SN 3.13 — SN 3:13 A Gallon Measure | Doṇapāka Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro 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

A Gallon Measure

Doṇapāka Sutta (SN 3:13)

In this sutta, a king’s servant learns a verse from the Buddha to recite in the king’s presence and earns a monetary reward for doing so. Because the Buddha doesn’t object to this arrangement, it has been argued from this incident that he would have approved of the modern practice of selling Dhamma books as merchandise.

It’s a sad day when those who write Dhamma books want to put themselves in the same position as a king’s lackey.

* * *

Dwelling at Sāvatthī… Now, on that occasion King Pasenadi of Kosala ate a gallon-measure of rice. Then, having just finished his meal and breathing heavily, he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side.

Then the Blessed One, sensing that King Pasenadi of Kosala had just finished his meal and was breathing heavily, recited this verse:

For a person always mindful,

knowing moderation in the food he's obtained,

his pains grow slender;

gradually he ages, guarding his life.

Now, on that occasion the young brahman Sudassana was standing behind King Pasenadi of Kosala. So the king addressed him, "Come now, my dear Sudassana. Having learned this verse in the Blessed One's presence, recite it during the time I am taking my meal, and I will bestow on you a daily stipend of one hundred kahapaṇa."

Saying, "As you say, your majesty," the young brahman Sudassana and learning the verse in the Blessed One's presence, he recited it during the time when King Pasenadi was taking his meal:

For a person always mindful,

knowing moderation in the food he's obtained,

his pains grow slender;

gradually he ages, guarding his life.

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala step-by-step restrained himself to at most a quart-measure of rice. At a later time, when he had become quite slim, he stroked his limbs with his hand and exclaimed, "O, how the Blessed One has shown sympathy for my benefit of both sorts: for that in the present life, and that in the life to come!"1

Note

1. The commentary to Dhammapada 325 contains a more elaborate version of this story, the main differences being that Prince Uttara is the person asked to recite the verse, and the verse he recites is considerably stronger than the one given above:

When torpid & over-fed,

a sleepy-head lolling about

like a stout hog, fattened on fodder:

a dullard enters the womb

over &

over again. — Dhp 325

The two differences may be related. The king might not have tolerated this stronger verse in the mouth of a mere courtier.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: AN 4:37