SN 2.23 — SN 2:23 Serī the Deva’s Son | Serī Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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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

Serī the Deva’s Son

Serī Sutta (SN 2:23)

As he was standing there, Serī the deva’s son recited these verses in the Blessed One’s presence:

“Truly, they delight in food,

both devas & human beings,

so what is the spirit

who doesn’t delight in food?”

The Buddha:

“Those who give it through conviction,

with clear, bright awareness:

One eats that food,

in this world & the next.

So, having subdued miserliness,

one who conquers [that] stain,

should give a gift.

Deeds of merit are the support for beings

when they arise

in the other world.”

“How amazing, lord! How astounding! How well this was stated by the Lord Blessed One!”

“‘Those who give it through conviction,

with clear, bright awareness:

One eats that food,

in this world & the next.

So, having subdued miserliness,

one who conquers [that] stain,

should give a gift.

Deeds of merit are the support for beings

when they arise

in the other world.’”

“In the past, lord, I was a king named Serī—a donor, a lord of giving, one who spoke in praise of giving. At my four gates I had gifts given to contemplatives & brahmans, poor people & travelers, mendicants & beggars.

“Then my harem women came to me and said, ‘Your majesty, you give gifts, but we don’t give gifts. It would be good if, depending on you, we gave gifts & did deeds of merit.’

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Here I am, a donor, a lord of giving, one who speaks in praise of giving. So when they say, “Let us give gifts,” what am I to say?’ So I gave the first

gate to the harem women. There the harem women gave gifts, and my gifts returned to me.

“Then my noble-warrior subordinates came to me and said, ‘Your majesty, you give gifts, the harem women give gifts, but we don’t give gifts. It would be good if, depending on you, we gave gifts & did deeds of merit.’

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Here I am, a donor, a lord of giving, one who speaks in praise of giving. So when they say, “Let us give gifts,” what am I to say?’ So I gave the second gate to my noble-warrior subordinates. There the noble-warrior subordinates gave gifts, and my gifts returned to me.

“Then my troops came to me and said, ‘Your majesty, you give gifts, the harem women give gifts, the noble-warrior subordinates give gifts, but we don’t give gifts. It would be good if, depending on you, we gave gifts & did deeds of merit.’

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Here I am, a donor, a lord of giving, one who speaks in praise of giving. So when they say, “Let us give gifts,” what am I to say?’ So I gave the third gate to my troops. There the troops gave gifts, and my gifts returned to me.

“Then brahmans & householders came to me and said, ‘Your majesty, you give gifts, the harem women give gifts, the noble-warrior subordinates give gifts, the troops give gifts, but we don’t give gifts. It would be good if, depending on you, we gave gifts & did deeds of merit.’

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Here I am, a donor, a lord of giving, one who speaks in praise of giving. So when they say, “Let us give gifts,” what am I to say?’ So I gave the fourth gate to the brahmans & householders. There the brahmans & householders gave gifts, and my gifts returned to me.

“Then my men came to me and said, ‘Now your majesty isn’t giving any gifts.’

“When that was said, I said to my men, ‘In that case, I say, bring half of the revenue generated in the outlying districts into the city, and give half of it as gifts to contemplatives & brahmans, poor people & travelers, mendicants & beggars.’

“And so, lord, in the meritorious deeds I did for such a long time, in the skillful deeds I did for such a long time, I didn’t reach a limit of ‘so much merit’ or ‘so much fruit of merit’ or ‘so long I should stay in heaven.’

“How amazing, lord! How astounding! How well this was stated by the lord Blessed One!”

“‘Those who give it through conviction,

with clear, bright awareness:

One eats that food,

in this world & the next.

So, having subdued miserliness,

one who conquers [that] stain,

should give a gift.

Deeds of merit are the support for beings

when they arise

in the other world.”’

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 3:19–20; AN 6:37; AN 9:20