Ud 8.5 — Ud 8:5 Cunda | Cunda Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Ud 8:5 Cunda (Cunda Sutta)

I have heard that on one occasion, while the Blessed One was wandering among the Mallans with a large community of monks, he arrived at Pāvā. There he stayed near Pāvā in the mango grove of Cunda the silversmith.

Cunda the silversmith heard, “The Blessed One, they say, while wandering among the Mallans with a large community of monks and reaching Pāvā, is staying near Pāvā in my mango grove.”

So Cunda 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. Then Cunda–instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the

Blessed One's Dhamma-talk–said to him, "Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the community of monks."

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Cunda, 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, at the end of the night, after having exquisite staple & non-staple food–including a large amount of pig-delicacy1–prepared in his own home, he announced the time to the Blessed One: "It's time, lord. The meal is ready."

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, adjusted his under robe and–carrying his bowl & robes–went together with the community of monks to Cunda's home. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out. Seated, he said to Cunda, "Cunda, serve me with the pig-delicacy you have had prepared, and the community of monks with the other staple & non-staple food you have had prepared."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Cunda served the Blessed One with the pig-delicacy he had had prepared, and the community of monks with the other staple & non-staple food he had had prepared. Then the Blessed One said to him, "Cunda, bury the remaining pig-delicacy in a pit. I don't see anyone in the world–together with its devas, Māras, & Brahmas, with its people with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & commonfolk–in whom, when it was ingested, it would go to a healthy change, aside from the Tathāgata."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Cunda buried the remaining pig-delicacy in a pit, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, after bowing down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One–after instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging him with Dhamma-talk–got up from his seat and left.

Then in the Blessed One, after he had eaten Cunda's meal, there arose a severe illness accompanied with (the passing of) blood, with intense pains & deadly. But the Blessed One endured it–mindful, alert, & not struck down by it.

Then he addressed Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, we will go to Kusinarā."

"As you say, lord," Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

I have heard that,

on eating Cunda the silversmith's meal,

the enlightened one was touched by illness–

fierce, deadly.

After he had eaten the pig-delicacy,

a fierce sickness arose in the Teacher.

After being purged of it,

the Blessed One said,

“To the city of Kusinarā

I will go.”2

Then the Blessed One, going down from the road, went to a certain tree and, on arrival, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please arrange my outer robe folded in four. I am tired. I will sit down.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda arranged the outer robe folded in four. The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out.

Seated, he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, just now 500 carts have passed through. The meager river–cut by the wheels–flows turbid & disturbed. But the Kukuṭa river is not far away, with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water,3 with restful banks, refreshing. There the Blessed One will drink potable water and cool his limbs.”

A second time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

A second time, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, just now 500 carts have passed through. The meager water–cut by the wheels–flows turbid & disturbed. But the Kukuṭa River is not far away, with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water, with restful banks, refreshing. There the Blessed One will drink potable water and cool his limbs.”

A third time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda–taking a bowl–went to the river. And the meager river that, cut by the wheels, had been flowing turbid & disturbed, on his approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed. The thought occurred to him, “How amazing! How astounding!–the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!–in that this meager river that, cut by the wheels, was flowing turbid & disturbed, on my approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed!” Fetching water with the bowl, he went to the Blessed One and on arrival said, “How amazing! How astounding!–the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!–in that this meager river that, cut by the wheels, was flowing turbid & disturbed, on my approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed! Drink the water, O Blessed One! Drink the water, O One-Well-Gone!”

Then the Blessed One drank the water.4

Then the Blessed One, together with the community of monks, went to the Kukuṭa River and, after arriving at the Kukuṭa River, going down, bathing, drinking, & coming back out, went to a mango grove. On arrival, the Blessed One said to Ven. Cundaka, "Cundaka, please arrange my outer robe folded in four. I am tired. I will lie down."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Cundaka arranged the outer robe folded in four. The Blessed One, lying on his right side, took up the lion's posture, placing one foot on top of the other–mindful, alert, and attending to the perception of getting up. Ven. Cundaka sat in front of him.

