AN 3.57 — Vacchagotta Sutta (Discourse to Vacchagotta)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

57. Vacchagotta Sutta (Discourse to Vacchagotta) On one occasion, the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta went and approached The Blessed One, and after exchanging friendly greetings with The Teacher, he sat down to one side and said:

“Venerable Sir, I heard that the recluse Gautama had said this:

‘Gifts should be given to me, not to others. Gifts should be given to my disciples and not to the disciples of other sects. Gifts given to me are of much benefit; gifts given to others are not so beneficial. Gifts given to my disciples are of benefit and the gifts given to the disciples of other sects are not beneficial, at all.’

“Venerable Sir, do those who say this state that which has been truly spoken by the recluse Gautama, or are they simply misrepresenting and accusing the recluse Gautama wrongly? Do those who say this speak and explain according to The Dhamma, in a way that would not bring onto them criticism and rebuke from wise individuals, or not?

“We are asking this, Venerable Sir, because we do not wish to be misrepresenting the recluse Gautama.”

And The Blessed One spoke by saying:

“Vacchagotta, those who say:

‘Gifts should be given to me, not to others. Gifts should be given to my disciples and not to the disciples of other sects. Gifts given to me are of much benefit; gifts given to others are not so

beneficial. Gifts given to my disciples are of benefit and the gifts given to the disciples of other sects are not beneficial, at all,’ are not stating what has been truly spoken by Me; hence they are simply misrepresenting Me with what is untrue and contrary to fact.

“After all, Vaccha, whoever obstructs another from giving or receiving a gift or an offering, creates three obstacles. What three?

“He destroys the possibility for the giver to make merit; he destroys the possibility of gaining the offering for the receiver; and thus, he injures and maims himself through this evil act of obstruction.

“Thus, Vaccha, whoever obstructs another from giving or receiving a gift or an offering, creates three obstacles.

“But, Vaccha, I will tell you this as well –

“Whoever throws away even the dirty water used for the washing of his bowl, cup or saucers into a cesspit or a refuse dump, at the entrance of the village, while reflecting with a heart that is flooded with loving-kindness (mettā):

‘May all those living beings that are to be sustained with this, benefit from this!’

“Now this itself will accrue much merits, so how much more can be said when given to humans!”

“Yet, I tell you Vaccha, that whatever is given to the one with virtuous behavior is far more fruitful than those given to non-virtuous and immoral individuals.

“But even more fruitful than these are gifts offered to those, who have given up five factors and now possess the five other factors.

“And what are the five factors that are given up?

“Intoxication with sense pleasures; anger; sloth and torpor; restlessness and worry; and skeptical doubts. These are the five factors they have given up.

“And what are the five factors that are possessed?

“The possession of abundant virtues, by the one gone beyond The Training. The collected stability of the mind (samādhi), of the one gone beyond The Training. The wisdom, of the one gone beyond The Training. The attainment of Full Awakening, by the one gone beyond The Training. The Knowledge and Vision of Release, of the one gone beyond The Training.

“These are the five factors that they possess.

“It is for this reason that I declare, that gifts offered to those who have given up five factors and now possess the five other factors, are truly the most fruitful.

‘The cattle may be pure white or black in color, or maybe red or brown, They might be spotted, solid-colored, beautiful, or dove colored, But the best to be born among them is the Bull That is powerful and mighty, yet tamed and restrained, The one with the highest

authority and formidable speed to lead, Which is why it is to him that the load is given, Irrespective of the color of his hide.

In the same manner, among warrior kings, Brahmins, merchants, householders, or outcastes, Those who are truly tamed are indeed the very best; Righteous, virtuous, truthful and endowed with wise inner moral shame. They are, after all, the only ones who come to the end of the holy life, By having put an end to death itself. It is they, who have put down the heavy load, And done what had to be done, and are now desire-less, taintless, and free.

Gone beyond all thoughts, they are fully extinguished without any grabbing or holding. These are The Holy Ones, the supreme field of merits, The very best to be offered your heartfelt gifts.

But the majority that is dull-witted, And all those without true understanding or insight, Give their gifts to the undeserving and unappeased, The ones who are genuinely un-holy, While those givers, in their blindness, keep ignoring The Holy Ones, sitting close by.

As for those with eyes to see, who revere the appeased and the wise, Their faith soon becomes established in The Tathāgata. Which is why they either go to the heavenly realms, or are born into good families here, While gradually advancing and making their way, To the state reached only by the wise, With their attainment of Nibbāna Supreme.’