# Pv 21 — Aṅkura Sutta: The Merchant Aṅkura

English translation by Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery (Sutta Friends).

Source: https://suttafriends.org/sutta/pv2-9/

Source revision: a5eaa8e3ee5f24880bac73482e5cbd2c44b0711d5921616fee41166f6402458e

License: Sutta Friends — individual sutta sharing permission — https://suttafriends.org/copyright/

License URL: https://suttafriends.org/copyright/

Copyright: © Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery

License notice: Please feel free to share individual suttas however you like. Otherwise, the sutta translations on this site are © Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery.

Attribution: English from the Sinhala translations published by Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery; see the original article and publisher permission statement.

Distribution: Individual copies only in this build; omitted from combined readers and collection/source archives.

Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: UNKNOWN. Complete publisher article including supplied Pali, notes and lists. Unabridged canonical coverage and translation accuracy not independently established.

## Text

A group of merchants tries to capture a ghost.

Aṅkura (merchant):

We are going to the country of Kamboja to do business. This god will help us get what we want. Let’s take him with us.

After we have taken the god, either with his permission or by force, we will put him on a cart and can go quickly to the city of Dvāraka.

Ghost:

One should not break the branches of a tree which he previously rested under. It is like injuring a friend, this is a very evil deed.

Aṅkura:

Dear god, it doesn’t matter. One should even cut down the trunk of a tree he previously used for shade if he needs it.

Ghost:

One should not remove even one leaf of the tree that he previously used for shade. It is like injuring a friend. This is a very evil deed.

Aṅkura:

No, oh god, one should even pull the whole tree out along with the roots if he needs it.

Ghost:

A man should not even have an evil thought against another man who helped him by providing food, drink, and shelter, even for one night. Showing gratefulness is always praised by the wise in this world.

A man should not even have an evil thought against another man who helped him by providing food, drink, and shelter, even for one night. Good people with honest hearts do not like to associate with bad friends.

A person who harms another who had previously helped him will not have good fortune.

If one hates another who does not hate him back, the bad karma will come back to that same fool just like when dust is thrown up and falls back down.

I am not easily defeated by a god or man. I have very mighty psychic powers with great beauty and strength. I can travel great distances.

Aṅkura:

Your hands are golden, five streams of sweet juices flows out of your hand. You must be Sakka, the King of Gods.

Ghost:

No, I am not the god Sakka nor a famous god or gandhabba. I lived in the human world in the city Bheruva. After death, I was reborn in the ghost world. Aṅkura, I am a ghost.

Aṅkura:

What good deed did you do when you were living in Bheruva city to get those wonderful hands of yours?

Ghost:

I was a tailor in Bheruva city. Back then, my life was very hard and I had nothing to give. However, my workshop was close to a man named Asayha who was very generous. He was a disciple of the Buddha, followed precepts, and collected lots of merit. Beggars would come to me asking where the house of wealthy Asayha was, saying, “Blessings to you! Where should we go? Where are the alms given out?” I would point with my right hand and answer saying, “Blessings to you! You should follow that direction. The alms are given out there at Asayha’s residence.” For this reason, my hand flows with sweet juices.

Aṅkura:

You did not give alms to anyone with your own hand, but you helped others by pointing to the place where someone else gave alms. For that meritorious deed your hand flows with sweet juices.

I am curious about the generous man who gave those alms. Where was he reborn after death?

Ghost:

I do not know for sure but wherever he is, he must be very powerful and bright. I have also heard from the god Vessavaṇa that he has been reborn in the same heavenly world where Sakka the leader of gods is.

Aṅkura:

It is really great to do good deeds such as giving alms. After seeing the hand which gives unlimited happiness, why would anyone not collect merits?

Definitely, when I return to the city of Dvāraka, I will give alms which will result in happiness.

I will give food, drink, clothing, and provide houses to stay in. I will build public water tanks, wells, and bridges in places where it is hard to cross.

While this discussion was taking place, suddenly the merchant Aṅkura saw another ghost and questioned him.

Aṅkura:

Why are your fingers crooked, your face disfigured and ugly? Why are tears oozing from your eyes? What bad karma did you do for this to happen?

Ghost:

Now, you know about that generous man Asayha, the disciple of the Buddha. He appointed me as the person in charge of gifts in his house. But when I saw beggars who had come asking for food, I did not like to see them, so I would purposely turn my face away from them with anger. For that reason, my fingers and face are now deformed, and tears are oozing out from my eyes. This was the evil deed that I committed.

Aṅkura:

Oh unfortunate man, you are suffering with crooked fingers and a deformed face because you were unhappy about others giving alms.

