SN 22.89 — SN 22:89 About Khemaka | Khemaka 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

About Khemaka

Khemaka Sutta (SN 22:89)

On one occasion many elder monks were staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery. And at that time Ven. Khemaka was staying at the Jujube Tree Park, diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then in the evening the elder monks left their seclusion and addressed Ven. Dāsaka, (saying,) “Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, ‘The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, “We hope you are getting better, friend. We hope you are comfortable. We hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. We hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.”’”

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him: "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'We hope you are getting better, friend. We hope you are comfortable. We hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. We hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.'"

"I am not getting better, my friend. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening."

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and, on arrival, said to them, "The monk Khemaka has said to me, 'I am not getting better, my friend. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening.'"

"Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: Do you assume anything with regard to these five clinging-aggregates to be self or belonging to self?"'"

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: Do you assume anything with regard to these five clinging-aggregates to be self or belonging to self?'"

"Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self."

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and, on arrival, said to them, "The monk Khemaka has said to me, 'Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self.'"

"Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: If, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, Ven. Khemaka

assumes nothing to be self or belonging to self, then Ven. Khemaka is an arahant, devoid of effluents.'"'"

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: If, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, Ven. Khemaka assumes nothing to be self or belonging to self, then Ven. Khemaka is an arahant, devoid of effluents.'"

"Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self, and yet I am not an arahant. With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, 'I am' has not been overcome, although I don't assume that 'I am this.'"

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and, on arrival, said to them, "The monk Khemaka has said to me, 'Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self, and yet I am not an arahant. With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, "I am" has not been overcome, although I don't assume that "I am this."'"

"Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "Friend Khemaka, this 'I am' of which you speak: what do you say 'I am'? Do you say, 'I am form,' or do you say, 'I am something other than form'? Do you say, 'I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,' or do you say, 'I am something other than consciousness'? This 'I am' of which you speak: what do you say 'I am'?'"'

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'Friend Khemaka, this "I am" of which you speak: what do you say "I am"? Do you say, "I am form," or do you say, "I am something other than form"? Do you say, "I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness," or do you say, "I am something other than consciousness" '? This "I am" of which you speak: what do you say "I am"?'"

"Enough, friend Dāsaka. What is accomplished by this running back & forth? Fetch me my staff. I will go to the elder monks myself."

Then Ven. Khemaka, leaning on his staff, went to the elder monks and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with them. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the elder monks said to him, "Friend Khemaka, this 'I am' of which you speak: what do you say 'I am'? Do you say, 'I am form,' or do you say, 'I am something other than form'? Do you say, 'I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,' or do you say, 'I am something other than consciousness"? This 'I am' of which you speak: what do you say 'I am'?"

"Friends, it's not that I say 'I am form,' nor do I say 'I am something other than form.' It's not that I say, 'I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,' nor do I say, 'I am something other than consciousness.' With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, 'I am' has not been overcome, although I don't assume that 'I am this.'

"It's just like the scent of a blue, red, or white lotus: If someone were to call it the scent of a petal or the scent of the color or the scent of a filament, would he be speaking correctly?"

"No, friend."

"Then how would he describe it if he were describing it correctly?"

"As the scent of the flower: That's how he would describe it if he were describing it correctly."

"In the same way, friends, it's not that I say 'I am form,' nor do I say 'I am other than form.' It's not that I say, 'I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,' nor do I say, 'I am something other than consciousness.' With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, 'I am' has not been overcome, although I don't assume that 'I am this.'

"Friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, he still has with regard to the five clinging-aggregates a lingering residual 'I am' conceit, an 'I am' desire, an 'I am' obsession. But at a later time he keeps focusing on the phenomena of arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' As he keeps focusing on the arising & passing away of these five clinging-aggregates, the lingering residual 'I am' conceit, 'I am' desire, 'I am' obsession is fully obliterated.

"Just like a cloth, dirty & stained: Its owners give it over to a washerman, who scrubs it with salt earth or lye or cow-dung and then rinses it in clear water. Now even though the cloth is clean & spotless, it still has a lingering residual scent of salt earth or lye or cow-dung. The washerman gives it to the owners, the owners put it away in a scent-infused wicker hamper, and its lingering residual scent of salt earth, lye, or cow-dung is fully obliterated.

"In the same way, friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, he still has with regard to the five clinging-aggregates a lingering residual 'I am' conceit, an 'I am' desire, an 'I am' obsession. But at a later time he keeps focusing on

arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' As he keeps focusing on the arising & passing away of these five clinging-aggregates, the lingering residual 'I am' conceit, 'I am' desire, 'I am' obsession is fully obliterated."

When this was said, the elder monks said to Ven. Khemaka, "We didn't cross-examine Ven. Khemaka with the purpose of troubling him, just that (we thought) Ven. Khemaka is capable of declaring the Blessed One's message, teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain—just as he has in fact declared it, taught it, described it, set it forth, revealed it, explained it, made it plain."

That is what Ven. Khemaka said. Gratified, the elder monks delighted in his words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of sixty-some monks, through lack of clinging/sustenance, were released from effluents—as was Ven. Khemaka's.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 140; SN 12:68; AN 3:88