

DN 16.36 The Buddha's Last Words, Bhikkhu Sujato

Then the Buddha said to the mendicants,
“Perhaps even a single mendicant has doubt or uncertainty regarding the Buddha, the teaching, the Saṅgha, the path, or the practice. So ask, mendicants! Don't regret it later, thinking: ‘We were in the Teacher's presence and we weren't able to ask the Buddha a question.’”

When this was said, the mendicants kept silent. For a second time, and a third time the Buddha addressed the mendicants:

“Perhaps even a single mendicant has doubt or uncertainty regarding the Buddha, the teaching, the Saṅgha, the path, or the practice. So ask, mendicants! Don't regret it later, thinking: ‘We were in the Teacher's presence and we weren't able to ask the Buddha a question.’”

For a third time, the mendicants kept silent. Then the Buddha said to the mendicants,
“Mendicants, perhaps you don't ask out of respect for the Teacher. So let a friend tell a friend.”

When this was said, the mendicants kept silent. Then Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha,
“It's incredible, sir, it's amazing! I am quite confident that there's not even a single mendicant in this Saṅgha who has doubt or uncertainty regarding the Buddha, the teaching, the Saṅgha, the path, or the practice.”

“Ānanda, you speak from faith. But the Realized One knows that there's not even a single mendicant in this Saṅgha who has doubt or uncertainty regarding the Buddha, the teaching, the Saṅgha, the path, or the practice. Even the last of these five hundred mendicants is a stream-enterer, not liable to be reborn in the underworld, bound for awakening.”

Then the Buddha said to the mendicants:
“Come now, mendicants, I say to you all:

‘Conditions fall apart. Persist with diligence.’”

These were the Realized One's last words.

WORDS

Speak the words and phrases that touch you. Listen deeply to words shared by others. Speak only the words of the text. Ruminates. Let them find a home in your memory.

FELT RESPONSES

Remain absorbed in the words and turn towards resonances in the body. “When I read this, I feel *this*.” What emotions are evoked, what images? Speak only felt responses related specifically to the text.

MEANING

Explore the meaning of the words and phrases. Inquire. Do not be afraid to analyze. Notice how threads of meaning are woven. Are there ambiguities, metaphors, contexts? How clearly can these words be understood?

ESSENCE

Discern what is true in this text: universal, timeless, beyond the personal. Intuit what is being named that is simply the operation of nature. Sense how the essence of this text comes to life now in you. Speak that essence. Move patiently between the printed words, inner words, and silences.

DIALOGUE

Join together in the immediate experience of the Dhamma: the way things actually are. Release the text; trust that it will inform the present moment. Speak to the present experience, sharing observations, pain, insights. Listen Deeply. There are ample silences to soak in each and every spoken word.