

3

Kesī Sutta

The Discourse to Kesī • A 4.111

Theme: How the Buddha trains his disciples

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008, 2018

1 Overview

1.1 KESĪ

1.1.1 His occupation. Kesī is a well known horse-guide, probably from Sāvattthī. From his description in the Sutta, he is more exactly a “horse-caravan driver” (*assa,damme sāretī ti assa,damma,sārathi*, AA 3:120,9). Technically, an *assa,damma,sārathi* is “a driver of tamable horses.”¹ Apparently, he trains horses and leads a horse-caravan; hence, he is a horse-guide. [1.3.3.1]

1.1.2 How Kesī trains horses. The Buddha recognizes Kesī as a reputable horse-guide, and asks him how he trains horses. In reply, Kesī says that he trains some horses with mildness (*saṅghena*), some by harshness (*pharusena*), and others in both ways (*saṅha,pharusena*). On being asked by the Buddha about what happens to one that fails to submit to his training, he retorts that he “destroys” it—so as not to bring shame to his establishment. [§7]

1.2 THE BUDDHA’S TRAINING

1.2.1 When Kesī declares that he knows the Buddha to be the “peerless guide of tamable persons” (*anuttaro purisa,damma,sārathi*), and asks how he tames persons, the Buddha replies that he does so in *just the same manner* as Kesī does.

The Buddha tames some “gently”—telling them what is good in bodily action, speech and mind (the 3 doors of karma), and showing them the way to happiness in the heavens and the human world [§10]; others, he tames “harshly”—pointing out the wrong actions of the 3 karmic doors and their respective results, that is, hell, animal birth and the preta realm [§11]. And yet others, he tames in both ways [§12].

1.2.2 When asked by Kesī what happens to one who fails to be tamed or trained in any of these ways, the Buddha replies that he “destroys” him (*hanāmi nam*) [§14]. When Kesī is shocked at the Buddha’s reply, the Buddha explains that when such a person is “deemed not to be spoken to, not to be admonished” (*na ... vattabbarā ananusāsitabbarā maññati*) by the Buddha or the wise in the sangha, he is “dead” to the Dharma-Vinaya [§17]. This is “intentional” language, which we will explore further below [1.3.3.3].

1.3 THE BUDDHA’S SKILLFUL MEANS IN TEACHING

1.3.1 The 2 levels of teaching

1.3.1.1 The Kesī Sutta (A 4.111) is an interesting and important discourse where the Buddha applies the teaching of **the Neyy’attha Nīt’attha Sutta** (A 2.3.5+6). According to this latter Sutta, when explaining or teaching the Dharma, we should properly present what is explicit as explicit (the *dhamma* language) and what is implicit as implicit. Here, the “implicit” is by way of skillful means (*upāya*).²

¹ Cf “horse-tamer,” *hatthi,damaka*: **Salāyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,25/3:222,6), SD 29.5.

² A 2.3.5+6 (SD 2.6b).

1.3.1.2 In the **Kesī Sutta**, we see the Buddha presenting the *form* of his teachings in an implicit way (*neyy'attha*) so as to connect with Kesī's expressed ideas—in this way, we will see how his own work and life connect with the Dharma. However, the *contents* of most of the Buddha's teachings to Kesī are explicit, that is, the senses are already apparent or “teased out” (*nīt'attha*), that is, good fruits from good, bad fruits from bad.

1.3.2 From knowing to understanding

1.3.2.1 Of special interest is the teaching-highlight where the Buddha declares that just as Kesī *literally* “destroys” an untamable horse, so, too, the Buddha “destroys” an untamable person, in a figurative sense [§14]. However, this “intentional”³ statement of the Buddha is **implicit**, as its true sense still needs to be teased out (*neyy'attha*).

The Buddha, as it were, waits for Kesī to ask how this can ever be possible—Kesī protests, “It is not proper for the Blessed One to take life!” [§15]. Kesī, in other words, still understands only what the Buddha has said thus far in terms of what he **knows** (from his livelihood as a horse-guide) [§16], that is, only on a worldly level.

