

The Arahan and the Four Truths in Early Buddhist Discourse

by Bhikkhu Anālayo

lecture 6

mettā (etc.) meditation practice in the early discourses:

"Dwell [mentally] pervading one direction, likewise the second, the third, and the fourth direction, and also the four intermediate directions and also above and below, all around, everywhere.

"With a mind imbued with loving-kindness, free from fetters or resentment, without ill-will or quarrel, dwell pervading the entire world [with a mind] boundless, exalted, immeasurable and well-cultivated."

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MA 28 – Discourse on Teaching the Sick

(Parallel to the *Pathama-Anāthapiṇḍika-sutta* SN 55.26/ SN V 380)

The venerable Sāriputta asked: "How is your ailment now, householder? How much are you eating and drinking? Are your painful feelings subsiding, not increasing?"

The householder [Anāthapiṇḍika] replied: "My ailment is becoming critical. I cannot eat or drink. My painful feelings are increasing, not subsiding."

The venerable Sāriputta said: "Don't be afraid, householder. Don't be afraid. Why not? In the case of ignorant, ordinary worldlings who are wanting in faith, with the breaking up of the body at death they go to a bad realm of existence, being reborn in hell.

"But you now, householder, are not wanting in faith; rather, you are of superior faith.

"By [recalling your] superior faith, householder, you may be able to extinguish your pain and give rise to happiness. By [relying on your] superior faith, householder, you may attain the fruit of once-returning, or [even] the fruit of non-returning, as you have already attained stream-entry.

[same then for:

- virtue
- learning
- generosity
- wisdom
- right view
- right intention
- right understanding
- right liberation
- right knowledge]

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qualities in SN 55.26:

- faith in Buddha
- faith in Dharma
- faith in community
- virtue
- right view
- right intention
- right speech
- right action
- right livelihood
- right effort
- right mindfulness
- right concentration
- right knowledge
- right liberation

Bhikkhu Bodhi 2000: *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, page 1958 note 351 comments: "At MN III 76,7-9, it is said that the trainee in the practice has eight factors, the arahant ten. Yet, here, strangely, the last two factors, *sammāñāṇa* and *sammāvimutti*, which are supposed to be unique to the arahant, are ascribed to the stream-enterer Anāthapiṇḍika. The last line of the sutta confirms that this was not a mere editorial oversight. For another example of such anomalies see 47:13 (and n. 160), where two factors of an arahant – liberation, and knowledge and vision of liberation – are ascribed to the trainee Ānanda."

SN 47:13

"Why, Ānanda, when Sāriputta attained final Nibbāna, did he take away your aggregate of virtue, or your aggregate of concentration, or your aggregate of wisdom, or your aggregate of liberation, or your aggregate of the knowledge and vision of liberation?"

kinnu te ānanda sāriputto sīlakkhandham vā ādāya parinibbuto, samādhikkhandham va ādāya parinibbuto ... (SN V 162)

Parallel SĀ 638 at T II 176c11 has same question but without "you", so that here the sense is simply if Sāriputta had taken away these five aggregates on attaining final Nirvāṇa, without any explicit relationship to Ānanda

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MĀ 28

Thereupon, the householder's illness vanished and his condition returned to normal. He raised himself into a sitting position on the bed, and praised the venerable Sāriputta:

"Very good! Very good! Your teaching of the Dharma to this sick man was marvelous, very special! Venerable Sāriputta, on hearing your Dharma teaching for a sick man, my pain has been extinguished and happiness has been aroused. Venerable Sāriputta, my illness has now vanished and my condition has returned to normal."

[after Anāthapiṇḍika has reached stream-entry during his first meeting with the Buddha]:

Then the Buddha asked me: 'What is your name? How do the people of Sāvatthī address you? '

I replied: 'My name is Sudatta; but because I regularly assist and give to the needy and the orphaned, the people of Sāvatthī call me Anāthapiṇḍika (Giver to the Needy and the Orphaned).'

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Vin II 156: *bhagavā anāthapiṇḍikam gahapatim etad avoca: ehi sudattā ti. atha kho anāthapiṇḍiko gahapti: nāmena mam bhagavā ālapatī ti haṭṭho udaggo yena bhagavatā ten' upasamkami*

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MĀ 28

Seeing the venerable Sāriputta approaching in the distance, the Blessed One told the monks [in the assembly]:

"The monk Sāriputta is endowed with bright wisdom, quick wisdom, lively wisdom, keen wisdom, extensive wisdom, profound wisdom, wisdom that brings release, penetrative wisdom, eloquent wisdom. The monk Sāriputta has achieved genuine wisdom. Why is that? Regarding the four limbs of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*) taught in brief by me, the monk Sāriputta has elaborated on them with ten different explanations for the householder Anāthapiṇḍika."

