

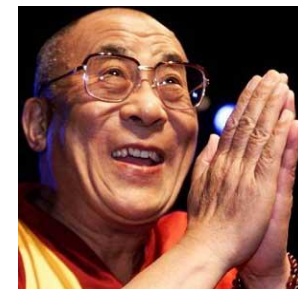
BANDAR UTAMA BUDDHIST SOCIETY



Abhayarājakumāra Sutta, MN 58 **(Discourse to Prince Abhaya)**

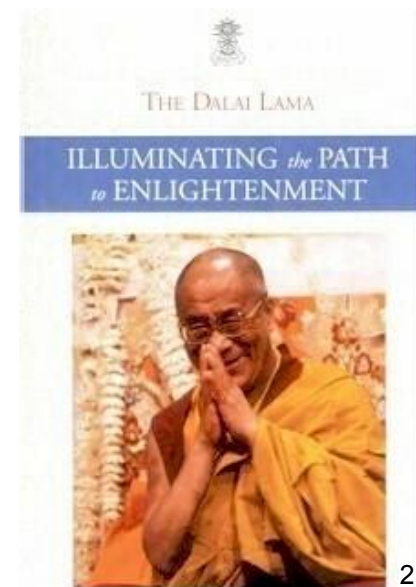


Four Reliances



- **Rely not on the person but the words.**
- **Rely not on the words but on their meaning.**
- **Rely not on the provisional meaning but the definitive meaning of the word.**
- **Rely not on intellectual understanding of the definitive meaning, but on direct, non-conceptual experience of it.**

○
●
Abhisamaya-alaṅkāra
Ornament of Clear Realizations



TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

The
Middle Length
Discourses
of the
Buddha



A Translation of the
Majjhima Nikāya



Translated by
Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli *and* Bhikkhu Bodhi



Background



In this sutta, the Buddha explains to Prince Abhaya the criteria for determining whether or not something is worth saying. This discourse is a beautiful example of the Buddha's skill as teacher: not only does he talk about right speech, but he also demonstrates right speech in action.



The Beginning

- THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Rajāgaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary.
- Then Prince Abhaya went to the Nigaṇṭha Natāputta, and after paying homage to him, sat down at one side. Then Nigaṇṭha Natāputta said to him:

Para 1, 2



The Beginning

- “Prince, refute the recluse Gotama's doctrine, and a good report of you will be spread to this effect: 'Prince Abhaya has refuted the doctrine of the recluse Gotama, who is so powerful and mighty.'”
- "But how, venerable sir, shall I refute his doctrine?"

Para 3



Question to the Buddha



“Ask the Buddha if he would utter speech that is unwelcome and disagreeable to others?”

If the Buddha answers **YES**, ask how he is any different from an ordinary person?

If the Buddha answers **NO**, ask him why he said that Devadatta will end up in hell, for his unpleasant speech made Devadatta angry.

Para 3



Two-Horned Question

Nigantha then said to Prince Abhaya that if the Buddha is posed this two-horned question, it would be like an iron spike were stuck in his throat where he would not be able either to gulp it down or to throw it up.

So such questions are by nature not answerable with a “yes” or “no”.

Para 3



Meeting the Buddha



Prince Abhaya agreed and then went to see the Buddha. After paying homage to the Buddha, he sat down, looked at the sun, and thought: "It is too late today to refute the Buddha. I shall refute him in my house tomorrow." Then he invited the Buddha with three other monks for a house dāna. The Buddha consented in silence.

Para 4



House Dāna

The Buddha and 3 monks then went to Prince Abhaya's house and sat down on the seat made ready. Then Prince Abhaya personally served food to the Buddha. When the Buddha had eaten and had withdrawn his hand from the bowl, Prince Abhaya took a low seat, sat down at one side, and said to him:

Para 5



The Question



- “Would a Buddha utter speech that is unwelcome and disagreeable to others?”
- Buddha replied that it is a one-sided answer.
- “Oh, the Nigaṇṭhas have lost then.”
- When Buddha asks why he said that, Prince Abhaya reported his entire conversation with the Nigaṇṭha Natāputta.

Para 6

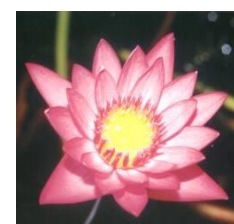


The Question

1. Would Buddha say anything unpleasant or disagreeable to others?
2. If he did, how is he then different from others?
3. If he did not, why did he speak disparagingly of Devadatta - words that angered him?



Ways of Answering



1. Question requiring **direct answer**
2. Question requiring **an analysis**
3. Question requiring **counter-question**
4. Question requiring a **rejection**

Pañha Sutta, A 4.42



Buddha's Silence



The Buddha kept silent on the following metaphysical and speculative questions:

1. Is the universe eternal?
2. Is it not eternal?
3. Is the universe finite?
4. Is it infinite?
5. Is soul the same as the body?