1.3.2.2 Then, the Buddha teases out the **meaning** (*attha*) of his teaching by explaining to Kesī, “For this, Kesī, is ‘killing’ (*vadha*) in the noble discipline,” that is, when neither the Buddha nor wise companions in the holy life are able to speak to or teach that person [§18]. While the worldly sense of “destruction” by Kesī refers to *killing* the horse, the same idea of *killing* applies figuratively to the person who is unwilling to learn or unable to change in the spiritual training.

Based on what Kesī *knows* as “killing” a horse—the reputation of his school is more precious than a mere horse—the Buddha uplifts the “violent” worldly knowledge into “non-violent” spiritual **understanding**—that when we cannot be tamed or trained in the noble discipline, we will gain neither wisdom nor liberation: then, we *are* nothing. We may get new horses, but how do we get a “new” liberated mind? The Kesī Sutta teaches us how.

1.3.3 The peerless guide of tamable persons

1.3.3.1 **Buddhaghosa**, in his Vinaya Commentary (VA 1:120,24), states that the Kesi Sutta should be cited as one of those suttas that explains the Buddha's virtue of being the “peerless guide of trainable persons” (*anuttaro purisa.damma,sārathi*).⁴ This 6th of the 9 virtues of the Buddha (*navāraha,guṇa*) has been discussed more fully elsewhere.⁵

The Saḷ-āyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 137) explains *purisa.damma,sārathi* as “a teacher devoted to training” (*yogg'ācāriya*), where *yogga* or *yoggā*⁶ means “training.”⁷ Broadly, the phrase can mean “the guide of those who are tamable or those to be tamed”; but contextually (in the Sutta here), it refers to “tamable person,” since there is the 4th and last category, “one who is untamable” [§§6+14].

³ On the nature of “intentional” language in the Buddha's teaching, see **Dh 97**, SD 10.6 esp (5) ; SD 26.11 (6.5).

⁴ For details on the Buddha's virtue of being “the peerless guide of trainable persons,” see SD 15.7 (3.6).

⁵ See **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7 (3). See also **Dhajagga S** (S 11.3), SD 15.5 (2); **Pañca Vera Bhaya S** (S 12.41,11), SD 3.3(4.2).

⁶ *Yogga, yoggā*. “training, practice”: J 2:165, 4:269; DhA 1:52. On *yoggācariya*, “trainer, groom,” see M 1:124 = S 4:176; M 3:97, 222; Tha 1140; J 1:505.

⁷

Here, we shall briefly examine the 3 elements of the term *purisa.damma,sārathi*, that is: what is *purisa*? [1.3.3.2]; the meaning of *damma* [1.3.3.3]; and how is the Buddha a “guide,” *sārathi*? [1.3.3.4].

1.3.3.2 What is *purisa*? The usual translation for *purisa* is “person,” usually a “man.” And the usual word for “individual” is *purisa,puggala* or simply *puggala*, as if famously used in reference to “the pairs of persons, the 8 individuals” (*purisa,yugāni atṭha,purisa.puggalā*) in the recollection of the noble community (*saṅghānussati*).⁸

Here, *purisa* refers to a “person,” which loosely refers to a being with some capacity for thought and will (in the sense of personal action).⁹

The Buddha has tamed animal persons (*tiracchāna,purisa*),¹⁰ such as the naga-rajah Apalāla, Cūḷodara, Mahodara, Aggī,sikha, Dhūma,sikha, the naga-rajah Āravāla, and the elephant Dhana,pālaka.¹¹

He has tamed human persons (*manussa,purisa*), such as the young nirgrantha Saccaka, the brahmin youth Ambaṭṭha, Pokkhara,sāti, Soṇa,daṇḍa, and Kūṭa,danta.¹²

He has tamed non-human persons (*amanussa,purisa*), such as the yakshas Āḷavaka, Sūci,loma and Khara,loma, and Sakra, the lord of the devas.¹³

1.3.3.3 What is *damma*? The word *damma* (Skt *dāmya*)¹⁴ is an adjective, the gerundive¹⁵ of *dameti* (causative: Skt *dāmyati*), “to bring into the house, to domesticate; to tame, convert; to be restrained; especially with reference to tamable animals; figuratively, to humans to be tamed or converted.” Technically, *damma* means “to be tamed, or should be tamed,” but the context here clearly refers to the capacity or readiness of a being or person for taming—hence, “tamable.”

