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Niraya,sagga Sutta 1

Paṭhama Niraya,sagga Sutta The 1st Hell and Heaven Discourse | A 10.200 [Be A 10.211]

Theme: Bad karma creates hell, good karma heaven

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2020

1 Introduction

1.1 The Niraya,sagga Sutta 1 (A 10.200) is a short “dedicated” text on the 10 courses of karma (*kamma,-patha*), on how habitually creating such a bad course of karma (*akusala kamma,patha*) [§1] makes us become such negative states “as it were, carried away and cast into hell.” And how, habitually cultivating the good course of karma (*kusala kamma,patha*) [§2], we become those happy states, “as it were, carried away and cast into heaven.”

1.2 Both the Niraya,sagga Sutta 1 (A 10.200) and **the Niraya,sagga Sutta 2** (A 10.201), SD 57.30, are recorded in the extant Pali manuscripts (Be, Ce, Ee, Se) as being identical. The only difference is that the text of the Niraya,sagga Sutta 2 is abridged. The Commentary, too, is silent on the first 5 suttas of the Karajakāya Vagga, only stating that their meaning is clear.¹ The Subcommentary, too, is silent.

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Niraya,sagga Sutta 1

The 1st Hell and Heaven Discourse

A 10.200

The 10 courses of unwholesome karma

1 “Bhikshus, possessing 10 qualities, one is, as it were, carried away and cast into hell.² What are the ten?”³

UNWHOLESOME BODILY KARMA

(1) Here, bhikshus, a certain person is one **who destroys living beings**, cruel, bloody-handed, given to cruelty and violence, merciless to all living beings.⁴

¹ *Pañcamassa paṭham’ādāni uttān’atthan’eva*, “Of the 5 beginning with the 1st, their meanings are clear.” (AA 5:75,29).

² “As it were, carried away and cast into hell,” *yathā,bhataṃ nikkhitto evaṃ niraye*. This phrase recurs often in **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,21), in the hell refrains (SD 49.1).

³ These 2 sets of the 10 courses of karma (*kamma,patha*) recur in **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,11-14), SD 5.7, and **Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206,7.2-12), SD 3.9.

⁴ *Idha gahapatayo ekacco pāṇātipātī hoti, luddo lohita,pāṇi hata-p,pahate niviṭṭho adayāpanno sabba,pāṇa,bhūtesu*. [*Sabba-* omitted in M 41 and other M readings.] In this section on the “unwholesome courses of action” (*akusala kamma,patha*), only the negative precepts are listed. Their positive counterparts are listed in §§12-14 below. For a fuller listing of the precepts, follow the “golden rule” or “the threefold purity,” see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7,6-12/5:353-355) & SD 1.5 (2), which however list only the 3 bodily actions and the 4 speeches, omitting the 3 courses of *mental* actions (which are listed here in full).

(2) He is one who takes **the not-given**:

in a village or in a forest,⁵ he takes by way of theft, the possessions of others that are of service to them.⁶

(3) He is one who commits **sexual misconduct**:

falling into such a conduct with those under the care of their mother, under the care of their father, [under the care of their parents,] under the care of their brother, under the care of their sister, under the care of a relative, protected by dharma, one with a husband, one protected by law,⁷ even with one adorned with a string of garlands (in betrothal to another).⁸

UNWHOLESOME VERBAL KARMA

(4) He is one who speaks **falsehood**.

When questioned as a witness before a council, before a congregation, in the midst of relatives, in the midst of a guild [a company], in the midst of the royal court [a court of law] and questioned thus: ‘Come now, man,⁹ tell us what you know!’

Not knowing, he says he knows, or knowing, he says he knows not;

having not seen, he says he saw, or having seen, he says he did not see—

consciously lying thus for his own sake, for the sake of others, or for some small material¹⁰ gain.

(5) He is one who **speaks divisively**.

What he has heard here (from others), he repeats it there (to others) to divide them;

what he has heard there, he repeats it here to divide them—

thus he divides the united, who encourages the divided (to remain so) [rejoicing in division];

being pleased at discord,¹¹ enjoying discord, delighting in discord, saying words conducive to discord.¹²

(6) He is one who **speaks harshly**.

