

Dīgha Nikāya - The Long Discourses

About Kūṭadanta A Bloodless Sacrifice (Kutadanta Sutta)

Thus Have I Heard:

Once the Lord was traveling through Magadha with a large company of some five hundred monks, and he arrived at a Brahmin village called Khanumata. And there he stayed at the Ambalatthika park. [1] Now at that time the Brahmin Kutadanta was living at Khanumata, a populous place, full of grass, timber, water and corn, which had been given to him by King Seniya Bimbisara of Magadha as a royal gift and with royal powers.

And Kutadanta 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 Khanumata heard say: "The ascetic Gotama...is staying at Ambalatthika." 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, Maras and Brahmas, 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 such Arahants." And at that the Brahmins and householders, leaving Khanumata in great numbers, went to Ambalatthika.

Just then, Kutadanta had gone up to his verandah for his midday rest. Seeing all the Brahmins and householders making for Ambalatthika, 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.

Then Kutadanta 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 Khanumata to ask them to wait for him.

And at that time several hundred Brahmins were staying at Khanumata intending to take part in Kutadanta'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."

"Sir, do not visit the ascetic Gotama ..." (exactly the same arguments as at Digha Nikáya 4 verse 5) ... it is not fitting that you should do so! If the Reverend Sonadanda goes to visit the ascetic Gotama, his reputation will decrease, and that of the ascetic Gotama will increase. This being so, it is not right that the Reverend Sonandanda should visit the ascetic Gotama, but rather the ascetic Gotama should visit him."

"The Reverend Sonadanda is well-born on both the mother's and the father's side, of pure descent to the seventh generation, unbroken, of irreproachable birth, and therefore he should not call on the ascetic Gotama, but rather the ascetic Gotama should call on him. The Reverend Sonadanda is possessed of great wealth and resources...The Reverend Sonadanda is a scholar, versed in the mantras, accomplished in the Three Vedas, a skilled expounder of the rules and rituals, the lore of sounds and meanings and, fifthly, oral tradition - an expounder, fully versed in natural philosophy and the marks of a Great Man. The Reverend Sonadanda is handsome, good-looking, pleasing, of the most beautiful complexion, in form and countenance like Brahma, of no mean appearance. He is virtuous, of increasing virtue, endowed with increasing virtue. He is well-spoken, of pleasing address, polite, of pure and clear enunciation, speaking to the point. He is the teacher's teacher of many, teaching the mantras to three hundred youths, and many young men come from different districts and regions seeking to learn the mantras in his presence, desirous to learn them from him. He is aged, grown old, venerable, advanced in years, long past his youth, whereas the ascetic Gotama is youthful and newly gone forth as a wanderer. The Reverend Sonadanda is esteemed, made much of, honored, revered, worshipped by King Seniya Bimbisara and by the Brahmin Pokkharasati. He lives at Campa, a populous place, full of grass, timber, water and corn, which has been given to him by King Seniya Bimbisara of Magadha as a royal gift, and with royal powers.

This being so, it is not proper that the Reverend Kutadanta should visit the ascetic Gotama, but rather the ascetic Gotama should visit him."

Then Kutadanta 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 Digha Nikáya 4 verse 6)...The ascetic Gotama is well-born on both sides of pure descent to the seventh generation, unbroken, of irreproachable birth ...(as Digha Nikáya 4 verse 5). Therefore it is fitting for us to visit him. He went forth, leaving a great body of kinsmen. In fact he gave up much gold and wealth to go forth, both hidden away and openly displayed. The ascetic Gotama, while youthful, a black-haired youth, in the prime of his young days, in the first stage of life went forth from the household life into homelessness. Leaving his grieving parents weeping with tear-stained faces, having cut off his hair and beard and put on yellow robes, he went forth into homelessness. He is handsome ... virtuous...well-spoken...the teacher's teacher of many. He has abandoned sensuality and dispelled vanity. He teaches action and the results of action, honoring the blameless Brahmin way of life. He is a wanderer of high birth, of a leading Khattiya family. He is a wanderer from a wealthy family, of great wealth and possessions. People come to consult him from foreign kingdoms and foreign lands. Many thousands of Devas have taken refuge with him.

