AN 4.114 — A Royal Elephant

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Text

Numbered Discourses 4.114

12. With Kesi

A Royal Elephant

“Mendicants, a royal bull elephant with four factors is worthy of a king, fit to serve a king, and is reckoned a factor of kingship. What four? A royal bull elephant listens, destroys, endures, and goes fast.

And how does a royal bull elephant listen? It’s when a royal bull elephant pays attention, applies the mind, concentrates wholeheartedly, and actively listens to whatever task the elephant trainer has it do, whether or not it has done it before. That’s how a royal bull elephant listens.

And how does a royal bull elephant destroy? It’s when a royal bull elephant in battle destroys elephants with their riders, horses with their riders, chariots and charioteers, and foot soldiers. That’s how a royal bull elephant destroys.

And how does a royal bull elephant endure? It’s when a royal bull elephant in battle endures being struck by spears, swords, arrows, and axes; it endures the thunder of the drums, kettledrums, horns, and cymbals. That’s how a royal bull elephant endures.

And how does a royal bull elephant go fast? It’s when a royal bull elephant swiftly goes in whatever direction the elephant trainer sends it, whether or not it has been there before. That’s how a royal bull elephant goes fast. A royal bull elephant with four factors is worthy of a king, fit to serve a king, and is reckoned a factor of kingship.

In the same way, a mendicant with four qualities is worthy of offerings dedicated to the gods, worthy of hospitality, worthy of a religious donation, worthy of veneration with cupped palms, and is the supreme field of merit for the world. What four? A mendicant listens, destroys, endures, and goes fast.

And how does a mendicant listen? It’s when a mendicant pays attention, applies the mind, concentrates wholeheartedly, and actively listens when the teaching and training proclaimed by a Realized One is being taught. That’s how a mendicant listens.

And how does a mendicant destroy? It’s when a mendicant doesn’t tolerate a sensual, malicious, or cruel thought. They don’t tolerate any bad, unskillful qualities that have arisen, but give them up, dispel them, eliminate them, and obliterate them. That’s how a mendicant destroys.

And how does a mendicant endure? It's when a mendicant endures cold, heat, hunger, and thirst; the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and reptiles; rude and unwelcome criticism; and they put up with physical pain—sharp, severe, acute, unpleasant, disagreeable, and life-threatening. That's how a mendicant endures.

And how does a mendicant go fast? It's when a mendicant swiftly goes in the direction they've never gone before in all this long time; that is, the stilling of all activities, the letting go of all attachments, the ending of craving, fading away, cessation, extinguishment. That's how a mendicant goes fast. A mendicant with these four qualities … is the supreme field of merit for the world."