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main point:

- the power of recollecting one's own good qualities

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MĀ 29 – Discourse to Mahākoṭṭhita

(Parallel to the *Sammāditthi-sutta* MN 9/ MN I 46)

The venerable Sāriputta then asked: "Venerable friend Mahā Koṭṭhita, is there a condition owing to which a monk accomplishes view, acquires right view and, having attained unwavering pure [confidence] in the Dharma, arrives at the true Dharma?"

1) [The venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita] replied: "There is, venerable Sāriputta. It is this: a monk knows the unwholesome and knows the roots of the unwholesome.

"What is knowledge of the unwholesome? It is this: evil bodily actions are unwholesome, evil verbal actions and evil mental actions are unwholesome. This is reckoned to be knowledge of the unwholesome.

"What is knowledge of the roots of the unwholesome? It is this: greed is a root of the unwholesome; hatred and ignorance are roots of the unwholesome.

"Venerable Sāriputta, if there is a monk who, in this manner, knows the unwholesome and the roots of the unwholesome, then he is said to be a monk who has accomplished view, acquired right view and, having attained unwavering pure [confidence] in the Dharma, has arrived at the true Dharma."

[Sāriputta approves and asks again]

"Friend Mahā Koṭṭhita, is there another condition owing to which a monk accomplishes view, acquires right view and, having attained unwavering pure [confidence] in the Dharma, arrives at the true Dharma?"

[Mahā Koṭṭhita] replied: "There is, venerable Sāriputta. It is this: a monk knows the wholesome and knows the roots of the wholesome.

"What is knowledge of the wholesome? It is this: good bodily actions are wholesome, good verbal actions and good mental actions are wholesome. This is reckoned to be knowledge of the wholesome.

"What is knowledge of the roots of the wholesome? It is this: absence of lust is a root of the wholesome; absence of aversion and absence of ignorance are roots of the wholesome.

"Venerable Sāriputta, if there is a monk who, in this manner, knows the wholesome and knows their roots, then he is said to be a monk who has accomplished view, acquired right view and, having attained unwavering pure [confidence] in the Dharma, has arrived at the true Dharma."

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in the parallel versions (MN 9, SĀ 344 and Sanskrit fragments) the wholesome and the unwholesome come together as one single answer

Another difference is that according to MN 9 (trsl Bhikkhu Bodhi):

"When a noble disciple has thus understood the unwholesome and the root of the unwholesome, the wholesome and the root of the wholesome, he entirely abandons the underlying tendency to lust, he abolishes the underlying tendency to aversion, he extirpates the underlying tendency to the view and conceit 'I am,' and by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge he here and now makes an end of suffering.

"In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

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 MĀ 29

[Sāriputta keeps asking]

2) "A monk knows nutriment (*āhāra*) as it really is, knows the arising of nutriment, knows the cessation of nutriment, and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of nutriment as it really is.

"What is knowledge of nutriment as it really is? It is this: there are four nutriments: the first nutriment is physical food, coarse or fine; the second nutriment is contact; the third nutriment is intention; and the fourth nutriment is consciousness. This is reckoned to be knowledge of nutriment as it really is.

"What is knowledge of the arising of nutriment as it really is? It is this: in dependence on craving, nutriment comes to be. This is reckoned to be knowledge of the arising of nutriment as it really is.

"What is knowledge of the cessation of nutriment as it really is? It is this: with the cessation of craving, nutriment also ceases. This is reckoned to be knowledge of the cessation of nutriment as it really is.

"What is knowledge of the path [leading to] the cessation of nutriment as it really is? It is this: the noble eightfold path, from right view to right concentration – eight [factors]. This is reckoned to be knowledge of the path [leading to] the cessation of nutriment as it really is.

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Bhikkhu Bodhi (1991: 5) explains that "each phenomenon to be comprehended by right view is expounded in terms of its individual nature, its arising, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation"

Basic Pattern of the Exposition

- 1st item in question
- 2nd cause of the item
- 3rd opposite of the item
- 4th cause of opposite of the item

In the case of the four noble truths, this basic pattern then becomes:

- 1st truth: *dukkha*,
- 2nd truth: arising of *dukkha* (i.e., its cause),
- 3rd truth: cessation of *dukkha* (i.e., the opposite of *dukkha*),
- 4th truths: path to the cessation of *dukkha* (i.e., cause of opposite)

This combines understanding something (1 and 3) with understanding its causes (2 and 4).

The description of such an understanding proceeds from the particular item to its cause (1 and 2), followed by turning to its opposite and then to the cause that brings about the opposite (3 and 4).

Diagnostic Scheme of the Four Noble Truths

- disease: *dukkha*
- pathogen: craving (arising of *dukkha*)
- health: Nirvāṇa (cessation of *dukkha*)
- cure: eightfold path