Snp 4.12 — Sn 4:12 The Lesser Array

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

4:12 The Lesser Array

“Dwelling on

their own views,

quarreling,

different skilled people say:

‘Whoever knows this, understands Dhamma.

Whoever rejects this, is

imperfect.’

Thus quarreling, they dispute:
‘My opponent’s a fool & unskilled.’
Which of these statements is true
when all of them say they are skilled?”

“If, in not accepting
an opponent’s doctrine,
one’s a fool, a beast of inferior discernment,
then all are fools of inferior discernment—
all of these
who dwell on their views.
But if, in siding with a view,
one’s cleansed,
with discernment made pure,
sensible, skilled,
then none of them
are of inferior discernment,
for all of them
have their own views.

I don’t say, ‘That’s how it is,’
the way fools tell one another.
They each make out their views to be true
and so regard their opponents as fools.”

“What some say is true
—‘That’s how it is’—
others say is ‘falsehood, a lie.’
Thus quarreling, they dispute.
Why can’t contemplatives
say one thing & the same?”

“The truth is one,1
there is no second
about which a person who knows it
would argue with one who knows.
Contemplatives promote
their various own truths,
that’s why they don’t say
one thing & the same.”

“But why do they say
various truths,
those who say they are skilled?
Have they learned many various truths
or do they follow conjecture?”

“Apart from their perception
there are no
many
various
constant truths
in the world.2
Theorizing conjectures
with regard to views,
they speak of a pair: true
& false.
Dependent on what’s seen,
heard,
& sensed,
dependent on habits & practices,
one shows disdain [for others].
Taking a stance on his decisions,

praising himself, he says,
‘My opponent’s a fool & unskilled.’
That by which
he regards his opponents as fools
is that by which
he says he is skilled.
Calling himself skilled,
he despises another
who speaks the same way.

Agreeing on a view gone out of bounds,
drunk with conceit, imagining himself perfect,
he has consecrated, with his own mind,
himself
as well as his view.

If, by an opponent’s word,
one’s inferior,
the opponent’s
of inferior discernment as well.
But if, by one’s own word
one’s an attainer-of-knowledge, enlightened,
no one
among contemplatives
is a fool.

‘Those who approve of a doctrine other than this
are lacking in purity,
imperfect.’
That’s what the many sectarians say,
for they’re smitten with passion
for their own views.

‘Only here is there purity,’

that’s what they say.

‘In no other doctrine

is purity,’ they say.

That’s how the many sectarians

are entrenched,

speaking firmly there

concerning their own path.

Speaking firmly concerning your own path,

what opponent here would you take as a fool?

You’d simply bring strife on yourself

if you said your opponent’s a fool

with an impure doctrine.

Taking a stance on your decisions,

& yourself as your measure,

you dispute further down

into the world.

But a person who’s abandoned

all decisions

creates no strife

in the world.”

vv. 878–894

Notes

1. “The truth is one”: This statement should be kept in mind throughout the following verses, as it forms the background to the discussion of how people who theorize their conjectures speak of the pair, true and false. The Buddha is not denying that there is such a thing as true and false, or that some statements correspond more truly to reality than others. He avoids defending his own teachings in debates, not because there are many different truths, but because—as he says in Sn 4:8, the purpose of debates is not to arrive at truth but to gain praise. In this way, it encourages the debater to get entrenched in his views. All entrenched views, regardless of how true or false their content might be, behave

in line with the truth of conditioned phenomena as explained in the preceding sutta. They lead to conceit, conflict, and states of becoming. When they are viewed in this way—as events in a causal chain rather than as true or false depictions of other events (or as events rather than signs)—the tendency to hold to or become entrenched in them is diminished. This allows for a practitioner to hold to the truths of right view for the sake of putting an end to suffering and stress, and then to put aside any attachment to those truths once they have performed their duty. On this point, see MN 22 and AN 10:93, and the essay, "Truths with Consequences."

2. On the role of perception in leading to conflicting views, see the preceding sutta.