of a contemplative, lacking a strong reverence for the training, given to luxury, lax, forerunners in backsliding, not committed<sup>10</sup> to seclusion, lazy, of inferior energy, with mindfulness forgotten, lacking clear comprehension, unconcentrated, with wandering minds, unwise, stupid<sup>11</sup> - for them, it seems that Venerable Sāriputta 'carves' them using this Dhamma-discourse, having known [their minds] from heart to heart.

“But those clansmen who have gone forth from the household life into homelessness from a basis of faith, and are not fraudulent, not deceitful, not treacherous, not restless, not arrogant, not fickle, not prone to harsh speech, not prone to scattered speech, guarded in their [sense-]faculties, moderate in eating<sup>12</sup>, devoted to wakefulness, interested in the qualities of a contemplative, with a strong reverence for the training, not given to luxury, not lax, not committed to backsliding, forerunners in seclusion, with energy aroused, self-directed, with mindfulness established, with clear comprehension, concentrated, with one-pointed mind, wise, not stupid - for them, after hearing this Dhamma-discourse from Venerable Sāriputta, it seems they eat and drink it with speech and mind, [thinking] 'It is indeed an excellent thing to lift one's co-practitioners out of what is unwholesome and establish them in what is wholesome.' Venerables, just as a woman or a man who is young, youthful, and fond of adornments, who has washed their head and obtained a garland of lotus, jasmine, or rose [blossoms], would take it with both hands and place it on the crown of their head, in the same way, Venerables, those clansmen who have gone forth from the household life into homelessness from a basis of faith... after hearing this Dhamma-discourse from Venerable Sāriputta, it seems they eat and drink it with speech and mind, [thinking] 'It is indeed an excellent thing to lift one's co-practitioners out of what is unwholesome and establish them in what is wholesome.'

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9 *Sāre patitṭhita*. It is difficult to do this idiom justice in English. *Sāra* can mean heartwood, essence, essential nature, ideal nature, the best, the core, etc.

10 *Nikkhitta-dhura*. Lit. “[one who has] put down the burden.”

11 *Eḷa-muga*. Lit. “deaf & dumb.”

12 *Bhojane mattaññū*. Lit. “One who knows the [right] amount when eating.”

Thus both of these great beings appreciated each other's well-spoken statements.