Ud 4.3 — The Cowherd

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Text

Heartfelt Sayings 4.3

The Cowherd

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was wandering in the land of the Kosalans together with a large Saṅgha of mendicants. And then the Buddha left the road, went to the root of a certain tree, and sat down on the seat spread out.

Then a certain cowherd went up to the Buddha, bowed, and sat down to one side. The Buddha educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired him with a Dhamma talk.

Then the cowherd said to the Buddha, “Sir, would the Buddha, together with the mendicant Saṅgha, please accept tomorrow’s meal from me?” The Buddha consented with silence. Then, knowing that the Buddha had consented, the cowherd rose from his seat, bowed, and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on his right, before leaving.

And when the night had passed the cowherd had plenty of thick milk-rice prepared in his own home, with fresh ghee. Then he had the Buddha informed of the time, saying, “Sir, it’s time. The meal is ready.”

The Buddha robed up, took his bowl and robe and, together with the Saṅgha of monks, went to the house of that cowherd, where he sat down on the prepared seat in the dining hall. Then the cowherd served and satisfied the mendicant Saṅgha headed by the Buddha with his own hands with a thick milk-rice and fresh ghee. When the Buddha had eaten and washed his hand and bowl, the cowherd took a low seat and sat to one side. The Buddha then educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired him with a teaching, after which he got up and left. But soon after the Buddha had left, the cowherd was killed by a certain man in the gap between village perimeters.

Then several mendicants went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened.

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha expressed this heartfelt sentiment:

“A wrongly directed mind

would do you more harm

than a hater to the hated,

or an enemy to their foe.”