SN 12.35 — Ignorance is a Requirement

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 12.35

4. Kaḷāra the Aristocrat

Ignorance is a Requirement

At Sāvatthī.

“Ignorance is a requirement for choices.

Choices are a requirement for consciousness. … That is how this entire mass of suffering originates.”

When this was said, one of the mendicants said to the Buddha, “What are old age and death, sir, and who do they belong to?”

“That’s not a cogent question,” said the Buddha. “You might say, ‘What are old age and death, and who do they belong to?’ Or you might say, ‘Old age and death are one thing, who they belong to is another.’ But both of these mean the same thing, only the phrasing differs. Mendicant, if you have the view that the soul and the body are one and the same, there is no living of the spiritual life. If you have the view that the soul is one thing, the body another, there is no living of the spiritual life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way: ‘Rebirth is a requirement for old age and death.’”

“What is rebirth, sir, and who does it belong to?”

“That’s not a cogent question,” said the Buddha. “You might say, ‘What is rebirth, and who does it belong to?’ Or you might say, ‘Rebirth is one thing, who it belongs to is another.’ But both of these mean the same thing, only the phrasing differs. Mendicant, if you have the view that the soul and the body are one and the same, there is no living of the spiritual life. If you have the view that the soul is one thing, the body another, there is no living of the spiritual life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way: ‘Continued existence is a requirement for rebirth.’”

“What is continued existence, sir, and who is it for?”

“That’s not a cogent question,” said the Buddha. “You might say, ‘What is continued existence, and who does it belong to?’ Or you might say, ‘Continued existence is one thing, who it belongs to is another.’ But both of these mean the same thing, only the phrasing differs. Mendicant, if you have the view that the soul and the body are one and the same, there is no living of the spiritual life. If you have the view that the soul is one thing, the

body another, there is no living of the spiritual life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way: ‘Grasping is a requirement for continued existence.’ … ‘Craving is a requirement for grasping.’ … ‘Feeling is a requirement for craving.’ … ‘Contact is a requirement for feeling.’ … ‘The six sense fields are requirements for contact.’ … ‘Name and form are requirements for the six sense fields.’ … ‘Consciousness is a requirement for name and form.’ … ‘Choices are a requirement for consciousness.’”

“What are choices, sir, and who do they belong to?”

“That’s not a cogent question,” said the Buddha. “You might say, ‘What are choices, and who do they belong to?’ Or you might say, ‘Choices are one thing, who they belong to is another.’ But both of these mean the same thing, only the phrasing differs. Mendicant, if you have the view that the soul and the body are one and the same, there is no living of the spiritual life. If you have the view that the soul is one thing, the body another, there is no living of the spiritual life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way: ‘Ignorance is a requirement for choices.’

When ignorance fades away and ceases with no residue left behind, then any twists, ducks, and dodges are given up: ‘What are old age and death, and who do they belong to?’ or ‘old age and death are one thing, who they belong to is another’, or ‘the soul and the body are one and the same’, or ‘the soul is one thing, the body another.’ These are all cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future.

When ignorance fades away and ceases no residue left behind, then any twists, ducks, and dodges are given up: ‘What is rebirth, and who does it belong to?’ or ‘rebirth is one thing, who it belongs to is another’, or ‘the soul and the body are one and the same’, or ‘the soul is one thing, the body another.’ These are all cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future.

When ignorance fades away and ceases no residue left behind, then any twists, ducks, and dodges are given up: ‘What is continued existence …’ ‘What is grasping …’ ‘What is craving …’ ‘What is feeling …’ ‘What is contact …’ ‘What are the six sense fields …’ ‘What are name and form …’ ‘What is consciousness …’

When ignorance fades away and ceases no residue left behind, then any twists, ducks, and dodges are given up: ‘What are choices, and who do they belong to?’ or ‘choices are one thing, who they belong to is another’, or ‘the soul and the body are one and the same’, or ‘the soul is one thing, the body another.’ These are all cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future.”