SN 4.20 — SN 4:20 Rulership | Rajja Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro 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

Rulership

Rajja Sutta (SN 4:20)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Kosalans in a wilderness hut in a Himalayan district. Then, as he was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness: “Is it possible to exercise rulership without killing or causing others to kill, without dispossessing or causing others to dispossess, without sorrowing or causing others sorrow—righteously?”

Then Māra, the Evil One, knowing with his awareness the train of thought in the Blessed One’s awareness, went to him and on arrival said to him: “Exercise rulership, Blessed One! Exercise rulership, O One Well-Gone!—without killing or causing others to kill, without

dispossessing or causing others to dispossess, without sorrowing or causing others sorrow—righteously!"

"But what do you see in me, Evil One, that you say to me, 'Exercise rulership, Blessed One! Exercise rulership, O One Well-Gone!—without killing or causing others to kill, without dispossessing or causing others to dispossess, without sorrowing or causing others sorrow—righteously!'?"

"Lord, the Blessed One has developed the four bases of power,1 pursued them, given them a means of transport, given them a grounding, steadied them, consolidated them, and undertaken them well. If he wanted to, he could resolve on the Himalayas, king of mountains, as gold, and it would become a mountain of gold."2

The Buddha:

"The entirety

of a mountain of gold,

of solid bullion:

Even twice that

wouldn't suffice

for one person.

Knowing this,

live evenly,

in tune with the contemplative life.

When you see stress,

and from where it comes,

how can you incline

to sensuality?

Knowing acquisition

to be a bond in the world,

train for

its subduing."

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "The Blessed One knows me; the One Well-Gone knows me"—vanished right there.

Notes

1. The foundations for psychic abilities. See SN 51:20.

2. The implication here is that, with so much gold, the Buddha could cure the world's miseries and buy off his enemies.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 82; SN 35:199; AN 3:70; Dhp 186–187