MN 51 — MN 51 To Kandaraka | Kandaraka Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN51.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

To Kandaraka

Kandaraka Sutta (MN 51)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Campā on the banks of the Gaggarā Lake with a large community of monks. Then Pessa the elephant driver’s son and Kandaraka the wanderer went to the Blessed One. On arrival, Pessa the elephant driver’s son, bowing down to the Blessed One, sat to one side, while Kandaraka the wanderer exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, stood to one side. As he was standing there, he glanced around at the community of monks sitting silently, silently, and then said to the Blessed One, “It’s amazing, Master Gotama. It’s astounding how the community of monks has been led by Master Gotama to practice rightly. Those who, in the past, were Worthy Ones,

Rightly Self-awakened, at most led their community of monks to practice rightly as Master Gotama has led the community of monks to practice rightly at present. And those who, in the future, will be Worthy Ones, Rightly Self-awakened, will at most lead their community of monks to practice rightly as Master Gotama has led the community of monks to practice rightly at present."

"That's how it is, Kandaraka. That's how it is. Those who, in the past, were Worthy Ones, Rightly Self-awakened, at most led their community of monks to practice rightly as I have led the community of monks to practice rightly at present. And those who, in the future, will be Worthy Ones, Rightly Self-awakened, will at most lead their community of monks to practice rightly as I have led the community of monks to practice rightly at present.

"In this community of monks, Kandaraka, there are monks who are arahants, whose effluents are ended, who have reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, laid to waste the fetter of becoming, and are released through right gnosis. In this community of monks there are monks in training,1 of constant virtue, living with constant virtue; wise, living with wisdom, who remain with their minds well-established in the four establishings of mindfulness. Which four? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves… the mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world."

When this was said, Pessa the elephant driver's son said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding—how these four establishings of mindfulness have been so well described by the Blessed One for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, and for the realization of unbinding. We, too—householders clad in white—from time to time remain with our minds well-established in the four establishings of mindfulness. There is the case where we remain focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. We remain focused on feelings in & of themselves… the mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

"It's amazing, lord. It's astounding—how, with so much human convolution, so much human muck, so much human deception going on, the Blessed One knows the welfare & harm of beings. For human beings are a convolution, lord, while an animal is perfectly clear. Lord, I can drive an elephant to be tamed, and in the time it takes to go back & forth to Campā, it will show me all its deception & duplicity & fraudulence & crookedness. But our 'slaves' & 'workers' & 'servants' behave one way with the body, a different way with their speech, and their mind is different from that. It's amazing, lord. It's astounding—how, with so much human convolution, so much human muck, so much human deception going on, the Blessed One knows the welfare & harm of beings. For human beings are a convolution, lord, while an animal is perfectly clear."

“That’s the way it is, Pessa. That’s the way it is. Human beings are a convolution, while an animal is perfectly clear.

“Pessa, there are these four types of persons to be found existing in the world. Which four? There is the case where a certain person torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself. There is the case where a certain person torments others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others. There is the case where a certain person torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself, and also torments others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others. There is the case where a certain person neither torments himself nor is devoted to the practice of torturing himself, neither torments others nor is devoted to the practice of torturing others. Neither tormenting himself nor tormenting others, he dwells in the here-&-now free of hunger, unbound, cooled, sensitive to pleasure, with a Brahmā-like mind.

“Now, of these four persons, Pessa, which one satisfies your mind?”

“Lord, the person who torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself doesn’t satisfy my mind. The person who torments others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others doesn’t satisfy my mind. The person who torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself, and also torments others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others doesn’t satisfy my mind. The person who neither torments himself nor is he devoted to the practice of torturing himself, and neither torments others nor is he devoted to the practice of torturing others, who—neither tormenting himself nor tormenting others—dwells in the here-&-now free of hunger, unbound, cooled, sensitive to pleasure, with a Brahmā-like mind does satisfy my mind.”

“But why, Pessa, do those three persons not satisfy your mind?”

“Lord, the person who torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself: He torments & tortures his self who loves pleasure & abhors pain. That’s why that person doesn’t satisfy my mind. The person who torments others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others: He torments & tortures another who loves pleasure & abhors pain. That’s why that person doesn’t satisfy my mind. The person who torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself, and also torments others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others: He torments & tortures his self & another, both of whom love pleasure & abhor pain. That’s why that person doesn’t satisfy my mind. The person who neither torments himself nor is devoted to the practice of torturing himself, and neither torments others nor is devoted to the practice of torturing others: He—neither tormenting himself nor tormenting others—dwells in the here-&-now free of hunger, unbound, cooled, sensitive to pleasure, with a Brahmā-like mind.2 That’s why that person does satisfy my mind.

“Well, then, lord, I am going. Many are my duties, many my responsibilities.”

“Then do, Pessa, what you think it is now time to do.”

