Dhp 320-333 — The Elephant Chapter

English translation by Bhante Suddhāso.
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Text

Collection of Minor Texts

Verses of Dhamma

The Elephant Chapter

Like an elephant in battle

struck by an arrow from a bow,

I will endure criticism

from the immoral multitude.

One who is trained can be led through a crowd,

one who is trained can be mounted by a king;

a trained person is the best among humans,

one who endures criticism.

Excellent are trained mules,

well-bred Sindhi horses,

and enormous elephants;

but more excellent that those is one who is self-trained.

For it is not by means of those vehicles

that one goes in the direction one has never gone;

where one who is self-trained, well-trained,

can go by means of that training.

The elephant named Dhanapāla

is bitter about being separated, and is hard to restrain;

captive, he does not eat,

as he misses the elephant forest.
Lethargic and gluttonous,
languid, lazing about,
like an oversized pig that has taken the bait,
the fool arrives again and again in the womb.
In the past this mind would wander,
going wherever it wished, wherever it desired, wherever it found pleasure.
Today I will subdue it with a wise understanding of causality,
like an elephant-trainer subduing a rampaging elephant.
Approve of non-negligence,
and guard your own mind.
Lift yourself up from the harmful path,
like an elephant lifting itself up from the mud.
If you can get a prudent companion
to travel with, a steadfast person who lives an excellent life,
then leave behind all your problems
and go with them, satisfied and mindful.
If you can not get a prudent companion
to travel with, a steadfast person who lives an excellent life,
then like a king leaving behind a conquered realm,
go alone, like an elephant in its wilderness habitat.
It is best to go alone;
there is no companionship with a fool.
One who lives alone and does nothing harmful
will be at ease, like an elephant in its wilderness habitat.
It is pleasant to have companions when the need arises,
it is pleasant to be content with whatever comes,
it is pleasant to have merit when life comes to an end,
it is pleasant to leave behind all suffering.

It is pleasant to be a mother in this world,

it is pleasant to be a father;

it is pleasant to be a contemplative in this world,

it is pleasant to be spiritual.

It is pleasant to have virtue that lasts into old age,

it is pleasant to have established faith,

it is pleasant to have attained wisdom,

it is pleasant to do no evil.