

1. Thus have I heard. Once the Lord was travelling through Magadha with a large company of some five hundred monks, and he arrived at a Brahmin village called Khānumata. And there he stayed at the Ambalaṇṇhikā park. Now at that time the Brahmin Kūṭadanta was living at Khānumata, a populous place, full of grass, timber, water and corn, which had been given to him by King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha as a royal gift and with royal powers. And Kūṭadanta planned a great sacrifice: seven hundred bulls, seven hundred bullocks, seven hundred heifers, seven hundred he-goats and seven hundred rams were all tied up to the sacrificial posts.

2. And the Brahmins and householders of Khānumata heard say: 'The ascetic Gotama...is staying at Ambalaṇṇhikā. And concerning that Blessed Lord Gotama a good report has been spread about: "This Blessed Lord is an Arahant, a fully-enlightened Buddha, perfected in knowledge and conduct, a Well-Farer, Knower of the worlds, unequalled Trainer of men to be tamed, Teacher of gods and humans, a Buddha, a Blessed Lord." He proclaims this world with its gods, māras and Brahmās, the world of ascetics and Brahmins with its princes and people, having come to know it by his own knowledge. He teaches a Dhamma that is lovely in its beginning, lovely in its middle and lovely in its ending, in the spirit and in the letter, and he displays the fully-perfected, thoroughly purified holy life. And indeed it is good to see such Arahants.' And at that the Brahmins and householders, leaving Khānumata in great numbers, went to Ambalaṇṇhikā.

3. Just then, Kūṭadanta had gone up to his verandah for his midday rest. Seeing all the Brahmins and householders making for Ambalaṇṇhikā, he asked his steward the reason. The steward replied: 'Sir, it is the ascetic Gotama, concerning whom a good report has been spread about: "This Blessed Lord is an Arahant,...a Buddha, a Blessed Lord". That is why they are going to see him.'

4. Then Kūṭadanta thought: 'I have heard that the ascetic Gotama understands how to conduct successfully the triple sacrifice with its sixteen requisites. Now I do not understand all this, but I want to make a big sacrifice. Suppose I were to go to the ascetic Gotama and ask him about the matter.' So he sent his steward to the Brahmins and householders of Khānumata to ask them to wait for him.

5. And at that time several hundred Brahmins were staying at Khānumata intending to take part in Kūṭadanta's sacrifice. Hearing of his intention to visit the ascetic Gotama, they went and asked him if this were true. 'So it is, gentlemen, I am going to visit the ascetic Gotama.'

6. ‘Sir, do not visit the ascetic Gotama...(exactly the same arguments as at Sutta 4, verse 5). This being so, it is not proper that the Reverend Kūṭadanta should visit the ascetic Gotama, but rather the ascetic Gotama should visit him.’

7. Then Kūṭadanta said to the Brahmins: ‘Now listen, gentlemen, as to why it is fitting for us to visit the Reverend Gotama, and why it is not fitting for him to visit us...(exactly the same as Sutta 4,verse6). The ascetic Gotama has arrived in Khānumata and is staying at Ambalaṇṇhikā. And whatever ascetics or Brahmins come to our territory are our guests...He is beyond all praise.’

8. On hearing this, the Brahmins said: ‘Sir, since you praise the Ascetic Gotama so much, then even if he were to live a hundred yojanas from here, it would be fitting for a believing clansman to go with a shoulder-bag to visit him. And, sir we shall all go to visit the ascetic Gotama.’ And so Kūṭadanta went with a large company of Brahmins to Ambalaṇṇhikā. He approached the Lord, exchanged courtesies with him, and sat down to one side. Some of the Brahmins and householders of Khānumata made obeisance to the Lord, some exchanged courtesies with him, some saluted him with joined palms some announced their name and clan, and some sat down to one side in silence.

9. Sitting to one side, Kūṭadanta addressed the Lord: ‘Reverend Gotama, I have heard that you understand how to conduct successfully the triple sacrifice with its sixteen requisites. Now I do not understand all this, but I want to make a big sacrifice. It would be well if the ascetic Gotama were to explain this to me.’ ‘The listen, Brahmin, pay proper attention, and I will explain.’ ‘Yes, sir’, said Kūṭadanta, and the Lord said:

10. ‘Brahmin, once upon a time there was a king called Mahāvijita. He was rich, of great wealth and resources, with an abundance of gold and silver, of possessions and requisites, of money and money’s worth, with a full treasury and granary. And when King Mahāvijita was musing in private, the thought came to him: “I have acquired extensive wealth in human terms, I occupy a wide extent of land which I have conquered. Suppose now I were to make a great sacrifice which would be to my benefit and happiness for a long time?” And calling his minister-chaplain, he told him his thought. “I was to make a big sacrifice. Instruct me, Reverend Sir, how this may be to my lasting benefit and happiness.”

