The Backstory for Saṁyutta Nikāya 35.28 - The Fire Sermon



excerpt from
The Great Chapter
(Mahākhandhako, Mv 1-4)
translated by
Ānandajoti Bhikkhu
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Preface

In preparing for a weekend class for London Insight on the senses, I wanted to reread the backstory for Saṁyutta Nikāya 35.28 - The Fire Sermon. It took a bit of searching the internet to find a copy of the story, but I did in Ānandajoti Bhikkhu's translation of the Great Chapter of the Vinaya. Since his work is licesened under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 License, I excerpted the story from his website at https://ancient-buddhist-texts.net/English-Texts/Great-Chapter/index.htm and created this little book.

I did make a few changes:

Fortunate One => Blessed One
Worthy One => Arahant
Worthiness => Arahantship
pollutants => āsavas
38: The Instruction about Burning => 38: The Fire Sermon
passion => greed
weary => disenchanted
weariness => disenchantment

I changed "he" to "one" where appropriate,
and I added the footnote at 38: The Fire Sermon

All that follows is from Ānandajoti Bhikkhu's translation, with the minor changes above.

May you enjoy this mythological backstory for the Fire Sermon.

Introduction

This is the backstory for Saṁyutta Nikāya 35.28 - The Fire Sermon. This is traditionally said to be the Buddha's "third sermon." This story appears in the Great Chapter of the Vinaya. The text of the first four sections of the Great Chapter in the Vinaya (Discipline collection) traces the life and career of the Buddha for a period of about one year after the Complete Awakening, and is one of the earliest sources we have for this period in the Buddha's life. This section of the text forms a continuous narrative before it is replaced with a detailing of the various duties incumbent on monastics, and other rules for the monks and nuns.
...

The third section for recital finds the Buddha back in Uruvelā, but now somewhat north of where he had Awakened, in the Ashram of the fire-worshipper Uruvelā Kassapa, who is living there with his five-hundred disciples. This Kassapa is one of three brothers who are living in the area engaged in the same practice, with three hundred and two hundred disciples each.

The Buddha asks if he can stay for the night in the firehouse. At first Kassapa refuses, fearing that a Dragon (Nāga) who is living there would harm him, but eventually the Buddha persuades Kassapa to let him stay. During the night there is a fiery contest with the Dragon, which the Buddha wins.

Kassapa is impressed by this, but he still believes that the Buddha is not at the same standing as he is himself. Still he offers to provide food for the Buddha if he stays on in the Ashram, and the Buddha agrees. This exact same story is told twice in the text, first in prose and then in verse. The commentary specifically states that the verses came later and were inserted after the prose. There is yet another rescension of the same story in the Mahāvastu, but there it occurs not as the first but as the last of a series of miracles that are different from those recorded in the Pāḷi.

The Pāḷi text then has a series of miracles performed by the Buddha, but none of them succeed in convincing Kassapa of the Buddha's superiority, so eventually the Buddha tells Kassapa straight that he is neither a Arahant nor is he on his way to becoming one. Kassapa is convinced and asks for ordination, and both he and his followers and afterwards his brothers and their followers are ordained.

At this point the Buddha gives the famous Instruction about Burning, showing that the true fires are burning in our hearts, and rather than leading to release they are keeping us entrapped in the round of birth and death, and all 1,000 yogis attain to Arahantship upon hearing the discourse, which closes the third section.

21: The First Miracle (The Dragon-King - Prose)

Then the Blessed One while walking gradually on walking tour arrived at Uruvela. Then at that time at Uruvela there lived three yogis: known as Uruvelakassapa, Nadikassapa, and Gayakassapa. Of these, the yogi Uruvelakassapa was the leader, guide, chief, director, and instructor of five hundred yogis. The yogi Nadikassapa was the leader, guide, chief, director, and instructor of three hundred yogis. The yogi Gayakassapa was the leader, guide, chief, director, and instructor of two hundred yogis.

Then the Blessed One approached the yogi Uruvelakassapa's ashram, and after approaching he said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: "If it is not troublesome to you, Kassapa, we would stay for one night in the sacrificial firehouse." "It is not troublesome to me, Great Ascetic, (but) there is a fierce, venomous, poisonous, Dragon-King here, having psychic power, he should not (be allowed to) harass you."

