MN 141 — Saccavibhanga Sutta: Discourse on The Analysis of the Truths

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved; source ellipsis or repetition-omission statement retained. Canonical repetitions were not reconstructed.

Text

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Deer Park at Isipatana (the Resort of Saints) near Varanasi (Benares). Then he addressed the monks saying: "O Monks." "Venerable Sir," replied those monks in assent to the Blessed One. Thereupon he said:

"The matchless Wheel of Dhamma set in motion by the Tathagata,[1] the Consummate One, the supremely Enlightened One, in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Varanasi, cannot be set in motion by a recluse or brahmana or Deva or Mara or Brahma or by anyone in the world. That is to say, it was a proclamation of the Four Noble Truths, by way of teaching, laying down, establishing, opening up, analyzing, and elucidating them.

"Of what four: It was a proclamation of the Noble Truth of suffering (dukkha), by way of teaching... (as before) and elucidating it; of the Noble Truth of the arising (cause) of suffering... of the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering... of the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of suffering. This matchless Wheel of Dhamma, monks, set in motion by the Tathagata, the Consummate One, the supremely Enlightened One, in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Varanasi, cannot be set in motion by a recluse... or by anyone in the world. That is to say, it was a proclamation of the Four Noble Truths, by way of teaching, laying down, establishing, opening up, analyzing, and elucidating them.

"Monks, follow Sariputta and Moggallana; associate with Sariputta and Moggallana. Wise monks do help (materially and spiritually) those who live the holy life. Monks, Sariputta is like unto a mother, Moggallana is like unto a foster-mother to a child. Sariputta, monks, trains (beings) in the path[2] of stream-attainment. Moggallana in the highest goal (arahantship).[3] Sariputta, monks, is able to proclaim, teach, lay down, establish, open up, analyze, and elucidate the Four Noble Truths."

This the Blessed One said, and having said so, the Welcome Being (sugata)[4] rose from his seat and entered (his) abode. Not long after the Blessed One had departed, the Venerable Sariputta addressed the monks, saying: "Reverend friends." "Your reverence," the monks replied the Venerable Sariputta in assent.

This the Venerable Sariputta said:

"Your reverence, the matchless Wheel of Dhamma set in motion by the Tathagata, the Consummate One, the supremely Enlightened One, in the Deer Park, at Isipatana near Varanasi, cannot be set in motion by a recluse or brahmana... (as before) in the world. That is to say, it was a proclamation of the Four Noble Truths, by way of teaching, laying down, establishing, opening up, analyzing, and elucidating them.

"Of what four? It was a proclamation of the Noble Truth of suffering (dukkha) by way of teaching... elucidating it; of the Noble Truth of the arising of suffering... of the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering... of the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of suffering.

"What, your reverence, is the Noble Truth of suffering? Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; death is suffering; grief, lamentation, bodily pain, mental pain and despair are suffering; not getting what one desires, that too is suffering: In brief the five aggregates subject to grasping are suffering.

"What is birth? It is the birth of beings in the various classes (planes) of beings; the production, their conception, coming into existence (re-birth), the appearance of the aggregates, acquiring of the sense-bases. This is called birth.

"What is aging? It is the aging of beings in the various classes of beings, their decay, broken teeth, graying hair, wrinkled skin, the dwindling of the life-span, the wearing out of the sense-organs. This is called aging.

"What is death? It is the passing away of beings in the various classes of beings; the falling away, the breaking up, the disappearance, the death, making end of life, the breaking up of the aggregates, the laying down of the body. This is called death.

"What is grief? It is the grief, sorrow, sorrowfulness, the state of being sorry, inward sorrow, inward intense sorrow visited by some calamity or other, smitten by some kind of ill or other. This is called grief.

"What is lamentation? It is the crying, the wailing, the act of crying, the act of wailing, the state of crying, the state of wailing of one visited by some calamity or other, smitten by some kind of ill or other. This is called lamentation.

"What is suffering? It is bodily suffering, bodily unpleasantness, the painful and unpleasant feeling produced by bodily contact. This is called suffering.

"What is misery? It is mental suffering, unpleasantness, the painful and unpleasant feeling produced by mental contact. This is called misery.

"What is despair? It is despondency, despair, the state of despondency, the state of despair of one visited by some calamity or other. This is called despair.

"What is meant by not getting what one desires, that too is suffering? To beings subject to birth there comes desire: 'O might we not be subject to birth, and birth not come to us.' But this cannot be attained by mere desiring. So not getting what one desires, that too, is suffering. To beings subject to aging there comes the desire: 'O might we not be subject to aging, and aging not come to us...' (as before). To beings subject to disease there comes the desire: 'O might we not be subject to disease and disease not come to us...' To beings subject to death there comes the desire: 'O might we not be subject to death and death not come to us...' To beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, suffering, misery, and despair there comes the desire: 'O might we not be subject to sorrow, lamentation, suffering, misery, and despair, and sorrow, lamentation, suffering, misery, and despair not come to us.' But this cannot be attained by merely desiring. So not getting what one desires that too is suffering.

