AN 3.50 — A Master Thief

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Text

Numbered Discourses 3.50

5. The Lesser Chapter

A Master Thief

“Mendicants, a master thief with three factors breaks into houses, plunders wealth, steals from isolated buildings, and commits highway robbery. What three?

A master thief relies on uneven ground, on thick cover, and on the powerful. And how does a master thief rely on uneven ground? It’s when a master thief relies on inaccessible riverlands or rugged mountains. That’s how a master thief relies on uneven ground.

And how does a master thief rely on thick cover? It’s when a master thief relies on thick grass, thick trees, a blind spot, or a large forest grove. That’s how a master thief relies on thick cover.

And how does a master thief rely on the powerful? It’s when a master thief relies on rulers or their chief ministers. They think: ‘If anyone accuses me of anything, these rulers or their chief ministers will speak in my defense in the case.’ And that’s exactly what happens. That’s how a master thief relies on the powerful.

A master thief with these three factors breaks into houses, plunders wealth, steals from isolated buildings, and commits highway robbery.

In the same way, when a bad mendicant has three factors, they keep themselves broken and damaged. They deserve to be blamed and criticized by sensible people, and they brim with much wickedness. What three?

A bad mendicant relies on uneven ground, on thick cover, and on the powerful.

And how does a bad mendicant rely on uneven ground? It’s when a bad mendicant has unethical conduct by way of body, speech, and mind. That’s how a bad mendicant relies on uneven ground.

And how does a bad mendicant rely on thick cover? It’s when a bad mendicant has wrong view, he’s attached to an extremist view. That’s how a bad mendicant relies on thick cover.

And how does a bad mendicant rely on the powerful? It’s when a bad mendicant relies on rulers or their chief ministers. They think: ‘If anyone accuses me of anything, these rulers or their chief ministers will speak in my defense in the case.’ And that’s exactly what happens. That’s how a bad mendicant relies on the powerful.

When a bad mendicant has these three qualities, they keep themselves broken and damaged. They deserve to be blamed and criticized by sensible people, and they brim with much wickedness.”