AN 2.17 — AN 2.17

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

17. Once, the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi came and approached The Blessed One, and after exchanging friendly greetings with Him, he sat down to one side. Then, he addressed The Blessed One by saying:

“Good Sir, Gautama, why is it that some beings, when their bodies no longer become sustainable, at the moment of death, find themselves taking birth in places of misery, in horrible and miserable states of existence, in the hells?”

“Brahmin, it is on account of things that they have done, and those things that they have not done, that when their bodies no longer become sustainable, once they die, beings find themselves taking birth in places of misery, in horrible and miserable states of existence, in the hells.”

“But, Good Sir, Gautama, why is it that with others, when their bodies no longer become sustainable, at the moment of death, they find themselves taking birth in places of ease and comfort, in happy and delightful states of existence, in the heavenly realms?”

“Brahmin, it is on account of things that they have done, and those things that they have not done, whereby those other beings, when their bodies no longer become sustainable, at the moment of death, find themselves taking birth in places of ease and comfort, in happy and delightful states of existence, in the heavenly realms.”

“Good Sir, Gautama, I must admit that I do not understand this explanation given to me in brief. Therefore, it would be wonderful if you could please explain it further, by clarifying what was just said, but in more detail.”

“Then, brahmin, listen carefully by paying close attention to what I shall say.”

“Yes, Sir,” replied the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi.

And The Blessed One continued instructing:

“Here, Brahmin, someone has lived without virtue by engaging in wrong intentional bodily actions that were damaging and harmful, while at the same time, not having done good and beneficial bodily actions. Similarly, he has engaged in wrong intentional speech and verbal actions that were damaging and harmful, while at the same time, not having engaged in good speech or beneficial verbal actions. And he has similarly engaged in wrong thinking and intentional mental actions that were damaging and harmful, while at the same time not having engaged in good thoughts or beneficial mental actions.

“So, you see, brahmin, it is on account of things that they have done, and those things that they have not done, that when their bodies no longer become sustainable, once they die, beings find themselves taking birth in places of misery, in horrible and miserable states of existence, in the hells.

“Meanwhile, brahmin, someone else has behaved virtuously by engaging in right intentional bodily actions that were beneficial, while at the same time not having done evil or damaging bodily actions. Similarly, he has already engaged in good intentional speech and verbal actions that were beneficial, while at the same time not having engaged in evil speech or damaging verbal actions. And he has similarly engaged in healthy thinking and good intentional mental actions that were beneficial, while at the same time not having engaged in evil thoughts or damaging mental actions.

“Here too, brahmin, you see that it is on account of things that they have done, and those things that they have not done, that when their bodies no longer become sustainable, once they die, beings find themselves taking birth in places of ease and comfort, in happy and delightful states of existence, in the heavenly realms.”

“It is marvelous! It truly is wonderful! Master Gautama has clarified The Dhamma in many ways, as though He placed upright what had been turned upside-down, revealing what was hidden, showing the correct path to one who was lost, holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see.

“Bhante, I go to The Blessed One for refuge, and to The Dhamma, and to The Sangha of Bhikkhus. May The Blessed One accept me as his lay disciple, who has taken refuge in Him from today until the end of life.”