“**Tamable persons**” (*purisa,damma*), that is, those to be trained, according to the Sutta are of 4 kinds:

- (1) those who are trained with gentleness; [1.3.4.1]
- (2) those who are trained with harshness; [1.3.4.2]
- (3) those who are trained both ways (with gentleness and with harshness); [1.3.4.3] and
- (4) those who cannot be trained at all: the untamable. [1.3.5]

1.3.4 Tamable persons

1.3.4.1 (1) Those who are tamed with gentleness (*saṅghena*). They are taught the practice of wholesome conduct of the body, speech and mind, and how such actions fruit in heavenly life and happy human rebirths. Those who fall into this category are the early disciples, especially the monks, who are mature and ready to listen to the Dharma, understand it and attain the path almost at once. Such disciples include Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā, and laymen like Citta the householder and the lady Visākhā.

⁸ See *Saṅghānussati*, SD 15.10a (5(93)).

⁹ See *The person in Buddhism*, SD 29.6b, esp (5.3, 8.1.1).

¹⁰ The Comys usu tr *purisa* as “male,” but historically we see the Buddha helping members of both sexes. As such I have given a freer tr for the sake of a broad-based meditation.

¹¹ Refs: Apalāla (Mahv 242), “dwelling in the Himalayas” (VismṬ 202); Cūḷodara & Mahōdara (Dīpv 21-23; Mahv 7 f); Aggī,sikha & Dhūmasikha (“inhabitants of Lanka,” VismṬ 202), Āravāla & Dhanapālaka (V 2:194-196; J 5:333-337).

¹² Refs: Saccaka (M 35 & 36); Ambaṭṭha (D 3); Pokkharasāti (D 1:109); Soṇadaṇḍa (D 4); Kuṭadanta (D 6).

¹³ Refs: Āḷavaka (Sn p31); Sūciloma & Kharaloma (Sn p47 f); Sakka (D 1:263 f).

¹⁴ With ref to a young bullock (M 1:225, *bala,gāvā damma,gāvā*, the bulls and the young steers); It 80; also of other animals, eg *assa,damma,sārathi*, a horse-guide (A 2:112). Fig, of unconverted men likened to refractory bullocks in phrase, *purisa.damma,sārathi*, “guide of tamable persons” (ep of the Buddha) (D 1:62 (misprinted as *-dhamma-*) = 2:93 = 3:5; M 2:38; A 2:112; Vv 17.13 (*nara,vara,damma.sārathi*; cf VvA 86).

¹⁵ The fut pass part with the sense of “that should be done or to be done.”

The best known of the suttas popular with the Buddhist community are, as a rule, those whose teachings are based on “gentleness.” Amongst the best known discourses for the laity are “the 3 suttas,” that is, **the (Karaṇīya) Metta Sutta** (Sn 1.8),¹⁶ **the Maṅgala Sutta** (Sn 2.4)¹⁷ and **the Ratana Sutta** (Sn 2.1).¹⁸ Other well known “gentle” discourses include **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31)¹⁹ for the laity, and the majestic **Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2) for an overview of Dhamma training.

Then, there are **the Kesa,puttiya Sutta** (A 3.65)²⁰ for those with a good faculty of faith, and **the Mahā Nidāna Sutta** (D 15)²¹ for those with a strong faculty of wisdom. For monastics or a good idea of the camaraderie of the early arhats, there are the two “gentle” **Go,siṅga Suttas** (M 31+32).²²

Some of the key discourses on right view that are essential for a proper basic understanding of early Buddhism and our personal practice are discourses taught with “gentleness,” that is, **the Gāraṇa Sutta** (S 6.2) on the Dharma as the one refuge,²³ **the Sambuddha Sutta** (S 22.58) on the sameness of the awakening of both the Buddha and the arhats,²⁴ and **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) for attaining streamwinning in this life itself.²⁵

1.3.4.2 (2) Those who are tamed with harshness (pharusena). Of the 4 ways of the Buddha’s teaching methods, this training “with harshness” has the least examples. This is because it is the least common of his teaching methods. Even when such a “harsh” approach is used, it is only to highlight the dangers and disadvantages of unwholesome views or practices. One of the best known popular teachings for the laity is **the Vasala Sutta** (Sn 1.7),²⁶ on what makes a true “outcaste,” which contrasts against the 38 blessings of the Maṅgala Sutta (Sn 2.4), mentioned above.

