DN 5 — With Kūṭadanta

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Text

Long Discourses 5

With Kūṭadanta

1. The Brahmins and Householders of Khāṇumata

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was wandering in the land of the Magadhans together with a large Saṅgha of five hundred mendicants when he arrived at a village of the Magadhan brahmins named Khāṇumata. There he stayed nearby at Ambalaṭṭhikā.

Now at that time the brahmin Kūṭadanta was living in Khāṇumata. It was a crown property given by King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha, teeming with living creatures, full of hay, wood, water, and grain, a royal park endowed to a brahmin. Now at that time Kūṭadanta had prepared a great sacrifice. Bulls, bullocks, heifers, goats and rams—seven hundred of each—had been led to the post for the sacrifice.

The brahmins and householders of Khāṇumata heard:

“It seems the ascetic Gotama—a Sakyan, gone forth from a Sakyan family—has arrived at Khāṇumata and is staying at Ambalaṭṭhikā. He has this good reputation: ‘That Blessed One is perfected, a fully awakened Buddha, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, holy, knower of the world, supreme guide for those fit for training, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’ He has realized with his own insight this world—with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, gods and humans—and he makes it known to others. He teaches Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And he reveals a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. It’s good to see such perfected ones.”

Then, exiting Khāṇumata, they formed into companies and headed to Ambalaṭṭhikā.

Now at that time the brahmin Kūṭadanta had retired to the upper floor of his stilt longhouse for his midday nap. He saw the brahmins and householders heading for Ambalaṭṭhikā, and addressed his butler, “My butler, why are the brahmins and householders headed for Ambalaṭṭhikā?”

“The ascetic Gotama has arrived at Khāṇumata and is staying at Ambalaṭṭhikā. He has this good reputation: ‘That Blessed One is perfected, a fully awakened Buddha, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, holy, knower of the world, supreme guide for those fit for training, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’ They’re going to see that worthy Gotama.”

Then Kūṭadanta thought, “I’ve heard that the ascetic Gotama knows how to accomplish the sacrifice with three modes and sixteen accessories. I don’t know about that, but I wish to perform a great sacrifice. Why don’t I ask him how to accomplish the sacrifice with three modes and sixteen accessories?”

Then Kūṭadanta addressed his butler, “Well then, go to the brahmins and householders and say to them: ‘Sirs, the brahmin Kūṭadanta asks you to wait, as he will also go to see the ascetic Gotama.’”

“Yes, worthy sir,” replied the butler, and did as he was asked.

2. The Qualities of Kūṭadanta

Now at that time several hundred brahmins were residing in Khāṇumata thinking to participate in Kūṭadanta’s sacrifice. They heard that Kūṭadanta was going to see the ascetic Gotama. They approached Kūṭadanta and said to him:

“Is it really true that you are going to see the ascetic Gotama?”

“Yes, worthy sir, it is true.”

“Please don’t! It’s not appropriate for you to go to see the ascetic Gotama. For if you do so, your reputation will diminish and his will increase. For this reason it’s not appropriate for you to go to see the ascetic Gotama; it’s appropriate that he comes to see you.

You are well born on both your mother’s and father’s side, stemming from a clean vessel, with irrefutable and impeccable genealogy back to the seventh paternal generation. For this reason it’s not appropriate for you to go to see the ascetic Gotama; it’s appropriate that he comes to see you.

You’re rich, affluent, and wealthy, with lots of property and assets, and lots of money and grain …

You recite and remember the hymns, and have mastered the three Vedas, together with their vocabularies and ritual performance, their phonology and word classification, and the testaments as fifth. You know them word-by-word, and their grammar. You are well versed in cosmology and the marks of a great man. …

You are attractive, good-looking, lovely, of surpassing beauty. You have divine looks and lustre, remarkable to behold. …

You are ethical, mature in ethical conduct. …

You’re a good speaker who enunciates well, with a polished, clear, and articulate voice that expresses the meaning. …

You’re the tutor of tutors for many, and teach three hundred young students to recite the hymns. Many students come from various districts and countries for the sake of the hymns, wishing to learn the hymns. …

You’re old, elderly and senior, advanced in years, and have reached the final stage of life. The ascetic Gotama is young, and has newly gone forth. …

You're honored, respected, revered, venerated, and esteemed by King Bimbisāra of Magadha …

and the brahmin Pokkharasāti. …

You live in Khāṇumata, a crown property given by King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha, teeming with living creatures, full of hay, wood, water, and grain, a royal park endowed to a brahmin. For this reason it's not appropriate for you to go to see the ascetic Gotama; it's appropriate that he comes to see you."

