

Dhammapada Verse 354
Sakkapanha Vatthu

Sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati
sabbarasam dhammaraso jinati
sabbaratim dhammarati jinati
tanhakkhaya sabbadukkham jinati.

Verse 354: The gift of the Dhamma excels all gifts; the taste of the Dhamma excels all tastes; delight in the Dhamma excels all delights. The eradication of Craving (i.e., attainment of arahatship) overcomes all ills (samsara dukkha).

The Story of the Questions Raised by Sakka

While residing at the Jetavana monastery, the Buddha uttered Verse (354) of this book, with reference to four questions raised by Sakka, king of the devas.

On one occasion, at a meeting of the devas in the Tavatimsa realm, four questions were raised, but the devas failed to get the correct answers. Eventually, Sakka took these devas to the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery. After explaining their difficulty, Sakka presented the following four questions:

- (a) Among gifts, which is the best?
- (b) Among tastes, which is the best?
- (c) Among delights, which is the best?
- (d) Why is the eradication of craving said to be the most excellent?

To these questions, the Buddha replied, "*Oh Sakka, the Dhamma is the noblest of all gifts, the best of all tastes and the best of all delights. Eradication of Craving leads to the attainment of arahatship and is, therefore, the greatest of all conquests.*"

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

Verse 354: The gift of the Dhamma excels all gifts; the taste of the Dhamma excels all tastes; delight in the Dhamma excels all delights. The eradication of Craving (i.e., attainment of arahatship) overcomes all ills (samsara dukkha).

At the end of the discourse, Sakka said to the Buddha, "Venerable Sir, if the gift of the Dhamma excels all gifts why are we not invited to share the merit whenever gifts of the Dhamma are made? Venerable Sir! I pray that, from now on, we may

be given a share in the merit of good deeds". Then the Buddha asked all the bhikkhus to assemble and exhorted them to share the merit of all their good deeds with all beings.

Since then, it has become a custom to invite all beings from the thirty-one realms (bhumis) to come and share merit whenever a good deed is done.

source: <http://www.tipitaka.net/tipitaka/dhp/verseload.php?verse=354>