SN 3.1 — Young

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Text

Linked Discourses 3.1

1. Shackles

Young

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side and said to the Buddha, "Does the worthy Gotama claim to have awakened to the supreme perfect awakening?"

"If anyone should rightly be said to have awakened to the supreme perfect awakening, it's me. For, Great King, I have awakened to the supreme perfect awakening."

"Well, there are those ascetics and brahmins who lead an order and a community, and tutor a community. They're well-known and famous religious founders, deemed holy by many people. That is, Pūraṇa Kassapa, the bamboo-staffed ascetic Gosāla, the Jain ascetic of the Ñātika clan, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, Pakudha Kaccāyana, and Ajita of the hair blanket. I also asked them whether they claimed to have awakened to the supreme perfect awakening, but they made no such claim. So why do you, given that you're so young in age and newly gone forth?"

"Great king, these four things should not be looked down upon or disparaged because they are young. What four? An aristocrat, a serpent, a fire, and a mendicant. These four things should not be looked down upon or disparaged because they are young."

That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, went on to say:

"A man should not despise

an aristocrat of impeccable lineage,

high-born and famous,

just because they're young.

For it's possible that that lord of mankind,

as aristocrat, will gain the throne.

And in his anger he'll execute a royal punishment,
and have you violently beaten.
Hence you should avoid him
for the sake of your own life.
Whether in village or wilderness,
wherever a serpent is seen,
a man should not look down on it
or despise it for its youth.
With its rainbow of colors,
the serpent of fiery breath glides along.
It lashes out and bites the fool,
both men and women alike.
Hence you should avoid it
for the sake of your own life.
A fire devours a vast amount,
a conflagration with a blackened trail.
A man should not look down on it
just because it's young.
For once it gets fuel
it'll become a big conflagration.
It'll lash out and burn the fool,
both men and women alike.
Hence you should avoid it
for the sake of your own life.
When a forest is burned by fire,
a conflagration with a blackened trail,
the shoots will spring up there again,
with the passing of the days and nights.
But if a mendicant endowed with ethics

burns you with their power,

you'll have no children or livestock,

nor will your heirs find wealth.

Childless and heirless you become,

like a palm-tree stump.

That's why an astute person,

seeing what's good for themselves,

would always treat these properly:

a serpent, a conflagration,

a famous aristocrat,

and a mendicant endowed with ethics."

When this was said, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Buddha, "Excellent, sir! 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, the Buddha has made the teaching clear in many ways. I go for refuge to the Buddha, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. From this day forth, may the Buddha remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life."