Ud 4.4 — The Spirit's Blow

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Text

Heartfelt Sayings 4.4

The Spirit's Blow

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground. At that time the venerables Sāriputta and Moggallāna were staying near the pigeons' alcove. Now at that time Venerable Sāriputta was sitting outdoors in the moonlight, his head freshly shaven, having entered a certain state of immersion.

Now at that time two native spirits who were friends were on their way from the north to the south on some business. They saw Sāriputta meditating there. One of the spirits said to the other, "I feel inspired, my dear, to give this ascetic a blow on the head!" The other spirit replied, "Enough, my dear, don't hit the ascetic! That is an eminent ascetic, powerful and mighty!"

For a second time the first spirit said to the other, "I feel inspired to give this ascetic a blow on the head!" For a second time, the other spirit replied, "Enough, don't hit the ascetic! That is an eminent ascetic, powerful and mighty!" For a third time the first spirit said to the other, "I feel inspired to give this ascetic a blow on the head!" For a third time, the other spirit replied, "Enough, don't hit the ascetic! That is an eminent ascetic, powerful and mighty!"

Ignoring his friend, the first spirit struck Sāriputta. The blow was so strong it would have felled a bull elephant seven or seven and a half cubits tall, or split apart a great mountain peak. But then the spirit, crying out, "I burn, I burn!" fell into the Great Hell right there.

With clairvoyance that is purified and superhuman, Venerable Moggallāna saw that spirit striking Venerable Sāriputta. He approached him and said, "I hope you're keeping well, reverend, I hope you're all right. I hope you are not in pain." "I am keeping well, Reverend Moggallāna; but my head does hurt a little."

"It's incredible, Reverend Sāriputta, it's amazing! How mighty and powerful is Venerable Sāriputta! Just now, a native spirit struck you on the head. The blow was so strong it would have felled a bull elephant seven or seven and a half cubits tall, or split apart a great mountain peak. Yet you say, 'I am keeping well, Reverend Moggallāna; but my head does hurt a little.'"

"It's incredible, Reverend Moggallāna, it's amazing! How mighty and powerful is Venerable Moggallāna, in that he can even see a native spirit! Whereas I can't even see a mud-goblin

right now.”

With clairaudience that is purified and superhuman, the Buddha heard that discussion between those two spiritual giants.

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha expressed this heartfelt sentiment:

“One whose mind is like a rock,

steady, never shaking,

free of desire for desirable things,

not getting annoyed when things are annoying:

from where will suffering strike one

whose mind is developed like this?”