

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was wandering in the Kuru country with a large Sangha of bhikkhus, and eventually he arrived at a Kuru town named Thullakoṇṇhita.

2. The brahmin householders of Thullakoṇṇhita heard: “The recluse Gotama, the son of the Sakyans who went forth from a Sakyan clan, has been wandering in the Kuru country with a large Sangha of bhikkhus and has come to Thullakoṇṇhita. Now a good report of Master Gotama has been spread to this effect: ‘That Blessed One is accomplished, fully enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, enlightened, blessed. He declares this world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its princes and its people, which he has himself realized with direct knowledge. He teaches the Dhamma good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, with the right meaning and phrasing, and he reveals a holy life that is utterly perfect and pure.’ Now it is good to see such arahants.”

3. Then the brahmin householders of Thullakoṇṇhita went to the Blessed One. Some paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side; some exchanged greetings with him, and when this courteous and amiable talk was finished, sat down at one side; some extended their hands in reverential salutation towards the Blessed One and sat down at one side; some pronounced their name and clan in the Blessed One’s presence and sat down at one side; some kept silent and sat down at one side. When they were seated, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, and gladdened them with talk on the Dhamma.

4. Now at that time a clansman named Raṅgahapāla, the son of the leading clan in that same Thullakoṇṇhita, was sitting in the assembly. Then it occurred to him: “As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is not easy while living in a home to lead the holy life, utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness.”

5. Then the brahmin householders of Thullakoṇṇhita, having been instructed, urged, roused, and gladdened by the Blessed One with talk on the Dhamma, delighted and rejoiced in his words. They then rose from their seats, and after paying homage to him, they departed, keeping him on their right.

6. Soon after they had gone, the clansman Raṅgīhapāla went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, as I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is not easy while living in a home to lead the holy life, utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Venerable sir, I wish to shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness. I would receive the going forth under the Blessed One, I would receive the full admission.”

“Have you been permitted by your parents, Raṅgīhapāla, to go forth from the home life into homelessness?”

“No, venerable sir, I have not been permitted by my parents.”

“Raṅgīhapāla, Tathāgatas do not give the going forth to anyone who does not have his parents’ permission.”

“Venerable sir, I shall see to it that my parents permit me to go forth from the home life into homelessness.”

7. Then the clansman Raṅgīhapāla rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, he departed, keeping him on his right. He went to his parents and told them: “Mother and father, as I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is not easy while living in a home to lead the holy life, utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. I wish to shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness. Give me permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness.”

When he had said this, his parents replied: “Dear Raṅgīhapāla, you are our only son, dear and beloved. You have been raised in comfort, brought up in comfort; you know nothing of suffering, dear Raṅgīhapāla. Even in case of your death we would lose you unwillingly, so how could we give you our permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness while you are still living?”

For the second time...For the third time the clansman Raṅgīhapāla said to his parents: “Mother

and father...give me permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness.”

For the third time his parents replied: “Dear Raṅgīhapāla...how could we give you our permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness while you are still living?”

Then, not receiving his parents’ permission to go forth, the clansman Raṅgīhapāla lay down there on the bare floor, saying: “Right here I shall either die or receive the going forth.”

8. Then the clansman Raṅgīhapāla’s parents said to him: “Dear Raṅgīhapāla, you are our only son, dear and beloved. You have been raised in comfort, brought up in comfort; you know nothing of suffering, dear Raṅgīhapāla. Get up, dear Raṅgīhapāla, eat, drink, and amuse yourself. While eating, drinking, and amusing yourself, you can be happy enjoying sensual pleasures and making merit. We do not permit you to go forth from the home life into homelessness. Even in the case of your death we would lose you unwillingly, so how could we give you our permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness while you are still living?” When this was said, the clansman Raṅgīhapāla was silent.

For the second time...For the third time his parents said to him: “Dear Raṅgīhapāla...how could we give you our permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness while you are still living?” For the third time the clansman Raṅgīhapāla was silent.

