

AN 3.65
Kesaputtiya (Kālāma) Sutta
“Discourse to the Kālāmas”
Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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This is what I have personally heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was touring the country of Kosala with a large Sangha of Bhikkhus as he entered the township of Kesaputta of the Kālāmas. Then, the Kālāmas of Kesaputta heard that *‘The good recluse Gautama, son of the Sakyan clan, having gone forth from the home life into homelessness, has now entered their city of Venāgapura.’* Further, they heard how such a good praise has been spread about the Blessed Gautama, 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 gods and humans, enlightened and blessed. Having realized it by himself with direct knowledge, in this world, together with gods and humans, Māras, Brahmās, as well as the community of recluses and brahmins, He now teaches the Dhamma that is good in its beginning, good in its middle, and good in its end, along with the right meaning and phrasing; clearly revealing thus the spiritual life that is utterly perfect and pure. Now, it is good indeed to be able to see such Arahants.’*

Then, the Kālāmas of Kesaputta approached the Blessed One, where some paid homage to Him and sat down to one side. Some exchanged friendly greetings and sat down to one side. Some extended their clasped hands towards the Blessed One and sat down to one side. Some announced their name and clan and sat down to one side, while still others silently sat down to one side. Then, Vacchagotta of Venāgapura said to the Blessed One:

“Venerable Sir, some recluses and brahmins who come passing through our town of Kesaputta, explain their own views, but while at the same time 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, they too explain their own views, but while at the same time denigrating, denouncing, and disparaging the views of others, which they make seem to be useless, at best. Venerable Sir, this has been a source of confusion and doubt for us in Kesaputta, as we find ourselves perplexed and unsure as to which recluse speaks the truth and which one speaks the untruth.”

“Kālāmas, 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 the untruth.

“Come Kālāmas, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by scriptures, by logical reasoning alone, by inferential reasoning alone, or on the grounds of authority, or by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker, or by their words, while thinking ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my “guru.”’

“However, Kālamas, when you ponder and know for yourselves by saying: ‘these thoughts are unwholesome, these thoughts are blameworthy, these thoughts are reprovved by those considered wise, these thoughts undertaken and accomplished are not conducive to our welfare, and they bring about more suffering.’ Then Kālamas, you should abandon those thoughts.”

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

“Venerable Sir, it is not to his welfare. It is to his ruin.”

“Kālamas, a greedy person with a mind obsessed with greed destroys living things, 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, Venerable Sir.”

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

“Venerable Sir, it is not to his welfare. It is to his ruin.”

“Kālamas, an angry person with a mind obsessed with anger destroys living things, 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, Venerable Sir.”

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

“Venerable Sir, it is not to his welfare. It is to his ruin.”

“Kālamas, a deluded person with a mind drenched in ignorance destroys living things, 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, venerable Sir.”

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

“Venerable Sir, they are unwholesome.”

“Are they blameworthy or blameless?”

“Venerable Sir, they are blameworthy.”

“Are they reprovved or praised by the wise?”

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

“And how do you understand it, when such actions are undertaken and committed, do they conduce to evil and suffering or not?”

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

“In this way, Kālamas, as we have stated:

“Come Kālamas, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by scriptures, by logical reasoning alone, by inferential reasoning alone, or on the grounds of authority, or by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker, or by their words, while thinking ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my “guru.”’

“However, Kālamas, when you ponder and know for yourselves by saying: ‘these thoughts are unwholesome, these thoughts are blameworthy, these thoughts are reproved by those considered wise, these thoughts undertaken and accomplished are not conducive to our welfare, and they bring about more suffering.’ 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 oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by scriptures, by logical reasoning alone, by inferential reasoning alone, or on the grounds of authority, or by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker, or by their words, while thinking ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my “guru.”’

“However, Kālamas, when you ponder and know for yourselves by saying: ‘these thoughts are wholesome, these thoughts are blameless, these thoughts are praised by those considered wise, these thoughts undertaken and accomplished are conducive to our welfare, and they bring about happiness.’ 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 ruin?”

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

“Kālamas, a person lacking greed, not overcome by it, and with a mind not obsessed by greed, does not destroy living things, does not take what is not given, neither covets nor goes to other's wives, he does not tell lies, nor encourages others to engage in unwholesome behavior. Now, do such actions conduce to his benefit and happiness for a long time?”