He utters words that are rough, hard, hurting to others, offensive to others, connected with anger,¹³ inconducive to mental concentration.

(7) He is one who **chatters frivolously** [utters useless talk].

He speaks at the wrong time, speaks what is untrue, speaks what is unbeneficial,

⁵ “In a village or in a forest,” *gāma, gataṃ vā araṇṇa’gataṃ va*, lit “gone to the village or gone to the forest.”

⁶ *Adinn’ādāyī hoti, yan taṃ parassa para, vittūpakaṛaṇaṃ gāma, gataṃ vā araṇṇa, gataṃ vā, taṃ adinnaṃ theyya, saṅkhātāṃ ādātā hoti.*

⁷ Comy: *Yo itthan, nāmaṃ itthiṃ gacchati, tassa ettako daṇḍo’ti evaṃ gāmaṃ vā gehaṃ vā vīthiṃ vā uddissa thapita, daṇḍā, pana saparidaṇḍā nāma*, “This penalty is placed in connection with a village, house or street, thus: ‘Whoever goes to such and such a woman gets such a penalty’—this is called *sa, paridaṇḍā* (MA 2:330). This apparently refers to where prostitution is illegal. In modern terms, this rule also covers “wards of the court,” ie, minors involved in some kind of legal process or adjudication.

⁸ *Kāmesu micchā, cārī hoti, yā tā mātu, rakkhitā pitu, rakkhitā bhātu, rakkhitā, bhagini, rakkhitā ñāti, rakkhitā sa-dhamma, rakkhitā s, sāmikā sa, paridaṇḍā antamaso mālā, guṇa, parirakkhitā pi.* These “protected women” are listed as 10 in the Vinaya: *mātā, rakkhitā, pitu, rakkhitā, mātā, pitu, rakkhitā, bhātura, rakkhitā, bhagini, rakkhitā, ñāti, rakkhitā, gotta, rakkhitā* (those under the care of the clan), *dhamma, rakkhitā* (those protected by custom)—the preceding refer to “minors”—*sārakkhā* (those “under (natural) protection,” ie, the betrothed [*mālā, guṇa, parirakkhitā*] and married women [*sa-s, sāmikā*], incl women of the royal harem), *sa, paridaṇḍā* (V 3:139). The “one with a husband” and “one who has been garlanded in betrothal to another” of Sāleyyaka S come under the category of *sārakkhā* in the Vinaya. On *sa, paridaṇḍā*, see prec n.

⁹ Reading *eh’ambho purisa* (for text’s *evaṃ bho puriso*), as at **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114, 6.4/3:48), SD 39.8.

¹⁰ “Material,” *āmisā*, alt tr “worldly.”

¹¹ “Discord,” *vagga*, fr *vi-agga* (Skt *vyagra*) opp of *sāmagga*, “concord.” See M 1:286; It 11 = V 2:205.

¹² On dealing with slander, see eg **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1, 1.5/1:4).

¹³ “Connected with anger,” *kodha, sāmantā*, adv of (adj) *samanta*, “all around.”

speaks what is not the teaching, what is not the discipline;
 he speaks words not worth treasuring,
 spoken out of time, poorly reasoned,
 undefined [rambling], unconnected with the goal.¹⁴ [284]

UNWHOLESOME MENTAL KARMA

(8) He is one who is **covetous**.

He covets the possessions of others that are of service to them, thinking,
 ‘Oh, may what belongs to others become mine!’

(9) He is one with a mind of **ill will** and intentions of hate thus:

‘May these beings be slain, slaughtered, cut off, destroyed, or annihilated!’

(10) He is one who holds **wrong view**, with distorted vision, thinking thus:¹⁵

‘There is nothing given,¹⁶ nothing offered, nothing sacrificed.

There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions.¹⁷

There is no this world, there is no next world;¹⁸

there is no mother, no father;¹⁹

there are no spontaneously born beings.²⁰

There are no recluses or brahmins who, living rightly and practising rightly, having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them.’²¹

One possessing these 10 qualities is, as it were, carried away and cast into hell.

¹⁴ “Unconnected with the goal,” ie, unrelated to the goal of cultivating moral virtue, of mental cultivation, of wisdom, and of liberation.

