

7b

Keniya Jaṭila Vatthu

The Story of the Matted-hair Ascetic Keniya | Mv 6.35¹

Theme: Monastics are allowed certain beverages outside the proper time

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Keniya the part-time matted-hair ascetic

1.1 The Keniya Jaṭila Vatthu is the story of the part-time matted-hair ascetic Keniya,² which forms the background and origin story for the promulgation of the rules regarding taking of beverages for monks [2.1]. In this account, there is no mention of Sela at all. This is understandable as it is used merely as the origin story for the Vinaya rules on beverages for monastics [§7].

The Commentaries say that Keniya was a brahmin “of great halls” (*mahā,sāla*), that is, very wealthy, who became a matted-hair ascetic (*jaṭila*) to protect his wealth. He was also the protector of 5000 families. He wore the yellow robes in the day, at night he indulged in the pleasures of the senses.³ In other words, Keniya was a “career religious” or “renunciator of convenience.”

1.2 Like **Nanda**, another wealthy brahmin, used his livelihood to “evade the royal plunder” (*rāja,-pīlam apaharanto*).⁴ Nanda lived as Anātha,piṇḍika’s cowherd.⁵ Both Keniya and Nanda assumed their respective livelihoods to protect their own great wealth, to evade having to pay taxes and other royal levies. Clearly, this alludes to an early form of tax evasion.⁶

1.3 Interestingly, we see the habit of making a career of the cloth a growing tendency amongst the urban monastics of today. While the wealthier landed monastics who own temples and property live just like any lay person, the less affluent but more enterprising monastics would turn of the academic career, earning a salary like any professional.⁷ In most cases, they live better lives than their own devotees, but they do not pay any income taxes and are exempt from other obligations such as national service.⁸

2 Related texts

2.1 COMPARATIVE STUDY

2.1.1 The Keniya Jaṭila Vatthu (Mv 6.35), the Vinaya story of Keniya [1.1] forms the origin story of the allowance of beverages for monastics in the forbidden hours (*vikāla*) [§7]. This story has a parallel in **the Sela Sutta** (M 92 = Sn 3.7), but which is much longer, as it includes the story of the brahmin Sela and his followers, the 300 brahmin youths. The Vinaya story, too, has some details not found in the Sutta. Here is a comparative table of the episodes and contents of the two texts:

<u>The Keniya Jaṭila Vatthu (Mv 6.35)</u>	<u>The Sela Sutta (M 92 = Sn 3.7)</u>
(2) Keniya hears of the Buddha [§1]	(1) The Buddha and 1250 monks at Āpaṇa [§1]
(3) Keniya reflects on what to give: the ancient brahmins & abstinence from food in the forbidden hours [§§1.5-3.1]	(2) (same) [§2]
(4) Keniya approaches the Buddha:	(4) Keniya meets Buddha [§3.1]

¹ Be numbers this as Mv 3.6.23 and spells the name as Keniya.

² V:Be Ce Se so; Ee *keniya* throughout. Spelt *keniya* in M 92, Sn & Tha @ SD 45.7a; MA 3:399.

³ See **Sela S** (M 92,4.3), SD 45.7a; MA 3:399 ≈ SnA 440.

⁴ DA 1:270.

⁵ U 4.3/38 f @ SD 100.6; UA 240-244 esp 241. For the story of Nanda the cowherd (based on Dh 42), see **Nanda Gopalaka Vatthu** (DhA 3.8), SD 100.7.

⁶ Further on **Keniya’s “asceticism,”** see SD 45.7a (4.3).

⁷ See eg H L Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings*, Chicago, 1999.

⁸ For similar problems with the sale of ordination certificates in Chinese Buddhism, see SD 40b (2.3.6; 4.3.3.7; 5.2.3.5).