3. The Qualities of the Buddha

When they had spoken, Kūṭadanta said to those brahmins:

"Well then, gentlemen, listen to why it's appropriate for me to go to see the ascetic Gotama, and it's not appropriate for him to come to see me. He is well born on both his mother's and father's side, stemming from a clean vessel, with irrefutable and impeccable genealogy back to the seventh paternal generation. For this reason it's not appropriate for the ascetic Gotama to come to see me; rather, it's appropriate for me to go to see him.

When he went forth he abandoned a large family circle. …

When he went forth he abandoned abundant gold, both coined and uncoined, stored above and below ground. …

He went forth from the lay life to homelessness while still a youth, young, with pristine black hair, blessed with youth, in the prime of life. …

Though his mother and father wished otherwise, weeping with tearful faces, he shaved off his hair and beard, dressed in ocher robes, and went forth from the lay life to homelessness. …

He is attractive, good-looking, lovely, of surpassing beauty. He has divine looks and lustre, remarkable to behold. …

He is ethical, possessing ethical conduct that is noble and skillful. …

He's a good speaker who enunciates well, with a polished, clear, and articulate voice that expresses the meaning. …

He's a tutor of tutors. …

He has ended sensual desire, and is rid of caprice. …

He teaches the efficacy of deeds and action. He doesn't wish any harm upon the community of brahmins. …

He went forth from an eminent family of unbroken aristocratic lineage. …

He went forth from a rich, affluent, and wealthy family. …

People come from distant lands and distant countries to question him. …

Many thousands of deities have gone for refuge for life to him. …

He has this good reputation: ‘That Blessed One is perfected, a fully awakened Buddha, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, holy, knower of the world, supreme guide for those fit for training, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’ …

He has the thirty-two marks of a great man. …

He is welcoming, congenial, polite, smiling, open, the first to speak. …

He’s honored, respected, revered, venerated, and esteemed by the four assemblies. …

Many gods and humans are devoted to him. …

While he is residing in a village or town, non-human entities do not harass them. …

He leads an order and a community, and tutors a community, and is said to be the best of the various religious founders. He didn’t come by his fame in the same ways as those other ascetics and brahmins. Rather, he came by his fame due to his supreme knowledge and conduct. …

King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha and his wives and children have gone for refuge for life to the ascetic Gotama. …

King Pasenadi of Kosala and his wives and children have gone for refuge for life to the ascetic Gotama. …

The brahmin Pokkharasāti and his wives and children have gone for refuge for life to the ascetic Gotama. …

He’s honored, respected, revered, venerated, and esteemed by King Bimbisāra of Magadha …

King Pasenadi of Kosala …

and the brahmin Pokkharasāti.

The ascetic Gotama has arrived at Khāṇumata and is staying at Ambalaṭṭhikā. Any ascetic or brahmin who comes to stay in our village district is our guest, and should be honored and respected as such. For this reason, too, it’s not appropriate for Worthy Gotama to come to see me; rather, it’s appropriate for me to go to see him. This is the extent of the worthy Gotama’s praise that I have memorized. But his praises are not confined to this, for the praise of the worthy Gotama is limitless.”

When he had spoken, those brahmins said to him, “According to Kūṭadanta’s praises, if the worthy Gotama were staying within a hundred leagues, it’d be worthwhile for a faithful gentleman to go to see him, even if he had to carry his own provisions in a knapsack.”

“Well then, gentlemen, let’s all go to see the ascetic Gotama.”