9. Then the clansman Raṅgīhapāla’s parents went to his friends and said to them: “Dears, the clansman Raṅgīhapāla has lain down on the bare floor, having said: ‘Right here I shall either die or receive the going forth.’ Come, dears, go to the clansman Raṅgīhapāla and say to him: ‘Friend Raṅgīhapāla, you are your parents’ only son...Get up, friend Raṅgīhapāla, eat, drink, and amuse yourself...how could your parents give you their permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness while you are still living?’”

10. Then the clansman Raṅgīhapāla’s friends went to him and said: “Friend Raṅgīhapāla, you are your parents’ only son, dear and beloved. You have been raised in comfort, brought up in comfort; you know nothing of suffering, friend Raṅgīhapāla. Get up, friend Raṅgīhapāla, eat, drink, and amuse yourself. While eating, drinking, and amusing yourself, you can be happy enjoying sensual pleasures and making merit. Your parents do not permit you to go forth from the home life into homelessness. Even in the case of your death they would lose you

unwillingly, so how could they give you their permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness while you are still living?” When this was said, the clansman Raṅgīhapāla was silent.

For the second time...For the third time his friends said to him: “Dear Raṅgīhapāla...how could they give you their permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness while you are still living?” For the third time the clansman Raṅgīhapāla was silent.

11. Then the clansman Raṅgīhapāla’s friends went to his parents and said to them: “Mother and father, the clansman Raṅgīhapāla is lying down there on the bare floor having said: ‘Right here I shall either die or receive the going forth.’ Now if you do not give him your permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness, he will die there. But if you give him your permission, you will see him after he has gone forth. And if he does not enjoy the going forth, what else can he do then but return here? So give him your permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“Then, dears, we give the clansman Raṅgīhapāla permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness. But when he has gone forth, he must visit his parents.”

“Then the clansman Raṅgīhapāla’s friends went to him and told him: “Get up, friend Raṅgīhapāla. Your parents permit you to go forth from the home life into homelessness. But when you have gone forth, you must visit your parents.”

12. The clansman Raṅgīhapāla then got up, and when he had regained his strength, he went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and told him: “Venerable sir, I have my parents’ permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness. Let the Blessed One give me the going forth.” Then the clansman Raṅgīhapāla received the going forth under the Blessed One, and he received the full admission.

13. Then not long after the venerable Raṅgīhapāla had received the full admission, a half-month after he had received the full admission, the Blessed One, having stayed at Thullakoṭṭhita as long as he chose, set out to wander towards Sāvattṥī. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Sāvattṥī, and there he lived at Sāvattṥī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇṇika’s Park.

14. Before long, dwelling alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and resolute, the venerable Raṭṭhapāla, by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, here and now entered upon and abided in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness. He directly knew: “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.” And the venerable Raṭṭhapāla became one of the arahants.

15. Then the venerable Raṭṭhapāla went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and told him: “Venerable sir, I wish to visit my parents, if I have the Blessed One’s permission.”

Then the Blessed One penetrated mentally the thoughts in venerable Raṭṭhapāla’s mind. When he knew that the clansman Raṭṭhapāla was incapable of abandoning the training and returning to the low life, he told him: “You may go, Raṭṭhapāla, at your own convenience.”

16. Then the venerable Raṭṭhapāla rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, he departed, keeping him on his right. He then set his resting place in order, and taking his bowl and outer robe, set out to wander towards Thullakoṭṭhita. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Thullakoṭṭhita. There he lived in Thullakoṭṭhita in King Koravya’s Migācīra Garden. Then, when it was morning, he dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went into Thullakoṭṭhita for alms. As he was wandering for alms from house to house in Thullakoṭṭhita, he came to his own father’s house.

