SN 12.33 — Grounds for Knowledge

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 12.33

4. Kaḷāra the Aristocrat

Grounds for Knowledge

At Sāvatthī.

“Mendicants, I will teach forty-four grounds for knowledge. Listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.”

“Yes, sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this:

“And what are the forty-four grounds for knowledge? Knowledge of old age and death, knowledge of the origin of old age and death, knowledge of the cessation of old age and death, and knowledge of the practice that leads to the cessation of old age and death. Knowledge of rebirth … Knowledge of continued existence … Knowledge of grasping … Knowledge of craving … Knowledge of feeling … Knowledge of contact … Knowledge of the six sense fields … Knowledge of name and form … Knowledge of consciousness … Knowledge of choices, knowledge of the origin of choices, knowledge of the cessation of choices, and knowledge of the practice that leads to the cessation of choices. These are called the forty-four grounds for knowledge.

And what is old age and death? The old age, decrepitude, broken teeth, grey hair, wrinkly skin, diminished vitality, and failing faculties of the various sentient beings in the various orders of sentient beings. This is called old age. The passing away, passing on, disintegration, demise, mortality, death, decease, breaking up of the aggregates, and laying to rest of the corpse of the various sentient beings in the various orders of sentient beings. This is called death. Such is old age, and such is death. This is called old age and death.

Rebirth is the origin of old age and death. When rebirth ceases, old age and death cease. The practice that leads to the cessation of old age and death is simply this noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right purpose, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion.

A noble disciple understands old age and death, their origin, their cessation, and the practice that leads to their cessation. This is their knowledge of the teaching. With this teaching that is seen, understood, immediately attained, and fathomed, they apply the method to the past and future.

Whatever ascetics and brahmins in the past directly knew old age and death, their origin, their cessation, and the practice that leads to their cessation, all of them directly knew these things in exactly the same way that I do now.

Whatever ascetics and brahmins in the future will directly know old age and death, their origin, their cessation, and the practice that leads to their cessation, all of them will directly know these things in exactly the same way that I do now. This is their inferential knowledge.

A noble disciple has purified and cleansed these two knowledges— knowledge of the teaching and inferential knowledge. When a noble disciple has done this, they're one who is called 'one accomplished in view', 'one accomplished in vision', 'one who has come to the true teaching', 'one who sees this true teaching', 'one endowed with a trainee's insight', 'one endowed with a trainee's knowledge', 'one who has entered the stream of the teaching', 'a noble one with penetrative wisdom', and also 'one who stands pressing against the door to freedom from death'.

And what is rebirth? … And what is continued existence? … And what is grasping? … And what is craving? … And what is feeling? … And what is contact? … And what are the six sense fields? … And what are name and form? … And what is consciousness? … And what are choices? There are three kinds of choices. Choices by way of body, speech, and mind. These are called choices.

Ignorance is the origin of choices. When ignorance ceases, choices cease. The practice that leads to the cessation of choices is simply this noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right purpose, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion.

A noble disciple understands choices, their origin, their cessation, and the practice that leads to their cessation. This is their knowledge of the teaching. With this teaching that is seen, understood, immediately attained, and fathomed, they apply the method to the past and future.

Whatever ascetics and brahmins in the past directly knew choices, their origin, their cessation, and the practice that leads to their cessation, all of them directly knew these things in exactly the same way that I do now.

Whatever ascetics and brahmins in the future will directly know choices, their origin, their cessation, and the practice that leads to their cessation, all of them will directly know these things in exactly the same way that I do now. This is their inferential knowledge.

A noble disciple has purified and cleansed these two knowledges— knowledge of the teaching and inferential knowledge. When a noble disciple has done this, they're one who is called 'one accomplished in view', 'one accomplished in vision', 'one who has come to the true teaching', 'one who sees this true teaching', 'one endowed with a trainee's insight', 'one endowed with a trainee's knowledge', 'one who has entered the stream of the teaching', 'a noble one with penetrative wisdom', and also 'one who stands pressing against the door to freedom from death'."