

AN 7.56: Tissabrahmā Sutta

Discourse to Tissa the Brahmā

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

Thus have I heard: On one occasion the Fortunate One was living at Rājagaha, at Vulture Peak Mountain. Then late at night, two angels of extreme beauty illuminated all of Vulture Peak, approached the Fortunate One, paid respects to him, and stood to one side. While standing to one side, one angel said to the Fortunate One, “Bhante, those bhikkhunis are liberated.” The other angel said to the Fortunate One, “Bhante, those bhikkhunis are well-liberated with nothing remaining.” This is what those angels said. The Teacher approved. Then those angels, thinking “The Teacher approved,” paid respects to the Fortunate One, and, having done what was appropriate, vanished right there.

Then after the night had ended, the Fortunate One addressed the monks: “Monks, late last night, two angels of extreme beauty illuminated all of Vulture Peak, approached me, paid respects to me, and stood to one side. Monks, while standing to one side, one angel said to me, ‘Bhante, those bhikkhunis are liberated.’ The other angel said to me, ‘Bhante, those bhikkhunis are well-liberated with nothing remaining.’ Monks, this is what those angels said. After saying this and paying respects to me, they vanished right there.”

On this occasion Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna was seated not far from the Fortunate One. He thought, “Which angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining?” And at that time a monk named Tissa had recently died and reappeared in a certain Brahma-world. There they knew him in this way: “Tissa the Brahma has great power and great authority.”

Then, just as a strong person might extend a contracted arm or contract an extended arm, Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna vanished from Vulture Peak Mountain and manifested in that Brahma-world. Tissa the Brahma saw Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna coming from afar, and said to him, “Come, Sir Moggallāna! Welcome, Sir Moggallāna! Sir Moggallāna, it has a been a long time since you last came here. Sit, Sir Moggallāna, this is the designated seat.”

Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna sat on the designated seat. Tissa the Brahma paid respects to Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna and sat to one side. When Tissa the Brahma was seated to one side, Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna said to him, “Tissa, which angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining?”

“Sir Moggallāna, Brahma-group angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining.”

“Tissa, do all Brahma-group angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining?”

“Sir Moggallāna, not all Brahma-group angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining. Sir Moggallāna, there are Brahma-group angels who are content with divine vitality, divine beauty, divine pleasure, divine

glory, and divine power, and who do not accurately understand that there is a further escape; they do not know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining. And, Sir Moggallāna, there are Brahma-group angels who are not content with divine vitality, divine beauty, divine pleasure, divine glory, and divine power, and who accurately understand that there is a further escape; they know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining.

“Sir Moggallāna, there is a case where a monk is doubly liberated. Those angels know it like this: ‘That venerable is doubly liberated. As long as their body persists, they can be seen by angels and humans. After their body dies, they will not be seen by angels and humans.’ Sir Moggallāna, in this way those angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining.

“Sir Moggallāna, there is a case where a monk is wisdom-liberated. Those angels know it like this: ‘That venerable is wisdom-liberated. As long as their body persists, they can be seen by angels and humans. After their body dies, they will not be seen by angels and humans.’ Sir Moggallāna, in this way those angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining.

“Sir Moggallāna, there is a case where a monk is a body-witness. Those angels know it like this: ‘That venerable is a body-witness. If that venerable uses suitable dwellings, associates with good friends, and controls their faculties, then in this very life they may attain and dwell in the supreme goal of the spiritual life for the sake of which people leave behind lay life and become homeless renunciants.’ Sir Moggallāna, in this way those angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining.

“Sir Moggallāna, there is a case where a monk is a view-attainer... faith-liberated... a dhamma-follower. Those angels know it like this: ‘That venerable is a dhamma-follower. If that venerable uses suitable dwellings, associates with good friends, and controls their faculties, then in this very life they may attain and dwell in the supreme goal of the spiritual life for the sake of which people leave behind lay life and become homeless renunciants.’ Sir Moggallāna, in this way those angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining.

Then, after delighting in and rejoicing in Tissa the Brahma’s statement, just as a strong person might extend a contracted arm or contract an extended arm, Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna vanished from that Brahma-world, and manifested at Vulture Peak Mountain. He approached the Fortunate One, paid respects to him, sat to one side, and reported to the Fortunate One the entire conversation with Tissa the Brahma.

“Moggallāna, Tissa the Brahma did not teach you about the seventh kind of person – the one who dwells in objectlessness.”

“Now is the time, Fortunate One! Now is the time, Sublime One! May the Fortunate One teach about the seventh kind of person – the one who dwells in objectlessness. The monks will listen to the Fortunate One and remember,” Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna replied to the Fortunate One. The Fortunate One said this:

“Here, Moggallāna, by not paying attention to any objects, a monk attains and dwells in the objectlessness unification of mind. Those angels know it like this: ‘That venerable attains and dwells in the objectlessness unification of mind. If that venerable uses suitable dwellings, associates with good friends, and controls their faculties, then in this very life they may attain and dwell in the supreme goal of the spiritual life for the sake of which people leave behind lay life and become homeless renunciants.’ Sir Moggallāna, in this way those angels know when someone has something remaining and when someone has nothing remaining.”