AN 8.24 — AN 8:24 About Hatthaka (2) | Hatthaka Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

About Hatthaka (2)

Hatthaka Sutta (AN 8:24)

The four grounds for the bonds of fellowship (see AN 4:32) appear in the early Mahāyāna sūtras as guidelines for every aspiring bodhisattva—one of the few teachings that even the more radical Mahāyāna sūtras adopt from the early canons. The following sutta, which maintains that these four qualities are required for developing any large following, may account for this fact.

* * *

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Āḷavī at the Aggāḷava Shrine. Then Hatthaka of Āḷavī, surrounded by approximately 500 (other) lay followers, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, "Large is your following, Hatthaka. How have you won over this large following?"

"Lord, I have won over this large following through the four grounds for the bonds of fellowship taught by the Blessed One. When I know that, 'This person is to be won over by giving,' then I win him/her over by giving. When I know that, 'This person is to be won over by kind words,' then I win him/her over by kind words. When I know that, 'This person is to be won over by beneficial help,' then I win him/her over by beneficial help.1 When I know that, 'This person is to be won over by consistency,' then I win him/her over by consistency.2 Awed by the wealth of my family, they regard me as worth listening to, which would not be the case if I were poor."

"It's good, Hatthaka, it's very good that this is the means by which you have won over a large following. All those in the past who have won over a large following have done so by means of these four same grounds for the bonds of fellowship. All those in the future who will win over a large following will do so by means of these four same grounds for the bonds of fellowship. All those at present who are winning over a large following do so by means of these four same grounds for the bonds of fellowship."

Then, having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One with a talk on Dhamma, Hatthaka of Āḷavī got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One, circled him—keeping him on his right—and left. Not long after he had left, the Blessed One said to the monks, "Monks, remember Hatthaka of Āḷavī as being endowed with eight amazing, astounding qualities. Which eight? Hatthaka of Āḷavī is endowed with conviction. He is virtuous. He has a sense of shame. He has a sense of compunction (over the results of unskillful actions). He is learned. He is generous. He is discerning. He is modest. Remember Hatthaka of Āḷavī as being endowed with these eight amazing, astounding qualities."

Notes

1. The Commentary to AN 4:32 defines beneficial help as beneficial words and advice, an assertion that may be based on the idea that giving already covers beneficial actions. AN 5:99 and AN 8:26 would suggest that encouraging the person to observe the precepts would also count as beneficial help.

2. The Commentary defines consistency as sharing the same hardships and pleasures: eating together, sleeping together, observing the same precepts, not claiming any special privileges. Other traditional texts define consistency more in terms of reliability: acting the same way behind the other person's back as one would to his/her face.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: AN 3:35