- offers beverages [§3.2-3.3]
- (5) The Buddha accepts beverages [§3.4-6]
- (6) Keṇiya serves beverages to the monks [§4.1-2]
- (7) The Buddha gives thanks [§4.3] (7) The Buddha instructs Keṇiya on Dharma [§3.2]
- (8) Keṇiya offers a meal: 1250 monks [§§4.4-5] (8) (same) [§§3-4]
- (9) The Vinaya rule regarded beverages [§6]
- (10) Keṇiya’s preparations [§4.3-4]
- (11) **The Sela cycle** [§§5-23]:
Sela sees Keṇiya’s preparations;
Sela hears “Buddha”;
Sela speaks of the great man and his 2 destinies;
Sela and his followers visit Buddha to examine
the 32 marks, and confirms the Buddha’s state;
Sn 548-567 = Tha 818-837;
Sela and his followers go forth [§24]
- (12) Keṇiya’s offering [§7] (12) (same) [§25.1-4]
- (13) The Buddha’s thanksgiving verses [§8.1-3] (13) (same) [§§25.5, 26]
- (14) The Buddha departs [§8.4] (14) (same) [§26.2]
- (15) Sela and his followers become arhats [§28]
- (16) Sela’s lion-roar [§29]: Sn 570-573 = Tha 838-841

2.1.2 The benefits of reputation

2.1.2.1 Both accounts reports Keṇiya hearing of the Buddha’s presence and reputation. Only **the Vinaya account** says that **(2)-(3)** Keṇiya reflects the ancient brahmins and abstinence from food in the forbidden hours. This clearly is a source of Keṇiya’s respect for the Buddha and prompts him **(4)** to offer beverages to him and the sangha. **The Sela Sutta** only reports that **(4)** he meets the Buddha.

In **the Vinaya account** the Buddha **(7)** gives thanks after drinking the beverages, while in **the Sela Sutta** only says that **(7)** the Buddha instructs Keṇiya in the Dharma. According to the Sutta, then, it is clear that it is the Dharma instruction that inspires Keṇiya to invite the Buddha for a meal on the following day.

The Vinaya account goes on **(9)** to record the Buddha’s promulgation of the rules allowing beverages during forbidden hours. **The Sela Sutta** details **(11)** Keṇiya’s preparations for the morning meal-offering. This is followed by the Sela cycle, which is missing from the Vinaya account. We can here surmise the learned brahmin Sela knows the Buddha’s reputation, and it is the learned brahmin’s views of the great man and his 32 marks that inspire him to meet the Buddha, an event climaxing in his going-forth together with his followers.

2.1.2.2 Hence, both accounts centre around **the faith** of their protagonists. In **the Vinaya account**, it is Keṇiya, who offers beverages to the monks, occasioning the Buddha to allow them during the forbidden hours. In **the Sutta**, it is Sela who is satisfied that the Buddha is the “great man” (*mahā, purisa*), and listening to the Dharma, is inspired to go forth, along with his followers.

In the end, Keṇiya the part-time matted-hair ascetic **(13)** receives the blessings of the Buddha and the sangha, while Sela and his followers **(13)** renounce the world **(15)** to become arhats. The Sutta closes with Sela making **(16)** his lion-roar or declaration of faith. The two accounts, as such, actually belong to the same story-line, each with their own highlights, and with two different happy endings.

2.2 Elsewhere, we are told of Keṇiya’s devotee, the brahmin Sela. In **the Sela Sutta** (M 92 = Sn 3.7), we see Keṇiya meeting with the brahmin Sela, who later joins the sangha.⁹ **The Sela Thera, gāthā** records

⁹ See **Sela S** (M 92 = Sn 3.7), SD 45.7a.

his reflections as an elder upon his awakening (Tha 818-841).¹⁰ There is also **the Sela Thera Apadāna** (Ap 389/316-322), where Keniya is also mentioned.

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The Story of the Matted-hair Ascetic Keniya

Mv 6.35

Keniya hears of the Buddha

1 At that time, the Blessed One was walking [peregrinating] by stages and he arrived in Āpaṇa.¹¹

1.2 Now the matted-hair ascetic Keniya heard,

“It is said that the recluse, master Gotama, a Sakya son, who has gone forth from the Sakya clan, has arrived in Āpaṇa.¹²

1.3 Now concerning this master Gotama a fair report has been spread about, thus:¹³

‘So, too, is he the Blessed One:¹⁴ for, he is

arhat,
fully self-awakened one,
accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
well-farer,
knower of worlds,
peerless guide of persons to be tamed,
teacher of gods and humans,
awakened,
blessed.

