AN 3.38 — Dutiya Catumahārāja Sutta (The Four Great Celestial Guardian

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

38. Dutiya Catumahārāja Sutta (The Four Great Celestial Guardian Kings – Part 2) Bhikkhus, once Lord Sakka, The King of Devas, began reciting the following verse while instructing his retinue of Thirty-Three Devas of The Tāvatiṁsā Heaven:

“Anyone who desires to be like me, May they commit themselves to living with purity, By observing the fortnightly Uposatha to perfection, and in all its eight factors, Whether on the eighth, the fourteenth, or the fifteenth, Or on any of the especially significant days.”

But Bhikkhus, you must know that this verse was not spoken appropriately, nor in the best possible way that it could have been spoken.

And why do I say this?

It is because even the King of Devas, Sakka himself, is still susceptible to rebirth, having to undergo and endure old age, sickness, and death, for he still has to face much sorrow, pain, wailing and tears, along with depression and anguish. Therefore, he is still not free from these things, hence not immune to suffering.

On the other, an Arahant, who has completely destroyed all the contaminants that corrupt the heart, and fully lived The Holy Life, by attaining its ultimate Goal, and thereby has done what had to be done, having already laid down the heavy burden and fully obliterated and torn into shreds the fetter for renewed existence, and thus accomplished the Task by liberating himself through Release, with direct understanding; it is such a person indeed, who truly can speak the verse appropriately and in its best possible way, when he says:

“Anyone who desires to be like me, May they commit themselves to living with purity, By observing the fortnightly Uposatha to perfection, and in all its eight factors, Whether on the eighth, the fourteenth, or the fifteenth, Or on any of the especially significant days.”

And why do I say this?

It is because that Bhikkhu has rightly unshackled himself from rebirth, and is no longer subject to the cycles of birth, old age, sickness, and death. Thus, he has fully released himself from all the sorrow, pain, wailing and tears, along with depression and anguish which continued existing in saṁsāra brings.

I declare, therefore, that it is he, the Arahant, who is utterly free from, and thus totally immune to suffering.