"What, in brief, are the five aggregates subject to grasping that are suffering? These are the aggregate of matter subject to grasping, the aggregate of feeling..., the aggregate of perception..., the aggregate of mental (volitional) formations..., the aggregate of consciousness subject to grasping. These are called, in brief, the five aggregates subject to grasping that are suffering. This is called the Noble Truth of suffering.

"What is the Noble Truth of the arising of suffering? It is this craving which produces re-becoming (re-birth) accompanied by passionate greed, and finding delight now here now there, namely the craving for sense pleasures, craving for existence and craving for non-existence (self-annihilation). This is called the Noble Truth of the arising of suffering.

"What is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering? It is the complete cessation of that very craving, giving it up, relinquishing it, liberating oneself from it, and detaching oneself from it. This is called the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering.

"And what is the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of suffering? It is this Noble Eightfold Path itself, namely: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"What is right understanding? It is this knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the arising of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of suffering — this is called right understanding.

"What is right thought? Thought of renunciation, thought of goodwill, thought of not harming — this is called right thought.

"What is right speech? Abstention from false speech, abstention from tale-bearing, abstention from harsh (abusive) speech, abstention from idle chatter (gossip), this is called right speech.

"What is right action? Abstention from killing, abstention from stealing, abstention from illicit sexual indulgence, this is called right action.

"What is right livelihood? Herein (in this dispensation) the ariyan disciple avoiding wrong livelihood, makes his living by right livelihood, this is called right livelihood.

"What is right effort? Herein a monk puts forth will, strives, stirs up energy, strengthens his mind, exerts himself to prevent the arising of evil, of unwholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen; puts forth will... (as before) to banish the evil, unwholesome thoughts that have already arisen; puts forth will... to develop wholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen; and puts forth will, strives, stirs up energy, strengthens his mind, exerts himself to maintain, to preserve, increase, to bring them to maturity, development, and to complete the wholesome thoughts that have arisen. This is called right effort.

"What is right mindfulness? Herein a monk lives practicing body contemplation on the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful (of it), having overcome covetousness and dejection concerning the world (of the body).

"He lives practicing feeling-contemplation on the feelings, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful (of it) having overcome covetousness and dejection concerning the world (of feelings).

"He lives practicing mind-contemplation on the mind, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful (of it) having overcome covetousness and dejection concerning the world (of the mind).

"He lives practicing mind-object contemplation on the mind objects, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful (of it) having overcome covetousness and dejection concerning the world (of mental objects). This is called right mindfulness.

"And what is right concentration? Herein a monk aloof from sense desires, aloof from unwholesome thoughts, attains to and abides in the first meditative absorption (jhana) which is detachment-born and accompanied by applied thought, sustained thought, joy, and bliss.

"By allaying applied and sustained thought he attains to, and abides in the second jhana which is inner tranquillity, which is unification (of the mind), devoid of applied and sustained thought, and which has joy and bliss.

"By detachment from joy he dwells in equanimity, mindful, and with clear comprehension and enjoys bliss in body, and attains to and abides in the third jhana which the noble ones (ariyas) call: 'Dwelling in equanimity, mindfulness, and bliss.'

"By giving up of bliss and suffering, by the disappearance already of joy and sorrow, he attains to, and abides in the fourth jhana, which is neither suffering nor bliss, and which is the purity of equanimity-mindfulness. This is called right concentration.

"This is called the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of suffering.

"Your reverence, the matchless Wheel of Dhamma set in motion by the Tathagata, the Consumate One, the supremely Enlightened One, in the Deer Park, at Isipatana near Varanasi, cannot be set in motion by a recluse or brahmana or deva or Brahma or by anyone in the world. That is to say, it was a proclamation of the Four Noble Truths, by way of teaching, laying down, establishing, opening up, analyzing, and elucidating them."

This the Venerable Sariputta said. Those monks glad at heart rejoiced at the words of the Venerable Sariputta.

Notes

1.

For a very comprehensive account of the Four Noble Truths read The Buddha's Ancient Path, Piyadassi Thera, Buddhist Publication Society. Kandy, Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

2.

Literally "fruit," "sotapatti phale."

3.

To train in the path of stream-attainment is more difficult than to train in the path of arahantship for the reason that in the former case one has to deal with undeveloped

beings, and in the latter case with those who are already developed, and who are, by virtue of their development, not destined to fall back.

4.

This is another epithet of the Buddha.