The awakened one,

–having gone to the little Kukuṭa river

with its pristine, pleasing water, clear–

the Teacher, seeming very tired,

the Tathāgata, unequalled in the world

went down, bathed, drank, & came out.

Honored, surrounded,

in the midst of the group of monks,

the Blessed One, Teacher,

proceeding here in the Dhamma,

the great seer,

went to the mango grove.

He addressed the monk named Cundaka,

"Spread it out, folded in four

for me to lie down."

Ordered by the One of developed mind,

Cundaka quickly set it out, folded in four.

The Teacher lay down, seeming very tired,

and Cundaka sat down there before him.

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, if anyone tries to incite remorse in Cunda the silversmith, saying, 'It's no gain for you, friend Cunda, it's ill-done by you, that the Tathāgata, having eaten your last alms, was totally unbound,' then Cunda's remorse

should be allayed (in this way): 'It's a gain for you, friend Cunda, it's well-done by you, that the Tathāgata, having eaten your last alms, was totally unbound. Face to face with the Blessed One have I heard it, face to face have I learned it, "These two alms are equal to each other in fruit, equal to each other in result, of much greater fruit & reward than any other alms. Which two? The alms that, after having eaten it, the Tathāgata awakens to the unexcelled right self-awakening. And the alms that, after having eaten it, the Tathāgata is unbound by means of the unbinding property with no fuel remaining.5 These are the two alms that are equal to each other in fruit, equal to each other in result, of much greater fruit & reward than any other alms. Venerable6 Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to long life. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to beauty. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to happiness. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to heaven. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to rank. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to sovereignty.'" In this way, Ānanda, Cunda the silversmith's remorse should be allayed."

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

For a person giving,

merit increases.

For one self-restraining,

no animosity is amassed.

One who is skillful

leaves evil behind

and

–from the ending of

passion,

aversion,

delusion–

is totally unbound.

Notes

1. The Commentary notes a wide range of opinions on what "pig-delicacy" means. The opinion given in the Mahā Aṭṭhakathā–the primary source for the Commentary we now have–is that pig-delicacy is tender pork. Other opinions include soft bamboo shoots or mushrooms that pigs like to nibble on, or a special elixir. Given that India has long had a history of giving fanciful names to its foods and elixirs, it's hard to say for sure what the Buddha ate for his last meal.

2. This style of narrative–in which prose passages alternate with verses retelling parts of what was narrated in the prose–is called a campū. This sutta is one of the few instances of this type of narrative in the Pali Canon. Another is the Kuṇāla Jātaka (J 5:416-456). There are also some Vedic examples of this form in the Brāhmaṇas, texts that apparently dated from around the same time as the Pali Canon. When the incidents portrayed in this sutta were included in DN 16, these alternating narrative verses were included. Aside from the Buddha's conversation with Pukkusa the Mallan (see note 4), these are the only incidents that DN 16 narrates in this style. This suggests that perhaps the version of the narrative given here was composed first as a separate piece and then later was incorporated into DN 16.

3. Ven. Ānanda's description of the water is alliterative in the Pali: sātodakā sītodakā setodakā.

4. At this point in the narrative, DN 16 inserts the account of the Buddha's encounter with Pukkusa the Mallan. There's no way of knowing which version of the events is earlier, as the focus of this sutta is not on telling everything that happened to the Buddha on his final day, but on recounting all the events related to Cunda's meal.

5. Unbinding as experienced by an arahant at death. The image is of a fire so thoroughly out that the embers are totally cold. This is distinguished from the unbinding property with fuel remaining–unbinding as experienced in this lifetime–which is like a fire that has gone out but whose embers are still glowing. See Iti 44, Thag 15:2, and the discussion in The Mind Like Fire Unbound, chapter 1.

6. Āyasmant: This is a term of respect usually reserved for senior monks. The Buddha's using it here was probably meant to emphasize the point that Cunda's gift of the Buddha's last meal should be treated as a very honorable thing.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: AN 10:176; Sn 1:5