AN 4.195 — With Vappa

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Text

Numbered Discourses 4.195

20. The Great Chapter

With Vappa

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Sakyans, near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Tree Monastery. Then Vappa of the Sakyans, a disciple of the Jains, went up to Venerable Mahāmoggallāna, bowed, and sat down to one side. Mahāmoggallāna said to him:

“Vappa, take an individual who, due to the fading away of ignorance and the arising of knowledge, is restrained in body, speech, and mind. Do you see any reason why defilements giving rise to painful feelings would defile that person in the next life?”

“Sir, I do see such a case. Take someone who did bad deeds in a past life. But the result of that has not yet ripened. For this reason defilements giving rise to painful feelings would defile that person in the next life.” But this conversation between Mahāmoggallāna and Vappa was left unfinished.

Then in the late afternoon, the Buddha came out of retreat and went to the assembly hall. He sat down on the seat spread out, and said to Mahāmoggallāna, “Moggallāna, what were you sitting talking about just now? What conversation was left unfinished?”

Moggallāna repeated the entire conversation to the Buddha, and concluded: “This was my conversation with Vappa that was unfinished when the Buddha arrived.”

Then the Buddha said to Vappa, “Vappa, we can discuss this. But only if you grant what should be granted, and reject what should be rejected. And if you ask me the meaning of anything you don’t understand, saying: ‘Sir, why is this? What’s the meaning of that?’”

“Sir, let us discuss this. I will do as you say.”

“What do you think, Vappa? There are distressing and feverish defilements that arise because of instigating bodily activity. These don’t occur in someone who refrains from such bodily activity. They don’t perform any new deeds, and old deeds are eliminated by experiencing their results little by little. This wearing away is apparent in the present life, immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible people can know it for themselves. Do you see any reason why defilements giving rise to painful feelings would defile that person in the next life?”

“No, sir.”

“What do you think, Vappa? There are distressing and feverish defilements that arise because of instigating verbal activity. These don’t occur in someone who refrains from such verbal activity. They don’t perform any new deeds, and old deeds are eliminated by experiencing their results little by little. This wearing away is apparent in the present life, immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible people can know it for themselves. Do you see any reason why defilements giving rise to painful feelings would defile that person in the next life?”

“No, sir.”

“What do you think, Vappa? There are distressing and feverish defilements that arise because of instigating mental activity. These don’t occur in someone who refrains from such mental activity. They don’t perform any new deeds, and old deeds are eliminated by experiencing their results little by little. This wearing away is apparent in the present life, immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible people can know it for themselves. Do you see any reason why defilements giving rise to painful feelings would defile that person in the next life?”

“No, sir.”

“What do you think, Vappa? There are distressing and feverish defilements that arise because of ignorance. These don’t occur when ignorance fades away and knowledge arises. They don’t perform any new deeds, and old deeds are eliminated by experiencing their results little by little. This wearing away is apparent in the present life, immediately effective, inviting inspection, relevant, so that sensible people can know it for themselves. Do you see any reason why defilements giving rise to painful feelings would defile that person in the next life?”

“No, sir.”

“A mendicant whose mind is rightly freed like this has achieved six consistent responses. Seeing a sight with their eyes, they’re neither happy nor sad, but remain equanimous, mindful and aware. Hearing a sound with their ears … Smelling an odor with their nose … Tasting a flavor with their tongue … Encountering a touch with their body … Knowing an idea with their mind, they’re neither happy nor sad, but remain equanimous, mindful and aware. Feeling the end of the body draw close, they understand: ‘I feel the end of the body draw close.’ Feeling the end of life draw close, they understand: ‘I feel the end of life draw close.’ They understand: ‘When my body breaks up and my life has come to an end, everything that’s felt, being no longer relished, will become cool right here.’

Suppose there was a shadow cast by a post. Then along comes a person with a spade and basket. They cut down the post at its base, dig it up, and pull it out by its roots, right down to the fibers and stems. Then they split it apart, cut up the parts, and chop them into splinters. Next they dry the splinters in the wind and sun, burn them with fire, and reduce them to ashes. Then they whisk away the ashes in a strong wind, or glide them down a swift stream. And so the shadow cast by the post is cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future.

In the same way, a mendicant whose mind is rightly freed like this has achieved six consistent responses. Seeing a sight with their eyes, they're neither happy nor sad, but remain equanimous, mindful and aware. Hearing a sound with their ears … Smelling an odor with their nose … Tasting a flavor with their tongue … Encountering a touch with their body … Knowing an idea with their mind, they're neither happy nor sad, but remain equanimous, mindful and aware. Feeling the end of the body draw close, they understand: 'I feel the end of the body draw close.' Feeling the end of life draw close, they understand: 'I feel the end of life draw close.' They understand: 'When my body breaks up and my life has come to an end, everything that's felt, being no longer relished, will become cool right here.'"

When he said this, Vappa the Sakyan, the disciple of the Jains, said to the Buddha:

"Sir, suppose there was a man who raised commercial horses for profit. But he never made any profit, and instead just got weary and frustrated. In the same way, I paid homage to those Jain fools for profit. But I never made any profit, and instead just got weary and frustrated. From this day forth, any confidence I had in those Jain fools I whisk away as in a strong wind, or glide away as down a swift stream.

Excellent, sir! … From this day forth, may the Buddha remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life."