SN 6.4 — With Baka the Divinity

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Text

Linked Discourses 6.4

1. The Appeal

With Baka the Divinity

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

Now at that time Baka the Divinity had the following harmful misconception: "This is permanent, this is everlasting, this is eternal, this is whole, this is not liable to pass away. For this is where there's no being born, growing old, dying, passing away, or being reborn. And there's no other escape beyond this."

Then the Buddha knew Baka the Divinity's train of thought. As easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, he vanished from Jeta's Grove and reappeared in that realm of divinity.

Baka the Divinity saw the Buddha coming off in the distance and said to him, "Come, good fellow! Welcome, good fellow! It's been a long time since you took the opportunity to come here. For this is permanent, this is everlasting, this is eternal, this is whole, this is not liable to pass away. For this is where there's no being born, growing old, dying, passing away, or being reborn. And there's no other escape beyond this."

When he had spoken, the Buddha said to him, "Alas, Baka the Divinity is lost in ignorance! Alas, Baka the Divinity is lost in ignorance! Because what is actually impermanent, not lasting, transient, incomplete, and liable to pass away, he says is permanent, everlasting, eternal, whole, and not liable to pass away. And where there is being born, growing old, dying, passing away, and being reborn, he says that there's no being born, growing old, dying, passing away, or being reborn. And although there is another escape beyond this, he says that there's no other escape beyond this."

"Gotama, we seventy-two merit-makers are now wielders of power,

having passed beyond rebirth and old age.

This is our last rebirth as the Divinity, O knowledge master.

And now many people pray to us."

"But, Baka, the lifespan here is short, not long,

though you think it's long.
A hundred thousand times a hundred million years—
I understand your lifespan, Divinity."
"I am the blessed one of infinite vision,
who has gone beyond rebirth and old age and sorrow.
What was my past practice of precept and observance?
Explain to me so that I may understand."
"You gave drink to many humans
who were oppressed by thirst and heat.
That's your past practice of precept and observance.
I recollect it like one who has wakened from sleep.
When people at Deer River Bank were seized,
you released the captives as they were led away.
That's your past practice of precept and observance.
I recollect it like one who has wakened from sleep.
When a boat on the Ganges River was seized
by a fierce dragon desiring human flesh,
you freed it wielding mighty force.
That's your past practice of precept and observance.
I recollect it like one who has wakened from sleep.
I used to be your footman named Kappa.
You thought he was intelligent and loyal.
That's your past practice of precept and observance.
I recollect it like one who has wakened from sleep."
"You certainly understand this lifespan of mine.
And others, too, you know; that's why you're the Buddha.
And that's why your blazing glory
lights up even the realm of divinity."