17. Now on that occasion the venerable Raṭṭhapāla’s father was sitting in the hall of the central door having his hair dressed. When he saw the venerable Raṭṭhapāla coming in the distance, he said: “Our only son, dear and beloved, was made to go forth by these bald-pated recluses.” Then at his own father’s house the venerable Raṭṭhapāla received neither alms nor a polite refusal; instead, he received only abuse.

18. Just then a slavewoman belonging to one of his relatives was about to throw away some old porridge. Seeing this, the venerable Raṭṭhapāla said to her: “Sister, if that stuff is to be thrown away, then pour it into my bowl here.”

While she was doing so, she recognized the characteristic features of his hands, his feet, and his voice. Then she went to his mother and said: “Please know, my lady, that my lord’s son Raṅgīhapāla has arrived.”

“Gracious! If what you say is true, you are no longer a slave!”

Then the venerable Raṅgīhapāla’s mother went to his father and said: “Please know, householder, they say that the clansman Raṅgīhapāla has arrived.”

19. Just then the venerable Raṅgīhapāla was eating the old porridge by the wall of a certain shelter. His father went to him and said: “Raṅgīhapāla, my dear, surely there is...and you will be eating old porridge! Is there not your own house to go to?”

“How could we have a house, householder, when we have gone forth from the home life into homelessness? We are homeless, householder. We went to your house, but we received neither alms nor a polite refusal there; instead we received only abuse.”

“Come, dear Raṅgīhapāla, let us go to the house.”

“Enough, householder, my meal for today is finished.”

“Then, dear Raṅgīhapāla, consent to accept tomorrow’s meal.” The venerable Raṅgīhapāla consented in silence.

20. Then, knowing that the venerable Raṅgīhapāla had consented, his father went back to his own house where he had gold coins and bullion made into a large heap and covered it with mats. Then he told the venerable Raṅgīhapāla’s former wives: “Come, daughters-in-law, adorn yourselves with ornaments in the way Raṅgīhapāla found you most dear and loveable.”

21. When night had ended, the venerable Raṣṣhapāla's father had good food of various kinds prepared in his own house and had the time announced to the venerable Raṣṣhapāla: "It is time, dear Raṣṣhapāla, the meal is ready."

22. Then, it being morning, the venerable Raṣṣhapāla dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, he went to his own father's house and sat down on the seat made ready. Then his father had the pile of gold coins and bullion uncovered and said: "Dear Raṣṣhapāla, this is your maternal fortune; your paternal fortune is another and your ancestral fortune is yet another. Dear Raṣṣhapāla, you can enjoy the wealth and make merit. Come then, dear, abandon the training and return to the low life, enjoy the wealth and make merit."

"Householder, if you would follow my advice, then have this pile of gold coins and bullion loaded on carts and carried away to be dumped midstream in the river Ganges. Why is that? Because, householder, on account of this there will arise for you sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair."

23. Then the venerable Raṣṣhapāla's former wives clasped his feet and said to him: "What are they like, my lord's son, the nymphs for whose sake you lead the holy life?"

"We do not lead the holy life for the sake of nymphs, sisters."

"Our lord's son Raṣṣhapāla calls us 'sisters,'" they cried and right there they fainted.

24. Then the venerable Raṣṣhapāla told his father: "Householder, if there is a meal to be given, then give it. Do not harass us."

"Eat then, dear Raṣṣhapāla, the meal is ready."

Then, with his own hands, the venerable Raṣṣhapāla's father served and satisfied him with the various kinds of good food. When the venerable Raṣṣhapāla had eaten and had put his bowl

aside, he stood up and uttered these stanzas:

25. “Behold a puppet here pranked out,

A body built up out of sores,

Sick, an object for concern,

Where no stability abides.

Behold a figure here pranked out

With jewelry and earrings too,

A skeleton wrapped up in skin,

Made attractive by its clothes.

Its feet adorned with henna dye

And powder smeared upon its face:

It may beguile a fool, but not



A seeker of the further shore.