4. The Story of King Mahāvijita’s Sacrifice

Then Kūṭadanta together with a large group of brahmins went to Ambalaṭṭhikā, approached the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side. Before sitting down to one side,

some of the brahmins and householders of Khāṇumata bowed, some exchanged greetings and polite conversation, some held up their cupped palms toward the Buddha, some announced their name and clan, while some kept silent.

Kūṭadanta said to the Buddha, “Worthy Gotama, I’ve heard that you know how to accomplish the sacrifice with three modes and sixteen accessories. I don’t know about that, but I wish to perform a great sacrifice. Please teach me how to accomplish the sacrifice with three modes and sixteen accessories.”

“Well then, brahmin, listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.”

“Yes, worthy sir,” Kūṭadanta replied. The Buddha said this: “Once upon a time, brahmin, there was a king named Mahāvijita. He was rich, affluent, and wealthy, with lots of gold and silver, lots of property and assets, lots of money and grain, and a full treasury and storehouses. Then as King Mahāvijita was in private retreat this thought came to his mind: ‘I have achieved human wealth, and reign after conquering this vast territory. Why don’t I hold a large sacrifice? That will be for my lasting welfare and happiness.’

Then he summoned the brahmin high priest and said to him: ‘Just now, brahmin, as I was in private retreat this thought came to mind, “I have achieved human wealth, and reign after conquering this vast territory. Why don’t I perform a great sacrifice? That will be for my lasting welfare and happiness.” Brahmin, I wish to perform a great sacrifice. Please instruct me. It will be for my lasting welfare and happiness.’

When he had spoken, the brahmin high priest said to him: ‘Sir, the king’s realm is harried and oppressed. Raiding of villages, towns, and cities has been seen, and infesting of highways. But if the king were to extract more taxes while his realm is thus harried and oppressed, he would not be doing his duty.

Now the king might think, “I’ll eradicate this plague of savages by execution or imprisonment or confiscation or condemnation or banishment!” But that’s not the right way to eradicate this plague of savages. Those who remain after the killing will return to harass the king’s realm.

Rather, here is a plan, relying on which the plague of savages will be properly uprooted. So let the king provide seed and fodder for those in the realm who work in growing crops and raising cattle. Let the king provide funding for those who work in trade. Let the king guarantee food and wages for those in government service. Then the people, occupied with their own work, will not harass the realm. The king’s revenues will be great. When the country is secured as a sanctuary, free of being harried and oppressed, the happy people, with joy in their hearts, dancing with children at their breast, will dwell as if their houses were wide open.’

The king agreed with the high priest’s advice and followed his recommendation.

Then the king summoned the brahmin high priest and said to him: ‘I have eradicated the plague of savages. And relying on your plan my revenue is now great. Since the country is secured as a sanctuary, free of being harried and oppressed, the happy people, with joy in their hearts, dancing with children at their breast, dwell as if their houses were wide open. Brahmin, I wish to perform a great sacrifice. Please instruct me. It will be for my lasting

welfare and happiness.’

4.1. The Four Accessories

‘In that case, let the king announce this throughout the realm to the aristocrat vassals of both town and country; the ministers and councillors of both town and country; the well-to-do brahmins of both town and country; and the well-off householders of both town and country. “I wish to perform a great sacrifice. Please grant your approval, worthy sirs; it will be for my lasting welfare and happiness.”’

The king agreed with the high priest’s advice and followed his recommendation. And all of the people who were thus informed responded by saying: ‘May the king perform a sacrifice! It is time for a sacrifice, Great King.’ And so these four consenting factions became accessories to the sacrifice.

4.2. The Eight Accessories

King Mahāvijita possessed eight factors.

He was well born on both his mother’s and father’s side, stemming from a clean vessel, with irrefutable and impeccable genealogy back to the seventh paternal generation.

He was attractive, good-looking, lovely, of surpassing beauty. He had divine looks and lustre, remarkable to behold.

He was rich, affluent, and wealthy, with lots of gold and silver, lots of property and assets, lots of money and grain, and a full treasury and storehouses.

He was powerful, having an army of four divisions that was obedient and carried out instructions. He’d probably prevail over his enemies just with his reputation.

