SN 42.3 — SN 42:3 To Yodhājīva (The Professional Warrior) | Yodhājīva Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

To Yodhājīva (The Professional Warrior)

Yodhājīva Sutta (SN 42:3)

Then Yodhājīva (Professional Warrior) the headman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors that ‘When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.’ What does the Blessed One have to say about that?”

“Enough, headman, put that aside. Don’t ask me that.”

A second time… A third time Yodhājīva the headman said: “Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors that ‘When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.’ What does the Blessed One have to say about that?”

“Apparently, headman, I haven’t been able to get past you by saying, ‘Enough, headman, put that aside. Don’t ask me that.’ So I will simply answer you. When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, his mind is already seized, debased, & misdirected by the thought: ‘May these beings be struck down or slaughtered or annihilated or destroyed. May they not exist.’ If others then strike him down & slay him while he is thus striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the hell called the realm of those slain in battle. But if he holds such a view as this: ‘When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle,’ that is his wrong view. Now, there are two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb.”

When this was said, Yodhājīva the headman sobbed & burst into tears. (The Blessed One said:) “That is what I couldn’t get past you by saying, ‘Enough, headman, put that aside. Don’t ask me that.’”

“I’m not crying, venerable sir, because of what the Blessed One said to me, but simply because I have been deceived, cheated, & fooled for a long time by that ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors who said: ‘When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.’

“Magnificent, venerable sir! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 135; SN 3:14-15; AN 5:117; Dhp 129–134; Sn 4:15