Pv 19 — Dhanapāla Sutta: Wealthy Dhanapāla

English translation by Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery (Sutta Friends).

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Text

A group of merchants sees a ghost and questions him.

Merchant:

You are naked and very ugly, your veins are popping out. You thin person, with your ribs sticking out, who are you?

Dhanapāla (Ghost):

I am a ghost, sir. I am suffering in the world of Yama. I have done an evil deed as a human and have been reborn in the world of ghosts.

Merchant:

Now what evil deed have you done by body, speech, or mind for you to have been born in the world of ghosts?

Dhanapāla:

I was a wealthy merchant named Dhanapāla who lived in the city of Erakaccha, one of the Dasannās people. I possessed eighty cartloads of gold, and many others of pearls and precious stones.

Even though I was very rich, I did not give anything to anybody at all. I used to close the doors of my house when I was eating fearing that beggars would come to me. I was rude,

greedy, and insulted others. I did not believe in the Supreme Buddha.

I often tried to get in the way of people when they were giving alms by saying, “There is no result from giving. Nothing good comes from following precepts.” I destroyed lotus ponds, water pots, gardens, and bridges that were meant for the public.

The only deeds I did were evil ones. After my death, I was reborn in the world of ghosts, suffering from hunger and thirst. It has been forty five years since I left the human world. I do not remember ever having eaten food or having drunk water. This is the result of being greedy.

In the past, I was very foolish. I did not give anything even though I was rich, even though there were many opportunities to give. I did not collect merits for the protection of my future lives. Now I regret my previous evil actions.

Four months from now, I will die and fall to the very scary and terrible hell. That hell has four corners and four doors. It is divided into sections, surrounded by an iron wall and covered by an iron roof. Its iron floor is glowing with heat. Flames cover the area for hundreds of miles. I will experience pain there for a very long time as the result of my evil deeds. Because of this I am very sad.

Therefore, I warn all of you, do not commit evil deeds either openly or in secret, because you cannot escape their results, even if you fly up and run away.

Be respectful to your mother, father, elders in the family, as well as monks and ascetics. In this way, you will be reborn in heaven.