For a second time the Blessed One said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: "If it is not troublesome to you, Kassapa, we would stay for one night in the sacrificial firehouse." "It is not troublesome to me, Great Ascetic, (but) there is a fierce, venomous, poisonous, Dragon-King here, having psychic power, he should not (be allowed to) harass you."

For a third time the Blessed One said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: "If it is not troublesome to you, Kassapa, we would stay for one night in the sacrificial firehouse." "It is not troublesome to me, Great Ascetic, (but) there is a fierce, venomous, poisonous, Dragon-King here, having psychic power, he should not (be allowed to) harass you."

"It is all right, he will not harass me, come now, Kassapa, allow me the sacrificial firehouse." "Dwell (there), Great Ascetic, according to your pleasure."

Then the Blessed One, after entering the sacrificial firehouse and preparing a grass covering, sat down, folded his legs crosswise, set his body straight, and established mindfulness at the front. Then the Dragon saw that the Blessed One had entered, and after seeing (him), pained, depressed, he belched out smoke.

Then this occurred to the Blessed One: "Now what if I, without having destroyed this Dragon's tegument, skin, flesh, muscle, bone, or bone-marrow, were to overcome (the Dragon's) power with (my) power?" Then the Blessed One so arranged it with his psychic powers that he (also) belched out smoke. Then that Dragon, unbearably angry, blazed forth. The Blessed One, having attained the fire-element, also blazed forth, and both of them burned so bright it was as if the sacrificial firehouse was on fire, in flames, was burning down.

Then those yogis, having surrounded the sacrificial firehouse, said this: "The Great Ascetic is surely intelligent, but he is harassed by the Dragon." Then the Blessed One, with the passing of that night, without harming that Dragon's tegument, skin, flesh, muscle, bone, or bone-marrow, after overcoming (the Dragon's) power with (his own) power and dropping him into his bowl, showed (him) to the yogi Uruvelakassapa, (saying): "This is your Dragon, Kassapa, his power was overcome by (my) power."

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: "Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since he can overcome this fierce, venomous, poisonous, Dragon-King's psychic power with (his own) power, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am."

22: The First Miracle (The Dragon-King - Verse)

Near the (river) Nerañjarā the Blessed One said this to Uruvelakassapa:

“If it is not troublesome to you, Kassapa, we would live for this moonlight night in the fire shelter.”
“It is not troublesome to me, Great Ascetic, but seeking your comfort I (would) prevent you,

(For) there is a fierce, venomous, poisonous, Dragon-King here, having psychic power - he should not (be allowed to) harass you!”

“It is all right, he will not harass me, come now, Kassapa, allow me the sacrificial firehouse.”

Having understood that “(permission is) given”, not daunted he entered, unafraid.
Having seen the Seer enter, the Snake-Dragon, depressed, belched out smoke.

With intent and gladdened mind the Human-Dragon also belched out smoke right there.
Unbearably angry, the Snake-Dragon blazed forth like fire.

Skilled in the fire-element, the Human-Dragon also blazed forth right there,
They both burned so brightly that the yogis surveying the sacrificial firehouse, (said):

“The Great Ascetic is surely intelligent, but he is harassed by the Dragon.”
With the passing of the night, the Dragon’s flames were destroyed,

But the multi-coloured flames of the One of Psychic Power remained.
Then there were blue, red, crimson, yellow, and quartz-coloured

Multi-coloured flames on the body of Aṅgirasa.
After putting (him) in his bowl, he showed the Snake-Dragon to the brāhmaṇa, (saying):

“This is your Dragon, Kassapa, his psychic power was overcome by (my) power.”

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa convinced by this psychic miracle of the Blessed One, said this to the Blessed One: “Live right here, Great Ascetic, I (will give) a constant supply of food to you.”

23: The Second Miracle (The Four Great Kings)

Then the Blessed One, not far from the yogi Uruvelakassapa's ashram, dwelt in a certain jungle thicket. Then the Four Great Kings, towards the end of the night, having lit up the whole of that jungle thicket with their surpassing beauty, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching and worshipping the Blessed One, they stood at the four directions like a great mass of fire.

