

THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

The
Middle Length
Discourses
of the
Buddha



A Translation of the
Majjhima Nikāya



Translated from the Pāli

ORIGINAL TRANSLATION
by

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25 *Nivāpa Sutta*

The Bait

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthi in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus."—"Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Bhikkhus, a deer-trapper does not lay down bait for a deer herd intending thus: 'May the deer herd enjoy this bait that I have laid down and so be long-lived and handsome and endure for a long time.' A deer-trapper lays down bait for a deer herd intending thus: 'The deer herd will eat food unwarily by going right in amongst the bait that I have laid down; by so doing they will become intoxicated; when they are intoxicated, they will fall into negligence; when they are negligent, I can do with them as I like on account of this bait.'

3. "Now the deer of the first herd ate food unwarily by going right in amongst the bait that the deer-trapper had laid down; by so doing they became intoxicated; when they were intoxicated, they fell into negligence; when they were negligent, the deer-trapper did with them as he liked on account of that bait. That is how the deer of the first herd failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control.

4. "Now the deer of a second herd reckoned thus: 'The deer of that first herd, by acting as they did without precaution, [152] failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. Suppose we altogether shun that bait food; shunning that fearful enjoyment, let us go out into the forest wilds and live there.' And they did so. But in the last month of the hot season when the grass and the water were used up, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation; with that they lost their strength and energy; when they had lost their strength and energy, they returned to that same bait that the deer-trapper had laid down.

They ate food unwarily by going right in amongst it. By so doing they became intoxicated; when they were intoxicated they fell into negligence; when they were negligent, the deer-trapper did with them as he liked on account of that bait. And that is how the deer of the second herd also failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control.

5. "Now the deer of a third herd reckoned thus: 'The deer of that first herd, by acting as they did without precaution, failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. The deer of that second herd, by reckoning how the deer of the first herd had failed and by planning and acting as they did with the precaution of going to live in the forest wilds, also failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. Suppose we make our dwelling place within range of the deer-trapper's bait. [153] Then, having done so, we shall eat food not unwarily and without going right in amongst the bait that the deer-trapper has laid down; by doing so we shall not become intoxicated; when we are not intoxicated, we shall not fall into negligence; when we are not negligent, the deer-trapper shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait.' And they did so.

"But then the deer-trapper and his following considered thus: 'These deer of this third herd are as cunning and crafty as wizards and sorcerers. They eat the bait laid down without our knowing how they come and go. Suppose we have the bait that is laid down completely surrounded all round over a wide area with wicker hurdles; then perhaps we might see the third deer herd's dwelling place, where they go to hide.' They did so, and they saw the third herd's dwelling place, where they went to hide. And that is how the deer of the third herd also failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control.

6. "Now the deer of a fourth herd reckoned thus: 'The deer of that first herd, by acting as they did without precaution, failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. The deer of that second herd, by reckoning how the deer of the first herd had failed and by planning and acting as they did with the precaution of going to live in the forest wilds, also failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. And the deer of that third herd, by reckoning how the deer of the first herd [154] and also the deer of the second herd had failed, and by planning and acting as they did with the precaution of making their dwelling

place within range of the deer-trapper's bait, also failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. Suppose we make our dwelling place where the deer-trapper and his following cannot go. Then, having done so, we shall eat food not unwarily and without going right in amongst the bait that the deer-trapper has laid down; by doing so we shall not become intoxicated; when we are not intoxicated, we shall not fall into negligence; when we are not negligent, [155] the deer-trapper shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait.' And they did so.

"But then the deer-trapper and his following considered thus: 'These deer of this fourth herd are as cunning and crafty as wizards and sorcerers. They eat the bait laid down without our knowing how they come and go. Suppose we have the bait that is laid down completely surrounded all round over a wide area with wicker hurdles; then perhaps we might see the fourth deer herd's dwelling place, where they go to hide.' They did so, but they did not see the fourth deer herd's dwelling place, where they went to hide. Then the deer-hunter and his following considered thus: 'If we scare the fourth deer herd, being scared they will alert others, and so the deer herds will all desert this bait that we have laid down. Suppose we treat the fourth deer herd with indifference.' They did so. And that was how the deer of the fourth deer herd got free from the deer-trapper's power and control.

7. "Bhikkhus, I have given this simile in order to convey a meaning. This is the meaning: 'Bait' is a term for the five cords of sensual pleasure. 'Deer-trapper' is a term for Māra the Evil One. 'The deer-trapper's following' is a term for Māra's following. 'Deer herd' is a term for recluses and brahmins.

8. "Now recluses and brahmins of the first kind ate food unwarily by going right in amongst the bait and the material things of the world that Māra had laid down; [156] by so doing they became intoxicated; when they were intoxicated, they fell into negligence; when they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked on account of that bait and those material things of the world. That is how the recluses and brahmins of the first kind failed to get free from Māra's power and control. Those recluses and brahmins, I say, are just like the deer of the first herd.