11. ‘The chaplain replied: “Your Majesty’s country is beset by thieves, it is ravaged, villages and towns are being destroyed, the countryside is infested with brigands. If Your Majesty were to tax this region, that would be the wrong thing to do. Suppose Your Majesty were to think: ‘I will get rid of this plague of robbers by executions and imprisonment, or by confiscation, threats and banishment’, the plague would not be properly ended. Those who survived would later harm Your Majesty’s realm. However, with this plan you can completely eliminate the plague. To those in the kingdom who are engaged in cultivating crops and raising cattle, let Your Majesty distribute grain and fodder; to those in trade, give capital; to those in government service assign proper living wages. Then those people, being intent on their own occupations, will not harm the kingdom. Your Majesty’s revenues will be great, the land will be tranquil and not beset by thieves, and the people, with joy in their hearts, will play with their children, and will dwell in open houses.” ‘And saying: “So be it!”, the king accepted the chaplain’s advice: he gave grain and fodder, capital to those in trade,... proper living wages...and the people with joy in their hearts...dwelt in open houses.

12. ‘Then King Mahāvijita sent for the chaplain and said: “I have got rid of the plague of robbers; following your plan my revenue has grown, the land is tranquil and not beset by thieves, and the people with joy in their hearts play with their children and dwell in open houses. Now I wish to make a great sacrifice. Instruct me as to how this may be done to my lasting benefit and happiness.” “For this, Sire, you should send for your Khattiyas from town and country, your advisers and counselors, the most influential Brahmins and the wealthy householders of your realm, and say to them: ‘I wish to make a great sacrifice. Assist me in this, gentlemen, that is may be to my lasting benefit and happiness.’” ‘The King agreed, and did so. “Sire, let the sacrifice begin, now is the time, Your Majesty. These four assenting groups will be accessories for the sacrifice.

13. “King Mahāvijita is endowed with eight things. He is well-born on both sides,...(as Sutta 4, verse 5) of irreproachable birth. He is handsome,... of no mean appearance. He is rich... with a full treasury and granary. He is powerful, having a four-branched army that is loyal, dependable, making bright his reputation among his enemies. He is a faithful giver and host, not shutting his door against ascetics, Brahmins and wayfarers, beggars and the needy – a fountain of goodness. He is very learned in what should be learnt. He knows the meaning of whatever is said, saying: ‘This is what that means.’ He is a scholar, accomplished, wise, competent to perceive advantage in the past, the future or the present. King Mahāvijita is endowed with these eight things. These constitute the accessories for the sacrifice.

14. “The Brahmin chaplain is endowed with four things. He is well-born... He is a scholar, versed in the mantras...He is virtuous, of increasing virtue, endowed with increasing virtue. He is learned, accomplished and wise, and is the first or second to hold the sacrificial ladle. He has these four qualities. These constitute the accessories to the sacrifice.”

15. ‘Then, prior to the sacrifice, the Brahmin chaplain taught the King the three modes. “It might be that Your Majesty might have some regrets about the intended sacrifice: ‘I am going to lose a lot of wealth’, or during the sacrifice: ‘I am losing a lot of wealth’, or after the sacrifice: ‘I have lost a lot of wealth.’ In such cases, Your Majesty should not entertain such regrets.”

16. ‘Then, prior to the sacrifice, the chaplain dispelled the King’s qualms with ten conditions for the recipient: “Sire, there will come to the sacrifice those who take life and those who abstain from taking life. To those who take life, so will it be to them; but those who abstain from taking life will have a successful sacrifice and will rejoice in it, and their hearts may be calmed within. There will come those who take what is not given and those who refrain..., those who indulge in sexual misconduct and those who refrain..., those who tell lies..., indulge in calumny, harsh and frivolous speech..., those who are covetous and those who are not, those who harbor ill-will and those who do not, those who have wrong views and those who have right views. To those who have right views will have a successful sacrifice and will rejoice in it, and their hearts may be calmed within.” So the chaplain dispelled the King’s doubts with ten conditions.

