SN 2.23 — With Serī

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/sn2.23/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
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Text

Linked Discourses 2.23

3. Various Sectarians

With Serī

Standing to one side, the godling Serī addressed the Buddha in verse:

“Both gods and humans

enjoy their food.

So what’s the name of the spirit

who doesn’t like food?”

“Those who give with faith

and a clear and confident heart,

partake of food

in this world and the next.

So you should dispel stinginess,

overcoming that stain, and give a gift.

The good deeds of sentient beings

support them in the next world.”

“It’s incredible, sir, it’s amazing, how well said this was by the Buddha.” He repeated the Buddha’s verses, and said:

“Once upon a time, sir, I was a king named Serī, a giver, a donor, who praised giving. I gave gifts at the four gates to ascetics and brahmins, to paupers, vagrants, supplicants, and beggars. Then the ladies of my harem approached me and said, ‘Your Majesty gives gifts, but we don’t. Your Majesty, please support us to give gifts and make merit.’ Then it occurred to me, ‘I’m a giver, a donor, who praises giving. When they say, “We would give gifts”, what am I to say?’ And so I gave the first gate to the ladies of my harem. There they gave gifts, while my own giving dwindled.

Then my aristocrat vassals approached me and said, ‘Your Majesty gives gifts, the ladies of your harem give gifts, but we don’t. Your Majesty, please support us to give gifts and make merit.’ Then it occurred to me, ‘I’m a giver, a donor, who praises giving. When they say, “We would give gifts”, what am I to say?’ And so I gave the second gate to my aristocrat vassals. There they gave gifts, while my own giving dwindled.

Then my troops approached me and said, ‘Your Majesty gives gifts, the ladies of your harem give gifts, your aristocrat vassals give gifts, but we don’t. Your Majesty, please support us to give gifts and make merit.’ Then it occurred to me, ‘I’m a giver, a donor, who praises giving. When they say, “We would give gifts”, what am I to say?’ And so I gave the third gate to my troops. There they gave gifts, while my own giving dwindled.

Then my brahmins and householders approached me and said, ‘Your Majesty gives gifts, the ladies of your harem give gifts, your aristocrat vassals give gifts, your troops give gifts, but we don’t. Your Majesty, please support us to give gifts and make merit.’ Then it occurred to me, ‘I’m a giver, a donor, who praises giving. When they say, “We would give gifts”, what am I to say?’ And so I gave the fourth gate to my brahmins and householders. There they gave gifts, while my own giving dwindled.

Then my men approached me and said, ‘Now Your Majesty is not giving gifts anywhere!’ When they said this, I said to those men, ‘Well then, lads, deposit half the revenue generated in the outer districts in the royal compound. Give the other half as charity to ascetics and brahmins, to paupers, vagrants, supplicants, and beggars in those districts.’ Sir, for a long time I made so much merit and did so many skillful deeds. I never reached any limit so as to say ‘there’s this much merit’ or ‘there’s this much result of merit’ or ‘for so long I’ll remain in heaven’. It’s incredible, sir, it’s amazing, how well said this was by the Buddha.

‘Those who give with faith

and a clear and confident heart,

partake of food

in this world and the next.

So you should dispel stinginess,

overcoming that stain, and give a gift.

The good deeds of sentient beings

support them in the next world.’”