Vv 63 — Cūḷaratha Sutta: Small Chariot Mansion

English translation by Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery (Sutta Friends).

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Text

Maha Kaccana Bhante was living in the forest. One day, he saw a prince and spoke to him in this way.

Maha Kaccana Bhante:

You are holding a bow that is made from hardwood, pushing on one end with your foot. Are you a king, a prince, or a hunter in the forest? Who are you?

Prince:

Bhante, I am the son of King Assaka traveling in this forest. I can tell you my name. Everyone knows me as Sujata. I came into this forest looking for deer, but I have not found any. I saw you and stopped here.

Maha Kaccana Bhante:

You have great merit. It is very good that you came here. Your arrival here is not in vain. Take this water and wash your feet. See this cool water I brought from a mountain cave. Drink it and sit on this mat.

Prince:

Great Sage, your words are pleasing, friendly, meaningful, and sweet. Great Ascetic, why do you like to live in this forest? I ask you so that having listened to you and understood, I can follow your Dhamma.

Maha Kaccana Bhante:

Dear Prince, we desire to spread thoughts of harmlessness and compassion towards all living beings. We do not steal, behave badly, or drink alcohol. We abstain from those bad things. Instead we practice the Dhamma, remember much Dhamma, and pay gratitude. These are the things praised in this very life. Truly, these are the things that should be praised.

Oh, dear Prince, listen to me carefully. Within five months, you will die. Before that happens, protect yourself from rebirth in hell.

Prince:

Oh, Bhante, to which country should I run away? What should I do? What kind of effort should I make? What kind of knowledge would help me to escape from this aging and death?

Maha Kaccana Bhante:

Prince, it is impossible to find the place, the effort, or the knowledge by which you can escape from aging and death.

Even kings, those with great wealth and many possessions, are not free from aging and death. Have you heard of soldiers like Andhaka and Venhuputta? Mighty like the sun and moon, they defeated enemies with great strength and bravery. Eventually, when they reached the end of their lifespan, they too died.

Kings, brahmins, merchants, servants, and low-caste people – all of them are not free from old age and death. Even those great ascetics, coming from a famous lineage, who had learned spells and many things, are not freed from old age and death.

Other tranquil and virtuous ascetics with austere practices will leave their bodies too when death arrives. Even in the case of Arahants who have completed the path to Nibbana, who are freed from defilements and have overcome both merit and demerit – they too leave this body when the time comes.

Prince:

Great Sage, the Dhamma you preach is very meaningful and well taught. I understood your teaching. Please be my protection. I would go for refuge to you.

Maha Kaccana Bhante:

Dear Prince, do not go for refuge to me. I myself have gone for refuge to the Great Teacher, Gautama Supreme Buddha. You should also go for refuge to that great hero.

Prince:

Oh, Bhante, where is the Great Teacher staying now? I would like to go see the Great Victor, the Unmatchable Teacher.

Maha Kaccana Bhante:

Prince, that excellent teacher who was born in the Okkaka family, lived in the eastern province. Now that Great Teacher attained final Nibbana at passing away.

Prince:

Oh Bhante, if your great teacher was still alive, I would have traveled even for many miles to see him. Bhante, right here, I go for refuge to your great teacher, the Great Hero to whom you have gone for refuge.

I go for refuge to the Supreme Buddha, the excellent Supreme Dhamma, and the Great Teacher's community of monks, the Supreme Sangha. From now on, I abstain from killing, stealing, drinking alcohol, and telling lies. I abstain from sexual misconduct and am content with my own wife.

One day a deva, having dismounted from his divine chariot appeared in front of Maha Kaccana Bhante and paid homage to him.

Maha Kaccana Bhante:

Your chariot travels in the sky shining in all ten directions like the sun that shines with a thousand rays. The chariot is over seventy kilometers long. It is decorated all around with golden plates. Its front is decorated with pearls and gems. Gold and silver carvings beautify your vehicle even further. The head of the chariot is made of beryl gemstones. The yoke is made of red gems. Horses are attached to the chariot with gold and silver ropes. These beautiful horses travel as fast as the mind thinks.

Famous God, you are sitting in this golden chariot pulled by a thousand horses like the god Sakka. I ask you, skilled Deva, how did you gain all these wonderful things?

Deva:

Bhante, in my previous life, I was a prince named Sujata. You were the one who was compassionate towards me and taught me the great Dhamma.

You understood that my life was about to end, gave me a bodily relic of the Supreme Buddha, and told me to worship it. I respected that sacred relic, offering fragrances and flowers respectfully. When I passed away, I was born in this Tavatimsa Heaven in the Nandana Park.

This delightful Nandana Park is filled with various types of birds. I enjoy living there, surrounded by dancing and singing goddesses.