

KHEMĀSUTTAMĀ



SN 44.1 EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
ĀNANDAJOTI BHIKKHU

Khemāsuttam

The Discourse about Khemā

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Texts

BJT: Sri Lankan edition, from the Buddha Jayanti Tripitaka Series, Volume XVI (Colombo, 1981/2519, reprinted with corrections 2005).

Thai: Thai edition, as found on Budsir for Windows CD-ROM (version 2.0, Bangkok, 1996).

ChS: Burmese edition, as found on the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana CD-ROM (version 3, Igatpuri, no date, but = 1999).

PTS: European edition, Saṃyutta-Nikāya Part IV, ed. M. Leon Feer, (Oxford, 1894, reprinted 1990).

Preface

According to the commentary on the foremost nun disciples of the Buddha,¹ it is through this discourse that the nun Khemā was appointed to the position of foremost amongst those who have great wisdom, making her the female equivalent of Ven. Sāriputta.

The discourse is indeed profound, and in one interesting aspect departs from other discourses that contain the same teaching. Normally in the commentaries in the question about the position of the *tathāgata* after death, the word is defined like this:

tathāgato ti satto;²
the *tathāgata* (here) means a being.

¹ AA 1.5.2.

² Many examples, but see the comm. to MN 63.

This would give the question: Does a being exist (not exist, both exist and not exist, neither exist nor not exist) after death?³

Here, however, the text makes it clear the question is being asked about the Realised One himself, and not about beings in general:

“Evam-eva kho, Mahārāja, yena rūpena Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,
“Just so, Great King, through knowing whatever bodily form a Realised One can be
known by,

taṃ rūpaṃ Tathāgatassa pahīnaṃ ucchinnaṃ tālāvattukataṃ,
that form the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakataṃ āyatiṃ anuppādadhammaṃ.
made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

And the commentary concurs:

‘Taṃ rūpaṃ Tathāgatassa pahīnaṃ,’-ti
‘That form the *Tathāgata* has abandoned,’ means

taṃ vuttappakārarūpaṃ samudayappahānena sabbaññu-Tathāgatassa pahīnaṃ.
through abandoning the arising of that form said to be prepared, the omniscient
Tathāgata has abandoned (form).

Because of this we must see the meaning of these question in two ways: one as a question about beings in general, which cannot be said to exist (not exist, both exist and not exist, neither exist nor not exist) after death because there is no underlying something that has continual existence in human life, only conditionally arisen phenomena.

On the other hand in this context we cannot say the Realised One exists (not exists, both exists and not exists, neither exists nor not exists) after death because the state of Nibbāna is unincluded in the categories of existence altogether, as is anyone who has attained Liberation. Indeed, this is the definition of Liberation, to be free from renewed existence.

So the discourse throws new light on our understanding of these difficult questions, and rightly Arahat Khemā was placed at the foremost levels of great wisdom, through her profound understanding of these deep questions and her exposition of their meaning, which is later confirmed when the King, who is asking the questions, asks the very same questions of the Buddha himself and gets the same replies..

Ānandajoti Bhikkhu,
 September, 2014

³ These are four question of a sequence which sometimes includes a total of ten profound questions.

Khemāsuttam⁴

The Discourse about Khemā (SN 44.1)

Introduction in Torāṇavatthu

Ekam samayaṃ Bhagavā Sāvattھیyaṃ viharati

At one time the Fortunate One was dwelling near Sāvattī

Jetavane Anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme.

at Anāthapiṇḍika's grounds in Jeta's Wood.

Tena kho pana samayena Khemā bhikkhunī,

Then at that time the nun Khemā,

Kosalesu cārikam caramānā,

while walking gradually through Kosala on walking tour,

antarā ca Sāvattīm antarā ca Sāketam,

between Sāvattī and Sāketa,

Toraṇavattusmiṃ vāsam upagatā hoti.⁵

had reached and was dwelling in Torāṇavatthu.

Atha kho Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo Sāketā Sāvattīm gacchanto

Then the Kosalan King Pasenadi was going to Sāvattī from Sāketa

antarā ca Sāketam antarā ca Sāvattīm

and was between Sāvattī and Sāketa

Toraṇavattusmiṃ ekarattivāsam upagacchi.

and had reached and was dwelling in Torāṇavatthu for a night.