“Yes, Venerable Sir.”

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

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

“Kālamas, a person lacking anger, not overcome by it, and with a mind not obsessed by anger, does not destroy living things, does not take what is not given, neither covets nor goes to other's wives, he does not tell lies, nor encourages others to engage in unwholesome behavior. Now, do such actions conduce to his benefit and happiness for a long time?”

“Yes, Venerable Sir.”

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

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

“Kālamas, a person lacking delusion, not overcome by it, and with a mind not drenched in ignorance, does not destroy living things, does not take what is not given, neither covets nor goes to other's wives, he does not tell lies, nor encourages others to engage in unwholesome behavior. Now, do such actions conduce to his benefit and happiness for a long time?”

“Yes, 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 actions are undertaken and committed, do they conduce to benefit and happiness or not?”

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

“In this way, Kālamas, as we have stated:

“Come Kālamas, do not accept a teaching simply on account of it being disseminated through oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by scriptures, by logical reasoning alone, by inferential reasoning alone, or on the grounds of authority, or by the charisma or apparent competence of the speaker, or by their words, while thinking ‘I have to follow such a teacher because they are my “guru.”’

“However, Kālamas, when you ponder and know for yourselves by saying: ‘these thoughts are wholesome, these thoughts are blameless, these thoughts are praised by those considered wise, these thoughts undertaken and accomplished are conducive to our welfare, and they bring about happiness.’ Then Kālamas, you should grow such thoughts further and live in harmony with them. It was for this reason that it was thus said.”

“In this way, Kālamas, the noble disciple who is thus free from covetousness, free from anger, free from delusion, clearly comprehending and aware, with mindfulness established, pervades one quarter direction with loving kindness, so too the second quarter, the third quarter, the fourth quarter, so above, below, and across, in every respect radiating a mind fully drenched with loving kindness, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurable, and without anger or resentment.

“Further, he abides pervading one quarter direction with compassion, so too the second quarter, the third quarter, the fourth quarter, so above, below, and across, in every respect radiating a mind fully drenched with compassion, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurable, and without anger or resentment.

“Further, he abides pervading one quarter direction with altruistic joy, so too the second quarter, the third quarter, the fourth quarter, so above, below, and across, in every respect radiating a mind fully drenched with altruistic joy, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurable, and without anger or resentment.

“Further, he abides pervading one quarter direction with equanimity, so too the second quarter, the third quarter, the fourth quarter, so above, below, and across, in every respect radiating a mind fully drenched with equanimity, enveloping and growing in all directions, immeasurable, and without anger or resentment.

“In such a way, Kālamas, when the noble disciple's mind is without anger, without covetousness, not soiled and is pure, he here and now gains four certainties, while being alive. Here, with the first certainty, he knows that ‘If there is another world, if there are results of good and evil actions, there is a possibility that after death, I will be reborn in a good state, in heaven.’ This is his first certainty. ‘If there isn’t another world, if there are no results for good and evil actions, here and now, I abide without enmity, without covetousness, I abide in purity and happiness.’ This is his second certainty. ‘The evildoer does evil, yet I do not think of any evil, I have not done any evil, so I will not experience any results of evil.’ This is his third certainty. ‘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.’ This is his fourth certainty.”

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

“It is just so Blessed One. It is just so Tathagata, when the noble disciple's mind is without anger, without covetousness, not soiled and is pure, he here and now gains four certainties: ‘If there is another world, if there are results of good and evil actions, there is a possibility that after death, I will be reborn in a good state, in heaven.’ This is his first certainty. ‘If there isn’t another world, if there are no results for good and evil actions, here and now, I abide without enmity, without covetousness, I abide in purity and happiness.’ This is his second certainty. The evildoer does evil, yet I do not think of any evil, I have not done any evil, so I will not experience any such results of evil.’ This is his third certainty. ‘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.’ This is his fourth certainty. In this way, when the noble disciple's mind is without anger, without covetousness, not soiled and is pure, he here and now gains these four certainties, while being alive.”

“Magnificent, Venerable Sir! Magnificent, Venerable Sir! The Blessed One has made the Dhamma clear for me in many ways, as though he were turning upright what had been turned upside-down, revealing 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 Sangha of Bhikkhus. From this day forward, may the Blessed One remember me as a lay disciple who has taken refuge in him, from today until the end of life.”

Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu