MN 150 — With the People of Nagaravinda

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Middle Discourses 150

With the People of Nagaravinda

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was wandering in the land of the Kosalans together with a large Saṅgha of mendicants when he arrived at a village of the Kosalan brahmins named Nagaravinda.

The brahmins and householders of Nagaravinda heard, “It seems the ascetic Gotama—a Sakyan, gone forth from a Sakyan family—while wandering in the land of the Kosalans has arrived at Nagaravinda, together with a large Saṅgha of mendicants. He has this good reputation: ‘That Blessed One is perfected, a fully awakened Buddha, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, holy, knower of the world, supreme guide for those fit for training, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’ He has realized with his own insight this world—with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, gods and humans—and he makes it known to others. He teaches Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And he reveals a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. It’s good to see such perfected ones.”

Then the brahmins and householders of Nagaravinda went up to the Buddha. Before sitting down to one side, some bowed, some exchanged greetings and polite conversation, some held up their cupped palms toward the Buddha, some announced their name and clan, while some kept silent. The Buddha said to them:

“Householders, if wanderers who follow another religion were to ask you: ‘What kind of ascetic or brahmin doesn’t deserve honor, respect, reverence, and veneration?’ You should answer them: ‘There are ascetics and brahmins who are not free of greed, hate, and delusion for sights known by the eye, whose minds are not settled internally, and who conduct themselves badly among the good by way of body, speech, and mind. They don’t deserve honor, respect, reverence, and veneration. Why is that? Because we ourselves are not free of these things, so we do not see that they have any higher good conduct than us. That’s why they don’t deserve honor, respect, reverence, and veneration. There are ascetics and brahmins who are not free of greed, hate, and delusion for sounds known by the ear … smells known by the nose … tastes known by the tongue … touches known by the body … ideas known by the mind, who are not settled internally, and who conduct themselves badly among the good by way of body, speech, and mind. They don’t deserve honor, respect, reverence, and veneration. Why is that? Because we ourselves are not free of these things, so we do not see that they have any higher good conduct than us. That’s

why they don't deserve honor, respect, reverence, and veneration.' When questioned by wanderers of other religions, that's how you should answer them.

If wanderers of other religions were to ask you: 'What kind of ascetic or brahmin deserves honor, respect, reverence, and veneration?' You should answer them: 'There are ascetics and brahmins who are free of greed, hate, and delusion for sights known by the eye, whose minds are settled internally, and who conduct themselves well by way of body, speech, and mind. They deserve honor, respect, reverence, and veneration. Why is that? Because we ourselves are not free of these things, but we see that they have a higher good conduct than us. That's why they deserve honor, respect, reverence, and veneration. There are ascetics and brahmins who are free of greed, hate, and delusion for sounds known by the ear … smells known by the nose … tastes known by the tongue … touches known by the body … ideas known by the mind, whose minds are settled internally, and who conduct themselves well by way of body, speech, and mind. They deserve honor, respect, reverence, and veneration. Why is that? Because we ourselves are not free of these things, but we see that they have a higher good conduct than us. That's why they deserve honor, respect, reverence, and veneration.' When questioned by wanderers of other religions, that's how you should answer them.

If wanderers of other religions were to ask you: 'But what reasons and evidence do you have regarding those venerables that justifies saying, "Clearly those venerables are free of greed, hate, and delusion, or practicing to be free of them"?' You should answer them: 'It's because those venerables frequent remote lodgings in the wilderness and the forest. In such places there are no sights known by the eye to see and enjoy, there are no sounds known by the ear to hear and enjoy, no odors known by the nose to smell and enjoy, no flavors known by the tongue to taste and enjoy, and no touches known by the body to feel and enjoy. These are the reasons and evidence that you have regarding those venerables that justifies saying, "Clearly those venerables are free of greed, hate, and delusion, or practicing to be free of them".' When questioned by wanderers of other religions, that's how you should answer them."

When he had spoken, the brahmins and householders of Nagaravinda said to the Buddha, "Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what's there, worthy Gotama has made the Teaching clear in many ways. We go for refuge to the worthy Gotama, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge for life."