

Brahmāyācana Sutta

SN I 6.1 Brahma's Request

Translated by Ānanda

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Thus I have heard,

*Once, the Awakened One was living Uruvelā,
On the bank of the Nerañjarā River,
At the root of the goat's herd banyan tree,
Not long after his complete awakening.*

*During his secluded meditation
This chain of thought occurred to him:*

*“This Dhamma I have now discovered
Is profound, hard to see, hard to understand,
Peaceful and exquisite, far beyond mere intellectual reasoning,
Subtle, knowable by the wise.¹*

*But these people here
Delight in attachment,
Take pleasure in attachment,
Rejoice in attachment.²*

*And for people who
Delight in attachment,
Take pleasure in attachment,
Rejoice in attachment,³*

*These matters that are hard to see, namely;
The causes and conditions for existence,
The emergence of reality by way of its causes.⁴*

*These also are matters equally hard to see, namely:
The stilling of all built-in processes,
Breaking free from all mental limitations,
The soothing of tension*

¹ *“adhigato kho myāyaṃ dhammo gambhīro duddaso duranubodho santo paṇīto atakkāvacaro nipuṇo paṇḍitavedanīyo.*

² *Ālayarāmā kho panāyaṃ pajā ālayaratā ālayasammuditā.*

³ *Ālayarāmā kho panāyaṃ pajā ālayaratā ālayasammuditā.*

⁴ *duddasaṃ idaṃ thānaṃ yadidaṃ idappaccayatāpaṭiccasamuppādo.*

*Calming down, Complete Release, Nibbāna.*⁵

*If I were to teach the Dhamma,
Others would not understand me;
And this would be wearisome to me,
This would be for my own trouble.”*⁶

*So much so that the Awakened One uttered
These long-reflected verses, unheard in the past:*

*“By great hardship, this, I have attained,
Enough now of making it known;
By those lost in greed and aversion,
This Dhamma is not understood.”*⁷

*Going against the current and subtle,
Profound, hard to see and refined;
By those enslaved by craving it not seen,
Shrouded in the dark mass [of ignorance].”*⁸

*After having reflected in this way,
His mind inclined to not making an effort,
To not teaching the Dhamma.”*⁹

*At that time, the almighty Brahma,
Having encompassed the heart of the Awakened One
in his own heart, exclaimed:*

*“Alas, there goes the world,
Alas, this world is bound for destruction.”*¹⁰
*For the mind of the Truth-Finder,
The truly worthy, Perfectly All-Awakened
Inclines to not making an effort,
To not teaching the Dhamma.”*¹¹

*Then,
Just as a strong person could
flex their outstretched arm,
or outstretch their flexed arm;*

⁵ *Idampi kho ṭhānaṃ duddasaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭṭinissaggo taṇhākkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*

⁶ *Ahañceva kho pana dhammaṃ deseyyaṃ; pare ca me na ājāneyyūṃ; so mamassa kilamatho, sā mamassa vihesā”ti.*

⁷ *“Kicchena me adhigataṃ, halaṃ dāni pakāsituṃ; Rāgadosaparetehi, nāyaṃ dhammo susambudho.*

⁸ *Paṭisotaḡāmiṃ nipuṇaṃ, gambhīraṃ duddasaṃ aṇuṃ; Rāgarattā na dakkhanti, tamokhandhena āvuṭṭā” ti.*

⁹ *Itiha bhagavato paṭisaṅcikkhato appossukkatāya cittaṃ namati, no dhammadesanāya.*

¹⁰ *“nassati vata bho loko, vinassati vata bho loko,*

¹¹ *yatra hi nāma tathāgatassa arahato sammāsambuddhassa appossukkatāya cittaṃ namati, no dhammadesanāyā”ti.*

*Brahmā, the Undefeated-
Disappeared from the Brahma plane
And materialized right in front of the Awakened One.*

*Then, the Almighty Brahmā,
Having arranged his robe over to one side,
Having put down his right knee to the ground,
Having folded his hands together in añjali
in front of the Buddha said this:*

*“Teach Bhante, the Dhamma of the Awakened One,
Teach the Dhamma of the Blissful One.
There are beings who are born with little dust in the eyes
They will be lost without hearing this Dhamma.”¹²*

There will be those who understand!”

