

Madhupiṇḍika Sutta

MN 18 The Ball of Honey
Translated by Ānanda
Aug 2020

Thus I have heard,

*Once, the Awakened One was living amongst the Sakyans,
In Kapilavatthu, in the banyan tree hermitage.*

*Then, sometime in the morning,
After taking his robe and bowl,
The Awakened One entered Kapilavatthu for alms.*

*Then, after his almsround,
He went to the great forest to meditate for the day
And sat down at the root of a young Bilva tree.*

*At that time, Daṇḍapāṇi¹ the Sakyān was walking around,
And decided to follow him and inquire² and also went to the great wood.
He went to the young Bilva tree, approached the Awakened One
And exchanged respectful greetings.*

Then, leaning on his stick and keeping a stand beside him, he asked:

“What do you say samaṇa,³ what do you teach?”⁴

[Teaching]

*“I teach in a way friend, that
None in this world,
With its Devas, Māras and Brāhmas
This generation of samaṇas and brāhmaṇas,
Of kings and people,⁵
None in the world stands fight;⁶*

¹ Daṇḍapāṇi: Lit. “Stick in hand”

² Jaṅghāvihāraṇi anucaṅkamamāno anuṇicaramāno

³ Samaṇa: Spiritual wanderer. Truth Seeker.

⁴ “kiṃvādī samaṇo kimakkhāyī”ti?

⁵ “Yathāvādī kho, āvuso, sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyyā pajāya sadevamanussāya

⁶ Na kenaci loke viggayha tiṭṭhati

*And that this brāhmaṇa⁷
Lives disengaged from sense desires,⁸
Has gone beyond perplexity,⁹
Cut away mental agitation,¹⁰
And whatever he does,
He is tensionless,
Uninclined to [any kind of] conceiving.¹¹*

This is what I say brāhmaṇa, this is what I teach.”

*When this was said,
Daṇḍapāṇi the Sakyan
Shook his head
Pulled his tongue
Frowned his forehead in three lines
And left, leaning on his stick.*

*Later in the evening,
the Awakened One stood from meditation,
Went to the banyan tree hermitage
And sat down on a prepared seat.*

Then he addressed the monks saying:

[...All that had taken place...]

[Request for Explanation]

When this was said, a certain monk asked:

*“Bhante Bhagavā, how can it be said that:¹²
‘None in this world,
With its Devas, Māras and Brāhmas
This generation of samaṇas and brāhmaṇas,
Kings and people,
None in the world stands fight;’*

⁷ Brāhmaṇa: Man of God, Holy man, the priestly caste of India. “This brāhmaṇa,” The Buddha speaks of himself again in the third person.

⁸ Yathā ca pana kāmehi viṣaṃyuttaṃ viharantaṃ

⁹ Taṃ brāhmaṇaṃ akathaṃkathiṃ

¹⁰ Chinnakukkuccaṃ

¹¹ Bhavābhava vītataṇhaṃ saññā nānuseti—

¹² Kiṃvādī pana, bhante, bhagavā

Pray Bhante, how does the Awakened One,¹³
‘That brāhmaṇa live,
Disengaged from sense desires,
Having gone beyond perplexity,
Cut away mental agitation,
And that whatever he does,
He is tensionless,
Uninclined to [any kind of] conceiving?’

[Propagation of Concepts]

The propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind]¹⁴
is the cause of a person’s bewilderment.¹⁵

These [concepts]
Should not be delighted in,
Nor praised,
Nor indulged in.¹⁶

Here ends:
The inclination to discontent,
The inclination to irritation,
The inclination to views,
The inclination to doubt,
The inclination to pride,
The inclination to longing for becoming,
The inclination to carelessness,¹⁷

This is the end of being given to
Rods and swords,
Fights and arguments,
Rivalry and fault-finding,
Slander and lies.¹⁸

This is where unrighteous, unwholesome states of mind stop entirely.¹⁹

¹³ *Kathaṅca pana, bhante, bhagavantam kāmehi viṣaṃyuttaṃ viharantaṃ*

¹⁴ *The depth of this statement is not easy to fathom. This is true down to the subtlest level of paṭiccasamuppāda or Causality and conditioned behavior of the mind. This is the true unrivaled majesty of the Buddha’s Teaching, going to the pith, transcending arguments. For one who sees this, sees the Dhamma. One who sees the causality of mental conditioned behavior, no taste is sweeter than these words. Alternative translations: The proliferation of concepts [based on sense] perceptions; Created, made-up, constructed propagating concepts.*