This good report has been spread about him : "This Blessed Lord is an Arahant, a fully-enlightened Buddha, perfected in knowledge and conduct..."He bears the thirty-two marks of a Great Man. He is welcoming, kindly of speech, courteous, genial, clear and ready of speech. He is attended by four assemblies, revered, honored, esteemed and worshipped by them. Many Devas and humans are devoted to him. Whenever he stays in any town or village, that place is not troubled by non-human beings. He has a crowd, a multitude of followers, is a teacher of many, he is consulted by the chief of the various leaders of sects. It is not the way with the ascetic Gotama's reputation, as it is with that of some ascetics and Brahmins, about whom this or that is reported - the ascetic Gotama's fame is based on his achievement of unsurpassed wisdom and conduct. Indeed King Seniya Bimbisara of Magadha has gone for refuge to him together with his son, his wife, his followers and his ministers. So have King Pasenadi of Kosala and the Brahmin Pokkharasati. He is revered, honored, esteemed and worshipped by them.

The ascetic Gotama has arrived in Campa and is staying by Gaggara's lotus-pond. And whatever ascetics and Brahmins come to our territory are our guests. And we should revere, honor, esteem and worship guests. Having come to Gaggara's lotus-pond, the ascetic Gotama is such a guest, and should be treated as such. Therefore it is not proper that he should come to us, but rather we

should go to him. However much I might praise the ascetic Gotama, that praise is insufficient, he is beyond all praise."

The ascetic Gotama has arrived in Khanumata and is staying at Ambalatthika. And whatever ascetics or Brahmins come to our territory are our guests ...He is beyond all praise."

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 Kutadanta went with a large company of Brahmins to Ambalatthika. He approached the Lord, exchanged courtesies with him, and sat down to one side. Some of the Brahmins and householders of Khanumata made obeisance to the Lord, some exchanged courtesies with him, some saluted him with joined palms, some announced their names and clan, and some sat down to one side in silence.

Sitting to one side, Kutadanta 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." "Then listen, Brahmin, pay proper attention, and I will explain. "Yes, Sir," said Kutadanta, and the Lord said:

"Brahmin, once upon a time there was a king called Mahavijita. [3] 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 Mahavijita 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, [4] he told him his thought: "I want to make a big sacrifice. Instruct me, Reverend Sir, how this may be to my lasting benefit and happiness."

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 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.

Then King Mahavijita 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, Sir, 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 it may be to my lasting benefit and happiness."

The King agreed, and did so. "Sir, let the sacrifice begin, now is the time, Your Majesty. These four assenting groups [5] will be the accessories for the sacrifice.

"King Mahavijita is endowed with eight things. He is well-born on both sides...(as Digha Nikáya 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 6 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. 7 King Mahavijita is endowed with these eight things. These constitute the accessories for the sacrifice.

"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."

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."

Then, prior to the sacrifice, the chaplain dispelled the King's qualms with ten conditions for the recipient: "Sir, 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 wrong views it will turn out accordingly, but 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.

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 Mahavijita 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 Mahavijita 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...

"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."

"Then, Brahmin, the Khattiyas...the ministers and counselors, the influential Brahmins, the wealthy householders of town and country, having received a sufficient income, came to King Mahavijita and said: "We have brought sufficient wealth, Your Majesty, please accept it." "But gentlemen, 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."

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 Mahavijita was endowed with eight things, and the chaplain with four things in three modes. This, Brahmin, is called the sixteen-fold successful sacrifice in three modes.

At this the Brahmins shouted loudly and noisily : "What a splendid sacrifice! What a splendid way to perform a sacrifice!" But Kutadanta 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.[8] 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 Mahavijita, 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."

"And, Reverend Gotama, is there any other sacrifice that is simpler, less difficult, more fruitful and profitable than this three-fold sacrifice with its sixteen attributes?" "There is, Brahmin."

"What is it, Reverend Gotama?" "Whenever regular family gifts are given to virtuous ascetics, these constitute a sacrifice more fruitful and profitable than that."