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching he said this to the Blessed One: "It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready. Who were those, Great Ascetic, towards the end of the night, who, having lit up the whole of that jungle thicket with their surpassing beauty, approached you, and after approaching and worshipping you, stood at the four directions like a great mass of fire?"

"Those, Kassapa, were the Four Great Kings, who approached me to listen to the Dhamma." Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: "Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since even the Four Great Kings will approach him to listen to the Dhamma, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am." Then the Blessed One, having eaten the yogi Uruvelakassapa's food, dwelt on in that very jungle thicket.

24: The Third Miracle (Sakka, the Lord of the Gods)

Then Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, towards the end of the night, having lit up the whole of that jungle thicket with his surpassing beauty, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching and worshipping the Blessed One, he stood at one side like a great mass of fire, (having colours) more brilliant, and more excellent, than the former colours.

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching he said this to the Blessed One: "It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready. Who was that, Great Ascetic, towards the end of the night, who, having lit up the whole of that jungle thicket with his surpassing beauty, approached you, and after approaching and worshipping you, stood at one side like a great mass of fire, (having colours) more brilliant, and more excellent, than the former colours." "That, Kassapa, was Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, who approached me to listen to the Dhamma."

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: "Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since even Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, will approach him to listen to the Dhamma, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am." Then the Blessed One, having eaten the yogi Uruvelakassapa's food, dwelt on in that very jungle thicket.

25: The Fourth Miracle (Brahmā Sahampati)

Then Brahmā Sahampati, towards the end of the night, having lit up the whole of that jungle thicket with his surpassing beauty, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching and worshipping the Blessed One, he stood at one side like a great mass of fire, (having colours) more brilliant, and more excellent, than the former colours.

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching he said this to the Blessed One: “It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready. Who was that, Great Ascetic who, towards the end of the night, having lit up the whole of that jungle thicket with his surpassing beauty, approached you, and after approaching and worshipping you, stood at one side like a great mass of fire, (having colours) more brilliant, and more excellent, than the former colours.” “That, Kassapa, was Brahmā Sahampati, who approached me to listen to the Dhamma.”

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since even Brahmā Sahampati will approach him to listen to the Dhamma, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.” Then the Blessed One, having eaten the yogi Uruvelakassapa’s food, dwelt on in that very jungle thicket.

26: The Fifth Miracle (Mind-Reading)

Then at that time the yogi Uruvelakassapa had arranged for a great sacrifice, and almost the whole (population) of Aṅga and Magadha, having gathered abundant food and drinks, had a desire to attend. Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Now I have arranged for a great sacrifice, and almost the whole (population) of Aṅga and Magadha, having gathered abundant food and drinks, will attend. If the Great Ascetic performs a powerful miracle in the midst of the people his gain and honour will increase, and my gain and honour will decrease. Surely the Great Ascetic should not come on the morrow.”

Then the Blessed One, knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in the yogi Uruvelakassapa’s mind, after approaching Northern Kuru, gathering alms from there, and eating them at lake Anotatta, made his dwelling right there for the day. Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching, he said this to the Blessed One: “It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready. Why did you not come yesterday, Great Ascetic, we remembered you, (thinking): ‘Why does the Great Ascetic not come? A portion of the food and drinks was set aside for you.”

“Didn't this occur to you, Kassapa: ‘Now I have arranged for a great sacrifice, and almost the whole (population) of Aṅga and Magadha, having gathered abundant food and drinks, will attend. If the Great Ascetic performs a powerful miracle in the midst of the people his gain and honour will increase, and my gain and honour will decrease. Surely the Great Ascetic should not come on the morrow’? Then I, Kassapa, knowing with my mind the reflection that had arisen in your mind, after approaching Northern Kuru, gathering alms from there, and eating them at lake Anotatta, made my dwelling right there for the day.”

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since he can even know (my) mind with (his) mind, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.” Then the Blessed One, having eaten the yogi Uruvelakassapa’s food, dwelt on in that very jungle thicket.

27: The Rag-Robe Miracle

Then at that time there was a rag-robe that had arisen to the Blessed One. Then this occurred to the Blessed One: "Now where can I wash this rag-robe?" Then, Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in the Blessed One's mind, having dug a lake with his hand, said this to the Blessed One: "May the Blessed One, venerable Sir, wash the rag-robe here."

