MN 141 — MN 141 An Analysis of the Truths | Sacca-vibhaṅga Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN141.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

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, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

An Analysis of the Truths

Sacca-vibhaṅga Sutta (MN 141)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Bārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There he addressed the monks: “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “Monks, near Bārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative or brahman, deva, Māra, or Brahmā or

anyone at all in the cosmos: in other words, the declaration, teaching, description, setting-forth, revelation, explanation, and making-plain of the four noble truths. Of which four? The declaration, teaching, description, setting-forth, revelation, explanation, and making-plain of the noble truth of stress. The declaration, teaching, description, setting forth, revelation, explanation, and making-plain of the noble truth of the origination of stress… the noble truth of the cessation of stress… the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress. Near Bārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative or brahman, deva, Māra, or Brahmā or anyone at all in the cosmos: in other words, the declaration, teaching, description, setting-forth, revelation, explanation, and making-plain of these four noble truths.

“Monks, associate with Sāriputta & Moggallāna. Consort with Sāriputta & Moggallāna. Sāriputta & Moggallāna are wise & sympathetic toward the monks who are their companions in the holy life. Like the mother giving birth: That’s Sāriputta. Like the nurse raising a child after it’s born: That’s Moggallāna. Sāriputta trains (others) to the fruit of stream-entry; Moggallāna, to the highest goal.1 Sāriputta is capable of declaring, teaching, describing, setting forth, revealing, explaining, and making plain the four noble truths in detail.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said it, he—the One Well-Gone—rose from his seat and entered his dwelling.

Then Ven. Sāriputta, not long after the Blessed One had left, addressed the monks, “Friends!”

“Yes, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Sāriputta said, “Friends, near Bārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative or brahman, deva, Māra, or Brahmā or anyone at all in the cosmos: in other words, the declaration, teaching, description, setting-forth, revelation, explanation, and making-plain of the four noble truths. Of which four? The declaration, teaching, description, setting-forth, revelation, explanation, and making-plain of the noble truth of stress… the noble truth of the origination of stress… the noble truth of the cessation of stress… the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress. Near Bārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the Tathāgata—the worthy & rightly self-awakened—set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative or brahman, deva, Māra, or Brahmā or anyone at all in the cosmos: in other words, the declaration, teaching, description, setting-forth, revelation, explanation, and making-plain of these four noble truths.

“Now what, friends, is the noble truth of stress? Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; not getting what is wanted is stressful.2 In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

“And what is birth? Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of (sense) spheres of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

“And what is aging? Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging.

“And what is death? Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break-up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.

“And what is sorrow? Whatever sorrow, sorrowing, sadness, inward sorrow, inward sadness of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called sorrow.

“And what is lamentation? Whatever crying, grieving, lamenting, weeping, wailing, lamentation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called lamentation.

“And what is pain? Whatever is experienced as bodily pain, bodily discomfort, pain or discomfort born of bodily contact, that is called pain.

“And what is distress? Whatever is experienced as mental pain, mental discomfort, pain or discomfort born of mental contact, that is called distress.

“And what is despair? Whatever despair, despondency, desperation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called despair.

“And what is the stress of not getting what is wanted? In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, ‘O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us.’ But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted. In beings subject to aging… illness… death… sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, the wish arises, ‘O, may we not be subject to aging… illness… death… sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and may aging… illness… death… sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not come to us.’ But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted.

“And what are the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrication clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: These are called the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful.

“This, friends, is called the noble truth of stress.

“And what, friends, is the noble truth of the origination of stress? The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

“This is called the noble truth of the origination of stress.

“And what, friends, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

“This is called the noble truth of the cessation of stress.

“And what, friends, is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress? Just this very noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“And what is right view? Knowledge in terms of stress, knowledge in terms of the origination of stress, knowledge in terms of the cessation of stress, knowledge in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view.

“And what is right resolve? The resolve for renunciation, for freedom from ill will, for harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

“And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.

“And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, from stealing, & from sexual misconduct: This is called right action.

“And what is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood: This is called right livelihood.

“And what is right effort? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen: This is called right effort.

“And what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves… the mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness.

“And what is right concentration? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration.

“This is called the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

“Friends, near Bārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the Tathāgata—the worthy & rightly self-awakened—set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative or brahman, deva, Māra, or Brahmā or anyone at all in the cosmos: in other words, the declaration, teaching, description, setting-forth, revelation, explanation, and making-plain of these four noble truths.”

That is what Ven. Sāriputta said. Gratified, the monks delighted in Ven. Sāriputta’s words.

Notes

1. The Buddha declared Sāriputta to be foremost among his disciples in terms of discernment; Moggallāna, foremost in terms of psychic powers. It might seem strange, then, that Sāriputta takes on what seems to be a lower job, but as many Buddhist teachers have commented, it’s much harder to train an ordinary person to enter the stream than it is to train a stream-winner to reach the highest goal.

2. In passages where the Buddha defines stress, (e.g., SN 56:11, DN 22), he includes the statements, “association with the unbeloved is stressful; separation from the loved is stressful,” prior to “not getting what one wants is stressful.” For some reason, in passages where Ven. Sāriputta defines stress (here and at MN 9 and MN 28), he drops these statements from the definition.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 22; SN 12:20; SN 56:11; AN 3:137