Snp 3.6 — With Sabhiya

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Text

Anthology of Discourses 3.6

With Sabhiya

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground. Now at that time the wanderer Sabhiya had been presented with several questions by a deity who was a former blood relation, saying: "Sabhiya, you should live the spiritual life with whatever ascetic or brahmin answers these questions."

Then Sabhiya, after learning those questions in the presence of that deity, approached those ascetics and brahmins who led an order and a community, and taught a community, who were well-known and famous religious founders, deemed holy by many people. That is, Pūraṇa Kassapa, the bamboo-staffed ascetic Gosāla, Ajita of the hair blanket, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, and the Jain ascetic of the Ñātika clan. And he asked them those questions, but they were stumped by them. Displaying annoyance, hate, and bitterness, they questioned Sabhiya in return.

Then Sabhiya thought, "Those famous ascetics and brahmins were stumped by my questions. Displaying annoyance, hate, and bitterness, they questioned me in return on that matter. Why don't I return to a lesser life so I can enjoy sensual pleasures?"

Then Sabhiya thought, "This ascetic Gotama also leads an order and a community, and tutors a community. He's a well-known and famous religious founder, deemed holy by many people. Why don't I ask him these questions?"

Then he thought, "Even those ascetics and brahmins who are elderly and senior, who are advanced in years and have reached the final stage of life; who are senior, long standing, long gone forth; who lead an order and a community, and tutor a community; who are well-known and famous religious founders, deemed holy by many people—that is Pūraṇa Kassapa and the rest— were stumped by my questions. They displayed annoyance, hate, and bitterness, and even questioned me in return. How can the ascetic Gotama possibly answer my questions, since he is so young in age and newly gone forth?"

Then he thought, "An ascetic should not be looked down upon or disparaged because they are young. Though young, the ascetic Gotama has great psychic power and might. Why don't I ask him these questions?"

Then Sabhiya set out for Rājagaha. Traveling stage by stage, he came to Rājagaha, the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground. He 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 addressed the Buddha in verse:

“I’ve come full of doubts and uncertainties,”

said Sabhiya,

“wishing to ask some questions.

Please solve them for me.

Answer my questions in turn, in accordance with the truth.”

“You have come from afar, Sabhiya,”

said the Buddha,

“wishing to ask some questions.

I shall solve them for you,

answering your questions in turn, in accordance with the truth.

Ask me your question, Sabhiya,

whatever you want.

I’ll solve each and every

question you have.”

Then Sabhiya thought, “Oh lord, how incredible, how amazing! Where those other ascetics and brahmins didn’t even give me a chance, the Buddha has invited me.” Uplifted and elated, full of rapture and happiness, he asked this question.

“What must one attain to be called a mendicant?”

said Sabhiya,

“How is one ‘gentle’, how said to be ‘tamed’?

How is one declared to be ‘awakened’?

May the Buddha please answer my question.”

“When by the path they have walked themselves,”

said the Buddha to Sabhiya,

“they reach extinguishment, with doubt overcome;

giving up desire for existence or nonexistence,

their journey complete, their rebirths ended: that is a mendicant.

Equanimous toward everything, mindful,

they don’t harm anyone in the world.

An ascetic who has crossed over, unclouded,

who has no pretensions, is gentle.

Their faculties have been developed

inside and out in the whole world.

Having pierced through this world and the next,

tamed, they await their time.

They have examined the eons in their entirety,

and both sides of transmigration—passing away and rebirth.

Rid of dust, unblemished, purified:

the one they call ‘awakened’ has attained the end of rebirth.”

And then, having approved and agreed with what the Buddha said, uplifted and elated, full of rapture and happiness, Sabhiya asked another question:

“What must one attain to be called ‘brahmin’?”

said Sabhiya.

“Why is one an ‘ascetic’, and how a ‘bathed initiate’?

How is one declared to be a ‘giant’?

May the Buddha please answer my question.”

“Having banished all bad things,”

said the Buddha to Sabhiya,

“immaculate, well-composed, steadfast,

consummate, they’ve left transmigration behind:

unattached, one such is called ‘brahmin’.

An assuaged one who has given up good and evil,

stainless, understanding this world and the next,

gone beyond rebirth and death:

one such is rightly called ‘ascetic’.

Having washed off all bad things

inside and out in the whole world,

among gods and humans bound to creations,

the one they call ‘washed’ does not return to creation.

