AN 5.55 — Mother and Son

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Numbered Discourses 5.55

6. Hindrances

Mother and Son

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

Now, at that time a mother and son had both entered the rainy season residence at Sāvatthī, as a monk and a nun. They wanted to see each other often. The mother wanted to see her son often, and the son his mother. Seeing each other often, they became close. Being so close, they became familiar. And being familiar, lust overcame them. With their minds swamped by lust, without resigning the training and declaring their inability to continue, they had sex.

Then several mendicants went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened.

“Mendicants, how could that futile man imagine that a mother cannot lust for her son, or that a son cannot lust for his mother? Compared to the sight of a woman, I do not see a single sight that is so arousing, sensuous, intoxicating, captivating, and infatuating, and such an obstacle to reaching the supreme sanctuary from the yoke. Sentient beings are lustful, greedy, tied, infatuated, and attached to the sight of a woman. They sorrow for a long time under the sway of a woman’s sight.

Compared to the sound … smell … taste … touch of a woman, I do not see a single touch that is so arousing, sensuous, intoxicating, captivating, and infatuating, and such an obstacle to reaching the supreme sanctuary from the yoke. Sentient beings are lustful, greedy, tied, infatuated, and attached to the touch of a woman. They sorrow for a long time under the sway of a woman’s touch.

When a woman walks, she occupies a man’s mind. When a woman stands … sits … lies down … laughs … speaks … sings … cries … is injured, she occupies a man’s mind. Even when a woman is dead, she occupies a man’s mind. For if anyone should be rightly called ‘an all-round snare of Māra’, it’s ladies.

You might chat with someone who has knife in hand.

You might even chat with a goblin.

You might sit close by a viper,
whose bite would take your life.
But never should you chat
one on one with a lady.
They captivate the unmindful
with a glance and a smile.
Or scantily clad,
they speak charming words.
It’s not good to sit with such a person,
even if she’s injured or dead.
These five kinds of sensual stimulation
are apparent in a woman’s body:
sights, sounds, tastes, smells,
and touches so delightful.
Those swept away by the flood of sensual pleasures,
not comprehending them,
are governed by transmigration—
time and destination, and life after life.
But those who fully understand sensual pleasures
live fearing nothing from any quarter.
They are those in the world who’ve crossed over,
having reached the ending of defilements.”