

THE PARABLE OF THE PIECE OF CLOTH

*(Vatthiipama-suttā)*

(Abridged)

Thus have I heard. The Blessed One was once living at the monastery of Anathapindika in Jeta's grove near Savatthi. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus saying: 'Bhikkhus' and they replied to him: 'Venerable Sir'. The Blessed One then spoke as follows:

'If a soiled and dirty (piece of) cloth is dipped by the fuller in any dye at all—blue, yellow, red or pink—it will still be of bad and dirty colour. Why? Because the cloth is not clean. Even so, Bhikkhus, when the mind is impure, a bad future life must be expected.

'If a perfectly clean (piece of) cloth is dipped by the fuller in any dye at all—blue, yellow, red or pink—it will be of beautiful and clean colour. Why? Because the cloth is clean. Even so, Bhikkhus, when the mind is pure, a good future life must be expected.

'Now, what are the mind's impurities? Cupidity—excessive desire—is an impurity of the mind; enmity . . . anger . . . rancour . . . hypocrisy . . . malice . . . jealousy. . . avarice . . . trickery . . . deceit. . . obduracy . . . haughtiness . . . pride . . . arrogance . . . inflation . . . indolence is an impurity of the mind.

'Bhikkhus, that bhikkhu, who recognizes cupidity—excessive desire—as an impurity of the mind, abandons it; who recognizes enmity . . . anger . . . rancour . . . hypocrisy . . . malice . . . jealousy . . . avarice . . . trickery . . . deceit. . . obduracy . . . haughtiness . . . pride . . . arrogance . . . inflation . . . indolence as an impurity of the mind, abandons it.

'Bhikkhus, when that bhikkhu has abandoned cupidity—excessive desire—recognizing it as an impurity of the mind; when he has abandoned enmity . . . anger . . . rancour . . . hypocrisy . . . malice . . . jealousy . . . avarice . . . trickery . . . deceit . . . obduracy . . . haughtiness . . . pride . . . arrogance . . . inflation . . . indolence recognizing it as an impurity of the mind, he finds serene joy (satisfaction) in the Enlightened One: (knowing that)

"The Blessed One is Worthy, Perfectly Enlightened, Endowed with knowledge and virtue, Happy, Knower of worlds, Matchless tamer of men, Teacher of gods and men, Awakened and Blessed." He finds serene joy (satisfaction) in the Dhamma: (knowing that) "The Dhamma is excellently expounded by the Blessed One; it can be realized here in this life; it produces immediate results; it invites people to come and see (investigate); it leads to the goal (Nibbana); it has to be comprehended by the wise, each for himself." He finds serene joy (satisfaction) in the Community of the Disciples: (knowing that) "The Community of the Disciples of the Blessed One is of good conduct, upright, wise, dutiful. The Community of the Disciples of the Blessed One: namely, the Four Pairs of Persons, the Eight kinds of Individuals,<sup>1</sup> is worthy of offerings, of hospitality, of gifts, of reverential salutation, it is an incomparable field of merit to the world."

'Finally, with impurities renounced, spewed out, discharged, abandoned, and with the thought that he is endowed with serene joy in the Enlightened One—in his Teaching (*Dhamma*)—in the Community—he is touched with a feeling for the Sense and the Truth, and he receives the gladness associated with Truth; when one is glad, joy arises; when the mind is joyful, the body becomes relaxed; when relaxed, one feels content: the mind of the contented man is concentrated.

'A bhikkhu who has reached this state in virtue, in mental discipline and in wisdom, may, without impediment (to his spiritual life), partake of the choicest rice with all manner of sauces and curries. Just as a soiled and dirty cloth, plunged in clear water, becomes pure and clean; or just as gold, passed through the furnace, becomes pure and clean; even so, a bhikkhu who has reached this state in virtue, in mental discipline and in wisdom, may partake of the choicest rice with all manner of sauces and curries, and it will not be an impediment (harm) to him (to his spiritual life).

