MN 131 — Bhaddekaratta Sutta: An Auspicious Day

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.131.than.html

Source revision: sha256:7c411108530c04aafcca0ac43267ed12227cbb2653320e8ae0bb686e566bb783

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: ©1997 Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

License notice: The text of this page ("Bhaddekaratta Sutta: An Auspicious Day", by Thanissaro Bhikkhu) is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of the license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. Documents linked from this page may be subject to other restrictions.

Attribution: ©1997 Thanissaro Bhikkhu. The text of this page ("Bhaddekaratta Sutta: An Auspicious Day", by Thanissaro Bhikkhu) is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of the license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. Documents linked from this page may be subject to other restrictions. Transcribed from a file provided by the translator. Last revised for Access to Insight on 30 November 2013. How to cite this document (a suggested style): "Bhaddekaratta Sutta: An Auspicious Day" (MN 131), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.131.than.html . Alternate format:

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

Translator's Introduction

The title of this discourse has sparked some controversy, centered on the word "ratta." Modern translators in Asian vernaculars are unanimous in rendering it as "night," a reading seconded by Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the discourse. Translators working in English have balked at this reading, however, on the grounds that the title it yields — "Auspicious One-Night" — makes no sense. Thus I.B. Horner drops the word "ratta" for her translation entirely; Ven Ñanamoli renders it as "attachment," yielding "One Fortunate Attachment"; and Ven. Ñanananda, taking his cue from Ven. Ñanamoli, renders it as "lover," yielding "Ideal Lover of Solitude."

If we look at idiomatic Pali usage, though, we find that there is good reason to stick with the traditional reading of "night." There is a tendency in the Pali canon to speak of a 24-hour period of day and night as a "night." This would be natural for a society that used a lunar calendar — marking the passage of time by the phases of the moon — just as it is natural for us, using a solar calendar, to call the same period of time a "day." As the verse that forms the summary of this discourse explicitly mentions one practicing "relentlessly both day and night," the "night" in the title of the discourse would seem to be a 24-hour,

rather than a 12-hour, night — and so I have chosen to render the Pali idiom into its English equivalent: An Auspicious Day.

Ven. Ñanamoli is probably right in assuming that "bhaddekaratta" was a pre-Buddhist term that the Buddha adopted and re-interpreted in light of his own teaching. The point of the discourse would thus be that — instead of the play of cosmic forces, the stars, or the lucky omens — one's own development of the mind's attitude to time is what makes a day auspicious.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in Savatthi, at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. There he addressed the monks: "Monks!"

"Yes, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said: "Monks, I will teach you the summary & exposition of one who has had an auspicious day. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks replied.

The Blessed One said:

You shouldn't chase after the past or place expectations on the future. What is past is left behind. The future is as yet unreached. Whatever quality is present you clearly see right there, right there. Not taken in, unshaken, that's how you develop the heart. Ardently doing what should be done today, for — who knows? — tomorrow death. There is no bargaining with Mortality & his mighty horde. Whoever lives thus ardently, relentlessly both day & night, has truly had an auspicious day: so says the Peaceful Sage.

"And how, monks, does one chase after the past? One gets carried away with the delight of 'In the past I had such a form (body)'... 'In the past I had such a feeling'... 'In the past I had such a perception'... 'In the past I had such a thought-fabrication'... 'In the past I had such a consciousness.' This is called chasing after the past.

"And how does one not chase after the past? One does not get carried away with the delight of 'In the past I had such a form (body)'... 'In the past I had such a feeling'... 'In the past I had such a perception'... 'In the past I had such a thought-fabrication'... 'In the past I had such a consciousness.' This is called not chasing after the past.

"And how does one place expectations on the future? One gets carried away with the delight of 'In the future I might have such a form (body)'... 'In the future I might have such a feeling'... 'In the future I might have such a perception'... 'In the future I might have such a thought-fabrication'... 'In the future I might have such a consciousness.' This is called placing expectations on the future.

"And how does one not place expectations on the future? One does not get carried away with the delight of 'In the future I might have such a form (body)'... 'In the future I might

have such a feeling'... 'In the future I might have such a perception'... 'In the future I might have such a thought-fabrication'... 'In the future I might have such a consciousness.' This is called not placing expectations on the future.

"And how is one taken in with regard to present qualities? There is the case where an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person who has not seen the noble ones, is not versed in the teachings of the noble ones, is not trained in the teachings of the noble ones, sees form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form.

"He/she sees feeling as self, or self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling.

"He/she sees perception as self, or self as possessing perception, or perception as in self, or self as in perception.

"He/she sees thought-fabrications as self, or self as possessing thought-fabrications, or thought-fabrications as in self, or self as in thought-fabrications.

"He/she sees consciousness as self, or self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness. This is called being taken in with regard to present qualities.

"And how is one not taken in with regard to present qualities? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones who has seen the noble ones, is versed in the teachings of the noble ones, is well-trained in the teachings of the noble ones, does not see form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form.

"He/she does not see feeling as self, or self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling.

"He/she does not see perception as self, or self as possessing perception, or perception as in self, or self as in perception.

"He/she does not see thought-fabrications as self, or self as possessing thought-fabrications, or thought-fabrications as in self, or self as in thought-fabrications.

"He/she does not see consciousness as self, or self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness. This is called not being taken in with regard to present qualities.

You shouldn't chase after the past or place expectations on the future. What is past is left behind. The future is as yet unreached. Whatever quality is present you clearly see right there, right there. Not taken in, unshaken, that's how you develop the heart. Ardently doing what should be done today, for — who knows? — tomorrow death. There is no bargaining with Mortality & his mighty horde. Whoever lives thus ardently, relentlessly both day & night, has truly had an auspicious day: so says the Peaceful Sage.

"'Monks, I will teach you the summary & exposition of one who has had an auspicious day.' Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.