AN 3.128 — Kaṭuviya Sutta (On Defiling)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

Source: https://www.mindreleased.com/s/Book-3_Anguttara-Nikya-A-New-Translation.pdf#page=259

Source revision: ee5230c458ad6c1566f518d5909916ad92d12aebf1240750c5357dd9b5699f30

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Candana source labels: 127. Site text ID: AN 3.128.

Text

127. Kaṭuviya Sutta (On Defiling) At one time, The Blessed One was staying in the deer park at Isipatana, in Varanasi.

Then, when it was morning, having dressed and taking His alms bowl and outer robes, The Blessed One entered Varanasi for His daily alms.

While walking on His alms round, He saw a certain Bhikkhu who had also gone for his alms round, but instead of tending to collecting his meal for the day, the Bhikkhu was skulking near a fig tree, where cattle were being kept bound.

The Blessed One saw how this Bhikkhu's mind was restless and unhappy, internally dissatisfied, and being given to bitter resentment for being a Bhikkhu, who instead kept entertaining himself by gratifying his senses with external sights and sounds.

Thus, The Blessed One saw that this was a Bhikkhu, who lacked both mindfulness and clear comprehension, with a mind that was muddled and uncollected, completely at the mercy of his uncontrolled mental faculties.

Witnessing the Bhikkhu's state of disarray, The Blessed One said:

"Bhikkhu, O Bhikkhu, do not defile yourself! When you defile yourself as such, you give off an evil stench, making it impossible for flies not to follow or settle on you, attracted to your terribly nasty stench!"

The startled Bhikkhu, on being advised by The Blessed One in this manner, quickly became remorseful and resolutely reengaged in his efforts.

Then, later in the day, having returned from the alms round and eaten His meal, The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus, by saying:

"Bhikkhus, this morning, after having dressed and taken my alms bowl and outer robes, I entered Varanasi for the alms round.

“While walking for alms, I saw a certain Bhikkhu also going for alms, who had stopped near a fig tree, where some cattle were being kept bound.

“Then, I saw how this Bhikkhu’s mind was restless and unhappy, internally dissatisfied, and being given to bitter resentment for being a Bhikkhu, who instead kept entertaining himself by gratifying his senses with external sights and sounds.

“Thus, I saw that this was a Bhikkhu, who lacked both mindfulness and clear comprehension, with a mind that was muddled and uncollected, completely at the mercy of his uncontrolled mental faculties.

“Witnessing him in that state, I said:

“Bhikkhu, O Bhikkhu, do not defile yourself! When you defile yourself as such, you give off an evil stench, making it impossible for flies not to follow or settle on you, attracted to your terribly nasty stench!”

On being advised by Me in this manner, the startled Bhikkhu quickly became remorseful, and resolutely reengaged in his efforts.

When this was said, a certain Bhikkhu asked a question:

“Bhante, what is meant here by the term ‘defiling;’ what is ‘the evil stench;’ and what are the ‘flies’?”

And The Blessed One replied by instructing:

“Bhikkhu, ‘the defiling’ mentioned here is one’s covetousness for what others have; the ‘evil stench’ is aversion and hatred one keeps in his heart; and the ‘flies’ are one’s evil and damaging thoughts.

“Therefore, when the Bhikkhu defiles himself as such, he inevitably ends up giving off an evil stench, making it impossible for flies not to follow or settle on him, attracted to his nasty and terrible stench.”

‘When the eyes and ears are left unprotected, And the mental faculties run amok, The flies of evil thoughts will multiply and abound. The defiled Bhikkhu, thus giving off an evil stench, Far from Nibbāna he remains, Living only in suffering, that remains his only lot.

Whether in the village or forest, Not able to taste the fruits of inner peace, The fool leads on, followed by the flies. But he who is of virtuous behavior, Enjoying the fruits of peaceful wisdom, Lives tranquil and sleeps happily, Having destroyed all those flies, and all that they bring.’