

SEPTEMBER DHARMA REFLECTION:

TENDING THE SICK

Now, at that time a certain monk was suffering from dysentery and lay where he had fallen down in his own excrements. As the Buddha was walking about he came to the lodging of that monk. When he saw that monk lying where he had fallen in his own excrements, he went over to him and said, “Brother, what ails you?”

“I have dysentery, Lord.”

“But is there anyone taking care of you, brother?”

“No, Lord.”

“Why is it, brother, that the monks do not take care of you?”

“I am useless to the monks, Lord, therefore the monks do not care for me.”

Then the Buddha said to the venerable Ananda, “Go, Ananda, and fetch water. We will wash brother.”

When Ananda had fetched water, the Buddha poured it out, and the venerable Ananda washed that brother all over. Then the Buddha taking him by the head and the venerable Ananda taking him by the feet, together they laid him on a bed.

Then the Buddha, in this connection and on this occasion, gathered the order of monks together, and questioned them, saying, “Monks, is there in such a lodging a brother who is sick?”

“There is, Lord.”

“And what ails that brother?”

“Lord, that brother has dysentery.”

“But, brethren, is there anyone taking care of him?”

“No, Lord.”

“Why not? Why do the monks not take care of him?”

“That brother is useless to the order of monks, Lord. That is why the monks do not take care of him.”

“Monks, you have no mother and no father to take care of you. If you will not take care of each other, who else will do so? Monks, those who would attend to me, let them attend to the sick.”

Adapted from the Theravada Vinaya, translated by F.L. Woodward