Once such unwholesomeness has been put into perspective, we are then treated to more “gentleness” with teachings that inspire lovingkindness and joy as the basis for wisdom. Lovingkindness and joy are very vital catalysts in our spiritual progress, especially in our mental cultivation for the sake of understanding the nature of true reality, leading to awakening and liberation.

The best known records of the “harsh” teaching approach of the Buddha are found in those suttas that relate the horrors of the hell-states, such as in **the Bāla Paṇḍita Sutta** (M 129),²⁷ whose §§10-16 recur in **the (Pañca) Deva,dūta Sutta** (M 130)²⁸; **the (Yama) Deva,dūta Sutta** (A 3.35)²⁹ and **the Nāta Nidāna** of the Kuruṅga Jātaka (J 21/1:174).

Such graphic descriptions of violent tortures were based on actual methods used by the ancient Indian kings.³⁰ Basically, such mythical accounts work to remind bad-doers that although the hells may be “mythical,” the experience of hellish violence and pains are very real indeed. After all, when the

¹⁶ Sn 1.8 = Khp 9 (SD 38.3).

¹⁷ Sn 2.4 = Khp 5 (SD 101.5).

¹⁸ Sn 2.1 = Khp 4 (SD 101.2).

¹⁹ D 2 (SD 8.10).

²⁰ A 3.65 (SD 35.4a).

²¹ D 15 (SD 5.17).

²² M 31 (SD 44.11); M 32 (SD 44.12).

²³ S 6.2 (SD 12.3).

²⁴ S 22.58 (SD 49.10).

²⁵ S 25.1 (SD 16.7); of the same theme are the other 9 suttas in the same **Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25).

²⁶ Sn 1.7 (Sn 72.2).

²⁷ M 129 (SD 2.22).

²⁸ M 130 (SD 2.23).

²⁹ S 3.35,27-33/1:141 f (SD 48.10).

³⁰ See SD 2.22 (1).

unwholesomeness of actions is rooted in the perpetrator’s mind, he will feel its commensurate pain in himself for himself.³¹

1.3.4.3 (3) Those who are tamed both ways (with gentleness and with harshness, *saṅha,pharusena*). This is the most common method of teaching used by the Buddha. Such combined methods are found, for example, in **the Bāla Paṇḍita Sutta** (M 129) [above], which comprises both “harsh” theme (§§2-26) and the “gentle” theme (§§27-49).

Most of the notable longer discourses fall under this category of teachings that employs both “harshness” and “gentleness.” The best known of these discourses are those that employ the teaching of **the 10 courses of karma** (*kamma,patha*), that is, the 10 kinds of unwholesome actions (*kusala kamma,patha*) by way of body, speech and mind, and their wholesome counterpart (*akusala kamma,patha*).

Amongst the best known of discourses featuring both “harshness” and “gentleness” are **the Cūḷa Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 135)³² and **the Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga S** (M 136).³³ Both these discourses deal with the 10 courses of karma, first with the unwholesome karma and their fruits, and then the wholesome karma and their fruits.

1.3.5 The untamable

1.3.5.1 (4) Those who cannot be tamed. While most of the suttas record how the Buddha’s teachings convert many and inspire others, there is a handful of important discourses where, apparently, the protagonists lack the capacity for spiritual change. Interestingly, in all such cases, the Buddha does indeed *teach* them the Dharma. However, for some reason, the protagonists remain unmoved despite being admonished by the Buddha himself.

