

# The Arahant and the Four Truths in Early Buddhist Discourse

by Bhikkhu Anālayo

## lecture 7

simile for second absorption:

"Just as a blue, red, or white lotus, being born in the water and having come to full growth in the water, remains submerged in water, with every part of its roots, stem, flower, and leaves completely drenched and pervaded [by water], with no part that is not pervaded by it"

(MĀ 81 at T I 555c10)

+++++

### Anāthapiṇḍika in other Pāli discourses

Anāthapiṇḍika asks about worthy recipients of gifts

(AN 2.4.4 at AN I 63)

Several discourses given to him are about giving, wealth etc.

(AN 4.58 at AN II 64; AN 4.60 at AN II 65; AN 4.61 at AN II 66; AN 4.62 at AN II 69; AN 5.41 at AN III 45; AN 5.43 at AN III 47; and AN 10.91 at AN V 177)

Buddha tells Anāthapiṇḍika that he should develop the bliss of meditation, he tells him that awareness of impermanence for a moment is more fruitful than giving food and lodging to the Buddha and his monastic disciples

(AN 5.176 at AN III 207 and AN 9.20 at AN IV 396)

Anāthapiṇḍika remarks:

"although I have long waited upon the Teacher and bhikkhus worthy of esteem, never before have I heard such a talk on the Dhamma"

(Bhikkhu Bodhi trsl. of MN 143 at MN III 261)

The parallel SĀ 1032 similarly reports him saying:

"I have been respectfully supporting the Buddha for over twenty years, yet I never heard venerable Sāriputta give [such] deep and sublime teachings, as I have just heard.'

(my trsl. of T II 269c)

+++++

## Diagnostic Scheme of the Four Noble Truths

disease: *dukkha*

pathogen: craving (arising of *dukkha*)

health: Nirvāṇa (cessation of *dukkha*)

cure: eightfold path

### **SĀ 389** (T II 105a–b)

[Discourse on the Physician]

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying at Benares in the Deer Park at Isipatana. At that time, the Blessed One told the monks:

"By accomplishing four principles one is reckoned a great royal physician, worthy of being the possession of a king, and of being a member of the king's [retinue]. What are the four?

"One: being skilled in understanding a disease;  
two: being skilled in understanding the source of a disease;  
three: being skilled in understanding the cure of a disease;  
four: being skilled in understanding when a disease has been cured and will not appear again.

"How is someone reckoned to be a good doctor who is skilled in understanding a disease? That is, a good doctor is skilled in understanding various types of disease – then he is reckoned a good doctor who is skilled in understanding a disease.

"How is someone a good doctor who is skilled in understanding the source of a disease? That is, a good doctor is skilled in understanding that this disease has arisen because of wind, this has arisen due to intestinal disorders, this has arisen due to mucus, this has arisen due to various colds, this has arisen because of a present matter, this has arisen due to seasonal [influence] – then he is reckoned a good doctor who is skilled in understanding the source of a disease.

"How is someone a good doctor who is skilled in understanding the cure of a disease? That is, a good doctor is skilled in understanding that for various types of disease one should administer medication, or should [bring about] vomiting, or should [administer] a laxative, or should [undertake] nasal instillations, or should [administer] fumigation, or should bring about perspiration – then he is reckoned a good doctor who is skilled in understanding the cure of a disease.

"How is someone a good doctor who is skilled in understanding when a disease has been cured and will never appear again in the future? That is, a good doctor is skilled in understanding how to settle various types of disease so that they are completely eliminated and in the future will never arise again – then he is reckoned a good doctor who is skilled in understanding how to settle a disease so that it will not appear again.

"A Tathāgata, who is an arahant and a Fully Awakened One, is [also] a great royal physician who has accomplished four qualities to cure the disease of living beings, also just like this. What are the four?

