AN 3.28 — Gūthabhāṇī Sutta (Speech that Resembles Freshly Dropped

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

28. Gūthabhāṇī Sutta (Speech that Resembles Freshly Dropped Excrement) Bhikkhus, these are the three types of beings found in existence. What three?

The one whose speech is like that of freshly dropped excrement; the other whose speech resembles flowers; and lastly, the one whose speech is like that of pure honey.

a. And who, Bhikkhus, is that person whose speech is like that of freshly dropped excrement?

Here, when someone is asked to show up at an assembly, to his relatives' gathering, or to a gathering of his colleagues, or to stand in council, or to appear at the royal court and report on a matter as a witness thus: "Tell us, sir, what you have witnessed," at which he states that he has witnessed what, in fact, he has not witnessed; or he denies having witnessed at all that which he has, in fact, witnessed. Thus, while not having seen, he exclaims by lying: "I have seen," and when having actually seen, he instead claims: "I have not seen."

Such a person lies knowingly and speaks falsehood to secure his own ends, or those of others, or some worldly goal that he has in mind.

Such is a person whose speech is like that of freshly dropped excrement.

b. And who, Bhikkhus, is that person whose speech resembles flowers?

Here, when someone is asked to show up at an assembly, to his relatives' gathering, or to a gathering of his colleagues, or to stand in council, or to appear at the royal court and report on a matter as a witness thus: "Tell us, sir, what you have witnessed," at which he states that he has witnessed what indeed, he has witnessed. Or when having not witnessed, he denies having witnessed it. Thus, when not having seen, he says "I have not seen," and when having seen, he says "Yes, I have seen."

Such a person does not lie knowingly but speaks the truth, which he does not to secure his own ends, nor those of others, or for some worldly goal that he has in mind.

Therefore, such is the person whose speech is like that of flowers.

c. And who, Bhikkhus, is that person whose speech is like that of pure honey?

Here, someone has relinquished the use of abusive, hurtful, or mean speech, and consciously refrains from the use of abusive, hurtful or mean speech.

His speech is therefore kindly, encouraging, and lovely to the ear, and goes straight to the heart, remaining respectful and considerate, thereby welcomed and enjoyable by the many who get to hear it.

Such is the person whose speech is like that of pure honey.

These are, Bhikkhus, the three types of beings found in existence.