SN 35.235 — The Exposition on Burning

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Text

Linked Discourses 35.235

18. The Ocean

The Exposition on Burning

“Mendicants, I will teach you an exposition of the teaching on burning. Listen …

And what is the exposition of the teaching on burning?

You’d be better off mutilating your eye faculty with a red-hot iron nail, burning, blazing, and glowing, than getting caught up in the features by way of the details in sights known by the eye. Should consciousness tied to gratification in the features or details continue to remain, and you were to die at that time, it’s possible you would go to one of two destinations: hell or the animal realm. I speak having seen this drawback.

You’d be better off mutilating your ear faculty with a sharp iron spike …

You’d be better off mutilating your nose faculty with a sharp nail cutter …

You’d be better off mutilating your tongue faculty with a sharp razor …

You’d be better off mutilating your body faculty with a sharp spear, burning, blazing, and glowing, than getting caught up in the features by way of the details in touches known by the body. Should consciousness tied to gratification in the features or details continue to remain, and you were to die at that time, it’s possible you would go to one of two destinations: hell or the animal realm. I speak having seen this drawback.

You’d be better off sleeping. For I say that sleep is useless, fruitless, and folly for the living. But while you’re asleep you won’t fall under the sway of such thoughts that would make you create a schism in the Saṅgha. I speak having seen this drawback.

A learned noble disciple reflects on this: ‘Forget mutilating the eye faculty with a red-hot iron nail, burning, blazing, and glowing! I’d better focus on the fact that the eye, sights, eye consciousness, and eye contact are impermanent. And the painful, pleasant, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on eye contact is also impermanent.

Forget mutilating the ear faculty with a sharp iron spike, burning, blazing, and glowing! I’d better focus on the fact that the ear, sounds, ear consciousness, and ear contact are impermanent. And the painful, pleasant, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on ear contact is also impermanent.

Forget mutilating the nose faculty with a sharp nail cutter, burning, blazing, and glowing! I'd better focus on the fact that the nose, smells, nose consciousness, and nose contact are impermanent. And the painful, pleasant, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on nose contact is also impermanent.

Forget mutilating the tongue faculty with a sharp razor, burning, blazing, and glowing! I'd better focus on the fact that the tongue, tastes, tongue consciousness, and tongue contact are impermanent. And the painful, pleasant, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on tongue contact is also impermanent.

Forget mutilating the body faculty with a sharp spear, burning, blazing, and glowing! I'd better focus on the fact that the body, touches, body consciousness, and body contact are impermanent. And the painful, pleasant, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on body contact is also impermanent.

Forget sleeping! I'd better focus on the fact that the mind, ideas, mind consciousness, and mind contact are impermanent. And the painful, pleasant, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on mind contact is also impermanent.'

Seeing this, a learned noble disciple grows disillusioned with the eye, sights, eye consciousness, and eye contact. And they grow disillusioned with the painful, pleasant, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on eye contact. They grow disillusioned with the ear … nose … tongue … body … mind … painful, pleasant, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on mind contact.

Being disillusioned, desire fades away. When desire fades away they're freed. When they're freed, they know they're freed.

They understand: 'Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.'

This is the exposition of the teaching on burning."