

AN 6.56

Phagguṇa Sutta
“With the Ven. Phagguṇa”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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At one time, the venerable Phagguṇa was gravely ill and the Venerable Ānanda by approaching The Blessed One, paid homage to Him and then sat to one side and said:

“Bhante, the Venerable Phagguṇa is gravely ill. It would be helpful if The Blessed One would go to him out of compassion.” The Blessed One accepted the suggestion, in silence.

Then, when it was evening, The Blessed One having come out of his seclusion, went to see the Venerable Phagguṇa. On seeing the Blessed One approaching from the distance, the Venerable Phagguṇa quickly tried to get out of bed to show pay his respects to the Lord, but The Blessed One urged him:

“Phagguṇa, it is not necessary. Do not move out from your bed. There are seats prepared here in front, I will sit there.”

And The Blessed One sat on the prepared seat and said to the Venerable Phagguṇa:

“Phagguṇa, I hope your situation is bearable. I hope you are doing well. Is your pain decreasing and not intensifying? Can you tell if the pain is nearing its end or is it still strong and persisting?”

“Bhante, my situation is unbearable, and I am not doing well at all. My pain is increasing and intensifying. The pain is not nearing its end, as it is still strong and persisting. Bhante, the pain I am experiencing is so severe that it feels just as if a strong man was cleaving the top of my head with the edge of a sharp sword. In the same way, Bhante, my head feels like it is being sliced by the dry and violent internal winds. Bhante, I can’t bear the pain.

“Bhante, my situation is unbearable, and I am not doing well at all. My pain is increasing and intensifying. The pain is not nearing its end, as it is still strong and persisting. Bhante, the pain I am experiencing is so severe that it feels just as if a strong man was continuously tightening a leather strap that’s wrapped around my head. In the same way, Bhante, my head feels like it is about to explode by the dry and violent internal winds. Bhante, I can’t bear the pain.

“Bhante, my situation is unbearable, and I am not doing well at all. My pain is increasing and intensifying. The pain is not nearing its end, as it is still strong and persisting. Bhante, the pain I am experiencing is so severe that it feels just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to cut open my gut with his meat cleaver. In the same way, Bhante, my gut feels like it is being cut open by the dry and violent internal winds. Bhante, I can’t bear the pain.

“Bhante, my situation is unbearable, and I am not doing well at all. My pain is increasing and intensifying. The pain is not nearing its end, as it is still strong and persisting. Bhante, the pain I am experiencing is so severe that it feels just as if two strong men had grabbed hold of a weaker person by his limbs and start roasting and grilling him over a pit of burning charcoal. In the same way, Bhante, my body is burning with hot fever. Bhante, I can’t bear the pain.

“Bhante, my situation is unbearable, and I am not doing well at all. My pain is increasing and intensifying. The pain is not nearing its end, as it is still strong and persisting.”

Then The Blessed One encouragingly spoke, as he inspired, roused, and lightened Venerable Phagguṇa’s heart with an enlivening Talk on the Dhamma, and then, He rose from His seat and left.

Soon after The Blessed One had left, the Venerable Phagguṇa died. But, as he was dying, his faculties suddenly became bright and clear.

Then, the Venerable Ānanda approached The Blessed One, and after paying homage to Him, sat to one side, and said:

“Bhante, soon after The Blessed One had left, the Venerable Phagguṇa died. But, as he was dying, his faculties suddenly became bright and clear.”

Ānanda, why shouldn't Phagguṇa Bhikkhu’s faculties not become bright and clear? For even though, Phagguṇa Bhikkhu’s mind was not yet released from the five lower fetter that bound him to the sensual world, on listening to the Dhamma, right at that moment, his mind was released from the lower fetters that bound him to the sensual world.

“Ānanda, there are these six benefits of listening to the Dhamma at the correct time, while investigating its meaning, at the correct time. What are these six?

“Here, Ānanda the Bhikkhu’s mind is not yet released from the five lower fetters binding him to the sensual world. At the time of his death, he gets the opportunity to see the Tathāgata. The Tathāgata then teaches him the Dhamma that is beautiful in its beginning, beautiful at its middle, and beautiful in its end; full of meaning and balanced in its expression and phrasing, while declaring and revealing to him the completeness and purity of the Holy Life. Now, on hearing and listening to the Dhamma his mind is released from the five lower fetters binding him to the sensual world. Ānanda, this is the first benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the correct time.

“Again, Ānanda the Bhikkhu’s mind is not yet released from the five lower fetters binding him to the sensual world. At the time of his death, he does not get the opportunity to see the Tathāgata. But, prior to his death, he does see a Disciple of The Tathāgata, who teaches him the Dhamma that is beautiful in its beginning, beautiful at its middle, and beautiful in its end; full of meaning and balanced in its expression and phrasing, while declaring and revealing to him the completeness and purity of the Holy Life. Now, on hearing and listening to the Dhamma his mind is released from the five lower fetters binding him to the sensual world. Ānanda, this is the second benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the correct time.

“Again, Ānanda the Bhikkhu’s mind is not yet released from the five lower fetters binding him to the sensual world. At the time of his death, he does not get the opportunity to see the Tathāgata, nor does he see a Disciple of The Tathāgata. But he carefully examines, scrutinizes, ponders, and investigates whatever he has already heard and learned of the Dhamma. Now, as he continues doing so, his mind is released from the five lower fetters binding him to the sensual world. Ānanda, this is the third benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the correct time.

“Further, Ānanda the Bhikkhu’s mind is released from the five lower fetters binding him to the sensual world, but not yet released from the underlying defilements in the heart, through the unsurpassed destruction of all attachments. But at the time of his death, he gets the opportunity to see the Tathāgata. The Tathāgata then teaches him the Dhamma that is beautiful in its beginning, beautiful at its middle, and beautiful in its end; full of meaning and balanced in its expression and phrasing, while declaring and revealing to him the completeness and purity of the Holy Life. Now, on hearing and listening to the Dhamma his mind is released from the underlying defilements in the heart, through the destruction of attachments. Ānanda, this is the fourth benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the correct time.

“Again, Ānanda the Bhikkhu’s mind is released from the five lower fetters binding him to the sensual world, but not yet released from the underlying defilements in the heart, through the unsurpassed destruction of all attachments. At the time of his death, he does not get the opportunity to see the Tathāgata. But, prior to his death, he *does* see a Disciple of The Tathāgata, who teaches him the Dhamma that is beautiful in its beginning, beautiful at its middle, and beautiful in its end; full of meaning and balanced in its expression and phrasing, while declaring and revealing to him the completeness and purity of the Holy Life. Now, on hearing and listening to the Dhamma his mind is released from the underlying defilements in the heart, through the destruction of attachments. Ānanda, this is the fifth benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the correct time.

“Again, Ānanda the Bhikkhu’s mind is released from the five lower fetters binding him to the sensual world, but not yet released from the underlying defilements in the heart, through the unsurpassed destruction of all attachments. At the time of his death, he does not get the opportunity to see the Tathāgata, nor does he see a Disciple of The Tathāgata. But he carefully examines, scrutinizes, ponders, and investigates whatever he has already heard and learned of the Dhamma. Now, as he continues doing so, his mind is released from the underlying defilements in the heart, through the destruction of attachments. Ānanda, this is the sixth benefit of listening to the Dhamma at the correct time.

“Ānanda, these are the six benefits of listening to the Dhamma at the correct time, while investigating its meaning, at the correct time.”

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