Atha kho Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo aññataram purisaṃ āmantesi:

Then the Kosalan King Pasenadi addressed a certain man,

“Ehi tvaṃ, ambho purisa, Torāṇavattusmiṃ

saying: “Please go, dear Sir, and in Torāṇavatthu

tathārūpaṃ samaṇaṃ vā brāhmaṇaṃ vā jāna

see if there would be a suitable and knowledgeable ascetic or brāhmaṇa

yam-ahaṃ ajja payirupāseyyan.”-ti⁶

I can pay homage to today.”

⁴ PTS: *Khemātherī*.

⁵ RTE omits: *vāsam upagatā hoti. Atha kho Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo Sāketā Sāvattīm gacchanto antarā ca Sāketam antarā ca Sāvattīm Torāṇavattusmiṃ.*

⁶ PTS: *payirūpāseyyanti*; and similarly throughout.

“Evaṃ, Devā,” ti kho so puriso, Rañño Pasenadissa Kosalassa paṭissutvā,
“Yes, your Majesty”, said that man, and after replying to the Kosalan King Pasenadi,

kevalakappaṃ Torāṇavatthum⁷ āhiṇḍanto⁸ nāddasa
and wandering through the whole of Torāṇavatthu, he did not find

tathārūpaṃ samaṇaṃ vā brāhmaṇaṃ vā
a suitable and knowledgeable ascetic or brāhmaṇa

yaṃ Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo payirupāseyya.
that the Kosalan King Pasenadi could pay homage to.

Addasā kho so puriso Khemaṃ bhikkhuniṃ
(But) the man did see that the nun Khemā

Toraṇavatthusmiṃ vāsaṃ upagataṃ.
had reached and was dwelling in Torāṇavatthu.

Disvāna, yena Rājā⁹ Pasenadi Kosalo tenupasaṅkamaṃ,
Having seen (her), he approached the Kosalan King Pasenadi,

upasaṅkamtivā Rājānaṃ Pasenadiṃ Kosalaṃ¹⁰ etad-avoca:
and after approaching he said this to the Kosalan King Pasenadi:

“Natthi kho, Deva, Torāṇavatthusmiṃ
“There is not, your Majesty, in Torāṇavatthu

tathārūpo samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā yaṃ devo payirupāseyya.
a suitable and knowledgeable ascetic or brāhmaṇa your Majesty can pay homage to today.

Atthi ca kho, deva, Khemā nāma bhikkhuniṃ,
But there is, your Majesty, the nun named Khemā,

tassa Bhagavato sāvikā Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa,
who is a disciple of the Fortunate One, the Worthy One, the Perfect Sambuddha,

tassā kho pana Ayyāya¹¹ evaṃ kalyāṇo kittisaddo abbhuggato:
and about this Noble Lady this beautiful report has gone round:

⁷ PTS: *Toraṇavatthusmiṃ*.

⁸ BJT: *anvāhiṇḍanto*.

⁹ BJT omits: *Rājā*.

¹⁰ PTS: *Pasenadi-Kosalaṃ*.

¹¹ BJT: *panayyāya*.

‘Paṇḍitā, viyattā¹² medhāvinī bahussutā cittakathā¹³ kalyāṇapaṭibhānā.’ ti
‘She is wise, learned, intelligent, a beautiful orator and extemporary speaker.’

Taṃ devo payirupāsātū.” ti
Your Majesty can pay homage to her.”

Khemā Therī answers the Questions

Atha kho Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo yena Khemā bhikkhunī tenupasaṅkami,
Then the Kosalan King Pasenadi approached the nun Khemā,

upasaṅkamitvā Khemaṃ bhikkhuniṃ abhivādetvā, ekamantaṃ nisīdi.
and after approaching and worshipping the nun Khemā, he sat down on one side.

Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo
While sitting on one side the Kosalan King Pasenadi

Khemaṃ bhikkhuniṃ etad-avoca:
said this to the nun Khemā:

“Kiṃ nu kho, Ayye, hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?” ti¹⁴
“How is it, Noble Lady, does the Realised One exist after death?”

