

BUDDHA'S READING OF RELIC OFFERING

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Dhātu Pūjā can be considered as a popular religious activity which draws the attraction of most of the Buddhists. Also it is a way of offering the Buddha in category of *Āmisapūjā*. Eventhough some of the believers disapprove and criticise this offering of *Āmisa*, it is the most popular meritorious deed compared to *Pratipattipuja*. Apparently, there are three kinds of *Chetiya*s in which the offering of *Āmisa* is rewarded with a crucial place. Among them *Sāririka Dhātu pūjā* can be of paramount importance. The objective of this research paper is to explore the origins and its appearance in *Thripitaka* of worship of Relic.

It has been found evidence of an important discussion in *Milindapanha* of *kuddhaka nikaya* in this regard. King Milinda questioned Ven. *Nagasena* in *Milindapañha* ;

“Isn't it a contradiction *Pujetha nan pujaniyassa dhatum, Evam karo saggamito bhavissati* and *abyavata tumhe ananda hotha tathagatassa sarirapujaya* which comes in *Mahā Parinibbāna sutta*. According to the first statement in this phrase, those who respect the relic of Lord Buddha which should be worshiped with offerings, have the privilege of entering the heaven. Nevertheless, the second statement in the phrase abandoned the idea of worshipping the relics of Lord Buddha. King Milinda questioned about these two contradictory statements made regarding the worship of the relics of Lord Buddha.

According to the reply made to the statement by Venerable *Nāgasena*, the first statement is uttered for the benefit of lay people whereas the second is for the monks like *Ananda*. It is important to practice the path of liberation than wasting time worshipping the relics of the Buddha for a

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person who entered to the dispensation. But the situation and the standing of the layman is different with regard to this practice.

In order to illustrate the theory behind this statement, an example is drawn. A son of a king and a son of a farmer do not practise the same discipline in their education. Their studying of subjects depends on the socio economic context they exist in. Similarly, the relic offering is practised by the lay community and the monk community in different ways. Though a monk is allowed to offer the relic, it is not regarded as his duty as a clergy and the practicing the path is considered as the most important.

According to the commentary of *Samyuttanikāya*, the worshipping the Buddha, offering oil lamps, listening to *Dhamma*, building *Dhātutūpa* (relic pagoda) are done by the right viewer (*sammaditthika*). *Sammāditthi* or right view is the first step of the path. There is a historical relic offering impact in Buddhism in this regard.

Reports of Apadānapali in *Kuddhakanikāya* voice of numerous achievements met by the monks when offering relic in the reports “Ekanavtitokappe – yam pupphamabhiropayim Duggatim nabhijanami – buddhapujayidam phalam”

“For these 91 kappas I have not met hell as the result of offering flower to a Buddha.”

A biography of cold Padumacchadaniya Therāpadāna of a monk who offered flowers to the crematorium of Vipassi Buddha is found. Sumanatherapadana, pupphachangotiya therapadana, padumapupphiya therapadana, Gandhodakiya therapadana, ganthipupphiya therapadana, chandanapujaka therapadana, vatansakiya therapadana and bhandujivaka therapadana are the accounts of explanations which are related to the offering of Buddha or his relic.

Punnagapupphiyatherapadana mentions a story of a hunter who offered followers to a sand pagoda at a river-bank. Further, Therāpadāna reports that the intention of the hunter is to respect the Buddha and he considers the sand pagoda as the object of worship since he didn't find any valuable object to offer his respects. Thus, he created a sand pagoda and offered punnaga

flowers for the name of the Buddha. Chitakapujaka Therāpadāna discusses another similar story which talks about the offering of flowers to worship the late Ananda Buddha who entered great demise at the jungle.

Above examples illustrate the positive impacts of respecting relics. There are some stories of negative results of ill-treating of relics. Once after the great demise of kashapa Sambuddha devotees contributed to build a huge pagoda depositing his relics. But the engineer responsible for the pagoda decreased the height of the creation for the convenience of maintaining. However the story of Lakunthakabhaddiya theras reports that he was born with a short figure till his last birth due to the *kamma* of decreasing the height of relic pagoda.