

MN 88: Bāhitika Sutta

The Cloak

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

Thus have I heard. One one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Jeta's Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's park. Then in the morning, Venerable Ānanda dressed, took his bowl and robe, and entered Sāvatti for alms. After going for alms in Sāvatti, when he had finished his meal and returned from alms-round, he went to the Mansion of Migāra's Mother in the Eastern Park for the day's abiding.

On that occasion King Pasenadi of Kosala had mounted the elephant Ekaṇḍarīka¹ and set out from Sāvatti for the day. King Pasenadi of Kosala saw Venerable Ānanda coming in the distance, and said to his minister Sirivaḍḍha, "Dear Sirivaḍḍha, that is Venerable Ānanda."

"Yes, Great King, that is Venerable Ānanda."

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala said to a certain man, "Good man, go to Venerable Ānanda, honor him with your head at his feet, and address him with my words: 'Bhante, King Pasenadi of Kosala honors you with his head at your feet.' Then say, 'Bhante, if there is nothing that Venerable Ānanda urgently needs to do, then, Bhante, let Venerable Ānanda wait a moment, out of compassion.'"

"Yes, Lord," that man replied to King Pasenadi of Kosala. He approached Venerable Ānanda, paid respect to him, and stood to one side. While he was standing to one side, he said to Venerable Ānanda, "Bhante, King Pasenadi of Kosala honors you with his head at your feet, and says this : 'Bhante, if there is nothing that Venerable Ānanda urgently needs to do, then, Bhante, let Venerable Ānanda wait a moment, out of compassion.'" Venerable Ānanda silently consented.

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala, having gone as far as he could by elephant, dismounted from the elephant and approached Venerable Ānanda on foot. He paid respects to Venerable Ānanda and stood to one side. While he was standing to one side, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to Venerable Ānanda, "Bhante, if there is nothing that Venerable Ānanda urgently needs to do, then, Bhante, it would be excellent if Venerable Ānanda would approach the bank of the river Aciravatī, out of compassion." Venerable Ānanda silently consented.

Then Venerable Ānanda approached the bank of the river Aciravatī, and sat at a seat prepared at the base of a certain tree. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala, after going as far as he could by elephant, dismounted from the elephant and approached Venerable Ānanda on foot. He paid respects to Venerable Ānanda and stood to one side. While he was standing to one side, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to Venerable Ānanda, "Here, Bhante, let Venerable Ānanda sit on this elephant-hide rug."

"Enough, Great King. You sit [on it]; I am already seated on my own sitting-cloth."

1 Lit. "Single Lotus."

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala sat on the prepared seat. When he was seated, he said to Venerable Ānanda, “Bhante Ānanda, would the Blessed One engage in any kind of physical activity... verbal activity... mental activity that would be criticized by contemplatives and Brahmins?”

“Great King, the Blessed One would not engage in any kind of physical activity... verbal activity... mental activity that would be criticized by wise contemplatives and Brahmins.”

“Wonderful, Bhante! Magnificent, Bhante! Bhante, we were not able to answer this question, Bhante, that has been completely explained by Venerable Ānanda. Bhante, those who are foolish and incompetent speak in praise or dispraise of others without investigating and considering, and we do not see that as valuable. However, Bhante, the wise, competent, and sagacious speak in praise or dispraise of others after investigating and considering, and we do see that as valuable. Bhante Ānanda, what kind of physical... verbal... mental activity is criticized by wise contemplatives and Brahmins?”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that is unwholesome.”

“Bhante, what physical... verbal... mental activity is unwholesome?”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that is blameworthy.”

“Bhante, what physical... verbal... mental activity is blameworthy?”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that is afflictive.”

“Bhante, what physical... verbal... mental activity is afflictive?”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that results in suffering.”

“Bhante, what physical... verbal... mental activity results in suffering?”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that contributes to affliction for oneself, that contributes to affliction for others, that contributes to affliction for both, that causes unwholesome mindstates² to increase, [or] that causes wholesome mindstates to decrease; Great King, this is the kind of physical... verbal... mental activity that is criticized by wise contemplatives and Brahmins.”

“Bhante Ānanda, does the Blessed One praise abandoning all unwholesome mindstates?”

“Great King, the Tathāgata has abandoned all unwholesome mindstates, and is endowed with all wholesome mindstates.”

“Bhante Ānanda, what physical... verbal... mental activity is not criticized by wise contemplatives and Brahmins?”

² *Dhammā*. This could be translated simply as “things.”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that is wholesome.”

“Bhante, what physical... verbal... mental activity is wholesome?”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that is blameless.”

“Bhante, what physical... verbal... mental activity is blameless?”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that is non-afflictive.”

“Bhante, what physical... verbal... mental activity is non-afflictive?”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that results in happiness.”

“Bhante, what physical... verbal... mental activity results in happiness?”

“Great King, any physical... verbal... mental activity that does not contribute to affliction for oneself, that does not contribute to affliction for others, that does not contribute to affliction for both, that causes unwholesome mindstates to decrease, [and] that causes wholesome mindstates to increase; Great King, this is the kind of physical... verbal... mental activity that is not criticized by wise contemplatives and Brahmins.”

“Bhante Ānanda, does the Blessed One praise commitment to all wholesome things?”

“Great King, the Tathāgata has abandoned all unwholesome mindstates, and is endowed with all wholesome mindstates.”

“Wonderful, Bhante! Magnificent, Bhante! Bhante, this has been well-said by Venerable Ānanda. Bhante, we are satisfied and pleased with Venerable Ānanda’s well-spoken statement. Bhante, because we are satisfied and pleased with Venerable Ānanda’s well-spoken statement, if it was proper for Venerable Ānanda to have a prize elephant, we would give him a prize elephant; if it was proper for Venerable Ānanda to have a prize horse, we would give him a prize horse; if it was proper for Venerable Ānanda to have control of a village, we would give him control of a village. However, Bhante, we know that these things are not proper for Venerable Ānanda. Bhante, I have this cloak, which was sent to me by King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha wrapped in a roll of cloth; it is sixteen units long and eight units wide. Bhante, let Venerable Ānanda receive it out of compassion.”

“Enough, Great King. I already have a complete set of three robes.”

“Bhante, the river Aciravatī is seen by both Venerable Ānanda and by us. When a great rain-cloud pours rain high in the mountains, then the river Aciravatī overflows both its banks; in the same way, Bhante, with this cloak Venerable Ānanda can make a set of three robes for himself, and whatever cloth is leftover from making Venerable Ānanda’s set of three robes can be shared with his spiritual companions. In this way, our donation will metaphorically overflow. Bhante, let Venerable Ānanda receive this cloak.” Venerable Ānanda received the cloak.

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala said to Venerable Ānanda, “Bhante Ānanda, now we will go; we have many duties and much to do.”

“Great King, do as you see fit.”

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala, having delighted in Venerable Ānanda’s statement, rose from his seat, paid respects to Venerable Ānanda, and having done what was respectful, he left.

Then not long after King Pasenadi of Kosala had left, Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One, paid respects to him, and sat to one side. While he was seated to one side, Venerable Ānanda reported to the Blessed One the entire conversation that had occurred with King Pasenadi of Kosala, and gave the cloak to the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One announced to the monks, “Monks, it is a gain for King Pasenadi of Kosala, it is well-gained by King Pasenadi of Kosala, that he got to see Ānanda and attend to him.”

This is what the Blessed One said. Satisfied, those monks delighted in the Blessed One’s statement.