SN 4.23 — With Godhika

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Text

Linked Discourses 4.23

3. Māra

With Godhika

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the squirrels' feeding ground.

Now at that time Venerable Godhika was staying on the slopes of Isigili at the Black Rock. Then Venerable Godhika, meditating diligent, keen, and resolute, experienced temporary freedom of heart. But then he fell away from that temporary freedom of heart. For a second … third … fourth … fifth … sixth time Godhika experienced temporary freedom of heart. But for a sixth time he fell away from it. For a seventh time Godhika, meditating diligent, keen, and resolute, experienced temporary freedom of heart.

Then he thought, "I've fallen away from this temporary freedom of heart no less than six times. Why don't I commit suicide?"

And then Māra the Wicked, knowing Godhika's train of thought, went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:

"O great hero, O greatly wise!

Shining with power and glory.

You've gone beyond all enmities and fears,

I bow to your feet, O Clear-eyed One!

Great hero, master of death,

your disciple longs for death,

he's planning for it.

Stop him, O light-bringer!

For Blessed One, renowned among men,

your disciple who loves your teaching,

a trainee who hasn't achieved their heart's desire—

how can they kill themselves?”

Now at that time Venerable Godhika had already committed suicide.

Then the Buddha, knowing that this was Māra the Wicked, addressed him in verse:

“This is how the attentive act,

for they don’t long for life.

Having plucked out craving, root and all,

Godhika is quenched.”

Then the Buddha said to the mendicants, “Come, mendicants, let’s go to the Black Rock on the slopes of Isigili where Godhika, who came from a good family, committed suicide.”

“Yes, sir,” they replied.

Then the Buddha together with several mendicants went to the Black Rock on the slopes of Isigili. The Buddha saw Godhika off in the distance on his cot, lying with aggregates cast off.

Now at that time a cloud of black smoke was moving east, west, north, south, above, below, and in-between.

Then the Buddha said to the mendicants,

“Mendicants, do you see that cloud of black smoke moving east, west, north, south, above, below, and in-between?”

“Yes, sir.”

“That’s Māra the Wicked searching for Godhika’s consciousness, wondering: ‘Where is Godhika’s consciousness established?’ But since his consciousness is not established, Godhika is quenched.”

Then Māra, carrying his arched harp made from the pale timber of wood-apple, went up to the Buddha and addressed him in verse:

“Above, below, all round,

in the four quarters and in-between,

I’ve been searching without success:

where has that Godhika got to?”

“He was an attentive and steadfast sage,

a meditator who loved absorption.

By day and by night he applied himself,

without concern for his life.

He defeated the army of death,
and won’t return for any future life.
Having plucked out craving, root and all
Godhika is quenched.”
So stricken with sorrow
that his harp dropped from his armpit,
that spirit, downcast,
vanished right there.