He was faithful, generous, a donor, his door always open. He was a well-spring of support, making merit with ascetics and brahmins, for paupers, vagrants, supplicants, and beggars.

He was very learned in diverse fields of learning. He understood the meaning of diverse statements, saying: ‘This is what that statement means; that is what this statement means.’

He was astute, competent, and intelligent, able to think issues through as they bear upon the past, future, and present.

These are the eight factors that King Mahāvijita possessed. And so these eight factors also became accessories to the sacrifice.

4.3. Four More Accessories

And the brahmin high priest had four factors.

He was well born on both his mother’s and father’s side, stemming from a clean vessel, with irrefutable and impeccable genealogy back to the seventh paternal generation.

He recited and remembered the hymns, and had mastered the three Vedas, together with their vocabularies and ritual performance, their phonology and word classification, and the testaments as fifth. He knew them word-by-word, and their grammar. He was well versed

in cosmology and the marks of a great man.

He was ethical, mature in ethical conduct.

He was astute, competent, and intelligent, being the first or second to hold the sacrificial ladle.

These are the four factors that the brahmin high priest possessed. And so these four factors also became accessories to the sacrifice.

4.4. The Three Modes

Next, before the sacrifice, the brahmin high priest taught the three modes to the king. ‘Now, though the king wants to perform a great sacrifice, he might have certain regrets, thinking: “I shall lose a great fortune,” or “I am losing a great fortune,” or “I have lost a great fortune.” But the king should not harbor such regrets.’

These are the three modes that the brahmin high priest taught to the king before the sacrifice.

4.5. The Ten Respects

Next, before the sacrifice, the brahmin high priest dispelled the king’s regret regarding the recipients in ten respects:

‘There will come to the sacrifice those who kill living creatures and those who refrain from killing living creatures. As to those who kill living creatures, the outcome of that is theirs alone. But as to those who refrain from killing living creatures, it is for their sakes that the king should sacrifice, relinquish, rejoice, and gain confidence in his heart.

There will come to the sacrifice those who steal … commit sexual misconduct … lie … use backbiting … use harsh speech … talk nonsense … are covetous … have ill will … have wrong view and those who have right view. As to those who have wrong view, the outcome of that is theirs alone. But as to those who have right view, it is for their sakes that the king should sacrifice, relinquish, rejoice, and gain confidence in his heart.’

These are the ten respects in which the high priest dispelled the king’s regret regarding the recipients before the sacrifice.

4.6. The Sixteen Respects

Next, while the king was performing the great sacrifice, the brahmin high priest educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired the king’s mind in sixteen respects:

‘Now, while the king is performing the great sacrifice, someone might say, “King Mahāvijita performs a great sacrifice, but he did not announce it to the aristocrat vassals of town and country. That’s the kind of great sacrifice that this king performs.” Those who speak against the king in this way have no legitimacy. For the king did indeed announce it to the aristocrat vassals of town and country. Let the king know this as a reason to sacrifice, relinquish, rejoice, and gain confidence in his heart.

While the king is performing the great sacrifice, someone might say, “King Mahāvijita performs a great sacrifice, but he did not announce it to the aristocrat vassals; the ministers and councillors; the well-to-do brahmins; and the well-off householders. That’s the kind of great sacrifice that this king performs.” Those who speak against the king in this way have no legitimacy. For the king did indeed announce it to all these people. Let the king know this too as a reason to sacrifice, relinquish, rejoice, and gain confidence in his heart.

While the king is performing the great sacrifice, someone might say that he does not possess the eight factors. Those who speak against the king in this way have no legitimacy. For the king does indeed possess the eight factors. Let the king know this too as a reason to sacrifice, relinquish, rejoice, and gain confidence in his heart.

While the king is performing the great sacrifice, someone might say that the high priest does not possess the four factors. Those who speak against the king in this way have no legitimacy. For the high priest does indeed possess the four factors. Let the king know this too as a reason to sacrifice, relinquish, rejoice, and gain confidence in his heart.’

These are the sixteen respects in which the high priest educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired the king’s mind while he was performing the sacrifice.

