

Majjhima Nikāya - The Middle Length Discourses

The Heavenly Messengers (Devaduutasutta)

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anaathapindika in Jeta's grove in Saavatthi. The Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus from there. 'Bhikkhus, like a man standing between two houses with doors standing adjacently would see people entering, leaving, wandering and roaming in the two houses. Likewise I see with my heavenly eye purified beyond human, beings disappearing and appearing, unexalted and exalted, beautiful and ugly, in heaven and in hell. I see beings according their actions: These good beings conducting well by body, speech and mind, not blaming noble ones, developing right view, bearing the right view of actions, at the break up of the body, after death, go to increase, are born in heaven. These good beings conducting well by body, speech and mind, not blaming noble ones, developing right view, bearing the right view of actions, at the break up of the body, after death, are born with humans. These good beings mis-conducting by body, speech and mind, blaming noble ones, developing wrong view, bearing the wrong view of actions, at the break up of the body, after death,

are born in the sphere of ghosts. These good beings misconducting by body, speech and mind, blaming noble ones, developing wrong view, bearing the wrong view of actions, at the break up of the body, after death, are born with animals. These good beings misconducting by body, speech and mind, blaming noble ones, developing wrong view, bearing the wrong view of actions, at the break up of the body, after death, decrease, and are born in hell.

Bhikkhus, the warders of hell take him by his hands and feet and show him to the king of the under world 'Lord, this man is unfriendly, not uniting, not chaste, does not honour the elders in the family, mete him the suitable punishment.

The king of the under world cross questions, asks for reasons and studies together with him thus. 'Good man did you not see the first divine messenger among humans?' He says 'Sir I did not see.' Then the king of the under world would ask him. 'Good man didn't you see a toddler who stands and lies with difficulty, mingled in his own urine and excreta while lying?' Then he says, 'Sir, I saw.' The king of the under world asks him. 'Goodman, being a wise aged one, didn't it occur to you, I have not gone beyond birth, now I will do some good by body, words and mind?' He would say, 'Sir, I could not do. owing to negligence' The king of the under world says. 'Good one, owing to negligence you acted in that manner. This evil action was not done by your, mother, father, brother, sister, friends, co -associates or blood relations. It was not done by recluses, brahmins or gods, it was done by you and you will experience its results

Bhikkhus, the king of the under word having finished cross questioning, asking for reasons and studying together about the first divine messenger asks him 'Good man did you not see the second divine messenger among humans?' He says 'Sir I did not see.' Then the king of the under world would ask him. 'Good man didn't you see among humans a woman or man, eighty or ninety years old, decayed and bent like the frame work of a roof, going about supported on a stick, shivering, ill, the youth gone, with broken teeth, grey hair, spotted wrinkled skin?' Then he says, 'Sir, I saw.' The king of the under world asks him. 'Goodman, being a wise aged one, didn't it occur to you, I have not gone beyond decay, now I will do some good by body, words and mind?' He would say, 'Sir, I could not do. owing to negligence' The king of the under world says. 'Good one, owing to negligence you acted in that manner. This evil action was not done by your, mother, father, brother, sister, friends, co -associates or blood relations. It was not done by recluses, brahmins or gods, it was done by you and you will experience its results

Bhikkhus, the king of the under word having finished cross questioning, asking for reasons and studying together about the second divine messenger asks him 'Good man did you not see the third divine messenger among humans?' He says 'Sir I did not see.' Then the king of the under world would ask him. 'Good man didn't you see among humans a woman or man, gravely ill immersed in his own urine and excreta, raised by others and conducted by others?' Then he says, 'Sir, I saw.' The

king of the under world asks him. ‘Goodman, being a wise aged one, didn’t it occur to you, I have not gone beyond illness, now I will do some good by body, words and mind?’ He would say, ‘Sir, I could not do.owing to negligence’ The king of the under world says. ‘Good one, owing to negligence you acted in that manner. This evil action was not done by your, mother, father, brother, sister, friends, co -associates or blood relations. It was not done by recluses, brahmins or gods, it was done by you and you will experience its results

Bhikkhus, the king of the under word having finished cross questioning, asking for reasons and studying together about the third divine messenger asks him‘Good man did you not see the fourth divine messenger among humans?’ He says ‘Sir I did not see.’ Then the king of the under world would ask him. ‘Good man didn’t you see among humansan offender taken hold by the king and given various kinds of torture caned and wipped, flogged with the jungle rope, flogged with the soiled stick, hands severed, legs severed, or both hands and legs severed, ears and nose severed, put in the boiling gruel pot, shell tonsured, put in Raahu’s mouth, garlanded with the blazing garland, hands scorched, the bark dress given, put with snakes, put hooks in theflesh, cut pieces of flesh from the body, drive a spike from ear to ear, beat to make the body like straw, immerse in the boiling oil, give to the dogs to be eaten, raise on a spike alive until death, and cut the neck with the sword?’. Then he says, ‘Sir, I saw.’The king of the under world asks him. ‘Goodman, being a wise aged one, didn’t it occur to you, the results for evil actions are here and now there is no other alternative. Now I will do some good by body, words and mind?’ He would say, ‘Sir, I could not do.owing to negligence’ The king of the under world says. ‘Good one, owing to negligence you acted in that manner. This evil action was not done by your, mother, father, brother, sister, friends, co -associates or blood relations. It was not done by recluses, brahmins or gods, it was done by you and you will experience its results

Bhikkhus, the king of the under word having finished cross questioning, asking for reasons and studying together about the fourth divine messenger asks him‘Good man did you not see the fifth divine messenger among humans?’ He says ‘Sir I did not see.’ Then the king of the under world would ask him. ‘Good man didn’t you see among humans a woman or man dead after one day, two

days or three days, bloated and turned blue?’ Then he says, ‘Sir, I saw.’ The king of the under world asks him. ‘Goodman, being a wise aged one, didn’t it occur to you, I too will be subject to death, I have not gone beyond it. Now I will do some good by body, words and mind?’ He would say, ‘Sir, I could not do. owing to negligence’ The king of the under world says. ‘Good one, owing to negligence you acted in that manner. This evil action was not done by your, mother, father, brother, sister, friends, co -associates or blood relations. It was not done by recluses, brahmins or gods, it was done by you and you will experience its results

Bhikkhus, the king of the under world having finished cross questioning, asking for reasons and studying together about the fifth divine messenger becomes silent.

