

FOUR SUPREME ACQUISITIONS

15 (6) The Story of King Pasēnadi of Kōsala (Verse 204)

While residing at the Jētavana Monastery, the Buddha spoke this verse, with reference to King Pasēnadi of Kōsala. For at a certain period of his life King Pasēnadi Kōsala used to eat boiled rice cooked by the bucketful, and sauce and curry in proportion. One day after he had eaten his breakfast, unable to shake off the drowsiness occasioned by over-eating, he went to see the Buddha and paced back and forth before him with a very weary appearance. Overcome with a desire to sleep, but not daring to lie down and stretch himself out, he sat down on one side. Thereupon the Buddha said to him, "Did you come, great king, before you were well rested?" "Oh no, Venerable; but I always suffer greatly after eating a meal." Then said the Buddha to him, "Great king, over-eating just brings such suffering." So saying, the Buddha gave the following stanza: "If a man gives way to indolence, eats too much, spends his time in sleep, and lies and rolls about like a great hog fed on grain, such a simpleton will endlessly be reborn." After admonishing the king with this stanza, the Buddha continued, "Great king, one ought to observe moderation in eating, for in moderate eating there is comfort." And admonishing him further, the Buddha gave the following stanza: "If a man be ever mindful, if he observe moderation in taking food, his sufferings will be but slight; he will grow old slowly, preserving his life." The king was unable to memorize this stanza. So the Buddha said to the king's nephew, Prince Sudassana, who stood near, "Memorize this stanza." Sudassana asked the Buddha, "Venerable, after I have memorized this stanza, what shall I do with it?" The Buddha replied, "When the king eats his meal, just as he is about to take the last lump of boiled rice, you must recite this stanza. The king will understand its purport and will immediately throw away that lump of rice. When it is time to boil the rice for the king's next meal, you must fetch just as many grains of fresh rice as there were grains of boiled rice in that lump of rice." "Very well, Venerable," replied Sudassana. So both evening and morning, when the king ate his meal, his nephew would recite the stanza just as the king was about to take the last lump of boiled rice, and would fetch for his next meal just as many grains of fresh rice as there were grains of boiled rice in the lump of boiled rice which the king had thrown away. And every time the king heard that stanza recited, he gave away a thousand pieces of money in alms. The king contented himself with a pint-pot of boiled rice a day, never exceeding that amount. After a time he became cheerful and lean. One day the king went to pay his respects to the Buddha, and having saluted the Buddha, said to him, "Ven-

erable, now I am happy. Once more I am able to follow the chase and to catch wild beasts and horses. I used to quarrel with my nephew. But recently, however, I gave my nephew my daughter, the Princess Vajirā, to wife. I have given her this village, that she may have a pool wherein to bathe. My quarrels with my nephew have ceased, and for this reason also I am happy. The other day a precious stone, the property of the royal household was lost; this has but recently returned to my hand, and for this reason also I am happy. Desiring to establish friendly relations with your disciples, I established the daughter of one of your kinsmen in our household, and for this reason also I am happy." The Buddha replied, "Great king, health is the greatest blessing one can ask for, contentment with whatever one has received is the greatest wealth, confidence the best relative. But there is no happiness that can be compared with Nibbāna."

Explanation Translation (Verse 204)

lābhā ārogyaparamā dhanam santutthi paramam nāti vissāsaparamā nibbānam paramam sukham

lābhā: of all acquisitions; *ārogyaparamā*: good health is the foremost; *dhanam*: of all wealth; *santutthi paramam*: happiness is the greatest; *nāti*: of all relations; *vissāsaparamā*: the trustworthy are the best; *nibbānam*: deathlessness; *paramam sukham*: is the highest bliss

Of acquisitions, good health is the foremost. Of wealth, the greatest is peace of mind. Of kinsmen, the trustworthy are the supremest. The highest bliss is Nibbāna.

Commentary

vissāsa paramā nāti: the trustworthy are the greatest relatives. Relatives are generally the most trusted. Relationship stands in the foundation of trust. The traditional commentary has this to say *Mātā vā hōtu pitā vā tēna saddhim vissāsō natthi, yēna aññatakēna pana saddhim vissāsō atthi sō asambandhōpi paramō uttamō nāti*. If one has no trust even in one's mother, father or other relatives, they are not relatives in reality. But, on the other hand, if one can place one's trust in someone who may not be related, he is truly a great relation. Trust implies agreement, intimacy, and confidence. As it is difficult at times to fathom the motives of some people and, as some are vicious, trust placed in those types of person — whether related or unrelated — is likely to bring about evil results on one. This way, it is difficult to come upon a person who could be implicitly trusted. Good results ensue from true and genuine trust. There are three things that are conducive to one's downfall: *Lōbha pramāda vishvāsna purushō nashayatē thribhi: tasmā lōbhō nakartavyam pramādō na vishvasēt*. The three things that bring about man's downfall are miserliness, slothfulness and wrong trust.