

These four kinds of persons, O monks, are found existing in the world. What four? The one heading from darkness to darkness, the one heading from darkness to light, the one heading from light to darkness, the one heading light to light.

And how, monks, is a person one heading from darkness to darkness? Here some person has been reborn in a low family – an outcast family or a family of bamboo workers or a family of hunters or a family of carters or a family of flower-scarvengers – a poor family in which there is little food and drink and which subsists with difficulty, one where food and garments are obtained with difficulty. And he is ugly, unsightly, deformed, chronically ill – purblind or crock-armed or lame or crippled.

He is not one who gains food, drink, clothing and vehicles; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, housing and lighting. He engages in misconduct with the body, speech and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the plane of misery, in a bad destination, in a lower world, in hell.

And how, monks, is a person one heading from darkness to light? Here some person has been reborn in a low family ... one where food and garments are obtained with difficulty. And he is ugly ... or crippled. He is not one who gains food ... and lighting. He engages in good conduct with the body, speech and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.

And how, monks, is a person one heading from light to darkness? Here some person has been reborn in a high family – an affluent noble, brahmin or householder family – one which is rich, with great wealth and property, with abundant gold and silver, abundant treasures and commodities, abundant wealth and grain. And he is handsome, attractive, graceful, possessing supreme beauty of complexion.

He is one who gains food, drink, clothing and vehicles; garlands, scents and unguents; bedding, housing and lighting. He engages in misconduct with the body, speech and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the plane of misery, in a bad destination, in a lower world, in hell.

And how, monks, is person one heading from light to light? Here some person has been reborn in a high family ... with abundant wealth and grain. And he is handsome, attractive, graceful, possessing supreme beauty of complexion. He is one who gains food ... and lighting. He engages in good conduct with the body, speech and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.

These, monks, are the four kinds of persons found existing in the world.

Numerical Discourses of the Buddha

An anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikāya

Selected and translated from the Pāli by Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi



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