"Why, Reverend Gotama, and for what reason is this better?"

"Brahmin, no Arahants or those who have attained the Arahant path will attend such a sacrifice. Why? Because there they see beatings and throttlings, so they do not attend. But they will attend the sacrifice at which regular family gifts are given to virtuous ascetics, because there are no beatings or throttlings. That is why this kind of sacrifice is more fruitful and profitable."

"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."

"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."

"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."

"But, Reverend Gotama, is there any sacrifice that is more profitable than these five?"

"There is, Brahmin."

"What is it, Reverend Gotama?" "Brahmin, a Tathágata arises in this world, an Arahant, a 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, Maras and Brahmas, 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 (Digha Nikáya 2 verses 41-74). Thus a monk is perfected in morality. He attains the four jhanas (Digha Nikáya 2 verses 75-82). That, Brahmin, is a sacrifice... more profitable. He attains various insights (Digha Nikáya verses 83-95), and the cessation of the corruptions (Digha Nikáya 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."

"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 given cool water to drink, and let cool breezes play upon them."

Then the Lord delivered a graduated discourse to Kutadanta, 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 Kutadanta'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 stains have been removed receives the dye perfectly, so in the Brahmin Kutadanta, as he sat there, there arose the

pure and spotless Dhamma-eye and he knew: "Whatever things have an origin must come to cessation."

Then Kutadanta, 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 Kutadanta, 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 Kutadanta's place of sacrifice and sat down on the prepared seat. And Kutadanta 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, Kutadanta took a low stool and sat down to one side.

Then the Lord, having instructed Kutadanta with a talk on Dhamma, inspired him, fired him with enthusiasm and delighted him, rose from his seat and departed. [9]

Footnotes:

[1] Not the same place as that mentioned in Digha Nikáya 1 but one similar to it [DA].

[2] His name means "Sharp-tooth," and RD is almost certainly right in considering this an invented story. Apart from anything else, no Brahmin would have consulted the Buddha, of all people, about how to perform a sacrifice which was supposed to be their specialty. But at SN 3.1.9 we have the presumably historical story of how King Pasenadi of Kosala planned a great sacrifice [though of only 500, not 700 bulls, etc], with the Buddha's versified comments. From the commentary, though not the text, we hear that the King finally desisted from his intention. Perhaps the Buddha told the King this story on that occasion and the incident was later tactfully transferred from the King of Kosala to an imaginary Brahmin "with royal powers" living in the neighboring kingdom of Magadha.

[3] "Lord Broadacres."

[4] Purohitam. The king's head-priest [Brahmanic], or domestic chaplain, acting at the same time as a sort of Prime Minister.

[5] The Khattiyas, counselors, Brahmins and householders.

[6] Elephants, cavalry, chariots and infantry.

[7] By knowing the workings of kamma : good fortune now is due to past kamma, and good deeds performed now will have similar results in the future.

[8] A curious threat that never comes to anything, and is of course pre-Buddhist.

[9] In his important book *Five Stages of Greek Religion* [London, Watts and Co., 1935, p. 38] Gilbert Murray has a fine passage in praise of the Greek spirit. He writes : When really frightened the oracle generally fell back on some remedy full of pain and blood. The medieval plan of burning heretics alive had not yet been invented. But the history of uncivilized man, if it were written, would provide a vast list of victims, all of them innocent, who died or suffered to expiate some portent or monstrem...with which they had nothing whatever to do...The sins of the modern world in dealing with heretics and witches have perhaps been more gigantic than those of primitive men, but one can hardly rise from the record of these ancient observances without being haunted by the judgment of the Roman poet : "Tantum religio potuit sadere malorum" ["To so many evils was religion able to persuade men"], and feeling with him that the lightening of this cloud, the taming of this blind dragon, must rank among the very greatest services that Hellenism wrought for mankind.

Murray seems only to think of human victims, and to be totally oblivious to the fact that Buddhism had, a century before Socrates, been much more radical in its abolition of cruelty to humans and animals, and with more lasting results, at least as far as India and neighboring countries were concerned.

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