Its hair is dressed in eightfold plaits

And unguent smeared upon its eyes:

It may beguile a fool, but not

A seeker of the further shore.

A filthy body well adorned

Like a new-painted unguent pot:

It may beguile a fool, but not

A seeker of the further shore.

The deer-hunter set out the snare

But the deer did not spring the trap;

We ate the bait and now depart

Leaving the hunters to lament.”

26. After the venerable Raṁhapāla had stood up and uttered these stanzas, he went to King Koravya’s Migācīra Garden and sat down at the root of a tree for the day’s abiding.

27. Then King Koravya addressed his gamekeeper thus: “Good gamekeeper, tidy up the Migācīra Garden so that we may go to the pleasure garden to see a pleasing spot.” “Yes, sire,” he replied. Now while he was tidying up the Migācīra Garden, the gamekeeper saw the venerable Raṁhapāla seated at the root of a tree for the day’s abiding. When he saw him, he went to King Koravya and told him: “Sire, the Migācīra Garden has been tidied up. The clansman Raṁhapāla is there, the son of the leading clan in this same Thullakoṇṇhita, of whom you have always spoken highly; he is seated at the root of a tree for the day’s abiding.”

“Then, good gamekeeper, enough of the pleasure garden for today. Now we shall go to pay respects to that Master Raṁhapāla.”

28. Then, saying: “Give away all the food that has been prepared there,” King Koravya had a number of state carriages prepared, and mounting one of them, accompanied by the other carriages, he drove out from Thullakoṇṇhita with the full pomp of royalty to see the venerable Raṁhapāla. He drove thus as far as the road was passable for carriages, and then he dismounted from his carriage and went forward on foot with a following of the most eminent officials to where the venerable Raṁhapāla was. He exchanged greetings with the venerable Raṁhapāla, and when this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he stood at one side and said: “Here is an elephant rug. Let Master Raṁhapāla be seated on it.”

“There is no need, great king. Sit down. I am sitting on my own mat.”

King Koravya sat down on a seat made ready and said:

29. “Master Raṁhapāla, there are four kinds of loss. Because they have undergone these four kinds of loss, some people here shave off their hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness. What are the four? They are loss through ageing, loss through sickness, loss of wealth, and loss of relatives.

30. “And what is loss through ageing? Here, Master Raṁhapāla, someone is old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, come to the last stage. He considers thus: ‘I am old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, come to the last stage. It is no longer easy for me to acquire unacquired wealth or to augment wealth already acquired. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness.’ Because he has undergone that loss through ageing, he shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the yellow robe, and goes forth from the home life into homelessness. This is called loss through ageing. But Master Raṁhapāla has not undergone any loss through ageing. What has he known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?

31. “And what is loss through sickness? Here, Master Raṁhapāla, someone is afflicted, suffering, and gravely ill. He considers thus: ‘I am afflicted, suffering, and gravely ill. It is no longer easy for me to acquire unacquired wealth...into homelessness.’ Because he has undergone that loss through sickness...he goes forth from the home life into homelessness. This is called loss through sickness. But Master Raṁhapāla has not undergone any loss through sickness. What has he known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?

32. “And what is loss of wealth? Here, Master Raṁhapāla, someone is rich, of great wealth, of great possessions. Gradually his wealth dwindles away. He considers thus: ‘Formerly I was rich, of great wealth, of great possessions. Gradually my wealth has dwindled away. It is no longer easy for me to acquire unacquired wealth...into homelessness.’ Because he has undergone that loss of wealth...he goes forth from the home life into homelessness. This is called loss of wealth. But Master Raṁhapāla is the son of the leading clan in this same Thullakoṇṇhita. Master Raṁhapāla has not undergone any loss of wealth. What has he known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?

