

Aggikkhandhopama Sutta ***“A Blazing Bonfire”***

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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This is what I personally heard.

At one time, The Blessed One was wandering through the Kosalan region with a large Sangha of Bhikkhus. Then, while still walking on the main highway, The Blessed One saw a huge blazing bonfire and deviating from the path, He sat on a prepared seat at the root of a tree and addressed the Bhikkhus by saying:

“Bhikkhus, do you see that huge blazing bonfire?”

“Yes, Bhante, we do see it.”

1. “Bhikkhus, what do you consider to be better: to go and embrace this huge mass of blazing bonfire, as you sit or lie down next to it? Or to go and embrace the soft and tender hands and feet of a young woman from royal class of warriors, or of brahmins, or from a householder family, and to sit or lie down next to her?”

“Bhante, it would be much better to go and embrace the soft and tender hands and feet of a young woman from royal class of warriors, or of brahmins, or from a householder family, and to sit or lie down next to her! Because Bhante, it would be a terrible and pure suffering, if one were to go and embrace this huge mass of blazing bonfire and sit or lie down next to it!”

“On the contrary, Bhikkhus! I declare to you all and call your attention to this fact, that it is far better for even an immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth; I declare that even for such a person, it would be far better to go and embrace that huge mass of blazing bonfire, and sit or lie down next to it. And why do I say this?

“I say this because, although such a person would experience terrible and excruciating bodily pains due to the blazing fires, nevertheless, once his body breaks down, after death, he would at least not be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

“However, if that immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth, if he were to go and embrace the soft and tender hands and feet of a young woman from the royal class of warriors, or of brahmins, or from a householder family, and sit or lie down next to her, it will surely lead to his suffering and anguish for a very long time, but not only that, because once his body breaks down, after death, he will be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

2. “Bhikkhus, what do you consider to be better, to have a strong man binding you with a tough rope weaved out of horsehair, as he tightly squeezes at both your ankles and knees, tighter and tighter, crushing them, until the rope tears through your outer skin, your inner skin, the muscles and flesh, the veins, bones, and all the way through, until it stops at the bone marrow? Or is it better to be welcoming of the veneration offered by the warrior kings, brahmins, or the wealthy householders with higher social standing, all bowing down to you, as a sign of devotion and honor?

“Bhante, it would be much better to be welcoming of the veneration offered by the warrior kings, brahmins, or the wealthy householders with higher social standing, all bowing down to us, as a sign of devotion and honor. Because, Bhante, it would be truly unbearable to have a strong man binding us with a tough rope weaved out of horsehair, as he tightly squeezes at both our ankles and knees, tighter and tighter, crushing them, until the rope tears through our outer skin, our inner skin, the muscles and flesh, the veins, bones, and all the way through, until it stops at the bone marrow.”

“On the contrary, Bhikkhus! I declare to you all and call your attention to this fact, that it is far better for even an immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth; I declare that even for such a person, it would be far better to have a strong man binding him with a tough rope weaved out of horsehair, as he tightly squeezes at both his ankles and knees, tighter and tighter, crushing them, until the rope tears through his outer skin, his inner skin, the muscles and flesh, the veins, bones, and all the way through, until it stops at the bone marrow. And why do I say this?

“I say this because, although such a person would experience terrible and excruciating bodily pains due to being squeezed to death, nevertheless, once his body breaks down, after death, he would at least not be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

“However, if that immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse,

who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth, if he were to be welcoming of the veneration offered by the warrior kings, brahmins, or the wealthy householders with higher social standing, all bowing down to him as a sign of devotion and honor, this will surely lead to his suffering and anguish for a very long time, but not only that, because once his body breaks down, after death, he will be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

3. “Bhikkhus, what do you consider to be better: to have a strong man standing behind you, who cuts you down mercilessly, with a large sword that has been carefully sharpened in oil for a long time? Or is it better to be welcoming of the devotion offered with hands in *anjalī* by the warrior kings, brahmins, or the wealthy householders with higher social standing?

“Bhante, it would be much better to be welcoming of the devotion offered with hands in *anjalī* by the warrior kings, brahmins, or the wealthy householders with higher social standing. Because, Bhante, it would be truly unbearable to have a strong man standing behind us, who cuts us down mercilessly, with a large sword that has been carefully sharpened in oil for a long time.”

