SN 45.160 — A River

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Text

Linked Discourses 45.160

12. Hard Work

A River

“Mendicants, suppose that, although the Ganges River slants, slopes, and inclines to the east, a large crowd were to come along with a spade and basket, saying: ‘We’ll make this Ganges River slant, slope, and incline to the west!’

What do you think, mendicants? Would they succeed?”

“No, sir. Why is that? The Ganges River slants, slopes, and inclines to the east. It’s not easy to make it slant, slope, and incline to the west. That large crowd will eventually get weary and frustrated.”

“In the same way, while a mendicant develops and cultivates the noble eightfold path, if rulers or their chief ministers, friends or colleagues, relatives or kin should invite them to accept wealth, saying: ‘Please, my man, why let these ocher robes torment you? Why follow the practice of shaving your head and carrying an alms bowl? Come, return to a lesser life, enjoy wealth, and make merit!’ It is quite impossible for a mendicant who develops and cultivates the noble eightfold path to resign the training and return to a lesser life. Why is that? Because for a long time that mendicant’s mind has slanted, sloped, and inclined to seclusion. So it’s impossible for them to return to a lesser life.

And how does a mendicant develop the noble eightfold path? It’s when a mendicant develops right view, right purpose, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion, which rely on seclusion, fading away, and cessation, and ripen as letting go. That’s how a mendicant develops and cultivates the noble eightfold path.”