*Having said this,
he spoke further:*

*“In the past, there appeared in this Kingdom of Magadha
An impure Dhamma, filthy, crafted by minds,
Break open the doors of the Deathless,
Let them hear the Dhamma awakened to by the Immaculate One.”¹³*

*Just as a person standing on a mountain crag,
Can see the people roaming about all around;¹⁴*

*Same it is for the highest Dhamma of the delightful sage,
Ascent the fortress of Dhamma, O Omniscient One,¹⁵
Gone for you is sorrow, living, well rid of it,
But see here these beings, overwhelmed by birth and old age¹⁶*

*Arise! You Hero. Victor of the battle.
Leader of the convoy, debtless, wander this world.¹⁷
Teach the Dhamma of the Awakened.
There are those who will understand.”¹⁸*

Then the Awakened One

¹² *“desetu, bhante, bhagavā dhammaṃ, desetu sugato dhammaṃ. Santi sattā apparajakkhajātikā, assavanatā dhammassa parihāyanti.*

¹³ *“Pāturahosi magadhesu pubbe, Dhammo asuddho samalehi cintito; Apāpuretaṃ amatassa dvāraṃ, Suñantu dhammaṃ vimalenānubuddhaṃ.*

¹⁴ *Sele yathā pabbatamuddhaniṭṭhito, Yathāpi passe janataṃ samantato;*

¹⁵ *Tathūpamaṃ dhammamayaṃ sumedha, Pāsādamāruyha samantacakkhu;*

¹⁶ *Sokāvatiṇṇaṃ janatamapetasoko, Aveckhassu jātijarābhibhūtaṃ.*

¹⁷ *Uṭṭhehi vīra vijitasāṅgāma, Satthavāha anaṇa vicara loke;*

¹⁸ *Desassu bhagavā dhammaṃ, Aññātāro bhavissanti”ti.*

*Having considered Brahmā's plea,
Out of compassion for the living,
Surveyed the world with the Vision of a Buddha.¹⁹*

[Surveying the World]

*while surveying the world,
With is Awakened faculty of Vision, he saw:*

*Beings with little dust in their eyes,
Beings with much dust in their eyes;*

*Beings with acute faculties,
Beings with dull faculties;*

*Beings who were well-disposed,
Beings who were ill-disposed;*

*Beings who were easy to teach,
Beings who were hard to teach;*

*Those who lived, understanding the danger in selfishness
and conscientious of the afterlife,
Those who lived, careless of the danger in selfishness
and unconscientious of the afterlife.*

[Analogy of the Lotuses]

*Just as there were water lilies,
Indian lotuses and white lotuses,*

*And some of them were
Born in the water,
Grown in the water
Living underwater,
Feeding underwater,
Completely submerged;*

*While some others were
Born in the water
Grown in the water,
But risen at the surface of the water;*

*While some others were
Born in the water,*

¹⁹ *Atha kho bhagavā brahmuno ca ajjhesanaṃ veditvā sattesu ca kāruṇṇātaṃ paṭicca buddhacakkhunā lokaṃ volokesi.*

*Grown in the water,
But risen above, standing clear off of the water
Detached, untouched by the water;*

*In the same way,
With his Awakened faculty of Vision,
The Awakened One surveyed the world and saw:*

*Beings with little dust in their eyes,
Beings with much dust in their eyes;*

*Beings with acute faculties,
Beings with dull faculties;*

*Beings who were well-disposed,
Beings who were ill-disposed;*

*Beings who were easy to teach,
Beings who were hard to teach;*

*Those who lived, understanding the danger in selfishness
and conscientious of the afterlife,
Those who lived, careless of the danger in selfishness
and unconscientious of the afterlife.*

Having thought this, he replied in verse to Brahmā the Undefeated:

*“Wide open are the doors of the Deathless,
Let those who hear it break their bonds and gain faith,²⁰
Seeing it as disturbing, Brahmā, I thought of not teaching the Goodness,
This sublime Dhamma to mankind.”²¹*

Then Brahma the Undefeated thought:

“Given, is the opportunity for the Dhamma of the Awakened to be taught.”

*He paid loving respects to the Buddha
and having departed, vanished there and then.*

²⁰ “Apārutā tesaṃ amatassa dvārā, Ye sotavanto pamuñcantu saddham;

²¹ Vihimsasāññī paḷaṇaṃ na bhāsiṃ, Dhammaṃ paṇītaṃ manujesu brahme”ti.