9. "Now recluses and brahmins of the second kind reckoned thus: 'Those recluses and brahmins of the first kind, by acting as they did without precaution, failed to get free from Māra's

power and control. Suppose we altogether shun that bait food and those material things of the world; shunning that fearful enjoyment, let us go out into the forest wilds and live there.' And they did so. There they were eaters of greens or millet or wild rice or hide-parings or moss or rice-bran or the discarded scum of boiled rice or sesamum flour or grass or cowdung; they lived on forest roots and fruits, they fed on fallen fruits.

"But in the last month of the hot season when the grass and the water were used up, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation; with that they lost their strength and energy; when they had lost their strength and energy, they lost their deliverance of mind;²⁹³ with the loss of their deliverance of mind, they returned to that same bait that Māra had laid down and those material things of the world; they ate food unwarily by going right in amongst it; by so doing they became intoxicated; when they were intoxicated, they fell into negligence; when they were negligent, Māra did with them as he liked on account of that bait and those material things of the world. That is how those recluses and brahmins of the second kind failed to get free from Māra's power and control. [157] Those recluses and brahmins, I say, are just like the deer of the second herd.

10. "Now recluses and brahmins of the third kind reckoned thus: 'Those recluses and brahmins of the first kind, by acting as they did without precaution, failed to get free from Māra's power and control. Those recluses and brahmins of the second kind, by reckoning how the recluses and brahmins of the first kind had failed, and then planning and acting as they did with the precaution of going to live in the forest wilds, also failed to get free from Māra's power and control. Suppose we make our dwelling place within range of that bait that Māra has laid down and those material things of the world. Then, having done so, we shall eat food not unwarily and without going right in amongst the bait that Māra has laid down and the material things of the world. By doing so we shall not become intoxicated; when we are not intoxicated, we shall not fall into negligence; when we are not negligent, Māra shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait and those material things of the world.' And they did so.

"But then they came to hold views such as 'the world is eternal' and 'the world is not eternal' and 'the world is finite' and

‘the world is infinite’ and ‘the soul and the body are the same’ and ‘the soul is one thing and the body another’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata exists’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist.’²⁹⁴ [158] That is how those recluses and brahmins of the third kind failed to get free from Māra’s power and control. Those recluses and brahmins, I say, are just like the deer of the third herd.

11. “Now recluses and brahmins of the fourth kind reckoned thus: ‘Those recluses and brahmins of the first kind, by acting as they did without precaution, failed to get free from Māra’s power and control. Those recluses and brahmins of the second kind, by reckoning how the recluses and brahmins of the first kind had failed, and by planning and acting as they did with the precaution of going to live in the forest wilds, also failed to get free from Māra’s power and control. And the recluses and brahmins of the third kind, by reckoning how the recluses and brahmins of the first kind and also the recluses and brahmins of the second kind had failed, and by planning and acting as they did with the precaution of making their dwelling place within range of the bait that Māra had laid down and the material things of the world, also failed to get free from Māra’s power and control. Suppose we make our dwelling place where Māra and his following cannot go. Then, having done so, we shall eat food not unwarily and without going right in amongst the bait that Māra has laid down and the material things of the world. By doing so we shall not become intoxicated; when we are not intoxicated, we shall not fall into negligence; when we are not negligent, Māra shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait and those material things of the world.’ And they did so. [159] And that is how those recluses and brahmins of the fourth kind got free from Māra’s power and control. Those recluses and brahmins, I say, are just like the deer of the fourth herd.

12. “And where is it that Māra and his following cannot go? Here, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. This bhikkhu

is said to have blindfolded Māra, to have become invisible to the Evil One by depriving Māra's eye of its opportunity.²⁹⁵

13. "Again, with the stilling of applied and sustained thought, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the second jhāna, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration. This bhikkhu is said to have blindfolded Māra...

14. "Again, with the fading away as well of rapture, a bhikkhu abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he enters upon and abides in the third jhāna, on account of which the noble ones announce: 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.' This bhikkhu is said to have blindfolded Māra...

15. "Again, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the fourth jhāna, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. This bhikkhu is said to have blindfolded Māra...

16. "Again, with the complete surmounting of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of sensory impact, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, aware that 'space is infinite,' a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the base of infinite space. This bhikkhu is said to have blindfolded Māra...

17. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite space, aware that 'consciousness is infinite,' a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the base of infinite consciousness. This bhikkhu is said to have blindfolded Māra...

18. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite consciousness, [160] aware that 'there is nothing,' a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the base of nothingness. This bhikkhu is said to have blindfolded Māra...

19. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of nothingness, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This bhikkhu is said to have blindfolded Māra, to have become invisible to the Evil One by depriving Māra's eye of its opportunity.

20. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the cessation of perception and feeling. And his taints are destroyed by his seeing with wisdom. This bhikkhu is said

to have blindfolded Māra, to have become invisible to the Evil One by depriving Māra's eye of its opportunity, and to have crossed beyond attachment to the world."²⁹⁶

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.