

MAJJHIMA NIKĀYA

Sutta 23

The Anthill

Translated from the Pāli
by
Michael M. Olds



BuddhaDust Publications

Los Altos

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Buddha Dust

**Bits and scraps, crumbs, fine
Particles that drift down to
Walkers of The Walk.
Then: Thanks for that, Far-Seer!
Great 'Getter-of-the-Get'n!**

■

**May all beings be well and happy
May I act with friendliness in thought, word, and deed
towards all living beings
in whatsoever of the ten directions they may abide
whether far or near
May I sympathize with their pains and sorrows
Empathize with their situations
and be at all times objectively detached.**

Majjhima Nikāya
1. Mūla-Paṇṇāsa
3. Tatiya Vagga

Sutta 23

Vammīka Suttam

The Anthill

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Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa

In the name of The Lucky Man,
Aristocrat, Consummately Self-Awakened One

For my Mother and Father,
in gratitude for giving me this life.

To My Teachers
in the order encountered
H.C. Warren, Buddhism in Translations,
The Pali Text Society translators
T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, F.L. Woodward,
E.M. Hare, I.B. Horner,
and all those too little sung heros
that came before
and laid the foundations of today's Dhamma resources.
Ven. Jinamurti
Ven. Mew Fung Chen
Ven. M. Puṇṇaji
Carlos Castaneda

I HEAR TELL:

Once upon a time Bhagava, Sāvattthī-town residing, Anāthapiṇḍika's Jeta Grove.

At this time, then, the Ancient Kumāra Kassapa resided in Dark Woods.

**Then towards the passing of night
a certain diety of surpassing color
drew near to Kumāra Kassapa
and illuminating the while that Dark Woods,
having drawn near,
stood to one side.**

**Standing to one side
that diety said this to Kumāra Kassapa:**

"Beggar! Beggar!

**This anthill smokes by night,
by day blazes up.**

The Brahmin says this:

**'Use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it up.'**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw an obstruction
and said:**

'An obstruction, venerable.'

The Brahmin says this:

**'Get rid of the obstruction,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out.'**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a puffed up croaker
and said:**

'A puffed up croaker, venerable.'

The Brahmin says this:

**'Get rid of the puffed up croaker,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out.'**

Using the sword,

**Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a diverging path
and said:**

'A diverging path, venerable.'

The Brahmin says this:

**'Get rid of the diverging path,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out.'**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a screen.
and said:**

'A screen, venerable.'

The Brahmin says this:

**'Get rid of the screen,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out.'**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a turtle.
and said:**

'A turtle, venerable.'

The Brahmin says this:

**'Get rid of the turtle,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out.'**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a slaughter-house,
and said:**

'A slaughter-house, venerable.'

The Brahmin says this:

**'Get rid of the slaughter-house,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out.'**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a piece of flesh,**

and said:

'A piece of flesh, venerable.'

The Brahmin says this:

'Get rid of the piece of flesh,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out.'

Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a serpent,
and said:

'A serpent, venerable.'

The Brahmin says this:

'Let stand the serpent.

Do not upset the serpent.

Give homage to the serpent.'

Now then, bhikkhu,
approach the Bhagava
questioning him about this,
in such way as the Bhagava explains,
so you should retain it.

Beggar!

I see in this world
with it's dieties,
with it's Māras,
Brahmas; —
this generation
together with shamans and brhamins,
with its dieties and men,
no one who if questioned about this,
could explain it to the satisfaction of mind
other than a Tathāgata
or a Tathāgata's apprentice,
or one who had heard it from such a one."

Thus spoke that diety
and having spoken,
he vanished on the spot.

Then, towards the end of the night
the Ancient, Kumāra Kassapa, drew near to the Bhagava,

having drawn near
he sat to one side.

Sitting to one side
the Ancient, Kumāra Kassapa,
said this to the Bhagava:

"Towards the passing of night, bhante,
a certain diety of surpassing color
drew near
and illuminating Dark Woods the while,
having drawn near,
stood to one side.

Standing to one side
that diety said this to me:

'Beggar! Beggar!

This anthill smokes by night,
by day blazes up.

The Brahmin says this:

"Use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it up."

Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw an obstruction
and said:

"An obstruction, venerable."

The Brahmin says this:

"Get rid of the obstruction,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out."

Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a puffed up croaker
and said:

"A puffed up croaker, venerable."

The Brahmin says this:

"Get rid of the puffed up croaker,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out."

Using the sword,

**Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a diverging path
and said:**

"A diverging path, venerable."

The Brahmin says this:

**"Get rid of the diverging path,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out."**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a screen,
and said:**

"A screen, venerable."

The Brahmin says this:

**"Get rid of the screen,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out."**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a turtle,
and said:**

"A turtle, venerable."

The Brahmin says this:

**"Get rid of the turtle,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out."**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a slaughter-house,
and said:**

"A slaughter-house, venerable."

