SN 22.87 — Vakkali Sutta: Vakkali

English translation by Maurice O'Connell Walshe.

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Text

Seeing the Dhamma

[The Buddha visits the Ven. Vakkali, who is sick]

Now the Venerable Vakkali saw the Blessed One coming from a distance, and tried to get up. Then the Blessed One said to the Venerable Vakkali: "Enough, Vakkali, do not try to get up.[1] There are these seats made ready. I will sit down there." And he sat down on a seat that was ready. Then he said:

"Are you feeling better, Vakkali? Are you bearing up? Are your pains getting better and not worse? Are there signs that they are getting better and not worse?"[2]

"No, Lord, I do not feel better, I am not bearing up. I have severe pains, and they are getting worse, not better. There is no sign of improvement, only of worsening."

"Have you any doubts, Vakkali? Have you any cause for regret?"

"Indeed, Lord, I have many doubts. I have much cause for regret."

"Have you nothing to reproach yourself about as regards morals?"

"No, Lord, I have nothing to reproach myself about as regards morals."

"Well then, Vakkali, if you have nothing to reproach yourself about as regards morals, you must have some worry or scruple that is troubling you."

"For a long time, Lord, I have wanted to come and set eyes on the Blessed One, but I had not the strength in this body to come and see the Blessed One."

"Enough, Vakkali! What is there to see in this vile body? He who sees Dhamma, Vakkali, sees me; he who sees me sees Dhamma. Truly seeing Dhamma, one sees me; seeing me one sees Dhamma."[3]

Notes

1.

"Stirred on his bed" (Woodward). "Tried to get up" ("out of reverence": SA [SN commentary]) is the obvious sense.

2.

The standard way of enquiring about a sick person.

3.

A famous quotation. It has been compared with Christ's words: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30)