

## Okāsa vandāmi, Bhante; okāsa khamāmi Bhante

### Venerable Dakkhī (DK) asks Venerable Vajirā (VA)

translated transcript of interview in Olomouc on 23rd August 2006

- DK: Venerable Vajirā, when you have visited me together with Venerable Kusalānanda two years ago, I watched you performing a ritual of veneration to your teacher at the end of day. I liked that ritual very much. It was very inspiring. Be so kind and elaborate on it in more detail; because it became very important for me. I will explain then why it became important at the end of this interview.
- VA: Alright, Venerable Dakkhī, that ritual is a sort of standardized expressing of veneration, which is standardizing the relationship between the teacher and his pupil while they are actually interacting for some time. This may be during one day or just a short pupil's visit to the dwelling place of the teacher. This was the case when I used to go to regularly visit my teacher while I was dwelling in Olaboduwa. As the very first Czech nun I lived with the Sinhalese nuns and went there daily with my bowl for the alms round, which they did not do. Venerable Āyukusala Thera donated them the alms bowls, too, and hoped that they would follow my example. As two of those nuns had the higher ordination of *bhikkhunī-upasampadā*, he wanted me to venerate them — even when I have been teaching them something what I have learned in our Āyukusala tradition.
- DK: Well, this is something interesting in regard to the modern history of nuns. But what about your relationship with the Venerable Kusalānanda?
- VA: Thus I used to go regularly to the *āssama* of Venerable Āyukusala Thera in Kananvila. There I stayed for half a day or sometimes only for an hour or so. Every such a meeting was closed by ritually parting from my teacher, performing that big *vandanā* to venerate the teacher. There are of course some more rituals, Venerable Dakkhī, to develop and to formalize the relationship between teacher and pupil, to mutually confirm and assert their relationship. It starts already with asserting this relationship when the pupil goes into the homelessness, that is the ritual of *pabbajjā*. And similar is then the higher ordination of *upasampadā*. Something similar happened when Āyukusala Thera gave the *cīvara* to you, Venerable Dakkhī, in order to use it for those ritual performances, whenever you are a *bhikkhunī* according to the Buddha's definition. You have the instruction to use the *cīvara* when you sit for your morning meditation and *pūja* and when you teach the *lokuttara-dhamma* of *satipatthāna* and become thus for that time a *bhikkhunī*.
- DK: And I would like you to explain more technically just that ritual, which you have here performed two years ago. Yes, that will be important.
- VA: Gladly, I will do. Are you asking, Venerable Dakkhī, especially about the Pāli?
- DK: I am asking both about the action and about that what is being said. Thereafter, at the end of our interview, I will give the explanation why it is so important for me.
- VA: Good so, Ivanko, well, Venerable Dakkhī...
- DK: ...both my names are alright here.
- VA: ...you have witnessed it that time. Two years ago you have offered to the Venerable Āyukusala Thera and to me as Bhikkhū Vajirā your dwelling here in Olomouc, which became the Dakkhī Vihāra by now. And you have watched my ritual venerating Bhante at the end of day. Before describing it, I want to say that before this ritual we do — as far as there is time for it — *paccavekkhanā* reflecting of the day. When the pupil comes to the teacher, he or she has already a clear comprehension of what was successful and what was not so good during that day. Then the pupil asks permission from the teacher to speak about what was going on and to part. Thus...

DK: ...as a little child is parting with parents before going to sleep. This is nice, I like it.

VA: Yes, something like that. Thus the child goes to mother and father, kisses them, says good night and goes to bed. Similarly it happens, when the pupil comes to the teacher and says “Bhante, I would like to part with you. Can you spare some time?” The Venerable would say yes, usually, and put on *cīvara* properly, sit down in front of the Buddha statue, and the pupil would kneel down and say: “*okāsa, vandāmi, bhante.*” Then the pupil bows to touch the ground with five limbs, *pañca-anga*, that is, both elbows, both wrists and the forehead. Thus you heard as I said “*okāsa, vandāmi, bhante*” that means “Allow me, Bhante, to venerate you.” Then came that part, in which I have shared with the teacher what was good, done successfully. And I said in Pāli “*mayā kattam puññam sāmīnā anumoditabbam*”, that is “I invite you to rejoice in the merit of what I have done”. And the teacher replies “*sādhu sādhu, anumodāmi*”, “Good, good, I rejoice”. Then the pupil says “*sāmīna kattam puññam mayā dātābbam*”, “I offer my meritorious deeds” and the Venerable says “*anumoditabbam*”, “That is to rejoice about.” And the pupil confirms it by saying “*sādhu sādhu, anumodāmi*”, which means “Good, good, I rejoice”.

This is the first part of that ritual, the sharing of the merit.

Thereafter comes the solving of all problematic things that may have happened. Whatever the pupil remembers having done wrongly, can be now shared and clarified, in order to relieve the mind. That is why the pupil says “*okāsa, dvārattayena kattam sabbam accayam khamatha me, bhante*”, which means “Allow me, Bhante, to ask forgiving all wrong that I have done through the three doors.” The three doors are *kāyena* by the body, *vācā* by the speaking, *cittena* through the thinking. And the teacher, taking all that into account, says “*khamāmi khamitabbe*”, “I forgive whatever is to be forgiven”. In case that something may not have been pleasant for the pupil, the teacher says “*yathā pi me khamitabbam*” that is “In the same way also I should be forgiven”.

DK: Does it sometimes happen that also the teacher should be forgiven?

VA: Of course, there are often smaller or bigger misunderstandings. Sometimes the pupil does not like what the teacher has done to him or has told about him. And this is the moment to formulate it and to find out explanations. The forgiving is said first in the mother tongue and then confirmed in Pāli “*okāsa khamāmi, bhante; dutiyam ’pi okāsa khamāmi, bhante; tatiyam ’pi okāsa khamāmi, bhante*” what literally means “Allow me, Bhante, I forgive; second and third time, allow me, Bhante, I forgive.” Some days are without any problem to solve, and then I would say instead of “*khamāmi, bhante*” three times “*okāsa vandāmi, bhante*”. This would be all just to complete parting with the teacher on that day.

DK: That’s it. Thank you very much for the explanation. For me is this elucidation important also because it makes clear that this ritual excludes a possibility of criticizing the teacher later on. This ritual makes fundamentally impossible any consecutive misunderstandings or conflicts between the teacher and the pupil. This applies, of course, only then, when it is done truthfully, with understanding of its meaning, with clear comprehension, which is the a priori assumption of all Buddhist practice. Because of this reasons, it is for me utterly incomprehensible that a former monk or nun would start later on some attack to run down the actions of their teacher. Any right to consequently hatch a plot against the teacher is eliminated by this ritual, because whatever misunderstanding might have arisen, it has been immediately solved during the parting from the teacher that same day. Thus your explanation has been important not only for my full understanding of this ritual. Many thanks to you, Venerable Vajirā.

VA: It has been a pleasure, Venerable Dakkhī.

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