“On the contrary, Bhikkhus! I declare to you all and call your attention to this fact, that it is far better that for even an immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth; I declare that even for such a person, it would be far better to have a strong man standing behind him, who cuts him down mercilessly, with a large sword that has been carefully sharpened in oil for a long time. And why do I say this?

“I say this because, although such a person would experience unbearable suffering due to being cut down by the sword, nevertheless, once his body breaks down, after death, he would at least not be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

“However, if that immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth, if he were to be welcoming of the devotion offered with hands in *anjalī* by the warrior kings, brahmins, or the wealthy householders with higher social standing, that will surely lead to his suffering and anguish for a very long time, but not only that, because once his body breaks down, after death, he will be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

4. “Bhikkhus, what do you consider to be better: to have a strong man grab you and then begin wrapping your body in a fiery iron sheet that is glowing red-hot, blazing and burning? Or is it better to accept an offering of robes, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders?

“Bhante, it would be much better to accept the offering of robes, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders. Because, Bhante, it would truly be unbelievably painful to have a strong man grab us and then begin wrapping our body in a fiery iron sheet that is glowing red-hot, blazing and burning.”

“On the contrary, Bhikkhus! I declare to you all and call your attention to this fact, that it is far better for even an immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth; I declare that even for such a person, it would be far better to have a strong man grab him and then begin wrapping his body in a fiery iron sheet that is glowing red-hot, blazing and burning. And why do I say this?

“I say this because, although such a person would experience unbelievable suffering due to being wrapped while still alive into burning red-hot iron sheet, nevertheless, once his body breaks down, after death, he would at least not be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

“However, if that immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth, if he were to accept the offering of robes, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders, that will surely lead to his suffering and anguish for a very long time, but not only that, because once his body breaks down, after death, he will be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

5. “Bhikkhus, what do you consider to be better: to have a strong man grab you and then ruthlessly pry open your mouth with a burning red-hot metal spike, and then shove blazingly hot copper balls down your throat, and in the process, entirely burn and scorch your lips, tongue, mouth, throat, esophagus, and stomach, after which those fiery red-hot copper balls would come out, along with your intestines and everything else with them? Or is it better to accept the offering of alms food, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders?

“Bhante, it would be much better to accept the offering of alms food, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders. Because, Bhante, it would truly be unbelievably painful to have a strong man grab us and then ruthlessly pry open our mouth with a burning red-hot metal spike, and then shove blazingly hot copper balls down our throat, and in the process, entirely burn and scorch our lips, tongue, mouth, throat, esophagus, and stomach, after which those fiery red-hot copper balls would come out, along with our intestines and everything else with them.”

“On the contrary, Bhikkhus! I declare to you all and call your attention to this fact, that it is far better for even an immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner,

not having even one speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth; I declare that even for such a person, it would be far better to have a strong man grab him and then ruthlessly pry open his mouth with a burning red-hot metal spike, and then shove blazingly hot copper balls down his throat, and in the process, entirely burn and scorch his lips, tongue, mouth, throat, esophagus, and stomach, after which those fiery red-hot copper balls would come out, along with his intestines and everything else with them. And why do I say this?

“I say this because, although such a person would experience unimaginable pain due to having red hot copper balls being shoved down his throat and then come out of his body, nevertheless, once his body breaks down, after death, he would at least not be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

“However, if that immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even one speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth, if he were to accept the offering of alms food, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders, that will surely lead to his suffering and anguish for a very long time, but not only that, because once his body breaks down, after death, he will be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

6. “Bhikkhus, what do you consider to be better: to have a strong man grab you by the head or your body, and then forcibly sit or lie you down on a red-hot iron chair or bed that is blazing and glowing ferociously with incredible heat? Or is it better to accept the offering of chairs or beds, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders?

“Bhante, it would be much better to accept the offering of chairs or beds, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders. Because Bhante, it would truly be unbelievably painful to have a strong man grab us by the head or our body, and then forcibly sit or lie us down on a red-hot iron chair or bed that is blazing and glowing ferociously with incredible heat.”

