

1. Thus have I heard. One one occasion the Blessed One was living at Rājahaga in the Park of the Hot Springs. Then, when it was near dawn, the venerable Samiddhi went to the hot springs to bathe his limbs. After bathing he came up out of the water and stood dressed in one robe, drying his limbs. Then, when the night was well advanced, a certain deity of beautiful appearance who illuminated the whole of the Hot Springs, approached the venerable Samiddhi. Standing at one side, the deity said to him:

2. “Bhikkhu, do you remember the summary and exposition of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night’?”

“Friend, I do not remember the summary and exposition of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night.’ But, friend, do you remember the summary and exposition of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night’?”

“Bhikkhu, I too do not remember the summary and exposition of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night.’ But, bhikkhu, do you remember the stanzas of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night’?”

“Friend, I do not remember the stanzas of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night.’ But, friend, do you remember the stanzas of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night’?”

“Bhikkhu, I too do not remember the stanzas of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night.’ But, bhikkhu, learn the summary and exposition of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night.’ Bhikkhu, master the summary and exposition of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night.’ Bhikkhu, remember the summary and exposition of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night.’ Bhikkhu, the summary and exposition of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night’ is beneficial, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life.”

That is what was said by the deity, who thereupon vanished at once.

3. Then, when the night was over, the venerable Samiddhi went to the Blessed One. After paying homage to him, he sat down at one side, told the Blessed One all that had occurred, and said: “It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One would teach me the summary and exposition of ‘One Who Has Had a Single Excellent Night.’”

4. “Then, bhikkhu, listen and attend closely to what I shall say.” – “Yes, venerable sir,” the venerable Samiddhi replied. The Blessed One said:

5. “Let not a person revive the past

Or on the future build his hopes;

For the past has been left behind

And the future has not been reached.

Instead with insight let him see

Each presently arisen state;

Let him know that and be sure of it,

Invincibly, unshakably.

Today the effort must be made;

Tomorrow Death may come, who knows?

No bargain with Mortality

Can keep him and his hordes away.

But one who dwells thus ardently,

Relentlessly, by day, by night –

It is he, the Peaceful Sage has said,

Who has had a single excellent night.”

6. That is what the Blessed One said. Having said this, the Sublime One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling.

7. Then, soon after the Blessed One had gone, the bhikkhus considered: “Now, friends, the Blessed One has risen from his seat and gone into his dwelling after giving a summary in brief without expounding the detailed meaning. Now who will expound this in detail?” Then they considered: “The venerable Mahā Kaccāna is praised by the Teacher and esteemed by his wise companions in the holy life. He is capable of expounding the detailed meaning. Suppose we went to him and asked him the meaning of this.”

8. Then the bhikkhus went to the venerable Mahā Kaccāna and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, they sat down to one side and they told him

what had taken place, adding: “Let the venerable Mahā Kaccāna expound it to us.”

9. [The venerable Mahā Kaccāna replied:] “Friend, it is as though a man needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, thought that heartwood should be sought for among the branches and leaves of a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, after he had passed over the root and the trunk. And so it is with you, venerable sirs, that you think that I should be asked about the meaning of this, after you passed the Blessed One by when you were face to face with the Teacher. For knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees; he is vision, he is knowledge, he is the Dhamma, he is the holy one; he is the sayer, the proclaimer, the elucidator of meaning, the giver of the Deathless, the lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata. That was the time when you should have asked the Blessed One the meaning. As he told you, so you should have remembered it.”

10. “Surely, friend Kaccāna, knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees; he is vision...the Tathāgata. That was the time when we should have asked the Blessed One the meaning. As he told us, so we should have remembered it. Yet the venerable Mahā Kaccāna is praised by the Teacher and esteemed by his wise companions in the holy life. The venerable Mahā Kaccāna is capable of expounding the detailed meaning of this summary given in brief by the Blessed One without expounding the detailed meaning. Let the venerable Mahā Kaccāna expound it without finding it troublesome.”

11. “Then listen, friends, and attend closely to what I shall say.” – “Yes, friend,” the bhikkhus replied. The venerable Mahā Kaccāna said this:

12. “Friends, when the Blessed One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling after giving a summary in brief without expounding the detailed meaning, that is:

‘Let not a person revive the past...

Who has had a single excellent night,’

I understand the meaning of it to be as follows.

13. “How, friends, does one revive the past? One’s consciousness becomes bound up with desire and lust there thinking, ‘My eye was thus in the past and forms were thus.’ Because one’s consciousness is bound up with desire and lust, one delights in that. When one delights in that, one revives the past.