“Abyākataṃ¹⁵ kho¹⁶ etaṃ, Mahārāja, Bhagavatā:
“This has not been answered, Great King, by the Fortunate One:

‘Hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ” ti
‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ ”

“Kiṃ pan’ Ayye, na hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?” ti
“But how is it, Noble Lady, does the Realised One not exist after death?”

‘Etaṃ-pi¹⁷ kho, Mahārāja, abyākataṃ Bhagavatā:
“This has not been answered, Great King, by the Fortunate One:

‘Na hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ” ti
‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ ”

¹² RTE: *byattā*.

¹³ RTE, PTS: *cittakathī*.

¹⁴ BJT: *param-maraṇā ti*; and similarly throughout.

¹⁵ SHB, PTS: *Avyākataṃ*; and similarly throughout.

¹⁶ BJT omits: *kho*.

¹⁷ PTS: *Tam pi*.

“Kiṃ nu kho, Ayye, hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?” ti
“How is it, Noble Lady, does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?”

“Abyākatam̐ kho etam̐, Mahārāja, Bhagavatā:
“This has not been answered, Great King, by the Fortunate One:

“Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?” ’ ti
“Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?” ’

“Kiṃ pan’ Ayye, neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā.” ti
“But how is it, Noble Lady, does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“Etam-pi kho, Mahārāja, abyākatam̐ Bhagavatā:
“This has not been answered, Great King, by the Fortunate One:

“Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?” ’ ti
“Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?” ’

“ ‘Kiṃ nu kho, Ayye, hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti
“ ‘How is it, Noble Lady, does the Realised One exist after death?’

– iti puṭṭhā samānā,
– when there is this question,

‘Abyākatam̐ kho etam̐, Mahārāja, Bhagavatā:
° you say: ‘This has not been answered, Great King, by the Fortunate One:

‘Hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ’ ti vadesi.
“Does the Realised One exist after death?” ’

‘Kiṃ pan’ Ayye, na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti
‘But how is it, Noble Lady, does the Realised One not exist after death?’

– iti puṭṭhā samānā,
– when there is this question,

‘Etam-pi kho, Mahārāja, abyākatam̐ Bhagavatā:
° you say: ‘This has not been answered, Great King, by the Fortunate One:

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ’ ti vadesi.
“Does the Realised One not exist after death?” ’

‘Kiṃ nu kho, Ayye, hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti
‘How is it, Noble Lady, does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’

– iti puṭṭhā samānā,
– when there is this question,

‘Abyākatam kho etam, Mahārāja, Bhagavatā:

° you say: ‘This has not been answered, Great King, by the Fortunate One:

“Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?” ’ ti vadesi.

“Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?” ’

‘Kiṃ pan’ Ayye,¹⁸ neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ti

‘How is it, Noble Lady, does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’

– iti puṭṭhā samānā,

– when there is this question,

‘Etam-pi kho, Mahārāja, abyākatam Bhagavatā:

° you say: ‘This has not been answered, Great King, by the Fortunate One:

“Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?” ’ ti vadesi.

“Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?” ’

Ko nu ko Ayye hetu ko paccayo yenetam¹⁹ abyākatam Bhagavatā?’ ti

What is the cause, Noble Lady, what is the reason, why does the Fortunate One not answer this?’

“Tena hi, Mahārāja, tañ-ñevettha paṭipucchissāmi,

“Now then, Great King, here I will ask you something in return,

yathā te khameyya tathā nam byākareyyāsi.

as you see fit, so you should answer.

Tam kiṃ maññasi, Mahārāja,

What do you think, Great King,

atthi te koci gaṇako vā muddiko vā saṅkhāyako vā

do you have a mathematician, or a calculator or an accountant

yo pahoti Gaṅgāya vālukam²⁰ gaṇetum,

who is able to count the (amount of) sand in the Ganges,

ettakā vālukā iti vā,

(saying): there is this much sand,

ettakāni vālukasatāni iti vā,

or there are so many hundreds of (grains of) sand,

¹⁸ PTS: *Kiṃ nu kho*; which is out of pattern with its own readings above.

¹⁹ SHB, PTS: *yena tam*.

