

The Arahant and the Four Truths in Early Buddhist Discourse

by Bhikkhu Anālayo

lecture 5

MĀ 27 – Discourse to the Brahmin Dhānañjāni (Parallel to the *Dhānañjāni-sutta* MN 97/ MN II 184)

Sāriputta inquires regarding the well-being of:

- the Buddha
- the monks and nuns
- male and female lay disciples
- non-Buddhist recluses and brahmins
- the brahmin Dhānañjāni

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MN 97

Sāriputta inquires regarding the well-being of:

- the Buddha
- the community of monks
- the brahmin Dhānañjāni

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MĀ 27

[The monk] replied: "Venerable Sāriputta, the brahmin Dhānañjāni from Rājagaha is healthy and strong, he is comfortable and free from ailments, he is dwelling at ease, and his vigor is as usual.

"[However,] he does not wish to see the Buddha, nor does he delight in hearing the Dharma. Why is that? Venerable Sāriputta, the brahmin Dhānañjāni has not been making efforts and has been transgressing against the moral precepts.

"Relying on his standing with the king, he defrauds the brahmins and householders; and relying on his standing with the brahmins and householders, he defrauds the king."

[Sāriputta approaches Dhānañjāni and inquires about his conduct]

The brahmin Dhānañjāni replied: "Sāriputta, know that, being at present a householder, I have to manage my household affairs. I have to see to

- my own comfort and well-being,
 - support my parents,
 - look after my wife and children,
 - provide for my male and female servants,
 - pay taxes to the king,
 - perform rituals for the deities,
 - make offerings to my departed ancestors,
 - give to recluses and brahmins — in order to live long and later be reborn in heaven and obtain pleasant karmic fruits.
- Sāriputta, all these affairs cannot be neglected."

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MN 97

Dhānañjāni mentions:

- parents
- wife and children
- servants
- **friends**
- **relatives**
- **guests**
- dead ancestors
- gods
- king
- himself

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MĀ 27

Then the venerable Sāriputta said: "Dhānañjāni, let me ask you a question. Answer as best you can. What do you think, Dhānañjāni?"

Suppose that someone does evil for the sake of his parents.

"Having done evil, he goes, at the breaking up of the body at death, to a bad realm of existence, being reborn in hell. Once reborn in hell, he is dragged off by the wardens of hell to undergo harsh punishment.

"He pleads with the wardens of hell: 'Wardens of hell, let me tell you! Don't punish me! Why? Because I did evil only for the sake of my parents.'

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni, will that person be able to escape punishment by the wardens of hell [by pleading so]?"

[Dhānañjāni] replied: "No."

[same then for:

- wife and children
- male and female servants
- king
- deities
- departed ancestors
- recluses and brahmins]

"Dhānañjāni, a clansman can gain wealth by means that are in accordance with the Dharma, in accordance with [creating good] karma, and in accordance with virtue, in order to honor, respect, and support his parents, thus performing meritorious acts and abstaining from unwholesome acts.

"Dhānañjāni, if a clansman gains wealth by means that are in accordance with the Dharma ... he is thought of fondly by his parents, who say: 'May you have good health and long life! Why [do we say this]? Because thanks to you, we have peace and happiness.'

"Dhānañjāni, for one who is thus thought of fondly by his parents, merits increase daily and do not decline.

[same then for:

- wife and children
- male and female servants
- king
- deities

- departed ancestors
- recluses and brahmins]

[Sāriputta leaves and on a later occasion again approaches Dhānañjani, who is sick]

The venerable Sāriputta asked: "Dhānañjāni, how is your ailment now? How much are you eating and drinking? Is your illness subsiding, not increasing?"

Dhānañjāni replied: "My ailment is becoming critical. I cannot eat or drink. My illness is increasing, not subsiding.

"Venerable Sāriputta, I now have a headache so severe that it is as if a strong man were cutting my head open with a knife, causing extreme pain.

"Venerable Sāriputta, I now have a headache so severe that it is as if a strong man were constantly tightening a rope around my head, causing extreme pain.

"Venerable Sāriputta, I now have stomach pains so severe that it is as if a butcher were cutting it open, like the stomach of a live cow, with a sharp knife, causing extreme pain.

"Venerable Sāriputta, my entire body is in such pain that it is as if two strong men had seized a weak man and were roasting him over a fire, causing extreme pain.

"Such are the painful feelings I am experiencing; and they are increasing, not subsiding."

The venerable Sāriputta said: "Dhānañjāni, let me ask you a question. Answer as best you can. What do you think, brahmin Dhānañjāni? Which is the better, hell or the animal [realm]?"
Dhānañjāni answered: "The animal [realm] is the better."

[same then for:

- hungry ghosts
- human beings
- heaven of the Four Great Kings
- heaven of the Thirty-three

- Yāma heaven
- Tusita heaven
- heaven of gods who delight in creating
- heaven of gods who wield power over the creations of others
- Brahmā heaven

on hearing the Brahmā heaven being mentioned, Dhānañjāni expresses his enthusiasm]

The venerable Sāriputta said: "Dhānañjāni, the Blessed One, who is endowed with knowledge and vision, the Tathāgata, without attachment and fully awakened, has taught four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*).

"By practicing them again and again, a male or female lay follower can cut off sensual desire, relinquish thoughts related to sensual desire, and, with the breaking up of the body at death, will be reborn in the Brahmā world. What are the four?

"Dhānañjāni, here a learned noble disciple with his mind imbued with loving-kindness, dwells [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, he dwells pervading the entire world [with a mind] boundless, exalted, immeasurable and well-cultivated.

"Similarly, he imbues his mind with compassion ... with sympathetic joy ... with equanimity ... free from fetters or resentment, without ill-will or quarrel, he dwells pervading the entire world [with a mind] boundless, exalted, immeasurable and well-cultivated."

Having taught Dhānañjāni the teachings relating to the Brahmā world, the venerable Sāriputta rose from his seat and left. After the venerable Sāriputta had left Rājagaha and before he had reached the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary, while he was still in between [these two places], the brahmin Dhānañjāni, who had practiced the four divine abidings and had abandoned sensual desire and

relinquished thoughts relating to sensual desire, with the breaking up of the body at death, was reborn in the Brahmā world.

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. This monk Sāriputta has just taught the brahmin Dhānañjāni a teaching on the Brahmā world. If he had taught him further, [Dhānañjāni] would have quickly realized the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma."

Then, the venerable Sāriputta approached the Buddha and, having paid homage at his feet, sat down to one side. The Blessed One said: "Sāriputta, why did you not teach the brahmin Dhānañjāni a teaching on going beyond the Brahmā world? If you had taught him further, he would have quickly realized the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma."

The venerable Sāriputta replied: "Blessed One, those brahmins have for a long time been attached to the Brahmā world, they delight in the Brahmā world, [take] the Brahmā world to be supreme, esteem the Brahmā world, [take] the Brahmā world to be [ultimately] real, and consider the Brahmā world as being for them. For these reasons, Blessed One, I acted according to [Dhānañjāni's] wishes."

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main points:

- daily demands in normal living situation of laity have to be evaluated against the broader perspective of morality and of future results, i.e., end does not justify the means,
- take responsibility for what one does

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mettā 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."