

# MN 84: Madhura Sutta

## *The Discourse at Madhura*

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

Thus have I heard. On one occasion Venerable Mahākaccāna was living at Madhura, in Gundā Forest. King Avantiputta of Madhura heard, “Apparently the contemplative Kaccāna is living at Madhura, in Gundā Forest. A good report about Venerable Kaccāna has been spread around, saying ‘He is wise, accomplished, sagacious, well-learned, of beautiful speech, wonderfully eloquent, an elder, and an Arahant.’ It is good to see such Arahants.” Then King Avantiputta of Madhura had a number of high-quality vehicles prepared, got in one of them, and, together with that entourage of vehicles, set out for Madhura in full royal majesty to see Venerable Mahākaccāna. He went as far as he could go by vehicle, then disembarked, and approached Venerable Mahākaccāna on foot.

After approaching Venerable Mahākaccāna, he conversed with him, and when the appropriate polite conversation was finished, he sat to one side. When he was seated to one side, King Avantiputta of Madhura said to Venerable Mahākaccāna, “Sir Kaccāna, the Brahmins say, ‘Only the Brahmin is the best caste, the other castes are inferior; only the Brahmin is the light caste, the other castes are dark; only Brahmins become pure, not non-Brahmins; Brahmins are the sons of Brahma, born from his mouth, produced by Brahma, created by Brahma, the heirs of Brahma.’ What does Sir Kaccāna say about this?”

“Great King, this is just an opinion<sup>1</sup> in the world - ‘Only the Brahmin is the best caste... the heirs of Brahma.’ Great King, there is a way by which one can see it as just an opinion in the world - ‘Only the Brahmin is the best caste... the heirs of Brahma.’

“What do you think, Great King - if a khattiya<sup>2</sup> succeeds at acquiring wealth, grain, silver, and gold, will khattiyas get up before him, go to bed after him, agree to whatever he wants done, behave in a pleasing manner towards him, and speak affectionately to him? If an aristocrat succeeds at acquiring wealth, grain, silver, and gold, will brahmins<sup>3</sup>... vessas<sup>4</sup>... suddas<sup>5</sup> get up before him, go to bed after him, agree to whatever he wants done, behave in a pleasing manner towards him, and speak affectionately to him?”

“Sir Kaccāna, if a khattiya succeeds at acquiring wealth, grain, silver, and gold, then khattiyas... brahmins... vessas... suddas will get up before him, go to bed after him, agree to whatever he wants done, behave in a pleasing manner towards him, and speak affectionately to him.”

“What do you think, Great King - if a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda succeeds at acquiring wealth, grain, silver, and gold, will khattiyas... brahmins... vessas... suddas get up before

---

1 *Ghosa*. Lit. “voice” or “sound.”

2 *Khattiya*. The noble caste, traditionally occupied in government and military.

3 *Brahmin*. The clerical caste, traditionally occupied in religious activities.

4 *Vessa*. The business caste, traditionally occupied as farmers and merchants.

5 *Sudda*. The menial caste, traditionally occupied as laborers and service-providers.

him, go to bed after him, agree to whatever he wants done, behave in a pleasing manner towards him, and speak affectionately to him?”

“Sir Kaccāna, if a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda succeeds at acquiring wealth, grain, silver, and gold, then khattiyas... brahmins... vessas... suddas will get up before him, go to bed after him, agree to whatever he wants done, behave in a pleasing manner towards him, and speak affectionately to him.”

“What do you think, Great King - if it is like this, aren't these four castes equal? Or how does it seem to you in this case?”

“Certainly, Sir Kaccāna, as it is like this, these four castes are equal. I do not see what would make them different in this case.”

“Great King, this is one way by which one can see it as just an opinion in the world - ‘Only the Brahmin is the best caste... the heirs of Brahma.’

“What do you think, Great King - if a khattiya... a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda kills, steals, commits sexual misconduct, tells lies, speaks maliciously, speaks harshly, chatters uselessly, is covetous, is aversive, and holds wrong view, then when he is separated from his body after death, will he reappear in a state of deprivation, a bad destination, in downfall, in hell? Or how does it seem to you in this case?”

“Kaccāna, if a khattiya... a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda kills, steals, commits sexual misconduct, tells lies, speaks maliciously, speaks harshly, chatters uselessly, is covetous, is aversive, and holds wrong view, then when he is separated from his body after death, he will reappear in a state of deprivation, a bad destination, in downfall, in hell. This is how it seems to me, and this is what I have heard from arahants.”

“Excellent, excellent, Great King! Great King, it is excellent that it seems that way to you, and it is excellent that you have heard this from arahants. What do you think, Great King - if it is like this, aren't these four castes equal? Or how does it seem to you in this case?”

“Certainly, Sir Kaccāna, as it is like this, these four castes are equal. I do not see what would make them different in this case.”

“Great King, this is another way by which one can see it as just an opinion in the world - ‘Only the Brahmin is the best caste... the heirs of Brahma.’

