

# **In the Buddha's Words**

## **by Bhikkhu Bodhi**

### **Selected Discourses I, 1: Old Age, Illness and Death**

- (1) Aging and Death [SN3:3]
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## **1. Introductory Note**

### **By Victor Gunasekara**

With this *Guide to Sutta Study* we will be commencing our consideration of the anthology of discourses from the Pali Canon selected by Bhikkhu Bodhi and published under the title *In the Buddha's Words* (Wisdom Publications).

This Anthology is divided into 10 chapters, each chapter being divided into sections and sub-sections. In all over 150 discourses have been selected. There is a systematic progression throughout the 10 principal chapters, so it might be useful to consider them in sequential order. For each meeting of the Group one or more sub-sections will be selected. However we may skip sections which had already been considered when we went through the discourses of the Middle Length collection sequentially. Additional discourses not included in Bhikkhu Bodhi's Anthology may also be considered. The detailed Table of Contents of the Anthology can be seen on the webpage of the Group at [www.vgweb.org/sutta](http://www.vgweb.org/sutta).

Bhikkhu Bodhi has provided introductions to each of the Chapters in the Anthology and extracts from these introductions are also reproduced in the Guide.

## **2. Introduction to the Selected Discourses in Ch I, 1.**

### **By Bhikkhu Bodhi**

Like other religious teachings, the Buddha's teaching originates as a response to the strains at the heart of the human condition. What distinguishes his teaching from other religious approaches to the human condition is the directness, thoroughness, and uncompromising realism with which he looks at these strains. The Buddha does not offer us palliatives that leave the underlying maladies untouched beneath the surface; rather, he traces our existential illness down to its most fundamental causes, so persistent and destructive, and shows us how these can be totally uprooted. However, while the Dhamma will eventually lead to the wisdom that eradicates the causes of suffering, it does not begin there but with observations about the hard facts of everyday experience. Here too its directness, thoroughness, and tough realism are evident. The teaching begins by calling upon us to develop a faculty called *yoniso manasiUra*, careful attention. The Buddha asks us to stop drifting thoughtlessly through our lives and instead to pay careful attention to simple truths that are everywhere available to us, clamoring for the sustained consideration they deserve.

One of the most obvious and inescapable of these truths is also among the most difficult for us to fully acknowledge, namely, that we are bound to grow old, fall ill, and die. It is commonly assumed that the Buddha beckons

us to recognize the reality of old age and death in order to motivate us to enter the path of renunciation leading to Nibbana, complete liberation from the round of birth and death. However, while this may be his ultimate intention, it is not the first response he seeks to evoke in us when we turn to him for guidance. The initial response the Buddha intends to arouse in us is an ethical one. By calling our attention to our bondage to old age and death, he seeks to inspire in us a firm resolution to turn away from unwholesome ways of living and to embrace instead wholesome alternatives.

Again, the Buddha grounds his initial ethical appeal not only upon a compassionate feeling for other beings, but also upon our instinctive concern for our own long-term welfare and happiness. He tries to make us see that to act in accordance with ethical guidelines will enable secure our own well-being both now and in the long-term future. His argument hinges on the important premise that actions have consequences. If we are to alter our accustomed ways, we must be convinced of the validity of this principle. Specifically, to change from a stultifying way of life to one that is truly fruitful and inwardly rewarding, we must realize that our actions have consequences for ourselves, consequences that can rebound upon us both in this life and in subsequent lives.

The three suttas that constitute the first section of this chapter establish this point eloquently, each in its own way. Text 1,1(1) enunciates the inevitable law that all beings who have taken birth must undergo aging and death. Although at first glance the discourse seems to be stating a mere fact of nature, by citing as examples members of the upper strata of society (wealthy rulers, brahmins, and householders) and liberated arahants, it insinuates a subtle moral message into its words. Text 1,1(2) brings out this message more explicitly with its impressive simile of the mountain, which drives home the point that when “aging and death rolling in” on us, our task in life is to live righteously and do wholesome and meritorious deeds. The sutta on the “divine messengers” – Text 1,1(3) – establishes the corollary to this: when we fail to recognize “divine messengers” in our midst, when we miss the hidden warning signals of old age, illness, and death we become negligent and behave recklessly, creating unwholesome kamma with the potential to old dreadful consequences.

The realization that we are bound to grow old and die breaks the spell of infatuation cast over us by sensual pleasures, wealth, and power. It dispels the mist of confusion and motivates us to take fresh look of our purposes in life. We may not be ready to give up family and possessions for a life of homeless wandering and solitary meditation, but this is not an option the Buddha generally expects of his householder disciples. Rather, as we saw above, the first lesson he draws from the fact that our lives end in old age and death is an ethical one interwoven with the twin principles of kamma and rebirth. The law of kamma stipulates that our unwholesome and wholesome actions have consequences extending far beyond this present life: unwholesome actions lead to rebirth in states of misery and bring future pain and suffering; wholesome actions lead to a pleasant rebirth and bring future well-being and happiness. Since we have to grow old and die, we should be constantly aware that any present prosperity we might enjoy is merely temporary. We can enjoy it only as long as we are young and healthy; and when we die, our newly acquired kamma will gain the opportunity to ripen and bring forth its own results. We must then reap the due fruits of our deeds. With an eye to our long-term future welfare, we should scrupulously avoid evil deeds that result in suffering and diligently engage in wholesome deeds that generate happiness here and in future lives.

