AN 4.187 — With Vassakāra

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Text

Numbered Discourses 4.187

19. Brahmins

With Vassakāra

At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.

Then Vassakāra the brahmin, a chief minister of Magadha, went up to the Buddha, and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side and said to the Buddha:

"Worthy Gotama, could an untrue person know of an untrue person: 'This worthy one is an untrue person'?"

"That's impossible, brahmin, it can't happen."

"Could an untrue person know of a true person: 'This worthy one is a true person'?"

"That too is impossible, it can't happen."

"Worthy Gotama, could a true person know of a true person: 'This worthy one is a true person'?"

"That, brahmin, is possible."

"Could a true person know of an untrue person: 'This worthy one is an untrue person'?"

"That too is possible."

"It's incredible, worthy Gotama, it's amazing, how well said this was by the worthy Gotama: 'It's impossible, it can't happen, that an untrue person could know … But it is possible that a true person could know …'

Once, members of the brahmin Todeyya's assembly were going on complaining about others: 'This King Eḷeyya is a fool to be so devoted to the ascetic Rāmaputta. He even shows him the utmost deference by bowing down to him, rising up for him, greeting him with cupped palms, and observing proper etiquette for him. And these king's men are fools too— Yamaka, Moggalla, Ugga, Nāvindakī, Gandhabba, and Aggivessa—for they show the same kind of deference to Rāmaputta.' Then the brahmin Todeyya reasoned with them like this: 'What do the good fellows think? When it comes to the various duties and speeches, isn't King Eḷeyya astute, even better than the experts?' 'That's true, worthy sir.'

‘It’s because the ascetic Rāmaputta is even more astute and expert than King Eḷeyya that the king is so devoted to him. That’s why he even shows Rāmaputta the utmost deference by bowing down to him, rising up for him, greeting him with cupped palms, and observing proper etiquette for him.

‘What do the good fellows think? When it comes to the various duties and speeches, aren’t the king’s men—Yamaka, Moggalla, Ugga, Nāvindakī, Gandhabba, and Aggivessa—astute, even better than the experts?’ ‘That’s true, worthy sir.’

‘It’s because Rāmaputta is even more astute and expert than the king’s men that they have such devotion to him. … It’s because Rāmaputta is even more astute and expert than King Eḷeyya that the king is so devoted to him. That’s why he even shows Rāmaputta the utmost deference by bowing down to him, rising up for him, greeting him with cupped palms, and observing proper etiquette for him.’

It’s incredible, worthy Gotama, it’s amazing, how well said this was by the worthy Gotama: ‘It’s impossible, it can’t happen, that an untrue person could know … But it is possible that a true person could know …’ Well, now, worthy Gotama, I must go. I have many duties, and much to do.”

“Please, brahmin, go at your convenience.”

Then Vassakāra the brahmin, having approved and agreed with what the Buddha said, rose from his seat and left.