Snp 1.7 — Vasala Sutta — The Outcaste

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Text

Snp. 1.7

Vasala Sutta

“The Outcaste”

I have personally heard this.

At one time, The Blessed One was living at the monastery donated by Anāthapiṇḍika at Jeta’s Park, in the City of Sāvatthi.

Then, when it was already morning, having put on His robes and taking His outer robe and alms bowl, The Blessed One went on His alms round by walking through the streets of Sāvatthi.

Meanwhile, the sacrificial fire kept burning at the house of Bhāradvāja, the fire worshipping brahmin, where offerings were being made as he performed the fire sacrifice.

Then, on seeing The Blessed One approach from a distance, Bhāradvāja, the fire worshipping brahmin, began yelling:

“You, stop there! You, bald-headed recluse! You wretched outcaste, stop! Don’t approach any further.”

When this was said, The Blessed One replied by asking Bhāradvāja, the fire worshipping brahmin:

“O, brahmin, do you know an outcaste when you see one? Or the qualities that make one an outcaste?”

Then, Bhāradvāja, the fire worshipping brahmin, pausing to consider the question, replied to The Blessed One by saying:

“Master Gautama, I do not know an outcaste, nor the qualities that make one an outcaste. Perhaps it would be good if you could explain to us who an ‘outcaste’ is, and what the qualities that make one an outcaste are.”

“Well then, brahmin, now listen closely and pay attention, and I will explain.”

“Yes Sir,” said Bhāradvāja, the fire worshipping brahmin.

And The Blessed One continued instructing him, in verse:

116. “If a man is angry, with hostility in his heart,

Full of evil intent, while being contentious,

Hypocritical and deceitful, lost in wrong views,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

117. “Intending to harm living beings,

Whether those born through a womb or hatched from eggs,

He who has no compassion for things that breathe,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

118. “Killing and robbing, terrorizing people

Wherever he meets them, be it in towns or cities,

Known to all as a tormenting oppressor with no compassion,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

119. “Whether in public or in private,

While not being offered himself,

The one who takes things cherished by others,

Taking what is not freely given to him,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

120. “Having borrowed money from those who trusted him,

When they come calling for him to repay his debt, or

Offer them a helping hand, he runs away, or even worse,

Denies ever owing them anything,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

121. “Whether in plain sight or in the middle of the street,

If he desires something of little material value,

Even from a recluse, gone into seclusion,

He would strike him down, and kills them to take it,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

122. “When asked to testify by bearing witness,

Instead of telling the truth, if he lies,

Whether for his own gain, or for someone else’s,

For the sake of some advantage or for wealth,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

123. “He who engages in sexual acts with others’ wives

Be they his relatives or his friends’ mates,

No matter if it is by their consent or through seducing them,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

124. “Although having the means, he who does not support

His mother and father, who need him,

Neglecting them, now that they’re old and past their prime,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

125. “He who strikes or verbally abuses his mother or father,

His brother or sister,

Or even his mother-in-law,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

126. “When asked for advice or to teach what is useful and

essential, while trying to hide his ignorance,

He answers by talking about what is useless and unessential, Avoiding questions & using roundabout ways of deflecting,

Even attacking the questioner instead,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

127. “While behaving in unwholesome ways,

He tries to hide and conceal his actions,

Engaging in secretive deeds,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

128. “While he enjoys going to others’ homes and Eating and having his fill of their delicious food,

But when it’s his turn to be hospitable and generous,

Becoming stingy, refusing to honor those who visit his home,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

129. “If the person deceives a Noble Disciple,

Or a recluse, or even

An ascetic from another sect,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

130. “When at the appropriate mealtime,

Recluses and ascetics come to receive their alms food,

Instead of offering them food, he scolds and abuses them,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

131. “Being ignorant and entirely shrouded in his delusion,

The one who gets overexcited,

As he rambles on about things that have never happened,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

132. “He who enjoys praising and talking about himself, But while putting down others and disparaging them,

Driven by nothing other than his conceit, Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

133. “The one with contention in his heart,

Always angry and avaricious, desiring to do evil,

Deceitful and with no remorse or shame for his actions,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

134. “He who tries insulting and abusing the Buddha,

Or any of His disciples,

Whether those who have gone forth or His lay followers,

Such a person is known to be an ‘outcaste.’

135. “Although having no attainments at all,

Whoever pretends to be an Arahant,

Whether by deceiving himself or others,

Thus remaining a thief and a low life, Both in this and in the Brahmā world, He indeed is the lowest of outcastes.

Therefore, I declare all these to be ‘outcastes.’

136. “So, you see, it’s not through birth that one

Becomes an outcaste, nor is it through birth

Whereby one becomes noble, either!

It’s only one’s own actions that make one an outcaste.

And it’s through one’s own intentional actions, as well,

That one becomes Noble, indeed!

137. “Here, it would serve you well

To know the example of Sopaka,

The son of an outcaste named Caṇḍāla,

Who came to be known as Mātanga.

138. “In time, this Mātanga became famous by achieving

what was difficult to attain,

Obtaining a reputation that is hard to gain,

Where even many Khattiya warriors from royal families,

As well as brahmins,

All came to honor, respect, and serve him.

139. “For he set out on the Divine and stainless path,

Leading to heavenly rebirth, as he gave up sensual desire,

And reappeared in the realm of the Brahmā Gods.

Thus, his low caste, as a human being, did not prevent him,

From attaining rebirth as a Brahmā God.

140. “Although brahmins born in families are seen as

Belonging to the highest class in society,

Known as the ‘reciters of the Vedas’ and their incantations, Yet, they are discovered to be no more than mere outcastes, Drowning in their evil, unwholesome actions, and behavior.

141. “In this way, they remain blameworthy, both

In this life, and in the ones to follow,

Being reborn in one miserable realm after another, Thus their high caste, while born as human beings, Did not prevent them from blame, but especially

From being reborn in the realms of misery, even in the hells.

142. “So, you see again, it’s not through birth that one

Becomes an outcaste, nor is it through birth

Whereby one becomes noble, either!

It’s only one’s own actions that make one an outcaste. And it’s through one’s own intentional actions, as well,

That one becomes Noble, indeed!”

When this was said, Bhāradvāja, the fire worshipping brahmin, exclaimed to The Blessed One:

“It is Magnificent, Master Gautama! This is Excellent, Bhante! The Blessed One has made the Dhamma clear for me in many ways, as though He were to turn upright what was turned upside-down, revealing to me what was hidden; showing the way to one who was lost; holding up a lamp in the dark, for all those with eyesight to see.

“I go to The Blessed One as my refuge, and to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha of Bhikkhus.

“From this day forward, may The Blessed One remember me as one of His lay disciples, who has taken refuge in Him, until the end of life.”