The Brahmin says this:

**"Get rid of the slaughter-house,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out."**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a piece of flesh,**

and said:

"A piece of flesh, venerable."

The Brahmin says this:

**"Get rid of the piece of flesh,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out."**

**Using the sword,
Goodly-wise, digging,
saw a serpent,
and said:**

"A serpent, venerable."

The Brahmin says this:

"Let stand the serpent.

Do not upset the serpent.

Give homage to the serpent."

**Now then, bhikkhu,
approach the Bhagava
questioning him about this,
in such way as the Bhagava explains,
so you should retain it.**

Beggar!

**I see in this world
with it's dieties,
with it's Māras,
Brahmas; —
this generation
together with shamans and brhamins,
with its dieties and men,
no one who if questioned about this,
could explain it to the satisfaction of mind
other than a Tathāgata
or a Tathāgata's apprentice,
or one who had heard it from such a one.'**

**Thus spoke that diety
and having spoken,
he vanished on the spot.**

What now, bhante, is 'the anthill'?

What is 'smoking by night'?

What is 'blazing up by day'?

Who is 'the Brahmin'?

Who is 'Goodly-wise'?

What is 'the sword'?

What 'digging out'?

What 'the obstruction'?

What 'the puffed up croaker'?

What 'the divergent path'?

What 'the screen'?

What 'the turtle'?

What 'the slaughter-house'?

What 'the piece of flesh'?

What 'the serpent'?"

""Anthill,' bhikkhu,

such is an expression for this four-great-elements-made body,

brought into being by mother and father,

dependant on gruel and yogurt,

given to instability,

erosion,

and dissolution;

given to breaking-up

and breaking-down.

In the night, beggar,

what one rethinks

and re-evaluates

of the day's works,

that is an expression for "smoking at night".

In the day, beggar,

whatever followed

from that rethinking

and whatever followed

from that re-evaluating

in the works of body,

speech

or mind,

that is an expression for "blazing up by day".

'Brahman,' bhikkhu,

such is an expression

for The Tathāgata,

Aristocrat,

#1-Highest-Self-Awakened-One.

**'Goodly-wise,' bhikkhu,
such is an expression
for the beggar who is a seeker.**

**'The Sword,' beggar,
such is an expression
for wisdom that is aristocratic.**

**'Digging out,' beggar,
such is an expression
for energetic resolve.**

**'Obstruction,' beggar,
such is an expression
for blindness.**

**Get rid of the obstruction,
let go of blindness,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out,
this is the point.**

**'The puffed-up croaker,' beggar,
such is an expression
for angry mudslinging**

**Get rid of the puffed-up croaker,
let go of angry mudslinging,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out,
this is the point.**

**'The divergent path,' beggar,
such is an expression
for doubt.**

**Get rid of the divergent path,
let go of doubt,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out,
this is the point.**

**'The screen,' beggar,
such is an expression
for the five bindups:**

**the bindup of wanting pleasure,
the bindup of angry ways,
the bindup of lazy ways and inertia,**

the bindup of fear and trembling,
the bindup of doubt.

Get rid of the screen,
let go of the five bindups,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out,
this is the point.

'The turtle,' beggar,
such is an expression
for the five bound up stockpiles,
that is to say:

the pile bound up in thingness,
the pile bound up in sense experience,
the pile bound up in perception,
the pile bound up in conjuration,
the pile bound up in re-knowing-knowing.

Get rid of the turtle
let go of the five bound up stockpiles,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out,
this is the point.

'The slaughter-house,' beggar,
such is an expression
for the five cords of sense-pleasure:

things known by way of the eye;
wished for,
enjoyable,
pleasing,
attractive,
useful in attaining pleasure,
exciting,

sounds known by way of the ear;
wished for,
enjoyable,
pleasing,
attractive,
useful in attaining pleasure,
exciting,

scents known by way of the nose;
wished for,

enjoyable,
pleasing,
attractive,
useful in attaining pleasure,
exciting,
tastes known by way of the tongue;;
wished for,
enjoyable,
pleasing,
attractive,
useful in attaining pleasure,
exciting,
touches known by way of the body;
wished for,
enjoyable,
pleasing,
attractive,
useful in attaining pleasure,
exciting.

Get rid of the slaughter-house,
let go of the five cords of sense-pleasure,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out,
this is the point.

'The piece of flesh,' beggar,
such is an expression
for delighting in lust.

Get rid of the piece of flesh,
let go of delighting in lust,
use the sword, Goodly-wise,
dig it out,
this is the point.

'Serpent,' beggar,
such is an expression
for the beggar who has abandoned the corrupting influences.

Let stand the serpent.

Do not upset the serpent.

Give homage to the serpent.

This is the point."

This is what Bhagava said.

**"Delightful!" said the Ancient Kumāra Kassapa,
uplifted by what the Lucky Man said.**