AN 3.63 — Venāgapura Sutta (At Venāgapura)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

63. Venāgapura Sutta (At Venāgapura) At one time, while The Blessed One was touring the country of Kosala with a large group of Bhikkhus, he entered the brahmin city of Venāgapura, where soon enough, the brahmin householders of Venāgapura heard the news –

‘The good recluse Gotama, son of the Sakyan clan, having gone forth from the home life into homelessness, has now arrived at our city of Venāgapura.’

Further, they came to learn that a great report had been spread about The Blessed Gautama, to the effect that –

‘The Blessed One is an Arahant, perfectly Awakened, accomplished and endowed with true knowledge and conduct; well gone, knower of the worlds, the incomparable discipliner of those to be tamed; Teacher of Devas and humans, The Enlightened and Blessed One.

‘And having realized by himself and with direct knowledge, in this world together with its Devas and humans, Māras, Brahmās, as well as the community of recluses and brahmins, He now teaches The Dhamma that is beautiful in its beginning, beautiful in its middle, and beautiful in its end; fully presenting it with its right meaning and phrasing, while clearly revealing to all The Holy Life that is utterly perfect and pure.

‘Now, it surely is wonderful indeed, to be able to go and see such Arahants.’

Then, the brahmin householders of Venāgapura went and approached The Blessed One, where some of them paid homage to Him and then sat down to one side; others exchanged friendly greetings and sat down to one side; while still others extended their clasped hands towards The Blessed One and sat down to one side; still others sat down after having announced their name and clan, while others silently sat down to one side, without greeting The Teacher, at all.

Then, Vacchagotta of Venāgapura said to The Blessed One:

“It is quite amazing, Master Gautama! It is truly wonderful, Master Gotama! For, your mental faculties are so stunningly tranquil and bright, with your skin color that is so pure and clear, like a yellow jujube fruit in autumn, or just like a palm flower released from the husk, or better yet,

like an ornament made of pure gold that is skillfully prepared and then placed in the middle of an orange brocade by a master goldsmith.

“How good it would be, if there were high and lofty couches such as decked chairs cushioned by wild bull hide, decorated with white woolen cloth, with layers of embroidered woolen blankets, made with a mixture of wool and covered with silken embroidered coverlets; if the floor were covered with woven woolen carpets, having elephant hide as spreads, horse driven luxurious chariot spreads made of antelope and deer hide; with overhead canopies, and red cushions on either side.

“Surely, Master Gautama would be rightfully the one to gain all these and more, and without difficulty!”

And The Blessed replied by saying:

“Brahmin, these high and lofty couches you speak of are rarely gained or obtained by the ones who have gone forth, and even if they were gained, they would still remain unsuitable for the truly homeless recluse.

“But, Brahmin, there are these three high and lofty couches which I gain quickly, at will, instantly and without any difficulty. What three?

“The high and lofty couches of Divinity; the high and lofty couches of Brahmā; and the high and lofty couches of The Noble Ones.

“These, brahmin, are the three high and lofty couches, which I gain quickly, at will, instantly and without any difficulty.”

“But, Master Gautama, what exactly are the high and lofty couches of Divinity which The Blessed One gains quickly, at will, instantly and without any difficulty?

a. “Here, brahmin, in the morning, I put on My robes and by taking the alms bowl and outer robe, I go for alms into the village. After the meal, having already returned from the alms round, I walk into a grove or a wooded area. Finding a heap of grass or leaves, which I collect and then sit on with my folded legs, I keep the body straight as I establish mindfulness by reconnecting with the breath, right under the tip of the nose.

“Then, brahmin, by pulling My mind away from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states, I enter upon and dwell in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thinking and planning, with joy and pleasure that manifest when I am appropriately in seclusion.

“Further, with the stilling of thinking and planning, I enter upon and dwell in the second jhāna, which has within it self-confidence and unification of mind, but in the absence of thinking and

planning, with joy and pleasure that continue due to the deepening of My collected stability of mind (samādhi).

“Further, with the fading away of joy also, I dwell in equanimity, remaining mindful and fully aware, while still feeling pleasure through the body, as I enter upon and dwell in the third jhāna, on account of which the noble ones declare:

‘He indeed possesses a lovely demeanor; the one who has equanimity, while being mindful.’

“Furthermore, by moving beyond pleasure and pain altogether, and with the previous disappearance of joy and discontent, I enter upon and dwell in the fourth jhāna, which has neither pain nor pleasure in it, but the purity of mindfulness pervading throughout, along with continued deepening of equanimity.

“Now, brahmin, while in that state, whenever I walk back and forth, my walking is Divine. While standing still, my standing is Divine. While sitting, my sitting is Divine. And if I were to lie down, then my lying down too is Divine.

