

## MN 100 Sangarava Sutta - To Sangarava

*From "A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi"*

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was wandering in the Kosalan Country with a large Sangha of bhikkhus.
2. Now on that occasion a brahmin woman named Dhananjani was staying at Candalakappa, having full confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.<sup>917</sup> One time she stumbled, and [on recovering her balance] exclaimed three times: "Honour to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened! Honour to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened! Honour to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened!"
3. At the time there was a brahmin student named Sangarava staying at Candalakappa. He was a master of the Three Vedas, with their vocabularies, liturgy, phonology, and etymology, and the histories as the fifth; skilled in philology and grammar, he was fully versed in natural philosophy and in the marks of a Great Man. Having heard the brahmin woman Dhananjani utter those words, he said to her: "This brahmin woman Dhananjani must be disgraced and degraded, since when there are brahmins around she praises that bald-pated recluse."  
She replied: "My dear sir, you do not know the virtue and wisdom of the Blessed One. If you knew that Blessed One's virtue and wisdom, my dear sir, you would never think of abusing and reviling him."  
"Then madam, inform me when the recluse Gotama comes to Candalakappa."  
"Yes, dear sir," the brahmin woman Dhananjani replied.
4. Then, after wandering by stages in the Kosalan country, the Blessed One eventually arrived at Candalakappa. There in Candalakappa the Blessed One lived in the Mango Grove belonging to the brahmins of the Todeyya clan.
5. The brahmin woman Dhananjani heard that the Blessed One had arrived, so she went to the brahmin student Sangarava and told him: "My dear sir, the Blessed One has arrived in Candalakappa and he is living here in Candalakappa in the Mango Grove belonging to the brahmins of the Todeyya clan. Now is the time, dear sir, to do as you think fit."  
"Yes, madam," he replied. Then he went to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and said:
6. "Master Gotama, there are some recluses and brahmins who claim to teach the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now.<sup>918</sup> Where among these recluses and brahmins does Master Gotama stand?"
7. "Bharadvaja, I say that there is a diversity among those recluses and brahmins who claim to teach the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. There are some recluses and brahmins who are traditionalists, who on the basis of oral tradition claim to teach the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now; such are the brahmins of the Three Vedas. There are some recluses and brahmins who, entirely on the basis of mere faith, claim to teach the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct

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<sup>917</sup> Dhananjani was a stream-enterer. MA says that Sangarava was her husband's younger brother.

<sup>918</sup> MA glosses: They claim to be the originators, creators, producers of a holy life, saying: "Having directly known here and now in this present existence and having reached the consummation, we have attained Nibbana, called 'perfection' because it is the transcendence of everything."

knowledge; such are the reasoners and investigators.<sup>919</sup> There are some recluses and brahmins who, having directly known the Dhamma for themselves<sup>920</sup> among things not heard before, claim to teach the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge.

8. “I, Bharadvaja, am one of those recluses and brahmins who, having directly known the Dhamma for themselves among things not heard before, claim to teach the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge. As to how I am one of those recluses and brahmins, that may be understood in the following way.
9. “Here, Bharadvaja, before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I considered thus: ‘Household life is crowded and dusty; life gone forth is wide open. It is not easy while living in a home to lead the holy life utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness.’
- 10-13. “Later, Bharadvaja, while still young...*(as Sutta 26, 14-17)*...And I sat down thinking: “This will serve for striving.’
- 14-30. “Now these three similes occurred to me spontaneously never heard before...*(as Sutta 36, 17-33; but in the present sutta in 17-22 – corresponding to 20-25 of Sutta 36 – the sentence “But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain” does not occur)*... the five bhikkhus were disgusted and left me, thinking: “The recluse Gotama now lives luxuriously; he has given up his striving and reverted to luxury.”
- 31-41. “Now when I had eaten solid food and regained my strength, then quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states... *(as Sutta 36, 34-44; but in the present sutta in 36, 38, and 41 – corresponding to 39, 41, and 44 of Sutta 36 – the sentence “But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain” does not occur)*... as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute.”
42. When this was said, the brahmin student Sangarava said to the Blessed One: “Master Gotama’s striving was unfaltering, Master Gotama’s striving was that of a true man, as it should be for an Accomplished One, a Fully Enlightened One. But how is it, Master Gotama, are there gods?”  
“It is known to me to be the case, Bharadvaja, that there are gods.”  
“But how is this, Master Gotama, that when you are asked, ‘Are there gods?’ you say: ‘It is known to me to be the case, Bharadvaja, that there are gods?’ If that is so, isn’t what you say empty and false?”<sup>921</sup>  
“Bharadvaja, when one is asked, ‘Are there gods?’ whether one answers, ‘There are gods,’ or ‘It is known to me to be the case that there are gods,’ a wise man can draw the definite conclusion that there are gods.”

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<sup>919</sup> It is puzzling that the reasoners and investigators are here said to rely on the basis of mere faith. Elsewhere faith and reasoning are contrasted as two different grounds of conviction (MN 95.14), and “mere faith” seems more closely allied with reliance on oral tradition than with reasoning and investigation.

<sup>920</sup> This phrase emphasizes direct personal realization as the foundation for promulgating a holy life.

<sup>921</sup> MA says that Sangarava had the idea that the Buddha spoke thus without actual knowledge, and he therefore accuses the Buddha of false speech. The sequence of ideas in this passage is difficult to follow and it is likely that the text is corrupt.

“But why didn’t Master Gotama answer me in the first way?”

“It is widely accepted in the world, Bharadvaja, that there are gods.”

43. When this was said, the brahmin student Sangarava said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! Master Gotama has made the Dhamma clear in many ways, as though he were turning upright what had been overturned revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see forms. I go to Master Gotama for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. Let Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life.”