SN 6.1 — The Appeal of the Divinity

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Text

Linked Discourses 6.1

1. The Appeal

The Appeal of the Divinity

So I have heard. At one time, when he was first awakened, the Buddha was staying in Uruvelā at the root of the goatherd's banyan tree on the bank of the Nerañjarā River.

Then as he was in private retreat this thought came to his mind, "This principle I have discovered is deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, sublime, beyond the scope of logic, subtle, comprehensible to the astute. But people like clinging, they love it and enjoy it. It's hard for them to see this topic; that is, specific conditionality, dependent origination. It's also hard for them to see this topic; that is, the stilling of all activities, the letting go of all attachments, the ending of craving, fading away, cessation, extinguishment. And if I were to teach this principle, others might not understand me, which would be wearying and troublesome for me."

And then these verses, which were neither supernaturally inspired, nor learned before in the past, occurred to the Buddha:

"I've struggled hard to realize this,

there's no need to reveal it now!

Those mired in greed and hate

can't really understand this teaching.

It goes against the stream, subtle,

deep, obscure, and very fine.

Those besotted by greed cannot see,

for they're cloaked in a mass of darkness."

And as the Buddha reflected like this, his mind inclined to remaining passive, not to teaching the Dhamma.

Then, knowing the Buddha's train of thought, it occurred to the divinity Sahampati, "Oh lord! The world will be lost, the world will perish! For the mind of the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha, inclines to remaining passive, not to teaching

the Dhamma.”

Then, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, he vanished from the realm of divinity and reappeared in front of the Buddha. He arranged his robe over one shoulder, knelt on his right knee, raised his joined palms toward the Buddha, and said:

“Sir, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma! Let the Holy One teach the Dhamma! There are beings with little dust in their eyes. They’re in decline because they haven’t heard the teaching. There will be those who understand the teaching!”

That is what the divinity Sahampati said. Then he went on to say:

“Among the Magadhans there appeared in the past

an impure teaching thought up by the stained.

Fling open the door to freedom from death!

Let them hear the teaching the immaculate one discovered.

Standing high on a rocky mountain,

you can see the people all around.

In just the same way, All-seer, so intelligent,

having ascended the Temple of Truth,

rid of sorrow, look upon the people

swamped with sorrow, overcome by rebirth and old age.

Rise, hero! Victor in battle, caravan leader,

wander the world free of debt.

Let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma!

There will be those who understand!”

Then the Buddha, understanding the Divinity’s invitation, surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha, out of his compassion for sentient beings. And the Buddha saw sentient beings with little dust in their eyes, and some with much dust in their eyes; with keen faculties and with weak faculties, with good qualities and with bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach. And some of them lived seeing the danger in the fault to do with the next world, while others did not.

It’s like a pool with blue water lilies, or pink or white lotuses. Some of them sprout and grow in the water without rising above it, thriving underwater. Some of them sprout and grow in the water reaching the water’s surface. And some of them sprout and grow in the water but rise up above the water and stand with no water clinging to them.

In the same way, the Buddha saw sentient beings with little dust in their eyes, and some with much dust in their eyes; with keen faculties and with weak faculties, with good

qualities and with bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach. And some of them lived seeing the danger in the fault to do with the next world, while others did not.

When he had seen this he replied in verse to the divinity Sahampati:

“Flung open are the doors to freedom from death!

Let those with ears to hear commit to faith.

Thinking it would be troublesome, Divinity, I did not teach

the sophisticated, sublime Dhamma among mankind.”

Then the divinity Sahampati, knowing that his request for the Buddha to teach the Dhamma had been granted, bowed and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before vanishing right there.