0.0.1 Foremost Knowledge

1. Thus was heard by me. On one occasion the Auspicious One was dwelling in Savatthi at the Eastern Monastery, the mansion of Migara's Mother. At that time Vasettha and Bharadvaja were living on probation among the bhikkhus, wishing to become bhikkhus. Then in the evening, the Auspicious One, having emerged from seclusion, having descended from the palace, was walking up and down in the open air in the shade of the palace. Vasettha saw that the Auspicious One, having emerged from seclusion, having descended from the palace, was walking up and down in the open air in the shade of the palace. Having seen, he address Bharadvaja: "This Auspicious One, O friend Bharadvaja, having emerged from seclusion, having descended from the palace, is walking up and down in the open air in the shade of the palace. Let us approach this Auspicious One, O friend Bharadvaja. Hopefully, we might gain the hearing of a Dhamma talk in the presence of the Auspicious One." "Yes, friend," Bharadvaja replied to Vasettha. So then Vasettha and Bharadvaja approached the Auspicious One. Having approached, having bowed down to the Auspicious One, they walk back and forth following the Auspicious One.

2. Then the Auspicious One addressed Vasettha: "Here Vasettha, being brahmin by birth, of a brahmin caste, you have gone forth from the home life into homelessness from a brahmin family. Hopefully, O Vasettha, the brahmins do not abuse you with verbal abuse." "Certainly,

O Bhante, the brahmins fully abuse and insult us with personally suitable verbal abuse without holding back."

3. "But in which way, O Vasettha, do the brahmins fully abuse and insult you with personally suitable verbal abuse without holding back?" "The brahmins, O Bhante, say thus: "The brahmins are the only most excellent caste, other castes are inferior. The brahmins are the only bright caste, other castes are dark. The brahmins are the only well-born, not non-brahmins. The brahmins are the only legitimate sons of Brahma, born of his mouth, born of Brahma, created by Brahma, an heir of Brahma. You, having abandoned the most excellent caste, have entered into an inferior caste, that of the shaven-headed counterfeit samanas, those dark menial offsprings of our kinsmen's feet. This is not good, this is not proper, that you, having abandoned the most excellent caste, have entered into an inferior caste, that of the shaven-headed counterfeit samanas, those dark menial offsprings of our kinsmen's feet." Thus do the brahmins fully abuse and insult us with personally suitable verbal abuse without holding back?"

4. Certainly, O Vasettha, the brahmins do not remember their ancestry when they say thus to you: "The brahmins are the only most excellent caste, other castes are inferior. The brahmins are the only bright caste, other castes are dark. The brahmins are the only well-born, not non-brahmins. The brahmins are the only legitimate

sons of Brahma, born of his mouth, born of Brahma, created by Brahma, an heir of Brahma." Yet, O Vasettha, for the brahmins, the brahmin women are also seen menstruating, also being pregnant, also giving birth, also breastfeeding. Yet those brahmins, evidently being born from womb, say thus: The brahmins are the only most excellent caste, other castes are inferior. The brahmins are the only bright caste, other castes are dark. The brahmins are the only well-born, not non-brahmins. The brahmins are the only legitimate sons of Brahma, born of his mouth, born of Brahma, created by Brahma, an heir of Brahma." Those brahmins simply misrepresent Brahma with untrue statements and accumulate much demerit.

5. There are, O Vasettha, these four castes, the Khattiya, the Brahmin, the Vessa and the Sudda. Here, O Vasettha, a certain khattiya is a killer of living beings, a taker of what is not given, an engager in misconduct in sensual pleasures, a speaker of falsehood, a speaker of divisive speech, a speaker of harsh speech, a covetous one, one with a mind of ill-will, a holder of wrong view. Thus, O Vasettha, these dhammas which are unwholesome and reckoned as unwholesome, blameworthy and reckoned as blameworthy, not to be associated with and reckoned as not to be associated with, unsuitable for the noble ones and reckoned as unsuitable for the noble ones, dark with dark results, blamed by the wise, a khattiya is seen engaging in them. Here, O Vasettha, a certain brahmin

too is a killer of living beings, a taker of what is not given, an engager in misconduct in sensual pleasures, a speaker of falsehood, a speaker of divisive speech, a speaker of harsh speech, a covetous one, one with a mind of ill-will, a holder of wrong view. Thus, O Vasettha, these dhammas which are unwholesome and reckoned as unwholesome, blameworthy and reckoned as blameworthy, not to be associated with and reckoned as not to be associated with, unsuitable for the noble ones and reckoned as unsuitable for the noble ones, dark with dark results, blamed by the wise, a brahmin too is seen engaging in them. Here, O Vasettha, a certain vessa too is a killer of living beings, a taker of what is not given, an engager in misconduct in sensual pleasures, a speaker of falsehood, a speaker of divisive speech, a speaker of harsh speech, a covetous one, one with a mind of ill-will, a holder of wrong view. Thus, O Vasettha, these dhammas which are unwholesome and reckoned as unwholesome, blameworthy and reckoned as blameworthy, not to be associated with and reckoned as not to be associated with, unsuitable for the noble ones and reckoned as unsuitable for the noble ones, dark with dark results, blamed by the wise, a vessa too is seen engaging in them. Here, O Vasettha, a certain sudda too is a killer of living beings, a taker of what is not given, an engager in misconduct in sensual pleasures, a speaker of falsehood, a speaker of divisive speech, a speaker of harsh speech, a covetous one, one with a mind of ill-will, a holder of wrong view. Thus, O Vasettha, these dhammas which are unwholesome and reckoned as unwholesome, blameworthy and

reckoned as blameworthy, not to be associated with and reckoned as not to be associated with, unsuitable for the noble ones and reckoned as unsuitable for the noble ones, dark with dark results, blamed by the wise, a sudda too is seen engaging in them.