Buddha's Silence



- (6) Is soul different from the body?
- (7) Does Buddha exist after death?
- (8) Does he not exist after death?
- (9) Does he exist and not exist after death?
- (10) Does he neither exist nor not exist after death?

Māluṅkyāputta Sutta, MN 63



Buddha's Reply



The Buddha replied that the question needed qualification and, noticing that the prince was nursing his little boy, who lay in his lap, asked him what he would do if a pebble or a stick got into his mouth. "I should pull it out even if the blood flowed." "Just so would a Buddha state unpleasant truths in due season if necessary and profitable."



Right Speech

1. False, Useless, Unpleasant
2. True, Useless, Unpleasant
3. **True, Useful, Unpleasant**
4. False, Useless, Pleasant
5. True, Useless, Pleasant
6. **True, Useful, Pleasant**

Para 8



Buddha's Speech



- A speech the Buddha knows is true and beneficial, but unwelcome and disagreeable to others, he knows the time to say it.
- A speech the Buddha knows to be true and beneficial, and welcome and agreeable to others, he knows the time to say it.
- Why is that? Because the Buddha has compassion for beings."

Para 8



Buddha's Speech

1. When a statement is **true**, **useful** but **unpleasant**, Buddha knows the right time to say it.
2. When a statement is **true**, **useful** and **pleasant**, Buddha also know the time to say it.



Well Spoken Words



Spoken at the proper time
Spoken in line with the truth
Spoken gently
Spoken beneficially
Spoken with a friendly heart

Vaca Sutta, AN 5.198

SOCRATES' TRIPLE FILTER TEST

IS IT TRUE?

YES

NO



IS IT GOOD?

YES

NO



**DON'T
SAY IT.**



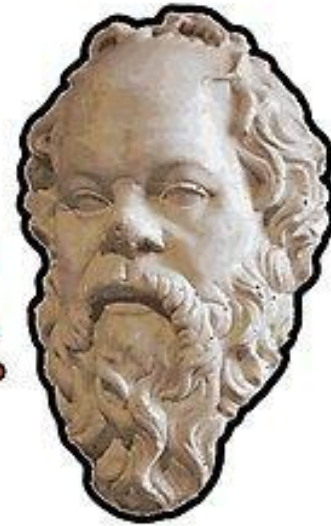
IS IT USEFUL?

YES

NO



SAY IT.





True & Useful



"If only the true and useful things were recorded, our huge historical libraries would be reduced to very narrow dimensions – but we would know more, and know it better." ~

Voltaire (1694 - 1778)



Right Speech



Buddha advises Vassakara, the well-known courtier of Magadha that whatever is seen, heard, sensed, or cognized, only those that contribute to the decline of unwholesome states and the growth of wholesome states should be spoken of.

Suta Sutta, AN 4.183



How to Answer?

"Venerable sir, when learned nobles, Brahmins, laymen and recluses, after formulating a question, were to go to the Buddha and pose it, has there already been in the Buddha's mind the thought: 'If they come to me and ask me thus, I shall answer thus'? Or does that answer occur to the Buddha on the spot?"

Para 9



Chariot Simile

- "As to that, prince, I shall ask you a question in return. Answer it as you choose.
- What do you think, prince? Are you skilled in the parts of a chariot?"
- "Yes, venerable sir, I am."

Para 10



Chariot Simile

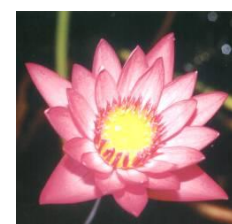


- The Buddha asked the Prince if he were to name of various parts of the chariot, would he have to think about the answer or would it occur to him on the spot?
- Prince Abhaya replied that as he is well-known as a charioteer skilled in the parts of a chariot, the answer would occur to him on the spot.

Para 10



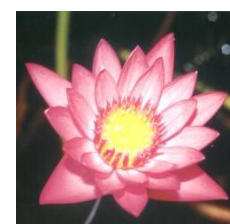
A Prompt Answer



"So too, when learned nobles, brahmins, laymen and recluses, after formulating a question, were to ask the Buddha , he would answer on the spot.

Why is that? That element of things has been fully penetrated by the Buddha, thus the answer occurs on the spot."

Para 11



Conclusion

When this was said, Prince Abhaya said:
"Magnificent, venerable sir! Magnificent,
venerable sir!"

The Blessed One has made the Dhamma
clear in many ways...From today let the
Blessed One remember me as a lay
follower who has gone to him for refuge
for life."

Para 12



Prayer on Four Sublime States



- ▣ **May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes,**
- ▣ **May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes,**
- ▣ **May all sentient beings never be separated from bliss without suffering,**
- ▣ **May all sentient beings be in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger.**

