

Vattha Sutta (MN 7)

Cloth

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, when cloth is defiled and dirty, then no matter what kind of dye you use - whether it is blue, yellow, red, or crimson - it will appear poorly dyed and the color will not be pure. For what reason? Monks, because of the impurity of the cloth. In the same way, monks, when the mind is defiled, a bad result is expected.

"Monks, when cloth is completely pure and clean, then no matter what kind of dye you use - whether it is blue, yellow, red, or crimson - it will appear well-dyed and the color will be pure. For what reason? Monks, because of the purity of the cloth. In the same way, monks, when the mind is not defiled, a good result is expected.

"Monks, what are the defilements of the mind? Covetous deviant¹ greed is a defilement of the mind. Aversion... anger... resentment... deprecation... malice... jealousy... stinginess... fraudulence... deceitfulness... stubbornness... hostility... conceit... arrogance... pride... negligence is a defilement of the mind.

"Monks, when a monk has recognized that covetous deviant greed is a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. When he has recognized that aversion... anger... resentment... deprecation... malice... jealousy... stinginess... fraudulence... deceitfulness... stubbornness... hostility... conceit... arrogance... pride... negligence is a defilement of the mind, he abandons it.

"Monks, when a monk has recognized that covetous deviant greed is a defilement of the mind and has abandoned it, when he has recognized that aversion... anger... resentment... deprecation... malice... jealousy... stinginess... fraudulence... deceitfulness... stubbornness... hostility... conceit... arrogance... pride... negligence is a defilement of the mind and has abandoned it, then he has unwavering² confidence in the Buddha: 'He is the Blessed One, the Arahant, the Fully Self-Awakened One, perfect in knowledge and conduct, sublime, the world-knower, the unsurpassable trainer of trainable people, the teacher of celestial and human beings, the Buddha, the Blessed One.' He has unwavering confidence in the Dhamma: 'The Blessed One's Dhamma is well-expounded, visible, timeless, tangible, a guide³, personally experiencable by the wise.' He has unwavering confidence in the Saṅgha: 'The Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples that has practiced well, that has practiced honorably⁴, that has practiced methodically, that has practiced appropriately - that is, the four pairs, the eight kinds of individuals: this is the Saṅgha of

1 *Visama*. Lit. "apart from peace (*sama*)."
Sama can also mean "even" or "level."

2 *Avecca*. Lit. "not moving."

3 *Opaneyyika*. From "upa" (close) "neyya" (guiding). Accordingly, this may mean "guiding one closer [to awakening]."

4 *Ujuppaṭipanna*. Lit. "practiced in an upright way."

the Blessed One's disciples, which is worthy of support, worthy of hospitality, worthy of generosity, and respectable - an unsurpassable field of merit for the world.'

"When there is discarding, rejecting, releasing, abandoning, and relinquishing to this extent, then with the thought 'I have unwavering confidence in the Buddha,' one acquires knowledge of the meaning, knowledge of the Dhamma, and joy connected with Dhamma. When one is joyful, rapture arises. When one has a rapturous mind, the body becomes tranquil. One who has a tranquil body experiences happiness. When one is happy, the mind becomes concentrated.

"With the thought 'There is discarding, rejecting, releasing, abandoning, and relinquishing to this extent,' one acquires knowledge of the meaning, knowledge of the Dhamma, and joy connected with Dhamma. When one is joyful, rapture arises. When one has a rapturous mind, the body becomes tranquil. One who has a tranquil body experiences happiness. When one is happy, the mind becomes concentrated.

"Monks, if a monk has this virtue, this teaching, and this wisdom, then even if he eats refined almsfood with many sauces and condiments, it is not an impediment for him. Monks, just as when a defiled and dirty cloth enters clear water it becomes completely pure and clean, or when gold is enters a furnace it becomes completely pure and clean, in the same way, monks, if a monk has this virtue, this teaching, and this wisdom, then even if he eats refined almsfood with many sauces and condiments, it is not an impediment for him.

"He dwells having pervaded one direction with a mind endowed with loving-kindness - likewise the second, the third, and the fourth.⁵ So above, below, around, and everywhere, to all as to himself, he dwells having pervaded the entire world with a mind endowed with loving-kindness - abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, and without aversion.

"He dwells having pervaded one direction with a mind endowed with compassion... with sympathetic joy... with equanimity... abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, and without aversion.

"He understands: 'There is this, there is the inferior, there is the superior, there is a further escape from this perception.' Knowing and seeing in this way, his mind is liberated from the corruption of sensuality, the corruption of existence, and the corruption of ignorance. When there is liberation, there is the knowledge of liberation. He understands: 'Birth is eliminated, the spiritual life has been completed, what was to be done has been done, there will not be another life here.' Monks, this is called 'A monk who is cleansed by means of internal cleansing.'"

On this occasion, the Brahmin Sundarika-Bhāradvāja was seated not far from the Blessed One. He said to the Blessed One, "Does Sir Gotama go to bathe in the river Bāhukā?"

"Brahmin, what is the river Bāhukā? What will the river Bāhukā do?"

5 That is, the four directions - north, south, east, west (or perhaps forward, backward, left, right).

“Sir Gotama, the river Bāhukā is considered by many to be liberating, to be meritorious; many people wash away their harmful karma in the river Bāhukā.”

Then the Blessed One spoke to the Brahmin Sundarika-Bhāradvāja using these verses:

“Bāhukā, Adhikakkā, Gayā, Sundarikā,
Sarassatī, Payāgā, and the river Bāhumatī,
A fool may constantly jump in,
But his dark karma will not be purified.

“What will the river Sundarikā do, or Payāgā, or Bāhukā?
If a man has done hostile or cruel actions,
That will not purify his harmful karma.

“For one who is pure, it is always a sacred festival,
For one who is pure, it is always a holy day.
For one who is pure and has pure karma,
One attains the completion of one’s practice.

“Bathe in this, Brahmin, and produce safety for all beings;
If you speak no lies, harm no beings, take nothing that is not given,
If you have faith and are free of stinginess,
What would you do if you went to Gayā?
Any well can be Gayā for you.”

When this was said, the Brahmin Sundarika-Bhāradvāja said to the Blessed One,
“Wonderful, Sir Gotama! Wonderful, Sir Gotama! Sir Gotama, just as one might set upright what has been overturned, or reveal what has been concealed, or explain the path to one who is confused, or bring an oil-lamp into the darkness so those with eyes can see – in the same way, Sir Gotama has revealed the Dhamma in many ways. I go for refuge to Sir Gotama, and to the Dhamma, and to the monastic community. May I receive the Going-Forth in the Blessed One’s presence; may I receive full ordination.”

The Brahmin Sundarika-Bhāradvāja received the Going-Forth in the Blessed One’s presence, and he received full ordination. Not long after his ordination, while living alone, withdrawn, vigilant, ardent, and diligent, he directly realized for himself the conclusion of the spiritual life – the right goal that good people go forth from the household life to homelessness for. He knew, “Birth is eliminated, the spiritual life has been completed, what was to be done has been done, there will not be another life here.” Venerable Bhāradvāja become one of the Arahants.