SN 3.21 — SN 3:21 Persons | Puggala Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

Persons

Puggala Sutta (SN 3:21)

Near Sāvatthī. Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Great king, there are these four types of people to be found existing in the world. Which four? One in darkness who is headed for darkness, one in darkness who is headed for light, one in light who is headed for darkness, and one in light who is headed for light.

“And how is one the type of person in darkness who is headed for darkness? There is the case where a person is born into a lower class family—the family of a scavenger, a hunter, a basket-weaver, a wheelwright, or a sweeper—a family that is poor, with little food or

drink, living in hardship, where food & clothing are hard to come by. And he is ugly, misshapen, stunted, & sickly: half-blind or deformed or lame or crippled. He doesn't receive any (gifts of) food, drink, clothing, or vehicles; garlands, perfumes, or ointments; bedding, shelter, or lamps. He engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

"Just as if a person were to go from obscurity to obscurity, from darkness to darkness, from a blood stain to a blood stain: This person, I tell you, is similar to that. This is the type of person in darkness who is headed for darkness.

"And how is one the type of person in darkness who is headed for light? There is the case where a person is born into a lower class family—the family of a scavenger, a hunter, a basket-weaver, a wheelwright, or a sweeper—a family that is poor, with little food or drink, living in hardship, where food & clothing are hard to come by. And he is ugly, misshapen, stunted, & sickly: half-blind or deformed or lame or crippled. He doesn't receive any (gifts of) food, drink, clothing, or vehicles; garlands, perfumes, or ointments; bedding, shelter, or lamps. He engages in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct. Having engaged in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world.

"Just as if a person were to ascend from the ground to a platform, or from a platform to horseback, or from horseback to an elephant's shoulder, or from an elephant's shoulder to a palace: This person, I tell you, is similar to that. This is the type of person in darkness who is headed for light.

"And how is one the type of person in light who is headed for darkness? There is the case where a person is born into an upper class family—a noble warrior family, a brahman family, a prosperous householder family—a family that is rich, with much wealth, with many possessions, with a great deal of money, a great many accoutrements of wealth, a great many commodities. And he is well-built, handsome, extremely inspiring, endowed with a lotus-like complexion. He receives (gifts of) food, drink, clothing, & vehicles; garlands, perfumes, & ointments; bedding, shelter, & lamps. He engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

"Just as if a person were to descend from a palace to an elephant's shoulder, or from an elephant's shoulder to horseback, or from horseback to a platform, or from a platform to the ground, or from the ground into an underground obscurity: This person, I tell you, is similar to that. This is the type of person in light who is headed for darkness.

"And how is one the type of person in light who is headed for light? There is the case where a person is born into an upper class family—a noble warrior family, a brahman family, a

prosperous householder family—a family that is rich, with much wealth, with many possessions, with a great deal of money, a great many accoutrements of wealth, a great many commodities. And he is well-built, handsome, extremely inspiring, endowed with a lotus-like complexion. He receives (gifts of) food, drink, clothing, & vehicles; garlands, perfumes, & ointments; bedding, shelter, & lamps. He engages in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct. Having engaged in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world.

"Just as if a person were to cross over from a platform to a platform, or from horseback to horseback, or from an elephant's shoulder to an elephant's shoulder, or from a palace to a palace: This person, I tell you, is similar to that. This is the type of person in light who is headed for light.

"These, great king, are the four types of people to be found existing in the world."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-gone, the Teacher, said further:

"A poor person, O king,

without conviction, stingy, mean,

with

evil resolves,

wrong views,

disrespectful,

who abuses & reviles

contemplatives,

brahmans,

& other mendicants,

a nihilist, a cynic,

who hinders those giving food

to those begging:

Such a person, when dying, O king,

goes, O lord of people,

to a terrible hell:

From darkness headed to darkness.

A poor person, O king,
of conviction, not stingy,
gives—with the best resolves,
a man of unscattered heart—to
contemplatives,
brahmans,
& other mendicants,
Standing up, he bows down
and trains in polite conduct.
He doesn’t thwart those giving food
to those begging:
Such a person, when dying, O king,
goes, O lord of people,
to the triple heaven:
From darkness headed to light.

A rich person, O king,
without conviction, stingy, mean,
with
evil resolves,
wrong views,
disrespectful,
who abuses & reviles
contemplatives,
brahmans,
& other mendicants,
a nihilist, a cynic,
who hinders those giving food
to those begging:
Such a person, when dying, O king,

goes, O lord of people,

to a terrible hell:

From light headed to darkness.

A rich person, O king,

of conviction, not stingy,

gives—with the best resolves,

a man of unscattered heart—to

contemplatives,

brahmans,

& other mendicants,

Standing up, he bows down

and trains in polite conduct.

He doesn’t thwart those giving food

to those begging:

Such a person, when dying, O king,

goes, O lord of people,

to the triple heaven:

From light headed to light.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 135; SN 11:14; AN 7:6–7; AN 8:22; AN 10:176; Ud 5:3; Thag 12:2