“One’s consciousness becomes bound up with desire and lust there thinking, ‘My ear was thus in the past and sounds were thus...My nose and odors...My tongue and flavors...My body and tangibles...My mind was thus in the past and mind-objects were thus.’ Because one’s consciousness is bound up with desire and lust, one delights in that. When one delights in that, one revives the past. That is how one revives the past.

14. “How does one not revive the past? One’s consciousness does not become bound up with desire and lust there thinking, ‘My eye was thus in the past and forms were thus.’ Because one’s consciousness is not bound up with desire and lust, one does not delight in that. When one does not delight in that, one does not revive the past.

“One’s consciousness does not become bound up with desire and lust there thinking, ‘My ear was thus in the past and sounds were thus...My nose and odors...My tongue and flavors...My body and tangibles...My mind was thus in the past and mind-objects were thus.’ Because one’s consciousness is not bound up with desire and lust, one does not delight in that. When one does not delight in that, one does not revive the past. That is how one does not revive the past.

15. “How, friends, does one build up hope upon the future? One sets one’s heart on obtaining what has not yet been obtained, thinking, ‘May my eye be thus in the future and forms be thus!’ Because one sets one’s heart thus, one delights in that. When one delights in that, one builds up hope upon the future.

“One sets one’s heart on obtaining what has not yet been obtained, thinking, ‘May my ear be thus in the future and sounds be thus!...May my nose and odors...May my tongue and flavors...May my body and tangibles...May my mind be thus in the future and mind-objects be thus!’ Because one sets one’s heart thus, one delights in that. When one delights in that, one builds up hope upon the future. That is how one builds up hope upon the future.

16. “How, friends, does one not build up hope upon the future? One does not set one’s heart on obtaining what has not yet been obtained, thinking, ‘May my eye be thus in the future and forms be thus!’ Because one does not set one’s heart thus, one does not delight in that. When one does not delight in that, one does not build up hope upon the future.

“One does not set one’s heart on obtaining what has not yet been obtained, thinking, ‘May my ear be thus in the future and sounds be thus!...May my nose and odors...May my tongue and flavors...May my body and tangibles...May my mind be thus in the future and mind-objects be thus!’ Because one does not set one’s heart thus, one does not delight in that. When one does not delight in that, one does not build up hope upon the future. That is how one does not build up hope upon the future.

17. “How is one vanquished in regard to presently arisen states? In regard to the eye and forms that are presently arisen, one’s consciousness is bound up with desire and lust for that which is presently arisen. Because one’s consciousness is bound up with desire and lust, one delights in that. When one delights in that, one is vanquished in regard to presently arisen states.

“In regard to the ear and sounds that are presently arisen...the nose and odors...the tongue and flavors...the body and tangibles...the mind and mind-objects that are presently arisen, one’s consciousness is bound up with desire and lust for that which is presently arisen. Because one’s consciousness is bound up with desire and lust, one delights in that. When one delights in that, one is vanquished in regard to presently arisen states. That is how one is vanquished in regard to presently arisen states.

18. “How is one invincible in regard to presently arisen states? In regard to the eye and forms that are presently arisen, one’s consciousness is not bound up with desire and lust for that which is presently arisen. Because one’s consciousness is not bound up with desire and lust, one does not delight in that. When one does not delight in that, one is invincible in regard to presently arisen states.

“In regard to the ear and sounds that are presently arisen...the nose and odors...the tongue and flavors...the body and tangibles...the mind and mind-objects that are presently arisen, one’s consciousness is not bound up with desire and lust for that which is presently arisen. Because one’s consciousness is not bound up with desire and lust, one does not delight in that. When one does not delight in that, one is invincible in regard to presently arisen states. That is how one is invincible in regard to presently arisen states.

19. “Friends, when the Blessed One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling after giving a summary in brief without expounding the detailed meaning, that is:

‘Let not a person revive the past...

Who has had a single excellent night,’

I understand the detailed meaning of this summary to be thus. Now, friends, if you wish, go to the Blessed One and ask him about the meaning of this. As the Blessed One explains it to you, so you should remember it.”

20. Then the bhikkhus, having delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Mahā Kaccāna’s words, rose from their seats and went to the Blessed One. After paying homage to him, they sat down at one side and told the Blessed One all that had taken place after he had left, adding: “Then, venerable sir, we went to the venerable Mahā Kaccāna and asked him about the meaning. The venerable Mahā Kaccāna expounded the meaning to us with these terms, statements, and phrases.”

21. “Mahā Kaccāna is wise, bhikkhus, Mahā Kaccāna has great wisdom. If you had asked me the meaning of this, I would have explained it to you in the same way that Mahā Kaccāna has explained it. Such is its meaning, and so you should remember it.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi
Contributed by Chris Burke