²⁰ SHB, RTE read: *vālik*- throughout.

ettakāni vālukasahassāni iti vā,
or there are so many thousands of (grains of) sand,

ettakāni vālukasatasahassāni iti vā?” ti
or there are so many hundreds of thousands of (grains of) sand?”

“No hetam, Ayye.”
“Certainly not, Noble Lady.”

“Atthi pana te koci gaṇako vā muddiko vā saṅkhāyako vā
“But do you have a mathematician, or a calculator or an accountant

yo pahoti mahāsamudde udakam gaṇetum,²¹
who is able to measure the water in the great ocean,

ettakāni udakāḷhakāni iti²² vā,
(saying): there are this many gallons of water,

ettakāni udakāḷhakasatāni iti vā,
or there are this many hundreds of gallons of water,

ettakāni udakāḷhakasahassāni iti vā,
or there are this many thousands of gallons of water,

ettakāni udakāḷhakasatasahassāni iti vā?” ti
or there are this many hundreds of thousands of gallons of water?”

“No hetam, Ayye.
“Certainly not, Noble Lady.

Tam kissa hetu?
What is the cause of that?

Mah’ Ayye, samuddo gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho.” ti²³
Great is the ocean, Noble Lady, deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom.”

“Evam-eva kho, Mahārāja,
“Just so, Great King,

yena rūpena²⁴ Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,
through knowing whatever bodily form a Realised One can be known by,

²¹ SHB, PTS: *manitum*.

²² BJT: *ti*; and similarly throughout.

²³ BJT: *appariyogāho ti*; and similarly throughout.

²⁴ ChS: *rūpe*.

taṃ rūpaṃ²⁵ Tathāgataṃ pahīnaṃ ucchinnamūlaṃ tālāvattthukataṃ,
that form the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakatā²⁶ āyatiṃ anuppādadhammaṃ.²⁷
made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Rūpasaṅkhāya vimutto²⁸ kho, Mahārāja, Tathāgato,
The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as bodily form,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho,²⁹ seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.³⁰
he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

‘Hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,
‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,
‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,
‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti.
‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.

Yāya vedanāya Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,
Through knowing whatever feeling a Realised One can be known by,

sā vedanā Tathāgataṃ pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvattthukatā,
that feeling the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakatā āyatiṃ anuppādadhammā.
made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Vedanāsaṅkhāya vimutto kho,³¹ Mahārāja, Tathāgato,
The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as feeling,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho,³² seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.
he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

²⁵ PTS omits: *Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya taṃ rūpaṃ*; also in the repetition below.

²⁶ RTE: *anabhāvāṅkataṃ*; similarly throughout; ChS: *anabhāvāṅkataṃ*; similarly throughout.

²⁷ PTS: *anuppādakataṃ*.

²⁸ SHB, RTE: *Rūpasaṅkhyā vimutto kho*; similarly throughout.

²⁹ BJT: *appariyogāho*.

³⁰ RTE: *mahārāja mahāsamuddo kho*; similarly throughout.

³¹ ChS omits: *kho*.

³² BJT from here on writes: *duppariyogāho*; against its earlier: *appariyogāho*.

‘Hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti.

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.

Yāya saññāya Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,

Through knowing whatever perception a Realised One can be known by,

sā saññā Tathāgatassa pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvatthukatā,

that perception the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakatā āyatiṃ anuppādadhammā.

made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Saññāsaṅkhāya vimutto kho,³³ Mahārāja, Tathāgato,

The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as perception,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho, seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.

he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

‘Hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti.

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.

³³ ChS omits: *kho*.

Yehi saṅkhārehi Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,

Through knowing whatever (volitional) processes a Realised One can be known by,

te saṅkhārā Tathāgatassa pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvattthukatā,

those (volitional) processes the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakatā āyatim anuppādadhammā.

made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Saṅkhārāsāṅkhāya vimutto kho,³⁴ Mahārāja, Tathāgato

The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as (volitional) processes,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho, seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.

he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

‘Hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti.

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.