### **3. The Selected Discourses** **Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi**

#### **(1) Aging and Death [SN3:3]**

At Savatthi, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, is anyone who is born free from aging and death?”<sup>1</sup>

“Great king, no one who is born is free from aging and death. Even those affluent khattiyas – rich, with great wealth and property, with abundant gold and silver, abundant treasures and commodities, abundant wealth and grain

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1. King Pasenadi was the ruler of the state of Kosala, whose capital was Sāvattthī. Jetavana, the grove of Prince Jeta, was also known as Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park because it was purchased for the Buddha by the wealthy philanthropist, Anāthapiṇḍika. The Nikāyas depict Paenadi’s one of the Buddha’s most devoted lay followers, though they never show him as attaining any state of realization. An entire chapter of the Samyutta Nikāya – Kosalasamyutta (chapter 3) – records his conversations with the Buddha.

because they have been born, are not free from aging and death. Even those affluent brahmins ... affluent householders – rich ... with abundant wealth and grain – because they have been born, are not free from aging and death. Even those monks who are arahants, whose taints are destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal, utterly destroyed the fetters of existence, and are completely liberated through final knowledge: even for them this body is subject to breaking up, subject to being laid down?

“The beautiful chariots of kings wear out,  
This body too undergoes decay.  
But the Dhamma of the good does not decay:  
So the good proclaim along with the good.”<sup>2</sup>

(SN 33; 171 <163-64>)

## (2) The Simile of the Mountain [SN 3:25]

At Sāvattṭhī, in the middle of the day, King Pasenadi of Kosala approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, and sat down to one side. The Blessed One then asked him: “Now where are you coming from, great king, in the middle of the day?”

“Just now, venerable sir, I have been engaged in those affairs of kingship typical for kings who are intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty, who are obsessed by greed for sensual pleasures, who have attained stable control in their country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth.”

“What do you think, great king? Suppose a man would come to you from the east, one who is trustworthy and reliable, and would tell you: ‘For sure, great king, you should know this: I am coming from the east, and there I saw a great mountain high as the clouds coming this way, crushing all living beings. Do whatever you think should be done, great king.’ Then a second man would come to you from the west... a third man from the north ... and a fourth man from the south, one who is trustworthy and reliable, and would tell you: ‘For sure, great king, you should know this: I am coming from the south, and there I saw a great mountain high as the clouds coming this way, crushing all living beings. Do whatever you think should be done, great king.’ If, great king, such a great peril should arise, such a terrible destruction of human life, the human state being so difficult to obtain, what should be done?”

“If, venerable sir, such a great peril should arise, such a terrible destruction of human life, the human state being so difficult to obtain, what else should be done but to live by the Dhamma, to live righteously, and to do wholesome and meritorious deeds?”

“I inform you, great king, I announce to you, great king: aging and death are rolling in on you. When aging and death are rolling in on you, great king, what should be done?”

“As aging and death are rolling in on me, venerable sir, what else should be done but to live by the Dhamma, to live righteously, and to do wholesome and meritorious deeds?”

“Venerable sir, kings intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty, obsessed by greed for sensual pleasures, who have attained stable control in their country and rule over a great sphere of territory, conquer by means of elephant battles, cavalry battles, chariot battles, and infantry battles; but there is no hope of victory by such battles, no chance of success, when aging and death are rolling in. In this royal court, venerable sir, there are counselors who, when the enemies arrive, are capable of dividing them by subterfuge; but there is no hope of victory by subterfuge, no chance of success, when aging and death are rolling in. In this royal court, venerable sir, there exists abundant bullion and gold stored in vaults and lofts, and with such wealth we are capable of mollifying the enemies when they come but there is no hope of victory by wealth, no chance of success, when aging and death are rolling in. As aging and death are rolling in on me, venerable sir, what else should I do but live by the Dhamma, live righteously, and do wholesome and meritorious deeds?”

“So it is, great king! So it is, great king! As aging and death are rolling in on you, what else should you do but live by the Dhamma, live righteously, and do wholesome and meritorious deeds?”

This is what the Blessed One said. Having said this, the Fortunate One, the Teacher, further said this:

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2. When speaking of the arahant, the Buddha does not describe his destiny as “aging and death”, but as a mere breaking up and discarding of the body. This is because the arahant, being free from all notions of “I” and “mine”, does not conceive the decay and dissolution of the body as the ageing and death of an “I”.

“Just as mountains of solid rock,  
Massive, reaching to the sky,  
Might draw together from all sides,  
Crushing all in the four quarters  
So aging and death come  
Rolling over living beings–

“Khattiyas, brahmins, vessas, suddas,  
Outcasts and scavengers:  
They spare none along the way  
But come crushing everything.

“There’s no hope there for victory  
By elephant troops, chariots, and infantry.  
One can’t defeat them by subterfuge,  
Or buy them off by means of wealth.

“Therefore a person of wisdom here,  
Out of regard for his own good,  
Steadfast, should settle faith  
In the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.

“When one conducts oneself by Dhamma  
With body, speech, and mind,  
They praise one here in the present life,  
And after death one rejoices in heaven.”

(SN 3:25;1100-102 <224-29>)

### (3) The Divine Messengers [AN 3:35]

“There are, monks, three divine messengers.<sup>3</sup> What three?

“There is a person of bad conduct in body, speech, and mind. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he is reborn in the plane of misery, in a bad destination, in a lower world, in hell. There the warders of hell seize him by both arms and take him before Yama, the Lord of Death,<sup>4</sup> saying: ‘This man, your majesty, had no respect for father and mother, nor for ascetics and brahmins, nor did he honor the elders of the family. May your majesty inflict due punishment on him!’

“Then, monks, King Yama questions that man, examines him, and addresses him concerning the first divine messenger: ‘Didn’t you ever see, my good man, the first divine messenger appearing among humankind?’

“And he replies: ‘No, Lord, I did not see him.’

