Ud 8.7 — Dvidhapatha Sutta: A Fork in the Path

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

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

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was journeying along a road in the Kosalan country with Ven. Nāgasamāla as his junior companion. Ven. Nāgasamāla, while going along the road, saw a fork in the path. On seeing it, he said to the Blessed One, "That, lord Blessed One,[1] is the route. We go that way." When this was said, the Blessed One said, "This, Nāgasamāla, is the route. We go this way."

A second time... A third time, Ven. Nāgasamāla said to the Blessed One, "That, lord Blessed One, is the route. We go that way." And for a third time, the Blessed One said, "This, Nāgasamāla, is the route. We go this way."

Then Ven. Nāgasamāla, placing the Blessed One's bowl & robes right there on the ground, left, saying, "This, lord Blessed One, is the bowl & robes."

Then as Ven. Nāgasamāla was going along that route, thieves — jumping out in the middle of the road — pummeled him with their fists & feet, broke his bowl, and ripped his outer robe to shreds.

So Ven. Nāgasamāla — with his bowl broken, his outer robe ripped to shreds — went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "Just now, lord, as I was going along that route, thieves jumped out in the middle of the road, pummeled me with their fists & feet, broke my bowl, and ripped my outer robe to shreds."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

When traveling together, mixed together with a person who doesn't know, an attainer-of-wisdom, on realizing that the person is evil, abandons him as a milk-feeding[2] heron, a bog.

Note

1.

Throughout the first part of this story, Ven. Nāgasamāla refers to the Buddha with this exaggerated form of address. Perhaps the compilers meant this as a linguistic hint of how inappropriate an attendant he was for the Buddha. At the point in the narrative where he puts the Buddha's bowl and robes on the ground, the Sri Lankan and Burmese editions correct his statement to the more appropriate: "This, lord, is the Blessed One's bowl & robes." However, to be in keeping with his normal way of addressing the Buddha, and to stress the rudeness of the gesture, I felt it better to keep the sentence as it is in the Thai edition. Only after Ven. Nāgasamāla is chastened by his experience with the thieves does he revert to the using the simpler and more standard address: "lord."

2.

Milk-feeding = khīrapaka. This is a poetic way of saying "young and unweaned" — the "milk" here being the regurgitated food with which the mother heron feeds her young. Also — in the conventions of Indian literature — the reference to milk suggests that the heron is white. The Commentary has a fanciful way of explaining this term, saying that it refers to a special type of heron so sensitive that, when fed milk mixed with water, it drinks just the milk.