MN 141 — The Analysis of the Truths

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/mn141/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
License: CC0-1.0 — https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/

Text

Middle Discourses 141

The Analysis of the Truths

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Varanasi in the deer park at Isipatana. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, "Mendicants!"

"Venerable sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:

"Near Varanasi, in the deer park at Isipatana, the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha rolled forth the supreme Wheel of Dhamma. And that wheel cannot be rolled back by any ascetic or brahmin or god or Māra or divinity or by anyone in the world. It is the teaching, advocating, establishing, clarifying, analyzing, and revealing of the four noble truths. What four?

The noble truths of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering.

Near Varanasi, in the deer park at Isipatana, the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha rolled forth the supreme Wheel of Dhamma. And that wheel cannot be rolled back by any ascetic or brahmin or god or Māra or divinity or by anyone in the world. It is the teaching, advocating, establishing, clarifying, analyzing, and revealing of the four noble truths.

Mendicants, you should cultivate friendship with Sāriputta and Moggallāna. You should associate with Sāriputta and Moggallāna. They're astute, and they support their spiritual companions. Sāriputta is like one who gives birth, while Moggallāna is like one who raises the child. Sāriputta guides people to the fruit of stream-entry, Moggallāna to the highest goal. Sāriputta is able to explain, teach, assert, establish, clarify, analyze, and reveal the four noble truths in detail."

That is what the Buddha said. When he had spoken, the Holy One rose from his seat and entered his dwelling.

Then, not long after the Buddha left, Venerable Sāriputta said to the mendicants, "Reverends, mendicants!"

"Reverend," they replied. Sāriputta said this:

"Near Varanasi, in the deer park at Isipatana, the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha rolled forth the supreme Wheel of Dhamma. And that wheel cannot be

rolled back by any ascetic or brahmin or god or Māra or divinity or by anyone in the world. It is the teaching, advocating, establishing, clarifying, analyzing, and revealing of the four noble truths. What four?

The noble truths of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering.

And what is the noble truth of suffering? Rebirth is suffering; old age is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress are suffering; not getting what you wish for is suffering. In brief, the five grasping aggregates are suffering.

And what is rebirth? The rebirth, inception, conception, regeneration, manifestation of the aggregates, and acquisition of the sense fields of the various sentient beings in the various orders of sentient beings. This is called rebirth.

And what is old age? The old age, decrepitude, broken teeth, grey hair, wrinkly skin, diminished vitality, and failing faculties of the various sentient beings in the various orders of sentient beings. This is called old age.

And what is death? The passing away, passing on, disintegration, demise, mortality, death, decease, breaking up of the aggregates, laying to rest of the corpse, and cutting off of the life faculty of the various sentient beings in the various orders of sentient beings. This is called death.

And what is sorrow? The sorrow, sorrowing, state of sorrow, inner sorrow, inner deep sorrow in someone who has undergone misfortune, who has experienced suffering. This is called sorrow.

And what is lamentation? The wail, lament, wailing, lamenting, state of wailing and lamentation in someone who has undergone misfortune, who has experienced suffering. This is called lamentation.

And what is pain? Physical pain, physical unpleasantness, the painful, unpleasant feeling that's born from physical contact. This is called pain.

And what is sadness? Mental pain, mental displeasure, the painful, unpleasant feeling that's born from mind contact. This is called sadness.

And what is distress? The stress, distress, state of stress and distress in someone who has undergone misfortune, who has experienced suffering. This is called distress.

And what is 'not getting what you wish for is suffering'? In sentient beings who are liable to be reborn, such a wish arises: 'Oh, if only we were not liable to be reborn! If only rebirth would not come to us!' But you can't get that by wishing. This is: 'not getting what you wish for is suffering'. In sentient beings who are liable to grow old … fall ill … die … experience sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress, such a wish arises: 'Oh, if only we were not liable to experience sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress! If only sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress would not come to us!' But you can't get that by wishing. This is: 'not getting what you wish for is suffering'.

And what is ‘in brief, the five grasping aggregates are suffering’? They are the grasping aggregates that consist of form, feeling, perception, choices, and consciousness. This is called ‘in brief, the five grasping aggregates are suffering’. This is called the noble truth of suffering.

And what is the noble truth of the origin of suffering? It’s the craving that leads to future lives, mixed up with relishing and greed, taking pleasure there wherever it alights. That is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for continued existence, and craving for nonexistence. This is called the noble truth of the origin of suffering.

And what is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering? It’s the fading away and cessation of that very same craving no residue left behind; giving it away, letting it go, releasing it, and not clinging to it. This is called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

And what is the noble truth of the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering? It is simply this noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right purpose, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion.

And what is right view? Knowing about suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering. This is called right view.

And what is right purpose? Purposes of renunciation, good will, and harmlessness. This is called right purpose.

And what is right speech? Refraining from lying, backbiting, harsh speech, and talking nonsense. This is called right speech.

And what is right action? Refraining from killing living creatures, stealing, and sexual misconduct. This is called right action.

And what is right livelihood? It’s when a noble disciple gives up wrong livelihood and earns a living by right livelihood. This is called right livelihood.

And what is right effort? It’s when a mendicant generates enthusiasm, tries, makes an effort, exerts the mind, and strives so that bad, unskillful qualities don’t arise. They generate enthusiasm, try, make an effort, exert the mind, and strive so that bad, unskillful qualities that have arisen are given up. They generate enthusiasm, try, make an effort, exert the mind, and strive so that skillful qualities arise. They generate enthusiasm, try, make an effort, exert the mind, and strive so that skillful qualities that have arisen remain, are not lost, but increase, mature, and are fully developed. This is called right effort.

And what is right mindfulness? 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. They meditate observing an aspect of feelings … mind … principles—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of covetousness and displeasure for the world. This is called right mindfulness.

And what is right immersion? It’s when a mendicant, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters and remains in the first absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of seclusion, while placing the mind and keeping it connected. As the placing of the mind and keeping it connected are stilled, they enter and remain in the second absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of immersion, with

internal clarity and mind at one, without placing the mind and keeping it connected. And with the fading away of rapture, they enter and remain in the third absorption, where they meditate with equanimity, mindful and aware, experiencing for themselves the bliss of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous and mindful, one meditates in bliss.’ With the giving up of pleasure and pain and the disappearance of former happiness and sadness, they enter and remain in the fourth absorption, without pleasure or pain, with pure equanimity and mindfulness. This is called right immersion. This is called the noble truth of the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering.

Near Varanasi, in the deer park at Isipatana, the Realized One, the perfected one, the fully awakened Buddha rolled forth the supreme Wheel of Dhamma. And that wheel cannot be rolled back by any ascetic or brahmin or god or Māra or divinity or by anyone in the world. It is the teaching, advocating, establishing, clarifying, analyzing, and revealing of the four noble truths.”

That is what Venerable Sāriputta said. Satisfied, the mendicants approved what Sāriputta said.