AN 5.196 — The Great Dreams

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Text

Numbered Discourses 5.196

20. Brahmins

The Great Dreams

“Mendicants, before his awakening five great dreams appeared to the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha, when he was still not awake but intent on awakening. What five?

This great earth was his bed. Himalaya, king of mountains, was his pillow. His left hand was laid down in the eastern sea. His right hand was laid down in the western sea. And both his feet were laid down in the southern sea. This is the first great dream that appeared to the Realized One before his awakening.

Next, a kind of grass called ‘the crosser’ grew up from his navel and stood pressing against the cloudy sky. This is the second great dream that appeared to the Realized One before his awakening.

Next, white caterpillars with black heads crawled up from his feet and covered his knees. This is the third great dream that appeared to the Realized One before his awakening.

Next, four birds of different colors came from the four quarters. They fell at his feet, turning pure white. This is the fourth great dream that appeared to the Realized One before his awakening.

Next, he walked back and forth on top of a big mountain of filth while remaining unsoiled. This is the fifth great dream that appeared to the Realized One before his awakening.

Now, as to when, before his awakening, the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha was still not awake but intent on awakening. This great earth was his bed. Himalaya, king of mountains, was his pillow. His left hand was laid down in the eastern sea. His right hand was laid down in the western sea. And both his feet were laid down in the southern sea. This was fulfilled when the Buddha awakened to the perfect awakening. This was the first great dream that appeared to him while he was still not awakened.

As to when a kind of grass called ‘the crosser’ grew up from his navel and stood pressing against the cloudy sky. This was fulfilled when, after the Buddha had awakened to the noble eightfold path, it was fully revealed among gods and humans. This was the second great dream that appeared to him while he was still not awakened.

As to when white caterpillars with black heads crawled up from his feet and covered his knees. This was fulfilled when many white-clothed laypeople went for refuge to him for life. This was the third great dream that appeared to him while he was still not awakened.

As to when four birds of different colors came from the four quarters. They fell at his feet, turning pure white. This was fulfilled when members of the four classes—aristocrats, brahmins, peasants, and menials—went forth from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One and realized supreme freedom. This was the fourth great dream that appeared to him while he was still not awakened.

As to when he walked back and forth on top of a big mountain of filth while remaining unsoiled. This was fulfilled when the Realized One received robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicines and supplies for the sick. And he used them untied, uninfatuated, unattached, seeing the drawbacks, and understanding the escape. This was the fifth great dream that appeared to him while he was still not awakened.

Before his awakening these five great dreams appeared to the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha, when he was still not awake but intent on awakening.”