SN 12.36 — Ignorance is a Requirement (2nd)

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 12.36

4. Kaḷāra the Aristocrat

Ignorance is a Requirement (2nd)

At Sāvatthī.

“Ignorance is a requirement for choices.

Choices are a requirement for consciousness. … That is how this entire mass of suffering originates.

Mendicants, you might say, ‘What are old age and death, and who do they belong to?’ Or you might say, ‘Old age and death are one thing, who they belong to is another.’ But both of these mean the same thing, only the phrasing differs. If you have the view that the soul and the body are one and the same, there is no living of the spiritual life. If you have the view that the soul is one thing, the body another, there is no living of the spiritual life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way: ‘Rebirth is a requirement for old age and death.’

‘What is rebirth …’ ‘What is continued existence …’ ‘What is grasping …’ ‘What is craving …’ ‘What is feeling …’ ‘What is contact …’ ‘What are the six sense fields …’ ‘What are name and form …’ ‘What is consciousness …’ You might say, ‘What are choices, and who do they belong to?’ Or you might say, ‘Choices are one thing, who they belong to is another.’ But both of these mean the same thing, only the phrasing differs. If you have the view that the soul and the body are one and the same, there is no living of the spiritual life. If you have the view that the soul is one thing, the body another, there is no living of the spiritual life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way: ‘Ignorance is a requirement for choices.’

When ignorance fades away and ceases with no residue left behind, then any twists, ducks, and dodges are given up: ‘What are old age and death, and who do they belong to?’ or ‘old age and death are one thing, who they belong to is another’, or ‘the soul and the body are one and the same’, or ‘the soul is one thing, the body another’. These are all cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future.

When ignorance fades away and ceases with no residue left behind, then any twists, ducks, and dodges are given up: ‘What is rebirth …’ ‘What is continued existence …’ ‘What is grasping …’ ‘What is craving …’ ‘What is feeling …’ ‘What is contact …’ ‘What are the six

sense fields …' 'What are name and form …' 'What is consciousness …' 'What are choices, and who do they belong to?' or 'choices are one thing, who they belong to is another', or 'the soul and the body are one and the same', or 'the soul is one thing, the body another'. These are all cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future."