

## 2. NO DOGMAS OR BLIND BELIEF

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was wandering on tour together with a large Saṅgha of monks when he arrived at a town of the Kālāmas named Kesaputta.<sup>2</sup> Now the Kālāmas of Kesaputta heard: "It is said that the ascetic Gotama, the Sakyan son who went forth from a Sakyan family, has arrived at Kesaputta. Now a good report about that master Gotama has been circulating thus: 'That Blessed One is an arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One. Having realized with his own direct knowledge this world with its devas, Māra, and Brahmā, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, with its devas and humans, he makes it known to others. He teaches a Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, with the right meaning and expression; he reveals a spiritual life that is perfectly complete and purified.' Now it is good to see such arahants."<sup>3</sup>

Then the Kālāmas of Kesaputta approached the Blessed One. Some paid homage to him and sat down to one side; some exchanged greetings with him and, after their greetings and cordial talk, sat down to

one side; some saluted him reverentially and sat down to one side; some remained silent and sat down to one side. Then the Kālāmas said to the Blessed One:

"Venerable sir, some ascetics and brahmins who come to Kesaputta explain and elucidate their own doctrines, but disparage, debunk, revile, and vilify the doctrines of others. But then some other ascetics and brahmins come to Kesaputta, and they too explain and elucidate their own doctrines, but disparage, debunk, revile, and vilify the doctrines of the others. For us, venerable sir, there is perplexity and doubt as to which of these good ascetics speak truth and which speak falsehood."

"It is fitting for you to be perplexed, O Kālāmas, it is fitting for you to be in doubt. Doubt has arisen in you about a perplexing matter. Come, Kālāmas. Do not go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by a collection of texts, by logic, by inferential reasoning, by reasoned cogitation, by the acceptance of a view after pondering it, by the seeming competence of a speaker, or because you think, 'The ascetic is our teacher.'<sup>4</sup> But when you know for yourselves, 'These things are unwholesome; these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practiced, lead to harm and suffering,' then you should abandon them.

"What do you think, Kālāmas? When greed, hatred, and delusion arise in a person, is it for his welfare or harm?"<sup>5</sup>—"For his harm, venerable sir."—"Kālāmas, a person who is greedy, hating, and deluded, overpowered by greed, hatred, and delusion, his thoughts controlled by them, will destroy life, take what is not given, engage in sexual misconduct, and tell lies; he will also prompt others to do likewise. Will that conduce to his harm and suffering for a long time?"—"Yes, venerable sir."

"What do you think, Kālāmas? Are these things wholesome or unwholesome?"—"Unwholesome, venerable sir."—"Blamable or blameless?"—"Blamable, venerable sir."—"Censured or praised by the wise?"—"Censured, venerable sir."—"Undertaken and practiced, do they lead to harm and suffering or not, or how is it in this case?"—"Undertaken and practiced, these things lead to harm and suffering. So it appears to us in this case."

"It was for this reason, Kālāmas, that we said: Do not go by oral tradition....

"Come, Kālāmas. Do not go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching,

by hearsay, by a collection of texts, by logic, by inferential reasoning, by reasoned cogitation, by the acceptance of a view after pondering it, by the seeming competence of a speaker, or because you think, 'The ascetic is our teacher.' But when you know for yourselves, 'These things are wholesome; these things are blameless; these things are praised by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practiced, lead to welfare and happiness,' then you should engage in them.

"What do you think, Kālāmas? When nongreed, nonhatred, and nondelusion arise in a person, is it for his welfare or harm?"—"For his welfare, venerable sir."—"Kālāmas, a person who is without greed, without hatred, without delusion, not overpowered by greed, hatred, and delusion, his thoughts not controlled by them, will abstain from the destruction of life, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, and from false speech; he will also prompt others to do likewise. Will that conduce to his welfare and happiness for a long time?"—"Yes, venerable sir."

"What do you think, Kālāmas? Are these things wholesome or unwholesome?"—"Wholesome, venerable sir."—"Blamable or blameless?"—"Blameless, venerable sir."—"Censured or praised by the wise?"—"Praised, venerable sir."—"Undertaken and practiced, do they lead to welfare and happiness or not, or how is it in this case?"—"Undertaken and practiced, these things lead to welfare and happiness. So it appears to us in this case."

"It was for this reason, Kālāmas, that we said: Do not go upon oral tradition....

"Then, Kālāmas, that noble disciple—devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unconfused, clearly comprehending, ever mindful—dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, likewise the second quarter, the third, and the fourth.<sup>6</sup> Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, vast, exalted, measureless, without hostility and without ill will.

"He dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with compassion ... with altruistic joy ... with equanimity, likewise the second quarter, the third, and the fourth. Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with equanimity, vast, exalted, measureless, without hostility and without ill will.



"When, Kālāmas, this noble disciple has thus made his mind free of enmity, free of ill will, uncorrupted and pure, he has won four assurances in this very life.

"The first assurance he has won is this: 'If there is another world, and if good and bad deeds bear fruit and yield results, it is possible that with the breakup of the body, after death, I shall arise in a good destination, in a heavenly world.'

"The second assurance he has won is this: 'If there is no other world, and if good and bad deeds do not bear fruit and yield results, still right here, in this very life, I live happily, free of enmity and ill will.

"The third assurance he has won is this: 'Suppose evil befalls the evil-doer. Then, as I do not intend evil for anyone, how can suffering afflict me, one who does no evil deed?'

"The fourth assurance he has won is this: 'Suppose evil does not befall the evil-doer. Then right here I see myself purified in both respects.'

"When, Kālāmas, this noble disciple has thus made his mind free of enmity, free of ill will, uncorrupted, and pure, he has won these four assurances in this very life."

"So it is, Blessed One! So it is, Fortunate One! When this noble disciple has thus made his mind free of enmity, free of ill will, uncorrupted and pure, he has won these four assurances in this very life.

"Magnificent, venerable sir! Magnificent, venerable sir! The Blessed One has made the Dhamma clear in many ways, as though he were turning upright what had been overthrown, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the darkness so those with good eyesight can see forms. We now go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. Let the Blessed One accept us as lay followers who have gone for refuge from today until life's end."<sup>8</sup>