

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Ujuññā, in the Kaṁ akatthala Deer Park.

2. Now on that occasion King Pasenadi of Kosala had arrived at Ujuññā for some business or other. Then he told a man: “Come, good man, go to the Blessed One and pay homage in my name with your head at his feet, and ask whether he is free from illness and affliction, and is healthy, strong, and abiding in comfort, saying: ‘Venerable sir, King Pasenadi of Kosala pays homage with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, and he asks whether the Blessed One is free from illness...and abiding in comfort.’ And say this: ‘Venerable sir, today King Pasenadi of Kosala will come to see the Blessed One after he has had his breakfast.’”

“Yes, sire,” the man replied, and he went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and delivered his message.

3. The sisters Somā and Sakulā heard: “Today King Pasenadi of Kosala will go to see the Blessed One after he has had his breakfast.”

Then, while the meal was being served, the two sisters went to the king and said: “Sire, pay homage in our name with your head at the Blessed One’s feet, and ask whether he is free from illness...and abiding in comfort, saying: ‘Venerable sir, the sisters Somā and Sakulā pay homage with their heads at the Blessed One’s feet, and they ask whether he is free from illness...and abiding in comfort.’”

4. Then, when he had finished his breakfast, King Pasenadi of Kosala went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and delivered the message of the sisters Somā and Sakulā.

“But, great king, could the sisters Somā and Sakulā find no other messenger?”

“Venerable sir, the sisters Somā and Sakulā heard: ‘Today King Pasenadi of Kosala will go the

see the Blessed One after he has had his breakfast.’ Then, while the meal was being served, the sisters Somā and Sakulā came to me and said: ‘Sire, pay homage in our name with your head at the Blessed One’s feet, and ask whether he is free from illness...and abiding in comfort.’”

“May the sisters Somā and Sakulā be happy, great king.”

5. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, I have heard this: ‘The recluse Gotama says: “There is no recluse or brahmin who is omniscient and all-seeing, who can claim to have complete knowledge and vision; that is not possible.”’ Venerable sir, do those who speak thus say what has been said by the Blessed One, and not misrepresent him with what is contrary to fact? Do they explain in accordance with the Dhamma in such a way that nothing that provides a ground for censure can be legitimately deduced from their assertions?”

“Great King, those who speak thus do not say what has been said by me, but misrepresent me with what is untrue and contrary to fact.”

6. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala addressed General Viṇṇabha: “General, who introduced this story into the palace?”

“It was Sañjaya, sire, the brahmin of the Ākāsa clan.”

7. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala told a man: “Come, good man, in my name tell Sañjaya, the brahmin of the Ākāsa clan: “Venerable sir, King Pasenadi of Kosala calls you.”

“Yes, sire,” the man replied. He went to Sañjaya, the brahmin of the Ākāsa clan, and told him: “Venerable sir, King Pasenadi of Kosala calls you.”

8. Meanwhile King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, could

something else have been said by the Blessed One referring to that, and the person understood it wrongly? In what way does the Blessed One recall making that utterance?"

"I recall having actually made the utterance in this way, great king: 'There is no recluse or brahmin who knows all, who sees all, simultaneously; that is not possible.'"

"What the Blessed One has said appears reasonable, what the Blessed One has said appears to be supported by reason: 'There is no recluse or brahmin who knows all, who sees all, simultaneously; that is not possible.'

9. "There are these four castes, venerable sir: the nobles, the brahmins, the merchants, and the workers. Is there any distinction or difference among them?"

"There are these four castes, great king: the nobles, the brahmins, the merchants, and the workers. Two of them, that is, the nobles and the brahmins, are held to be superior since men pay homage to them, rise up for them, and accord them reverential salutation and polite services."

10. "Venerable sir, I was not asking about this present life; I was asking about the life to come. There are these four castes, venerable sir: the nobles, the brahmins, the merchants, and the workers. Is there any distinction or difference among them?"

"Great king, there are these five factors of striving. What five? Here a bhikkhu has faith, he places his faith in the Tathāgata's enlightenment thus: 'The 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.' Then he is free from illness and affliction, possessing a good digestion that is neither too cool nor too warm but medium and able to bear the strain of striving. Then he is honest and sincere, and shows himself as he actually is to his teacher and his companions in the holy life. Then he is energetic in abandoning unwholesome states and in undertaking wholesome states, steadfast, launching his effort with firmness and persevering in cultivating wholesome states. Then he is wise; he possesses wisdom regarding rise and disappearance that is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering. These are the five factors of striving.

“There are these four castes, great king: the nobles, the brahmins, the merchants, and the workers. Now if they possessed these five factors of striving, it would lead to their welfare and happiness for a long time.”

11. “Venerable sir, there are these four castes: the nobles, the brahmins, the merchants, and the workers. Now if they possessed these five factors of striving, would there be any difference among them here in that respect?”

“Here, great king, I say that the difference among them would lie in the diversity of their striving. Suppose there were two tamable elephants or tamable horses or tamable oxen that were well tamed and well disciplined, and two tamable elephants or tamable horses or tamable oxen that were untamed and undisciplined. What do you think, great king? Would the two tamable elephants or tamable horses or tamable oxen that were well tamed and well disciplined, being tamed, acquire the behavior of the tamed, would they arrive at the grade of the tamed?”

“Yes, venerable sir.”

“And would the two tamable elephants or tamable horses or tamable oxen that were untamed and undisciplined, being untamed, acquire the behavior of the tamed, would they arrive at the grade of the tamed, like the two elephants or horses or oxen that were well tamed and well disciplined?”