¹⁵ In **Sāmañña,phala S**, this view is attributed to Ajita Kesakambalī, the hair-blanket ascetic (D 2.23/1:55). He wore a cloak of human hair. His materialist view is answered in **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,5-12 = 1:401-404). Medhātithi, defining *haitukā* /at Manu 4.30 (*The Principal Upaniads*, ed S Radhakrishnan, 1:243) asserts that the *nāstikas* (who reject the establish brahminical system) upheld the doctrines of *nāsti para,loko nāsti dattam nāsti hutam iti* (“there is no hereafter [next world], no value in giving, no value in sacrifice”), which does not *n’atthi ayam loko*, as in the Buddhist formula. For a discussion, see **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1), SD 25.1(VII) n on “no next world” in qu on Ajita Kesambala (from **Sāmañña,phala S**). For commentaries on such wrong views, see Bodhi 1989:69-86 (on **Sāmañña,phala S**, D 2).

¹⁶ “There is nothing given,” *n’atthi dinnam*. MA 2:332 = DA 165 says that this means there is no fruit of (or no value in) giving. Cf D 1:55; M 1:401, 515; S 3:206.

¹⁷ This is essentially a rejection of karma or accountability for our actions (*akiriya,vāda*), implying antinomianism and amoralism, as in the ideas of Pūraṇa Kassapa: see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,16/1:52), SD 8.10.

¹⁸ “There is no this world, there is no next world.” On the problem of associating these two differing views to Ajita Kesambala, see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.22-24/1:55 f), SD 8. See Jayatilleke 1963:79 f, 91 f. Comys explain that “(a) ‘there is no this world’ means that when one is established in the next world, this world does not exist; (b) ‘there is no next world’ means that when one is established in this world, the next world does not exist.” (MA 2:332 = DA 1:165). Deeds done in such a deterministic system would not carry over into the afterlife, even if this view concedes to a hereafter.

¹⁹ “There is no father, no mother.” Comys explain “there is no fruit of good or of bad behaviour (towards them)” (MA 2:332=DA 1:165).

²⁰ *Opapātika*, said of the rebirth of a non-returner, but here also refers to all divine and hell beings. This is essentially a rejection of rebirth, implying that this is our only life, a kind of materialism. See **Mahāli S** (D 1:27, 156).

²¹ Comy: This last statement is the view that there are no “all-knowing” (*sabbaññū*) Buddhas (MA 2:322), in other words, the view that awakening is impossible.

The 10 courses of wholesome karma

2 Bhikshus, possessing 10 qualities, one is, as it were, carried away and cast into **heaven**.
What are the ten?

WHOLESOME BODILY KARMA

(1) Here, bhikshus, a certain person,
having given up killing living beings, refrains from harming living beings,
lays down rod and sword,
conscientious, merciful, dwells beneficial and compassionate to all living beings.²²

(2) *Having given up taking the not-given, he refrains from taking what is not given.*
He does not steal the wealth and property of others in the village or in the forest.

(3) *Having given up sexual misconduct, he refrains from sexual misconduct*
not falling into such a conduct with those under the care of their mother, under the care of their father,
[under the care of their parents,] under the care of their brother, under the care of their sister,
under the care of relatives,²³ [protected by dharma,]²⁴ one with a husband, a protected woman,
not even with one adorned with a string of garlands [in betrothal to another].

WHOLESOME VERBAL KARMA

(4) *Having given up speaking falsehood, refrains from speaking falsehood—*
when questioned as a witness before a council, before a congregation, in the midst of relatives, in
the midst of a guild [or company], in the midst of the royal court [a court of law]
and questioned thus: ‘Come now, man,²⁵ tell us what you know!’
Not knowing, he says he knows not, or knowing, he says he knows;
having not seen, he says he did not see, or having seen, he says he saw—
not consciously telling a lie thus for his own sake, for the sake of others, or (even) for some
small material gain. [285]

(5) *Having given up divisive speech, he refrains from divisive speech—*
what he has heard here (from others), he does not repeat it there (to others) to divide them;
what he has heard there, he does not repeat it here to divide them—
thus he is one who unites the disunited,
or who discourages the divided (from remaining so) [not rejoicing in division];
he is pleased at concord, enjoying concord, delighting in concord, saying words conducive to concord.