"That is, the Tathāgata understands that:

- this is knowing the noble truth of *dukkha* as it really is,
- this is knowing the noble truth of the arising of *dukkha* as it really is,
- this is knowing the noble truth of the cessation of *dukkha* as it really is,
- this is knowing the noble truth of the way to the cessation of *dukkha* as it really is.

"Monks, the secular good physician does not understand as it really is the fundamental cure for birth, for old age, for disease, for death, for sadness, for sorrow, for vexation and he does not understand as it really is the fundamental cure for *dukkha*.

"The Tathāgata, who is an arahant and a Fully Awakened One, being a great royal physician, does understand as it really is the fundamental cure for birth, for old age, for disease, for death, for sadness, for sorrow, for vexation and he does understand as it really is the fundamental cure for *dukkha*. For this reason, the Tathāgata, who is an arahant and a Fully Awakened One, is reckoned a great royal physician."

When the Buddha had spoken this discourse, the monks, who had heard what the Buddha said, were delighted and received it respectfully.

+++++

Parallels to SĀ 389:

- 1) SĀ<sup>2</sup> 254 at T II 462c to 463a
  - 2) T 219 at T IV 802a to b
  - 3) Uighur fragment in Kudara 1995
  - 4) Tibetan version in Śamathadeva's compendium of discourse quotations in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, D 4094 *nyu* 1b to 2b
  - 5) discourse quotation in *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, Wogihara 1971: 514f
  - 6) discourse quotation in *Arthaviniścaya-sūtra*, Samtani 1971: 159f
- in Pāli discourses the Buddha is regularly referred to as a physician (*bhisakka*, *sallakatto*)
  - AN 5.194 describes how through the Buddha's teaching one's sorrow and grief, etc., are dispelled, employing precisely the expressions used in the standard description of the first truth to define *dukkha*

Such dispelling is then illustrated with the example of being quickly relieved from a disease by a skilled doctor.

- thus it is only the explicit correlation of the four truths to a medical scheme of diagnosis that is not found in the Pāli discourses.
- such a correlation can be found, however, in the *Vimuttimaggā* and in the *Visuddhimagga*:
- *Vimuttimaggā* T 1648 at T XXXII 452c17: "it is just as a clever physician first sees the source of the disease, then inquires about the conditions of the disease and for the sake of extinguishing the disease prescribes the medicine appropriate to the disease. "In this way, the disease can be understood to be like *dukkha*. In this way, the causes of the disease can be understood to be like the arising [of *dukkha*]. In this way, the eradication of the disease can be understood to be like the cessation [of *dukkha*]. In this way, the medicine can be understood to be like the path".
- *Visuddhimagga* Vism 512,7: "the truth of *dukkha* is like a disease, the truth of the arising [of *dukkha*] is like the cause of the disease, the truth of the cessation [of *dukkha*] is like the cure of the disease and the truth of the path like the medicine".

+++++

### **MĀ 29 – Discourse to Mahākoṭṭhita** (continued)

The venerable Sāriputta then asked further: "Friend Mahā Koṭṭhita, is there yet 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?"

3) [Mahā Koṭṭhita] replied: "There is, venerable Sāriputta. It is this: a monk

- knows the influxes as they really are,
- knows the arising of the influxes,
- knows the cessation of the influxes,

- and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of the influxes as it really is.

"What is knowledge of the influxes as they really are? There are said to be three influxes: the influx of sensual desires, the influx of the process of existence, and the influx of ignorance. This is reckoned to be knowledge of the influxes as they really are.

"What is knowledge of the arising of the influxes as it really is? It is this: in dependence on ignorance, the influxes come to be. This is reckoned to be knowledge of the arising of influxes as it really is.

"What is knowledge of the cessation of the influxes as it really is? It is this: with the cessation of ignorance, the influxes also cease. This is reckoned to be knowledge of the cessation of influxes as it really is.

"What is knowledge of the path [leading to] the cessation of the influxes 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 the influxes as it really is.