“Then King Yama says to him: ‘But, my good man, didn’t you ever see a woman or a man, eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old, frail, bent like a roof bracket, crooked, leaning on a stick, shakily going along, ailing, youth and vigor gone, with broken teeth, with gray and scanty hair or bald, wrinkled, with blotched limbs?’

“And the man replies: ‘Yes, Lord, I have seen this.’

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3. *Devadūta*. According to legend, while the Bodhisatta was still a prince living in the palace, he encountered an old man, a sick man, and a corpse, sights he had never seen before. These encounters shattered his worldly complacency and stirred him to seek a way to liberation from suffering. The commentaries say that these three figures were deities in disguise sent to awaken the Bodhisatta to his mission. Hence old age, illness and death are called “divine messengers”.

4. Yama the legendary god of the underworld, who passes judgement on the dead and assigns them to their future destiny. According to some accounts he does so merely by holding before the dead spirits a mirror which reflects back their good and bad deeds.

“Then King Yama says to him: ‘My good man, didn’t it ever occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, “I too am subject to old age and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind”?’

“No, Lord, I could not do it. I was negligent.’

“Then King Yama says: ‘Through negligence, my good man, you have failed to do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind. Well, you will be treated as befits your negligence. That evil action of yours was not done by mother or father, brothers, sisters, friends or companions, nor by relatives, devas, ascetics, or brahmins. But you alone have done that evil deed, and you will have to experience the fruit.’

“When, monks, King Yama has questioned, examined, and addressed him thus concerning the first divine messenger, he again questions, examines, and addresses the man about the second one, saying: ‘Didn’t you ever see, my good man, the second divine messenger appearing among humankind?’

“No, Lord, I did not see him.’

“But, my good man, didn’t you ever see a woman or a man who was sick and in pain, seriously ill, lying in his own filth, having to be lifted up by some and put to bed by others?’

“Yes, Lord, I have seen this.’

“My good man, didn’t it ever occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, “I too am subject to illness and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind”?’

“No, Lord, I could not do it: I was negligent.’

“Through negligence, my good man, you have failed to do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind. Well, you will be treated as befits your negligence. That evil action of yours was not done by mother or father, brothers, sisters, friends or companions, nor by relatives, devas, ascetics, or brahmins. But you alone have done that evil deed, and you will have to experience the fruit.’

“When, monks, King Yama has questioned, examined, and addressed him thus concerning the second divine messenger, he again questions, examines, and addresses the man about the third one, saying: ‘Didn’t you ever see, my good man, the third divine messenger appearing among humankind?’

“No, Lord, I did not see him.’

“But, my good man, didn’t you ever see a woman or a man one, two, or three days dead, the corpse swollen, discolored, and festering?’

“Yes, Lord, I have seen this.’

“Then, my good man, didn’t it ever occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, “I too am subject to death and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind”?’

“No, Lord, I could not do it. I was negligent.’

“Through negligence, my good man, you have failed to do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind. Well, you will be treated as befits your negligence. That evil action of yours was not done by mother or father, brothers, sisters, friends or companions, nor by relatives, devas, ascetics, or brahmins. But you alone have done that evil deed, and you will have to experience the fruit.”

(from *AN 3:35; 1138-40*)

### 3. The Selected Discourses Translated by Mrs Rhys Davids (PTS)

#### (1) Aging and Death [SN3:3]

#### III Kosala Saṃyutta,

#### § 3. The King [Pasanedi].

On<sup>5</sup> another occasion the king asked the Exalted One: ‘Is there, your reverence, any born thing that can live without<sup>6</sup> decay and death?’

5. As all the Suttas in this Chapter are associated with conversations at the Jeta, Grove (Vihara), it is needless to repeat the preliminaries. The text merely states the name of the town.

6. This descriptive formula occurs in Dialogues i, 175, 177, but with the term *mahāsālā* omitted.

‘There is no life, sire, without decay and death. Even they who are eminent nobles, eminent brahmins, eminent burgesses, men of authority, owning great treasure, great wealth, immense hoards of gold and silver, immense aids to enjoyment, immense supplies of goods and corn, even they, being born, cannot live without decay and death. Even those almsmen, sire, who are Arahants, for whom the intoxicants have perished, who have lived The Life, have done that which was to be done, for whom the burden is laid low, who have won their own highest good (*sadatthā*), for whom the chain of becoming is utterly destroyed, who by right insight are free<sup>7</sup> – even in them this composite frame is of a nature to dissolve and be laid aside.’

The king’s own cars,<sup>8</sup> gay in their gold and silver,  
Wear out with age; so doth our body also  
Fare to decay. Norm of the good decays not  
The good, in sooth, one to another tell this.<sup>9</sup>

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## (2) The Simile of the Mountain [SN 3:25]

### § 5. The Parable of the Mountain.

It was at Sāvattī, and the king, the Kosalan Pasenadi, came to see the Exalted One. When he was seated, to him thus spake the Exalted One:–

‘Well, sire, whence come you?’

‘I have been zealously busied, lord, with all such matters as occupy kings – kings who are of noble birth and anointed, who are drunk with the intoxication of authority, yield indulgence to<sup>10</sup> their greed for sensuous pleasures, who have won security in their kingdoms and live as conquerors of a wide area of land.’

‘As to that what think you, sire ? Suppose a man were to come to you from the east, a man loyal and trustworthy, and were to say: “May it please you to know, sire, that I have come from the eastern districts, and that I there saw a great mountain high as the sky moving along, crushing every living thing<sup>11</sup> as it came. Whatever you can do, sire, do it.” And suppose other men came, from west, north, and south, all three loyal and trustworthy, and brought similar messages. And you, sire, seized with mighty dread, the destruction of human life so terrible, rebirth as man so hard to obtain, what is there that you could do ?’