1.4 Having realized, by his own direct knowledge,
this world with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās,
this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people,
he makes it known to others.

He teaches the Dharma, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end,
both in the spirit and in the letter.

He proclaims the holy life that is entirely complete and pure.’

It is good to see such arhats.’”

1.5 Then it occurred to the matted-hair ascetic Keniya,

“Now what should I take with me to be offered to the recluse Gotama?”¹⁵

Keniya reflects what to give

2 Then, it occurred to the matted-hair ascetic Keniya,

¹⁰ **Tha 818-841** are embedded in **Sela S**, where they form part of the Keniya-Sela narrative (M 92 = Sn 3.7), SD 45.7a.

¹¹ *Atha kho Bhagavā anupubbena cārikaṃ caramāno yena āpaṇaṃ tadavasari.* This intro is much shorter than in the sutta versions: see SD 45.7a.

¹² *Assosi kho kenīyo jaṭilo “samaṇo khalu bho gotamo sakya,putto sakya,kulā pabbajito āpaṇaṃ anupatto.*

¹³ For details on the 9 virtues of the Buddha, see **Buddhānussati**, SD 15.7b.

¹⁴ Alt tr: “For the following reasons, too, he is the Blessed One [the Lord]...” For nn on this section, see **Sela S** (M 92 = Sn 3.7) @ SD 45.7a ad loc.

¹⁵ *Atha kho kenīyassa jaṭilassa etad ahoṣi “kiṃ nu kho ahaṃ samaṇassa gotamassa harāpeyyan’ti.*

2.2 ^{16c}Now there are those ancient rishis [seers] of the brahmins, mantra makers, mantra preachers¹⁷—

whose ancient mantras are still sung, recited (for others), composed by the brahmins of today¹⁸— that we sing, that we recite, we utter, we say,¹⁹

2.3 that is to say, Aṣṭaka, Vāmaka, Vāma,deva, Viśvā,mitra, Jamad-agni, Aṅgi,rasa, Bhāra,dvāja, Vasiṣṭha, Kaśyapa, and Bhagu²⁰—

2.4 they, abstaining from food at night, refrained from food at the wrong time,²¹ consented to such beverages.²²

3 The recluse Gotama, too, abstains from food at night, refrains from food at the wrong time²³—the recluse Gotama, too, should consent to such beverages.²⁴

Keniya approaches the Buddha

3.2 And having had abundant beverages prepared, and having them strapped to pingos [carrying-poles],²⁵

3.3 approached the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the matted-hair ascetic Keniya stood at one side.

Keniya offers beverages to the Buddha

3.4 Standing thus as one side, the matted-hair ascetic Keniya said this to the Blessed One:

“May master Gotama accept beverage from me.”

3.5 “Well, then, Keniya, give it to the monks.”

Then the matted-hair Keniya gave it to the monks.

3.6 The monks, being uncertain, did not accept.

[The Blessed One:] “Accept it, bhikshus, drink it.”

4 Then the matted-hair ascetic Keniya served, with his own hands, and satisfied the community of monks with the Buddha at the head with abundant beverage.

¹⁶ This passage [§6.2-7.1] on the 10 ancient brahmins is stock: **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3/1:104 ×2); **Te,vijja S** (D 13/1:-238, 239, 241-243); **Caṅkī S** (M 95/2:169, 170); **Subha S** (M 99/2:200×2); **Doṇa Brāhmaṇa S** (A 5.192/3:224, 229); **Dāna Maha-p,phala S** (V 1:245,20; A 7.49.7/4:61); DA 1:273; VvA 265,15. See **TeVijja S** (D 13/1:235-252), SD 1.8 (2.1).

¹⁷ *Ye’pi kho te brāhmaṇānaṃ pubbakā isayo mantānaṃ kattāro mantānaṃ pavattāro*. Here, “mantras” (*manta,pa-da*) refers to Vedic verses (DA 1:273).