"Venerable Sāriputta, if there is a monk who, in this manner,

- knows the influxes as they really are,
- knows the arising of the influxes,
- knows the cessation of the influxes,
- and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of the influxes as it really is,

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."

[same basic pattern then continues with the following topics]

- 4) - "knows *dukkha* as it really is,
- knows the arising of *dukkha*,

- knows the cessation of *dukkha*,
- and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of *dukkha* as it really is.

"What is knowledge of *dukkha* as it really is? It is this:

- birth is *dukkha*,
- old age is *dukkha*,
- disease is *dukkha*,
- death is *dukkha*,
- association with what is disliked is *dukkha*,
- separation from what is loved is *dukkha*,
- being unable to get what one wishes is *dukkha*,
- in short, the five aggregates affected by clinging are *dukkha* ...

"What is knowledge of the arising of *dukkha* as it really is? It is this: dependent on old age and death, *dukkha* comes to be ...

"What is knowledge of the cessation of *dukkha* as it really is? It is this: with the cessation of old age and death, *dukkha* also ceases ...

"What is knowledge of the path [leading to] the cessation of *dukkha* as it really is? It is this: the noble eightfold path ...

+++++

MN 9 and the other parallels  
instead trace the arising of *dukkha* to craving.

*Upanisa-sutta* (SN 12.23 at SN II 31):

ignorance  
formations  
consciousness  
name-and-form  
six sense spheres  
contact  
feeling  
craving

clinging  
 becoming  
 birth  
 old age and death  
*dukkha*  
 faith  
 joy  
 delight  
 tranquility  
 happiness  
 concentration  
 knowledge and vision according to reality  
 disenchantment  
 dispassion  
 liberation  
 knowledge of the destruction (of the influxes)

+++++

MĀ 29

- 5) - "knows old age and death as they really are,
- knows the arising of old age and death,
  - knows the cessation of old age and death,
  - and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of old age and death as it really is.

"What is knowledge of old age as it really is? It is this: old age brings hoary hair, lost teeth, deteriorating health, hunched body, unsteady step, overweight body, shortness of breath, reliance on a walking cane, shrinking flesh, sagging skin, wrinkles like pockmarks, failing sense faculties, and unsightly complexion ...

"What is knowledge of death? It is this: all living beings, in their various forms, are subject to the ending of life, the impermanence, death, dissolution, extinction and breaking up of their life, the stopping of their vital force."



- 6) - "knows birth as it really is,  
 - knows the arising of birth,  
 - knows the cessation of birth,  
 - and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of birth as it really is.

"What is knowledge of birth as it really is? It is this: all living beings, in their various forms, experience birth when they are born, when they arise, when they are formed, when the five aggregates come into being, and when the vital faculties are developed."

- 7) - "knows becoming as it really is,  
 - knows the arising of becoming,  
 - knows the cessation of becoming,  
 - and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of becoming as it really is.

"What is knowledge of becoming as it really is? It is this: there are three kinds of becoming:

- becoming in the sensual [realm],
- becoming in the form [realm],
- and becoming in the formless [realm]."

- 8) - "knows clinging as it really is,  
 - knows the arising of clinging,  
 - knows the cessation of clinging,  
 - and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of clinging as it really is.

What is knowledge of clinging as it really is? It is this: there are four kinds of clinging:

- clinging to sensual desires,
- clinging to precepts,
- clinging to views,
- and clinging to a self."

+++++

MN 9

the last is instead: "clinging to a doctrine of self", *attavādupādāna*

stream-entry: attainment of right view

clinging to wrong views and clinging to doctrine of self are gone

also clinging to dogmatic adherence to rules and observances is gone

non-return:

clinging to sensual desires is gone

Ñāṇatiloka (1952/1988: 216): the "traditional fourfold division of clinging is not quite satisfactory [since this would imply that] the Anāgāmī is entirely free from the ... four kinds of *upādāna*".

+++++

MĀ 29

9) - "knows craving as it really is,  
 - knows the arising of craving,  
 - knows the cessation of craving,  
 - and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of craving as it really is.

