Snp 1.10 — Alavaka Sutta: Discourse to Alavaka

English translation by Piyadassi Thera.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

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Text

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the abode of Alavaka, the Yakkha (demon), at Alavi. Then Alavaka approached the Blessed One and said: "Get out, recluse (samana)." — "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One went out.

"Come in, recluse." — "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One entered.

"Get out, recluse," said Alavaka to the Blessed One a second time. — "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One went out.

"Come in, recluse." — "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One entered.

"Get out, recluse," said Alavaka to the Blessed One a third time. — "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One went out.

"Come in, recluse." — "Very well, friend," so saying the Blessed One entered.

"Get out recluse," said Alavaka to the Blessed One a fourth time. — "No, O friend, I will not get out. Do what you will."

"I will ask you a question, recluse. If you do not answer me, I will confound your mind (thoughts), or cleave your heart, or take you by your feet and fling you over to the further shore of the ocean (para gangaya).

"Well, friend, I do not see anyone in the world of Devas, Maras, Brahmas, or among the generation of recluses, brahmanas, deities, and humans, who could either confound my mind or cleave my heart, or take me by the feet and fling me over to the further shore of the ocean; nevertheless, friend, ask what you will."

Then Alavaka addressed the Blessed One in verse:

1. What wealth here is best for man? What well practiced will happiness bring? What taste excels all other tastes? How lived is the life they say is best?

[The Buddha:]

2. Faith is the wealth here best for man; Dhamma well practiced shall happiness bring; Truth indeed all other tastes excels; Life wisely lived they say is best.

[Alavaka:]

3. How does one the currents[1] cross? How is ocean's[2] existence crossed? How is one's suffering quelled? How is one purified?

[The Buddha:]

4. By faith are currents crossed; By diligence is the ocean crossed; By effort is one's suffering quelled; By wisdom is one purified;

[Alavaka:]

5. How does one wisdom win? How does one wealth obtain? How does one come to fame? How does one friendship win? How does one without sorrow fare When from this world to another he's gone?

[The Buddha:]

6. The mindful and discerning one, Who in the Dhamma plead his faith; By his will to hear that Dhamma Wins the wisdom of Nibbana. 7. Who is tactful and energetic, And gains wealth by his own effort; Fame will he acquire by truth, And friendship by his giving. 8. He who has faith and is also truthful, virtuous, firm, and fond of giving; By virtue of these four

conditions Will never in the hereafter grieve. 9. Truth and Restraint, Charity and Forbearance, Are the great reformers of man; If there be any better Ask of other samanas and brahmanas.

[Alavaka:]

10. Why should I now try to ask From other samanas and brahmanas When this day I came to learn What weal is here and hereafter? 11. This for my weal indeed The Buddha to Alavi came; A gift always bears a fruit; This too I learned today. 12. From village to village and town to town I shall now wander along Praising that Supreme Buddha And the Dhamma well preached by him.

Having thus spoken, Alavaka said to the Blessed One:

"Most excellent, O Gotama, is thy teaching, most excellent. Just as a man would set upright what is overturned, reveal what is concealed, point out the way to one gone astray, bring an oil lamp into the darkness so that those with eyes could see objects; even so the Dhamma (doctrine) has been declared in many a manner by the Venerable Gotama. I take refuge in the Venerable Gotama (the Buddha), in the Dhamma and in the Sangha (the Order). May the Venerable Gotama accept me as a disciple who has taken refuge, from this day forth while life lasts."

Notes

1.

"Current" stands for the Pali word 'ogha' which is fourfold — sense pleasures, becoming, wrong views and ignorance (kama-ogha, bhava-o., ditthi-o., avijja-o).

2.

"Ocean" stands for the Pali word 'annavam' which is metaphorically used to signify repeated existence, or samsara.