AN 8.25 — With Mahānāma

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Numbered Discourses 8.25

3. Householders

With Mahānāma

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Sakyans, near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Tree Monastery. Then Mahānāma the Sakyan went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Sir, how is a lay follower defined?”

“Mahānāma, when you’ve gone for refuge to the Buddha, the teaching, and the Saṅgha, you’re considered to be a lay follower.”

“But how is an ethical lay follower defined?”

“When a lay follower doesn’t kill living creatures, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie, or consume intoxicants of beer, wine, and liquor, they’re considered to be an ethical lay follower.”

“But how do we define a lay follower who is practicing to benefit themselves, not others?”

“A lay follower is accomplished in faith, but doesn’t encourage others to do the same. They’re accomplished in ethical conduct, but don’t encourage others to do the same. They’re accomplished in generosity, but don’t encourage others to do the same. They like to see the mendicants, but don’t encourage others to do the same. They like to hear the true teaching, but don’t encourage others to do the same. They readily memorize the teachings they’ve heard, but don’t encourage others to do the same. They examine the meaning of the teachings they’ve memorized, but don’t encourage others to do the same. Understanding the meaning and the teaching, they practice in line with the teaching, but they don’t encourage others to do the same. That’s how we define a lay follower who is practicing to benefit themselves, not others.”

“But how do we define a lay follower who is practicing to benefit both themselves and others?”

“A lay follower is accomplished in faith and encourages others to do the same. They’re accomplished in ethical conduct and encourage others to do the same. They’re accomplished in generosity and encourage others to do the same. They like to see the mendicants and encourage others to do the same. They like to hear the true teaching and

encourage others to do the same. They readily memorize the teachings they've heard and encourage others to do the same. They examine the meaning of the teachings they've memorized and encourage others to do the same. Understanding the meaning and the teaching, they practice in line with the teaching and they encourage others to do the same. That's how we define a lay follower who is practicing to benefit both themselves and others."