Yena viññāṇena³⁵ Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,

Through knowing whatever consciousness a Realised One can be known by,

taṃ viññāṇaṃ Tathāgatassa pahīnaṃ ucchinnamūlaṃ tālāvattthukataṃ,

that consciousness the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakataṃ āyatim anuppādadhammaṃ.

made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Viññāṇasaṅkhāya vimutto kho, Mahārāja, Tathāgato,

The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as consciousness,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho,³⁶ seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.

he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

³⁴ RTE: *Saṅkhārāsāṅkhyā vimutto kho*; similarly throughout.

³⁵ ChS: *viññāṇe*.

³⁶ BJT: *appariyogāho*; being very inconsistent in its readings.

‘Hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti.’³⁷

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.’

Atha kho Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo,

Then the Kosalan King Pasenadi,

Khemāya bhikkhuniyā bhāsitaṃ abhinanditvā anumoditvā,

after greatly rejoicing and gladly receiving this word of the nun Khemā,

uṭṭhāyāsanā Khemaṃ bhikkhuniṃ abhivādetvā padakkhiṇaṃ katvā pakkāmi.

having worshipped and circumambulated the nun Khemā, departed.

King Pasenadi meets the Buddha

Atha kho Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo

Then the Kosalan King Pasenadi

aparena samayena yena Bhagavā tenupasaṅkami,

at another time approached the Fortunate One,

upasaṅkamtivā Bhagavantaṃ abhivādetvā, ekamantaṃ nisīdi.

and after approaching and worshipping the Fortunate One, he sat down on one side.

Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo Bhagavantaṃ etad-avoca:

While sitting on one side the Kosalan King Pasenadi said this to the Fortunate One:

“Kiṃ nu kho, Bhante, hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?” ti

“How is it, reverend Sir, does the Realised One exist after death?”

“Abyākataṃ kho etaṃ, Mahārāja, mayā:

“This has not been answered, Great King, by me:

‘Hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ” ti

‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ ”

³⁷ Required, but omitted in all editions. In the repetition below BJT alone has it.

“Kiṃ pana, Bhante, na hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?” ti

“But how is it, reverend Sir, does the Realised One not exist after death?”

“Etam-pi kho,³⁸ Mahārāja, abyākatam̐ mayā:

“This has not been answered, Great King, by me:

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ” ti

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ ”

“Kiṃ nu kho, Bhante, hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?” ti

“How is it, reverend Sir, does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?”

“Abyākatam̐ kho etam̐, Mahārāja, mayā:

“This has not been answered, Great King, by me:

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ” ti

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ ”

“Kiṃ pana, Bhante, neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?” ti

“But how is it, reverend Sir, does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“Etam-pi kho, Mahārāja, abyākatam̐ mayā:

“This has not been answered, Great King, by me:

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ” ti

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ ”

“ ‘Kiṃ nu kho, Bhante, hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti

“ ‘How is it, reverend Sir, does the Realised One exist after death?’

– iti puṭṭhā samānā,

– when there is this question,

‘Abyākatam̐ kho etam̐, Mahārāja, mayā:

° you say: ‘This has not been answered, Great King, by me:

‘Hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti vadesi.

“Does the Realised One exist after death?”

‘Kiṃ pana, Bhante, na hoti Tathāgato param̐ maraṇā?’ ti

‘But how is it, reverend Sir, does the Realised One not exist after death?’

– iti puṭṭhā samānā,

– when there is this question,

³⁸ BJT: *natthi kho*, here.

‘Etam-pi kho, Mahārāja, abyākatam mayā:

° you say: ‘This has not been answered, Great King, by me:

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ti vadesi.

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’

‘Kiṃ nu kho, Bhante, hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ti

‘How is it, reverend Sir, does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’

– iti puṭṭhā samānā,

– when there is this question,

‘Abyākatam kho etam, Mahārāja, mayā:

° you say: ‘This has not been answered, Great King, by me:

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ’ ti vadesi.

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’

‘Kiṃ pana, Bhante, neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ti

‘How is it, reverend Sir, does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’

– iti puṭṭhā samānā,

– when there is this question,

‘Abyākatam kho etam, Mahārāja, mayā:³⁹

° you say: ‘This has not been answered, Great King, by me:

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param maraṇā?’ ti vadesi.

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’

Ko nu kho, Bhante, hetu ko paccayo yenetam⁴⁰ abyākatam Bhagavatā?’ ti

What is the cause, reverend Sir, what is the reason, why does the Fortunate One not answer this?’

