AN 4.35 — With Vassakāra

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Text

Numbered Discourses 4.35

4. Situations

With Vassakāra

At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground. Then Vassakāra the brahmin, a chief minister of Magadha, 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, when someone has four qualities we describe him as a great man with great wisdom. What four?

They are very learned in diverse fields of learning.

They understand the meaning of diverse statements, saying: 'This is what that statement means; that is what this statement means.'

They are mindful, able to remember and recollect what was said and done long ago.

They are deft and tireless in household duties, understanding how to go about things in order to complete and organize the work.

When someone possesses these four qualities we describe him as a great man with great wisdom. If the worthy Gotama agrees with me, please say so. If he disagrees, please say so."

"Brahmin, I neither agree nor disagree with you, but when someone has four qualities I describe him as a great man with great wisdom. What four?

It's when someone practices for the welfare and happiness of the people. They've established many people in the noble system, that is, the principles of goodness and skillfulness.

They think what they want to think, and don't think what they don't want to think. They consider what they want to consider, and don't consider what they don't want to consider. Thus they have achieved mental mastery of the paths of thought.

They get the four absorptions—blissful meditations in this life that belong to the higher mind—when they want, without trouble or difficulty.

They realize the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom. And they live having realized it with their own insight in this very life due to the ending of defilements.

Brahmin, I neither agree nor disagree with you, but when someone possesses these four qualities I describe him as a great man with great wisdom."

"It's incredible, worthy Gotama, it's amazing! How well said this was by the worthy Gotama! And we will remember the worthy Gotama as someone who possesses these four qualities. For the worthy Gotama practices for the welfare and happiness of the people … The worthy Gotama has achieved mental mastery of the paths of thought. The worthy Gotama gets the four absorptions … when he wants, without trouble or difficulty. The worthy Gotama has realized the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom. He lives having realized it with his own insight in this very life due to the ending of defilements."

"Your words are clearly invasive and intrusive, brahmin. Nevertheless, I will answer you. For I do practice for the welfare and happiness of the people … I have achieved mental mastery of the paths of thought. I do get the four absorptions … when I want, without trouble or difficulty. I have realized the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom. I live having realized it with my own insight in this very life due to the ending of defilements.

He discovered release from the snare of death

for all beings,

and explained the system of the teaching

for the welfare of gods and humans.

When they see him or hear him,

many people become confident.

He is skilled in what is the path and what is not the path,

he has completed the task and is free of defilements.

The Buddha, bearing his final body,

is called 'a great man, of great wisdom'."