6. Here, O Vasettha, a certain khattiya is an abstainer from the killing of living beings, an abstainer from the taking of what is not given, an abstainer from misconduct in sensual pleasures, an abstainer from false speech, an abstainer from divisive speech, an abstainer from harsh speech, an abstainer from senseless prattle, not covetous, one of a benevolent mind, one of right view. Thus, O Vasettha, these dhammas which are wholesome and reckoned as wholesome, blameless and reckoned as blameless, to be associated with and reckoned as to be associated with, suitable for the noble ones and reckoned as suitable for the noble ones. bright with bright results, praised by the wise, a khattiya is seen engaging in them. Here, O Vasettha, a certain brahmin too is an abstainer from the killing of living beings, an abstainer from the taking of what is not given, an abstainer from misconduct in sensual pleasures, an abstainer from false speech, an abstainer from divisive speech, an abstainer from harsh speech, an abstainer from senseless prattle, not covetous, one of a benevolent mind, one of right view. Thus, O Vasettha, these dhammas which are wholesome and reckoned as wholesome, blameless and reckoned as blameless, to be associated with and reckoned as to

be associated with, suitable for the noble ones and reckoned as suitable for the noble ones, bright with bright results, praised by the wise, a brahmin is seen engaging in them. Here, O Vasettha, a certain vessa too is an abstainer from the killing of living beings, an abstainer from the taking of what is not given, an abstainer from misconduct in sensual pleasures, an abstainer from false speech, an abstainer from divisive speech, an abstainer from harsh speech, an abstainer from senseless prattle, not covetous, one of a benevolent mind, one of right view. Thus, O Vasettha, these dhammas which are wholesome and reckoned as wholesome, blameless and reckoned as blameless, to be associated with and reckoned as to be associated with, suitable for the noble ones and reckoned as suitable for the noble ones, bright with bright results, praised by the wise, a vessa is seen engaging in them. Here, O Vasettha, a certain sudda too is an abstainer from the killing of living beings, an abstainer from the taking of what is not given, an abstainer from misconduct in sensual pleasures, an abstainer from false speech, an abstainer from divisive speech, an abstainer from harsh speech, an abstainer from senseless prattle, not covetous, one of a benevolent mind, one of right view. Thus, O Vasettha, these dhammas which are wholesome and reckoned as wholesome, blameless and reckoned as blameless, to be associated with and reckoned as to be associated with, suitable for the noble ones and reckoned as suitable for the noble ones, bright with bright results, praised by the wise, a sudda is seen engaging in them.

7. With both dark and bright dhammas existing thus, O Vasettha, both-ways mixed among these four castes, [both what is] blamed by the wise and praised by the wise, of which here the brahmins say thus: "The brahmins are the only most excellent caste, other castes are inferior. The brahmins are the only bright caste, other castes are dark. The brahmins are the only well-born, not non-brahmins. The brahmins are the only legitimate sons of Brahma, born of his mouth, born of Brahma, created by Brahma, an heir of Brahma." that the wise do not agree. What is the reason for that? Because, O Vaseṭṭha, whichever bhikkhu of the four castes is an arahant with asavas extincted, one who has lived [the life of purity], done what must be done, laid down the burden, attained the true advantage, completely extincted the fetters of being, one who is liberated by right final knowledge, he is said to be the foremost of them according to Dhamma, not non-Dhamma. Indeed Dhamma, O Vasetthā, is simply the best cause of birth in this world and the next.

8. By this method, O Vasettha, it is to be known how the Dhamma is simply the best cause of birth in this world and the next. King Pasenadi of Kosala knows well, O Vasettha: "The samana Gotama who has gone forth from a Sakyan family, is superior." But the Sakyans, O vāseṭṭhā, exist as subordinate followers of King Pasenadi of Kosala. They, the Sakyans, O Vasettha, perform acts of submission to King Pasenadi of Kosala, bowing down, rising from their seats [as a token of respect], doing rever-

ential salutations and paying homage. Thus, O Vasettha, those acts of submission which they, the Sakyans, perform to King Pasenadi of Kosala, bowing down, rising from their seats [as a token of respect], doing reverential salutations and paying homage, it is those [same acts] that King Pasenadi of Kosala, perform towards the Tathagata, bowing down, rising from his seat [as a token of respect], doing reverential salutations and paying homage, [thinking]: "Certainly the samana Gotama is well-born, while I am ill-born, the samana Gotama is powerful, while I am powerless, the samana Gotama is elegant, while I am ugly, the samana Gotama is of great influence, while I am of little influence." Now for him it is only by honoring the Dhamma, respecting the Dhamma, revering the Dhamma, worshipping the Dhamma, esteeming the Dhamma, that King Pasenadi of Kosala, perform such acts of submission towards the Tathagata, bowing down, rising from his seat [as a token of respect], doing reverential salutations and paying homage.

9. By this method too, O Vasettha, it is to be known how the Dhamma is simply the best cause of birth in this world and the next. All of you here, O Vasettha, of various births, various names, various lineages, various families, have gone forth from home life into homelessness. When being asked:"Who are you?" you should acknowledge: "We are samanas, sons of the Sakyan." Of whom, O Vasettha, faith in the Tathagata is settled, rooted, established, firm, unshakeable by any samana

or brahmana or deva or mara or Brahma or anyone in the world, this is fitting for him to say: “I am truly the legitimate son of the Auspicious One, born of his mouth, born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma, an heir of the Dhamma.” What is the reason for that? Because, O Vasettha, this is the designation for the Tathagata: “An embodiment of Dhamma.” Also “An embodiment of Brahma.” Also “A Dhamma Being.” Also “A Brahma Being.”