

MN 141: Saccavibhaṅga Sutta

Analysis of Truth

Translated by Suddhāso Bhikkhu

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Bārāṇasi, in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks!” “Auspicious sir!” those monks replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

“Monks, the unsurpassed Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by a contemplative, a priest, an angel, a demon, a god,¹ or by anyone in the world, was set in motion by the Worthy One,² the Rightly Self-Awakened One,³ at Bārāṇasi in the Deer Park at Isipatana – that is, the declaring, teaching, disclosing, describing, revealing, and clarifying of the Four Noble Truths. What four? The declaring, teaching, disclosing, describing, revealing, and clarifying of the noble truth of dissatisfaction;⁴ the declaring... and clarifying of the noble truth of the origin of dissatisfaction; the declaring... and clarifying of the noble truth of the cessation of dissatisfaction; the declaring... and clarifying of the noble truth of the practice which leads to the cessation of dissatisfaction. Monks, the unsurpassed Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by a contemplative, a priest, an angel, a demon, a god, or by anyone in the world, was set in motion by the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-Awakened One, at Bārāṇasi in the Deer Park at Isipatana – that is, the declaring, teaching, disclosing, describing, revealing, expounding, and clarifying of these Four Noble Truths.

“Monks, associate with Sāriputta and Moggallāna. Monks, spend time with Sāriputta and Moggallāna. They are wise monks who assist their companions in the Holy Life. Monks, Sāriputta is like a parent, Moggallāna is like a babysitter.⁵ Monks, Sāriputta leads one to the attainment of stream-entry, Moggallāna [leads one] to the highest goal.⁶ Monks, Sāriputta is able to declare, teach, disclose, describe, reveal, expound, and clarify the Four Noble Truths.” This is what the Blessed One said. After saying this, the Blessed One rose from his seat and entered [his] dwelling.

Not long after the Blessed One left, Venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks: “Venerable monks!” “Venerable sir,” those monks replied to Venerable Sāriputta. Venerable Sāriputta said this:

“Monks, the unsurpassed Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by a contemplative, a priest, an angel, a demon, a god, or by anyone in the world, was set in motion by the

1 *Samaṇa, brāhmaṇa, deva, māra, brahmā.*

2 *Arahant.*

3 *Sammā-sambuddha.* It is debatable whether “*sambuddha*” means “self-awakened” or “completely awakened.” The prefix *saṃ* usually means “completely.” However, it may in this case be a contraction of “*sayam*,” which means “by oneself.”

4 *Dukkha.* Lit. “that which is hard to bear.” Often translated “suffering” or “stress,” this covers the entire range of unpleasant and/or unsatisfying experiences, from the most subtle to the most extreme.

5 *Jātassa āpādetā.* Lit. “one who raises that which has been born.”

6 That is, full enlightenment – the attainment of the state of an Arahant.

Worthy One, the Rightly Self-Awakened One, at Bārāṇasi in the Deer Park at Isipatana - that is, the declaring, teaching, disclosing, describing, revealing, expounding, and clarifying of the Four Noble Truths. What four? The declaring... of the noble truth of dissatisfaction... of the origin of dissatisfaction... of the cessation of dissatisfaction... of the practice which leads to the cessation of dissatisfaction.

“And, Venerables, what is the noble truth of dissatisfaction? Birth is dissatisfaction, aging is dissatisfaction, dieing is dissatisfaction; sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and anguish are dissatisfaction; not getting what one wants is dissatisfaction; briefly, the five aggregates when affected by clinging are dissatisfaction.

“And, Venerables, what is birth? The birth, appearance, descent, or production of those beings amidst a group of beings; the manifestation of the aggregates; the acquisition of the sense-bases - Venerables, this is called 'birth.'

“And, Venerables, what is aging? The aging, decrepitude, broken teeth, gray hair, and wrinkled skin of those beings amidst a group of beings; the dwindling of vitality; the weakening of one's faculties - Venerables, this is called 'aging.'

“And, Venerables, what is dieing? The falling, shifting away, dissolution, disappearance, mortality, and dieing of those beings from a group of beings; the completion of the [life]time; the dissolution of the aggregates; the laying-down of the body; the severance of the life-faculty - Venerables, this is called 'dieing.'

“And, Venerables, what is sorrow? Venerables, the sorrow, sadness, sorrowfulness, melancholy, or depression of one who has had some kind of misfortune or who has encountered some kind of unpleasant experience - Venerables, this is called 'sorrow.'

“And, Venerables, what is lamentation? Venerables, the grief, lamentation, grieving, lamenting, state of grief, or state of lamentation of one who has had some kind of misfortune or who has encountered some kind of unpleasant experience - Venerables, this is called 'lamentation.'

“And, Venerables, what is pain? Venerables, whatever is felt as physical pain, physically unpleasant, pain and unpleasantness that arises from physical contact - Venerables, this is called 'pain.'

“And, Venerables, what is dejection? Venerables, whatever is felt as mental pain, mentally unpleasant, pain and unpleasantness that arises from mental contact - Venerables, this is called 'dejection.'

“And, Venerables, what is anguish? The misery, anguish, state of misery, or state of anguish of one who has had some kind of misfortune or who has encountered some kind of unpleasant experience - Venerables, this is called 'anguish.'

“And what, Venerables, is 'not getting what one wants is dissatisfaction'? Venerables, this kind of wish arises in a being who is subject to birth: 'Oh, may we not be subject to birth; may birth not come to us.' But that wish is not attainable. This is [called] 'not getting what one wants is dissatisfaction.' Venerables, this kind of wish arises in a being who is subject to aging... illness... dieing... sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and anguish: 'Oh, may we not be subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and anguish; may sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and anguish not come to us.' But that wish is not attainable. This is also [called] 'not getting what one wants is dissatisfaction.'

