

MN 41: Sāleyyaka Sutta

The Discourse to the Residents of Sālā

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Prosperous One was traveling among the Kosalans, together with a large group of monks. He came to a brahmin village of Kosala, named Sālā. The brahmin householders of Sālā heard, “Apparently the contemplative Gotama, a child of the Sakyan clan who became a renunciant, is traveling among the Kosalans together with a large group of monks, and has arrived at Sālā. A good rumor has been circulated about that honorable Gotama: ‘The Prosperous One is a Worthy One, a Rightly Self-Awakened One; he has perfect knowledge and behavior; he is a Sublime One, a world-knower, an unsurpassed trainer of trainable people, a teacher of angels and humans, an Awakened One, a Prosperous One. He makes known this world with its angels, demons, divinities, contemplatives, priests, its celestial beings and its human beings, having personally realized it with his own superior knowledge. He teaches a Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in its conclusion, with the right meaning and phrasing. He demonstrates a spiritual life that is completely thorough and completely pure.’ It is good to see such Worthy Ones.”

Then the brahmin householders of Sālā approached the Prosperous One. Some paid respects to the Prosperous One and sat to one side; some conversed with him and sat to one side when the appropriate polite conversation was finished; some held up their hands in *añjali* and sat to one side; some announced their name and clan and sat to one side; and some remained silent and sat to one side.

When they were seated to one side, the brahmin householders of Sālā said to the Prosperous One, “Sir Gotama, what is the reason, what is the condition, because of which, when some beings are separated from their bodies after death, they reappear in a state of deprivation, a bad destination, downfall, hell? Sir Gotama, what is the reason, what is the condition, because of which, when some beings are separated from their bodies after death, they reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world?”

“Householders, it is because of behavior contrary to Dhamma, behavior contrary to peace, that when some beings are separated from their bodies after death, they reappear in a state of deprivation, a bad destination, downfall, hell. Householders, it is because of behavior consistent with Dhamma, behavior consistent with peace, that when some beings are separated from their bodies after death, they reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.”

“We do not understand the full meaning of Sir Gotama’s brief statement, that was spoken without an explanation of its full meaning. It would be good if Sir Gotama taught us the Dhamma, such that we might understand the full meaning of Sir Gotama’s brief statement that was spoken without an explanation of its full meaning.”

“Therefore, householders, listen well, and pay attention. I will speak.”

“Yes, sir,” the brahmin householders of Sālā replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

[Causes for Rebirth in Hell]

“Householders, there are three kinds of physical behavior that are contrary to Dhamma and contrary to peace. There are four kinds of verbal behavior that are contrary to Dhamma and contrary to peace. There are three kinds of mental behavior that are contrary to Dhamma and contrary to peace.

“Householders, what are the three kinds of physical behavior that are contrary to Dhamma and contrary to peace?”

“Here, householders, someone is a killer, violent, bloody-handed, settled in harming and killing, merciless towards living beings.

“One is a taker of what is not given; one steals what belongs to others, whether in a village or a wilderness, when it has not been given to them.

“One is a performer of sexual misconduct; one engages in sexual activity with those who are protected by mother, father, parents, brother, sister, relative, family, Dhamma, spouse, law, or betrothal.

“Householders, these are the three kinds of physical behavior that are contrary to Dhamma and contrary to peace.

“Householders, what are the four kinds of verbal behavior that are contrary to Dhamma and contrary to peace?”

“Here, householders, someone is a liar. When one is brought to an assembly, a forum, a group of relatives, a group of businesspeople, or to a royal family, and is asked about what one has seen: ‘Come, person, say what you know,’ when one does not know one says ‘I know,’ and when one knows one says ‘I do not know,’ when one does not see one says ‘I see,’ when one sees one says ‘I do not see.’ Thus for one’s own sake, or for another’s sake, or for the sake of a little bit of profit, one knowingly speaks falsely.

“One is a speaker of divisive speech. What one has heard here one reports over there in order to create division, and what one has heard over there one reports over here in order to create division. Thus one separates those who are united, worsens divisions, enjoys conflict, likes conflict, delights in conflict, and speaks in ways that create conflict.

“One is a speaker of harsh speech. Speech which is sharp, rough, hurtful, abusive, angry, and contributes to distraction¹ - this is the kind of speech which one speaks.

“One is a speaker of useless speech. One speaks at the wrong time; one speaks untruthfully; one speaks unbeneficially; one says things that are not Dhamma; one says

¹ *Asamādhisaṃvattanikā*. Lit. “contributes to a lack of samādhi.”

things that are not Vinaya. One says things that are not worth treasuring, at the wrong time, unreasonably, immoderately, without any connection to the goal.

“Householders, these are the four kinds of verbal behavior that are contrary to Dhamma and contrary to peace.

“Householders, what are the three kinds of mental behavior that are contrary to Dhamma and contrary to peace?

“Here, householders, someone is covetous. One covets other people’s possessions, thinking ‘Oh, if only what was theirs was mine!’

“One has an aversive mind with hostile thoughts, such as ‘May these beings be killed or injured or maimed or lost! They should not exist!’

“One has wrong beliefs and distorted perspectives, such as: ‘There is no gift, no offering, no donation. There is no result or consequence of good deeds or bad deeds. There is no world other than this one. There is no mother and no father. There are no beings who appear without undergoing birth. There are no contemplatives or priests in this world who are on the right path and are practicing correctly, such that they explain both this world and other worlds based on their own direct knowledge.’

“Householders, these are the three kinds of mental behavior that are contrary to Dhamma and contrary to peace.

“Thus, householders, it is because of behavior contrary to Dhamma, behavior contrary to peace, that when some beings are separated from their bodies after death, they reappear in a state of deprivation, a bad destination, downfall, hell.