(6) *Having given up harsh speech, he refrains from harsh speech—*
he utters words that are blameless, pleasant to the ear, touching the heart,
urbane, loved by the masses, pleasant to the masses.

(7) *Having given up frivolous talk, he refrains from frivolous talk—*
he speaks at the right time,²⁶ speaks what is true, speaks what is beneficial,²⁷

²² *Idha gahapatayo ekacco pānātipātāṃ pahāya pānātipātā paṭivirato hoti, nihita,daṇḍo nihita,sattho lajjī dayā-panno sabba,pāṇa,bhūta,hitānukampī viharati.*

²³ Elsewhere, eg **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114), “under the care of the clan” (*gotta,rakkkhita*) is seen here (M 114,5.7/3:47), SD 39.8.

²⁴ Listed elsewhere, eg **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114), “protected by law [dharma]” (*dhamma,rakkkhita*) (M 114,5.4/3:46), SD 39.8.

²⁵ Reading *eh’ambho purisa* (for text’s *evam bho puriso*), as at **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114,6.7/3:48), SD 39.8.

²⁶ *Kāla,vādī ... bhāsītā hoti kālena.* Here, *kāla-* means “befitting the occasion,” while *kālena* means “in time,” ie neither too early nor too late. However, *bhāsītā hoti* qualifies *nidhāna,vādī* (preceding it) as the 7th course of good karma—as *nidhāna,vādī bhāsītā hoti*—at D 3:269, 290; M 1:287; A 5:266, 275-278.

speaks what is the teaching,²⁸ what is the discipline;²⁹
 he speaks words worth treasuring, spoken in time,
 well-reasoned, well-defined [not rambling], connected with the goal.³⁰

WHOLESOME MENTAL KARMA

(8) **He is not covetous**—

he covets not the possessions of others that are of service to them, thinking,
 ‘Oh, may what belongs to others become mine!’

(9) **He is one without a malevolent mind**, *a mind without wicked thoughts*,
 thinking, ‘May these beings be free from hate! May they be free from suffering!
 May they be free from woe [trouble]!’³¹ May they continue to be happy!’³²

(10) **He is one who has right view**, *without distorted vision*, thinking thus:
 ‘There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed.

There is fruit and result of good or bad actions.

There is this world, there is the next world.

There is mother, there is father.

There are beings that are reborn.

There are recluses and brahmins who, living rightly and practising rightly,
 having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them.’

One possessing these 10 qualities is, as it were, carried away and cast into heaven.”

paṭhamam

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²⁷ *Bhūta, vādī attha, vādī*. Comy glosses *attha, vādī*, as that he speaks about what is connected with the spiritual goal here and now, and hereafter (MA 2:208; DA 1:76). However, here, I have rendered *attha* as “the beneficial, the good (incl the goal),” which fits the flow of ideas better. As *attha* (as “goal”) appears at the end of this stock passage, I have rendered this closing word as “the goal,” which seems more fitting.

²⁸ He speaks on the 9 supramundane things (*nava lok’uttara, dhamma*) (MA 2:208 = DA 1:76), ie the 4 paths, 4 fruitions, nirvana (Dhs 1094).

²⁹ *Dhamma, vādī vinaya, vādī*. The disciplines of restraint (*saṃvara*) (of the senses) and of letting go (*pahāna*) (of defilements) (MA 2:208 = DA 1:76). We can also connect *attha, vādī* (in the prec line) here, as alt have “He speaks on meanings, he speaks on teachings, he speaks on the discipline.”

³⁰ *Nidhāna, vatim vācam bhāsītā kālena sâpadesam pariyanta, vatim attha, samhitam*. *Pariyanta, vati* means “within limits, well defined.” On “the goal” (*attha*), see n on “speaks on the beneficial” above here.

³¹ “Be free of woe,” *anīgha*, resolved as *an + īgha*, instead of *a + nigha* (affliction, trouble, woe). The ideas connoted by *a-nigha* overlap with the preceding “free from hate, free from suffering.”

³² *Ime sattā averā abyāpajjhā anīghā sukhī attānam pariharantu*. Cf A 2:3, 228, 253.