Pv 18 — Kaṇha Sutta: King Kanha

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Text

Minister Rohiṇeyya is helping King Kaṇha remove sadness over his son’s death.

Rohiṇeyya:

Please wake up King Kaṇha. Why are you lying down? What good do you gain from sleeping? Your brother Ghata, who is as close to you as your heart and right eye, is suffering from a disease. He is crying as if he is crazy, asking for a rabbit.

Having heard this, King Kaṇha became worried about his brother and got up quickly. He visited his brother and questioned,

King Kaṇha:

Why are you crying like a crazy man saying, “Rabbit! Rabbit!”? What kind of rabbit do you want? One made of gold, jewels, copper, silver, or precious stones? It doesn’t matter, I will make it for you. There are also rabbits in the forest that feed on grass. I will catch them for you. What kind of rabbit do you want?

Ghata:

I don’t want any of those rabbits that are on the earth. I need the rabbit that is on the moon. Bring that one down for me, my dear Kaṇha.

King Kaṇha:

Dear brother, you are asking for something ridiculous. You will waste your sweet life desiring that.

Ghata:

Oh! My dear Kaṇha, if you are wise enough to teach me, why are you still crying over your dead son?

Wanting one's son to not die is a wish that cannot be obtained by humans or non-humans in the world. It is impossible to bring the dead back to life by praying or any kind of medicine.

There are people who are very powerful, rich, and rule over kingdoms. Even they are not free from old age and death.

Kings, Brahmins, servants, or low cast people are not free from old age and death. Even ascetics who recite mantras living in forests are not free from old age and death. There are also virtuous and calm rishis; even they leave their body when their time ends.

There are Arahants, who have reached Nibbāna, and are free from defilements. They also leave their bodies at the end of the lifespan for the last time.

King Kaṇha:

My heart was burning with sadness over the death of my son like when ghee is poured onto a fire. But now, all my sorrow has been extinguished as if I had been sprayed with water. I was struck with an arrow of grief, but you have removed it from me, my brother. Having heard your advice, I have become tranquil and cool with the arrow of sorrow removed. I no longer grieve or weep.

The wise people in the world advise others with compassion, just as Ghata helped his elder brother. It was Ghata's advice that freed his elder brother from sorrow. If someone has ministers like King Kaṇha had, they will gain happiness.