1.3.5.2 Such discourses are very few, that is, where the protagonists (one may even call them “antagonists”) are “dead” to the Dharma-Vinaya. The best known of these are:

- **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38), where the monk Sāti holds on to the wrong view that our consciousness passes on unchanged in rebirth;³⁴
- **the Alagaddūpama Sutta** (M 22), where the monk Ariṭṭha wrongly views that sensual pleasures (including sex) are not “stumbling blocks” to the celibate holy life;³⁵
- **the Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 25), where, despite listening and accepting a long inspiring discourse from the Buddha, the wanderer Nigrodha and his followers still neither renounce nor go for refuge.³⁶

1.3.5.3 The most notorious case of one who is “dead” to the Dharma-Vinaya is clearly the monk **Deva,datta**. Despite being the Buddha’s cousin and listening to numerous Dharma teachings, he still shows antagonism against the Buddha, desiring to take over the leadership of the monastic sangha from the aging Buddha. The Devadatta narrative where he is depicted as the Buddha’s antagonist is, however, not without problems, and should be carefully studied to understand its significance.³⁷

³¹ On the nature of mythology, see SD 52.1 (1).

³² M 135 (SD 4.15).

³³ M 136 (SD 4.16).

³⁴ M 38 (SD 7.10).

³⁵ M 22 (SD 3.13).

³⁶ D 25 (SD 1.4).

³⁷ See **Deva,datta**, SD 71.4.

1.3.5.4 The most famous case of a person who seems to be intractable is the elder **Channa**, the erstwhile charioteer of the Bodhisattva himself.³⁸ On account of Channa’s closeness to the Bodhisattva and then the Buddha, he became arrogant, thinking “Our Buddha, our Dharma,” besides his inherited conceit of being a kshatriya (*khattiya, māna*). Channa’s “butler” narcissism and arrogance were, in the end, self-defeating. He failed in his tasks as a monk even while the Buddha lived. While dwelling in Kosambī, he was unwilling to acknowledge an offence he committed that the Buddha decreed a formal act of suspension (*ukkhepaniya, kamma*), forbidding him commensality (eating together) and dwelling with the monks.³⁹

He continued to commit other offences, especially disrespecting and reviling senior monks.⁴⁰ One of the Buddha’s last acts was to instruct Ānanda to impose the “supreme penalty” (*brahma, daṇḍa*), that is, a total boycott of Channa by the sangha.⁴¹ After the Buddha’s death, Ānanda executed the order.

The closing of Culla, vaggā 11 of the Vinaya records how when Ānanda conveys the supreme penalty to Channa at Ghosit’ārāma, in Kosambī, he faints at the thought of being boycotted by the order. Almost immediately Channa diligently works to correct himself—as movingly reported in **the (Lakkhaṇa) Channa Sutta** (S 22.90; V 2:292).

1.3.5.5 The (Lakkhaṇa) Channa Sutta (S 22.90) records in an almost humorous tone, how he attempts to seek Dharma instruction from other monks. Apparently, no monk actually boycotts him, since they try to answer his questions, albeit careful to not offend him. Finally, Ānanda teaches him the **Kaccāna, gotta Sutta** (S 12.15) on how dependent arising counters the two extreme views of eternalism and annihilationism, and how self-view is replaced by the realization that it is only *dukkha* that arises and ceases—and he breaks through to the Dharma. The supreme penalty is automatically lifted at the moment of Channa’s final attainment.⁴²

This is perhaps the only account we have of any monastic close to the Buddha who is apparently declared “dead” to the sangha. However, by his own efforts, Channa returns alive and well to be with the sangha, in due course, as an arhat.

2 Intentional language

2.1 LEVELS OF TEACHING

2.1.1 We should understand the Buddha’s dramatic declaration that he “destroys” (*hanāmi*) those who remain refractory despite being trained with “gentleness,” with “harshness,” or both ways, as a case of the application of “**intentional**” language [1.3.2.1]. The Buddha is *intentionally* “mirroring” Kesī’s words—“Bhante, I destroy it!” (of the horse that fails to respond to one of the 3 ways of training) [§6]—as a skilful means to facilitate Kesī with a higher understanding of “destroy,” as already explained [1.3.2].