“On the contrary, Bhikkhus! I declare to you all and call your attention to this fact, that it is far better for even an immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth; I declare that even for such a person, it would be far better to have a strong man grab him by the head or his body and then forcibly sit or lie him down on a red-hot iron chair or bed that is blazing and glowing ferociously with incredible heat. And why do I say this?

“I say this because, although such a person would experience terrible suffering due to being forced to sit or lie down on a red-hot iron chair or bed, nevertheless, once his body breaks down,

after death, he would at least not be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

“However, if that immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even one speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth, if he were to accept the offering of chairs or beds, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders, that will surely lead to his suffering and anguish for a very long time, but not only that, because once his body breaks down, after death, he will be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

7. “Bhikkhus, what do you consider to be better: to have a strong man grab and flip you upside down, and then throw you into a large copper cauldron, blazing with fire and boiling with swirling and filthy scum, where you would be cooked and roasted alive with no hope for escape, while you are being swept in this and that direction, pushing and shoving yourself upwards to jump out as you desperately try to find a way out, but to no avail? Or is it better to accept and use the offering of lodging and a place to stay, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders?

“Bhante, it would be much better to accept and use the offering of lodging and a place to stay, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders. Because, Bhante, it would be truly unimaginable being grabbed by a strong man, who flips us upside down, and then throws us into a large copper cauldron, blazing with fire and boiling with swirling and filthy scum, where we would be cooked and roasted alive with no hope for escape, while we are being swept in this and that direction, pushing and shoving ourselves upwards to jump out as we desperately try to find a way out, but to no avail.”

“On the contrary, Bhikkhus! I declare to you all and call your attention to this fact, that it is far better for even an immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth; I declare that even for such a person, it would be far better to have a strong man grab and flip him upside down, and then throw him into a large copper cauldron, blazing with fire and boiling with swirling and filthy scum, where he would be cooked and roasted alive with no hope for escape, while he is being swept in this and that direction, pushing and shoving himself upwards to jump out as he desperately tries to find a way out, but to no avail. And why do I say this?

“I say this because, although such a person would experience unimaginable suffering being boiled alive in a red-hot burning copper cauldron, nevertheless, once his body breaks down, after death, he would at least not be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

“However, if that immoral and impure person, who has evil, vile, and disgustingly filthy intentions pervading his heart like excrement; someone who is not a true Dhamma practitioner, not having even a speck of true spirituality running in his veins; a fake and not a true recluse, who only pretends to be a Bhikkhu, who claims to be celibate, when in fact he is not; a non-Brahmin, who is rotten inside and dripping with filth, if he were to accept the offering of lodging and a place to stay, given by warrior kings, brahmins, or householders, that will surely lead to his suffering and anguish for a very long time, but not only that, because once his body breaks down, after death, he will be reborn in the miserable lower realms, in the planes of misery, in the horrendous destinations, in the hells.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, you should train in this manner:

“Whatever robes, alms food, places to stay, and medicinal requisites we may be offered to use, may it so happen that these gifts bring great rewards and blessings to all those who offered them. And may our going forth not be wasted, and instead be productive and fruitful, bringing us many great results.

“So, Bhikkhus, each of you must train while you consider and apply yourselves in such a way, that is truly fitting and appropriate for you, as someone who has gone forth; a recluse who recognizes what is indeed beneficial to himself and for his own good, and to this end, you must strive with diligence.

“Similarly, each of you must train while you consider and apply yourselves in such a way, that is truly fitting and appropriate for you, as someone who has gone forth; a recluse who recognizes what is indeed beneficial to others, working for others’ good as well, and to this end, you must strive with diligence.

“Finally, each of you must train while you consider and apply yourselves in such a way, that is truly fitting and appropriate for you, as someone who has gone forth; a recluse who recognizes what is indeed beneficial and good for both yourselves and others, and to this end, you must strive with diligence.”

This is what The Blessed One said.

And while The Great Teacher was giving this explanation and before it was finished, about sixty Bhikkhus vomited hot blood; about sixty Bhikkhus gave up the Holy Life and went down to lay life, as they cried out:

“This is too difficult, Blessed One! It is just too hard!”

Meanwhile, about sixty other Bhikkhus were released from the *āsavas*, through no longer seizing or grabbing onto anything, as they too attained to Arahantship.

Sādhū

Sādhū

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