17. ‘So the chaplain instructed the King who was making the great sacrifice with sixteen reasons, urged him, inspired him and gladdened his heart. “Someone might say: ‘King Mahāvijita is making a great sacrifice, but he has not invited his Khattiyas..., his advisers and counselors, the most influential Brahmins and wealthy householders...’ But such words would not be in accordance with the truth, since the King has invited them. Thus the King may know that he will have a successful sacrifice and rejoice in it, and his heart will be calmed within. Or someone might say: ‘King Mahāvijita is making a great sacrifice, but he is not well-born on both sides...’ But such words would not be in accordance with the truth... Or someone might say: ‘His chaplain is not well-born...’ But such words would not be in accordance with the truth.” Thus the chaplain instructed the King with sixteen reasons...

18. ‘In this sacrifice, Brahmin, no bulls were slain, no goats or sheep, no cocks and pigs, nor were various living beings subjected to slaughter, nor were trees cut down for sacrificial posts, nor were grasses mown for the sacrificial grass, and those who are called slaves or servants or workmen did not perform their tasks for fear of blows or threats, weeping and in tears. But those who wanted to do something did it, those who did not wish to did not: they did what they wanted to do, and not what they did not want to do. The sacrifice was carried out with ghee, oil, butter, curds, honey and molasses.

19. ‘Then, Brahmin, the Khattiyas..., the ministers and counselors, the influential Brahmins, the

wealthy house-holders of town and country, having received a sufficient income, came to King Mahāvijita and said: “We have brought sufficient wealth, Your Majesty, please accept it.” “But, gentle-men, I have collected together sufficient wealth. Whatever is left over, you take away.”

‘At the King’s refusal, they went away to one side and consulted together: “It is not right for us to take this wealth back to our own homes. The King is making a great sacrifice. Let us follow his example.”

20. ‘Then the Khattiyas put their gifts to the east of the sacrificial pit, the advisers and counselors set out theirs to the south, the Brahmins to the west and the wealthy householders to the north. And in this sacrifice no bulls were slain,... nor were living beings subjected to slaughter... Those who wanted to do something did it, those who did not wish to did not... The sacrifice was carried out with ghee, oil, butter, curds, honey and molasses. Thus there were the four assenting groups, and King Mahāvijita was endowed with eight things, and the chaplain with four things in three modes. This, Brahmin, is called the sixteenfold successful sacrifice in three modes.’

21. At this the Brahmins shouted loudly and noisily: ‘What a splendid sacrifice! What a splendid way to perform a sacrifice!’ But Kūṇadanta sat in silence. And the Brahmins asked him why he did not applaud the ascetic Gotama’s fine words. He replied: ‘It is not that I do not applaud them. My head would split open if I did not. But it strikes me that the ascetic Gotama does not say: “I have heard this”, or “It must have been like this”, but he says: “It was like this or like that at the time.” And so , gentlemen, it seems to me that the ascetic Gotama must have been at that time either King Mahāvijita , the lord of the sacrifice, or else the Brahmin chaplain who conducted the sacrifice for him. Does the Reverend Gotama acknowledge that he performed, or caused to be performed, such a sacrifice, and that in consequence at death, after the breaking-up of the body, he was reborn in a good sphere, a heavenly state?’ ‘I do, Brahmin. I was the Brahmin chaplain who conducted that sacrifice.’

22. ‘And, Reverend Gotama, is there any other sacrifice that is simpler, less difficult, more fruitful and profitable than this threefold sacrifice with its sixteen attributes?’ ‘There is, Brahmin.’ ‘What is it, Reverend Gotama?’ ‘Wherever regular family gifts are given to virtuous ascetics, these constitute a sacrifice more fruitful and profitable than that.’

23. ‘Whey, Reverend Gotama, and for what reason is this better?’ ‘Brahmin, no Arahants or those who have attained the Arahant path will attend the sacrifice at which regular family gifts

are given to virtuous ascetics, because there there are no beatings or throttling. That is why this kind of sacrifice is more fruitful and profitable.'

24. 'But, Reverend Gotama, is there any other sacrifice that is more profitable than either of these?' 'There is, Brahmin.' 'What is it, Reverend Gotama?' 'Brahmin, if anyone provides shelter for the Sangha coming from the four quarters, that constitutes a more profitable sacrifice.'

