SN 22.90 — With Channa

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Text

Linked Discourses 22.90

9. Senior Mendicants

With Channa

At one time several senior mendicants were staying near Varanasi in the deer park at Isipatana.

Then in the late afternoon, Venerable Channa came out of retreat. Taking a latchkey, he went from dwelling to dwelling, going up to the senior mendicants and saying, “May the venerable senior mendicants advise me and instruct me! May they give me a Dhamma talk so that I can see the teaching!”

When he said this, the senior mendicants said to Venerable Channa:

“Reverend Channa, form, feeling, perception, choices, and consciousness are impermanent. Form, feeling, perception, choices, and consciousness are not-self. All conditions are impermanent. All things are not-self.”

Then Venerable Channa thought, “I too think in this way. … And yet my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided about the stilling of all activities, the letting go of all attachments, the ending of craving, fading away, cessation, extinguishment. Because of anxiety, grasping arises and keeps turning back to the thought: ‘So who then is my self?’ But that doesn’t happen for someone who sees the teaching. Who can teach me the Dhamma so that I can see the teaching?”

Then Venerable Channa thought, “Venerable Ānanda is staying near Kosambī in Ghosita’s monastery. He’s praised by the Buddha and esteemed by his sensible spiritual companions. He’s quite capable of teaching me the Dhamma so that I can see the teaching. Since I have so much trust in Venerable Ānanda, why don’t I go to see him?”

Then Channa set his lodgings in order and, taking his bowl and robe, set out for Kosambī. He went to see Ānanda in Ghosita’s monastery, exchanged greetings with him, and told him what had happened. Then he said,

“May Venerable Ānanda advise me and instruct me! May he give me a Dhamma talk so that I can see the teaching!”

“I’m already delighted with Venerable Channa. Hopefully you’ve opened yourself up and severed your hard-heartedness. Listen well, Channa. You are capable of understanding the

teaching.”

Then right away Channa was filled with lofty rapture and joy, “It seems I’m capable of understanding the teaching!”

“Reverend Channa, I heard and learned in the presence of the Buddha his advice to the mendicant Kaccānagotta:

‘Kaccāna, this world mostly relies on the duality of existence and non-existence.

But for one who truly sees the origin of the world with right understanding, the concept of non-existence regarding the world does not occur. And for one who truly sees the cessation of the world with right understanding, the concept of existence regarding the world does not occur.

This world is for the most part shackled by getting involved, grasping, and insisting.

But if—for all that getting involved and grasping, mental fixation, and insistence and underlying tendency—they do not get attracted, grasp, and fixate on the thought, ‘my self’, they’ll have no doubt or uncertainty that what arises is just suffering arising, and what ceases is just suffering ceasing. Their knowledge of this is independent of others.

This is how right view is defined.

“All exists”: this is one extreme.

“All does not exist”: this is the second extreme.

Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way:

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

When ignorance fades away and ceases with no residue left behind, choices cease. … That is how this entire mass of suffering ceases.”’”

“Reverend Ānanda, this is how it is when you have such venerables as spiritual companions to advise and instruct you out of kindness and sympathy. And now that I’ve heard this teaching from Venerable Ānanda, I’ve comprehended the teaching.”