AN 3.65 — Kesaputtiya (Kālāma) Sutta (Discourse to the Kālamas)

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Text

65. Kesaputtiya (Kālāma) Sutta (Discourse to the Kālamas) This is what I have personally heard.

At one time, while The Blessed One was touring the country of Kosala with a large Saṅgha of Bhikkhus, he entered the township of Kesaputta of the Kālamas. Then, the Kālamas of Kesaputta heard –

‘The Good Recluse Gautama, son of the Sakyan clan, having gone forth from the home life into homelessness, has now entered our city of Kesaputta.’

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 Kālamas of Kesaputta 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, the Kālamas addressed The Blessed One by asking:

“Venerable Sir, some recluses and brahmins who come passing through our town of Kesaputta, teach and explain their own views, but while denigrating, denouncing, and disparaging the views of others, which they make seem to be useless, at best. Then, other recluses and brahmins passing through our town of Kesaputta too, teach and explain their own views, but while denigrating, denouncing, and disparaging the views of others, which they make seem to be useless, at best.

“So, You see, Venerable Sir, this has been a source of much confusion and doubt for us in Kesaputta, for we find ourselves perplexed and unsure as to which recluse speaks the truth, and which one does not.”

And The Blessed One replied, by saying: “Kālamas, given what you have described, it is understandable for you to become confused, perplexed, and unsure as to which recluse speaks the truth, and which one speaks what is untrue.

“Come now, O Kālamas, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through an oral tradition; by lineage of teaching; by hearsay; by scriptures; by logical reasoning alone; by inferential reasoning alone; on the grounds of some authority; by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker; or by the eloquent or entertaining nature of their words, whereby you think: ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my ‘teacher.’

“However, Kālamas, when you carefully look at the teachings that you receive and come to know the following, for yourselves:

‘These thoughts are harmful and damaging; these thoughts are blameworthy; these thoughts are reproved and criticized by all those considered to be truly wise; once acted upon and undertaken, these thoughts would certainly not lead to our welfare or happiness, but instead, they will bring about more suffering, indeed.’

“Then Kālamas, on understanding and seeing the truth in this, you should quickly abandon those thoughts, right on the spot.

“Now, what do you think, Kālamas? Does greed or passionate wanting that arises in a person, really lead to his welfare and benefit, or in fact, it leads to his ruin, bringing him much harm?”

“Venerable Sir, it surely does not lead to his welfare, but simply brings him much harm, leading him to ruin.”

“Kālamas, a greedy person, with a mind obsessed with greed, destroys living beings; takes what is not given; covets and then goes to other’s wives; tells lies, and encourages others to do the same. Now, do such actions conduce to his ruin and suffering for a long time?”

“Yes of course, Venerable Sir.”

“What do you think, then Kālamas? Does the anger or hatred that arises in a person, really lead to his welfare and benefit, or in fact, it leads to his ruin, bringing him much harm?”

“Venerable Sir, it surely does not lead to his welfare, but simply brings him much harm, leading him to ruin.”

“Kālamas, an angry person, with a mind obsessed with anger or hate, destroys living beings; takes what is not given; covets and then goes to other’s wives; tells lies, and encourages others to do the same. Now, do such actions conduce to his ruin and suffering for a long time?”

“Yes of course, Venerable Sir.”

“What do you think, Kālamas? Does the delusion that arises in a person, really lead to his welfare and benefit, or in fact, it leads to his ruin, bringing him much harm?”

“Venerable Sir, it surely does not lead to his welfare, but simply brings him much harm, leading him to ruin.”

“Kālamas, a deluded person, with a mind drenched in ignorance, destroys living beings; takes what is not given; covets and then goes to other’s wives; tells lies, and encourages others to do the same. Now, do such actions conduce to his ruin and suffering for a long time?”

“Yes of course, Venerable Sir.”

“What do you think then, O Kālamas? Would you say that such thoughts and actions are beneficial or harmful?”