¹⁵ *“Yatonidānaṃ, bhikkhu, purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti.*

¹⁶ *Ettha ce natthi abhinanditabbaṃ abhivāditabbaṃ ajjhositabbaṃ.*

¹⁷ *Rāgānusayānaṃ, paṭighānusayānaṃ, diṭṭhānusayānaṃ, vicikicchānusayānaṃ, mānānusayānaṃ, bhavarāgānusayānaṃ, avijjānusayānaṃ*

¹⁸ *daṇḍādāna-satthādāna-kalaha-viggaha-vivāda-tvaṃtvaṃ-pesuñña-musāvādānaṃ.*

¹⁹ *Etthete pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti” ti.*

*This is what the Exalted One said.
The Happy One²⁰ then stood from his seat
and went into his residence.*

Then, not long after the Exalted One's departure, those monks thought:

*"Is it not friends, that the Exalted One,
After having exclaimed this short statement,
Leaving most of the meaning unexplained,
Stood from his seat and went into his residence?"*

[...Repeating the statement...]

"Who else could explain the meaning of this concise statement? "

[...]

[Visiting Mahākaccāna]

Then the monks considered:

*"There is the Elder Mahākaccāna,
Who is both praised and honored by the Teacher
And by our fellow wise meditators.²¹*

*The Venerable Mahākaccāna is able to explain the meaning in detail
Of this concise statement left unexplained by the Awakened One.*

*Perhaps we should approach the Venerable Mahākaccāna
And inquire about the meaning of this."*

*Then the monks approached the Venerable Mahākaccāna:
Exchanged respectful greetings and sat down to the side.*

Then the monks asked:

*"Friend Kaccāna,
The Bhagavā having put down this statement
Without explaining the meaning in detail
Stood up and went into his residence:*

²⁰ *Sugato*

²¹ *Ayaṃ kho āyasmā mahākaccāno satthu ceva saṃvaṇṇito sambhāvito ca viññūnaṃ sabrahmacārīnaṃ.*

*‘The propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind]
is the cause of a person’s bewilderment.*

*These [concepts]
Should not be delighted in,
Nor praised,
Nor indulged in.*

*Here ends:
The inclination to discontent,
The inclination to irritation,
The inclination to views,
The inclination to doubt,
The inclination to pride,
The inclination to longing for becoming,
The inclination to carelessness,*

*This is the end of being given to
Rods and swords,
Fights and arguments,
Rivalry and fault-finding,
Slander and lies.*

This is where unrighteous, unwholesome states of mind stop entirely.

Then, soon after the Awakened One left, we thought:

*“The Elder Mahākaccāna,
Who is both praised and honored by the Teacher
And by our fellow wise meditators.*

[...]

“Please explain to us”

[Hardwood]

*“Friends,
Just as a person who wanted hardwood,
Who was looking for hardwood,
Who was walking in search of hard wood,²²
Would walk by a great tree standing,
Thick with hardwood;*

²² *“Seyyathāpi, āvuso, puriso sārattthiko sārāgavesī sārāpariyesanaṃ caramāno*

*And he would pass over the roots,
And pass over the trunk,
And he would think to look for hardwood
amongst the branches and the leaves:*

*So you come [to me] Venerable ones,
When you were face to face with the teacher,
Having passed the Awakened One by
Now you ask me to explain the meaning of this.*

Friends,

The Awakened One:

*Knows what is to be known,
He sees what is to be seen,²³*

*He is vision,
He is knowledge,
He is the Dhamma
He is Brāhma,
He is the teacher the explainer,
The carrier of meaning,
The giver of the Deathless,
The master of the Dhamma,
The Truth-finder.²⁴*

*It was at that time
That you should have asked the Awakened One to explain.
And you should have remembered what he would have said to you.*

[The Monks]

*Indeed friend Kaccāna,
the Awakened One
knows what is to be known,
He sees what is to be seen,
He is vision,
He is knowledge,
He is the Dhamma
He is Brāhma
He is the teacher the explainer,
The carrier of meaning,
The giver of the Deathless,
The master of the Dhamma,
The Truth-finder.*

²³ *Bhagavā jānaṃ jānāti, passaṃ passati,*

²⁴ *cakkhubhūto nāṇabhūto dhammabhūto brahmabhūto, vattā pavattā, atthassa ninnetā, amatassa dātā, dhammassāmī tathāgato.*

*At that time,
We should have asked the Awakened One to explain.
And we should have remembered what he would have said.*

*Still, the Elder Mahākaccāna is both praised and honored
By the Teacher and by fellow wise meditators.*

*The Venerable Mahākaccāna is able to explain the meaning in detail
Of this concise statement left unexplained by the Awakened One.*

“Would the Venerable Mahākaccāna explain it, if it is not troublesome.”