So Pessa the elephant driver's son, delighting & rejoicing in the Blessed One's words, rose from his seat, and—after bowing down to him & circumambulating him—left.

Then, not long after he had left, the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Wise, monks, is Pessa the elephant driver's son. Greatly discerning is Pessa the elephant driver's son. If he had stayed a moment longer while I analyzed these four persons in detail, he would have met with great benefit. But even as it is, he has met with great benefit."

"This is the time, lord. This is the time, O One Well-gone, for the Blessed One to analyze these four persons in detail! Having listened to the Blessed One in detail,3 the monks will bear it in mind."

"In that case, monks, listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: "And which is the person who torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself? There is the case where a certain person goes without cloth, rejecting conventions, licking his hands, not coming when called, not staying when asked. He doesn't accept food brought or specially made. He doesn't consent to an invitation (to a meal). He doesn't receive anything from the mouth of a pot, from the mouth of a container, across a threshold, across a stick, across a pestle, from two eating together, from a pregnant woman, from a woman nursing a child, from a woman living with a man, from where it is announced that food is to be distributed, from where a dog is waiting, from where flies are buzzing. He accepts no meat, no distilled liquor, no wine, no fermented liquor. He limits himself to one house for one morsel, to two houses for two morsels… to seven houses for seven morsels. He lives on one saucerful a day, two saucerfuls a day… seven saucerfuls a day. He takes food once a day, once every two days… once every seven days, and so on up to once every half-month. He remains devoted to the practice of regulating his intake of food. He eats a diet of green vegetables or millet or wild rice or hide-parings or moss or rice bran or rice-water or sesame flour or grass or cow dung. He lives off forest roots & fruits. He eats fallen fruits. He clothes himself in hemp, in canvas, in shrouds, in thrown-away rags, in tree bark, in antelope hide, in wood-shavings fabric, in head-hair wool, in wild-animal wool, in owls' wings. He is a hair-&-beard puller, one devoted to the practice of pulling out his hair & beard. He is a stander, one who rejects seats. He is a hands-around-the-knees sitter, one devoted to the exertion of sitting with his hands around his knees. He is a spike-mattresser, one who makes his bed on a bed of spikes. He is a third-time-in-the-evening bather, one who stays devoted to the practice of bathing in water. Thus, in these many ways, he is devoted to the practice of tormenting & torturing the body. This is called a person who torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself.

"And which is the person who torments others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others? There is the case where a certain person is a butcher of sheep, a butcher of pigs, a butcher of fowl, a trapper, a hunter, a fisherman, a thief, an executioner,4 a prison warden, or anyone who follows any other bloody occupation. This is called a person who torments

others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others.

“And which is the person who torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself, and also torments others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others? There is the case where a person is a head-anointed noble warrior king, or a brahman of great wealth. Having had a new temple built to the east of the city, having shaved off his hair & beard, having dressed himself in a rough hide, having smeared his body with ghee & oil, and scratching his back with a deer horn, he enters the new temple along with his chief queen & brahman high priest. There he makes his bed on the bare ground strewn with grass. The king lives off the milk from the first teat of a cow with an identical calf; the queen lives off the milk from the second teat; the brahman high priest, off the milk from the third teat. The milk from the fourth teat they pour5 into the fire. The calf lives on what is left.

“He says, ‘Let so many bulls be slaughtered for the sacrifice. Let so many bullocks… so many heifers… so many goats… so many sheep…. Let so many horses be slaughtered for the sacrifice.6 Let so many trees be cut down for the sacrificial posts; let so many plants be mowed down for the sacrificial grass.’ And his slaves, servants, & workers make preparations, weeping with tearful faces, spurred on by punishment, spurred on by fear. This is called a person who torments himself and is devoted to the practice of torturing himself, and also torments others and is devoted to the practice of torturing others.

“And which is the person who neither torments himself nor is devoted to the practice of torturing himself, neither torments others nor is devoted to the practice of torturing others; who—neither tormenting himself nor tormenting others—dwells in the here-&-now free of hunger, unbound, cooled, sensitive to pleasure with a Brahmā-like mind?

“There is the case where a Tathāgata appears in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened. He teaches the Dhamma admirable in its beginning, admirable in its middle, admirable in its end. He proclaims the holy life both in its particulars and in its essence, entirely perfect, surpassingly pure.

“A householder or householder’s son, hearing the Dhamma, gains conviction in the Tathāgata and reflects: ‘Household life is confining, a dusty path. Life gone forth is the open air. It isn’t easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. What if I, having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe, were to go forth from the household life into homelessness?’

“So after some time he abandons his mass of wealth, large or small; leaves his circle of relatives, large or small; shaves off his hair & beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness.

Virtue

“When he has thus gone forth, endowed with the monks’ training & livelihood, then—abandoning the taking of life—he abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings.

“Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He takes only what is given, accepts only what is given, lives not by stealth but by means of a self that has become pure.

