SN 4.16 — The Alms Bowls

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 4.16

2. Rule

The Alms Bowls

At Sāvatthī.

Now at that time the Buddha was educating, encouraging, firing up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma talk on the topic of the five grasping aggregates. And those mendicants were paying attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and actively listening.

Then Māra thought, “This ascetic Gotama is educating, encouraging, firing up, and inspiring the mendicants with a Dhamma talk on the topic of the five grasping aggregates. And the mendicants are paying attention, applying the mind, concentrating wholeheartedly, and actively listening. Why don’t I go and pull the wool over their eyes?”

At that time several alms bowls were placed in the open air. Then Māra the Wicked manifested in the form of an ox and approached those bowls.

One of the mendicants said to another, “Mendicant, mendicant, that ox will break the bowls.”

When this was said, the Buddha said to that mendicant, “Mendicant, that’s no ox. That’s Māra the Wicked come to pull the wool over your eyes!”

Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, addressed him in verse:

“Form, what is felt, and perception,

consciousness, and what is chosen:

‘I am not this’ and ‘this is not mine’;

that’s how they become free of desire for them.

When you’re detached, secure,

all fetters transcended,

though Māra and his army chase everywhere

they never find you.”

Then Māra ... vanished right there.