AN 6.51 — With Ānanda

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Numbered Discourses 6.51

5. About Dhammika

With Ānanda

Then Venerable Ānanda went up to Venerable Sāriputta, and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, Ānanda sat down to one side, and said to Sāriputta:

“Reverend Sāriputta, how does a mendicant get to hear a teaching they haven’t heard before? How do they remember those teachings they have heard? How do they keep exercising the teachings with which they are already familiar? And how do they come to understand what they haven’t understood before?”

“Well, Venerable Ānanda, you’re very learned. Why don’t you clarify this yourself?”

“Well then, Reverend Sāriputta, listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.”

“Yes, reverend,” Sāriputta replied. Ānanda said this:

“Reverend Sāriputta, take a mendicant who memorizes the teaching— statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations.

Then, just as they learned and memorized it, they teach others in detail, make them recite in detail, they rehearse it themselves in detail, and they think about and consider the teaching in their heart, examining it with the mind.

They enter the rains retreat in a monastery with senior mendicants who are very learned, inheritors of the heritage, who have memorized the teachings, the monastic law, and the outlines. From time to time they go up to those mendicants and ask them questions: ‘Why, sir, does it say this? What does that mean?’ Those venerables reveal what is hidden, clarify what is unclear, and dispel doubt regarding the many doubtful matters.

This is how a mendicant gets to hear a teaching they haven’t heard before. It’s how they remember those teachings they have heard. It’s how they keep exercising the teachings with which they are already familiar. And it’s how they come to understand what they haven’t understood before.”

“It’s incredible, reverend, it’s amazing! How well said this was by Venerable Ānanda! And we will remember Venerable Ānanda as someone who possesses these six qualities.

For Ānanda memorizes the teaching … statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations. Those venerables reveal to Ānanda what is hidden, clarify what is unclear, and dispel doubt regarding the many doubtful matters.”