Snp 5.3 — Punnaka-manava-puccha: Punnaka's Questions

English translation by John D. Ireland.

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Text

[The Venerable Punnaka:]

"To him who is free from craving, who has seen the root (of things)[1] I have come with a question: for what reason did sages, warriors, brahmanas and other men prepare, here in this world, various sacrificial gifts for the gods (devata)? I ask the Lord this, let him tell me the answer."

[The Lord:]

"Whatever sages, warriors, brahmanas and other men, Punnaka, prepared various sacrificial gifts for the gods, they did so in the hope of this or that (future) existence, being induced by (the fact of) old age and decay."

[Punnaka:]

"By preparing various sacrificial gifts for the gods, being zealous in sacrificing, do they cross beyond birth and decay, Lord?"

[The Lord:]

"They hope and extol, pray and sacrifice for things of the senses, Punnaka. For the sake of such reward they pray. These devotees of sacrifice, infatuated by their passion for existence,[2] do not cross beyond birth and decay, I say."

[Punnaka:]

"If these devotees of sacrifice do not cross beyond birth and decay through sacrifice, Sir, then by what practice does one cross beyond birth and decay in this world of gods and men?"

[The Lord:]

"He who has comprehended in the world the here and the beyond, in whom there is no perturbation by anything in the world, who is calm, free from the smoldering fires,[3] untroubled and desireless — he has crossed beyond birth and decay, I say."

Notes

1.

"The root of unwholesome actions, etc." (Comy). There are six roots or basic conditions in a person leading to the performance of unwholesome (unskilled) and wholesome (skilled) actions: greed, aversion, delusion, non-greed (renunciation, detachment), non-aversion (love) and non-delusion(wisdom). The Buddha has seen and understood this as it really is.

2.

Or, "burning with lust for life."

3.

The three "fires" of greed, aversion and delusion. This is a punning reference, also to be seen in the previous note, to the brahmana's sacrificial fire.