Snp 5.1 — Introductory Verses

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Text

Anthology of Discourses 5.1

Introductory Verses

From the fair city of the Kosalans
to the southern region
came a brahmin expert in hymns,
aspiring to nothingness.
He settled in a region under the shared dominion
of Assaka and Muḷaka,
where he lived on the bank of the Godāvarī River,
getting by on gleanings and fruit.
He was supported
by a prosperous village nearby.
With the revenue earned from there
he performed a great sacrifice.
When he had completed the great sacrifice,
he returned to his hermitage once more.
Upon his return,
another brahmin arrived.
Foot-sore and thirsty,
with grotty teeth and dusty head,
he approached the other
and asked for five hundred coins.
When Bāvari saw him,

he invited him to sit down,
asked of his happiness and well-being,
and said the following.
“Whatever I had available to give,
I have already distributed.
Believe me, brahmin,
I don’t have five hundred coins.”
“If, good fellow, you do not
give me what I ask,
then on the seventh day,
let your head explode in seven!”
After performing a ritual,
that charlatan uttered his dreadful curse.
When he heard these words,
Bāvari became distressed.
Not eating, he grew emaciated,
stricken by the dart of sorrow.
And in such a state of mind,
he could not enjoy absorption.
Seeing him anxious and distraught,
a goddess wishing to help,
approached Bāvari
and said the following.
“That charlatan understands nothing
about the head, he only wants money.
When it comes to heads or head-splitting,
he has no knowledge at all.”
“Then you, Madam, must know—
please answer my question.

Let me hear what you say
about heads and head-splitting.”
“I too do not know that,
I have no knowledge in that matter.
When it comes to heads or head-splitting,
it is the Victors who have vision.”
“So who then,
in all this vast territory,
does know about heads and head-splitting?
Please tell me, goddess.”
“From the city of Kapilavatthu
the World Leader has gone forth.
He is a scion of King Okkāka,
a Sakyan, and a beacon.
For he, brahmin, is the Awakened One!
He has gone beyond all things;
he has attained to all knowledge and power;
his eye sees clearly in all things,
he has attained the end of all deeds;
he is freed with the ending of attachments.
That Buddha, the Blessed One in the world,
the Clear-eyed One, teaches Dhamma.
Go to him and ask—
he will answer you.”
When he heard the word “Buddha”,
Bāvari was elated.
His sorrow faded,
and he was filled to brimming with joy.
Uplifted, elated, and inspired,

Bāvari questioned that goddess:
“But in what village or town,
or in what land is the protector of the world,
where we may go and pay respects
to the Awakened One, best of men?”
“Near Sāvatthī, home of the Kosalans, is the Victor
abounding in wisdom, vast in intelligence.
That Sakyan is indefatigable, free of defilements,
that captain of men understands head-splitting.”
Therefore he addressed his acolytes,
brahmins who had mastered the hymns:
“Come, students, I shall speak.
Listen to what I say.
Today has arisen in the world
one whose appearance in the world
is hard to find again—
he is renowned as the Awakened One.
Quickly go to Sāvatthī
and see the best of men.”
“Brahmin, how then are we to know
the Buddha when we see him?
We don’t know, please tell us,
so we can recognize him.”
“The marks of a great man
have been handed down in our hymns.
Thirty-two have been described,
complete and in order.
One upon whose body is found
these marks of a great man

has two possible destinies,
there is no third.
If he stays at home,
having conquered this land
without rod or sword,
he shall govern by principle.
But if he goes forth
from the lay life to homelessness,
he becomes an Awakened One, a perfected one,
with veil cast off, supreme.
Ask him about my birth, clan, and marks,
my hymns and acolytes; and further,
about heads and head-splitting—
but do so only in your mind!
If he is the Buddha
of unhindered vision,
he will answer with his voice
the questions in your mind."
Sixteen brahmin acolytes
heard what Bāvari said:
Ajita, Tissametteyya,
Puṇṇaka and Mettagū,
Dhotaka and Upasīva,
Nanda and then Hemaka,
both Todeyya and Kappa,
and Jatukaṇṇī the astute,
Bhadrāvudha and Udaya,
and the brahmin Posāla,
Mogharāja the intelligent,

and Piṅgiya the great seer.
Each of them had their own following,
they were renowned the whole world over.
Those attentive ones, meditators who love absorption,
were redolent with the potential of their past deeds.
Having bowed to Bāvari,
and circled him to his right,
they set out for the north,
with their dreadlocks and hides.
First to Patiṭṭhāna of Muḷaka,
then on to the citadel of Māhissatī;
to Ujjenī and Gonaddhā,
and Vedisa, and Vanasa.
Then to Kosambī and Sāketa,
and the capital city of Sāvatthī;
on they went to Setavyā and Kapilavatthu,
and the homestead at Kusinārā.
To Pāvā they went, and Bhoga City,
and on to Vesālī and the Magadhan city.
Finally they reached the Pāsāṇaka Shrine,
fair and delightful.
Like a thirsty person to cool water,
like a merchant to great profit,
like a heat-struck person to shade,
they quickly climbed the mountain.
At that time the Buddha,
at the fore of the mendicant Saṅgha,
was teaching the mendicants the Dhamma,
like a lion roaring in the jungle.

Ajita saw the Buddha,
like the sun shining with a hundred rays,
like the moon on the fifteenth day
when it has come into its fullness.
Then he saw his body,
complete in all features.
Thrilled, he stood to one side
and asked this question in his mind.
“Speak about the brahmin’s birth;
of his clan; and his own marks;
what hymns is he proficient in;
and how many he teaches.”
“His age is a hundred and twenty.
By clan he is a Bāvari.
There are three marks on his body.
He is a master of the three Vedas,
the teachings on the marks, the testaments,
the vocabularies, and the rituals.
He teaches recitation to five hundred,
and has reached proficiency in his own teaching.”
“O supreme man, cutter of craving,
please reveal in detail
Bāvari’s marks—
let us doubt no longer!”
“He can cover his face with his tongue;
there is a tuft of hair between his eyebrows;
his private parts are sheathed in a foreskin:
know them as this, student.”
Hearing the answers

without having heard any questions,
all the people, inspired,
with cupped palms, wondered:
“Who is it that asked a question with their mind?
Was it a god or divinity?
Or Indra, Sujā’s husband?
To whom does the Buddha reply?”
“Bāvari asks
about heads and head-splitting.
May the Buddha please answer,
and so, O seer, dispel our doubt.”
“Know ignorance as the head,
and knowledge as the head-splitter,
when joined with faith, mindfulness, and immersion,
and enthusiasm and energy.”
At that, the student,
full of inspiration,
arranged his antelope-skin cloak over one shoulder,
and fell with his head to the Buddha’s feet.
“Good fellow, the brahmin Bāvari
together with his acolytes,
elated and happy,
bows to your feet, O Clear-eyed One!”
“May the brahmin Bāvari be happy,
together with his acolytes.
And may you, too, be happy!
May you live long, student.
To Bāvari and you all
I grant the opportunity to clear up all doubt.

Please ask

whatever you want.”

Granted the opportunity by the Buddha,

they sat down with cupped palms.

Ajita asked the Realized One

the first question right there.

The introductory verses are finished.