“And, Venerables, what is 'briefly, the five aggregates when affected by clinging are dissatisfaction'? It is these: the physical form aggregate when affected by clinging, the feeling... recognition... thought... consciousness aggregate when affected by clinging. Venerables, these are called 'briefly, the five aggregates when affected by clinging are dissatisfaction.'

“Venerables, this called 'the noble truth of dissatisfaction.'

“And, Venerables, what is the noble truth of the origin of dissatisfaction? That craving which is productive of further existence, is accompanied by delight and passion, [and] seeks delight in various ways⁷ - that is, craving for sensuality, craving for existence, and craving for avoiding existence.⁸ Venerables, this is called 'the noble truth of the origin of dissatisfaction.'

“And, Venerables, what is the noble truth of the cessation of dissatisfaction? The remainderless fading away, cessation, giving up, relinquishment, and release of that craving, without any further attachment to it. Venerables, this is called 'the noble truth of the cessation of dissatisfaction.'

“And, Venerables, what is the noble truth of the practice which leads to the cessation of dissatisfaction? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path - that is, appropriate perspective, appropriate intention, appropriate speech, appropriate conduct, appropriate livelihood, appropriate effort, appropriate mindfulness, and appropriate concentration.

“And, Venerables, what is appropriate perspective? Venerables, knowing about dissatisfaction, knowing about the origin of dissatisfaction, knowing about the cessation of dissatisfaction, [and] knowing about the practice which leads to the cessation of dissatisfaction - Venerables, this is called 'appropriate perspective.'

“And, Venerables, what is appropriate intention? The intention of renunciation, the intention of non-aversion, the intention of non-harming - Venerables, this is called 'appropriate intention.'

⁷ *Tatra-tatra-abhinandinī*. Lit. “here and there delighting.”

⁸ *Vibhava-taṇhā*. Often translated “craving for non-existence,” this may more accurately refer to the desire to avoid *particular* kinds of existence, rather than only existence as a whole.

“And, Venerables, what is appropriate speech? Refraining from false statements, refraining from malicious speech, refraining from harsh speech, refraining from useless prattle - Venerables, this is called 'appropriate speech.'

“And, Venerables, what is appropriate conduct? Refraining from killing living beings, refraining from theft, and refraining from sexual misconduct - Venerables, this is called 'appropriate conduct.'

“And, Venerables, what is appropriate livelihood? Venerables, here a noble disciple abandons inappropriate livelihood and makes a living by means of appropriate livelihood - Venerables, this is called 'appropriate livelihood.'

“And, Venerables, what is appropriate effort? Venerables, here a monk produces interest, makes an effort, arouses energy, directs the mind, and strives for the non-arising of harmful, unwholesome mindstates that have not yet arisen. He produces interest... and strives for the abandoning of harmful, unwholesome mindstates that have already arisen. He produces interest... and strives for the arising of wholesome mindstates that have not yet arisen. He produces interest... and strives for the stability, persistence, growth, abundance, development, and perfection of wholesome mindstates that have already arisen. Venerables, this is called 'appropriate effort.'

“And, Venerables, what is appropriate mindfulness? Venerables, here a monk dwells observing the body in terms of the body - ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having removed desire and dejection about the world. He dwells observing feelings in terms of feelings... the mind in terms of the mind... mindstates in terms of mindstates - ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having removed desire and dejection about the world. Venerables, this is called 'appropriate mindfulness.'

“And, Venerables, what is appropriate concentration? Venerables, here a monk separates himself from sensuality, separates himself from unwholesome mindstates, and attains and remains in the first *jhāna*,⁹ which has [directed] thought, investigation, and the rapture and happiness which is produced by seclusion. With the abeyance of thought and investigation, he attains and remains in the second *jhāna*, which has internal tranquility and mental unification, is free of [directed] thought and investigation, and has the rapture and happiness born of concentration. With the fading away of rapture, he attains and remains in the third *jhāna*; dwelling equanimous, mindful, and clearly comprehending, while experiencing pleasure with the body - this is what the noble ones call 'equanimous, mindful, and dwelling in pleasure.' From the abandoning of pleasure, the abandoning of pain, and the previous disappearance of elation and dejection, he attains and remains in the fourth *jhāna*, which is neither painful nor pleasant, and is completely pure, composed of equanimity and mindfulness.¹⁰ Venerables, this is called 'appropriate concentration.'

9 A state of deep concentration which is free of the 'five hindrances' - that is, sensual desire, aversion, sleepiness, restlessness, and doubt.

10 *Upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhī*. Lit. “equanimity - mindfulness - completely pure.” The juxtaposition of the three items in this compound word allows a wide range of possible interpretations. However, in compound words, usually the final word in the compound is the primary term, and the preceding words are adjectives or qualifiers - as in English words like blackbird or shellfish; in this case, “completely

“Venerables, this is called 'the noble truth of the practice which leads to the cessation of dissatisfaction.'

“Venerables, the unsurpassed Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by a contemplative, a priest, an angel, a demon, a god, or by anyone in the world, was set in motion by the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-Awakened One, at Bārāṇasi, in the Deer Park at Isipatana - that is, the declaring, teaching, disclosing, describing, revealing, expounding, and clarifying of these Four Noble Truths.”

This is what Venerable Sāriputta said. Satisfied, the monks delighted in Venerable Sāriputta's speech.

pure” would thus most likely be the primary term, which makes interpretations like “mindfulness purified by equanimity” relatively unlikely. A compound word can also simply be a list of terms concatenated into a single word for the sake of convenience, as in this translation.