

THE DISHONEST



AN 4.70
translated by
Ānandajoti Bhikkhu

The Discourse on the Dishonest

Adhammikasuttaṃ, AN 4.70

At whatever time, monastics, there are dishonest kings, at that time royal agents are dishonest.

In the tenth discourse in this section there are dishonest kings means established by the kings of old, agents, having taken a tenth in tax shares and the fines in accordance with guilt, dishonestly take extra taxes and extra fines. *Royal agents* means there are people who are agents managing various duties within the king's realms.

When there are dishonest royal agents at that time brahmins and householders are dishonest.

When there are dishonest brahmins and householders at that time the citizens are dishonest.

Brahmins and householders means those brahmins and householders dwelling within the cities. *Citizens* means those who dwell in the towns or the countryside.

When there are dishonest citizens moon and sun move irregularly.

When there is the irregular movement of the moon and sun the constellations and stars move irregularly.

When there is the irregular movement of the constellations and stars night and day move irregularly.

When there is the irregular movement of night and day the months and fortnights move irregularly.

When there is the irregular movement of the months and fortnights the seasons and years move irregularly.

When there is the irregular movement of the seasons and years the blowing of the winds is irregular and abnormal.

Irregular means having become uneven, blowing at the wrong time is the meaning. *Irregular* means not regular, too strong or too weak is the meaning. *Abnormal* means having departed from the right path. It is blowing along a devious path is the meaning.

The Discourse on the Dishonest – 2

When there is the irregular and abnormal movement of the winds the gods become agitated.

The gods become agitated means because of irregular and abnormal winds the trees break, their palaces break.¹

When the gods are agitated the gods do not give proper rain.

Therefore the gods become agitated, and those gods do not give the proper rain. Because of that this was said: the gods do not give the proper rain.

When the gods do not give proper rain the crops ripen irregularly.

The crops ripen irregularly means in one place they are swelling,² in one place sap has arisen, in one place it is still ripening, thus the crops ripen irregularly.

When the crops ripen irregularly, monastics, humans who eat them have a short life, are ugly and have many illnesses.

At whatever time, monastics, there are honest kings, at that time royal agents are honest.

When there are honest royal agents at that time brahmins and householders are honest.

When there are honest brahmins and householders at that time the citizens are honest.

When there are honest citizens the moon and sun move regularly.

When there is the regular movement of the moon and sun the constellations and stars move regularly.

The constellations and stars move regularly means just as the Kattika full moon is found in the Kattika constellation and

¹ Evidently the *bhummā devā* are intended here, those who live on earth, thought to inhabit trees and other places.

² Literally, *they are pregnant*, in the sense I take it of being larger than normal. I owe much of the interpretation of this passage to Dr. Junko Matsumura.

The Discourse on the Dishonest – 3

the Migasira full moon is found in the Migasira constellation, so in whatever month the full moons are, they are always found in the right constellations, therefore they move properly.

When there is the regular movement of the constellations and stars night and day move regularly.

When there is the regular movement of night and day the months and fortnights move regularly.

When there is the regular movement of the months and fortnights the seasons and years move regularly.

When there is the regular movement of the seasons and years the blowing of the winds is regular and normal.

The blowing of the winds means after being irregular the winds blow on time, six months there are northerly winds, six months there are southerly winds. Thus for those people the winds blow in accordance with the time of the year. *Regular* means moving regularly, neither too strong or too weak. *Normal* means along the right path. They blow along the path, not against the path is the meaning.

When there is the regular and normal movement of the winds the gods become calm.³

When the gods are calm the gods give proper rain.

When the gods give proper rain the crops ripen regularly.

When the crops ripen regularly, monastics, humans who eat them have a long life, are beautiful and have few illnesses.

If, when cattle are hurrying, the leader goes off course, they all go off course, as the leader is going off course.

Goes off course means goes crookedly, grasping an unsuitable way. The leader is going off course, here *leader* means their guide. Because the leader goes off course, having gone in an unsuitable way, the others also grasp an unsuitable way, grasp at a truly unsuitable way is the meaning.

³ Or, more literally, unagitated.

The Discourse on the Dishonest – 4

So it is with humans, he who is agreed upon as the chief,
if he is dishonest, what to say of the other people?
The whole country sleeps badly if the king is dishonest.

Sleeps badly means sleeping miserably, there is affliction is
the meaning.

If, when cattle are hurrying, as the leader is going straight,
they all go straight, following the one who goes straight.

So it is with humans, he who is agreed upon as the chief,
if he is honest, what to say of the other people?
The whole country will sleep happily if the king is but honest.