AN 7.52 — A Very Fruitful Gift

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Numbered Discourses 7.52

5. A Great Sacrifice

A Very Fruitful Gift

At one time the Buddha was staying near Campā on the banks of the Gaggarā Lotus Pond.

Then several lay followers of Campā went to Venerable Sāriputta, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him, "Sir, it's been a long time since we've heard a Dhamma talk from the Buddha. It would be good if we got to hear a Dhamma talk from the Buddha."

"Well then, reverends, come on the next sabbath day. Hopefully you'll get to hear a Dhamma talk from the Buddha."

"Yes, sir" they replied. Then they rose from their seats, bowed to Sāriputta, and respectfully circled him before leaving.

Then on the next sabbath the lay followers of Campā went to Venerable Sāriputta, bowed, and stood to one side. Then they went together with Sāriputta to the Buddha, bowed, and sat down to one side. Sāriputta said to the Buddha:

"Sir, could it be that someone gives a gift and it is not very fruitful or beneficial, while someone else gives exactly the same gift and it is very fruitful and beneficial?"

"Indeed it could, Sāriputta."

"Sir, what is the cause, what is the reason for this?"

"Sāriputta, take the case of a someone who gives a gift as an investment, their mind tied to it, expecting to keep it, thinking 'I'll enjoy this in my next life.' They give to ascetics or brahmins such things as food, drink, clothing, vehicles; garlands, fragrance, and makeup; and bed, house, and lighting. What do you think, Sāriputta, don't some people give gifts in this way?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sāriputta, someone who gives a gift as an investment, when their body breaks up, after death, is reborn in the company of the gods of the four great kings. When that deed, success, glory, and sovereignty is spent they return to this place.

Next, take the case of a someone who gives a gift not as an investment, their mind not tied to it, not expecting to keep it, and not thinking, 'I'll enjoy this in my next life.' But they give

a gift thinking, ‘It’s good to give.’ …

They give a gift thinking, ‘Giving was practiced by my father and my father’s father. It would not be right for me to abandon this family custom.’ …

They give a gift thinking, ‘I cook, they don’t. It wouldn’t be right for me to not give to them.’ …

They give a gift thinking, ‘The ancient brahmin seers were Aṭṭhaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Vessāmitta, Yamadaggi, Aṅgīrasa, Bhāradvāja, Vāseṭṭha, Kassapa, and Bhagu. Just as they performed great sacrifices, I will share a gift.’ …

They give a gift thinking, ‘When giving this gift my mind becomes clear, and I become happy and joyful.’ …

They don’t give a gift thinking, ‘When giving this gift my mind becomes clear, and I become happy and joyful.’ But they give a gift thinking, ‘This is an adornment and requisite for the mind.’ They give to ascetics or brahmins such things as food, drink, clothing, vehicles; garlands, fragrance, and makeup; and bed, house, and lighting. What do you think, Sāriputta, don’t some people give gifts in this way?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Sāriputta, someone who gives gifts, not for any other reason, but thinking, ‘This is an adornment and requisite for the mind’, when their body breaks up, after death, is reborn among the gods of the Divinity’s host. When that deed, success, glory, and sovereignty is spent they are a non-returner; they do not return to this place.

This is the cause, this is the reason why someone gives a gift and it is not very fruitful or beneficial, while someone else gives exactly the same gift and it is very fruitful and beneficial.”