2.1.2 The Buddha’s language here is “intentional,” furthermore, so that Kesī at once connects directly with the teaching, even feeling that the Buddha has given him a very personalized lesson. In short, the Buddha is speaking Kesī’s language—that of the horse-guide—from one trainer to another, as it were.

Note that the Buddha does clarify to Kesī—to prevent any misconception about killing—thus:

³⁸ See SD 52.1 (10.1.3).

³⁹ Cuv 1.18 (V 2:23 f).

⁴⁰ Cuv 11.1.12-16 (V 2:290-292); DhA 6.3/2:110-112 ad Dh 78. Cf DA 2:154,17-22. See also ThaA no 69.

⁴¹ D 16,6.4 (SD 9).

⁴² S 22.90/3:132-135), SD 56.5.

“For this, Kesī, is ‘killing’ (*vadha*) in the noble discipline, that is, when the Tathagata considers that he should not be spoken to, not to be admonished.

His wise companions in the holy life, too, consider that he should not be spoken to, not be admonished.” [§18]

2.1.3 The Buddha is speaking on a higher level of language—that of the Dharma—or simply, a figurative sense of “destroying.” After all, if one is unwilling or unable to better oneself despite being trained in all the ways, then, one is already as good as “dead” to the teaching. This “death” has nothing to do with the Buddha, his disciples or the teaching.

Not knowing the Buddha Dharma, we are not really born yet. We are still like little chicks still stuck in our egg encased in a hard shell of ignorance. In our ignorance, we are not even really aware of what we are doing, spurred on by lust, held back by hate and pushing away what we dislike—blinded by ignorance.

Not knowing the Buddha Dharma, we do not know how to live the noble life. Not understanding the impermanent nature of existence, we think that the world or parts of it belong to us, or that we can *have* the world. But the world is not ours—we have to let it go. Hence, our ignorance keeps us *dead* to the noble discipline. It is the Dharma-Vinaya that gives us true life so that we are aware of true reality and gain liberating wisdom.

2.2 THE BUDDHA AS A “GUIDE” (*sārathi*)

2.2.1 The word *sārathi* comes from *sa,ratha*, “one with a chariot.” This suggests one who drives a vehicle ferrying others, or one who works with chariots; hence, with horses to pull them. Specifically, it refers to a “charioteer,” but more broadly, it refers to a “guide or trainer.” Hence, the Buddha is said to be “the peerless guide of tamable persons” (*anuttara purisa,damma,sārathi*).

The Buddha is our guide (*sārathi*) on the path of training that he has prepared for the ennobling of our body and speech, for the calming and clarifying of our mind, and for the attaining liberating wisdom. This is, in essence, the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t,taya*).⁴³ At any point, as we train along this mundane path (*lokiya magga*)—especially with the constant perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*),⁴⁴ the noble path (*ariya magga*) will arise in us.

2.2.2 In this sense, then, the Buddha is the one who shows us the way (*akkhātā*) (Dh 276):⁴⁵ he only points out the right and safe way to us; he does not tell us what to see. We are to see the terrain and landscape for ourselves, to enjoy the scenery and befriend those whom we meet along the way. For, it is the journey that changes and betters us. The goal is reached when the journey is complete and completed.

2.2.3 The early suttas preserve the Buddha’s experiences and teachings. In an important sense, the suttas contain the Buddha’s teaching in his **intentional language**. The Buddha’s words have been skillfully woven into sutta narratives so that they can come to us despite the ravages of time. The outer layers of the sutta narratives are the instructions, miracles, stories, parables and so on. They are the signs and steps for us to move deeper into the sutta teachings so that we have an ever clearer understanding of the Buddha intention—at the heart of these teachings.

⁴³ See (Ti) **Sikkhā S** (A 3.88), SD 24.10c; **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6; SD 1.11 (5).

⁴⁴ On the perception of impermanence, see (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

⁴⁵ For **Dh 276**, see SD 45.8 (4.3.1).

