

Share Merits with Your Relatives of The Past & Present



The Buddha's Visit to Rajagaha

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Commentary: - In the current developed world of today, it is hard for one to imagine the existence of the 31 planes of existence. As Buddhist, yes, we know there are beings outside this human world: beings enjoying lives in the celestial world and beings who are suffering in the Niraya (Hell) world. Our relatives need our help to help free them from Niraya world. It is our Buddhist tradition to share merits with them so they could in respond, saying **Sadhu (Well done)** and gain their freedom. This teaching addresses how we could help our relatives of the past and present.

The Buddha's Visit to Rajagaha

King Bimbisara's Five Aspirations

According to the promise that the Buddha made to King Bimbisara in his early days of renunciation, the Buddha, together with one thousand bhikkhus led by Kassapa brothers, went to Rajagaha on the full moon day of Pyaso (December-January). When they arrived at the large green Palmyra grove near Rajagaha, the King and one hundred and twenty thousand people welcomed them heartily in great pomp and ceremony.

When the Buddha narrated the Jataka story of 'Mahanarada - kassapa' there, King Bimbisara and one hundred and ten thousand people became **Stream-winners** (Sotapanna) and the remaining ten thousand people became established in the three Refuges.

King Bimbisara, who had now become a stream - winner, felt very happy and said to the Buddha: 'Venerable Sir, I had five kinds of aspirations when I was a young prince. They all are now fulfilled and so I feel very happy.'

The five kinds of aspirations of the King were:

1. His wish to become an anointed king;
2. His wish that the Buddha would visit his country;
3. His wish to revere and attend to the Buddha when the latter visited his kingdom;
4. His wish that the Buddha would expound the dhamma; and
5. His wish to understand the dhamma taught to him.

The Great Donation of Veluvana Monastery

Then King Bimbisara became a lay-disciple of the Buddha and invited the Buddha and his one thousand bhikkhus for alms-food at his palace the next morning. Then he went back to his palace.

Next morning when the Buddha went to the palace to take alms-food, the crowd that came to pay homage to the Buddha was so big that **Sakka (the king of Devas)** himself had to assume the form of a young man and lead the way as a forerunner singing the Dhamma songs.

On reaching the palace, the King offered alms-food to the Buddha and the Order of Sangha. He also donated the great Veluvana Garden as a monastic dwelling. As he poured donation water, the earth quaked as if the main roots of Buddha's Teachings had been rooted.

Petas, (Hungry Ghosts) the old Relatives of King Bimbisara

That very night there were haunting sounds all over the palace of King Bimbisara and so he could not sleep. Therefore, he went to the Buddha the next morning and told him what had happened.

The Buddha preached thus: **92 world cycles ago**, during the time of *Phussa Buddha*, Bimbisara and his relatives carried out the duties of offering alms-food to the Buddha and his Sangha Order. Those who did their duties well reached celestial abodes when they died. **Those who stole and destroyed the properties of the Sangha had gone to niraya (hell) and became petas during the time of Kassapa Buddha. They saw that other petas were set free from being petas because they gained merits shared by their relatives when they had chances to say 'Sadhu'.** There were none to share merits to the petas who were the former relatives of Bimbisara. Therefore, they pleaded to Kassapa Buddha that they did not know who would perform meritorious deeds and share merits to them.

Kassapa Buddha told them that during the time of Gotama Buddha, the supervisor of the old relative petas would become King Bimbisara who would share merits to them and so they would be free from their woeful lives of petas. And they were very happy with the anticipation of being set free.

Indeed, when King Bimbisara offered alms-food to the bhikkhus led by the Buddha and donated the monastery, the petas were expecting anxiously to gain merits shared by the King. **But the king did not know to share merits with the petas of his relatives; so they did their frightening moaning the whole night.**

The Buddha instructed the king **to share merits to the dead or previous relatives when ever he performed meritorious deeds.** King Bimbisara then invited the bhikkhus led by the Buddha to have alms-food at his palace on that day. The Buddha by his supernormal power showed the king the petas who were waiting in poor dresses with frightful appearances. After offering alms-food and sharing merits, they all were free from their peta-existences. On seeing them looking well attired and having ambrosia, he was very much pleased.