‘In such a mighty peril, lord, the destruction of human life so terrible, rebirth as man so hard to obtain, what else could I do save to live righteously and justly and work good and meritorious deeds ?’

‘I tell you, sire, I make known to you, sire :– old age and death come rolling in upon you, sire! ` Since old age and death are rolling in upon you, sire, what is there that you can do ?’

‘Since old age and death, lord, are rolling in upon me, what else can I do save to live righteously and justly, and to work good and meritorious deeds ?’ Yea, lord, such matters as battles with elephant or horse cavalry, with chariots, with infantry – the business of kings of noble birth and anointed, who are drunk with the intoxication of authority, yield indulgence to their greed for sensuous pleasures, who have won security in their kingdoms and live as conquerors of a wide area of land – these cannot come to pass, there is no scope for these with old age and death rolling in upon me.

‘There are mighty counsellors, lord, in my court, weavers of spells, able by their spells to arrest advancing foes.<sup>12</sup> And there is, lord, at my court an immense gold supply, heaped in vaults and upper floors, enough to enable us

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7. This sentence is one of the formulas of Arahantship that run all through the four NikāyaS. B. has a comment on each of the beads in this ‘rosary.’ The ‘burden’ of the five aggregates (mind and body), of the kilesa’s or ten leading passions, of purposive worldly activities, of the pleasures of sense:– all these may be viewed as burdens by the Arahant. *Comy.*

8. *Dhp.* 151. The sight of Pasenadi’s waiting chariots richly adorned suggested the simile. *Comy.*

9. B. gives three interpretations of this line. I follow that of the *Dhp. Comy.* (iii, 123):– *sabbhīhi saddhiṃ . . . evaṃ kathenti.*

10. Or are overmastered by (*abhibhūtānaṃ, Comy.*).

11. Making them like pounded rape-seed. *Comy.*

12. In the Taccha-sūkara Jataka *Comy.* the king is recommended to procure war-mantras from bhikkhus. Whitt he does get is a ‘tip’, full of common sense.

to frustrate an attack by financial strategy. These battles of spells and of finance cannot come to pass, there is no scope for them with old age and death rolling in upon me. With old age and death rolling in upon me, what is there that I can do save to live righteously and justly and to work good and meritorious deeds ?

‘Even so, sire, even so. What else is there that you can do, save to live righteously and justly and to work good and meritorious deeds ?’

Thus spake the Exalted One, and the Master said:

As when huge mountain crags, piercing the sky,  
Advance in avalanches on all sides,  
Crushing the plains east, west, and north and south,  
So age and death come rolling over all.  
Noble and brahmin, commoner and serf,  
None can evade, or play the truant here.  
Th’ impending doom o’erwhelmeth one and all.  
Here is no place for strife with elephants,  
Or chariots of war, or infantry,  
Nay, nor for war of woven spell or curse,  
Nor may finance avail to win the day.  
Wherefore let him that hath intelligence  
And strength of mind, to his own good attend,  
In Buddha, Norm, and Order place his trust.  
Who doeth right in deed and word and thought  
Here winneth praise, and bliss in life to come.<sup>13</sup>

### (3) The Divine Messengers [AN 3:35]

## AN III Book of Threes, Ch 4 (Messengers of the Devas)

### § 35. The Lord of Death.

(§ i) ‘Monks, there are these three deva-messengers. What three ?

In this connexion a certain one lives an immoral life in deed, word and thought. So doing, when body breaks up after death he is reborn in the Waste, the Way of Woe, the Downfall, in Purgatory. Then, monks, the warders of Purgatory seize him by both arms and bring him before Yama the lord (of death)<sup>14</sup>, saying:

“Sire, this man had no respect for mother<sup>15</sup> and father, recluses and brahmins. He showed no deference to the elders of his clan. Let your majesty inflict due punishment on him.”

Then, monks, Yama the lord (of death) examines him, closely questions him<sup>16</sup> and addresses him

13. The *Comy.* relates, as the legend of this sutta, that bandits had laid an ambush for the king in the Andha Wood as he went, sometimes with but a small escort, to pay his respects to the Teacher. He was warned in time, and had the wood surrounded, capturing and impaling or crucifying the bandits on either side of the way leading through the wood. The Teacher judged that if the king, who came on red-handed to him, were taxed with the horrid deed, he would become sullen and not countermand anything. Hence the method adopted in this impressive dialogue.

It does not fit well, however, and the king would scarcely be referring to the *gens d’arme* work he had been doing in the wood by such expressions as ‘battle’ (*hatthi-yuddhāni*, etc.) and the rest. Nor does the *Comy.* tell of any repentant action at the end.

14. Yama, God of the dead=Pluto. Plato’s treatment of this story may be read at *Gorgias*, 525 ff. He is said to have got it from the Orphic poets. Cf. M. ii, 75; iii, 180 (*Dialog.* vi, 256), where five messengers are named, the first and fourth being a new-born babe and a guilty robber. Cf. Mrs. Rh. D. in *Sakya*, p. 77 ff.

15. *Amettyya* (or *mattyya*), formed like *pettyya*.

16. *Samanujunjati. Comy.* reads *samanugahati=anyoga-vattaṃ dropento pucchati.* Cf. *Nil. Panh.* 10.

concerning the first deva-messenger, saying:

“Now, my good man, have you never seen the first devamessenger manifest among men ?”

And he replies, “I have not seen him, sire.”

Then says to him Yama, lord of death:

“What! My good man, have you never seen any human being, a woman or a man, eighty or ninety or a hundred years of age, broken down, bent inwards like the rafter of a roof, crooked, staff-propped, and trembling as he goes along, – an ailing (creature) past his prime, with broken teeth, grey-haired or hairless, bald, with wrinkled brow and limbs all blotched and spotted ?”

