SN 12.61 — Unlearned

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 12.61

7. The Great Chapter

Unlearned

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. …

"Mendicants, an unlearned ordinary person might become disillusioned, dispassionate, and freed from this body made up of the four principal states. Why is that? This body made up of the four principal states is seen to accumulate and disperse, to be taken up and laid to rest. That's why an unlearned ordinary person might become disillusioned, dispassionate, and freed from it.

But an unlearned ordinary person is unable to become disillusioned, dispassionate, or freed from that which is called 'mind' and also 'sentience' and also 'consciousness'. Why is that? Because for a long time they've been attached to it, thought of it as their own, and mistaken it: 'This is mine, I am this, this is my self.' That's why an unlearned ordinary person is unable to become disillusioned, dispassionate, or freed from it.

But an unlearned ordinary person would be better off taking this body made up of the four principal states to be their self, rather than the mind. Why is that? This body made up of the four principal states is seen to last for a year, or for two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or a hundred years, or even longer.

But that which is called 'mind' and also 'sentience' and also 'consciousness' arises as one thing and ceases as another all day and all night. It's like a monkey moving through the forest. It grabs hold of one branch, lets it go, and grabs another; then it lets that go and grabs yet another. In the same way, that which is called 'mind' and also 'sentience' and also 'consciousness' arises as one thing and ceases as another all day and all night.

In this case, a learned noble disciple carefully and rationally applies the mind to dependent origination itself: 'So, when this exists, this comes to be; due to the arising of this, this arises. When this doesn't exist, this doesn't come to be; due to the cessation of this, this ceases. That is: Ignorance is a requirement for choices.

Choices are a requirement for consciousness. … That is how this entire mass of suffering originates. When ignorance fades away and ceases no residue left behind, choices cease. When choices cease, consciousness ceases. … That is how this entire mass of suffering

ceases.’

Seeing this, a learned noble disciple grows disillusioned with form, feeling, perception, choices, and consciousness. Being disillusioned, desire fades away. When desire fades away they’re freed. When they’re freed, they know they’re freed.

They understand: ‘Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.’”