SN 42.9 — SN 42:9 Families | Kula Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Families

Kula Sutta (SN 42:9)

On one occasion the Blessed One, while wandering on tour among the Kosalans together with a large Saṅgha of monks, arrived at Nāḷandā. There he stayed at Nāḷandā in Pāvārika’s Mango Grove.

Now at that time Nāḷandā was in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, the crops white with blight and turned to straw. And at that time Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta was staying in Nāḷandā together with a large following of nigaṇṭhas. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the nigaṇṭhas, went to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta said to

him, “Come, now, headman. Refute the words of the contemplative Gotama, and this admirable report about you will spread afar: ‘The words of the contemplative Gotama—so mighty, so powerful—were refuted by Asibandhakaputta the headman!’”

“But how, lord, will I refute the words of the contemplative Gotama—so mighty, so powerful?”

“Come now, headman. Go to the contemplative Gotama and on arrival say this: ‘Lord, doesn’t the Blessed One in many ways praise kindness, protection, & sympathy for families?’ If the contemplative Gotama, thus asked, answers, ‘Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praises kindness, protection, & sympathy for families,’ then you should say, ‘Then why, lord, is the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, wandering on tour around Nāḷandā in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, when the crops are white with blight and turned to straw? The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families.’ When the contemplative Gotama is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won’t be able to swallow it down or spit it up.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” Asibandhakaputta the headman got up from his seat, bowed down to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, circumambulated him, and then went to the Blessed One. On arrival, he bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, doesn’t the Blessed One in many ways praise kindness, protection, & sympathy for families?”

“Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praises kindness, protection, & sympathy for families.”

“Then why, lord, is the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, wandering on tour around Nāḷandā in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, when the crops are white with blight and turned to straw? The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families.”

“Headman, recollecting back over 91 eons, I do not know any family to have been brought to downfall through the giving of cooked alms. On the contrary: Whatever families are rich, with much wealth, with many possessions, with a great deal of money, a great many accoutrements of wealth, a great many commodities, all have become so from giving, from truth, from restraint.

“Headman, there are eight causes, eight reasons for the downfall of families. Families go to their downfall because of kings, or families go to their downfall because of thieves, or families go to their downfall because of fire, or families go to their downfall because of floods, or their stored-up treasure disappears, or their mismanaged undertakings go wrong, or in the family a wastrel is born who squanders, scatters, & shatters its wealth, and inconstancy itself is the eighth. These are the eight causes, the eight reasons for the downfall of families. Now, when these eight causes, these eight reasons are to be found, if

anyone should say of me, ‘The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families’—without abandoning that statement, without abandoning that intent, without relinquishing that view—then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.”

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 58; AN 4:255