[Mahākaccāna]

“Then friends, listen and apply your mind closely to what I will say.”

“Of course, Bhante” the monks replied.

[Mahākaccāna’s Explanation]

The venerable Mahākaccāna said this:

*“Friends,
When the Exalted One, [...] said:*

*‘The propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind]
is the cause of a person’s bewilderment.*

*These [concepts]
Should not be delighted in,
Nor praised,
Nor indulged in.*

*Here ends:
The inclination to discontent,
The inclination to irritation,
The inclination to views,
The inclination to doubt,
The inclination to pride,
The inclination to longing for becoming,
The inclination to carelessness,*

*This is the end of being given to
Rods and swords,
Fights and arguments,*

*Rivalry and fault-finding,
Slander and lies.*

This is where unrighteous, unwholesome states of mind stop entirely.

“This is how I understand the meaning of this:

[Eye]

*“Because of the eye and shapes;
Visual consciousness²⁵ becomes manifest.²⁶*

*The meeting of these three is [called] contact.²⁷
Because of contact there is sensation.²⁸*

*What one feels; that one perceives.²⁹
What one perceives; that one thinks about.³⁰
What one thinks about; that one mentally propagates.³¹*

*And what one mentally propagates;
That is the cause for that person’s bewilderment
by propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind]³²*

*Regarding past,
Present
And future shapes
That can be experienced by the eye.³³*

[Ear]

*“Because of the ear and sounds;
Auditive consciousness³⁴ becomes manifest.*

*The meeting of these three is [called] contact.
Because of contact there is sensation.*

²⁵ Eye or visual consciousness.

²⁶ Cakkhuñcāvuso, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṃ,

²⁷ tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso,

²⁸ phassapaccayā vedanā,

²⁹ yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti,

³⁰ yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi,

³¹ yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti,

³² yaṃ papañceti tatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti

³³ atitānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuviññeyyesu rūpesu.

³⁴ Ear or Auditive consciousness.

*What one feels; that one perceives.
What one perceives; that one thinks about.
What one thinks about; that one mentally propagates.*

*And what one mentally propagates;
That is the cause for that person's bewilderment
by propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind]*

*Regarding past,
Present,
And future sounds
That can be experienced by the ear.*

[Nose]

*"Because of the nose and odors;
Olfactive consciousness³⁵ becomes manifest.*

*The meeting of these three is [called] contact.
Because of contact there is sensation.*

*What one feels; that one perceives.
What one perceives; that one thinks about.
What one thinks about; that one mentally propagates.*

*And what one mentally propagates;
That is the cause for that person's bewilderment
by propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind]*

*Regarding past,
Present,
And future, odors
That can be experienced by the nose.*

[Tongue]

*"Because of the tongue and flavors;
Gustative consciousness³⁶ becomes manifest.*

*The meeting of these three is [called] contact.
Because of contact there is sensation.*

What one feels; that one perceives.

³⁵ Olfactive consciousness.

³⁶ Gustative consciousness.

*What one perceives; that one thinks about.
What one thinks about; that one mentally propagates.*

*And what one mentally propagates,
That is the cause for that person's bewilderment
by propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind]*

*Regarding past,
Present,
And future flavors
That can be experienced by the tongue.*

[Body]

*"Because of the body and tangibles;
Tactile consciousness³⁷ becomes manifest.*

*The meeting of these three is [called] contact.
Because of contact there is sensation.*

*What one feels; that one perceives.
What one perceives; that one thinks about.
What one thinks about; that one mentally propagates.*

*And what one mentally propagates;
That is the cause for that person's bewilderment
by propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind],*

*Regarding past,
Present,
And future tangibles
That can be experienced by the body.*

[Mind]

*Because of the mind and mental objects;
Mental consciousness³⁸ becomes manifest.*

*The meeting of these three is [called] contact.
Because of contact there is sensation.*

*What one feels; that one perceives.
What one perceives; that one thinks about.*

³⁷ Body or tactile consciousness.

