AN 5.140 — A Listener

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Numbered Discourses 5.140

14. Kings

A Listener

“Mendicants, a royal bull elephant with five factors is worthy of a king, fit to serve a king, and is reckoned a factor of kingship. What five? A royal bull elephant listens, destroys, protects, 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 protect? It’s when a royal bull elephant in battle protects its fore-quarters and hind-quarters, its fore-feet and hind-feet, and its head, ears, tusks, trunk, tail, and rider. That’s how a royal bull elephant protects.

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 these five 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 five 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 five? A mendicant listens, destroys, protects, 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, calm them, eliminate them, and obliterate them. That's how a mendicant destroys.

And how does a mendicant protect? When a mendicant sees a sight with the eyes, they don't get caught up in the features and details. If the faculty of sight were left unrestrained, bad unskillful qualities of covetousness and displeasure would become overwhelming. For this reason, they practice restraint, protecting the faculty of sight, and achieving its restraint. Hearing a sound with their ears … Smelling an odor with their nose … Tasting a flavor with their tongue … Encountering a touch with their body … Knowing an idea with their mind, they don't get caught up in the features and details. If the faculty of mind were left unrestrained, bad unskillful qualities of covetousness and displeasure would become overwhelming. For this reason, they practice restraint, protecting the faculty of mind, and achieving its restraint. That's how a mendicant protects.

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 puts 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 five qualities … is the supreme field of merit for the world."