Then the warders of hell give him the fivefold binding. That is two hot iron spikes are sent through his two palms, and two other hot spikes are sent through his two feet and the fifth hot iron spike is sent through his chest. On account of this he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings. Yet he does not die, until his demerit finishes. Next the warders of hell conduct him and hammer him On account of this he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings. Yet he does not die, until his demerit finishes. Next the warders of hell take him upside down and cut him with a knife On account of this too he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings. Yet he does not die, until his demerit finishes. Next the warders of hell yoke him to a cart and make him go to and fro on a ground that is flaming and ablaze On account of this too he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings. Yet he does not die, until his demerit finishes. Next the warders of hell make him ascend and descend a rock of burning ambers On account of this he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings. Yet he does not die, until his demerit finishes. Next the warders of hell throw him upside down into a boiling, blazing pot of molten. There he is cooked in the molten scum, and he on his own accord dives in comes up and goes across in the molten pot. On account of this too he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings. Yet he does not die, until his demerit finishes. Next the warders of hell throw him to the Great Hell. The square Great Hell has four gates and is divided in two, Enclosed by iron walls, is closed with an iron lid. The floor spreads for seven hundred miles, And it stands there everyday.

A fire springs from the eastern wall of the Great Hell to scorch the western wall. A fire springs from the western wall to scorch the eastern wall. A fire springs from the northern wall to scorch the southern wall. A fire springs from the southern wall to scorch the northern wall. A fire springs from the bottom to scorch the top and a fire springs from the top to scorch the bottom. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die until his demerit comes to an end.

Bhikkhus, after the lapse of a very long time, it happens that the eastern door of the Great Hell opens. Then he runs with great speed, in doing so he burns his outer skin, inner skin, flesh, nerves, and even the bones smoke, even if he pulls himself out, it happens. When he had, had enough of it the door closes. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die until his demerit comes to an end.

Bhikkhus, after the lapse of a very long time, it happens that the western door of the Great Hell opens. Then he runs with great speed, in doing so he burns his outer skin, inner skin, flesh, nerves, and even the bones smoke, even if he pulls himself out, it happens. When he had, had enough of it the door closes. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die until his demerit comes to an end.

Bhikkhus, after the lapse of a very long time, it happens that the eastern door of the Great Hell opens. Then he runs with great speed, in doing so he burns his outer skin, inner skin, flesh, nerves, and even the bones smoke, even if he pulls himself out, it happens. He escapes through that door.

Parallel and together with the Great Hell is the Hell of Excreta he falls into that. In it there are needle mouthed living things, that pierce the outer skin, then the inner skin, after that the flesh, the nerves and even the bones and they eat the bone marrow. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die until his demerit comes to an end.

Parallel and together with the Hell of Excretais the Hell where hot ashes rain, he falls into that. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die until his demerit comes to an end.

Parallel and together with the Hell where hot ashes rain, is the Simbali forest, more than seven miles tall, it has thorns sixteen inches long, aflame and blazing, he climbs on them and goes to and fro on them. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die until his demerit comes to an end.

Parallel and together with the Simbali forest, is a forest of swords. He enters that. The leaves that fall with the wind, cut his feet, hands, feet and hands, ears, nose, ears and nose. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die until his demerit comes to an end.

Parallel and together with the forest of swords is a huge salt water river. He falls into that. In it he is carried up stream and down stream. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die until his demerit comes to an end.

Then the warders of hell pull him out with a hook and ask him. 'Good man, what do you desire?' He says, 'Sir, I'm hungry.' The warders of hell open his mouth with hot iron spikes and pour into his mouth burning, flaming iron balls. They burn his lips, mouth, throat, chest, the intestines, the lower intestines and they come out with the insides. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die, until his demerit comes to an end.

Then the warders ask him. 'Good man, what do you desire?' He says, 'Sir, I'm thirsty.' The warders of hell open his mouth with hot iron spikes and pour into his mouth burning, flaming copper molten. They burn his lips, mouth, throat, chest, the intestines, the lower intestines and they come out with the insides. There he experiences sharp piercing unpleasant feelings, yet he does not die, until his demerit comes to an end.

Then the warders of Hell put him back to the Great Hell.

In the past to the king of the Under World it occurred thus. To those who do evil in the world, these various punishments are given. O! If I gain humanity. O! If the Thus Gone One, perfect and rightfully enlightened is born in the world. O! I should associate that Blessed One. O! the Blessed One should teach me and I should know that Teaching.

Bhikkhus, I say this not hearing from another recluse or brahmin, this is what I have myself known and seen and so I say it.'

Then the Blessed One further said.

Those humans that are negligent, when blamed by the divine messengers

Are born in low births, there they grieve long

The appeased and worthy ones blamed by the divine messengers,

Are not negligent in the noble Teaching any day.

They see fear in holding, birth, death and being

And release themselves without holding, destroying birth and death

They are the appeased and pleasant, the extinguished here and now

Gone beyond all fear and revenge, have gone beyond all unpleasantness.