MN 131 — One Fine Night

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Middle Discourses 131

One Fine Night

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, "Mendicants!"

"Venerable sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:

"I shall teach you the summary recital and the analysis of the one who has one fine night. Listen and apply your mind well, I will speak."

"Yes, sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:

"Don't run back to the past,

don't anticipate the future.

What's past is left behind,

the future has not arrived;

and any present phenomenon

you clearly discern in every case.

The unfaltering, the unshakable:

having known that, foster it.

Today's the day to keenly work—

who knows, tomorrow may bring death!

For there is no bargain to be struck

with Death and his mighty horde.

One who keenly meditates like this,

tireless all night and day:

that's who has one fine night—

so declares the peaceful sage.

And how do you run back to the past? You muster delight there, thinking: ‘I had such form in the past.’ … ‘I had such feeling … perception … choice … consciousness in the past.’ That’s how you run back to the past.

And how do you not run back to the past? You don’t muster delight there, thinking: ‘I had such form in the past.’ … ‘I had such feeling … perception … choice … consciousness in the past.’ That’s how you don’t run back to the past.

And how do you anticipate the future? You muster delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such form in the future.’ … ‘May I have such feeling … perception … choice … consciousness in the future.’ That’s how you anticipate the future.

And how do you not anticipate the future? You don’t muster delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such form in the future.’ … ‘May I have such feeling … perception … choice … consciousness in the future.’ That’s how you don’t anticipate the future.

And how do you falter amid presently arisen phenomena? It’s when an unlearned ordinary person has not seen the noble ones, and is neither skilled nor trained in the teaching of the noble ones. They’ve not seen true persons, and are neither skilled nor trained in the teaching of the true persons. They regard form as self, self as having form, form in self, or self in form. They regard feeling … perception … choices … consciousness as self, self as having consciousness, consciousness in self, or self in consciousness. That’s how you falter amid presently arisen phenomena.

And how do you not falter amid presently arisen phenomena? It’s when a learned noble disciple has seen the noble ones, and is skilled and trained in the teaching of the noble ones. They’ve seen true persons, and are skilled and trained in the teaching of the true persons. They don’t regard form as self, self as having form, form in self, or self in form. They don’t regard feeling … perception … choices … consciousness as self, self as having consciousness, consciousness in self, or self in consciousness. That’s how you don’t falter amid presently arisen phenomena.

‘Don’t run back to the past,

don’t anticipate the future.

What’s past is left behind,

the future has not arrived;

and any present phenomenon

you clearly discern in every case.

The unfaltering, the unshakable:

having known that, foster it.

Today’s the day to keenly work—

who knows, tomorrow may bring death!

For there is no bargain to be struck

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One who keenly meditates like this,

tireless all night and day:

that's who has one fine night—

so declares the peaceful sage.'

And that's what I meant when I said: 'I shall teach you the summary recital and the analysis of the one who has one fine night.'"

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, the mendicants approved what the Buddha said.