Snp 5.1 — Sn 5:1 Ajita’s Questions

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

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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

5:1 Ajita’s Questions

With what

is the world shrouded?

Because of what

doesn’t it shine?

With what

is it smeared? Tell me.

What

is its great danger & fear?

The Buddha:

With ignorance
the world is shrouded.
Because of stinginess,
heedlessness,1
it doesn't shine.
With longing
it's smeared—I tell you.
Suffering-stress:
its great danger & fear.

Ajita:

They flow every which way,
the streams.2
What is their blocking,
what their restraint—tell me—
with what are they finally stopped?

The Buddha:

Whatever streams
there are in the world:
Their blocking is
mindfulness, mindfulness
is their restraint—I tell you—
with discernment
they're finally stopped.

Ajita:

Discernment & mindfulness,
name-&-form, dear sir:

Tell me, when asked this,

where are they brought to a halt?

The Buddha:

This question you've asked, Ajita,

I'll answer it for you—

where name-&-form

are brought to a halt

without trace:

With the cessation of consciousness

they're here brought

to a halt.3

Ajita:

Those here who have fathomed the Dhamma,

those who are learners,

those who are run-of-the-mill:

When you, dear sir, astute,

are asked this,

tell me their manner of life.4

The Buddha:

He

should not hanker

for sensual pleasures,

should be limpid in mind.

Skilled in all mental qualities,

he, the monk, should wander

mindfully.

vv. 1032–1039

Notes

1. The Thai edition notes that this word, in terms of the meter of the line, is excessive.

2. According to Nd II, the streams that 'flow every which way' are the streams of craving, views, conceit, defilement, corruption, and ignorance that flow out the six sense media. The first two lines in the translation of Ven. Ajita's second set of questions (the first half-line in the Pali) is identical to the first half-line in Dhp 340.

3. See DN 11, DN 15, MN 49, and SN 12:67. Asaṅga, in the Yogācārabhūmi, quotes a Sanskrit translation of this sutta that inserts at this point the final question and answer, on the topic of how consciousness is brought to a halt, occurring at the end of the Pali version of Sn 5:13. A manuscript found in Turfan contains a Sanskrit version of this sutta that inserts the same question at the same point, and includes traces of other insertions as well.

4. In SN 12:31, the Buddha quotes this question to Ven. Sāriputta and asks him to answer it. With a little prodding, Ven. Sāriputta gives this extended answer, on which the Buddha places his seal of approval:

"One sees with right discernment that 'this has come into being.' Seeing with right discernment that 'this has come into being,' one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of what has come into being. One sees with right discernment that 'it has come into being from this nutriment.' Seeing with right discernment that 'it has come into being from this nutriment,' one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of the nutriment by which it has come into being. One sees with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation.' Seeing with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation,' one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a learner.

"And how is one a person who has fathomed the Dhamma?

"One sees with right discernment that 'this has come into being.' Seeing with right discernment that 'this has come into being,' one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what has come into being. One sees with right discernment that 'it has come into being from this nutriment.' Seeing with right discernment that 'it has come into being from this nutriment,' one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from the nutriment by which it has come into being. One sees with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation.' Seeing with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation,' one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a person who has fathomed the Dhamma."