Then the other says, “Sire, I have seen.”

Then says Yama, lord of death, to him:

“My good man, did it never occur to you as a man of intelligence and fully grown: I too am subject to old age, I have not overpassed old age. Come, let me act nobly in deed, word and thought ?”

Then the other says, “No, sire, I could not. I was negligent.”

Then, monks, Yama, lord of death, says to him:

“My good man, it was through negligence that you did not, act nobly in deed, word and thought. Verily they shall do unto you in accordance with your negligence. That evil action of yours was not done by mother, father, brother, sister, friends and comrades: not by kinsmen, devas, recluses and brahmins. By yourself alone was it done. It is just you that will experience the fruit thereof.”

(§ ii) Then, monks, Yama, lord of death, having examined him, closely questioned and addressed him concerning the first deva-messenger, does likewise concerning the second deva-messenger, saying

“My good man, have you never seen the second devamessenger manifest among men ?”

And he replies, “I have never seen him, sire.”

Then says Yama, lord of death, to him:

“What! My good man, have you never seen among human beings a woman or a man, sick, afflicted, suffering from a sore disease, lie wallowing in his own filth, by some lifted up, by others put to bed ?”

“Sire, I have seen.”

“Then, my good man, did it never occur to you as a man of intelligence and fully grown: I too am subject to disease. I have not overpassed disease. Come, let me act nobly in deed, word and thought ?”

Then says he, “Sire, I could not. I was negligent.”

Then says Yama, lord of death, to him:

“My good man, it was through negligence that you did not act nobly in deed, word and thought. . Verily they shall do unto you according to your negligence. That evil action of yours (*as above*) ... It is just you that will experience the fruit thereof.”

(§ iii) Thereupon, monks, Yama, lord of death, having examined ... him closely concerning the second deva-messenger ... does likewise concerning the third deva-messenger, saying:

“My good man, have you never seen among human beings a woman or a man, a corpse one, two, three days dead, swollen, black and blue and festering?”

And he replies, “Sire, I have seen.”

“Then, my good. man, did it never occur to you as a man of intelligence and fully grown: I too am subject to death. I have not overpassed death. Come, let me act nobly in deed, word and thought ?”

Then says he, “Sire, I could not. I was negligent.

And Yama, lord of death, says to him:

“My good man, it was through negligence that you did not act nobly in deed, word and thought. Verily they shall do unto you according to your negligence. That evil action of yours ... it is just you that will experience the fruit thereof.”

(§ iv) Then, monks, having examined ... him closely concerning the third deva-messenger, Yama, lord of death, is silent.

Thereupon, monks, the warders of Purgatory torture him with the fivefold pinion. They drive a hot iron pin through each hand and foot and a fifth through the middle of his breast. Thereat he suffers grievous, violent, sharp and bitter agonies, but he makes not an end until that evil deed of his has been worked out.

Then the warders of Purgatory lay him down and plane him down with adzes. Thereat he suffers . . . bitter agonies until that evil deed of his has been worked out.

Next they place him with feet up and head down and plane him with razors ... Then they bind him to a chariot and drive him up and down over a blazing ground, flaming and all aglow. Thereat he suffers . . . agonies . . .

Then they push him up and down a huge burning mountain of red-hot coal, blazing, flaming and all aglow. Thereat he suffers . . .

Then they take him, feet up and head down, and plunge him into a burning brazen cauldron, blazing, flaming and all aglow. There he is cooked, and rises to the surface with the scum. So doing, once he comes up and once he goes down and once he goes across. Thereat he suffers agonies grievous, violent, sharp and bitter: yet he makes not an end until that evil deed of his has been worked out.

Thereupon, monks, the warders of Purgatory toss him into the Great Hell. Now, monks, this Great Hell *Avici* (is thus described):

Four-square the Great Hell standeth, with four gates  
Divided and partitioned, with a wall  
Of iron girt. Of iron is the roof,  
Its floor of iron too, dazzling and hot,  
And, flashing all around a hundred leagues,  
Stands fast for evermore immovable?

(§ v) Once upon a time, monks, Yama, lord of death, thought thus to himself: True it is, methinks, that they who in the world do evil deeds in divers ways thus suffer retribution. O that I could win birth as a human being! O that a Tathagata were born into the world, an Arahant who is a Fully Enlightened One! O that I might sit at the feet of that Exalted One and then that Exalted One would teach me Dhamma, and then I might learn Dhamma from that Exalted One!

Now, monks, I say this, not hearing it from some recluse or brahmin; nay, but what I myself have known and seen and heard, that do I declare unto you.

§ (vi)  
They who, by deva-messengers tho' warned,  
Are proudly<sup>3</sup>careless and indifferent,  
Born in a mean estate, must suffer long.  
Good men, by deva-messengers when warned,  
Are never slothful in the Ariyan Dhamma;  
Seeing the risk of clinging to this world,  
Knowing it for the cause of birth and death,  
By ending birth and death, freed utterly,  
They have won calm, those happy ones,  
Have won Nibbana in this very life:  
They have passed over all the guilty dread,  
All Ill transcended.'

