

The Avanti PRE Curriculum

Exercise Sheet 7.5.1b (Story)

“King Rantideva ”

King Rantideva saw every living being equally. He directly saw the real self (*atman*), which is eternal. The king engaged his mind, word and body in the service of God and other people..

One morning, after fasting for forty-eight days, Rantideva sat down to a delicious vegetarian meal. However, just then a brahmin guest unexpectedly arrived. Rantideva received the saintly man with great respect and courtesy, and offered him a share of the food. The brahmin gratefully ate his portion, and happily went on his way.

After dividing the remaining food and serving it to his family, Rantideva was again about to eat. Suddenly, a working man arrived. Although he was not a very important person, Rantideva gave him a share of the food.

As soon as the man had gone, another guest arrived - a homeless man surrounded by dogs. He requested, “O King, my dogs and I are extremely hungry. Please give us something to eat.” With great respect, King Rantideva offered the rest of the food to the dogs and their master.

After this, only the drinking water remained. There was hardly for one person. When the King was just about to drink it, a dirty, disheveled man appeared and said, “O King, please give me some drinking water.” Feeling pity for the poor fatigued man, Maharaja Rantideva, although on the verge of dying of thirst, gave away his glass of water.

Then the demigods, including Brahma and Shiva, showed their own forms before the king. It was they had come as the different visitors! They offered the king whatever he wanted, but he refused to accept any material blessing. Rather, he said, ““I do not pray to the Lord even for liberation from repeated birth and death. I only want to stay among people and suffer all distresses on their behalf, to help free them from suffering.

Questions:

1. Write down in one sentence what King Rantideva did (that was karma-yoga, or selfless action)
2. Because Rantideva gave away his water, he might have died of thirst. What do you think of this? Was he sensible?