And brahmin, in that sacrifice no cattle were killed, no goats or sheep were killed, and no chickens or pigs were killed. There was no slaughter of various kinds of creatures. No trees were felled for the sacrificial post. No grass was reaped to strew over the place of sacrifice. No bondservants, servants, or workers did their jobs under threat of punishment and danger, weeping with tearful faces. Those who wished to work did so, while those who did not wish to did not. They did the work they wanted to, and did not do what they didn’t want to. The sacrifice was completed with just ghee, oil, butter, curds, honey, and molasses.

Then the aristocrat vassals, ministers and councillors, well-to-do brahmins, and well-off householders came to the king bringing abundant wealth and said, ‘Your Majesty, this abundant wealth is specially for you alone; may Your Majesty accept it!’

‘There’s enough raised for me through regular taxes. Let this be for you; and here, take even more!’

When the king turned them down, they withdrew to one side to think up a plan, ‘It wouldn’t be proper for us to take this abundant wealth back to our own homes. King Mahāvijita is performing a great sacrifice. Let us make an offering as an auxiliary sacrifice.’

Then the aristocrat vassals of town and country set up gifts to the east of the sacrificial enclosure. The ministers and councillors of town and country set up gifts to the south of the sacrificial enclosure. The well-to-do brahmins of town and country set up gifts to the west of the sacrificial enclosure. The well-off householders of town and country set up gifts to the north of the sacrificial enclosure.

And brahmin, in that sacrifice too no cattle were killed, no goats were killed, and no chickens or pigs were killed. There was no slaughter of various kinds of creatures. No trees were felled for the sacrificial post. No grass was reaped to strew over the place of sacrifice. No bondservants, servants, or workers did their jobs under threat of punishment and

danger, weeping with tearful faces. Those who wished to work did so, while those who did not wish to did not. They did the work they wanted to, and did not do what they didn't want to. The sacrifice was completed with just ghee, oil, butter, curds, honey, and molasses.

And so there were four consenting factions, eight factors possessed by King Mahāvijita, four factors possessed by the high priest, and three modes. Brahmin, this is called the sacrifice accomplished with three modes and sixteen accessories."

When he said this, those brahmins made an uproar, "Hooray for such sacrifice! Hooray for the accomplishment of such sacrifice!"

But the brahmin Kūṭadanta sat in silence. So those brahmins said to him, "How can you not applaud the ascetic Gotama's fine words?"

"It's not that I don't applaud what he said. If anyone didn't applaud such fine words, their head would explode!

But, gentlemen, it occurs to me that the ascetic Gotama does not say: 'So I have heard' or 'It ought to be like this.' Rather, he just says: 'So it was then, this is how it was then.'

It occurs to me that the ascetic Gotama at that time must have been King Mahāvijita, the owner of the sacrifice, or else the brahmin high priest who facilitated the sacrifice for him.

Does the worthy Gotama recall having performed such a sacrifice, or having facilitated it, and then, when his body broke up, after death, being reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm?"

"I do recall that, brahmin. For I myself was the brahmin high priest at that time who facilitated the sacrifice."

5. A Regular Gift as a Propitious Sacrifice.

"But Worthy Gotama, apart from that sacrifice accomplished with three modes and sixteen accessories, is there any other sacrifice that has fewer obligations and undertakings, yet is more fruitful and beneficial?"

"There is, brahmin."

"But what is it?"

"The regular gifts as propitious sacrifice given specially to ethical renunciates; this sacrifice, brahmin, has fewer obligations and undertakings, yet is more fruitful and beneficial."

"What is the cause, Worthy Gotama, what is the reason why those regular gifts as propitious sacrifice have fewer obligations and undertakings, yet are more fruitful and beneficial, compared with the sacrifice accomplished with three modes and sixteen accessories?"

"Because neither perfected ones nor those who are on the path to perfection will attend such a sacrifice. Why is that? Because beatings and throttlings are seen there.

But the regular gifts as propitious sacrifice given specially to ethical renunciates; perfected ones and those who are on the path to perfection will attend such a sacrifice. Why is that?