¹⁸ *Yesam idaṃ etarahi brāhmaṇā porāṇaṃ manta,paḍaṃ gītāṃ pavuttaṃ samihitaṃ*. Comy explains *pavutta* as “spoken or voiced for others” (*aññesaṃ vuttaṃ vācitan’ti attho*, DA 273).

¹⁹ *Tad anugāyanti, tad anubhāsanti, bhāsitaṃ anubhāsanti, vācitaṃ anuvācenti*.

²⁰ *Seyyath’idaṃ aṭṭhako vāmako vāma,devo vessā,mitto yama-t-aggi aṅgīraso bhāradvājo vāsetṭho kassapo bhagu*. Skt cognates: **Aṣṭaka** (son of Viśvā,mitra & author of Rg,veda 10.104), **Vāmaka** (cf RV 10.99), **Vāma,deva** (author of RV 4.1-41, 45-48), **Viśvā,mitra** (RV 3.33; author of most of RV 3 & 9.67.13-15, 10.137.5, 167), **Jamad-agni** (descendent of Bhṛgu, son of Bhārgava, and father of Paraśu,rāma; often named with Viśvā,mitra as adversary of Vasiṣṭha; RV 3.62.18, 8.101.8, 9.62.24, 62.25), **Aṅgī,rasa** (one of the 7 great rishis, author of RV 9), **Bhāra,dvāja** (a son of Bṛhaspati), **Vasiṣṭha** (one of the 7 great rishis, author of RV 7, adversary of Viśvā,mitra), **Kāśyapa** (one of the 7 great rishis and priest of Paraśu,rāma and Rāma,candra; cf RV 9.114.2), and **Bhṛgu** (one of the 7 great rishis). See *Vinaya Texts* (tr Rhys Davids & Oldenberg) 2:130 n3 & V:H 4:337 nn5-9.

²¹ “At the wrong time,” *vikāla*, ie “after noon has passed until sunrise” (V 4:86).

²² *Rattūparatā viratā vikāla,bhojanā, te eva,rūpāni pānāni sādīyimsu*. See prec n.

²³ A similar remark regarding the Buddha (quoted by the Buddha himself) occurs in **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1,1.10/-1:5), SD 25.

²⁴ *Samaṇo’pi gotamo rattūparato virato vikāla,bhojanā, arahati samaṇo pi gotamo eva,rūpāni pānāni sādīyitun’ti*.

²⁵ This is the **kāja**, a part of his ascetic gear. Used as a rod or flail (*daṇḍaka*): see M 96,10.5 n @ SD 37.9. For ascetic’s gear and requisites, see D 3,2.3(2) n on “his pole and khari” @ SD 21.3.

4.2 When the Blessed One had washed his hand and withdrawn his hand from the bowl, the matted-hair ascetic Keniya sat down at one side.

4.3 The Blessed One then instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened²⁶ the matted-hair ascetic Keniya, seated thus at one side, with a Dharma talk.

Keniya invites the Buddha for a meal

4.4 Then, [246] when the Blessed One had instructed, inspired, roused and gladdened the matted-hair ascetic Kenya with a Dharma talk, he said this to the Blessed One,

“May master Gotama along with the community of monks accept a meal from me tomorrow.”

5 “Great indeed, Keniya, is the community of monks, 1250 in number, and you are deeply devoted to the brahmins.”

5.2 For the second time, the matted-hair ascetic Keniya said this to the Blessed One,

“Although, master Gotama, the community of monks is large, number 1250 monks, and I am deeply devoted to the brahmins,

still may master Gotama along with the community of monks accept a meal from me tomorrow.”

5.3 “Great indeed, Keniya, is the community of monks, 1250 in number, and you are deeply devoted to the brahmins.”

5.4 For the third time, the matted-hair ascetic Keniya said this to the Blessed One,

“Although, master Gotama, the community of monks is large, number 1250 monks, and I am deeply devoted to the brahmins,

still may master Gotama along with the community of monks accept a meal from me tomorrow.”

