AN 3.56 — Paloka Sutta (Dwindled)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Source revision: ee5230c458ad6c1566f518d5909916ad92d12aebf1240750c5357dd9b5699f30

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Candana source labels: 56. Site text ID: AN 3.56.

Text

56. Paloka Sutta (Dwindled) At one time, a certain brahmin from a well-known clan approached The Blessed One, and after exchanging friendly greetings with Him, sat down to one side and said:

“Venerable Sir, I have heard this from senior brahmins, the forefathers, the teachers of teachers, that a long time ago, the world was densely populated, with no space to spare between people, with countless villages, towns, and districts.

“Venerable Sir, what is the reason for humans to have dwindled and decreased in number today, whereby now only a few seem to be left in comparison, and similarly the reduction in the number of villages, towns and districts that are far less than before?”

And The Blessed One replied, by saying:

“Brahmin, people today live unrighteously, with greed and lust everywhere, for they are bound by covetousness everywhere they turn, and are thus defeated by their wrong views, filled with anger, which is why they take up arms and sharp weapons, attacking, hurting and killing each other.

“This is the reason for the scarcity in the number of people today, brahmin, whereby the number of humans has dwindled, and only a few seem to be left in comparison, and similarly the reduction in the number of villages, towns, and districts that are far less than before.

“Furthermore, brahmin, because people today live unrighteously, with greed and lust everywhere, for they are bound by covetousness everywhere they turn, and are thus defeated by their wrong views, adequate rain does not come at the right time. As a result, there is famine, lack of food, seeds turn white, and people live on rationed food, and on account of that, many people die.

“Brahmin, this is the reason for humans to have dwindled in number, where only a few seem to be left in comparison, and similarly the reduction in the number of villages, towns, and districts that are far less than before.

“Also, brahmin, because people today live without any moral values nor virtue; with greed everywhere, being bound by covetousness and thus defeated by their wrong views, evil yakkhas, demons, and evil non-human beings are everywhere to be found, on account of which many people suffer and die.

“Brahmin, this is the reason for humans to have dwindled in number, where only a few seem to be left in comparison, and similarly the reduction in the number of villages, towns, and districts that are far less than before.”

Then, that brahmin made the following exclamation with his hands in reverential salutation, as he declared:

“Magnificent, Venerable sir! Magnificent, Venerable sir!

“The Blessed One has made The Dhamma clear to me in many ways! It is as though He turned upright what had been turned upside-down, thus revealing to me what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see.

“I go to The Blessed One for refuge, and to The Dhamma, and to The Saṅgha of Bhikkhus!

“From this day forward, may The Blessed One kindly remember me as a lay disciple of His, who has taken refuge in Him, until the end of life.”