2.2.4 Even after his death, the Buddha continues to be our guide and shower of the way. The Buddha has always placed the Dharma—the way and the truth—above himself.⁴⁶ Hence, even after the Buddha’s passing, the Dharma is still with us, the path is still present to us. All we need to do now is to respond to his teachings—whether the Dharma treats us gently, harshly, or sometimes gently, sometimes harshly. We are being trained for liberation. The gentleness and harshness are how we view the Dharma, which remains unchanged but changes us.

— — —

Kesī Sutta

The Discourse to Kesī

A 4.111

(1) Kesī the horse-guide meets the Buddha

- 1 Then, Kesī⁴⁷ the horse-guide⁴⁸ approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side.
- 2 Sitting at one side, the Blessed One said to Kesī the horse-guide:
- 3 “Now, Kesī, you are indeed disciplined and skilled⁴⁹ as a horse-guide.⁵⁰ But how, Kesī, do you train a tamable horse?”⁵¹

(2) How Kesī trains horses

- 4 “I, bhante, train with gentleness,⁵² or with harshness,⁵³ or with both gentleness and harshness.⁵⁴”⁵⁵

⁴⁶ See **Gārava S** (S 6.2), SD 12.3.

⁴⁷ *Kesī*, lit “hairy,” from *kesa*, “hair (of the head); mane.” Cf *kesava*, “of rich hair, of beautiful hair,” ep of king Vāsudeva (Pv 2.6.2). Also cf *kesara*, “a mane,” esp *kesara, sīha*, a maned lion (J 2:244; SnA 127); *kesarī* (from *kesara*), one that is maned, a lion.

⁴⁸ “Horse-guide,” *assa.damma, sārathi*, prob a horse-caravan driver [1.1.1].

⁴⁹ “Disciplined,” *saññato = saṃyato*, “restrained” (D 2:88; S1:79; Sn 88, 156, 716); but as past part of *saññānāti*, “skilled” (M 1:396). Cf *abhiññāta*, “well known”: **Mahā Go, siṅga S** (M 32,1.2), SD 44.12. On Pali polysemy, see SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2).

⁵⁰ *Tvañ ca khv-āsi kesi saññato assa, damma, sārathi*. Be *Tvañ kho’si paññato ...*

⁵¹ *Kathañ ca pana tvañ kesi assa, dammaṃ vinesīti* [Ce:Turnour *vinayīti*]?

⁵² Comy: With proper and respectful regard, good food, sweet water, gentle speech (*tassa anucchavikam sakkāram katvā, subhojanam bhojetvā madhura, pānam pāyetvā mudu, vacanena samudācaritvā damento saṅghena dameti nāma*, AA 3:120).

⁵³ Comy: By binding the knees, bridling (the mouth), prodded with a goad, whipping, harsh speech” (*jāṇu.bandhana, mukha.bandhan’ādīhi c’eva patoda.vijjhana, kasābhi.gḥāta, pharusa.vacanehi ca damento pharusena dameti nāma*, AA 3:120).

⁵⁴ Comy: At times, applying both methods (*kālena kālam tad ubhayam karonto saṅgha, pharusena dameti nāma*, AA 3:120). See prec 2 nn.

⁵⁵ *Aham kho bhante assa, dammam saṅghena pi vinemi pharusena pi vinemi saṅgha, pharusena pi vineṭi*. Ce:T omits *pi* throughout here.

5 “If, Kesī, a tamable horse submits to neither being trained with gentleness, nor being trained with harshness, nor trained with both gentleness and harshness—what would you do?”

6 “If, bhante, the horse *submits to neither being trained with gentleness, nor being trained with harshness, nor being trained with both gentleness and harshness*—then, bhante, I destroy it!”⁵⁶

7 “What is the reason for that?”

“So that there is no disgrace to my teacher’s training school!”⁵⁷

(3) How the Buddha trains his disciples

8 But, bhante, you are the peerless guide of tamable persons.⁵⁸

How, bhante, does the Blessed One train a tamable person?

9 “Kesī, I, too, train a tamable person with *gentleness*; I train him with *harshness*, too; I train him with *both* gentleness and harshness, too.

10 In using gentleness, Kesī, I train thus:

‘Such is good bodily conduct.	Such is the result of good bodily conduct.
Such is good verbal conduct.	Such is the result of good verbal conduct.
Such is good mental conduct.	Such is the result of good mental conduct.

