SN 47.10 — The Nuns’ Quarters

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 47.10

1. In Ambapālī’s Mango Grove

The Nuns’ Quarters

Then Venerable Ānanda robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, went to the nuns’ quarters, and sat down on the seat spread out. Then several nuns went up to Venerable Ānanda bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Honorable Ānanda, several nuns meditate with their minds firmly established in the four kinds of mindfulness meditation. They have realized a higher distinction than they had before.”

“That’s how it is, sisters! That’s how it is, sisters! Any monk or nun who meditates with their mind firmly established in the four kinds of mindfulness meditation can expect to realize a higher distinction than they had before.”

Then Ānanda educated, encouraged, fired up, and inspired those nuns with a Dhamma talk, after which he rose from his seat and left. Then Ānanda wandered for alms in Sāvatthī. After the meal, on his return from almsround, he went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and told him what had happened.

“That’s so true, Ānanda! That’s so true! Any monk or nun who meditates with their mind firmly established in the four kinds of mindfulness meditation can expect to realize a higher distinction than they had before.

What four? It’s when a mendicant meditates by observing an aspect of the body—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of covetousness and displeasure for the world. As they meditate observing an aspect of the body, based on the body there arises sweltering in the body, or mental sluggishness, or the mind is externally scattered. That mendicant should direct their mind toward an inspiring subject as a basis for meditation. As they do so, joy springs up. Being joyful, rapture springs up. When the mind is full of rapture, the body becomes tranquil. When the body is tranquil, one feels bliss. And when blissful, the mind becomes immersed in samādhi. Then they reflect: ‘I have accomplished the goal for which I directed my mind. Let me now relax.’ They relax, and neither place the mind nor keep it connected. They understand: ‘I’m neither placing the mind nor keeping it connected. Mindful within myself, I’m happy.’

Furthermore, a mendicant meditates by observing an aspect of feelings … mind … principles—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of covetousness and displeasure for the world. As they meditate observing an aspect of principles, based on principles there arises sweltering in the body, or mental sluggishness, or the mind is externally scattered. That mendicant should direct their mind toward an inspiring subject as a basis for meditation. As they do so, joy springs up. Being joyful, rapture springs up. When the mind is full of rapture, the body becomes tranquil. When the body is tranquil, one feels bliss. And when blissful, the mind becomes immersed in samādhi. Then they reflect: 'I have accomplished the goal for which I directed my mind. Let me now relax.' They relax, and neither place the mind nor keep it connected. They understand: 'I'm neither placing the mind nor keeping it connected. Mindful within myself, I'm happy.' That's how there is directed development.

And how is there undirected development? Not directing their mind externally, a mendicant understands: 'My mind is not directed externally.' And they understand: 'Before and behind, it's unconstricted, freed, and undirected.' And they also understand: 'I meditate observing an aspect of the body—keen, aware, mindful; I am happy.' Not directing their mind externally, a mendicant understands: 'My mind is not directed externally.' And they understand: 'Before and behind, it's unconstricted, freed, and undirected.' And they also understand: 'I meditate observing an aspect of feelings—keen, aware, mindful; I am happy.' Not directing their mind externally, a mendicant understands: 'My mind is not directed externally.' And they understand: 'Before and behind, it's unconstricted, freed, and undirected.' And they also understand: 'I meditate observing an aspect of the mind—keen, aware, mindful; I am happy.' Not directing their mind externally, a mendicant understands: 'My mind is not directed externally.' And they understand: 'Before and behind, it's unconstricted, freed, and undirected.' And they also understand: 'I meditate observing an aspect of principles—keen, aware, mindful; I am happy.' That's how there is undirected development.

So, Ānanda, I've taught you directed development and undirected development. Out of sympathy, I've done what a teacher should do who wants what's best for their disciples. Here are these roots of trees, and here are these empty huts. Practice absorption, Ānanda! Don't be negligent! Don't regret it later! This is my instruction to you."

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, Venerable Ānanda approved what the Buddha said.