

Dhammadāyāda Sutta (MN 3)

Heir of the Dhamma

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

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

"Monks, become the heirs of my Dhamma, not the heirs of my possessions¹. This is my compassionate thought about you: 'How can my disciples become the heirs of my Dhamma, not the heirs of my possessions?' Monks, if you become the heirs of my possessions and not the heirs of my Dhamma, then you will be seen in this way: 'The teacher's disciples are the heirs of his possessions, not the heirs of his Dhamma.' And I will also be seen in this way: 'The teacher's disciples are the heirs of his possessions, not the heirs of his Dhamma.' Therefore, monks, become the heirs of my Dhamma, not the heirs of my possessions. This is my compassionate thought about you: 'How can my disciples become the heirs of my Dhamma, not the heirs of my possessions?'

"Monks, here I had finished my meal, I had been invited [to have more], I was completely full, I was finished, I was well-nourished, I had eaten as much as I needed – but I still had some extra food that was going to be thrown away. Then two monks came who were overcome by weakness from hunger. I said to them, 'Monks, I have finished my meal; I have been invited [to have more], I am completely full, I have finished, I am well-nourished, I have eaten as much as I needed – but I still have some extra food that is going to be thrown away. If you wish, you may eat it; if you do not eat it, then I will now discard it where there is little vegetation or in uninhabited water.'

"Then it occurred to one of those monks, 'The Blessed One has finished his meal, he has been invited [to have more], he is completely full, he has finished, he is well-nourished, he has eaten as much as he needed; but he still has some extra food that is going to be thrown away. If we do not eat it, then the Blessed One will now discard it where there is little vegetation or in uninhabited water. However, this was said by the Blessed One: "Monks, become the heirs of my Dhamma, not the heirs of my possessions." And this food is just another possession. Perhaps I will not eat this food, and instead I will spend this day and night with the weakness of hunger.' He did not eat that food, and he spent the day and night with the weakness of hunger.

"Then it occurred to the second monk, 'The Blessed One has finished his meal, he has been invited [to have more], he is completely full, he has finished, he is well-nourished, he has eaten as much as he needed; but he still has some extra food that is going to be thrown away. If we do not eat it, then the Blessed One will now discard it where there is little vegetation or in uninhabited water. Perhaps I will eat this food, and spend this day and night without the weakness of hunger.' He ate that food and spent the day and night without the weakness of hunger.

1 *Āmisa*. Lit. "meat", this term also connotes material phenomena in general.

“Monks, compared to the monk who ate that food and spent the day and night without the weakness of hunger, for me the first monk is more respectable and praiseworthy. Why is that? Monks, it will have the long-lasting effect of helping that monk to have few wishes, to be content, humble, easy to support, and energetic. Therefore, monks, become the heirs of my Dhamma, not the heirs of my possessions. This is my compassionate thought about you: ‘How can my disciples become the heirs of my Dhamma, not the heirs of my possessions?’”

This is what the Blessed One said. After saying this, the Blessed One rose from his seat and entered his dwelling.

Not long after the Blessed One left, Venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks: “Venerable monks.” “Venerable sir,” those monks replied to Venerable Sāriputta. Venerable Sāriputta said, “Venerables, how do disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion not train in accordance with seclusion? And how do disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion train in accordance with seclusion?”

“Venerable, we would come from afar to personally learn the meaning of this statement from Venerable Sāriputta. It would be good if Venerable Sāriputta would explain the meaning of this statement; the monks will listen to Venerable Sāriputta and remember it.”

“Therefore, Venerables, listen and carefully pay attention; I will speak.”

“Yes, Venerable,” those monks replied to Venerable Sāriputta. Venerable Sāriputta said this:

“Venerables, how do disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion not train in accordance with seclusion? Venerables, here some disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion do not train in accordance with seclusion, they do not abandon the phenomena that the Teacher says are to be abandoned, they are opulent, lazy, champions of backsliding, and rejectors of seclusion. In this case, Venerables, senior monks are criticized for three reasons. ‘The disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion do not train in accordance with seclusion’ - this is the first reason why senior monks are criticized. ‘They do not abandon the phenomena that the Teacher says are to be abandoned’ - this is the second reason why senior monks are criticized. ‘They are opulent, lazy, forerunners in backsliding, and neglect seclusion’ - this is the third reason why senior monks are criticized. Venerables, these are three reasons why senior monks are criticized. Intermediate monks are criticized for three reasons... new monks are criticized for three reasons... These are three reasons why new monks are criticized. Venerables, this is how disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion do not train in accordance with seclusion.

“Venerables, how do disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion train in accordance with seclusion? Venerables, here some disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion train in accordance with seclusion, they abandon the phenomena that the Teacher says are to be abandoned, they are not opulent, not lazy, are rejectors of backsliding, and champions of seclusion. In this case, Venerables, senior monks are praised for three reasons. ‘The disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion train in accordance with seclusion’ - this is

the first reason why senior monks are praised. 'They abandon the phenomena that the Teacher says are to be abandoned' - this is the second reason why senior monks are praised. 'They are not opulent, not lazy, are rejectors of backsliding, and champions of seclusion' - this is the third reason why senior monks are praised. Venerables, these are three reasons why senior monks are praised. Intermediate monks... new monks are praised for three reasons... Venerables, this is how disciples of the Teacher who lives in seclusion train in accordance with seclusion.

"Venerables, there is greed, which is harmful, and hatred, which is harmful. For the abandoning of greed and hatred there is the Middle Path, which produces vision and understanding, and leads to peace, knowledge, awakening, and Nibbāna. Venerables, what is the Middle Path which produces vision and understanding, and leads to peace, knowledge, awakening, and Nibbāna? It is this Noble Eightfold Path - that is, Right View, Right Attitude, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. Venerables, this is the Middle Path, which produces vision and understanding, and leads to peace, knowledge, awakening, and Nibbāna.

"Venerables, there is anger, which is harmful, and resentment, which is harmful... denigration... malice... envy... stinginess... fraudulence... deceitfulness... stubbornness... hostility... conceit... arrogance... pride... and negligence, which is harmful. For the abandoning of pride and negligence there is the Middle Path... which produces vision and understanding, and leads to peace, knowledge, awakening, and Nibbāna."

This is what Venerable Sāriputta said. Those monks were satisfied and delighted in Venerable Sāriputta's speech.