“What do you think, Great King - if a khattiya... a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda refrains from killing, refrains from stealing, refrains from sexual misconduct, refrains from telling lies, refrains from malicious speech, refrains from harsh speech, refrains from useless chatter, is not covetous, is not aversive, and holds right view, then when he is separated from his body after death, will he reappear in a good destination, in a heaven-world? Or how does it seem to you in this case?”

“Kaccāna, if a khattiya... a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda refrains from killing, refrains from stealing, refrains from sexual misconduct, refrains from telling lies, refrains from malicious speech, refrains from harsh speech, refrains from useless chatter, is not covetous, is not aversive, and holds right view, then when he is separated from his body after death, he will reappear in a good destination, in a heaven-world. This is how it seems to me, and this is what I have heard from arahants.”

“Excellent, excellent, Great King! Great King, it is excellent that it seems that way to you, and it is excellent that you have heard this from arahants. What do you think, Great King - if it is like this, aren't these four castes equal? Or how does it seem to you in this case?”

“Certainly, Sir Kaccāna, as it is like this, these four castes are equal. I do not see what would make them different in this case.”

“Great King, this is another way by which one can see it as just an opinion in the world - 'Only the Brahmin is the best caste... the heirs of Brahma.’

“What do you think, Great King - if a khattiya... a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda commits thievery, larceny, burglary, robbery, or adultery, and people seize him and show him to you, saying 'Lord<sup>6</sup>, this is a criminal, an outlaw. Punish him however you wish.' What would you do?”

“Sir Kaccāna, I might have him executed, or imprisoned, or exiled, or whatever seemed appropriate. For what reason? Sir Kaccāna, although previously he was called a khattiya... a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda, that designation has now disappeared and he is just considered a criminal.”

“What do you think, Great King - if it is like this, aren't these four castes equal? Or how does it seem to you in this case?”

“Certainly, Sir Kaccāna, as it is like this, these four castes are equal. I do not see what would make them different in this case.”

“Great King, this is another way by which one can see it as just an opinion in the world - 'Only the Brahmin is the best caste... the heirs of Brahma.’

“What do you think, Great King - if a khattiya... a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda cuts off his hair and beard, puts on brown robes, leaves behind the household life, becomes a homeless monastic, refrains from killing, refrains from stealing, refrains from telling lies, refrains from eating at night, eats only once a day, is celibate, moral, and wholesome? What would you do?”

“Sir Kaccāna, I would welcome him, I would rise up for him, I would invite him to sit, I would offer him robes, food, lodging, medicines, and medical supplies, and I would arrange protection and security for him. For what reason? Sir Kaccāna, although

---

6 *Deva*. Lit. “angel” or “celestial being.” A polite term of address for a monarch.

previously he was called a khattiya... a brahmin... a vessa... a sudda, that designation has now disappeared and he is just considered a contemplative.”

“What do you think, Great King - if it is like this, aren’t these four castes equal? Or how does it seem to you in this case?”

“Certainly, Sir Kaccāna, as it is like this, these four castes are equal. I do not see what would make them different in this case.”

“Great King, this is another way by which one can see it as just an opinion in the world - ‘Only the Brahmin is the best caste... the heirs of Brahma.’”

When this was said, King Avantiputta of Madhura said to Venerable Mahākaccāna, “Wonderful, Sir Kaccāna! Wonderful, Sir Kaccāna. Sir Kaccāna, just as one might set upright what has been overturned, or reveal what has been concealed, or explain the path to one who is confused, or bring an oil-lamp into the darkness so those with eyes can see - in the same way, Sir Kaccāna has revealed the Dhamma in many ways. I go for refuge to Sir Kaccāna, and to the Dhamma, and to the monastic community. May Sir Kaccāna remember me as a disciple who has taken refuge for the rest of his life.”

“Great King, do not go to me for refuge. Go to the Blessed One for refuge, as I have.”

“Sir Kaccāna, where does the Blessed One live - the Arahant, the Fully Self-Enlightened One?”

“Great King, the Blessed One, the Arahant, the Fully Self-Enlightened one has attained Parinibbāna<sup>7</sup>.”

“Sir Kaccāna, even if we heard that the Blessed One was ten *yojana*<sup>8</sup> away, then we would travel ten *yojana* to see the Blessed One, the Arahant, the Fully Self-Enlightened One. Sir Kaccāna, even if we heard that the Blessed One was twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or a hundred *yojana* away, then we would travel a hundred *yojana* to see the Blessed One, the Arahant, the Fully Self-Enlightened One. However, Sir Kaccāna, since the Blessed One has attained Parinibbāna, then although he has attained Parinibbāna we go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the monastic community. May Sir Kaccāna remember me as a disciple who has taken refuge for the rest of his life.”

---

7 That is, “complete Nibbāna.” This is the term that is used when an enlightened being dies, to distinguish it from the ordinary death of an unenlightened being.

8 A unit of distance found in the Suttas. Its exact length is uncertain, though the context here indicates that “ten *yojana*” was considered a significant distance to travel by someone who had access to horse-drawn vehicles.