Then this occurred to the Blessed One: "Now on what can I beat this rag-robe?" Then, Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in the Blessed One's mind, set up a great rock, (saying): "May the Blessed One, venerable Sir, beat the rag-robe here."

Then this occurred to the Blessed One: "Now having grabbed hold of what can I emerge (from the lake)?" Then a god who was living in an Arjuna (tree), knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in the Blessed One's mind, bent down a branch, (saying): "May the Blessed One, venerable Sir, having grabbed hold here emerge (from the lake)."

Then this occurred to the Blessed One: "Now on what can I stretch out this rag-robe (for drying)?" Then, Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in the Blessed One's mind, set up a great rock, (saying): "May the Blessed One, venerable Sir, stretch out the rag-robe here."

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching, he said this to the Blessed One: "It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready. Now how is it, Great Ascetic, this lake was not here formerly, (and yet) this lake is here? This rock was not set up here formerly: this rock was set up by whom? This branch of the Arjuna (tree) was not bent down formerly, (and yet) this branch is bent down (now)? "

"Here, Kassapa, a rag-robe arose to me. Then, Kassapa, this occurred to me: 'Now where can I wash this rag-robe?' Then, Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, Kassapa, knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in my mind, having dug a lake with his hand, said this to me: 'May the Blessed One, venerable Sir, wash the rag-robe here,' the lake was dug by the divine being himself with his own hand.

Then this, Kassapa, occurred to me: 'Now on what can I beat this rag-robe?' Then, Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, Kassapa, knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in my mind, set up a great rock, (saying): 'May the Blessed One, venerable Sir, beat the rag-robe here,' the rock was set up by the divine being himself.

Then, Kassapa, this occurred to me: 'Now having grabbed hold of what can I emerge (from the lake)?' Then, Kassapa, a god who was living in an Arjuna (tree), knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in my mind, bent down a branch, (saying): 'May the Blessed One, venerable Sir, having grabbed hold here emerge (from the lake),' this Arjuna (tree-spirit) gave a hand himself.

Then, Kassapa, this occurred to me: 'Now on what can I stretch out this rag-robe (for drying)?' Then, Kassapa, Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in my mind, set up a great rock, (saying): 'May the Blessed One, venerable Sir, stretch out the rag-robe here,' the rock was set up by this divine being himself."

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since even Sakka, the Lord of the Gods, does (him) service, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am." Then the Blessed One, having eaten the yogi Uruvelakassapa's food, dwelt on in that very jungle thicket.

28: The Rose-Apple Miracle

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching he announced the time, (saying): “It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready.” “You go ahead, Kassapa, I am coming.” After sending away the yogi Uruvelakassapa, picking a fruit from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, he sat down in the sacrificial firehouse.

The yogi Uruvelakassapa saw the Blessed One sitting in the sacrificial firehouse, and after seeing (him), he said this to the Blessed One: “By what path, Great Ascetic, did you come, I set out earlier than you, (but) you, arriving earlier, are (already) sitting down in the sacrificial firehouse.”

“Here, Kassapa, after sending you away, picking a fruit from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, I sat down in the sacrificial firehouse. This is the Rose-Apple fruit, Kassapa, endowed with (good) colour, scent, and taste, if you wish, you can eat (it).”

“Enough, Great Ascetic, you surely brought it, you should surely eat it.”

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since after sending me away earlier, picking a fruit from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, he can sit down in the sacrificial firehouse, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.” Then the Blessed One, having eaten the yogi Uruvelakassapa’s food, dwelt on in that very jungle thicket.

29: The Mango Miracle

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching he announced the time, (saying): “It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready.” “You go ahead, Kassapa, I am coming.” After sending away the yogi Uruvelakassapa, picking a fruit from a Mango (tree) not far from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, he sat down in the sacrificial firehouse.

The yogi Uruvelakassapa saw the Blessed One sitting in the sacrificial firehouse, and after seeing (him), he said this to the Blessed One: “By what path, Great Ascetic, did you come, I set out earlier than you, (but) you, arriving earlier, are (already) sitting down in the sacrificial firehouse.” “Here, Kassapa, after sending you away, picking a fruit from a Mango (tree) not far from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, I sat down in the sacrificial firehouse. This is the Mango fruit, Kassapa, endowed with (good) colour, scent, and taste, if you wish, you can eat (it).”

