Snp 3.8 — The Dart

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Text

Anthology of Discourses 3.8

The Dart

Unforeseen and unknown
is the extent of this mortal life—
hard and short
and bound to pain.
There is no way that
those born will not die.
On reaching old age death follows:
such is the nature of living creatures.
As ripe fruit
are always in danger of falling,
so mortals once born
are always in danger of death.
As clay pots
made by a potter
all end up being broken,
so is the life of mortals.
Young and old,
foolish and wise—
all go under the sway of death;
all are destined to die.
When those overcome by death

leave this world for the next,
a father cannot protect his son,
nor relatives their kin.
See how, while relatives look on,
wailing profusely,
mortals are led away one by one,
like a cow to the slaughter.
And so the world is stricken
by old age and by death.
That is why the attentive do not grieve,
for they understand the way of the world.
For one whose path you do not know—
not whence they came nor where they went—
you lament in vain,
seeing neither end.
If a bewildered person,
lamenting and self-harming,
could extract any good from that,
then those who see clearly would do the same.
For not by weeping and wailing
will you find peace of heart.
It just gives rise to more suffering,
and distresses your body.
Growing thin and pale,
you hurt yourself.
It does nothing to help the dead:
your lamentation is in vain.
Unless a personage gives up grief,
they fall into suffering all the more.

Bewailing those whose time has come,
you fall under the sway of grief.
See, too, other folk departing,
passing on according to their deeds;
fallen under the sway of death,
beings flounder while still here.
For however they imagine it,
it turns out to be something else.
Such is separation:
see the way of the world!
Even if a human lives
a hundred years or more,
they are parted from their family circle,
they leave this life behind.
Therefore, having learned from the Perfected One,
dispel lamentation.
Seeing the dead and departed, think:
“I cannot escape this.”
As one would extinguish
a blazing refuge with water,
so too an attentive one—a wise,
astute, and skilled person—
would swiftly blow away grief that comes up,
like the wind a tuft of cotton.
One who seeks their own happiness
would pluck out the dart from themselves—
the wailing and praying,
and sadness inside.
With dart plucked out, unattached,

having found peace of mind,

overcoming all sorrow,

one is sorrowless and quenched.