“Venerable Sir, they are harmful.”

“Are they blameworthy or blameless?”

“Venerable Sir, they are blameworthy.”

“Are they reproved or praised by the wise?”

“Venerable Sir, they are reproved by the wise.”

“And how do you understand it, O Kālamas, when such thoughts and actions are undertaken, would they then lead to happiness or to further evil, bringing about more suffering?”

“Venerable Sir, as we understand it, when such actions are undertaken and committed, they lead to further evil and more suffering.”

“Thereby, O Kālamas, as I stated to you earlier:

“Come now, O Kālamas, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through an oral tradition; by lineage of the teaching; by hearsay; by its scriptures; by logical reasoning alone; by inferential reasoning alone; on the grounds of some authority; by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker; or by the eloquent and entertaining nature of their words, whereby you think: ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my ‘teacher.’”

“However, Kālamas, when you ponder and know for yourselves:

‘These thoughts are harmful and damaging; these thoughts are blameworthy; these thoughts are reproved and criticized by all those considered to be truly wise; once acted upon and undertaken, these thoughts would certainly not lead to our welfare or happiness, but instead, they will bring about more suffering, indeed.’

Then, Kālamas, you should abandon those thoughts. It was for this reason that it was thus said:

“Come Kālamas, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through an oral tradition; by lineage of the teaching; by hearsay; by its scriptures; by logical reasoning alone; by inferential reasoning alone; on the grounds of some authority; by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker; or by the eloquent and entertaining nature of their words, whereby you think: ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my ‘teacher.’”

“However, Kālamas, when you ponder and know for yourselves thus:

‘These thoughts are wholesome; these thoughts are blameless; these thoughts are praised by all those considered to be truly wise; once acted upon and undertaken, these thoughts are conducive to our welfare, and they bring about happiness, for sure.’

Then, Kālamas, you should grow such thoughts further and live in harmony with them.”

“What do you think, Kālamas? Is the arising of non-greed in a person conducive to his benefit or to his ruin?”

“Venerable Sir, it is to his benefit, and not to his ruin.”

“Kālamas, a person lacking greed, not overcome by greed, with a mind not obsessed by greed, does not destroy living beings; does not take what is not given; he does not covet nor goes to other’s wives; he does not tell lies; nor encourages others to engage in unwholesome behavior. Now, do such actions contribute to his benefit and happiness, for a long time?”

“Yes of course, Venerable Sir.”

“What do you think Kālamas? Is the arising of non-anger in a person conducive to his benefit or to his ruin?”

“Venerable Sir, it is to his benefit, and not to his ruin.”

“Kālamas, a person lacking anger, not overcome by anger, with a mind not obsessed by anger, does not destroy living beings; does not take what is not given; he does not covet nor goes to other’s wives; he does not tell lies, nor encourages others to engage in unwholesome behavior. Now, do such actions contribute to his benefit and happiness, for a long time?”

“Yes of course, Venerable Sir.”

“What do you think, Kālamas? Is the arising of non-delusion in a person conducive to his benefit or to his ruin?”

“Venerable Sir, it is to his benefit, and not to his ruin.”

“Kālamas, a person lacking delusion, not overcome by delusion, with a mind not drenched in delusion, does not destroy living beings; does not take what is not given; he does not covet nor goes to other’s wives; he does not tell lies, nor encourages others to engage in unwholesome behavior. Now, do such actions contribute to his benefit and happiness, for a long time?”

“Yes of course, Venerable Sir.”

“What do you think, Kālamas? Are such thoughts and actions wholesome or unwholesome?”

“Venerable Sir, they are wholesome.”

“Are they blameworthy or blameless?”

“Venerable Sir, they are blameless.”

“Are they reproved or praised by the wise?”

“Venerable Sir, they are praised by the wise.”

“And how do you understand it, when such thoughts and actions are undertaken and committed, would they conduce to benefit and happiness, or not?”