“Abandoning uncelibacy, he lives a celibate life, aloof, refraining from the sexual act that is the villager’s way.

“Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world.

“Abandoning divisive speech he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord.

“Abandoning abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing and pleasing to people at large.

“Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, and the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal.

“He abstains from damaging seed & plant life.

“He eats only once a day, refraining from the evening meal and from food at the wrong time of day.

“He abstains from dancing, singing, instrumental music, and from watching shows.

“He abstains from wearing garlands and from beautifying himself with scents and cosmetics.

“He abstains from high & luxurious beds & seats.

“He abstains from accepting gold & money.

“He abstains from accepting uncooked grain… raw meat… women & girls… male & female slaves… goats & sheep… fowl & pigs… elephants, cattle, steeds, & mares… fields & property.

“He abstains from running messages… from buying & selling… from dealing with false scales, false metals, & false measures… from bribery, deception, & fraud.

“He abstains from mutilating, executing, imprisoning, highway robbery, plunder, & violence.

“He is content with a set of robes to provide for his body and alms food to provide for his hunger. Just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden; so too is he content with a set of robes to provide for his body and alms food to provide for his hunger. Wherever he goes, he takes only his barest necessities along.

“Endowed with this noble aggregate of virtue, he is inwardly sensitive to the pleasure of being blameless.

Sense Restraint

“On seeing a form with the eye, he doesn’t grasp at any theme or details by which—if he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the eye—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. On hearing a sound with the ear…. On smelling an aroma with the nose…. On tasting a flavor with the tongue…. On touching a tactile sensation with the body…. On cognizing an idea with the intellect, he doesn’t grasp at any theme or details by which—if he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the intellect—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. Endowed with this noble restraint over the sense faculties, he is inwardly sensitive to the pleasure of being blameless.

Mindfulness & Alertness

“When going forward & returning, he makes himself alert. When looking toward & looking away… when bending & extending his limbs… when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, & his bowl… when eating, drinking, chewing, & tasting… when urinating & defecating… when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself alert.

Abandoning the Hindrances

“Endowed with this noble aggregate of virtue, this noble restraint over the sense faculties, this noble mindfulness & alertness, he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a wilderness, the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a forest grove, the open air, a heap of straw. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he sits down, crosses his legs, holds his body erect, and brings mindfulness to the fore.

“Abandoning covetousness with regard to the world, he dwells with an awareness devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness. Abandoning ill will & anger, he dwells with an awareness devoid of ill will, sympathetic with the welfare of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of ill will & anger. Abandoning sloth & drowsiness, he dwells with an

awareness devoid of sloth & drowsiness, mindful, alert, percipient of light. He cleanses his mind of sloth & drowsiness. Abandoning restlessness & anxiety, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness & anxiety. Abandoning uncertainty, he dwells having crossed over uncertainty, with no perplexity with regard to skillful qualities. He cleanses his mind of uncertainty.

The Four Jhānas

"Having abandoned these five hindrances—imperfections of awareness that weaken discernment—then, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, he enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation.

"Then, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance.

"Then, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.'

"Then, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.

The Three Knowledges

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, & bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, he directs & inclines it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives [literally: previous homes]. He recollects his manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, (recollecting,) 'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes and details. This, too, is how striving is fruitful, how exertion is fruitful.

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, & bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, he directs & inclines it to knowledge of the passing away & re-appearance of beings. He sees—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in

accordance with their kamma: 'These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.' Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—he sees beings passing away & re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, & bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, the monk directs & inclines it to the knowledge of the ending of the effluents. He discerns, as it has come to be, that 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress... These are effluents... This is the origination of effluents... This is the cessation of effluents... This is the way leading to the cessation of effluents.' His heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the effluent of sensuality, released from the effluent of becoming, released from the effluent of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"This is called a person who neither torments himself nor is devoted to the practice of torturing himself, who neither torments others nor is devoted to the practice of torturing others. Neither tormenting himself nor tormenting others, he dwells in the here-&-now free of hunger, unbound, cooled, sensitive to pleasure, with a Brahmā-like mind."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Notes

1. Sekha, in training, means that the monks have at least gained the Dhamma eye, the first experience of the deathless, but are not yet fully awakened. See AN 3:74 and AN 3:87.

2. Following the Thai edition of the Canon. Other editions add an extra sentence here: "He neither torments nor tortures his self nor another, both of whom love pleasure & abhor pain."

3. Following the Thai edition of the Canon. Other editions omit vitthārena, "in detail," here.

4. The Burmese edition of the Canon here adds, "a slaughterer of cows."

5. Following the Sinhalese, Burmese, and PTS editions of the Canon. The Thai edition reads, "he pours."

6. The PTS and Sinhalese editions omit the sentence, “Let so many horses be slaughtered for the sacrifice.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: AN 4:95; AN 4:96; AN 4:99