SN 35.132 — With Lohicca

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Text

Linked Discourses 35.132

13. Householders

With Lohicca

At one time Venerable Mahākaccāna was staying in the land of the Avantis in a wilderness hut near Makkarakaṭa.

Then several students, pupils of the brahmin Lohicca, approached Mahākaccāna's wilderness hut while collecting firewood. They walked and wandered all around the hut, making a colossal racket and all kinds of jeers: "These shavelings, fake ascetics, primitives, black spawn from the feet of our kinsman, the Lord! They're honored, respected, revered, venerated, and esteemed by so-called inheritors of Vedic culture."

Then Mahākaccāna left his dwelling and said to those young students, "Young students, stop being so noisy. I will speak to you on the teaching."

When this was said, the young students fell silent. Then Mahākaccāna recited these verses for them:

"For the brahmins of old, ethics were the highest;

they remembered the ancient legends.

Their sense doors were guarded, well protected,

and they had mastered anger.

Those brahmins who remembered the ancient legends

enjoyed virtue and absorption.

But these have lost their way. Saying, 'We must pray',

they live out of balance, judging by clan.

Mastered by anger, they take up many arms,

indifferent to those with craving and without.

All is vain for someone who doesn't guard the sense doors,

like the wealth a person finds in a dream.

Fasting, sleeping on bare ground,

bathing at daybreak, the three Vedas,

rough hides, dreadlocks, and mud,

hymns, precepts and observances, and fervent austerities,

fawning, bent staffs,

and sipping water.

These emblems of the brahmins

are only used to generate profits.

A mind that's serene,

clear and unclouded,

kind to all creatures:

that's the path to attainment of divinity!"

Then those young students, offended and upset, went to the brahmin Lohicca and said to him, "Please, master, you should know this. The ascetic Mahākaccāna condemns and rejects outright the hymns of the brahmins!"

When they said this, Lohicca was offended and upset. Then he thought, "But it wouldn't be appropriate for me to abuse or insult the ascetic Mahākaccāna solely because of what I've heard from these young students. Why don't I go and ask him about it?"

Then the brahmin Lohicca together with those young students went to Venerable Mahākaccāna and exchanged greetings with him.

When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side and said to him, "Master Kaccāna, did several young pupils of mine come by here collecting firewood?"

"They did, brahmin."

"But did you have some discussion with them?"

"I did."

"But what kind of discussion did you have with them?"

"This is the discussion I had with these young students." And he repeated the verses in full.

"Worthy Kaccāna spoke of someone who doesn't guard the sense doors. How do you define someone who doesn't guard the sense doors?"

"Brahmin, take someone who sees a sight with their eyes. If it's pleasant they hold on to it, but if it's unpleasant they dislike it. They live with mindfulness of the body unestablished and their heart stunted. And they don't truly understand the freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom where those arisen bad, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

When they hear a sound with their ears …

When they smell an odor with their nose …

When they taste a flavor with their tongue …

When they feel a touch with their body …

When they know an idea with their mind, if it's pleasant they hold on to it, but if it's unpleasant they dislike it. They live with mindfulness of the body unestablished and their heart stunted. And they don't truly understand the freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom where those arisen bad, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

That's how someone doesn't guard the sense doors."

"It's incredible, worthy Kaccāna, it's amazing! How accurately you've explained someone whose sense doors are unguarded!

You also spoke of someone who does guard the sense doors. How do you define someone who does guard the sense doors?"

"Brahmin, take a mendicant who sees a sight with their eyes. If it's pleasant they don't hold on to it, and if it's unpleasant they don't dislike it. They live with mindfulness of the body established and a limitless heart. And they truly understand the freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom where those arisen bad, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

When they hear a sound with their ears …

When they smell an odor with their nose …

When they taste a flavor with their tongue …

When they feel a touch with their body …

When they know an idea with their mind, if it's pleasant they don't hold on to it, and if it's unpleasant they don't dislike it. They live with mindfulness of the body established and a limitless heart. And they truly understand the freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom where those arisen bad, unskillful qualities cease without remainder.

That's how someone guards the sense doors."

"It's incredible, worthy Kaccāna, it's amazing! How accurately you've explained someone whose sense doors are guarded! Excellent, worthy Kaccāna! 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, the worthy Kaccāna has made the teaching clear in many ways. I go for refuge to the Buddha, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. From this day forth, may the worthy Kaccāna remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.

Please come to my family just as you go to the families of the lay followers in Makkarakaṭa. The brahmin boys and girls there will bow to you, rise in your presence, and give you a seat and water. That will be for their lasting welfare and happiness."