SN 3.9 — Sacrifice

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 3.9

1. Shackles

Sacrifice

At Sāvatthī.

Now at that time a grand sacrifice had been set up for King Pasenadi of Kosala. Bulls, bullocks, heifers, goats and rams—five hundred of each—had been led to the pillar for the sacrifice. His bondservants, servants, and workers did their jobs under threat of punishment and danger, weeping with tearful faces.

Then several mendicants robed up in the morning and, taking their bowls and robes, entered Sāvatthī for alms. Then, after the meal, when they returned from almsround, they went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what was happening.

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha recited these verses:

“Horse sacrifice, human sacrifice,

the ‘casting of the yoke-pin’, the ‘royal soma drinking’,

and the ‘unimpeded’—

these grand, violent sacrifices yield no great fruit.

The great sages of right comportment

don’t attend sacrifices

where goats, sheep, and cattle

and various creatures are killed.

But the great sages of right comportment

do attend those sacrifices

that are non-violent and propitious,

where goats, sheep, and cattle,

and various creatures are not killed.

An intelligent person should sacrifice like this,

for this sacrifice is very fruitful.

For a sponsor of sacrifices like this,

things get better, not worse.

Such a sacrifice is truly abundant,

and even the deities are pleased.”