

## **Kalama Sutta / Freedom of Inquiry**

The people of Kalama asked the Buddha who to believe out of all the ascetics, sages, venerables, and holy ones who, like himself, passed through their town. They complained that they were confused by the many contradictions they discovered in what they heard. The Kalama Sutta is the Buddha's reply.

The same text, said the Buddha, must be applied to his own teachings.

One should not accept something just because it has been passed along and retold for many generations

One should not accept something merely because it has become a traditional practice.

One should not accept something just because it is cited in a text, or rumored to be true.

One should not accept something simply because it is well-known everywhere.

One should not accept something solely on the grounds of logical reasoning.

One should not accept something merely because it accords with your philosophy.

One should not accept something because it appeals to "common sense."

One should not accept something just because you like the idea.

One should not accept something because the speaker seems trustworthy.]

One should not accept something merely on the authority of a teacher or priest.

The Buddha advises that it is wise to make a proper examination before accepting any teaching. The above statements should not be taken to mean that one should reject all teachings and become cynical. For this would suggest that one should hold tightly to one's own opinions, and thus fail to investigate the world around us.

When you yourselves know, "This is unwholesome, this is blameworthy, this is censured by the wise, these things when accepted and practiced lead to harm and suffering, then you should give them up."

This famous discourse to the Kālāmas is often quoted as the Buddha's Charter for Freedom of Inquiry. It is not, in fact, called the Kālāma Sutta, but the Kesamutti Sutta, and is found in the Book of Threes in the Gradual Sayings. Kesamutta was a market town of the Kālāmas.

This is not the entire discourse, but just the key section of it, which is often quoted. It begins with the Kālāmas expressing their doubts about the doctrines they have heard from various teachers, who praise their own doctrines and disparage those of others, so it is hard to know who is speaking the truth. The Buddha advises them that it is wise to make a proper examination before accepting any religious teaching. It should not be taken to mean that one should reject all religious teachings and be a cynical materialist, as some try to imply. That would mean holding fast to one's own opinions and failing to investigate any further.

It concludes by saying how a noble disciple abides free from covetousness, ill-will, and confusion, with a mind made expansive with loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity. Thus he enjoys bliss here and now and is assured of going to heaven after death if there is a heaven. Either way he is self-assured and content.