I have to be very careful when I appoint somebody else to give alms.

When I leave here and go back to Dvāraka city, I will give food, drink, clothing and houses for travelers. I will build water tanks and bridges in places where it is hard to cross. This will bring me happiness in my future life.

When Aṅkura returned to Dvāraka, he gave food, drink, clothing and guest houses. He built water tanks, wells, and bridges in places where it was hard to cross. He did all these things with a very happy mind. Every morning and evening, servants and cooks in Aṅkura's house invited people to his house, calling loudly, "Who is hungry? Who is thirsty? Who needs clothes? Who needs a resting place for their oxen? Who needs an umbrella? Who needs perfumes? Who needs flowers? Who needs sandals?"

Aṅkura appointed a young man named Sindaka to organize alms. One day, Aṅkura spoke to Sindaka thus:

Aṅkura:

My dear Sindaka, the people think that I have a very happy and satisfied life, but if there are little or no beggars that come to my house on some days, I am very sad and will not sleep well.

Sindaka:

If the god Sakka, leader of the Tāvatiṁsa Heaven, was to grant you one wish, what would you wish for?

Aṅkura:

I would wish:

May heavenly food appear in front of me when I wake up.

May I see virtuous beggars.

May I never be short of things to give.

May I feel no regret after giving.

May I have a very pleasant mind while giving.

At that time, a man named Soṇaka was sitting there listening to the conversation, and spoke to Aṅkura saying,

Soṇaka:

One should not give everything one has to others. One should not only give alms, but one should also protect one's own wealth. Therefore wealth is better than giving. Those people who give too much will become poor. Wise people do not praise not giving or giving too much. Giving in a balanced way is always safe.

Aṅkura:

No Soṇaka, I will definitely continue to give to others. May lots of good people become my friends. I want to make everyone happy. I want to give gifts to them like a cloud that rains everywhere.

When people welcome beggars to their house happily and becomes happy after giving, those people living there will definitely become happy. One should have a pleasant mind before giving, while giving, and after giving. This is the way to collect powerful merit.

Aṅkura is always thinking about giving. Sixty thousand carts of food are given constantly to the people who come to his house. There are three thousand cooks wearing beautiful jewelry working for Aṅkura to prepare alms. There are another sixty thousand young men who chop firewood to be used for the cooking fire. There are twelve thousand women wearing beautiful jewelry preparing ingredients for the food. There are another twelve thousand women wearing beautiful jewelry standing with spoons to distribute the food.

In this way, King Aṅkura gave an immeasurable gift of alms to many people. He gave alms again and again in a very organized way, with respect and with his own hands. He gave alms for many days, months, seasons, years—for a very long time.

Having given such great alms for a long time, after death, Aṅkura was reborn in the Tāvatiṁsa Heaven.

There was another young man named Indaka who only gave one spoonful of food to the Arahant Anuruddha Bhante. After death, Indaka was also reborn in Tāvatiṁsa heaven. Surprisingly, Indaka experienced divine happiness with more beautiful forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles than Aṅkura. Indaka had a longer life span, beauty, happiness, and power.

One day the Supreme Buddha, the best of men, visited the Tāvatiṁsa heaven and was sitting on the Paṇḍukambala Rock at the foot of the Coral Tree on the top of Mount Meru. A large number of gods assembled there to pay homage to the supreme Buddha. The light of the Buddha's body shone more brightly that those gods.

At that time, Aṅkura was sitting twelve miles away from the Buddha while Indaka was sitting very close, shining brightly.

The Supreme Buddha noticed both of them and questioned,

Supreme Buddha:

Aṅkura, why are you sitting far away from me? You have given great alms for a long period of time. Why don't you come closer to me?

Aṅkura:

There were no noble disciples of the Blessed One to accept my alms so the result was not so fruitful. But Indaka gave very little alms to an Arahant disciple and now shines more brightly than me, like the moon in the midst of stars.

Just like when many seeds are planted in an infertile field, it does not give a large harvest. The farmer will not become happy. In the same way, even though a large alms-giving is given to an ordinary group of people who do not follow the Dhamma and protect precepts, it does not give a big result. It will not make the donor happy.

On the other hand, when a small amount of seeds are planted in a fertile field, it gives a very large and successful harvest. The farmer will be happy. In the same way, if someone offers very little alms to the noble disciples who are virtuous and full of good qualities, the result will be very fruitful.

In order to gain fruitful results from giving, people should give wisely. Then they will be born in heaven.

The Supreme Buddha always praised giving alms wisely. The gifts given to noble disciples give a more fruitful result, just as the seeds planted in a fertile field give a big harvest.