“Enough, Great Ascetic, you surely brought it, you should surely eat it.”

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since after sending me away earlier, picking a fruit from a Mango (tree) not far from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, he can sit down in the sacrificial firehouse, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.” Then the Blessed One, having eaten the yogi Uruvelakassapa’s food, dwelt on in that very jungle thicket.

30: The Emblic Myrobalan Miracle

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching he announced the time, (saying): “It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready.” “You go ahead, Kassapa, I am coming.” After sending away the yogi Uruvelakassapa, picking a fruit from an Emblic Myrobalan (tree) not far from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, he sat down in the sacrificial firehouse.

The yogi Uruvelakassapa saw the Blessed One sitting in the sacrificial firehouse, and after seeing (him), he said this to the Blessed One: “By what path, Great Ascetic, did you come, I set out earlier than you, (but) you, arriving earlier, are (already) sitting down in the sacrificial firehouse.” “Here, Kassapa, after sending you away, picking a fruit from an Emblic Myrobalan (tree) not far from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, I sat down in the sacrificial firehouse. This is the Emblic Myrobalan fruit, Kassapa, endowed with (good) colour, scent, and taste, if you wish, you can eat (it).”

“Enough, Great Ascetic, you surely brought it, you should surely eat it.”

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since after sending me away earlier, picking a fruit from an Emblic Myrobalan (tree) not far from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, he can sit down in the sacrificial firehouse, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.” Then the Blessed One, having eaten the yogi Uruvelakassapa’s food, dwelt on in that very jungle thicket.

31: The Yellow Myrobalan Miracle

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching he announced the time, (saying): “It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready.” “You go ahead, Kassapa, I am coming.” After sending away the yogi Uruvelakassapa, picking a fruit from a Yellow Myrobalan (tree) not far from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, he sat down in the sacrificial firehouse.

The yogi Uruvelakassapa saw the Blessed One sitting in the sacrificial firehouse, and after seeing (him), he said this to the Blessed One: “By what path, Great Ascetic, did you come, I set out earlier than you, (but) you, arriving earlier, are (already) sitting down in the sacrificial firehouse.” “Here, Kassapa, after sending you away, picking a fruit from a Yellow Myrobalan (tree) not far from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, I sat down in the sacrificial firehouse. This is the Yellow Myrobalan fruit, Kassapa, endowed with (good) colour, scent, and taste, if you wish, you can eat (it).”

“Enough, Great Ascetic, you surely brought it, you should surely eat it.”

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since after sending me away earlier, picking a fruit from a Yellow Myrobalan (tree) not far from the Rose-Apple (tree), (after which) the Rose-Apple Island is named, and arriving earlier, he can sit down in the sacrificial firehouse, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.” Then the Blessed One, having eaten the yogi Uruvelakassapa’s food, dwelt on in that very jungle thicket.

32: The Coral Tree Flower Miracle

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, with the passing of that night, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching he announced the time, (saying): “It is time, Great Ascetic, the meal is ready.” “You go ahead, Kassapa, I am coming.” After sending away the yogi Uruvelakassapa, going to the Tāvatiṁsa (Heaven), picking a Coral tree flower, and arriving earlier, he sat down in the sacrificial firehouse.

The yogi Uruvelakassapa saw the Blessed One sitting in the sacrificial firehouse, and after seeing (him), he said this to the Blessed One: “By what path, Great Ascetic, did you come, I set out earlier than you, (but) you, arriving earlier, are (already) sitting down in the sacrificial firehouse.” “Here, Kassapa, after sending you away, going to the Tāvatiṁsa (Heaven), picking a Coral tree flower, and arriving earlier, I sat down in the sacrificial firehouse. This is the Coral tree flower, Kassapa, endowed with (good) colour and scent, if you wish, you can take (it).”

“Enough, Great Ascetic, you surely brought it, you should surely take it.”

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since after sending me away earlier, going to the Tāvatiṁsa (Heaven), picking a Coral tree flower, and arriving earlier, he can sit down in the sacrificial firehouse, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.”