‘Tena hi, Mahārāja, tañ-ñevettha paṭipucchissāmi,

‘Now then, Great King, here I will ask you something in return,

yathā te khameyya tathā nam byākareyyāsi.

as you see fit, so you should answer.

Tam kiṃ maññasi, Mahārāja,

What do you think, Great King,

atthi te koci gaṇako vā muddiko vā saṅkhāyako vā

do you have a mathematician, or a calculator or an accountant

³⁹ BJT: *Natthi kho, Mahārāja, Abyākatam mayā*; PTS: *Tam pi kho, Mahārāja, Abyākatam mayā*.

⁴⁰ PTS: *yena tam*.

yo pahoti Gaṅgāya vālukam⁴¹ gaṇetum,

who is able to count the (amount of) sand in the Ganges,

ettakā vālukā iti vā,

(saying): there is this much sand,

ettakāni vālukasatāni iti vā,

or there are so many hundreds of (grains of) sand,

ettakāni vālukasahassāni iti vā,

or there are so many thousands of (grains of) sand,

ettakāni vālukasatasahassāni iti vā?” ti

or there are so many hundreds of thousands of (grains of) sand?”

“No hetam, Bhante.”

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.”

“Atthi pana te koci gaṇako vā muddiko vā saṅkhāyako vā

“But do you have a mathematician, or a calculator or an accountant

yo pahoti mahāsamudde udakam gaṇetum,⁴²

who is able to measure the water in the great ocean,

ettakāni udakāḷhakāni iti vā,

(saying): there are this many gallons of water,

ettakāni udakāḷhakasatāni iti vā,

or there are this many hundreds of gallons of water,

ettakāni udakāḷhakasahassāni iti vā,

or there are this many thousands of gallons of water,

ettakāni udakāḷhakasatasahassāni iti vā?” ti

or there are this many hundreds of thousands of gallons of water?”

“No hetam, Bhante.

“Certainly not, reverend Sir.

Tam kissa hetu?

What is the cause of that?

Mahā, Bhante, samuddo gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho.” ti⁴³

Great is the ocean, reverend Sir, deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom.”

⁴¹ PTS: *vālukim* in the repetition, *vālukam* in the interview with Khemā.

⁴² BJT, PTS: *paṇetum*, here *manitum* above.

⁴³ BJT: *appariyogāho ti*.

“Evam-eva kho, Mahārāja, yena rūpena Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,
“Just so, Great King, through knowing whatever bodily form a Realised One can be known by,

taṃ rūpaṃ⁴⁴ Tathāgataṃ pahīnaṃ ucchinnamūlaṃ tālāvattthukataṃ,
that form the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakataṃ⁴⁵ āyatiṃ anuppādadhammaṃ.
made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Rūpasaṅkhāya vimutto kho, Mahārāja, Tathāgato,
The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as bodily form,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho, seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.
he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

‘Hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,
‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,
‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti,
‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā?’ ti pi na upeti.
‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.

Yāya vedanāya Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,
Through knowing whatever feeling a Realised One can be known by,

sā vedanā Tathāgataṃ pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvattthukatā,
that feeling the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakatā āyatiṃ anuppādadhammā.
made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Vedanāsaṅkhāya vimutto kho, Mahārāja, Tathāgato,
The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as feeling,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho, seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.
he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

⁴⁴ PTS omits: *Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya taṃ rūpaṃ*; here includes above.

⁴⁵ PTS: *anabhāvagataṃ*, here *anabhāvakataṃ* above.

‘Hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti.

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.

Yāya saññāya Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,

Through knowing whatever perception a Realised One can be known by,

Sā saññā Tathāgatassa pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvatthukatā,

that perception the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakatā āyatim̐ anuppādadhammā.

made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Saññāsaṅkhāya vimutto kho, Mahārāja, Tathāgato,

The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as perception,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho, seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.

he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

‘Hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param̐ marañā?’ ti pi na upeti.

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.

