AN 2.1 — Vajja Sutta (Blameworthy Faults)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

Source: https://www.mindreleased.com/s/Book-2_Anguttara-Nikya-A-New-Translation.pdf#page=25

Source revision: 95439bcf66d6295a952d574a8501d2d31edc03ca3ed8eb1e5889f079f7b658c9

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Candana source labels: 1. Site text ID: AN 2.1.

Text

AN II

Suttas 1-10

Kammakaraṇa Vagga “The Section on Punishments”

1. Vajja Sutta (Blameworthy Faults) I have personally heard this.

At one time, while The Blessed One was living at the monastery offered by Anāthapiṇḍika at Jeta’s Park, in Sāvatthī, He addressed the Bhikkhus by saying:

“Bhikkhus!”

“Yes, Bhante,” they replied.

And The Blessed One continued:

“Bhikkhus, there are these two faults that are blameworthy. And what are they?

“The fault of something that is reflected immediately upon the current life, and the fault that is reflected upon future lives.

“Now, what is the fault that is blameworthy, reflected immediately upon this present life?

“Here, Bhikkhus, someone sees a criminal or some evil doer who is ‘caught red-handed’ and brought before the king, and the king sentences him to a series of punishments.

“Thus, the onlooking man witnesses the criminal being flogged and inflicted with all kinds of corporal punishments, such as being whipped repeatedly, caned repeatedly, beaten with clubs and sticks that are soiled and dipped in filth; he sees the criminal being tortured by having his fingers, toes, hands and feet cut off; he sees how the man is then thrown into the gruel pot, where he has his head and body hair shaved off with seashells; then thrown into the pit of darkness, after which he is pulled out and a wreath of burning flames is

placed around his neck for him to wear; he then has his hands squeezed into the ‘blazing fiery gloves’ to wear; he is tortured some more by having to wear a gown made of sharp blades of grass, or the bark dress, or those made from rough and abrasive antelope hide that peel off his skin; he is then placed upon meat hooks and hung from them to dry; his skin is then cut and pulled off, piece by piece, into the size of small

coins. He is then thrown into a mixture of bleach, then pulled out and pushed into a hole into the ground, as his torturers spin the rest of his body around, while he stands fixed in position. He is then beaten some more and then tossed into hot boiling oil, or given to wild hungry dogs that eat him alive, nibbling and grinding their sharp teeth into his flesh and bones; or he is raised up onto a sharp spike to die on it, or have his neck cut off with a sword.

“Then, the other man witnessing all this, pauses to consider, how the criminal who was caught for having committed an evil act, had to endure all that suffering and unimaginable pain. He reflects further, and sees that if he too were to engage in evil behavior, on committing a crime, he also would have to endure all that torture, himself being subjected to the same punishments.

“On realizing the significance of this, the man becomes afraid of such a dreadful prospect befalling him in his current lifetime, and as a result, he abstains from engaging in any evil or damaging conduct, such as stealing or taking what is not given to him.

“In this way, the blameworthy fault manifests here, as its impact is immediately reflected upon the current life.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is the blameworthy fault that is reflected upon future lives?

“Here, someone reflects carefully as he begins considering:

‘Evil or damaging conduct of any kind, in the form of intentional actions that I commit through my body, sooner or later, will bring me its evil outcomes which are inescapable, if not now in this current life, then for sure, I will have to face their consequences in my future births.

‘Evil or damaging conduct of any kind, in the form of intentional actions that I commit through my speech, sooner or later, will bring me its evil outcomes which are inescapable, if not now in this current life, then for sure, I will have to face their consequences in my future births.

‘Evil or damaging conduct of any kind, in the form of intentional actions that I commit through my mind, sooner or later, will bring me its evil outcomes which are inescapable, if not now in this current life, then for sure, I will have to face their consequences in my future births.

‘Therefore, whether through my body, speech, or mind, whatever evil actions that I intentionally commit, once this body breaks down, after death, as a result of such behavior I will most certainly end up in a terrible destination, in a miserable realm, in the lower worlds, even in hell!’

“Then, on realizing the significance of this, the man becomes afraid of such a dreadful prospect befalling him in his future lifetimes, and as a result, he abstains from engaging in any evil or damaging conduct committed through the body, and instead chooses to engage in beneficial and good actions with his body. “Similarly, he abstains from engaging in any evil or damaging conduct committed through his speech, and instead chooses to engage in beneficial and good actions with his speech.

“Similarly, he abstains from engaging in any evil or damaging conduct committed through his mind, and instead chooses to engage in beneficial and good actions with his mind.

“In this manner, the man lives a life that is pure, maintaining a virtuous character throughout his life. This, therefore, is called the blameworthy fault that is reflected upon future lives.

“Bhikkhus, now that you are familiar with these two blameworthy faults, you must diligently engage yourselves by training daily, thus:

‘We too shall fear the outcomes of blameworthy faults that are reflected upon this life, as well as the blameworthy faults that are reflected upon future lifetimes. In this way, we shall train ourselves to abstain from all faults, by looking at the imminent danger they pose if we were to commit any of them.’

“Thus you must train yourselves, Bhikkhus, for all those who truly abstain from engaging in blamable faults by looking at the imminent danger they pause, become truly liberated from them, once and for all.”