

# Kesi Sutta: Kesi the Horse-trainer

Translated by Bhikkhu Pesala

Then Kesi the horse-trainer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him: “You, Kesi, are known as a trainer (*sārathī*) of tamable horses (*assadamma*). How do you train a tamable horse?”

“Lord, I train a tamable horse with gentleness, with harshness, with both gentleness and harshness.”

“And if a tamable horse does not submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a mild and harsh training, Kesi, what do you do?”

“If a tamable horse does not submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle and harsh training, lord, then I kill it. Why is that? I think: ‘Don’t let this be a discredit to my lineage of teachers.’ The Blessed One, venerable sir, is the incomparable trainer of tamable individuals. How do you train a tamable individual?”

“Kesi, I train a tamable individual with gentleness, with harshness, with both gentleness and harshness.

“In using gentleness, I teach: ‘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 deities. Such are human beings.’

“In using harshness, I teach: ‘Such is bodily misconduct. Such is the result of bodily misconduct. Such is verbal misconduct. Such is the result of verbal misconduct. Such is mental misconduct. Such is the result of mental misconduct. Such is hell. Such is the animal womb. Such is the realm of the hungry ghosts.’

“In using gentleness and harshness, I teach: ‘Such is good bodily conduct. Such is the result of good bodily conduct. Such is bodily misconduct. Such is the result of bodily misconduct. Such is good verbal conduct. Such is the result of good verbal conduct. Such is verbal misconduct. Such is the result of verbal misconduct. Such is good mental conduct. Such is the result of good mental conduct. Such is mental misconduct. Such is the result of mental misconduct. Such are the deities. Such are human beings. Such is hell. Such is the animal womb. Such is the realm of the hungry ghosts.’”

“And if a tamable person does not submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a mild and harsh training, what do you do?”

“If a tamable person does not submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle and harsh training, then I kill him, Kesi.”

“Surely it’s not proper for the Blessed One to take life! Yet the Blessed One just said, ‘I kill him, Kesi.’”

“It is true, Kesi, that it is not proper for a Tathāgata to take life. However, if a tamable person does not submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle and harsh training, then the Tathāgata does not regard him as being worth speaking to or admonishing. His knowledgeable fellows in the holy life do not regard him as being worth speaking to or admonishing. This is what it means to be totally destroyed in the Doctrine and Discipline, when the Tathāgata does not regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing, and one’s knowledgeable fellows in the holy life do not regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing.”

“Indeed, venerable sir, one would be totally destroyed if the Tathāgata does not regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing, and one’s knowledgeable fellows in the holy life do not regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing.

“It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous, venerable sir! It is as if, venerable sir, someone had set upright what had been overturned, revealed what was hidden, pointed out the path to one who was lost, brought a light into the darkness so that those with eyes can see. Thus, venerable sir, the Blessed One has explained the Dhamma in various ways. I go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life.”