SN 44.2 — With Anurādha

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 44.2

1. The Undeclared Points

With Anurādha

At one time the Buddha was staying near Vesālī, at the Great Wood, in the hall with the peaked roof.

Now at that time Venerable Anurādha was staying not far from the Buddha in a wilderness hut. Then several wanderers of other religions went up to Venerable Anurādha and exchanged greetings with him.

When the greetings and polite conversation were over, they sat down to one side and said to him:

“Reverend Anurādha, when a realized one is describing a realized one—a supreme person, highest of people, who has reached the highest point—they describe them in these four ways: After death, a realized one still exists, or no longer exists, or both still exists and no longer exists, or neither still exists nor no longer exists.”

“Reverends, when a realized one is describing a realized one—a supreme person, highest of people, who has reached the highest point—they describe them other than these four ways: After death, a realized one still exists, or no longer exists, or both still exists and no longer exists, or neither still exists nor no longer exists.”

When he said this, the wanderers said to him, “This mendicant must be junior, recently gone forth, or else a foolish, incompetent senior mendicant.” Then, after rebuking Venerable Anurādha by calling him “junior” and “foolish”, the wanderers rose from their seats and left.

Soon after they had left, Anurādha thought, “If those wanderers were to inquire further, how should I answer them so as to repeat what the Buddha has said, and not misrepresent him with an untruth? How should I explain in line with his teaching, so that there would be no legitimate grounds for rebuttal and criticism?”

Then Venerable Anurādha went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened.

“What do you think, Anurādha? Is form permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, sir.”

“But if it’s impermanent, is it suffering or happiness?”

“Suffering, sir.”

“But if it’s impermanent, suffering, and perishable, is it fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, I am this, this is my self’?”

“No, sir.”

“Is feeling … perception … choices … consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, sir.”

“But if it’s impermanent, is it suffering or happiness?”

“Suffering, sir.”

“But if it’s impermanent, suffering, and perishable, is it fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, I am this, this is my self’?”

“No, sir.”

“So, Anurādha, you should truly see any kind of form at all—past, future, or present; internal or external; solid or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near: all form—with right understanding: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.’ Any kind of feeling … perception … choices … consciousness at all—past, future, or present; internal or external; solid or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near: all consciousness—with right understanding: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.’

Seeing this, a learned noble disciple grows disillusioned with form, feeling, perception, choices, and consciousness. Being disillusioned, desire fades away. When desire fades away they’re freed. When they’re freed, they know they’re freed.

They understand: ‘Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.’

What do you think, Anurādha? Do you consider that the label ‘realized one’ applies to form?”

“No, sir.”

“Do you consider that the label ‘realized one’ applies to feeling?” … “… perception?” … “… choices?” … “… consciousness?”

“No, sir.”

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you consider that the label ‘realized one’ applies in relation to form?”

“No, sir.”

“Do you consider that the label ‘realized one’ applies apart from form?”

“No, sir.”

“Do you consider that the label ‘realized one’ applies in relation to feeling?” “… apart from feeling?” … “… in relation to perception?” … “… apart from perception?” … “… in relation to choices?” … “… apart from choices?” … “… in relation to consciousness?” … “… apart from consciousness?”

“No, sir.”

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you consider that the label ‘realized one’ applies to one who has form?” … “… feeling?” … “… perception?” … “… choices?” … “… consciousness?”

“No, sir.”

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you consider that the label ‘realized one’ applies to that one who is without form?” … “… feeling?” … “… perception?” … “… choices?” … “… consciousness?”

“No, sir.”

“In that case, Anurādha, since a realized one is not found by you as a genuine fact in this very life, is it cogent for you to declare: ‘Reverends, when a realized one is describing a realized one—a supreme person, highest of people, who has reached the highest point—they describe them other than these four ways: After death, a realized one still exists, or no longer exists, or both still exists and no longer exists, or neither still exists nor no longer exists’?”

“No, sir.”

“Good, good, Anurādha! In the past, as today, what I describe is suffering and the cessation of suffering.”