Thag 16.6 — Sela

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Text

Verses of the Senior Monks 16.6

The Book of the Twenties

Chapter One

Sela

“O Blessed One, your body’s perfect,

you’re radiant, handsome, lovely to behold;

golden colored,

with teeth so white; you’re strong.

The characteristics

of a handsome man,

the marks of a great man,

are all found on your body.

Your eyes are clear, your face is fair,

you’re formidable, upright, majestic.

In the midst of the Saṅgha of ascetics,

you dazzle like the sun.

You’re a mendicant fine to see,

with skin that shines like lustrous gold.

But with such excellent appearance,

what do you want with the ascetic life?

You’re fit to be a king,

a wheel-turning monarch, chief of charioteers,

victorious in the four quarters,

lord of the Black Plum Tree Land.
Aristocrats, nobles, and kings
ought follow your rule.
Gotama, may you reign
as king of kings, lord of mankind!”
“I am a king, Sela”,
said the Buddha to Sela,
“the supreme king of the teaching.
By the teaching I roll forth the wheel
which cannot be rolled back.”
“You claim to be awakened,”
said Sela the brahmin,
“the supreme king of the teaching.
‘I roll forth the teaching’:
so you say, Gotama.
Then who is your general,
the disciple who follows the Teacher’s way?
Who keeps rolling the wheel
of the teaching you rolled forth?”
“By me the wheel was rolled forth,”
said the Buddha,
“the supreme wheel of the teaching.
Sāriputta, taking after the Realized One,
keeps it rolling on.
I have known what should be known,
and developed what should be developed,
and given up what should be given up:
and so, brahmin, I am a Buddha.
Dispel your doubt in me—

make up your mind, brahmin!
The sight of a Buddha
is hard to find again.
I am a Buddha, brahmin,
the supreme surgeon,
one of those whose appearance in the world
is hard to find again.
A manifestation of divinity, unequaled,
crusher of Māra's army;
having subdued all my opponents,
I rejoice, fearing nothing from any quarter."
"Pay heed, sirs, to what
is spoken by the Clear-eyed One.
The surgeon, the great hero,
roars like a lion in the jungle.
A manifestation of divinity, unequaled,
crusher of Māra's army;
who would not be inspired by him,
even one born in a dark class?
Those who wish may follow me;
those who don't may go.
Right here, I'll go forth in his presence,
the one of such outstanding wisdom."
"Sir, if you endorse
the teaching of the Buddha,
we'll also go forth in his presence,
the one of such outstanding wisdom."
"These three hundred brahmins
with cupped palms held up, ask:

‘May we lead the spiritual life
in your presence, Blessed One?”’
“The spiritual life is well explained,”
said the Buddha,
“apparent in the present life, immediately effective.
Here the going forth isn’t in vain
for one who trains with diligence.”
“This is the eighth day since
we went for refuge, O Clear-eyed One.
In these seven days, Blessed One,
we’ve become tamed in your teaching.
You are the Buddha, you are the Teacher,
you are the sage who has overcome Māra;
you have cut off the underlying tendencies,
you’ve crossed over, and you bring humanity across.
You have transcended attachments,
your defilements are shattered;
like a lion free of grasping,
with fear and dread given up.
These three hundred mendicants
stand with cupped palms raised.
Stretch out your feet, great hero:
let these giants bow to the Teacher.”