Because no beatings and throttlings are seen there.

This is the cause, brahmin, this is the reason why those regular gifts as propitious sacrifice have fewer obligations and undertakings, yet are more fruitful and beneficial, compared with the sacrifice accomplished with three modes and sixteen accessories."

"But Worthy Gotama, apart from that sacrifice accomplished with three modes and sixteen accessories and those regular gifts as propitious sacrifice, is there any other sacrifice that has fewer obligations and undertakings, yet is more fruitful and beneficial?"

"There is, brahmin."

"But what is it?"

"When someone gives a dwelling specially for the Saṅgha of the four quarters."

"But is there any other sacrifice that has fewer obligations and undertakings, yet is more fruitful and beneficial?"

"When someone with confident heart goes for refuge to the Buddha, the teaching, and the Saṅgha."

"But is there any other sacrifice that has fewer obligations and undertakings, yet is more fruitful and beneficial?"

"When someone with a confident heart undertakes the training rules to refrain from killing living creatures, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxicants of beer, wine, and liquor."

"But is there any other sacrifice that has fewer obligations and undertakings, yet is more fruitful and beneficial?"

"There is, brahmin.

It's when a Realized One arises in the world, perfected, a fully awakened Buddha … That's how a mendicant is accomplished in ethics. … They enter and remain in the first absorption … This sacrifice has fewer obligations and undertakings than the former, yet is more fruitful and beneficial. …

They enter and remain in the second absorption … third absorption … fourth absorption. This sacrifice has fewer obligations and undertakings than the former, yet is more fruitful and beneficial. …

They project and extend the mind toward knowledge and vision … This sacrifice has fewer obligations and undertakings than the former, yet is more fruitful and beneficial.

They understand: '… there is nothing further for this place.' This sacrifice has fewer obligations and undertakings than the former, yet is more fruitful and beneficial. And, brahmin, there is no other accomplishment of sacrifice which is better and finer than this."

6. Kūṭadanta Declares Himself a Lay Follower

When he had spoken, Kūṭadanta said to the Buddha, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what’s there, worthy Gotama has made the Teaching clear in many ways. I go for refuge to the worthy Gotama, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.

And these bulls, bullocks, heifers, goats, and rams—seven hundred of each—I release them, I grant them life! Let them eat green grass and drink cool water, and may a cool breeze blow upon them!”

7. The Realization of the Fruit of Stream-Entry

Then the Buddha taught Kūṭadanta step by step, with a talk on giving, ethical conduct, and heaven. He revealed the drawbacks of sensual pleasures, so sordid and corrupt, and the benefit of renunciation. And when he knew that Kūṭadanta’s mind was ready, pliable, rid of hindrances, elated, and confident he revealed the special teaching of the Buddhas: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path. Just as a clean cloth rid of stains would properly absorb dye, in that very seat the stainless, immaculate vision of the Dhamma arose in the brahmin Kūṭadanta: “Everything that is liable to arise is liable to cease.”

Then Kūṭadanta saw, attained, understood, and fathomed the Dhamma. He went beyond doubt, got rid of indecision, and became self-assured and independent of others regarding the Teacher’s instructions. He said to the Buddha, “Would the worthy Gotama together with the mendicant Saṅgha please accept tomorrow’s meal from me?” The Buddha consented with silence.

Then, knowing that the Buddha had consented, Kūṭadanta rose from his seat, bowed, and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before leaving. And when the night had passed Kūṭadanta had delicious fresh and cooked foods prepared in his own sacrificial enclosure. Then he had the Buddha informed of the time, saying, “It’s time, worthy Gotama, the meal is ready.”

Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, went to the sacrificial enclosure of Kūṭadanta together with the mendicant Saṅgha, where he sat down on the seat spread out.

Then Kūṭadanta served and satisfied the mendicant Saṅgha headed by the Buddha with his own hands with delicious fresh and cooked foods. When the Buddha had eaten and washed his hand and bowl, Kūṭadanta took a low seat and sat to one side. Then the Buddha educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired him with a Dhamma talk, after which he rose from his seat and left.