5.5 The Blessed One consented by his silence.

5.6 Then, the matted-hair ascetic Keniya, knowing that the Blessed One has consented, rose from his seat and left.²⁷

The rule allowing for beverages at any time

6 Then, the Blessed One, in that connection, on that occasion, gave a Dharma talk, and then addressed the monks,

(1) “I allow, bhikshus, 8 kinds of beverages [drinks], that is to say, mango drink,²⁸ rose-apple drink, coconut drink,²⁹ banana drink,³⁰ honey drink, grape drink, lotus root drink,³¹ and *phārusaka*³² drink.³³

²⁶ “[I]nstructed, inspired, roused and gladdened,” *sandassesī samādapesi samuttejesi sampahāmsesi*. This action sequence reflects the basic structure of the Buddha’s teaching method: (1) the Dharma is shown (*sandassetvā*); (2) the listener/s are filled with enthusiasm (*samādapetvā*); (3) they are fired with commitment (*samuttejetvā*); and (4) filled with joy (*sampahāmsetvā*). The Commentaries explain that by instructing, the Buddha dispels the listener’s **delusion**; by inspiring him, **heedlessness** is dispelled; by rousing him, **indolence** is dispelled; and by gladdening, brings the practice to a **conclusion**. In short, when we teach Dharma to benefit others, we should do our best to **bring instruction, inspiration, motivation and joy** to the listener (DA 1:300; UA 242; SnA 446). These 4 qualities are, in fact, the sixth or last of the ideal skills of a Dharma speaker (**Udāyi S**, A 3:184). See SD 11.4 (4.3) Stages in teaching, SD 30.8 (3.4.2.1) Gladdening the audience, SD 40a.4 (1.2) Stages of effective discourse, & also L S Cousins, in his review of *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (tr. Nāṇamoli) in JBE 4 1997:272, where he gives a slightly different listing of the above. See also Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, 1992:65-67.

²⁷ **Sela S** (§4.2 of M 92 = Sn 3.7) omits the foll section on the drink allowances [§6] and says how Keniya gets his household to prepare for the next morning’s meal offering (§§4.3-4 of M 92 = Sn 3.7), followed by the Sela episode (§§5-24 of M 92 = Sn 3.7). Then the two story-lines merge again with the announcement of the meal to the Buddha [§7], right to the end here.

²⁸ Made from raw or cooked mangoes (VA 1191).

²⁹ *Coca*. Comys says this is *aṭṭhi, kadali, phala*, “the fruit of ‘kernelled’ banana (?),” while *moca* is said to be *anaṭṭhika kadali, phala*, “the fruit of banana ‘without kernel’ (?)” (VA 1102 = NmA 396). It is difficult to say what kind of fruit this is. A safe surmise here is to take *coca* as meaning “coconut,” esp young coconut, whose sweet water is a popular drink throughout south and southeast Asia. It is certainly not “plantain” which has to be cooked before it can be eaten.

- (2) I allow, bhikshus, all kinds of fruit juices, except the fruit juice from grain.³⁴
 (3) I allow, bhikshus, all kinds of leaf-juices, except the vegetable juice.³⁵
 (4) I allow, bhikshus, all kinds of flower-juices, except the juice of the madhuka flower.³⁶
 (5) I allow, bhikshus, sugarcane juice.³⁷

Keṇiya's offering

7 Then, when the night was over, the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya, having had excellent food, hard and soft, prepared in his own ashram, had the time announced to the Blessed One,
 “It is time, master Gotama, the meal is ready.”

7.2 Then, the Blessed One, having dressed himself in the morning, taking robe and bowl, approached the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya's ashram. Having arrived, he, along with the community of monks, sat down on the prepared seats.

7.3 At that time, the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya served, with his own hands, the community of monks, headed by the Buddha, and satisfied them with excellent food, hard and soft.

When the Blessed One had finished his meal, and washed his hands and bowl, he sat down at one side.

