AN 4.35 — AN 4:35 With Vassakāra | Vassakāra Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/AN/AN4_35.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

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Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

With Vassakāra

Vassakāra Sutta (AN 4:35)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest at the Squirrels’ Sanctuary. Then Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, we declare a person endowed with four qualities to be one of great discernment, a great man. Which four?

“There is the case where he is learned.

“Whatever he hears, he immediately understands the meaning of the statement, ‘This is the meaning of that statement. This is the meaning of that statement.’

“He is mindful, able to remember & recollect what was done & said a long time ago.

“He is adept in the affairs of the household life, vigorous, endowed with enough quick-wittedness in their techniques to organize them and get them done.

“Master Gotama, we declare a person endowed with these four qualities to be one of great discernment, a great man. If you think that I am worthy of agreement, Master Gotama, may you agree with me. If you think I am worthy of criticism, criticize me.”

“I neither agree with you, brahman, nor do I criticize you. I declare a person endowed with four qualities to be one of great discernment, a great man. Which four?

“There is the case, brahman, where he practices for the welfare & happiness of many people and has established many people in the noble method, i.e., the rightness of what is admirable, the rightness of what is skillful.

“He thinks any thought he wants to think, and doesn’t think any thought he doesn’t want to think. He wills any resolve he wants to will, and doesn’t will any resolve he doesn’t want to will. He has attained mastery of the mind with regard to the pathways of thought.1

“He attains—whenever he wants, without strain, without difficulty—the four jhānas that are heightened mental states, pleasant abidings in the here & now.

“With the ending of effluents—he remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.

“I neither agree with you, brahman, nor do I criticize you. I declare a person endowed with these four qualities to be one of great discernment, a great man.”

“It’s amazing, Master Gotama, and astounding, how well that has been said by Master Gotama. And I hold Master Gotama to be endowed with these same four qualities.

“Master Gotama practices for the welfare & happiness of many people and has established many people in the noble method, i.e., the rightness of what is admirable, the rightness of what is skillful.

“Master Gotama thinks whatever thought he wants to think, and doesn’t think any thought he doesn’t want to think. He wills any resolve he wants to will, and doesn’t will any resolve he doesn’t want to will. He has attained mastery of the mind with regard to the pathways of thought.

“Master Gotama attains—whenever he wants, without strain, without difficulty—the four jhānas that are heightened mental states, pleasant abidings in the here & now.

“Master Gotama, with the ending of effluents remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.”

“Well, brahman, you are certainly being rude & presumptuous in making this statement, but still I will respond to you.

“Yes, brahman, I practice for the welfare & happiness of many people and have established many people in the noble method, i.e., the rightness of what is admirable, the rightness of what is skillful.

“And, yes, I think whatever thought I want to think, and don’t think any thought I don’t want to think. I will any resolve I want to will, and don’t will any resolve I don’t want to will. I have attained mastery of the mind with regard to the pathways of thought.

“And, yes, I attain—whenever I want, without strain, without difficulty—the four jhānas that are heightened mental states, pleasant abidings in the here & now.

“And, yes, with the ending of effluents I remain in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for myself right in the here & now.”

He who, knowing, declared

release for all beings

from the snare of death,

welfare

for human beings & devas,

the methodical Dhamma—

seeing & hearing which,

many people grow clear & calm;

who is skilled in what is & is not the path,

his task done, effluent-free:

is called

one of great discernment,

bearing his last body,

awake.

Note

1. See MN 20.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 20; MN 36; MN 79; AN 4:95—96; AN 4:192; AN 7:64