AN 4.87 — The Son

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Text

Numbered Discourses 4.87

9. Confirmed

The Son

“Mendicants, these four individuals are found in the world. What four? The confirmed ascetic, the white lotus ascetic, the pink lotus ascetic, and the delicate ascetic of ascetics.

And how is an individual a confirmed ascetic? It’s when a mendicant is a practicing trainee, who lives aspiring to the supreme sanctuary from the yoke. It’s like the eldest son of an anointed aristocratic king. He has not yet been anointed, but is eligible, and has been confirmed in the succession. In the same way, a mendicant is a practicing trainee, who lives aspiring to the supreme sanctuary from the yoke. That’s how an individual is a confirmed ascetic.

And how is an individual a white lotus ascetic? It’s when a mendicant realizes the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom. And they live having realized it with their own insight in this very life due to the ending of defilements. But they don’t have direct meditative experience of the eight liberations. That’s how an individual is a white lotus ascetic.

And how is an individual a pink lotus ascetic? It’s when a mendicant realizes the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom … in this very life … And they have direct meditative experience of the eight liberations. That’s how an individual is a pink lotus ascetic.

And how is an individual a delicate ascetic of ascetics? It’s when a mendicant usually uses only what they’ve been invited to accept—robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicines and supplies for the sick—rarely using them without invitation. When living with other spiritual practitioners, they usually find themselves treated agreeably by them by way of body, speech, and mind, and rarely disagreeably. And they are usually presented with agreeable things by them, rarely with disagreeable ones. They’re healthy, so the various unpleasant feelings—stemming from disorders of bile, phlegm, wind, or their conjunction; or caused by change in weather, by not taking care of yourself, by exertion, or as the result of past deeds—usually don’t come up. They get the four absorptions—blissful meditations in this life that belong to the higher mind—when they want, without trouble or difficulty. And they realize the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom … in this very life … That’s how an individual is a delicate ascetic of ascetics.

And if anyone should be rightly called a delicate ascetic of ascetics, it's me. For I usually use only what I've been invited to accept … When living with other mendicants, I am usually treated agreeably by them. … I'm healthy … I get the four absorptions when I want, without trouble or difficulty. And I've realized the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom … in this very life … So if anyone should be rightly called a delicate ascetic of ascetics, it's me.

These are the four individuals found in the world."