33: The Sacred Fire Miracles

Then at that time those yogis who wanted to tend the sacred fires were not able to chop the firewood. Then this occurred to those yogis: “No doubt it is because of the Great Ascetic’s psychic power that we are not able to chop the firewood.” Then the Blessed One said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Let the firewood be chopped, Kassapa.” “Let it be chopped, Great Ascetic,” and more than five hundred pieces of firewood were chopped.

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since (on his say so) firewood can be chopped, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.”

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Then at that time those yogis who wanted to tend the sacred fires were not able to light the fires. Then this occurred to those yogis: “No doubt it is because of the Great Ascetic’s psychic power that we are not able to light the sacred fires.” Then the Blessed One said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Let the sacred fires be lit, Kassapa.” “Let them be lit, Great Ascetic,” and more than five hundred sacred fires were lit.

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since (on his say so) sacred fires can be lit, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.”

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Then at that time those yogis, after tending the sacred fires, were not able to put the sacred fires out. Then this occurred to those yogis: “No doubt it is because of the Great Ascetic’s psychic power that we are not able to put out the sacred fires.” Then the Blessed One said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Let the sacred fires be put out, Kassapa.” “Let them be put out, Great Ascetic,” and more than five hundred sacred fires were put out.

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since (on his say so) sacred fires can be put out, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.”

34: The Coal-Pan Miracle

Then at that time those yogis, in the cold Winter nights, in between ‘the eights’, at the time of the snowfall, in the river Nerañjarā, were plunging in, and plunging out, were plunging in and out. Then the Blessed One created about five hundred coal-pans, where those yogis, after emerging, warmed (themselves). Then this occurred to those yogis: “No doubt it is because of the Great Ascetic’s psychic power that these coal-pans were created.”

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since he can create so many coal-pans for them, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.”

35: The Island Miracle

Then at that time a great cloud poured down out of season, and a great flood-water arose, and in that area where the Blessed One was living the (whole) place became submerged with water. Then this occurred to the Blessed One: “Now what if I, having risen above the water on all sides, were to walk (on an island) in the middle on dusty ground?” Then the Blessed One, having risen above the water on all sides, walked (on an island) in the middle of dusty ground.

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa (thinking): ‘May the Great Ascetic not be carried away by water.’ with a boat and a great many yogis went to that place in the area where the Blessed One was living. The yogi Uruvelakassapa saw that the Blessed One, having risen above the water on all sides, was walking (on an island) in the middle of dusty ground, and after seeing (it), he said this to the Blessed One: “Are you here, Great Ascetic?” “It is I, Kassapa,” and after rising up into the sky, he reappeared in the boat.

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since even the water cannot carry him away, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.”

36: The Ordination of Kassapa and his Followers

Then this occurred to the Blessed One: “For a long time this will occur to that foolish fellow: ‘Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, but he is surely not a Arahant like I am.’ Now what if I were to cause spiritual anxiety to this yogi?” Then the Blessed One said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “You are certainly not a Arahant, Kassapa. Nor have you entered the path to Arahantship. This practice of yours is not one whereby you could be a Arahant, or one who has entered the path to Arahantship.”

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, having fallen with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, said this to the Blessed One: “May I receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Blessed One, may I receive the full ordination.” “But you Kassapa, are the leader, guide, chief, director and instructor of five hundred yogis, you should them give permission and they can do whatever they are thinking.”

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa approached those yogis, and after approaching he said this to those yogis: “I wish to live the spiritual life under the Great Ascetic, you, dear friends, can do whatever you are thinking.” [They replied:] “For a long time, friend, we have had confidence in the Great Ascetic, if you, friend, will live the spiritual life under the Great Ascetic, all of us will live the spiritual life under the Great Ascetic.”

Then those yogis, after throwing their hair, locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment into the water, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching and falling with their heads at the feet of the Blessed One, they said this to the Blessed One: “May we receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Blessed One, may we receive the full ordination.”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One, “the Dhamma has been well-proclaimed, live the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering.” That was these venerable ones’ full ordination.

37: The Ordination of the Other Yogis

The yogi Nadīkassapa saw the hair, locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment floating in the water, and after seeing (them), this occurred to him: “Let there be no danger for my brothers,” and he sent yogis, (saying): “Go and find out about my brothers,” and he together with three hundred yogis approached the venerable Uruvelakassapa, and after approaching he said this to the venerable Uruvelakassapa: “Is this better, Kassapa?” “Yes, friend, this is better.”