## 5. The Pali Text of the Selected Suttas

### (1) Aging and Death [SN3:3]

#### 3. Jarāmaraṇasuttaṃ

114. Sāvattihinidānaṃ. Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho rājā pasenadi kosalo bhagavantaṃ etadavoca— “atthi nu kho, bhante, jātassa aññatra jarāmarañā”ti? “Natthi kho, mahārāja, jātassa aññatra jarāmarañā. Yepi te, mahārāja, khattiyamahāsālā aḍḍhā mahaddhanā mahābhogā pahūtajātarūparajatā (1.0071) pahūtavittūpakaraṇā pahūtadhanadhaññā, tesampi jātānaṃ natthi aññatra jarāmarañā. Yepi te, mahārāja, brāhmaṇamahāsālā ...pe... gahapatimahāsālā aḍḍhā mahaddhanā mahābhogā pahūtajātarūparajatā pahūtavittūpakaraṇā pahūtadhanadhaññā, tesampi jātānaṃ natthi aññatra jarāmarañā. Yepi te, mahārāja, bhikkhū arahanto khīṇāsavā vusitavanto katakaraṇīyā ohitabhārā anuppattasadatthā parikkhīṇabhavasamyojanā sammadaññāvimuttā, tesam pāyaṃ kāyo bhedanadhammo nikkhepanadhammo”ti. Idamavoca ...pe...

“Jīranti ve rājarathā sucittā,

atho sarīrampi jaraṃ upeti;  
satañca dhammo na jaraṃ upeti,  
santo have sabbhi pavedayanti“ti.

## (2) The Simile of the Mountain [SN 3:25]

### 5. Pabbatūpamasuttam

136. Sāvattihinidānaṃ (1.0101). Ekamantaṃ nisinnaṃ kho rājānaṃ pasenadiṃ kosalaṃ bhagavā etadavoca– “handa, kuto nu tvaṃ, mahārāja, āgacchasi divā divassā“ti? “Yāni tāni, bhante, raññaṃ khattiyānaṃ muddhāvasittānaṃ issariyamadamattānaṃ kāmagedhapariyuṭṭhitānaṃ janapadatthāvariyaṃ pattānaṃ mahantaṃ pathavimaṇḍalaṃ abhivijjiya ajjhāvasantānaṃ rājakaraṇīyāni bhavanti, tesu khvāhaṃ, etarahi ussukkamāpanno”ti.

“Taṃ kiṃ maññasi, mahārāja, idha te puriso āgaccheyya puratthimāya disāya saddhāyiko paccayiko. So taṃ upasaṅkamitvā evaṃ vadeyya– ‘yagghe, mahārāja, jāneyyāsi, ahaṃ āgacchāmi puratthimāya disāya. Tatthaddasaṃ mahantaṃ pabbataṃ abbhasamaṃ sabbe paṇe nipphento āgacchati. Yaṃ te, mahārāja, karaṇīyaṃ, taṃ karohī“ti. Atha dutiyo puriso āgaccheyya pacchimāya disāya ...pe... atha tatiyo puriso āgaccheyya uttarāya disāya ...pe... atha catuttho puriso āgaccheyya dakkhiṇāya disāya saddhāyiko paccayiko. So taṃ upasaṅkamitvā evaṃ vadeyya– ‘yagghe mahārāja, jāneyyāsi, ahaṃ āgacchāmi dakkhiṇāya disāya. Tatthaddasaṃ mahantaṃ pabbataṃ abbhasamaṃ sabbe paṇe nipphento āgacchati. Yaṃ te, mahārāja, karaṇīyaṃ taṃ karohī“ti. Evarūpe te, mahārāja, mahati mahabbhaye samuppanne dāruṇe manussakkhaye , dullabhe manussatte kimassa karaṇīyaṃ”ti?

“Evarūpe me, bhante, mahati mahabbhaye samuppanne dāruṇe manussakkhaye dullabhe manussatte kimassa karaṇīyaṃ aññatra dhammacariyāya aññatra samacariyāya aññatra kusalakariyāya aññatra puññakariyāya“ti?

“Arocemi kho te, mahārāja, paṭivedemi kho te, mahārāja, adhivattati kho taṃ, mahārāja, jarāmarāṇaṃ. Adhivattamāne ce te, mahārāja, jarāmarāṇe kimassa karaṇīyaṃ”ti? “Adhivattamāne ca me, bhante, jarāmarāṇe kimassa karaṇīyaṃ aññatra dhammacariyāya samacariyāya kusalakariyāya puññakariyāya? Yāni tāni, bhante, raññaṃ khattiyānaṃ muddhāvasittānaṃ issariyamadamattānaṃ (1.0102) kāmagedhapariyuṭṭhitānaṃ janapadatthāvariyaṃ pattānaṃ mahantaṃ pathavimaṇḍalaṃ abhivijjiya ajjhāvasantānaṃ hatthiyuddhāni bhavanti; tesampi, bhante, hatthiyuddhānaṃ natthi gati natthi visayo adhivattamāne jarāmarāṇe. Yāni tāni, bhante, raññaṃ khattiyānaṃ muddhāvasittānaṃ ...pe... ajjhāvasantānaṃ assayuddhāni bhavanti ...pe... rathayuddhāni bhavanti ...pe... pattiyuddhāni bhavanti; tesampi, bhante, pattiyuddhānaṃ natthi gati natthi visayo adhivattamāne jarāmarāṇe. Santi kho pana, bhante, imasmiṃ rājakule mantino mahāmatā, ye pahonti , āgate paccatthike mantehi bhedayitūṃ. Tesampi, bhante, mantayuddhānaṃ natthi gati natthi visayo adhivattamāne jarāmarāṇe. Saṃvijjati kho pana, bhante, imasmiṃ rājakule pahūtaṃ hiraññasuvaṇṇaṃ bhūmigatañceva vehāsaṭṭhañca, yena mayaṃ pahoma āgate paccatthike dhanena upalāpetūṃ. Tesampi, bhante, dhanayuddhānaṃ natthi gati natthi visayo adhivattamāne jarāmarāṇe. Adhivattamāne ca me, bhante, jarāmarāṇe kimassa karaṇīyaṃ aññatra dhammacariyāya samacariyāya kusalakariyāya puññakariyāya“ti?

