Pv 8 — Goṇa Sutta: The Ox

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Text

A son is crying over the death of his ox. His father questions him:

Father:

Are you crazy son? Why are you trying to feed grass to a dead ox saying, “Eat, eat!”? Food and drink will not make it come back to life. You are childish, a fool, and an idiot.

Son:

But father, there are these legs, this head, this body with its tail, and the eyes are the same—this ox might come back to life. But our dead grandfather’s hands, legs, body, and head are not seen. But yet you still cry over the pile of earth that was built over his body. Is it not you that is foolish?

Father:

My heart was burning with sadness over the death of my father like when ghee is poured onto a fire. But now, all my sorrow has been extinguished as if I had been sprayed with water. I was struck with an arrow of grief, but you have removed it from me, my son. Having heard your advice, I have become tranquil and cool, with the arrow of sorrow removed. I no longer grieve or weep.

If someone feels compassion towards others, they should try to help them escape from sorrow like the son Sujāta to his father.