Then those yogis, after throwing their hair, locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment into the water, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching and falling with their heads at the feet of the Blessed One, they said this to the Blessed One: “May we receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Blessed One, may we receive the full ordination.”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One, “the Dhamma has been well-proclaimed, live the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering.” That was these venerable ones’ full ordination.

The yogi Gayākassapa saw the hair, locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment floating in the water, and after seeing (them), this occurred to him: “Let there be no danger for my brothers,” and he sent yogis, (saying): “Go and find out about my brothers,” and he together with two hundred yogis approached the venerable Uruvelakassapa, and after approaching he said this to the venerable Uruvelakassapa: “Is this better, Kassapa?” “Yes, friend, this is better. ”

Then those yogis, after throwing their hair, locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment into the water, approached the Blessed One, and after approaching and falling with their heads at the feet of the Blessed One, they said this to the Blessed One: “May we receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Blessed One, may we receive the full ordination.”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One, “the Dhamma has been well-proclaimed, live the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering.” That was these venerable ones’ full ordination.

Through the Blessed One’s determining five hundred pieces of firewood that were not chopped were chopped, fires that were not lit were lit, that were not put out were put out, (and) five hundred coal-pans were created. In this way there were three and a half thousand miracles.

38: The Fire Sermon

Then the Blessed One, having dwelt at Uruvelā for as long as he liked, left on walking tour for Gayā's Head, together with a great Community of monks, with a thousand monks all of whom were formerly yogis. There the Blessed One dwelt near Gayā, on Gayā's Head together with a thousand monks.

There the Blessed One addressed the monks, (saying): "All is burning, monks. What all is burning, monks? The eye is burning, monks, forms are burning, eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on eye-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of greed, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion.[1] It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

The ear is burning, sounds are burning, ear-consciousness is burning, ear-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on ear-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of greed, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

The nose is burning, scents are burning, nose-consciousness is burning, nose-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on nose-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of greed, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

The tongue is burning, tastes are burning, tongue-consciousness is burning, tongue-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on tongue-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of greed, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

The body is burning, tangibles are burning, body-consciousness is burning, body-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on body-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of greed, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

The mind is burning, thoughts are burning, mind-consciousness is burning, mind-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on mind-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of greed, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

Seeing this, monks, the learned Noble disciple grows disenchanted of the eye, grows disenchanted of forms, grows disenchanted of eye-consciousness, grows disenchanted of eye-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on eye-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, one also grows disenchanted of that.

One grows disenchanted of the ear, grows disenchanted of sounds, grows disenchanted of ear-consciousness, grows disenchanted of ear-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on ear-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, one also grows disenchanted of that.

One grows disenchanted of the nose, grows disenchanted of scents, grows disenchanted of nose-consciousness, grows disenchanted of nose-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on nose-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, one also grows disenchanted of that.

One grows disenchanted of the tongue, grows disenchanted of tastes, grows disenchanted of tongue-consciousness, grows disenchanted of tongue-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on tongue-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, one also grows disenchanted of that.

One grows disenchanted of the body, grows disenchanted of tangibles, grows disenchanted of body-consciousness, grows disenchanted of body-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on body-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, one also grows disenchanted of that.

One grows disenchanted of the mind, grows disenchanted of thoughts, grows disenchanted of mind-consciousness, grows disenchanted of mind-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on mind-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, one also grows disenchanted of that, through weariness he becomes dispassionate, through dispassion he is liberated, in liberation, there is the knowledge that such is liberation:

‘Destroyed is birth
accomplished is the spiritual life
done is what ought to be done
there is no more of this mundane state - this he knows.’

Moreover, as this sermon was being given, those one thousand monks’ minds were liberated from the āsavas, without attachment.

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1. rāgagginā, dosagginā, mohagginā
rāgaggi: masc. fire of lust; fire of desire; fire of craving [rāga + aggi]
dosaggi: masc. fire of hatred; fire of ill-will [dosa + agni]
mohaggi: masc. fire of delusion; fire of illusion [moha + aggi]