SN 35.96 — Liable to Decline

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 35.96

10. The Sixes

Liable to Decline

“Mendicants, I will teach you who is liable to decline, who is not liable to decline, and the six fields of mastery. Listen …

And how is someone liable to decline? When a mendicant sees a sight with their eyes, bad, unskillful phenomena arise: memories and thoughts that tighten the fetters. Suppose that mendicant tolerates them and doesn’t give them up, dispel them, eliminate them, and obliterate them. They should understand: ‘My skillful qualities are declining. For this is what the Buddha calls decline.’

Furthermore, when a mendicant hears a sound … smells an odor … tastes a flavor … encounters a touch … knows an idea with their mind, bad, unskillful phenomena arise: memories and thoughts that tighten the fetters. If that mendicant tolerates them and doesn’t give them up, dispel them, eliminate them, and obliterate them, they should understand: ‘My skillful qualities are declining. For this is what the Buddha calls decline.’ That’s how someone is liable to decline.

And how is someone not liable to decline? When a mendicant sees a sight with their eyes, bad, unskillful phenomena arise: memories and thoughts that tighten the fetters. Suppose that mendicant doesn’t tolerate them but gives them up, dispels them, eliminates them, and obliterates them. They should understand: ‘My skillful qualities are not declining. For this is what the Buddha calls non-decline.’

Furthermore, when a mendicant hears a sound … smells an odor … tastes a flavor … encounters a touch … knows an idea with their mind, bad, unskillful phenomena arise: memories and thoughts that tighten the fetters. Suppose that mendicant doesn’t tolerate them but gives them up, dispels them, eliminates them, and obliterates them. They should understand: ‘My skillful qualities are not declining. For this is what the Buddha calls non-decline.’ That’s how someone is not liable to decline.

And what are the six fields of mastery? When a mendicant sees a sight with their eyes, bad, unskillful phenomena don’t arise: memories and thoughts that tighten the fetters. They should understand: ‘This sense field has been mastered. For this is what the Buddha calls a field of mastery.’ … Furthermore, when a mendicant knows an idea with their mind, bad, unskillful phenomena don’t arise: memories and thoughts that tighten the fetters. They

should understand: ‘This sense field has been mastered. For this is what the Buddha calls a field of mastery.’ These are the six fields of mastery.”