AN 7.56 — Tissa the Divinity

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Numbered Discourses 7.56

6. The Undeclared Points

Tissa the Divinity

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha, on the Vulture's Peak Mountain.

Then, late at night, two glorious deities, lighting up the entire Vulture's Peak, went up to the Buddha, bowed, and stood to one side. One deity said to him, "Sir, these nuns are freed!"

The other deity said to him, "Sir, these nuns are well freed with no residue!"

This is what those deities said, and the Teacher concurred. Then those deities, knowing that the Teacher concurred, bowed and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on their right, before vanishing right there.

Then, when the night had passed, the Buddha told the mendicants all that had happened.

Now at that time Venerable Mahāmoggallāna was sitting not far from the Buddha. He thought, "Which gods know whether a person has remainder or not?"

Now, at that time a monk named Tissa had recently passed away and been reborn in a realm of divinity. There they knew that Tissa the Divinity was very mighty and powerful.

And then Venerable Mahāmoggallāna, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, vanished from the Vulture's Peak and reappeared in that realm of divinity.

Tissa saw Moggallāna coming off in the distance, and said to him, "Come, my good Moggallāna! Welcome, my good Moggallāna! It's been a long time since you took the opportunity to come here. Sit, my good Moggallāna, here, a seat is ready."

Moggallāna sat down on the seat spread out. Then Tissa bowed to Moggallāna and sat to one side.

Moggallāna said to him, "Which gods know whether a person has remainder or not?"

"The gods of the Divinity's host know this."

"But do all of them know this?"

“No, my good Moggallāna, not all of them.

Those gods of the Divinity’s host who are content with the lifespan of the Divinity, with the beauty, happiness, glory, and sovereignty of the Divinity, and who don’t truly understand any escape beyond: they don’t know this. But those gods of the Divinity’s host who are not content with the lifespan of the Divinity, with the beauty, happiness, glory, and sovereignty of the Divinity, and who do truly understand any escape beyond: they do know this.

Take a mendicant who is freed both ways. The gods know of them: ‘This venerable is freed both ways. As long as their body remains they will be seen by gods and humans. But when their body breaks up gods and humans will see them no more.’ This too is how those gods know whether a person has remainder or not.

Take a mendicant who is freed by wisdom. The gods know of them: ‘This venerable is freed by wisdom. As long as their body remains they will be seen by gods and humans. But when their body breaks up gods and humans will see them no more.’ This too is how those gods know whether a person has remainder or not.

Take a mendicant who is a direct witness. The gods know of them: ‘This venerable is a direct witness. Hopefully this venerable will frequent appropriate lodgings, associate with good friends, and control their faculties. Then they might realize the supreme culmination of the spiritual path in this very life, and live having achieved with their own insight the goal for which gentlemen rightly go forth from the lay life to homelessness.’ This too is how those gods know whether a person has remainder or not.

Take a mendicant who is attained to view. … freed by faith … a follower of teachings. The gods know of them: ‘This venerable is a follower of teachings. Hopefully this venerable will frequent appropriate lodgings, associate with good friends, and control their faculties. Then they might realize the supreme culmination of the spiritual path in this very life, and live having achieved with their own insight the goal for which gentlemen rightly go forth from the lay life to homelessness.’ This too is how those gods know whether a person has remainder or not.”

Moggallāna approved and agreed with what Tissa the Divinity said. Then, as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, he vanished from the realm of divinity and reappeared on the Vulture’s Peak. Then Mahāmoggallāna went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened.

“But Moggallāna, Tissa the Divinity didn’t teach the seventh individual, the signless meditator.”

“Now is the time, Blessed One! Now is the time, Holy One! May the Buddha teach the seventh individual, the signless meditator. The mendicants will listen and remember it.”

“Well then, Moggallāna, listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.”

“Yes, sir,” Mahāmoggallāna replied. The Buddha said this:

“Moggallāna, take the case of a mendicant who, not focusing on any signs, enters and remains in the signless immersion of the heart. The gods know of them: ‘This venerable, not focusing on any signs, enters and remains in the signless immersion of the heart.

Hopefully this venerable will frequent appropriate lodgings, associate with good friends, and control their faculties. Then they might realize the supreme culmination of the spiritual path in this very life, and live having achieved with their own insight the goal for which gentlemen rightly go forth from the lay life to homelessness.' This too is how those gods know whether a person has remainder or not."