AN 6.38 — One’s Own Volition

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Numbered Discourses 6.38

4. Deities

One’s Own Volition

Then a certain brahmin 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, this is my doctrine and view: One does not act of one’s own volition, nor does one act of another’s volition.”

“Brahmin, may I never see or hear of anyone holding such a doctrine or view! How on earth can someone who comes and goes on his own say that one does not act of one’s own volition, nor does one act of another’s volition?

What do you think, brahmin, is there an element of initiative?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Since this is so, do we find sentient beings who initiate activity?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Since there is an element of initiative, and sentient beings who initiate activity are found, sentient beings act of their own volition or that of another.

What do you think, brahmin, is there an element of persistence … exertion … strength … endurance … exertion?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Since this is so, do we find sentient beings who have exertion?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Since there is an element of exertion, and sentient beings who have exertion are found, sentient beings act of their own volition or that of another.

Brahmin, may I never see or hear of anyone holding such a doctrine or view! How on earth can someone who comes and goes on his own say that one does not act of one’s own volition, nor does one act of another’s volition?”

“Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! … From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.”