“Evametam, mahārāja, evametam, mahārāja! Adhivattamāne jarāmarāṇe kimassa karaṇīyaṃ aññatra dhammacariyāya samacariyāya kusalakariyāya puññakariyāya“ti? Idamavoca bhagavā ...pe... sathā–

“Yathāpi selā vipulā, nabhaṃ āhacca pabbatā;  
samantānupariyāyeyyūṃ, nipphento catuddisā.

“Evaṃ jarā ca maccu ca, adhivattanti paṇine ,  
khattiye brāhmaṇe vesse, sudde caṇḍālapukkuse;  
na kiñci , parivajjeti, sabbamevābhimaddati.

“Na tattha hatthīnaṃ bhūmi, na rathānaṃ na pattiyā;  
na cāpi mantayuddhena, sakkā jetuṃ dhanena vā.

“Tasmā hi paṇḍīto poso, sampassaṃ atthamattano;  
buddhe dhamme ca saṅghe ca, dhīro saddhaṃ nivesaye.

“Yo (1.0103) dhammaṃ cari , kāyena, vācāya uda cetasā;  
idheva naṃ pasamsanti, pecca sagge pamodatī“ti.

## (3) The Divine Messengers [AN 3:35]

## 6. Devadūtasuttam

36. “Tīṇimāni, bhikkhave, devadūṭāni. Katamāni tīṇi? Idha, bhikkhave, ekacco kāyena duccharitaṃ carati, vācāya duccharitaṃ carati, manasā duccharitaṃ carati. So kāyena duccharitaṃ caritvā, vācāya duccharitaṃ caritvā, manasā duccharitaṃ caritvā kāyassa bhedā paraṃ maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapajjati. Tamenam, bhikkhave, nirayapālā nānābhāsu gahetvā yamassa raṇṇo dassenti— ‘ayaṃ, deva, puriso amatteyyo apetteyyo asāmaṇṇo abrahmaṇṇo, na kule jeṭṭhāpacāyī. Imassa devo daṇḍaṃ paṇetū’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā paṭhamam devadūtam samanuyuñjati samanugāhati samanubhāsati— ‘ambho, purisa, na tvaṃ addasa manussesu paṭhamam devadūtam pātubhūtan’ti? So evamāha— ‘nāddasam, bhante’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā evamāha— ‘ambho purisa, na tvaṃ addasa manussesu itthiṃ vā purisaṃ vā āsītikaṃ vā nāvutikaṃ vā vassasatikaṃ vā , jātiyā jinṇam gopānasivaṅkam bhoggaṃ daṇḍaparāyaṇam , pavedhamānam gacchantam āturaṃ gatayobbanam khaṇḍadantaṃ palitakesam vilūnam khallitasiraṃ , valitam tilakāhatagattan’ti? So evamāha— ‘addasam, bhante’”ti.

“Tamenam (I.0138), bhikkhave, yamo rājā evamāha— ‘ambho, purisa, tassa te viññussa sato mahallakassa na etadahosi— ahampi khomhi jarādhhamo jaram anatīto, handāham kalyāṇam karomi, kāyena vācāya manasā’ti? So evamāha— ‘nāsakkhissam, bhante. Pamādasam, bhante’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā evamāha— ‘ambho, purisa, pamādatāya , na kalyāṇamakāsi kāyena vācāya manasā. Taggha tvaṃ , ambho purisa, tathā karissanti yathā tam , pamattam. Tam kho pana te etam , pāpakammaṃ , neva mātārā kataṃ, na pītārā kataṃ, na bhātārā kataṃ, na bhaginiyā kataṃ, na mittāmacchehi kataṃ, na ñātisālohitehi kataṃ, na devatāhi kataṃ, na samaṇabrāhmaṇehi kataṃ; atha kho tayāvetam pāpakammaṃ kataṃ, tvaññevetassa vipākam paṭisaṃvedissasī’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā paṭhamam devadūtam samanuyuñjivā samanugāhitvā samanubhāsivā, dutiyam devadūtam samanuyuñjati samanugāhati samanubhāsati— ‘ambho purisa, na tvaṃ addasa manussesu dutiyam devadūtam pātubhūtan’ti? So evamāha— ‘nāddasam, bhante’”ti. “Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā evamāha— ‘ambho purisa, na tvaṃ addasa manussesu itthiṃ vā purisaṃ vā ābādhikaṃ dukkhitam bāḷhagilānam, sake muttakarīse palipannaṃ semānam, aññehi vuṭṭhāpiyamānam, aññehi saṃvesiyamānan’ti? So evamāha— ‘addasam, bhante’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā evamāha— ‘ambho purisa, tassa te viññussa sato mahallakassa na etadahosi— ahampi khomhi byādhidhammo byādhiṃ anatīto, handāham kalyāṇam karomi kāyena vācāya manasā’ti? So evamāha— ‘nāsakkhissam, bhante. Pamādasam, bhante’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā evamāha— ‘ambho purisa, pamādatāya na kalyāṇamakāsi kāyena vācāya manasā. Taggha tvaṃ, ambho purisa, tathā karissanti yathā tam pamattam. Tam kho pana te etam pāpakammaṃ neva mātārā kataṃ, na pītārā kataṃ, na bhātārā kataṃ, na bhaginiyā kataṃ, na mittāmacchehi (I.0139) kataṃ, na ñātisālohitehi kataṃ, na devatāhi kataṃ, na samaṇabrāhmaṇehi kataṃ; atha kho tayāvetam pāpakammaṃ kataṃ. Tvaññevetassa vipākam paṭisaṃvedissasī’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā dutiyam devadūtam samanuyuñjivā samanugāhitvā samanubhāsivā, tatiyam devadūtam samanuyuñjati samanugāhati samanubhāsati— ‘ambho purisa, na tvaṃ addasa manussesu tatiyam devadūtam pātubhūtan’ti? So evamāha— ‘nāddasam, bhante’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā evamāha— ‘ambho purisa, na tvaṃ addasa manussesu itthiṃ vā purisaṃ vā ekāhamatam vā dvīhamatam vā tīhamatam vā uddhumātakam vinīlakam vipubbakajātan’ti? So evamāha— ‘addasam, bhante’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā evamāha— ‘ambho purisa, tassa te viññussa sato mahallakassa na etadahosi— ahampi khomhi maraṇadhammo maraṇam anatīto, handāham kalyāṇam karomi kāyena vācāya manasā’ti? So evamāha— ‘nāsakkhissam, bhante. Pamādasam, bhante’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā evamāha— ‘ambho purisa, pamādatāya na kalyāṇamakāsi kāyena vācāya manasā. Taggha tvaṃ, ambho purisa, tathā karissanti yathā tam pamattam. Tam kho pana te etam pāpakammaṃ neva mātārā kataṃ, na pītārā kataṃ, na bhātārā kataṃ, na bhaginiyā kataṃ, na mittāmacchehi kataṃ, na ñātisālohitehi kataṃ, na devatāhi kataṃ, na samaṇabrāhmaṇehi kataṃ; atha kho tayāvetam pāpakammaṃ kataṃ. Tvaññevetassa vipākam paṭisaṃvedissasī’”ti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, yamo rājā tatiyam devadūtam samanuyuñjivā samanugāhitvā samanubhāsivā tuṅhī hoti. Tamenam, bhikkhave, nirayapālā pañcavidhabandhanaṃ nāma kāraṇam karonti. Tattam ayokhilaṃ hatthe gamenti. Tattam ayokhilaṃ dutiyasmim hatthe gamenti. Tattam ayokhilaṃ pāde gamenti. Tattam ayokhilaṃ dutiyasmim pāde gamenti. Tattam ayokhilaṃ majjhe urasmim gamenti. So tattha dukkhā tībā , kharā kaṭukā vedanā vediyati, na ca tāva kālaṅkaroti yāva na tam pāpakammaṃ byantīhoti.

