

AN 2.39: Vuddhabhūmi Sutta

Elders

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

On one occasion Venerable Mahākaccāna was living at Madhurā, in Gundā Grove. Then the brahmin Kandarāyana approached Venerable Mahākaccāna and conversed with him; when the appropriate polite conversation was finished, he sat to one side, and said to Venerable Mahākaccāna,

“Sir Kaccāna, I have heard that ‘The contemplative Kaccāna does not pay respects to, rise up for, or offer seats to brahmins who are old, elderly, mature, coming to the end of their time, near the end of their life.’ This is true, Sir Kaccāna. Sir Kaccāna does not pay respects to, rise up for, or offer seats to brahmins who are old, elderly, mature, coming to the end of their time, near the end of their life. Sir Kaccāna, this is not proper.”

“Brahmin, the Fortunate One – the Knower, the Seer, the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-Awakened One – has stated what classifies one as an ‘elder’ and what classifies one as ‘young.’

“Brahmin, even if a person is eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old, if they indulge in sensuality, live a sensual life, burn with the fever of sensuality, are devoured by sensual thoughts, and eagerly seek sensuality, then they are considered a ‘fool,’ not ‘senior.’ However, brahmin, even if a person is young, dark-haired, youthful, near the beginning of their life, if they do not indulge in sensuality, do not live a sensual life, do not burn with the fever of sensuality, are not devoured by sensual thoughts, and do not eagerly seek sensuality, then they are considered a ‘wise senior.’”

When this was said, the brahmin Kandarāyana rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, bowed down with his head at the feet of the young monks, and said, “The Venerables are elders, they are classified as elders! But we are young, we are classified as young.

“Magnificent, Sir Kaccāna, magnificent, Sir Kaccāna! Sir Kaccāna, just like one might set upright what was upside down, or reveal what was hidden, or explain the path to one who is confused, or bring an oil lamp into darkness so those with eyes can see, in the same way the Dhamma has been revealed in many ways by Sir Kaccāna. I go to the Fortunate One for refuge, and to the Dhamma, and to the monastic community. May Sir Kaccāna remember me as a lay devotee who today has taken refuge for the rest of my life.”