The Buddha's thanksgiving

8 To the matted-hair ascetic Keṇiya sitting thus at one side, the Blessed One gave thanks with these verses:³⁸

8.2	<i>Aggi.hutta,mukhā yaññā sāvittī chandaso mukhaṃ rājā mukhaṃ manussānaṃ nadīnaṃ sāgaro mukhaṃ</i>	The fire sacrifice is the chief of sacrifices. The Sāvitrī is the chief of poetic metres. The king is the chief amongst humans. Of rivers, the ocean is the chief.	(Sn 568)
8.3	<i>Nakkhattānaṃ mukhaṃ cando ādicco tapataṃ mukhaṃ puññaṃ ākaṅkhamānānaṃ saṅgho ve yajataṃ mukhaṃ 'ti</i>	Of stars, the moon is the chief, the sun is foremost of those that shine. For those who, desiring merit, the sangha is indeed the best sacrificer.	(Sn 569)

³⁰ *Moca*: see prec (*coca*) is the banana, *Musa sapientum*, of which there are many subspecies and varieties.

³¹ *Sāluka,pāna*. Comys say this is a drink made from crushed roots of the red and the blue lotuses, and so on (VA 1102 = NmA 396). Lotus roots are a popular ingredient in local soups, esp amongst vegetarians.

³² *Phārusaka* (also DhA 3:316). *Vinaya Texts* says that this is “*Grewia asiatica* of Linnaeus” (V:RDO 2:133 n2): see SED (p606): *parūsa(ka)*, “(fruit) from the berries of which a cooling beverage is prepared.” Ariyesako say this is marian plum [*Bouea macrophylla*; Thai *mapraang*] or lychee fruit (*The Bhikkhus' Rules: A guide for the laypeople*, 1998:173 n92). In Sri Lanka, this is boraludamanu or ugarassasaid, ie “sweet lovi-lovi,” “Indian plum” or “paniala” (Hindi) (*Flacourtia ramontchi* or *Flacourtia cataphracta* Roxb): this is also the meaning given in Buddhadatta, *Concise Pali-Eng Dictionary*, sv. See Sarah T George, K I Mathew & K R Mridula, “Floral biology, fruitset and fruit development in sweet lovi-lovi *Flacourtia cataphracta* Roxb,” *Journal of Tropical Agriculture* 37,1-2, 1999:17-21.

³³ *Anujānāmi bhikkhave aṭṭha pānāni amba,pānaṃ jambu,pānaṃ coca,pānaṃ moca,pānaṃ madhūka,pānaṃ mud-dika,pānaṃ sālūka,pānaṃ phārusaka,pānaṃ*. Two lists of 8 beverages each (the first the same as here) are given at Nm 372. These beverages are a controverted point at Kvu 552.

³⁴ *Anujānāmi bhikkhave sabbaṃ phala,rasaṃ ṭhapetvā dhañña,phala,rasaṃ*.

³⁵ *Anujānāmi bhikkhave sabbaṃ patta,rasaṃ ṭhapetvā dāka,rasaṃ*.

³⁶ *Anujānāmi bhikkhave sabbaṃ puppha,rasaṃ ṭhapetvā madhūka,puppha,rasaṃ*. Horner identifies *madhuka* as the plant *Bassia latifolia* (V:H 4:339 n9). More likely, this is the flower of the *Madhuca longifolia*, locally known as mahwa or mahua in north India and llupai in Tamil. The flower is used to produce a kind of alcoholic drink, and known to affect animals.

³⁷ *Anujānāmi bhikkhave ucchu,rasaṃ*.

³⁸ For nn on these 2 verses, see **Sela S** (§26 of M 92 = Sn 3.7) @ SD 45.7a.

8.4 When the Blessed One had given thanks to the matted-hair ascetic Keniya with these verses, he rose from his seat and left.³⁹

— evam —

Bibliography

[See SD 45.7a Biblio]

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³⁹ **Sela S** continues here with the “Sela cycle 2,” ie, the arhathood of Sela and his followers, and closing with his lion-roar (§§27-29 of M 92 = Sn 3.7) @ SD 45.7b.