SN 11.3 — Dhajagga Sutta: The Top of the Standard

English translation by Thanissaro 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

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. There he addressed the monks, "Monks!"

"Yes, lord," the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, "Monks, once the devas & asuras were arrayed for battle. Then Sakka, the chief of the devas, addressed the devas of the Thirty-three: 'If, dear sirs, when the devas have gone into battle, there should arise fear, terror, or horripilation, then on that occasion you should catch sight of the top of my standard. For when you have caught sight of the top of my standard, whatever fear, terror, or horripilation there is will be abandoned.

"'If you can't catch sight of the top of my standard, then you should catch sight of the top of the deva-king Pajapati's standard. For when you have caught sight of the top of the deva-king Pajapati's standard, whatever fear, terror, or horripilation there is will be abandoned.

"'If you can't catch sight of the top of the deva-king Pajapati's standard, then you should catch sight of the top of the deva-king Varuna's standard. For when For when you have caught sight of the top of the deva-king Varuna's standard, whatever fear, terror, or horripilation there is will be abandoned.

"'If you can't catch sight of the top of the deva-king Varuna's standard, then you should catch sight of the top of the deva-king Isana's standard. For when you have caught sight of the top of the deva-king Isana's standard, whatever fear, terror, or horripilation there is will be abandoned.'

"But, monks, when the top of the deva-chief Sakka's standard is caught sight of, or when the top of the deva-king Pajapati's standard is caught sight of, or when the top of the deva-king Varuna's standard is caught sight of, or when the top of the deva-king Isana's standard is caught sight of, whatever fear, terror, or horripilation there is may be abandoned or may not be abandoned. Why is that? Because Sakka the chief of the devas is not devoid of passion, not devoid of aversion, not devoid of delusion. He feels fear, feels terror, feels dread. He runs away.

"But I tell you this: If — when you have gone into the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building — there should arise fear, terror, or horripilation, then on that occasion you should recollect me: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed.' For when you have recollected me, whatever fear, terror, or horripilation there is will be abandoned.

"If you can't recollect me, then you should recollect the Dhamma: 'The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be realized by the wise for themselves.' For when you have recollected the Dhamma, whatever fear, terror, or horripilation there is will be abandoned.

"If you can't recollect the Dhamma, then you should recollect the Sangha: 'The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straight-forwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced masterfully — in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types [1] — they are the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples: worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect, the unexcelled field of merit for the world.' For when you have recollected the Sangha, whatever fear, terror, or horripilation where is will be abandoned. Why is that? Because the Tathagata — worthy & rightly self-awakened — is devoid of passion, devoid of aversion, devoid of delusion. He feels no fear, feels no terror, feels no dread. He doesn't run away."

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

In the wilderness, in the shade of a tree, in an empty building, monks, recollect the Buddha. Your fear won't exist. If you can't recall the Buddha — best in the world, the bull of men — then you should recall the Dhamma: leading outward, well-taught. If you can't recall the Dhamma — leading outward, well-taught — then you should recall the Sangha: the field of merit unexcelled. When thus recalling the Buddha, Dhamma, & Sangha, monks, there'll be no horripilation, terror, or fear.

Notes

1.

The four pairs are (1) the person on the path to stream-entry, the person experiencing the fruit of stream-entry; (2) the person on the path to once-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of once-returning; (3) the person on the path to non-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of non-returning; (4) the person on the path to arahantship, the person experiencing the fruit of arahantship. The eight individuals are the eight types forming these four pairs.