“Brahmin, these are therefore the high and lofty couches of Divinity, which I gain quickly and at will, instantly and without any difficulty.”

“It is wonderful, Master Gotama, for who else could quickly and at will, gain such high and lofty couches of Divinity, instantly and without any difficulty, other than Master Gotama!”

“But, Master Gotama, what are the high and lofty couches of Brahmā, which The Blessed One gains quickly and at will, instantly and without any difficulty?”

And The Blessed One continued by saying:

b. “Here, brahmin, in the morning, I put on my robes and by taking the alms bowl and outer robe, I go for alms into the village. After the meal, having already returned from the alms round, I walk into a grove or a wooded area. Finding a heap of grass or leaves, which I collect and then sit on with my folded legs, I keep the body straight while establishing mindfulness before me, observing the breath as it moves in and out over the upper lip.

“Then, in deep and restful tranquility, I direct my mind while pervading one quarter direction with Universal Benevolent Loving Kindness (mettā), so too the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter; so above, below and across, in every respect while radiating with a heart that is fully drenched in Universal Benevolent Loving Kindness, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurably, and without any sense of forcefulness, resentment, compulsion, or the slightest antagonism towards anyone or

anything.

“Then, in deep and restful tranquility, I direct my mind while pervading one quarter direction with Universal Compassion (karunā), so too the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter; so above, below and across, in every respect while radiating with a heart that is fully

drenched in Universal Compassion, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurably, and without any sense of forcefulness, resentment, compulsion, or the slightest antagonism towards anyone or anything.

“Then, in deep and restful tranquility, I direct my mind while pervading one quarter direction with Universal Altruistic Joy (muditā), so too the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter; so above, below and across, in every respect while radiating with a heart that is fully drenched in Universal Altruistic Joy; enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurably, and without any sense of forcefulness, resentment, compulsion, or the slightest antagonism towards anyone or anything.

“Then, in deep and restful tranquility, I direct my mind while pervading one quarter direction with equanimity (upekkhā), so too the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter; so above, below and across, in every respect while radiating with a heart that is fully drenched in equanimity; enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurably, and without any sense of forcefulness, resentment, compulsion, or the slightest antagonism towards anyone or anything.

“Now, brahmin, while in that state, whenever I walk back and forth, my walking is that of Brahmā. While standing still, my standing is that of Brahmā. While sitting, my sitting is that of Brahmā. And if I were to lie down, then my lying down too is that of Brahmā.

“Brahmin, these are therefore the high and lofty couches of Brahmā, which I gain quickly and at will, instantly and without any difficulty.”

“It is wonderful, Master Gotama, for who else could quickly and at will, gain such high and lofty couches of Brahmā, instantly and without any difficulty, other than Master Gotama!”

“But, Master Gautama, what are the high and lofty couches of The Noble Ones, which The Blessed One gains quickly and at will, instantly, and without any difficulty?”

c. “Here, brahmin, in the morning, I put on my robes and by taking the alms bowl and outer robe, I go for alms into the village. After the meal, having already returned from the alms round, I walk into a grove or a wooded area. Finding a heap of grass or leaves, which I collect and then sit on with my folded legs, and by keeping the body straight, I anchor myself in mindfulness while fully aware of the breath as it enters and leaves, right over the mouth.

“Then, while reflecting carefully, I know and see clearly that there is no more greed or lust left in Me, having already been pulled out with its roots, made like a dead palm tree’s stump that has been cut cleanly in half, never to grow back again.

“Similarly, while reflecting carefully, I know and see clearly that there is no more anger or hatred left in Me; having already been pulled out with its roots, made like a dead palm tree’s stump that has been cut cleanly in half, never to grow back again.

“And also, while reflecting carefully, I know and see clearly that there is no more delusion or willful ignoring left in Me; having already been pulled out with its roots, made like a dead palm tree’s stump that has been cut cleanly in half, never to grow back again.

“Now, brahmin, while in that state, whenever I walk back and forth, my walking is that of The Noble Ones. While standing still, my standing is that of The Noble Ones. While sitting, my sitting is that of The Noble Ones. And if I were to lie down, then my lying down too is that of The Noble Ones.

“Brahmin, these therefore are the high and lofty couches of The Noble Ones, which I gain quickly and at will, instantly and without any difficulty.”

“It is wonderful, Master Gotama, for who else could so quickly and at will, gain such high and lofty couches of The Noble Ones, instantly and without any difficulty, other than Master Gotama?”

“Sādhu, Sādhu indeed, Venerable sir! This is 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, and revealed 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.”