33. “And what is loss of relatives? Here, Master Raṁhapāla, someone has many friends and companions, kinsmen and relatives. Gradually those relatives of his dwindle away. He considers thus: ‘Formerly I had many friends and companions, kinsmen and relatives. Gradually those relatives of mine have dwindled away. It is no longer easy for me to acquire unacquired wealth...into homelessness.’ Because he has undergone that loss of relatives...he goes forth from the home life into homelessness. This is called loss of relatives. But Master Raṁhapāla

has many friends and companions, kinsmen and relatives, in this same Thullakoṭṭhita. Master Raṭṭhapāla has not undergone any loss of relatives. What has he known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?

34. “Master Raṭṭhapāla, these are the four kinds of loss. Because they have undergone these four kinds of loss, some people here shave off their hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness. Master Raṭṭhapāla has not undergone any of these. What has he known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?”

35. “Great king, there are four summaries of the Dhamma that have been taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness. What are the four?

36. (1) “[Life in] any world is unstable, it is swept away’: this is the first summary of the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.

(2) “[Life in] any world has no shelter and no protector’: this is the second summary of the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees...

(3) “[Life in] any world has nothing of its own; one has to leave all and pass on’: this is the third summary of the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees...

(4) “[Life in] any world is incomplete, insatiate, the slave of craving’: this is the fourth summary of the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees...

37. “Great king, these are the four summaries of the Dhamma that have been taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

38. “Master Raṭṭhapāla said: ‘[Life in] any world is unstable, it is swept away.’ How should the meaning of that statement be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? When you were twenty or twenty-five years old, were you an expert rider of elephants, an expert horseman, an expert charioteer, an expert archer, an expert swordsman, strong in thighs and arms, sturdy, capable in battle?”

“When I was twenty or twenty-five years old, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I was an expert rider of elephants...strong in thighs and arms, sturdy, capable in battle. Sometimes I wonder if I had supernormal power then. I do not see anyone who could equal me in strength.”

“What do you think, great king? Are you now as strong in thighs and arms, as sturdy and as capable in battle?”

“No, Master Raṭṭhapāla. Now I am old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, come to the last stage; my years have turned eighty. Sometimes I mean to put my foot here and I put my foot somewhere else.”

“Great king, it was on account of this that the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened, said: ‘[Life in] any world is unstable, it is swept away’; and when I knew and saw and heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“It is wonderful, Master Raṭṭhapāla, it is marvellous how well that has been expressed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened: ‘[Life in] any world is unstable, it is swept away.’ It is indeed so!

39. “Master Raṭṭhapāla, there exist in this court elephant troops and cavalry and chariot troops and infantry, which will serve to subdue any threats to us. Now Master Raṭṭhapāla said: ‘[Life in] any world has no shelter and no protector.’ How should the meaning of that statement be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? Do you have any chronic ailment?”

“I have a chronic wind ailment, Master Raṭṭhapāla. Sometimes my friends and companions, kinsmen and relatives, stand around me, thinking: ‘Now King Koravya is about to die, now King Koravya is about to die!’”

“What do you think, great king? Can you command your friends and companions, your kinsmen and relatives: ‘Come, my good friends and companions, my kinsmen and relatives. All of you present share this painful feeling so that I may feel less pain’? Or do you have to feel that pain yourself alone?”

“I cannot command my friends and companions, my kinsmen and relatives thus, Master Raṭṭhapāla. I have to feel that pain alone.”

“Great king, it was on account of this that the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened, said: ‘[Life in] any world has no shelter and no protector’; and when I knew and saw and heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“It is wonderful, Master Raṭṭhapāla, it is marvellous how well that has been expressed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened: ‘[Life in] any world has no shelter and no protector.’ It is indeed so!

40. “Master Raṭṭhapāla, there exist in this court abundant gold coins and bullion stored away in vaults and depositories. Now Master Raṭṭhapāla said: ‘[Life in] any world has nothing of its own; one has to leave all and pass on.’ How should the meaning of that statement be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? You now enjoy yourself provided and endowed with the five cords of sensual pleasure, but will you be able to have it of the life to come: ‘Let me likewise enjoy myself provided and endowed with these same five cords of sensual pleasure’? Or will others take over this property, while you will have to pass on according to your actions?”