Such are the devas. Such are human beings.’

11 In using harshness, Kesī, I train thus:

‘Such is bad bodily conduct.	Such is the result of bad bodily conduct.
Such is bad verbal misconduct.	Such is the result of bad verbal conduct.
Such is bad mental misconduct.	Such is the result of bad mental conduct.

Such is hell. Such is the animal birth. Such is the preta realm.

12 In using gentleness and harshness, Kesī, I train thus:

‘Such is good bodily conduct.	Such is the result of good bodily conduct.
Such is bodily misconduct.	Such is the result of bad bodily conduct.
Such is good verbal conduct.	Such is the result of good verbal conduct.
Such is bad verbal conduct.	Such is the result of bad verbal conduct.
Such is good mental conduct.	Such is the result of good mental conduct.
Such is bad mental conduct.	Such is the result of bad mental conduct.

Such are the devas. Such are human beings.
Such is hell. Such is the animal birth. Such is the preta realm.”

(4) How a person is destroyed

13 “And if, bhante, a tamable person submits to neither **[113]** being trained with gentleness nor being trained with harshness nor being trained both ways—what would you do?”

⁵⁶ *Sace me bhante assa, dammo saṅghena vinayaṃ na upeti pharusena vinayaṃ na upeti saṅgha, pharusena vinayaṃ na upeti hanāmi naṃ bhante.*

⁵⁷ *Mā me ācariya, kulassa avaṇṇo ahoṣīti. Ācariya, kula* lit tr as “teacher’s family or lineage.” On a bigger scale, this would be a “guild” (*seṇī, pūga*).

⁵⁸ “Peerless guide of tamable persons,” *anuttaro purisa, damma sārathi* (V 1:35; D 1:49; Sn p103; It 79; similes: Vism 466; KhpA 21).

14 “If, Kesī, a tamable person submits to neither being trained with gentleness nor being trained with harshness nor being trained both ways—then, I ‘destroy’ him, Kesī!” (*hanāmi nam kesīti*).

15 “But, bhante, it is not proper for our Blessed One to take life! And yet the Blessed One just said, ‘I destroy him, Kesī!’”

16 “It is true, Kesī, that it is not proper for a Tathagata to take life.⁵⁹

17 But if a tamable person submits to neither being trained with gentleness nor being trained with harshness nor being trained both ways,

then, the Tathagata would consider that he should not be spoken to, should not to be admonished.⁶⁰

His wise companions in the holy life, too, consider that *he should not be spoken to, should not be admonished.*

18 For this, Kesī, is ‘killing’ (*vadha*) in the noble discipline, that is, when the Tathagata considers that he should not be spoken to, should not to be admonished.⁶¹

His wise companions in the holy life, too, consider that he should not be spoken to, should not be admonished.”

19 “Wouldn’t one, indeed, be truly gone to destruction, bhante,⁶² when the Tathagata considers that he should not be spoken to, should not to be admonished; when his wise companions in the holy life consider that he should be spoken to, should not be admonished!”

(5) Kesī’s going for refuge

20 Excellent, bhante! Excellent, bhante!

Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned,

or were to reveal what was hidden,

or were to show the way to one who was lost,

or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,

in the same way, in numerous ways, the Dharma has been made clear by the Blessed One.

I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a layman who has gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life.”

— evaṃ —

060305 180301 180303 180511

⁵⁹ *Saccam kesi na tathāgatassa pāṇātipāto kappati.*

⁶⁰ *Na ... vattabbaṃ anusāsitaḥḥaṃ maññatīti.*

⁶¹ *Vadho h’eso kesi ariyassa vinaye yaṃ na tathāgato vattabbaṃ anusāsitaḥḥaṃ maññati na pi viññū sa, brahma-cārī vattabbaṃ anusāsitaḥḥaṃ maññantīti.*

⁶² *Be so hi nūna bhante suhato hoti; Ce Se so hi nūna bhante suvadho hoti; Ee so hi nūna yo bhante sugata, hato hoti.*