Pv 45 — Gaṇa Sutta: Large Group of Ghosts

English translation by Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery (Sutta Friends).

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Text

Moggallana Bhante:

You are naked, very thin, and ugly. Your rib bones are pressing against your skin. Who are you?

Ghost:

Bhante, we are ghosts. When we were in the human world, we did evil deeds. After death we were reborn in this ghost world and now suffer very much.

Moggallana Bhante:

What evil did you do by body, speech and mind to have come to this ghost world?

Ghosts:

There were many virtuous people and opportunities for collecting merits but we did not give anything. Now we have been roaming for half a month suffering from thirst.

When we feel very thirsty, we go to the river to drink. When we get close to it, the water appears as if it has dried up and all that is left is dry sand. When we are scorched by the sun, we go to the shade of a tree. Once we get there the shade disappears and the sun beats down.

A wind like fire blows and burns us. But we deserve this because we have done lots of evil deeds in our previous life. We are overcome by hunger. We travel many miles searching for food but we cannot find any. We faint and fall on the ground on our backs. Other times we fall face down. We hit our own heads and chests with frustration. Alas, this is our lack of merit. But we deserve this and other more terrible results than this. When we were rich, we did not give anything to others. We did not collect any merit.

Once we escape from this ghost world and are reborn in the human world we hope that we will be generous and virtuous. We must do many wholesome deeds.