³⁸ Mind-consciousness.

What one thinks about; that one mentally propagates.

*And what one mentally propagates,
That is the cause for that person's bewilderment
by propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind]*

*Regarding past,
Present,
And future mental objects
That can be experienced by the mind.*

[Sense Awareness]

[Eye]

Thus friends,

*Paying attention to the eye,
Paying attention to shapes
And paying attention to visual consciousness;³⁹
One can discern the experience of contact;⁴⁰*

*Paying attention to the experience of contact;
One can discern the experience of sensation;⁴¹*

*Paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One can discern the experience of concepts;⁴²*

*Paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One can discern the experience of thinking;⁴³*

*Paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One can discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].⁴⁴*

[Ear]

*Paying attention to the ear,
Paying attention to sounds*

³⁹ *Cakkhusmiṃ sati rūpe sati cakkhuvīññāṇe sati*

⁴⁰ *Phassapaññattiṃ paññāpessatīti —ñhānametaṃ vijjati.*

⁴¹ *Phassapaññattiyā sati vedanāpaññattiṃ paññāpessatīti—ñhānametaṃ vijjati.*

⁴² *Vedanāpaññattiyā sati saññāpaññattiṃ paññāpessatīti—ñhānametaṃ vijjati.*

⁴³ *Saññāpaññattiyā sati vitakkapaññattiṃ paññāpessatīti—ñhānametaṃ vijjati.*

⁴⁴ *Vitakkapaññattiyā sati papañcasaññāsāṅkhāsamudācaraṇapaññattiṃ paññāpessatīti— ñhānametaṃ vijjati.*

*And paying attention to auditive consciousness;
One can discern the experience of contact;*

*Paying attention to the experience of contact;
One can discern the experience of sensation;*

*Paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One can discern the experience of concepts;*

*Paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One can discern the experience of thinking;*

*Paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One can discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].*

[Nose]

*Paying attention to the nose,
Paying attention to odors
And paying attention to olfactive consciousness;
One can discern the experience of contact;*

*Paying attention to the experience of contact;
One can discern the experience of sensation;*

*Paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One can discern the experience of concepts;*

*Paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One can discern the experience of thinking;*

*Paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One can discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].*

[Tongue]

*Paying attention to the tongue,
Paying attention to tastes
And paying attention to gustative consciousness;
One can discern the experience of contact;*

*Paying attention to the experience of contact;
One can discern the experience of sensation;*

*Paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One can discern the experience of concepts;*

*Paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One can discern the experience of thinking;*

*Paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One can discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].*

[Body]

*Paying attention to the body,
Paying attention to tangibles
And paying attention to tactile consciousness;
One can discern the experience of contact;*

*Paying attention to the experience of contact;
One can discern the experience of sensation;*

*Paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One can discern the experience of concepts;*

*Paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One can discern the experience of thinking;*

*Paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One can discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].*

[Mind]

*Paying attention to the mind,
Paying attention to mental states
And paying attention to mental consciousness;
One can discern the experience of contact;*

*Paying attention to the experience of contact;
One can discern the experience of sensation;*

*Paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One can discern the experience of concepts;*

*Paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One can discern the experience of thinking;*

*Paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One can discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].*

[Sense Unawareness]

[Eye]

Not paying attention⁴⁵ to the eye,
Not paying attention to shapes,
Not paying attention to visual consciousness;
One cannot discern the experience of contact;⁴⁶

Not paying attention to the experience of contact;
One cannot discern the experience of sensation;

Not paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One cannot discern the experience of concepts;

Not paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One cannot discern the experience of thinking;

Not paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One cannot discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].⁴⁷

[Ear]

Not paying attention to the ear,
Not paying attention to sounds,
Not paying attention to auditive consciousness;
One cannot discern the experience of contact;

Not paying attention to the experience of contact;
One cannot discern the experience of sensation;

Not paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One cannot discern the experience of concepts;

Not paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One cannot discern the experience of thinking;