"What is knowledge of craving as it really is? It is this: there are three kinds of craving:

- craving [related to] the sensual [realm],
- craving [related to] the form [realm],
- and craving [related to] the formless [realm]."

10)- "knows feeling as it really is,  
 - knows the arising of feeling,  
 - knows the cessation of feeling,  
 - and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of feeling as it really is.

"What is knowledge of feeling as it really is? It is this: there are three kinds of feeling:

- pleasant feelings,

- unpleasant feelings,
- and neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feelings.

11)- "knows contact as it really is,  
 - knows the arising of contact,  
 - knows the cessation of contact,  
 - and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of contact as it really is.

"What is knowledge of contact as it really is? It is this: there are three kinds of contact:

- pleasant contact,
- unpleasant contact,
- and neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant contact."

+++++

MN 9

instead presents

- craving,
- feeling
- and contact

by way of the six senses

+++++

12) - "knows the six sense-bases as they really are,  
 - knows the arising of the six sense-bases,  
 - knows the cessation of the six sense-bases,  
 - and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of the six sense-bases as it really is.

"What is knowledge of the six sense-bases as they really are? It is this: [there is] the sense-base of the eye, of the ear, of the nose, of the tongue, of the body, and the sense-base of the mind.

13) - "knows name-and-form as it really is,  
 - knows the arising of name-and-form,  
 - knows the cessation of name-and-form,

- and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of name-and-form as it really is.

"What is knowledge of name? It is this: name consists of the four non-corporeal aggregates [among the five aggregates].

"What is knowledge of form? It is this: form consists of the four great elements and of what is derived from the four great elements.

+++++

### MN 9

instead defines *nāma* in this way:

Feeling, perception, volition, contact, and attention

*vedanā, saññā, cetanā, phasso, manasikāra, idaṃ vuccat' āvuso nāmaṃ*

+++++

14) - "knows consciousness as it really is,

- knows the arising of consciousness,
- knows the cessation of consciousness,
- and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of consciousness as it really is.

"What is knowledge of consciousness as it really is? It is this: there are six types of consciousness:

- eye consciousness,
- ear [consciousness],
- nose [consciousness],
- tongue [consciousness],
- body [consciousness],
- and mind consciousness."

15) - "knows formations as they really are,

- knows the arising of formations,
- knows the cessation of formations,
- and knows the path [leading to] the cessation of formations as it really is.

"What is knowledge of formations as they really are? It is this: there are three kinds of formations:

- bodily formations,
- verbal formations,
- and mental formations."

+++++

## MN 9

continues by taking up the topic of ignorance and of the influxes

+++++

main points:

- diagnostic scheme of four noble truths applied to each of the links of dependent arising

1<sup>st</sup> truth: *dukkha*,

2<sup>nd</sup> truth: arising of *dukkha* (i.e., its cause),

3<sup>rd</sup> truth: cessation of *dukkha* (i.e., the opposite of *dukkha*),

4<sup>th</sup> truths: path to the cessation of *dukkha* (i.e., cause of opposite)

+++++

## **MĀ 30 – Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint** (Parallel to the *Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta*, MN 28/ MN I 184)

"Venerable friends, whatever countless wholesome states there are can all be subsumed under the four noble truths; they are all included in the four noble truths; the four noble truths are declared to be the foremost of all teachings. Why? Because they encompass all wholesome states.

"Venerable friends, it is just as the elephant's footprint is foremost among the footprints of all animals, because it is the greatest, the largest.

"So too, venerable friends, the countless wholesome states are all subsumed under the four noble truths; they are all included in the four noble truths; the four noble truths are declared to be the foremost of all teachings."

"What are the four? They are:

- the noble truth of *dukkha*,
- [the noble truth of] the arising of *dukkha*,
- [the noble truth of] the cessation of *dukkha*,
- and the noble truth of the path [leading to] the cessation of *dukkha*.