Snp 2.1 — Ratana Sutta: The Jewel Discourse

English translation by Piyadassi Thera.

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Text

Translator's Introduction

The occasion for this discourse, in brief, according to the commentary, is as follows: The city of Vesali was afflicted by a famine, causing death, especially to the poor folk. Due to the presence of decaying corpses the evil spirits began to haunt the city; this was followed by a pestilence. Plagued by these three fears of famine, non-human beings and pestilence, the citizens sought the help of the Buddha who was then living at Rajagaha.

Followed by a large number of monks including the Venerable Ananda, his attendant disciple, the Buddha came to the city of Vesali. With the arrival of the Master, there were torrential rains which swept away the putrefying corpses. The atmosphere became purified, the city was clean.

Thereupon the Buddha delivered this Jewel Discourse (Ratana sutta[1]) to the Venerable Ananda, and gave him instructions as to how he should tour the city with the Licchavi

citizens reciting the discourse as a mark of protection to the people of Vesali. The Venerable Ananda followed the instructions, and sprinkled the sanctified water from the Buddha's own alms bowl. As a consequence the evil spirits were exorcised, the pestilence subsided. Thereafter the Venerable Ananda returned with the citizens of Vesali to the Public hall where the Buddha and his disciples had assembled awaiting his arrival. There the Buddha recited the same Jewel Discourse to the gathering:

1. "Whatever beings (non-humans) are assembled here, terrestrial or celestial, may they all have peace of mind, and may they listen attentively to these words:

2. "O beings, listen closely. May you all radiate loving-kindness to those human beings who, by day and night, bring offerings to you (offer merit to you). Wherefore, protect them with diligence.

3. "Whatever treasure there be either here or in the world beyond, whatever precious jewel there be in the heavenly worlds, there is nought comparable to the Tathagata (the perfect One). This precious jewel is the Buddha.[2] By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

4. "That Cessation, that Detachment, that Deathlessness (Nibbana) supreme, the calm and collected Sakyan Sage (the Buddha) had realized. There is nought comparable to this (Nibbana) Dhamma. This precious jewel is the Dhamma.[3] By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

5. "The Supreme Buddha extolled a path of purity (the Noble Eightfold Path) calling it the path which unfailingly brings concentration. There is nought comparable to this concentration. This precious jewel is the Dhamma. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

6. "The eight persons extolled by virtuous men constitute four pairs. They are the disciples of the Buddha and are worthy of offerings. Gifts given to them yield rich results. This precious jewel is the Sangha.[4] By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

7. "With a steadfast mind, and applying themselves well in the dispensation of the Buddha Gotama, free from (defilements), they have attained to that which should be attained (arahantship) encountering the Deathless. They enjoy the Peace of Nibbana freely obtained.[5] This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

8. "As a post deep-planted in the earth stands unshaken by the winds from the four quarters, so, too, I declare is the righteous man who comprehends with wisdom the Noble Truths. This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

9. "Those who realized the Noble Truths well taught by him who is profound in wisdom (the Buddha), even though they may be exceedingly heedless, they will not take an eighth

existence (in the realm of sense spheres).[6] This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

10. "With his gaining of insight he abandons three states of mind, namely self-illusion, doubt, and indulgence in meaningless rites and rituals, should there be any. He is also fully freed from the four states of woe, and therefore, incapable of committing the six major wrongdoings.[7] This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

11. "Any evil action he may still do by deed, word or thought, he is incapable of concealing it; since it has been proclaimed that such concealing is impossible for one who has seen the Path (of Nibbana).[8] This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

12. "As the woodland groves though in the early heat of the summer month are crowned with blossoming flowers even so is the sublime Dhamma leading to the (calm) of Nibbana which is taught (by the Buddha) for the highest good. This precious jewel is the Buddha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

13. "The Peerless Excellent one (the Buddha) the Knower (of Nibbana), the Giver (of Nibbana), the Bringer (of the Noble Path), taught the excellent Dhamma. This precious jewel is the Buddha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

14. "Their past (kamma) is spent, their new (kamma) no more arises, their mind to future becoming is unattached. Their germ (of rebirth-consciousness) has died, they have no more desire for re-living. Those wise men fade out (of existence) as the flame of this lamp (which has just faded away). This precious jewel is the Sangha. By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

15. "Whatever beings (non-human) are assembled here, terrestrial or celestial, come let us salute the Buddha, the Tathagata (the perfect One), honored by gods and men. May there be happiness.[9]

16. "Whatever beings are assembled here, terrestrial or celestial, come let us salute the perfect Dhamma, honored by gods and men. May there be happiness.

17. "Whatever beings are assembled here, terrestrial or celestial, come let us salute the perfect Sangha, honored by gods and men. May there be happiness."

Notes

1.

Ratana means precious jewel. Here the term is applied to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.

2.

Literally, in the Buddha is this precious jewel.

3.

Literally, in the Dhamma is this precious jewel.

4.

Literally, in the Sangha is this precious jewel.

5.

Obtained without payment; 'avyayena' (KhpA).

6.

The reason why it is stated that there will be no eighth existence for a person who has attained the stage of sotapatti or the first stage of sanctity is that such a being can live at the most for only a period of seven existences in the realm of sense spheres.

7.

Abhithanani; i. matricide, ii. patricide, iii. the murder of arahants (the Consummate Ones), iv. the shedding of the Buddha's blood, v. causing schism in the Sangha, and vi. pernicious false beliefs (niyata micca ditthi).

8.

He is a sotapanna, stream-enterer, one who has attained the first stage of sanctity.

9.

The last three stanzas were recited by Sakka, the chief of Devas (gods) (KhpA).