⁴⁵ *Cakkhusmiṃ asati rūpe asati cakkhuvīññāṇe asati. Asati: Lit.: Not Aware, not remembering, not paying attention, turning away from. Interesting formulation whereas 'popular Buddhism' or the 'mindfulness movement' teaches to note or to 'be aware' of each of these things as they are happening, it is clearly indicated that sammā-sati is in fact worldly 'Asati,' or 'not-paying attention to the things of this world.' One more tangible proof that the Dhamma is about letting go, not grasping at worldly awareness. Asati also concords with viveka, disengaging, letting go, releasing, relaxing, the way to Samādhi. The Buddha's Teaching is not about 'mindfulness,' it is about going beyond mindfulness, complete liberation. One can even ask: Who is mindful?*

⁴⁶ *Moving away from sensory engagement is part of the first jhāna, the first level of meditation, as "vivicceva kāmehi." That is also when the bliss from detaching from the senses is experienced, this "vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ."*

⁴⁷ *Now, one can better understand why monks do not drive. 😊*

*Not paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One cannot discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].*

[Nose]

*Not paying attention to the nose,
Not paying attention to odors,
Not paying attention to olfactive consciousness;
One cannot discern the experience of contact;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of contact;
One cannot discern the experience of sensation;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One cannot discern the experience of concepts;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One cannot discern the experience of thinking;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One cannot discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].*

[Tongue]

*Not paying attention to the tongue,
Not paying attention to tastes,
Not paying attention to gustative consciousness;
One cannot discern the experience of contact;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of contact;
One cannot discern the experience of sensation;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One cannot discern the experience of concepts;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One cannot discern the experience of thinking;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One cannot discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].*

[Body]

*Not paying attention to the body,
Not paying attention to tangibles,
Not paying attention to tactile consciousness;*

One cannot discern the experience of contact;

*Not paying attention to the experience of contact;
One cannot discern the experience of sensation;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One cannot discern the experience of concepts;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One cannot discern the experience of thinking;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One cannot discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].*

[Mind]

*Not paying attention to the mind,
Not paying attention to mental states,
Not paying attention to mental consciousness;
One cannot discern the experience of contact;⁴⁸*

*Not paying attention to the experience of contact;
One cannot discern the experience of sensation;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of sensations;
One cannot discern the experience of concepts;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of concepts;
One cannot discern the experience of thinking;*

*Not paying attention to the experience of thinking;
One cannot discern the experience of propagation of concepts fabricated [by the mind].⁴⁹*

[...]

This is how I understand the meaning of this statement.

*Bearing this in mind, friends,
You should go to the Awakened One,
Then he might explain to you the meaning of this.
And you should remember what he will say.*

⁴⁸ Disengaging is at the core of the practice. To experience the complete release (Nirodha) from the mind requires meditation practice. This is also called Nibbāna.

⁴⁹ This is a wonderful way to explain quite literally the practice leading to Wise Awareness but this time, using the six sense bases instead of the Four Resting Places of Awareness (Satipaṭṭhāna).

[Going to the Buddha]

After having delighted and rejoiced in these words,
The monks stood up and went to the Awakened One and said:

[Everything that had taken place]

[...]

“This is how the Venerable Mahākaccāna
in this manner
in this way,
in these words
Explained the meaning.”

[The Buddha]

“Monks, Mahākaccāna is wise⁵⁰
Mahākaccāna has great wisdom.”

“You should remember the meaning of this statement as it was explained by him.
Mahākaccāna has explained this in the same way that I would have explained it.

That is the meaning.
This is how you should bear it in mind.”

When this was said,
The Venerable Ānanda asked the Awakened One:

[Ānanda]

“Bhante,
Just as a man overwhelmed and weakened by hunger
Would walk up to a ball of honey,
Wherever he would taste it⁵¹
He would get a sweet and delicious taste;

In the same way Bhante,
Wherever one is,
If a wise monk were to call to mind

⁵⁰ “Paṇḍito, bhikkhave, mahākaccāno;

⁵¹ So yato yato sāyeyya,

*And investigate the meaning
Of this exposition of the Dhamma⁵² with discernment,*

*He would gain gladness of heart,
And peace of mind.”*

⁵² *Yato yato imassa dhammapariyāyassa*

*“Bhante,
What is the name of this Explanation on the Dhamma?”*

[The Buddha]

*“Ānanda you can remember this exposition of the Dhamma
As the exposition of the ball of honey.”*

*This is what the Awakened One said.
Glad at heart, the Venerable Ānanda rejoiced in the Awakened One’s words.*



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