SN 9.14 — The Thief of Scent

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Text

Linked Discourses 9.14

1. In the Woods

The Thief of Scent

At one time one of the mendicants was staying in the land of the Kosalans in a certain forest grove.

Now at that time, after the meal, on their return from almsround, that mendicant plunged into a lotus pond and sniffed a pink lotus. The deity haunting that forest had sympathy for that mendicant, and wanted what's best for them. So they approached that mendicant wanting to stir them up, and addressed them in verse:

"This water flower has not been given.

When you sniff it,

this is one factor of theft.

Good fellow, you are a thief of scent!"

"I do not take, nor do I break;

I sniff the water flower from afar.

So how do you explain why

you call me a thief of scent?

Why don't you accuse someone

who does such vandalizing

as digging up the roots,

or breaking off the flowers?"

"I have nothing to say

to a person who is a crude vandal,

soiled like a used nappy.

You're the one who deserves to be spoken to.

To the man who has not a blemish,
who is always seeking purity,
even a hair-tip of evil
seems as big as a stormcloud.”
“Indeed, O spirit, you understand me,
and you empathize with me.
Please speak to me again,
whenever you see something like this.”
“We are no dependent of yours,
nor are we your servant.
You yourself should know, mendicant,
the way that leads to a good place.”
Impelled by that deity, that mendicant was struck with a sense of urgency.
The Linked Discourses in the Forest are complete.