Dhp 146-156 — Chapter on Decay

English translation by Bhante Suddhāso.
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Text

Collection of Minor Texts

Verses of Dhamma

Chapter on Decay

Who can laugh, who can delight,

since this is always on fire?

Obscured by darkness,

you do not search for light.

See that the mind has been made a puppet,

damaged with arrogance,

afflicted with excessive thought,

lacking stability and composure.

This body is decrepit,

fragile, a nest of disease,

a putrid heap that falls apart,

since life ends in death.

Set aside

like gourds in autumn -

when seeing these faded bones,

what appreciation can there be?

Like a city made of bones,

wrapped in meat and blood,

a place of decay and death,

conceit and contempt.
Even splendid royal chariots wear out;
so too, this body decays.
But the true Dhamma never decays:
it is made known by those who are peaceful and virtuous.
A person who has learned little
ages like an ox:
their muscles grow
but their wisdom does not.
Wandering through many lives,
seeking but not finding
the builder of this house -
repeatedly experiencing the suffering of birth.
House-builder, you have been seen!
You will build no house again.
All your rafters are broken,
the roof-peak dismantled.
The mind has gone to the unconditioned -
the elimination of craving has been reached.
Those who have neither lived a spiritual life
nor acquired wealth during their youth,
Waste away like old herons
by a fishless pond.
Those who have neither lived a spiritual life
nor acquired wealth during their youth,
lay around like wasted arrows,
lamenting the past.