“No, venerable sir.”

“So too, great king, it is not possible that what can be achieved by one who has faith, who is free from illness, who is honest and sincere, who is energetic, and who is wise, can be achieved by one who has no faith, who has much illness, who is fraudulent and deceitful, who is lazy, and who is not wise.”

12. “What the Blessed One has said appears reasonable, what the Blessed One has said

appears to be supported by reason.

“There are these four castes, venerable sir: the nobles, the brahmins, the merchants, and the workers. Now if they possessed these five factors of striving, and if their striving was right, would there be any difference among them in that respect?”

“Here, great king, in this respect I say that among them there is no difference, that is, between the deliverance of one and the deliverance of the others. Suppose a man took dry sākā wood, lit a fire, and produced heat; and then another man took dry sālā wood, lit a fire, and produced heat; and then another man took dry mango wood, lit a fire, and produced heat; and then another man took dry fig wood, lit a fire, and produced heat. What do you think, great king? Would there be any difference among these fires lit with different kinds of wood, that is, between the flame of one and the flames of the others, or between the color of one and the colors of the others, or between the radiance of one and the radiances of the others?”

“No, venerable sir.”

“So too, great king, when a fire is kindled by energy, lit by striving, there is, I say, no difference, that is, between the deliverance of one and the deliverance of the others.”

13. “What the Blessed One has said appears reasonable, what the Blessed One has said appears to be supported by reason. But, venerable sir, how is it: are there gods?”

“Why do you ask that, great king?”

“Venerable sir, I was asking whether those gods come back to this [human] state or whether they do not.”

“Great king, those gods who are still subject to affliction come back to this [human] state, those gods who are no longer subject to affliction do not come back to this [human] state.”

14. When this was said, General Viṁṁ abha asked the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, can those gods who are still subject to affliction and who come back to this [human] state topple or banish from that place those gods who are no longer subject to affliction and who do not come back to this [human] state?”

Then the venerable Ānanda thought: “This General Viṁṁ abha is the son of King Pasenadi of Kosala, and I am the son of the Blessed One. This is the time for one son to talk with the other.” He said to General Viṁṁ abha: “General, I shall ask you a question in return. Answer it as you choose. General, what do you think? There is the whole extent of King Pasenadi of Kosala’s realm, where he exercises lordship and sovereignty; now can King Pasenadi of Kosala topple or banish from that place any recluse or brahmin, irrespective of whether that recluse or brahmin has merit or not and whether he leads the holy life or not?”

“He can do so, sir.”

“What do you think, general? There is the whole extent that is not King Pasenadi of Kosala’s realm, where he does not exercise lordship and sovereignty; now can King Pasenadi of Kosala topple or banish from that place any recluse or brahmin, irrespective of whether that recluse or brahmin has merit or not and whether he leads the holy life or not?”

“He cannot do so, sir.”

“General, what do you think? Have you heard of the gods of the Thirty-three?”

“Yes, sir, I have heard of them. And King Pasenadi of Kosala has heard of them too.”

“General, what do you think? Can King Pasenadi of Kosala topple the gods of the Thirty-three or banish them from that place?”

“Sir, King Pasenadi of Kosala cannot even see the gods of the Thirty-three, so how could he topple them or banish them from that place?”

“So too, general, those gods who are still subject to affliction and who come back to this [human] state cannot even see those gods who are no longer subject to affliction and who do not come back to this [human] state; so how could they topple them or banish them from that place?”

15. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala asked the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, what is this bhikkhu’s name?”

“His name is Ānanda, great king.”

“Ānanda [joy] he is indeed, venerable sir, and Ānanda he appears. What the venerable Ānanda has said appears reasonable, what he has said appears to be supported by reason. But, venerable sir, how is it: are there Brahmās?”

“Why do you ask that, great king?”

“Venerable sir, I was asking whether those Brahmās come back to this [human] state or whether they do not.”

“Great king, any Brahmā who is still subject to affliction comes back to this [human] state, any Brahmā who is no longer subject to affliction does not come back to this [human] state.”

16. Then a man announced to King Pasenadi of Kosala: “Great king, Sañjaya, the brahmin of the Ākāsa clan, has come.”

King Pasenadi of Kosala asked Sañjaya, the brahmin of the Ākāsa clan: “Brahmin, who introduced this story to the palace?”

“Sire, it was General Viṁṁ abha.”

General Viṁṁ abha said: “Sire, it was Sañjaya, the brahmin of the Ākāsa clan.”

17. Then a man announced to King Pasenadi of Kosala: “Sire, it is time to depart.”

King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, we have asked the Blessed One about omniscience, and the Blessed One has answered about omniscience; we approve of and accept that answer, and so we are satisfied. We have asked the Blessed One about purification in the four castes, and the Blessed One has answered about purification in the four castes; we approve of and accept that answer, and so we are satisfied. We have asked the Blessed One about the gods, and the Blessed One has answered about the gods; we approve of and accept that answer, and so we are satisfied. We have asked the Blessed One about the Brahmās, and the Blessed One has answered about the Brahmās; we approve of and accept that answer, and so we are satisfied. Whatever we asked the Blessed One, that the Blessed One has answered; we approve of and accept those answers, and so we are satisfied. And now, venerable sir, we depart. We are busy and have much to do.”

“You may go, great king, at your own convenience.”

18. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s words, rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, keeping him on his right, he departed.

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi
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