Ud 7.9 — The Well

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Text

Heartfelt Sayings 7.9

The Well

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was wandering in the land of the Mallas together with a large Saṅgha of mendicants when he arrived at a brahmin town of the Mallas named Thūṇa. The brahmins and householders of Thūṇa heard: “It seems the ascetic Gotama—a Sakyan, gone forth from a Sakyan family—while wandering in the land of the Mallas has arrived at Thūṇa, together with a large Saṅgha of mendicants.” They filled the well with grass and hay right to the top, thinking, “Don’t let these shavelings, these fake ascetics drink the water.”

And then the Buddha left the road, went to the root of a tree, and sat down on the seat spread out. When he was seated he said to Venerable Ānanda: “Go on then, Ānanda, fetch me some water from that well.”

When he said this, Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha, “Just now, sir, the brahmins and householders of Thūṇa filled the well with grass and hay right to the top, thinking, ‘Don’t let these shavelings, these fake ascetics drink the water.’”

For a second time … For a third time, the Buddha said to Ānanda: “Go on then, Ānanda, fetch me some water from that well.” “Yes, sir,” replied Ānanda. Taking his bowl he went to the well. As he approached the well, all the grass and hay erupted out of the well-mouth. The water stood transparent, unclouded, and clear right up to the top, seeming to overflow.

Then Venerable Ānanda thought, “Oh lord, how incredible, how amazing! The Realized One has such psychic power and might! For when I approached this well, all the grass and hay erupted out of the well-mouth. The water stood transparent, unclouded, and clear right up to the top, seeming to overflow.” Gathering a bowl of drinking water he went back to the Buddha, and said to him, “It’s incredible, sir, it’s amazing! The Realized One has such psychic power and might! For when I approached that well, all the grass and hay erupted out of the well-mouth. The water stood transparent, unclouded, and clear right up to the top, seeming to overflow. Drink the water, Blessed One! Drink the water, Holy One!”

Then, understanding this matter, on that occasion the Buddha expressed this heartfelt sentiment:

“What difference would a well make

if water is there all the time?

Having cut off craving at the root,

who would go out on a quest?”