SN 16.5 — Old Age

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 16.5

1. Kassapa

Old Age

So I have heard. Near Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Grove. Then Venerable Mahākassapa went up to the Buddha, bowed, and sat down to one side. The Buddha said to him:

“You’re old now, Kassapa. Those worn-out hempen rag robes must be a burden for you. So Kassapa, you should wear clothes given by householders, accept invitations for the meal, and stay in my presence.”

“For a long time, sir, I’ve lived in the wilderness, eaten only almsfood, worn rag robes, and owned just three robes; and I’ve praised these things. I’ve been one of few wishes, content, secluded, aloof, and energetic; and I’ve praised these things.”

“But seeing what benefit, Kassapa, have you long practiced these things?”

“Sir, seeing two benefits I have long practiced these things.

I see happiness for myself in this life. And I have sympathy for future generations, thinking: ‘Hopefully those who come after might follow my example.’ For they may think: ‘It seems that the disciples awakened after the Buddha for a long time lived in the wilderness, ate only almsfood, wore rag robes, and owned just three robes; and they praised these things. They were of few wishes, content, secluded, aloof, and energetic; and they praised these things.’ They’ll practice accordingly, which will be for their lasting welfare and happiness.

Seeing these two benefits I have long practiced these things.”

“Good, good, Kassapa! You’re acting for the welfare and happiness of the people, out of sympathy for the world, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans. So Kassapa, wear worn-out hempen rag robes, walk for alms, and stay in the wilderness.”