<sup>1</sup>The Four Pairs of Persons constitute the four kinds of disciples who have attained the four Paths and the four Fruits of Sainthood, namely, *Sotapatti* (Stream-Entrant), *Sakaddgami* (Once-Returner), *Anagami* (Never-Returner), and *Arahatta* (Worthy). The one who has attained the Path and the one who has attained the Fruit of each of the four stages of Sainthood are once taken together and considered as a Pair. Hence the Four Pairs of Persons. And then when the two persons of each Pair are regarded separately, there are eight Individuals.

'With thoughts of love—of compassion—of sympathetic joy—of equanimity—he pervades one quarter of the world, so too the second, the third and the fourth quarters, above, below, across, everywhere; the whole length and breadth of the wide world is pervaded by the radiant thoughts of a mind all-embracing, vast and boundless, without hate, without ill-will.

'Then he knows: "There is this; there is a lower and there is yet a higher stage; Deliverance lies beyond this realm of perceptions." When he knows and sees this, his mind becomes liberated from the impurities of sense-pleasure, of (the desire for) continuing existence, of ignorance. When liberated, there is knowledge that he is liberated. Then he knows: "Birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived, what has to be done is done, there is no more left to be done on this account." Bhikkhus, such a bhikkhu can be said to have bathed internally.'

Now at this time there was sitting close by the Brahmin Sundarika-Bharadvaja who asked the Blessed One thus: 'Does the Venerable Gotama go to bathe in the river Bahuka?'

'What does the river Bahuka matter, Brahmin? What (good) does it do?'

'Venerable Gotama, the river Bahuka is considered by many people as purifying, as holy. Many people wash away their sins in the river Bahuka.'

Thereupon the Blessed One addressed the Brahmin Sundarika-Bharadvaja in these lines:

'In Bahuka and in Adhikakka,  
Gaya, Sundarika, Srasati,  
Payaga, Bahumati—there the fool of black deeds  
May daily plunge, yet is never purified.  
What can Sundarika, Payaga or Bahumati do?  
They cleanse not the man guilty of hate and evil.

For him who is pure (in mind) any day is auspicious, any day is hallowed.

Cleansed, pure in deeds,  
He always fulfils observances.

So, Brahmin, come and bathe here.  
Love all that lives. If you neither lie, nor slay, nor steal,  
Are no greedy miser but live in trust,  
What use going to Gaya? Your well at home is Gaya.'

At this the Brahmin Sundarika-Bharadvaja said to the Blessed One: 'Excellent, Venerable Gotama, excellent! It is just as if one should set upright what had been turned upside down, or reveal what had been hidden away, or show the way to a man gone astray, or bring a lamp into darkness so that those with eyes might see things there. In this manner in many ways the Dhamma is expounded by the Venerable Gotama. I take refuge in the Venerable Gotama, in the Dhamma and in the Community of Bhikkhus. May I be admitted into the Order and receive the Higher Ordination under the Venerable Gotama.'

The Brahmin Sundarika-Bharadvaja was admitted into the Order and received the Higher Ordination. Not long after his Higher Ordination, the Venerable Bharadvaja, dwelling alone and aloof, strenuous, ardent, resolute, attained to and dwelt in that incomparable State, the ultimate aim of holy life, in quest of which sons of families go forth from home to homelessness. And he knew through higher knowledge: 'Birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived, what has to be done is done, there is no more left to be done on this account.' And in this way the Venerable Bharadvaja, too, became one of the Arahants.

*(Majjhima-nikaja, Sutta No. 7)*

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

(The Presence of Mindfulness)

*(Satipatthana-sutta)*

(Abridged)

Thus have I heard. The Blessed One was once living among the Kurus, at Kammassadamma, a market town of the Kuru people. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus and spoke as follows:

'This is the only way, Bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbana, namely the Four Foundations (four forms of Presence) of Mindfulness. What are the four?

'Here a bhikkhu, ardent, clearly comprehending things and