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Okkhā Sutta¹

Ukkā Sutta The Discourse on the Rice-pots | S 20.4

Chinese Āgama SĀ 1253 = T2.344b25-344c5

Theme: Lovingkindness yields greater benefit than generosity

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003; rev 2010

Introduction

Two related suttas—the **Okkhā Sutta** (S 20.4) and the **Cūḷ’accharā Sutta** (A 1.6.3)²—show that lovingkindness (*mettā*) is a quality of the radiant mind (*pabhassara citta*). The Okkhā Sutta states that when the mind is directed to a wholesome thought, in this case, lovingkindness, even for a brief moment,³ it is of great benefit.

Giving a hundred pots of food in the morning, or at midday, or in the evening, are very generous acts. However, such a giving, being material, only goes so far, especially when the giving becomes routine, without giving a thought to the true condition of the recipients.

Lovingkindness is the unconditional acceptance of others, accepting them just as they are, and beginning there. In other words, we wish the recipients well and happy: the giving is done with unconditional love. The motivation behind such giving is that the recipients would be able to gain the strength to be able to become healthily independent in due course, unless of course if they are incapacitated in some way that prevents them from doing so.

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The Discourse on the Rice-pots

S 20.4

1 Staying at Sāvattthī.

2 “Bhikshus,

if one were to give a hundred pots (of food) in the morning;

if one were to give a hundred pots (of food) at midday;

if one were to give a hundred pots (of food) in the evening;

but if one were to cultivate a mind of lovingkindness *in the morning*, even for a moment that it takes to milk a cow by a pull at the udder-teat⁴;

or, if one were to cultivate a mind of lovingkindness *at midday*, even for a moment that it takes to milk a cow by a pull at the udder-teat;

or, if one were to cultivate a mind of lovingkindness *in the evening*, even for a moment that it takes to milk a cow by a pull at the udder-teat;

—*this* would be of greater fruit than these (the 3 kinds of giving).⁵

¹ PTS has *ukkā* (wr).

² A 1.6.3-5/1:10 f (SD 2.13).

³ Another such text is **Cūḷ’accharā S** (A 1.6.3-5/1:10 f), SD 2.13.

⁴ “To milk a cow by a mere tug at the udder-teat,” **gadduhana, mattam**, which comys gloss as *go, duhana, mattam* (lit “the extent of a cow-milking”) or more fully, *gāvim ṭhane gahetvā ekaṃ khīra, bindum dūhana, kāla. mattampi*, “for just the time it takes, having tugged at the cow’s teat, to get a drop of milk”; alternatively, they gloss it as *gandha, ūhana, mattam* (lit “the extent of a scent-sniff”), ie the time it take for a single sniff of a piece of incense nipped between two fingers (MA 4:195 = SA 2:224 = AA 4:195). Cf Skt *dadrūghna*, a small measure of time. The expression also occurs in **Cūḷ’accharā S** (A 1.6.5/1:11), SD 2.13 & **Velāma S** (A 9.20/4:395 f), SD 16.6 (§5.2) in connection with the moment it takes to cultivate lovingkindness as praised by the Buddha. The expression is also found in **Bakkula S** (M 124,33/3:127), SD 3.15, where Bakkula claims that he had never been sick for even such a short moment.

3 Therefore, bhikshus, you should train yourselves thus:

‘We will cultivate the liberation of mind by lovingkindness, often cultivate it, make a habit of it, make it our basic practice, keep it constant, build it up, fully undertake it.’

Thus, bhikshus, you should train yourselves.”

— evaṃ —

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⁵ That is, when compared to insight cultivation, cf **Velāma S** (A 9.20/4:395 f), SD 16.6.