“Venerable Sir, as we understand it, when such thoughts and actions are undertaken and committed, they would conduce to benefit and happiness.”

“Thereby, Kālamas, as I stated to you earlier:

“Come now, O Kālamas, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through an oral tradition; by lineage of the teaching; by hearsay; by its scriptures; by logical reasoning alone; by inferential reasoning alone; on the grounds of some authority; by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker; or by the eloquent and entertaining nature of their words, whereby you think: ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my ‘teacher.’”

“However, Kālamas, when you carefully look at the teachings you receive, and come to know the following, for yourselves:

‘These thoughts are wholesome; these thoughts are blameless; these thoughts are praised by all those considered to be truly wise; once acted upon and undertaken, these thoughts are conducive to our welfare, and they bring about happiness, for sure.’

Then, Kālamas, you should grow such thoughts further and live in harmony with them. It was for this reason that it was thus said.

a. “After all, O Kālamas, it is in this manner that the Noble Disciple – who has freed himself from covetousness, anger, and delusion; who is clearly comprehending and aware, with mindfulness firmly established – pervades one quarter direction with Universal Benevolent Loving Kindness, 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.

b. “Further, he abides pervading one quarter direction with Universal Compassion, 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.

c. “Further, he abides pervading one quarter direction with Universal Altruistic Joy, 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.

d. “Further, he abides pervading one quarter direction with Equanimity, 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.

“In such a way, Kālamas, when the Noble Disciple’s mind is without anger, without covetousness, faultless and unblemished, and thus purified, he here and now gains four certainties, while still alive, and in this very body.

“Here, with the first certainty, O Kālamas, he knows for sure, that –

‘If there is another world, if there are results of good and evil actions, then there is a possibility that after death, I will be reborn in a good state, in heaven.’

“This, therefore, is his first certainty.

Furthermore, he reflects:

‘If there isn’t another world, if there are no results for good and evil actions, still, here and now, I abide without enmity, without covetousness, in purity and happiness.’

“This then is his second certainty. And he considers –

‘The evildoer does evil, yet I do not even think of any evil, which means that I have not done any evil; hence, I will not experience any results of evil.’

“This is his third certainty.

And, he reflects –

‘Even if the evildoer does not experience the evil consequences of his evil actions, I still see myself residing in peace and purity in both respects, having nothing to worry about.’

“This is his fourth certainty.

“Thus, Kālamas, when the Noble Disciple’s mind is without anger, without covetousness, not soiled but pure, he here and now gains these four certainties, while being alive.”

“This makes so much sense, O Blessed One! This is truly amazing, O Tathāgata!

“Especially when you explain, Bhante, how the Noble Disciple’s mind is without anger, without covetousness, faultless and unblemished, and thus purified, whereby he here and now gains those four certainties, with the first one being:

‘If there is another world, if there are results of good and evil actions, then there is a possibility that after death, I will be reborn in a good state, in heaven.’

“Followed by his second certainty, which says:

‘If there isn’t another world, if there are no results for good and evil actions, still, here and now, I abide without enmity, without covetousness, in purity and happiness.’

“Then, his third certainty, which states:

‘The evildoer does evil, yet I do not even think of any evil, which means that I have not done any evil; hence, I will not experience any results of evil.’

“And finally, his fourth certainty, that states:

‘Even if the evildoer does not experience the evil consequences of his evil actions, I still see myself residing in peace and purity in both respects, having nothing to worry about.’

“In this way, that when the Noble Disciple’s mind is without anger, without covetousness, faultless and unblemished, and thus purified, he here and now gains four certainties, while still alive, and in this very body.”

Then, on hearing these words spoken to them directly by The Blessed One Himself, the Kālamas exclaimed with delight:

“Sādhu, Sādhu indeed, Bhante! This truly is Magnificent, Bhante!

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

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

“From this day forward, Bhante, may The Blessed One kindly remember us as lay disciples of His, who have taken refuge in Him, until the end of life.”