[Causes for Rebirth in Heaven]

“Householders, there are three kinds of physical behavior that are consistent with Dhamma and are consistent with peace. There are four kinds of verbal behavior that are consistent with Dhamma and are consistent with peace. There are three kinds of mental behavior that are consistent with Dhamma and are consistent with peace.

“Householders, what are the three kinds of physical behavior that are consistent with Dhamma and are consistent with peace?

“Here, householders, someone gives up killing, refrains from killing; they put down their cudgels and knives, they live carefully, sympathetically, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings.

“One gives up taking what is not given, refrains from taking what is not given. One does not steal what belongs to others, whether in a village or a wilderness, when it has not been given to them.

“One gives up sexual misconduct, refrains from sexual misconduct; one does not engage in sexual activity with those who are protected by mother, father, parents, brother, sister, relative, family, Dhamma, spouse, law, or betrothal.

“Householders, what are the four kinds of verbal behavior that are consistent with Dhamma and are consistent with peace?

“Here, householders, someone gives up lying, refrains from lying. When one is brought to an assembly, a forum, a group of relatives, a group of businesspeople, or to a royal family, and is asked about what one has seen: ‘Come, person, say what you know,’ when one does not know one says ‘I do not know,’ and when one knows one says ‘I know,’ when one does not see one says ‘I do not see,’ when one sees one says ‘I see.’ Thus one does not knowingly speak falsely, whether for one’s own sake, or for another’s sake, or for the sake of a little bit of profit.

“One gives up divisive speech, refrains from divisive speech. . What one has heard here one does not report over there in order to create division, and what one has heard over there one does not report over here in order to create division. Thus one unites those who are divided, strengthens concord, enjoys harmony, likes harmony, delights in harmony, and speaks in ways that create harmony.

“One gives up harsh speech, refrains from harsh speech. Speech which is polite, pleasing to the ear, lovable, heart-touching, humane, appealing to many, enjoyable to many – this is the kind of speech which one speaks.

“One gives up useless speech, refrains from useless speech. One speaks at the right time; one speaks truthfully; one speaks beneficially; one speaks about Dhamma; one speaks about Vinaya. One says things that are worth treasuring, at the right time, reasonably, moderately, connected with the goal.

“Householders, these are the four kinds of verbal behavior that are consistent with Dhamma and are consistent with peace.

“Householders, what are the three kinds of mental behavior that are consistent with Dhamma and are consistent with peace?

“Here, householders, someone is not covetous. One does not covet other people’s possessions by thinking ‘Oh, if only what was theirs was mine!’

“One has a non-aversive mind with non-hostile thoughts, such as ‘May these beings be unthreatened, unharmed, untroubled, and constantly happy!’

“One has right beliefs and undistorted perspectives, such as: ‘There are gifts, offerings, and donations. There are results and consequences of good deeds and bad deeds. There are worlds other than this one. There is mother and father. There are beings who appear without undergoing birth. There are contemplatives and priests in this world who are on the right path and are practicing correctly, such that they explain both this world and other worlds based on their own direct knowledge.’

“Householders, these are the three kinds of mental behavior that are consistent with Dhamma and are consistent with peace.

“Thus, householders, it is because of behavior consistent with Dhamma, behavior consistent with peace, that when some beings are separated from their bodies after death, they reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.”

[Deciding One's Rebirth]

"Householders, if one who behaves consistent with Dhamma and consistent with peace wishes, 'When I am separated from my body after death, may I reappear as a wealthy aristocrat,' then it is possible that when they are separated from their body after death, they may reappear as a wealthy aristocrat. For what reason? Because they behave consistent with Dhamma and consistent with peace.

"Householders, if one who behaves consistent with Dhamma and consistent with peace wishes, 'When I am separated from my body after death, may I reappear as a wealthy brahmin... a wealthy householder... an angel of the Four Great Kings... an angel of the Thirty-Three... a Yāma² angel... an angel of Contentment... an angel of Delight in Creating... an angel of Controlling Other's Creations... a Brahma angel... an angel of Luminosity... an angel of Limited Luminosity... an angel of Immeasurable Luminosity... an angel of Luminous Motion... an angel of Limited Radiance... an angel of Immeasurable Radiance... an angel of Radiant Suffusion... an angel of Abundant Fruit... an angel of Aviha... an angel of Atappa... an angel of Sudassa... an angel of Sudassi... an angel of Akaniṭṭha... an angel of the dimension of infinite space... an angel of the dimension of infinite consciousness... an angel of the dimension of nothingness... an angel of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception,' then it is possible that when they are separated from their body after death, they may reappear as an angel of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. For what reason? Because they behave consistent with Dhamma and consistent with peace.

“Householders, if one who behaves consistent with Dhamma and consistent with peace wishes, 'Based on the elimination of my corruptions, may I reach and remain in the immediately visible state of the corruption-free mental liberation by wisdom, having personally realized it with my own higher knowledge,' then it is possible that, based on the elimination of their corruptions, they will reach and remain in the immediately visible state of the corruption-free mental liberation by wisdom, having personally realized it with their own higher knowledge. For what reason? Because they behave consistent with Dhamma and consistent with peace.”

When this was said, the brahmin householders of Sālā said to the Prosperous One, “Magnificent, Sir Gotama, magnificent, Sir Gotama! Sir Gotama, just like one might set upright what was upside down, or reveal what was hidden, or explain the path to one who is confused, or bring an oil lamp into darkness so those with eyes can see, in the same way the Dhamma has been revealed in many ways by Sir Gotama. We go to Sir Gotama for

2 This word has three very different meanings: (1) time, (2) restraint, (3) death.

refuge, and to the Dhamma, and to the monastic community. May Sir Gotama remember us as lay devotees who today have taken refuge for the rest of their lives.”