“I cannot have it thus of the life to come, Master Raṁhapāla. On the contrary, others will take over this property while I shall have to pass on according to my actions.”

“Great king, it was on account of this that the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened, said: ‘[Life in] any world has nothing of its own; one has to leave all and pass on’; and when I knew and saw and heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“It is wonderful, Master Raṁhapāla, it is marvellous how well that has been expressed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened: ‘[Life in] any world has nothing of its own; one has to leave all and pass on.’ It is indeed so!

41. “Now Master Raṁhapāla said: ‘[Life in] any world is incomplete, insatiate, the slave of craving.’ How should the meaning of that statement be understood?”

“What do you think, great king? Do you reign over the rich Kuru country?”

“Yes, Master Raṁhapāla, I do.”

“What do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy and reliable man came to you from the east and said: ‘Please know, great king, that I have come from the east, and there I saw a large country, powerful and rich, very populous and crowded with people. There are plenty of elephant troops there, plenty of cavalry, chariot troops and infantry; there is plenty of ivory there, and plenty of gold coins and bullion both unworked and worked, and plenty of women for wives. With your present forces you can conquer it. Conquer it then, great king.’ What would you do?”

“We would conquer it too and reign over it, Master Raṁhapāla.”

“Great king, it was on account of this that the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened, said: ‘[Life in] any world is incomplete, insatiate, the slave of craving’; and when I knew and saw and heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“It is wonderful, Master Raṭṭhapāla, it is marvellous how well that has been expressed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened: ‘[Life in] any world is incomplete, insatiate, the slave of craving.’ It is indeed so!

42. That is what the venerable Raṭṭhapāla said. And having said that he said further:

“I see men wealthy in the world, who yet

From ignorance give not their gathered wealth.

Greedily they hoard away their riches

Longing still for further sensual pleasures.

A king who has conquered the earth by force

And rules over the land the ocean bounds

Is yet unsated with the sea’s near shore

And hungers for its further shore as well.



Most other people too, not just a king,

Encounter death with craving unabated;

[With plans] still incomplete they leave the corpse;

Desires remain unsated in the world.

His relatives lament and rend their hair,

Crying, 'Ah me! Alas! Our love is dead!'

They bear away the body wrapped in shrouds

To place it on a pyre and burn it there.

Clad in a shroud, he leaves his wealth behind,

Prodded with stakes he burns [upon the pyre].

And as he dies, no relatives or friends

Can offer him shelter and refuge here.

While his heirs take over his wealth, this being

Must pass on according to his actions;

And as he dies nothing can follow him;

Not child nor wife nor wealth nor royal estate.

Longevity is not acquired with wealth

Nor can prosperity banish old age;

Short is this life, as all the sages say,

Eternity it knows not, only change.

The rich and poor alike shall feel [Death's] touch,

The fool and sage as well shall feel it too;

But while the fool lies stricken by his folly,

No sage will ever tremble at the touch.

Better is wisdom here than any wealth,

Since by wisdom one gains the final goal.

For people through ignorance do evil deeds

While failing to reach the goal from life to life.

As one goes to the womb and the next world,

Renewing the successive round of births,

Another of little wisdom, trusting him,

Goes also to the womb and the next world.

Just as a robber caught in burglary

Is made to suffer for his evil deed,

So people after death, in the next world,

Are made to suffer for their evil deeds.

Sensual pleasures, varied, sweet, delightful,

In many different ways disturb the mind:

Seeing the danger in these sensual ties

I chose to lead the homeless life, O King.

As fruits fall from the tree, so people too,

Both young and old, fall when this body breaks.

Seeing this too, O King, I have gone forth:

Better is the recluse's life assured."

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Majjhima Nikāya 82

Part Two – The Middle Fifty Discourses (Majjhimaṇṇa āsapaṇṇi)

The Division on Kings (Rājavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

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