

Majjhima Nikāya no. 24

Rathavinīta Sutta: The Relay of Chariots

7. Then the venerable Sāriputta quickly picked up a mat and followed close behind the venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta. Then Puṇṇa Mantāniputta entered the Blind Men’s Grove and sat down for the day’s abiding at the root of a tree. Sāriputta also entered the Blind Men’s Grove and sat down for the day’s abiding at the root of a tree.

8. Then, when it was evening, Sāriputta rose from meditation, went to Puṇṇa Mantāniputta, and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous talk was finished, he sat down at one side and said to Puṇṇa Mantāniputta:

9. “Is the holy life lived under our Blessed One, friend?”—“Yes, friend.”—“But, friend, is it for the sake of purification of virtue that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is it for the sake of purification of mind that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is it for the sake of purification of view that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is it for the sake of purification by overcoming doubt that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is it for the sake of purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is it for the sake of purification by knowledge and vision of the way that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is it for the sake of purification by knowledge and vision that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One?”—“No, friend.”²⁸⁸

10. “Friend, when asked: ‘But, friend, is it for the sake of purification of virtue that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One?’ you replied: ‘No, friend.’ When asked: ‘Then is it for the sake of purification of mind ... purification of view ... purification by overcoming doubt ... purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path ... purification by knowledge and vision of the way ... purification by knowledge and vision that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One?’ you replied: ‘No, friend.’ For the sake of what then, friend, [148] is the holy life lived under the Blessed One?”

“Friend, it is for the sake of final Nibbāna without clinging that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One.”

11. “But, friend, is purification of virtue final Nibbāna without clinging?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is purification of mind final Nibbāna without clinging?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is purification of view final Nibbāna without clinging?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is purification by overcoming doubt final Nibbāna without clinging?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path final Nibbāna without clinging?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is purification by knowledge and vision of the way final Nibbāna without clinging?”—“No, friend.”—“Then is purification by knowledge and vision final Nibbāna without clinging?”—“No, friend.”—“But, friend, is final Nibbāna without clinging to be attained without these states?”—“No, friend.”

12. “When asked: ‘But, friend, is purification of virtue final Nibbāna without clinging?’ you replied: ‘No, friend.’ When asked: ‘Then is purification of mind ... purification of view ... purification by overcoming doubt ... purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path ... purification by knowledge and vision of the way ... purification by

knowledge and vision final Nibbāna without clinging?’ you replied: ‘No, friend.’ And when asked: ‘But, friend, is final Nibbāna without clinging to be attained without these states?’ you replied: ‘No, friend.’ But how, friend, should the meaning of these statements be regarded?”

13. “Friend, if the Blessed One had described purification of virtue as final Nibbāna without clinging, he would have described what is still accompanied by clinging as final Nibbāna without clinging. If the Blessed One had described purification of mind ... purification of view ... purification by overcoming doubt ... purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path ... purification by knowledge and vision of the way ... purification by knowledge and vision as final Nibbāna without clinging, he would have described what is still accompanied by clinging as final Nibbāna without clinging.²⁹⁰ And if final Nibbāna without clinging were to be attained without these states, then an ordinary person would have attained final Nibbāna, for an ordinary person is without these states.

14. “As to that, friend, I shall give you a simile, for some wise men understand the meaning of a statement by means of a simile. Suppose that King Pasenadi of Kosala while living at Sāvattthī [149] had some urgent business to settle at Sāketa, and that between Sāvattthī and Sāketa seven relay chariots were kept ready for him. Then King Pasenadi, leaving Sāvattthī through the inner palace door, would mount the first relay chariot, and by means of the first relay chariot he would arrive at the second relay chariot; then he would dismount from the first chariot and mount the second chariot, and by means of the second chariot, he would arrive at the third chariot ... by means of the third chariot, he would arrive at the fourth chariot ... by means of the fourth chariot, he would arrive at the fifth chariot ... by means of the fifth chariot, he would arrive at the sixth chariot ... by means of the sixth chariot, he would arrive at the seventh chariot, and by means of the seventh chariot he would arrive at the inner palace door in Sāketa. Then, when he had come to the inner palace door, his friends and acquaintances, his kinsmen and relatives, would ask him: ‘Sire, did you come from Sāvattthī to the inner palace door in Sāketa by means of this relay chariot?’ How then should King Pasenadi answer in order to answer correctly?”

“In order to answer correctly, friend, he should answer thus: ‘Here, while living at Sāvattthī I had some urgent business to settle at Sāketa, and between Sāvattthī and Sāketa seven relay chariots were kept ready for me. Then, leaving Sāvattthī through the inner palace door, I mounted the first relay chariot, and by means of the first relay chariot I arrived at the second relay chariot; then I dismounted from the first chariot and mounted the second chariot, and by means of the second chariot I arrived at the third ... fourth ... fifth ... sixth ... seventh chariot, and by means of the seventh chariot I arrived at the inner palace door in Sāketa.’ In order to answer correctly he should answer thus.”

15. “So too, friend, purification of virtue is for the sake of reaching purification of mind; purification of mind is for the sake of reaching purification of view; purification of view is for the sake of reaching purification by overcoming doubt; purification by overcoming doubt [150] is for the sake of reaching purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path; purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path is for the sake of reaching purification by knowledge and vision of the way; purification by knowledge and vision of the way is for the sake of reaching purification by knowledge and vision; purification by knowledge and vision is for the sake of reaching final

Nibbāna without clinging. It is for the sake of final Nibbāna without clinging that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One.”

16. When this was said, the venerable Sāriputta asked the venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta: “What is the venerable one’s name, and how do his companions in the holy life know the venerable one?”²⁹¹

“My name is Puṇṇa, friend, and my companions in the holy life know me as Mantāniputta.”

“It is wonderful, friend, it is marvellous! Each profound question has been answered, point by point, by the venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta as a learned disciple who understands the Teacher’s Dispensation correctly. It is a gain for his companions in the holy life, it is a great gain for them that they have the opportunity to see and honour the venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta. Even if it were by carrying the venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta about on a cushion on their heads that his companions in the holy life would get the opportunity to see and honour him, it would be a gain for them, a great gain for them. And it is a gain for us, a great gain for us that we have the opportunity to see and honour the venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta.”

17. When this was said, the venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta asked the venerable Sāriputta: “What is the venerable one’s name, and how do his companions in the holy life know the venerable one?”

“My name is Upatissa, friend, and my companions in the holy life know me as Sāriputta.”

“Indeed, friend, we did not know that we were talking with the venerable Sāriputta, the disciple who is like the Teacher himself. If we had known that this was the venerable Sāriputta, we should not have said so much.

“It is wonderful, friend, it is marvellous! Each profound question has been posed, point by point, by the venerable Sāriputta as a learned disciple who understands the Teacher’s Dispensation correctly. It is a gain for his companions in the holy life, it is a great gain for them that they have the opportunity to see and honour the venerable Sāriputta. Even if it were by carrying the venerable Sāriputta about on a cushion on their heads that his companions in the holy life would get the opportunity to see and honour him, [151] it would be a gain for them, a great gain for them. And it is a gain for us, a great gain for us that we have the opportunity to see and honour the venerable Sāriputta.”

Thus it was that these two great beings rejoiced in each other’s good words.