“Tamenam (1.0140), bhikkhave, nirayapālā saṃvesetvā , kudhārīhi tacchanti. So tattha dukkhā tikkhā kharā kaṭukā vedanā vediyati, na ca tāva kālaṅkaroti yāva na taṃ pāpakammaṃ byantīhoti.

“Tamenam, bhikkhave, nirayapālā uddhampādaṃ adhosiraṃ gahetvā vāsīhi tacchanti ...pe... tamenam, bhikkhave, nirayapālā rathe yojetvā ādittāya bhūmiyā sampajjalitāya sajotibhūtāya , sārentipi paccāsārentipi ...pe... tamenam, bhikkhave, nirayapālā mahantaṃ aṅgārapabbataṃ ādittaṃ sampajjalitaṃ sajotibhūtaṃ āropentipi oropentipi ...pe... tamenam, bhikkhave, nirayapālā uddhampādaṃ adhosiraṃ gahetvā tattāya lohakumbhiyā pakkhipanti, ādittāya sampajjalitāya sajotibhūtāya. So tattha pheṇuddehakaṃ paccamāno sakimpi uddham gacchati, sakimpi adho gacchati, sakimpi tiriyaṃ gacchati. So tattha dukkhā tikkhā kharā kaṭukā vedanā vediyati, na ca tāva kālaṃ karoti yāva na taṃ pāpakammaṃ byantīhoti. Tamenam, bhikkhave, nirayapālā mahāniraye pakkhipanti. So kho pana, bhikkhave, mahānirayo–

“Catukkaṇṇo catudvāro, vibhatto bhāgasō mito;  
ayopākārapariyanto, ayasā paṭikujjito.  
“Tassa ayomayā bhūmi, jalitā tejasā yutā;  
samantā yojanasataṃ, pharitvā tiṭṭhati sabbadā“ti ,.

“Bhūtapubbaṃ, bhikkhave, yamassa rañño etadahosi– ‘ye kira, bho, loke pāpakāni kammāni karonti te evarūpā vividhā kammakāraṇā karīyanti. Aho vatāhaṃ manussattaṃ labheyyaṃ, tathāgato ca loke uppajjeyya arahaṃ sammāsambuddho, tañcāhaṃ bhagavantaṃ payirupāseyyaṃ. So ca me bhagavā dhammaṃ deseyya, tassa cāhaṃ bhagavato dhammaṃ ājāneyyan’ti. Taṃ kho panāhaṃ, bhikkhave, na aññassa samaṇassa vā brāhmaṇassa vā sutvā evaṃ vadāmi, api ca kho, bhikkhave, yadeva me sāmaṃ ñātaṃ sāmaṃ diṭṭhaṃ sāmaṃ viditaṃ tadevāhaṃ vadāmi“ti.

“Coditā (1.0141) devadūtehi, ye pamajjanti māṇavā;  
te dīgharattaṃ socanti, hīnakāyūpagā narā.  
“Ye ca kho devadūtehi, santo sappurisā idha;  
coditā nappamajjanti, ariyadhamme kudācanaṃ.  
“Upādāne bhayaṃ disvā, jātimaraṇasambhava;  
anupādā vimuccanti, jātimaraṇasaṅkhaṇḍaṃ.  
“Te appamattā , sukhino , diṭṭhadhammābhiniḍḍatā.  
sabbaverabhayātītā, sabbadukkhaṃ upaccagun”ti.