They do nothing monstrous at all in the world,
discarding all yokes and bonds,
everywhere not stuck, freed:
one such is rightly called ‘giant’.”
And then Sabhiya asked another question:
“Who is a ‘field-victor’ according to the Buddhas?”
said Sabhiya,
“Why is one ‘skillful’, and how ‘an astute scholar’?
How is one declared to be a ‘sage’?
May the Buddha please answer my question.”
“They are victors on the fields of deeds in their entirety,”
said the Buddha to Sabhiya,
“the fields of gods, humans, and divinities;
released from the root bondage to all fields:
one such is rightly called ‘field-victor’.
They have examined the coffers in their entirety,
the coffers of gods, humans, and divinities;
released from the root bondage to all coffers:
one such is rightly called ‘skillful’.
They have examined whiteness
both inside and out; understanding purity,
they have left dark and bright behind:
one such is rightly called ‘an astute scholar’.
Understanding the nature of the bad and the good
inside and out in the whole world;
one worthy of honor by gods and humans,
who has escaped from the net and the chain: that is a sage.”
And then Sabhiya asked another question:
“What must one attain to be called ‘knowledge master’?”

said Sabhiya,

“Why is one ‘studied’, and how is one ‘heroic’?

How to gain the name ‘thoroughbred’?

May the Buddha please answer my question.”

“They have examined knowledges in their entirety,”

said the Buddha to Sabhiya,

“those that are current among ascetics and brahmins;

rid of greed for all feelings,

having left all knowledges behind: that is a knowledge master.

Having studied proliferation and name & form

inside and out—the root of disease;

released from the root bondage to all disease:

one such is rightly called ‘studied’.

Refraining from all evil here,

heroic, he escapes from the suffering of hell;

he is heroic and energetic:

one such is rightly called ‘hero’.

Whoever’s bonds are cut,

the root of clinging inside and out;

released from the root bondage to all clinging:

one such is rightly called ‘thoroughbred’.”

And then Sabhiya asked another question:

“What must one attain to be called ‘scholar’?”

said Sabhiya,

“Why is one ‘noble’, and how is one ‘well conducted’?

How to gain the name ‘wanderer’?

May the Buddha please answer my question.”

“One who has learned every teaching,”

said the Buddha to Sabhiya,

“and has known for themselves what in the world is blameworthy and blameless;

a vanquisher, decided, liberated,

untroubled everywhere: they call them ‘scholar’.

Having cut off defilements and clingings,

being wise, they enter no womb.

They’ve cast aside the bog of the three perceptions,

the one they call ‘noble’ does not return to creation.

One here who is accomplished and skillful in all forms of good conduct;

always understanding the teaching,

everywhere not stuck, freed in mind,

who has no aversion: they are ‘well-conducted’.

They wander full of wisdom,

having banished any deed that results in suffering,

deceit and conceit, as well as greed and anger,

above, below, all round, between.

They have made a limit on name and form;

the one they call a ‘wanderer’ has reached their destination.”

And then, having approved and agreed with what the Buddha said, uplifted and elated, full of rapture and happiness, Sabhiya rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward the Buddha, and extolled the Buddha in his presence with fitting verses:

“O one of vast wisdom, there are three and sixty opinions

based on the doctrines of ascetics:

they are expressions of perception, based on perception.

Having dispelled them all, you passed over the dark flood.

You have gone to the end, gone beyond suffering,

you are perfected, a fully awakened Buddha; I think you have ended defilements.

Brilliant, thoughtful, abounding in wisdom,

ender of suffering—you brought me across!

When you understood my uncertainty,

you brought me beyond doubt—homage to you!
A sage, accomplished in the ways of sagacity,
you are gentle, not hardhearted, O Kinsman of the Sun.
Any doubts that I once had,
you have answered for me, O Clear-eyed One.
Clearly you are a sage, an Awakened One,
there are no hindrances in you.
All your distress
is blown away and mown down.
Cooled, tamed, steadfast:
truth is your strength.
O giant among giants, O great hero,
when you are speaking
all the gods rejoice,
including both Nārada and Pabbata.
Homage to you, O thoroughbred!
Homage to you, supreme among men!
In the world with its gods,
you have no rival.
You are the Buddha, you are the Teacher,
you are the sage who has overcome Māra;
you have cut off the underlying tendencies,
you've crossed over, and you bring humanity across.
You have transcended attachments,
your defilements are shattered;
you are a lion free of grasping,
with fear and dread given up.
Like a graceful lotus
to which water does not stick,

so both good and evil

do not stick to you.

Stretch out your feet, great hero:

Sabhiya bows to the Teacher.”

Then the wanderer Sabhiya bowed with his head to the Buddha’s feet and said, “Excellent, sir! Excellent! … I go for refuge to the Buddha, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. Sir, may I receive the going forth, the ordination in the Buddha’s presence?”

“Sabhiya, if someone formerly ordained in another sect wishes to take the going forth, the ordination in this teaching and training, they must spend four months on probation. When four months have passed, if the mendicants are satisfied, they’ll give the going forth, the ordination into monkhood. However, I recognize individual differences in this matter.”

“Sir, if four months probation are required in such a case, I’ll spend four years on probation. When four years have passed, if the mendicants are satisfied, let them give me the going forth, the ordination into monkhood.” And the wanderer Sabhiya received the going forth, the ordination in the Buddha’s presence. And Venerable Sabhiya became one of the perfected.