Snp 3.8 — Salla Sutta — The Arrow

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.
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Text

Snp. 3.8

Salla Sutta

“The Arrow”

574. “Ultimately, the life of mortals remains insignificant, and the length of time they are to live, uncertain. It is brief, and crowded with countless difficulties and troubles, with suffering that is ever present, and never far away.

575. “There is no remedy through which all those who are born will somehow not die and perish. Even if one were to reach old age, death will remain certain, for such is the nature of all living beings.

576. “Just like with ripened fruits, there is always the fear of falling. Likewise, for all those who are born or will be born, there is the constant fear of the inevitability of dying.

577. “All clay pots once made by the potter, sooner or later, will break and come to destruction in the end. In the same way, sooner or later, the life of mortals gets to be destroyed in the end.

578. “Whether young or old, whether they are fools or wise, everyone, from the moment of their birth find themselves under the sway of death, as they sooner or later reach the ‘finish line’ that is death.

579. “As the person is dying, about to leave this world and on their way to the other realm of becoming, no protection could be provided for them; neither a loving father could save his only son, nor any close friend or blood relative could ever keep one from being taken by death.

580. “Even as loved ones or relatives surround one and impotently look on, crying and lamenting at their impending loss, one by one, all mortals are led away, just as cows are taken away by the butcher to the slaughterhouse.

581. “In this manner, the entire world is afflicted by aging and death. And by knowing and understanding this basic nature of the world, the wise simply do not grieve.

582. “Not knowing or understanding the path taken by beings as they arrive to birth in this life, or when the time will come for them to depart from it, leaving everything behind, one mourns and cries uselessly.

583. “What is the use of your wailing, or in pulling out your hair? For if there were any benefits to be gained from such insanity, then wise men would be engaging in such activities as well.

584. “After all, the heart cannot find peace nor becomes soothed through sobbing and lamenting, because by doing so, more anguish and sorrow will arise, along with agitation in the mind, as the body bears the brunt of it all.

585. “Thus, by harming oneself, the body becomes emaciated and malnourished, as it loses its luster and becomes a ghost of its former self. Meanwhile, all this does nothing

whatsoever to help the dead, who are now far beyond your reach! And all your sobbing proves to be in vain.

586. “By not accepting nor giving up the grief one feels in one’s heart, beings only end up experiencing much more of it. Replaying scenes from the past, the nostalgia of times gone by when the dead were still alive, turns those who are left behind, into perpetual victims of grief.

587. “You think you are alone? Look at all the others too, lying on their death beds. See how each one inescapably goes according to the actions they have done throughout life. And as the hour of death approaches, they all become confused and flounder like fish out of water.

588. “For whatever they keep thinking about or imagine while still alive, only ends up being completely different than expected, when they face the inescapable reality of death, in its fullness. Such is the true nature of separating from the familiar. Observe now and identify this unchanging fact about the world.

589. “Even if a human being lives for a hundred years or more, the time will come when they must leave it all behind - not just their own physical bodies and assets, but their loved ones and acquaintances too.

590. “Therefore, by having listened to the words of the Arahant, train yourself with dedication and relinquish all this wailing and lamenting. And as you see the dead, think wisely by reminding yourself that:

‘Nothing I can do could bring them back! For I will not see them ever again.’

591. “Just like when one’s home is on fire, one quickly rushes in to pour water over the blazing flames, likewise the resolute, resourceful, and learned wise person among humans, quickly and without wasting time, rushes in to address the grief that comes up in one’s heart, while he does so as speedily as the wind carries off the tiny tuft of cotton wool, along with it on its path.

592. “Wailing and lamenting with anguish in one’s heart, is ultimately no one else’s but one's own, to either be released from entirely or continue re-experiencing. But those desiring the end of suffering, know how each one is responsible for pulling out one’s own arrow of ignorance, once and for all.

593. “And by having removed the arrow from oneself, one finally enjoys true peace and tranquility within the heart. Thus, one transcends all sorrow, living without any shackles or fears, sorrowless, and Fully Released.”