SN 45.2 — Half the Spiritual Life

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Text

Linked Discourses 45.2

1. Ignorance

Half the Spiritual Life

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Sakyans, where they have a town named Townsville. Then Venerable Ānanda went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Sir, good friends, companions, and associates are half the spiritual life.”

“Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! Good friends, companions, and associates are the whole of the spiritual life. A mendicant with good friends, companions, and associates can expect to develop and cultivate the noble eightfold path.

And how does a mendicant with good friends develop and cultivate the noble eightfold path? It’s when a mendicant develops right view, which relies on seclusion, fading away, and cessation, and ripens as letting go. They develop right purpose … right speech … right action … right livelihood … right effort … right mindfulness … right immersion, which relies on seclusion, fading away, and cessation, and ripens as letting go. That’s how a mendicant with good friends develops and cultivates the noble eightfold path.

And here’s another way to understand how good friends are the whole of the spiritual life. For, by relying on me as a good friend, sentient beings who are liable to rebirth, old age, and death, to sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress are freed from all these things. This is another way to understand how good friends are the whole of the spiritual life.”