SN 3.24 — Archery

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 3.24

3. Kosala

Archery

At Sāvatthī.

Seated to one side, King Pasenadi said to the Buddha, “Sir, where should a gift be given?”

“Wherever your heart feels inspired, Great King.”

“But sir, where is a gift very fruitful?”

“Where a gift should be given is one thing, Great King, but where a gift is very fruitful is another. A gift is very fruitful when it’s given to an ethical person, not so much to an unethical person. Well then, Great King, I’ll ask you about this in return, and you can answer as you like.

What do you think, Great King? Suppose you were at war, ready to fight a battle. Then along comes an aristocrat youth who is untrained, inexpert, unfit, inexperienced. And he’s fearful, scared, nervous, quick to flee. Would you employ such a man? Would he be of any use to you?”

“No, sir, I would have no use for such a man.”

“What about a brahmin youth, a peasant youth, or a menial youth who was similar?”

“No, sir, I would have no use for such a man.”

“What do you think, Great King? Suppose you were at war, ready to fight a battle. Then along comes an aristocrat youth who is trained, expert, fit, experienced. And he’s fearless, brave, bold, standing his ground. Would you employ such a man? Would he be of any use to you?”

“Yes, sir, I would have a use for such a man.”

“What about a brahmin youth, a peasant youth, or a menial youth who was similar? Would you employ such a man? Would he be of any use to you?”

“Yes, sir, I would have a use for such a man.”

“In the same way, a gift to anyone who has given up five factors and possesses five factors is very fruitful, no matter what family they’ve gone forth from.

What are the five factors they’ve given up? Sensual desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. These are the five factors they’ve given up.

What are the five factors they possess? The entire spectrum of an adept’s ethics, immersion, wisdom, freedom, and knowledge and vision of freedom. These are the five factors they possess.

I say that a gift to anyone who has given up these five factors and possesses these five factors is very fruitful.”

That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, went on to say:

“Any youth skilled at archery,

powerful and vigorous,

would be employed by a king going to war—

one is not a coward by reason of birth.

Just so, whoever is settled

in the qualities of patience and gentleness,

an intelligent person with noble conduct,

should be venerated even if they’re low born.

You should build lovely hermitages

and settle learned people in them.

You should set up water supplies in barren regions

and passages in places hard to travel.

Food, drink, edibles,

clothes, and lodgings

should be given to the upright ones,

with a clear and confident heart.

The thundering rain cloud,

its hundred peaks wreathed in lightning,

pours down over the rich earth,

soaking the uplands and valleys.

So too an astute person,

faithful and learned,
should prepare a meal to satisfy
supplicants with food and drink.
Rejoicing, they strew gifts about,
saying, ‘Give! Give!’
For that is their thunder,
like rain sent from the heavens.
That stream of merit so abundant
showers down on the giver.”