Punishment

All tremble when faced with punishment; all fear death. Seeing others as ourselves, do not strike, do not cause another to strike.

All tremble when faced with punishment; life is dear to all. Seeing others as ourselves, do not strike, do not cause another to strike.

Whosoever hurts creatures eager for happiness for the sake of his own happiness, nevertheless will not obtain it after his death.

Whosoever does not hurt creatures eager for happiness for the sake of his own happiness, will obtain it after death.

Never speak harsh words to anyone, for they will be returned to you. Angry words cause suffering and one who utters them will bear them in return.

If you remain as silent as a broken gong, you have already entered Nirvana, for violence no longer abides in you.

As the cowherd, with his stick, drives the herd to pasture, so old age and death drive the life out of all living beings.

The fool does evil without knowing it; he is consumed and tormented by his actions as by a fire.

One who does harm to one who does none, one who offends one who offends not, will soon suffer one of the ten states that follow:
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He will endure intense pain, he will suffer disastrous losses and terrible injury, serious illness, madness.

Or he will come in conflict with authority, he will be the object of gross calumny, he will lose his near ones or his possessions.

Or else fire will destroy his dwelling-place; and at the time of the dissolution of his body he will be reborn in Hell.

Neither going naked or with matted hair, nor remaining dirty, nor fasting, nor sleeping on the bare ground, nor smearing the body with ashes, nor the practice of ascetic postures, can purify the mortal who has not cast away all doubt.

However richly he is dressed, if a man cultivates tranquillity of mind, if he is calm, resigned, master of himself, pure, if he does no harm to any creature, he is a Brahmin, he is an ascetic, he is a Bhikkhu.

Is there in this world a man beyond reproach that merits no blame, as a thoroughbred needs no blow from the whip?

Like a spirited horse, be quick and eager for the goal. By trust, virtue, energy, meditation, the quest for truth, perfection of knowledge and conduct, by faith destroy in you all suffering.

Those who build waterways lead the water where they want; those who make arrows straighten them; carpenters shape their wood; the sage controls himself.

One has the impression that these things were written for rather
primitive people. The series of calamities that will befall you if you do harm is quite amusing.

It would seem — provided of course that this is an exact record of the words that the Buddha spoke — that he must have changed the terms of his talks according to his audience and if he had to do with rustic people without education, he would speak a very material language with very practical and concrete comparisons so that they might understand him. There is a considerable difference of level in these verses. Some have become very famous, as, for example, the last verse here, where it is said that the artisan shapes his material to achieve what he has to do, and this striking conclusion: the sage controls himself.

Truly one has the impression that human mentality has progressed since that age. Thought has become more complex, psychology more profound, to the extent that these arguments appear almost puerile. But when we mean to practise them, then we realise that we have remained almost on the same level, and that if thought has progressed, practice, far from being better, seems to have become worse. And here there is a childlike simplicity, something rather healthy, an absence of perversion that unfortunately the human race no longer possesses.

There was a moral healthiness in those days which has now completely disappeared. These arguments make you smile, but the practice of what is taught here is much more difficult now than it was at that time. A kind of hypocrisy, pretension, underhand duplicity seems to have taken possession of the human mind and especially its way of being, and men have learnt to deceive themselves in a most pernicious way.

In those times, one could say, “Don’t do harm, you will be punished”; hearts were simple and the mind as well, and one said, “Yes, it is better not to do harm, because I will be punished.” But now, with an ironical smile, you say, “Oh! I shall surely find a way to avoid punishment.”

Mental capacity seems to have grown, mental power seems to have developed, men seem to be much more capable of playing
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with ideas, of having mental command over all principles, but at the same time they have lost the simple and healthy candour of people who lived closer to Nature and knew less how to play with ideas. Thus humanity as a whole seems to have reached a very dangerous turning-point. Those who are trying to find a solution to the general corruption preach a return to the simplicity of yore, but of course that is quite impossible: you cannot go back.

We must go farther on, we must advance, climb greater heights and go beyond the arid search for pleasure and personal welfare, not through fear of punishment, even punishment after death, but through the development of a new sense of beauty, a thirst for truth and light, through understanding that it is only by widening yourself, illumining yourself, setting yourself ablaze with the ardour for progress, that you can find both integral peace and enduring happiness.

One must rise up and widen — rise up... and widen.

18 April 1958