Yehi saṅkhārehi Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,

Through knowing whatever (volitional) processes a Realised One can be known by,

te saṅkhārā Tathāgatassa pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvatthukatā,

those (volitional) processes the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakatā āyatim anuppādadhammā.

made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Saṅkhārāsaṅkhāya vimutto kho, Mahārāja, Tathāgato

The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as (volitional) processes,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho, seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.

he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

‘Hoti Tathāgato param marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param marañā?’ ti pi na upeti.

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.

Yena viññāṇena Tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya,

Through knowing whatever consciousness a Realised One can be known by,

taṃ viññāṇaṃ Tathāgatassa pahīnaṃ ucchinnamūlaṃ tālāvattukataṃ,

that consciousness the Realised One has abandoned, cut off at the root, made a palm stump,

anabhāvakatam āyatim anuppādadhammam.

made unviable, so that by nature it is unable to rise again in the future.

Viññāṇasaṅkhāya vimutto kho, Mahārāja, Tathāgato,

The Realised One, Great King, is free from being considered as consciousness,

gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho, seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.⁴⁶

he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom, like the great ocean.

‘Hoti Tathāgato param marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Na hoti Tathāgato param marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One not exist after death?’ does not apply,

⁴⁶ BJT: *samuddo*.

‘Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato param marañā?’ ti pi na upeti,

‘Does the Realised One exist and not exist after death?’ does not apply,

‘Neva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato param marañā?’ ti pi na upeti.’ ti

‘Does the Realised One neither exist nor not exist after death?’ does not apply.’”

The Conclusion

“Acchariyaṃ, Bhante, abbhutaṃ, Bhante,

“It is wonderful, reverend Sir, it is marvellous, reverend Sir,

yatra hi nāma Satthu ceva⁴⁷ Sāvikāya ca
in as much as the Teacher and the Disciple

atthena attho byañjanaena⁴⁸ byañjanaṃ saṃsandissati,
agree in the meaning with the meaning and in the letter with the letter,

samessati, na virodhayissati⁴⁹ yad-idaṃ aggapadasmim.
concur, do not contradict, that is to say, in regard to the highest matter.

Ekam-idāhaṃ, Bhante, samayaṃ Khemaṃ bhikkhuniṃ upasaṅkamitvā,
On one occasion, reverend Sir, after approaching the nun Khemā,

etam-atthaṃ apucchim,⁵⁰
I asked about this matter,

sā pi me Ayyā etehi padehi etehi byañjanehi etam-atthaṃ byākāsi,
and the Noble Lady answered this matter for me with this meaning, with this letter,

seyyathā pi Bhagavā.
just as the Fortunate One did.

Acchariyaṃ, Bhante, abbhutaṃ, Bhante,
It is wonderful, reverend Sir, it is marvellous, reverend Sir,

yatra hi nāma Satthu ceva⁵¹ sāvikāya ca
in as much as the Teacher and the Disciple

atthena attho byañjanaena byañjanaṃ saṃsandissati,
agree in the meaning with the meaning and in the letter with the letter,

⁴⁷ PTS: *Satthuno*.

⁴⁸ PTS: *vyañjanaena*; and similarly throughout.

⁴⁹ RTE: *vihāyissati*.

⁵⁰ BJT: *āpucchim*.

⁵¹ PTS omits: *ceva* here; reads *Satthu* against *Satthuno* above.

samessati, na virodhayissati yad-idaṃ aggapadasmim.

concur, do not contradict, that is to say, in regard to the highest matter.

Handa dāni⁵² mayam, Bhante, gacchāma,

And now, reverend Sir, we shall go,

bahukiccā mayam bahukaraṇīyā.” ti

as we have many duties, and there is much which ought to be done.”

“Yassa dāni tvaṃ, Mahārāja, kālaṃ maññasī.” ti

“Now is the time, Great King, for whatever you are thinking.”

Atha kho Rājā Pasenadi Kosalo, Bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinanditvā anumoditvā,

The Kosalan King Pasenadi, after greatly rejoicing and gladly receiving this word of the Fortunate One,

uṭṭhāyāsanā Bhagavantam abhivādetvā padakkhiṇam katvā, pakkāmī ti.

having worshipped and circumambulated the Fortunate One, departed.

⁵² BJT: *Handa ca dāni.*