25. 'But, Reverend Gotama, is there any sacrifice that is more profitable than these three?' 'There is, Brahmin.' 'What is it, Reverend Gotama?' 'Brahmin, if anyone with a pure heart goes for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, that constitutes a sacrifice more profitable than any of these three.'

26. 'But, Reverend Gotama, is there any sacrifice that is more profitable than these four?' 'There is, Brahmin.' 'What is it, Reverend Gotama?' 'Brahmin, if anyone with a pure heart undertakes the precepts – to refrain from taking life, from taking what is not given, from sexual immorality, from lying speech and from taking strong drink and sloth-producing drugs- that constitutes a sacrifice more profitable than any of these four.'

27. 'But, Reverend Gotama, is there any sacrifice that is more profitable than these five?' 'There is, Brahmin.' 'What is it, Reverend Gotama?' 'Brahmin, a Tathāgata arises in this world, an Arahant, fully-enlightened Buddha, endowed with wisdom and conduct, Well-Farer, Knower of the worlds, incomparable Trainer of men to be tamed, Teacher of gods and humans, enlightened and blessed. He, having realized it by his own super-knowledge, proclaims this world with its devas, māras and Brahmās, its princes and people. He preaches the Dhamma which is lovely in its beginning, lovely in its middle, lovely in its ending, in the spirit and in the letter, and displays the fully-perfected and purified holy life. A disciple goes forth and practices the moralities, etc. (Sutta 2, verses 41-74). Thus a monk is perfected in morality. He attains the four jhānas (Sutta 2, verses 75-82). That, Brahmin, is a sacrifice ...more profitable. He attains various insights (Sutta 2, verses 41-74). Thus a monk is perfected in morality. He attains the four jhānas (Sutta 2, verses 75-82). That, Brahmin, is a sacrifice ... more profitable. He attains various insights (Sutta 2, verse 83-95), and the cessation of the corruptions (Sutta 2, verse 97). He knows: "There is nothing further in this world." That, Brahmin, is a sacrifice that is simpler, less difficult, more fruitful and more profitable than all the others. And beyond this there is no sacrifice that is greater and more perfect.'

28. 'Excellent, Reverend Gotama, excellent! It is as if someone were to set up what had been

knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost, or to bring an oil-lamp into a dark place, so that those with eyes could see what was there. Just so the Reverend Gotama has expounded the Dhamma in various ways, May the Reverend Gotama accept me as a lay-follower from this day forth as long as life shall last! And, Reverend Gotama, I set free the seven hundred bulls, seven hundred bullocks, seven hundred heifers, seven hundred he-goats and seven hundred rams. I grant them life, let them be fed with green grass and give cool water to drink, and let cool breezes play upon them.'

29. Then the Lord delivered a graduated discourse to Kūṇadanta, on generosity, on morality and on heaven, showing the danger, degradation and corruption of sense-desires, and the profit of renunciation. And when the Lord knew that Kūṇadanta's mind was ready, pliable, free from the hindrances, joyful and calm, then he preached a sermon on Dhamma in brief: on suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path. And just as a clean cloth from which all satins have been removed receives the dye perfectly, so in the Brahmin Kūṇadanta, as he sat there, there arose the pure and spotless Dhamma-eye, and he knew: 'Whatever things have an origin must come to cessation.'

30. Then Kūṇadanta, having seen, attained, experienced and penetrated the Dhamma, having passed beyond doubt, transcended uncertainty, having gained perfect confidence in the Teacher's doctrine without relying on others, said: 'May the Reverend Gotama and his order of monks accept a meal from me tomorrow!' The Lord assented by silence. Then Kūṇadanta, seeing his consent, rose, saluted the Lord, passed by to his right and departed. As day was breaking, he caused hard and soft food to be prepared at his place of sacrifice, and when it was ready he announced: 'Reverend Gotama, it is time; the meal is ready.' And the Lord, having risen early, went with robe and bowl and attended by his monks to Kūṇadanta's place of sacrifice and sat down on the prepared seat. And Kūṇadanta served the Buddha and his monks with the finest foods with his own hands until they were satisfied. And when the Lord had eaten and taken his hand away from the bowl, Kūṇadanta took a low stool and sat down to one side.

Then the Lord, having instructed Kūṇadanta with a talk on Dhamma, inspired him, fired him with enthusiasm and delighted him, rose from his seat and departed.

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