SN 42.9 — Families

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 42.9

1. Chiefs

Families

At one time the Buddha was wandering in the land of the Kosalans together with a large Saṅgha of mendicants when he arrived at Nāḷandā. There he stayed near Nāḷandā in Pāvārika's Mango Grove.

Now at that time Nāḷandā was undergoing famine and scarcity, with crops blighted and turned to straw. At that time the Jain ascetic of the Ñātika clan was residing at Nāḷandā together with a large assembly of Jain ascetics. Then Asibandhaka's son the chief, who was a disciple of the Jains, went up to the Jain Ñātika, bowed, and sat down to one side. The Jain Ñātika said to him:

"Come, chief, refute the ascetic Gotama's doctrine. Then you will get a good reputation: 'Asibandhaka's son the chief refuted the doctrine of the ascetic Gotama, so mighty and powerful!'"

"But sir, how am I to do this?"

"Here, brahmin, go to the ascetic Gotama and say to him: 'Sir, don't you in many ways praise kindness, protection, and sympathy for families?' When he's asked this, if he answers: 'Indeed I do, chief,' say this to him: 'So what then are you doing, wandering together with this large Saṅgha of mendicants during a time of famine and scarcity, with crops blighted and turned to straw? The Buddha is practicing to annihilate, collapse, and ruin families!' When you put this dilemma to him, the Buddha won't be able to either spit it out or swallow it down."

"Yes, sir," replied Asibandhaka's son. He rose from his seat, bowed, and respectfully circled the Jain Ñātika, keeping him on his right. Then he went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him:

"Sir, don't you in many ways praise kindness, protection, and sympathy for families?"

"Indeed I do, chief."

"So what then are you doing, wandering together with this large Saṅgha of mendicants during a time of famine and scarcity, with crops blighted and turned to straw? The Buddha is practicing to annihilate, collapse, and ruin families!"

“Well, chief, I recollect ninety-one eons back but I’m not aware of any family that’s been ruined merely by offering some cooked almsfood. Rather, rich, affluent, and wealthy families—with lots of gold and silver, lots of property and assets, and lots of money and grain—all acquired their wealth because of giving, truth, and restraint.

Chief, there are eight causes and reasons for the ruin of families. Their ruin stems from rulers, bandits, fire, or flood. Or they lose their savings. Or their business fails due to not applying themselves to work. Or a wastrel is born into the family who squanders and fritters away their wealth. And impermanence is the eighth. These are the eight causes and reasons for the ruin of families.

Given that these eight reasons are found, suppose someone says this: ‘The Buddha is practicing to annihilate, collapse, and ruin families!’ Unless they give up that speech and that thought, and let go of that view, they will be placed in hell as if delivered there.”

When he said this, Asibandhaka’s son the chief said to the Buddha, “Excellent, sir! Excellent! … From this day forth, may the Buddha remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.”