Ud 8.7 — A Fork in the Road

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Text

Heartfelt Sayings 8.7

A Fork in the Road

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was traveling along a road in the Kosalan lands with Venerable Nāgasamāla as his second monk. Nāgasamāla saw a fork in the road and said to the Buddha, “Sir, this is the road, let us go this way.” But when he said this the Buddha responded, “Nāgasamāla, this is the road, let us go this way.”

For a second time … For a third time Nāgasamāla said to the Buddha, “Sir, this is the road, let us go this way.” And for a third time the Buddha responded, “Nāgasamāla, this is the road, let us go this way.” Then Nāgasamāla put the Buddha’s bowl and robes down on the ground right there and left, saying, “Sir, here are your bowl and robes.”

Then as Nāgasamāla was going down that road, he was set upon by bandits who struck him with fists and feet, broke his bowl, and tore up his outer robe. Then Nāgasamāla—with his bowl broken and his outer robe torn—went to the Buddha and told him what had happened.

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha expressed this heartfelt sentiment:

“Walking together, dwelling as one,

the knowledge master mixes with foolish folk.

Knowing this, they give up wickedness,

like a milk-drinking heron the water.”