SN 46.53 — SN 46:53 Fire | Aggi Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Fire

Aggi Sutta (SN 46:53)

Then, early in the morning, a large number of monks adjusted their lower robes and, taking their bowls & outer robes, went into Sāvatthī for alms. Then the thought occurred to them, “It’s still too early to go for alms in Sāvatthī. Why don’t we go to the park of the wanderers of other sects?”

So the monks went to the park of the wanderers of other sects. On arrival, they exchanged courteous greetings with the wanderers of other sects. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side.

As they were sitting there, the wanderers of other sects said to them, "Friends, Gotama the contemplative teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way: 'Come, monks—abandoning the five hindrances, the corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment—develop the seven factors for awakening as they have come to be.'

"Now, friends, we too teach our disciples in this way: 'Come, you friends—abandoning the five hindrances, the corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment—develop the seven factors for awakening as they have come to be.'

"So, friends, what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there here between Gotama the contemplative and us, when comparing Dhamma teaching with Dhamma teaching, instruction with instruction?"

Then the monks neither delighted in the words of the wanderers of other sects, nor did they reject them. Without delighting or rejecting, they got up from their seats and left, (thinking,) "We will learn the meaning of these words in the presence of the Blessed One."

So, having gone for alms in Sāvatthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they [told him what had happened].

"Monks, when wanderers of other sects speak in that way, they should be addressed in this way: 'Friends, on any occasion when the mind is sluggish, which of the factors of awakening is that the wrong time to develop? Which of the factors of awakening is that the right time to develop? And on any occasion when the mind is restless, which of the factors of awakening is that the wrong time to develop? Which of the factors of awakening is that the right time to develop?'

"Being asked in this way, the wanderers of other sects will be unable to respond and, on top of that, will fall into vexation. Why is that? Because it lies beyond their range. Monks, I don't see anyone in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, who would satisfy the mind with their answer to these questions, aside from the Tathāgata, a disciple of the Tathāgata, or one who had heard it from them.

"Now, monks, on any occasion when the mind is sluggish, that is the wrong time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is hard to raise up by those mental qualities. Just as if a man, wanting to make a small fire blaze up, were to place wet grass in it, wet cow dung, & wet sticks; were to give it a spray of water and smother it with dust. Is it possible that he would make the small fire blaze up?"

"No, lord."

"In the same way, monks, on any occasion the mind is sluggish, that is the wrong time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening,

equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is hard to raise up by those mental qualities.

“Now, on any occasion when the mind is sluggish, that is the right time to develop analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is easy to raise up by those mental qualities. Just as if a man, wanting to make a small fire blaze up, were to place dry grass in it, dry cow dung, & dry sticks; were to blow on it with his mouth and not smother it with dust. Is it possible that he would make the small fire blaze up?

“Yes, lord.

“In the same way, monks, on any occasion when the mind is sluggish, that is the right time to develop analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is easy to raise up by those mental qualities.

“Now, on any occasion when the mind is restless, that is the wrong time to develop analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The restless mind is hard to still with those mental qualities. Just as if a man, wanting to put out a large fire, were to place dry grass in it, dry cow dung, & dry sticks; were to blow on it with his mouth and not smother it with dust. Is it possible that he would put it out?”

“No, lord.”

“In the same way, monks, on any occasion when the mind is restless, that is the wrong time to develop analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The restless mind is hard to still with those mental qualities.

“Now, on occasions when the mind is restless, that is the right time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The restless mind is easy to still with those mental qualities. Just as if a man, wanting to put out a large fire, were to place wet grass in it, wet cow dung, & wet sticks; were to give it a spray of water and smother it with dust. Is it possible that he would put it out?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, monks, when the mind is restless, that is the right time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The restless mind is easy to still with those mental qualities.

“As for mindfulness, I tell you, that serves every purpose.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 101; SN 47:8; SN 51:20; AN 3:103