Then he offered robes, beddings and monastic dwellings, and shared merits again. **The petas said 'sadhu'** and received celestial clothings, beddings and celestial mansions. On seeing that, the King became more pleased than before.

With reference to that incident the Buddha preached *Tirokutta Sutta* and eighty-four thousand beings attained *Ariyahood*, realizing the Four Noble Truths.



Share Your Merits
Allow them say – Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu

Rejoice in Your Charity Share Your Merits with Others



Dhammapada Verse 177

The Story of the Unrivalled Alms-Giving

Buddha said - " Fools do not rejoice in the charities given by others and go to the lower worlds. The wise rejoice in other people's charities. and through appreciation, they share in the merit gained by others and go to the abode of the devas".

It is customary for Buddhist when witnessing charities done by others, within their means – either big or small- and hearing their merit sharing, we all should rejoice and respond with great rejoice – saying – Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu.

While residing at the Jetavana monastery, the Buddha uttered Verse (177) of this book, with reference to the unrivalled alms giving of King Pasenadi of Kosala.

Once, the king offered alms to the Buddha and other bhikkhus on a grand scale. His subjects, in competition with him, organized another alms-giving ceremony on a grander scale than that of the king. Thus, the king and his subjects kept on competing in giving alms. Finally, Queen Mallika thought of a plan; to implement this plan, she asked the king to have a grand pavilion built. Next, she asked for five hundred white umbrellas and five hundred tame elephants; those five hundred elephants were to hold the five hundred white umbrellas over the five hundred bhikkhus. In the middle of the pavilion, they kept ten boats which were filled with perfumes and incense. There were also two

hundred and fifty princesses, who kept fanning the five hundred bhikkhus. Since the subjects of the king had no princesses, nor white umbrellas, nor elephants, they could no longer compete with the king. When all preparations were made, alms-food was offered. After the meal, the king made an offering of all the things in the pavilion, which were worth fourteen crores.

At the time, two ministers of the king were present. Of those two, the minister named Junha was very pleased and praised the king for having offered alms so generously to the Buddha and his bhikkhus. He also reflected that such offerings could only be made by a king. He was very glad because the king would share the merit of his good deeds with all beings. In short, the minister Junha rejoiced with the king in his unrivalled charity. The minister Kala, on the other hand, thought that the king was only squandering, by giving away fourteen crores in a single day, and that the bhikkhus would just go back to the monastery and sleep.

After the meal, the Buddha looked over at the audience and knew how Kala the minister was feeling. Then, he thought that if he were to deliver a lengthy discourse of appreciation, Kala would get more dissatisfied, and in consequence would have to suffer more in his next existence. So, out of compassion for Kala, the Buddha delivered only a short discourse and returned to the Jetavana monastery. The king had expected a lengthy discourse of appreciation, and so he was very sad because the Buddha had been so brief. The king wondered if he had failed to do something, which should have been done, and so he went to the monastery.

On seeing the king, the Buddha said, "Great King! You should rejoice that you have succeeded in making the offering of the unrivalled charity (asadisadana). Such an opportunity comes very rarely; it comes only once during the appearance of each Buddha. But your minister Kala had felt that it was a waste, and was not at all appreciative. So, if I had given a lengthy discourse, he would get more and more dissatisfied and uncomfortable, and in consequence, he would suffer much more in the present existence as well as in the next. That was why I preached so briefly. Then the Buddha added, "Great King! Fools do not rejoice in the charities given by others and go to the lower worlds. The wise rejoice in other

people's charities. and through appreciation, they share in the merit gained by others and go to the abode of the devas".

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

Verse 177. Indeed, misers do not go to the abode of the devas; fools do not praise charity; but the wise rejoice in charity and so gain happiness in the life hereafter.



*When you hear people sharing their merits,
Do Say – Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu
Rejoice in their good merits, done
You too, would go to the Devas Realm.*



Ananta Metta
Maung Paw