Vv 81 — Kanthaka Sutta: Kanthaka’s Mansion

English translation by Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery (Sutta Friends).

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Text

Moggallana Bhante:

Dear Deva, the mansion in this heaven travels in all directions, shining brightly like the full moon – the leader of stars, surrounded by the constellations. It shines as brightly as the rising sun. Beryl, gold, crystal, silver, cat’s-eyes, pearls, and rubies decorate the floor of this mansion. The pillars are extremely beautiful. This mansion is beautifully made.

There is a beautiful lotus pond with many divine fish. It is filled with clear sparkling water, and its bottom is covered in golden sand. Various types of lotuses and white lilies bloom in the pond. When the breeze blows, a sweet fragrance spreads throughout the air. There are two beautiful forests on opposite banks of the pond. Their trees are full of flowers and fruits.

The comfortable chair you are sitting on is made of gold and decorated with divine cloth. You are surrounded by many goddesses, like the god Sakka. Those mighty goddesses, decorated with beautiful ornaments and flowers, entertain you. You are as happy in your mansion as a leader of gods. It is filled with the sweet sounds of drums, conchs, kettle-drums, guitars, and tam-tams. You enjoy the music, dances, and songs. You have received various divine sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. Dear Deva, you shine brighter and brighter in this mansion like the rising sun.

How did you gain all these wonderful things? Is this the result of giving or practicing virtue or paying homage to someone? Please tell me of what meritorious deed this is the result of.

That deva, delighted at being questioned by Arahant Moggallana, gladly explained what he had done that resulted in such great happiness.

Deva:

I lived in the proud city of Kapilavatthu which was owned by the Sakyan people. My name was Kanthaka. I was the dearest horse of Prince Siddhartha, and I was born on the same day as this prince, the son of King Suddhodana.

One day at midnight Prince Siddhartha renounced the palace-life in order to seek enlightenment. He touched my thigh with his soft flexible hands and copper-colored nails. While touching my thigh he told me, "My friend, I am going to achieve enlightenment and after I have attained it, I will help others in the world to cross over this samsara. So carry me, my friend."

I was overjoyed to hear those words. With great delight I let the prince get onto my back. The famous mighty prince sat on my back, and thrilled, I carried him joyfully.

As the sun was rising we approached another kingdom. Leaving me and the chariot-driver Channa, Prince Siddhartha departed silently as if he had no attachment to us.

I licked Prince Siddhartha's sacred feet, with their copper-colored toenails, as he was about to depart. We watched the Great Hero entering the thick forest with tears in our eyes.

As soon as he was out of sight, I suddenly got very ill. Right there and then, I died.

Through the power of that meritorious deed, I have received this heavenly mansion. I enjoy this heaven immensely, surrounded by all the divine pleasures.

One day, other devas were rejoicing, having heard that Prince Siddhartha had attained Supreme Enlightenment. When I heard that, I was overjoyed. Based on that joy, I will attain Nibbana one day.

Bhante, when you approach the Greatest Teacher, the Supreme Buddha, please worship the Blessed One saying, "Deva Kanthaka worships you with his words and by bowing his head."

Soon, I too will go to see the Matchless Teacher who won the battle. It is extremely rare to see such a Supreme Buddha, who is unshaken by the ups and downs of the world. He is the true protector of the world.

On a later day, recollecting the help of the Great Teacher, and feeling grateful and thankful for his teachings, Deva Kanthaka went to see the Supreme Buddha. Having listened to the Buddha's teaching, he understood it and gained the Eye of Dhamma.

Deva Kanthaka removed self-centered view, doubt, and wrongful practices and became a Stream Entrant. After worshiping the Supreme Teacher’s sacred feet, he disappeared right there and then.