Ud 4.3 — Gopāla Sutta: The Cowherd

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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

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

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was wandering among the Kosalans with a large community of monks. Then, coming down from the road, he went to a certain tree, and on arrival sat down on a seat laid out. A certain cowherd then went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One, instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged him with Dhamma-talk. The cowherd — instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One's talk on Dhamma — said to him, "Lord, may the Blessed One, together with the community of monks, acquiesce to my offer of tomorrow's meal."

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then the cowherd, understanding the Blessed One's acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and left, circling him to the right.

Then, after the night had passed, the cowherd — having prepared in his own home a great deal of thick milk-rice porridge & fresh ghee — announced the time of the meal to the Blessed One: "It's time, lord. The meal is ready."

So the Blessed One early in the morning adjusted his under robe and — carrying his bowl & robes — went together with the community of monks to the cowherd's home. On arrival, he sat down on a seat laid out. The cowherd, with his own hand, served & satisfied the community of monks headed by the Blessed One with thick milk-rice porridge & fresh ghee. Then, when the Blessed One had eaten and had removed his hand from his bowl, the cowherd, taking a lower seat, sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One, instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged him with Dhamma-talk, then got up from his seat & left.

Now, not long after the Blessed One's departure, the cowherd was killed by a certain man between the boundaries of two villages. A large number of monks then went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they told him, "The cowherd who today served & satisfied the community of monks headed by the Blessed One with thick milk-rice porridge & fresh ghee, has been killed, it is said, by a certain man between the boundaries of two villages."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Whatever an enemy might do to an enemy, or a foe to a foe, the ill-directed mind can do to you even worse.[1]

Note

1.

This verse also occurs at Dhp 42, where it is paired with Dhp 43:

Whatever a mother, father or other kinsman might do for you, the well-directed mind can do for you even better.

See also: MN 136.