

Majjhima Nikaya 141

Saccavibhanga Sutta

The Exposition of the Truths

Excerpt from

The Middle Length

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141 Saccavibhanga Sutta

The Exposition of the Truths

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Benares in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: “Bhikkhus.” — “Venerable sir,” they replied. The Blessed One said this:
2. At Benares, bhikkhus, in the Deer Park at Isipatana the Tathagata, accomplished and fully enlightened, set rolling the matchless Wheel of the Dhamma, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Mara or Brahma or anyone in the world — that is, the announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of the Four Noble Truths. Of what four?
3. “The announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of the noble truth of suffering. The announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of the noble truth of the origin of suffering... of the noble truth of the cessation of suffering... of the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.
4. “At Benares, bhikkhus, in the Deer Park at Isipatana the Tathagata, accomplished and fully enlightened, set rolling the matchless Wheel of the Dhamma, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Mara or Brahma or anyone in the world — that is, the announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of these Four Noble Truths.
5. “Cultivate the friendship of Sariputta and Moggallana, bhikkhus; associate with Sariputta and Moggallana. They are wise and helpful to their companions in the holy life. Sariputta is like a mother; Moggallana is like a nurse. Sariputta trains others for the fruit of stream-entry, Moggallana for the supreme goal. Sariputta, bhikkhus, is able to announce, teach, describe, establish, reveal, expound, and exhibit the Four Noble Truths.”
6. So the Blessed One said. Having said this, the Sublime One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling.

7. Then, soon after the Blessed One had gone, the venerable Sariputta addressed the bhikkhus thus: “Friends, bhikkhus.” — “Friend,” the bhikkhus replied to the venerable Sariputta. The venerable Sariputta said this:
8. “At Benares, friends, in the Deer Park at Isipatana the Tathagata, accomplished and fully enlightened, set rolling the matchless Wheel of the Dhamma...and exhibiting of the Four Noble Truths. Of what four?”
9. “The announcing...and exhibiting of the noble truth of suffering...of the noble truth of the origin of suffering...of the noble truth of the cessation of suffering...of the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.
10. “And what, friends, is the noble truth of suffering? Birth is suffering; ageing is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering; not to obtain what one wants is suffering; in short, the five aggregates affected by clinging are suffering.
11. “And what, friends, is birth? The birth of beings into the various orders of beings, their coming to birth, precipitation [in a womb], generation, the manifestation of the aggregates, obtaining the bases for contact — this is called birth.
12. “And what, friends, is ageing? The ageing of beings in the various orders of beings. Their old age, brokenness of teeth, greyness of hair, wrinkling of skin, decline of life, weakness of faculties — this is called ageing.
13. And what, friends, is death? The passing of beings out of the various orders of beings, their passing away, dissolution, disappearance, dying, completion of time, dissolution of aggregates, laying down of the body — this is called death.
14. “And what, friends, is sorrow? The sorrow, sorrowing, sorrowfulness, inner sorrow, inner sorriiness, of one who has encountered some misfortune or is affected by some painful state — this is called sorrow.
15. “And what, friends, is lamentation? The wail and lament, wailing and lamenting, bewailing and lamentation, of one who has encountered some misfortune or is affected by some painful state — this is called lamentation.
16. “And what, friends, is pain? Bodily pain, bodily discomfort, painful, uncomfortable feeling born of bodily contact — this is called pain.
17. “And what, friends, is grief? Mental pain, mental discomfort, painful, uncomfortable feeling born of mental contact — this is called grief.
18. “And what, friends, is despair? The trouble and despair, the tribulation and desperation, of one who has encountered some misfortune or is affected by some painful state — this is called despair.

19. “And what, friends, is ‘not to obtain what one wants is suffering’? To beings subject to birth there comes the wish: ‘Oh, that we were not subject to birth! That birth would not come to us!’ But this is not to be obtained by wishing, and not to obtain what one wants is suffering. To beings subject to ageing...subject to sickness...subject to death..., subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, there comes the wish: ‘Oh, that we were not subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair! That sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair would not come to us!’ But this is not to be obtained by wishing, and not to obtain what one wants is suffering.

20. “And what, friends, are the five aggregates affected by clinging that, in short, are suffering? They are: the material form aggregate affected by clinging, the feeling aggregate affected by clinging, the perception aggregate affected by clinging, the formations aggregate affected by clinging, and the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging. These are the five aggregates affected by clinging that, in short, are suffering. This is called the noble truth of suffering.

21. “And what, friends, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering? It is craving, which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this and that; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being, and craving for non-being. This is called the noble truth of the origin of suffering.

22. “And what, friends, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering? It is the remainderless fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go, and rejecting of that same craving. This is called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

23. “And what, friends, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path; this is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

24. “And what, friends, is right view? Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering — this is called right view.

25. “And what, friends, is right intention? Intention of renunciation, intention of non-ill will, and intention of non-cruelty — this is called right intention.

26. “And what, friends, is right speech? Abstaining from false speech, abstaining from malicious speech, abstaining from harsh speech, and abstaining from idle chatter — this is called right speech.

27. “And what, friends, is right action? Abstaining from killing living beings, abstaining from taking what is not given, and abstaining from misconduct in sensual pleasures — this is called right action.

28. “And what, friends, is right livelihood? Here a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood, earns his living by right livelihood — this is called right livelihood.

29. “And what, friends, is right effort? Here a bhikkhu awakens zeal for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the arising of unarisen wholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the continuance, non- disappearance, strengthening, increase, and fulfillment by development of arisen wholesome states and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. This is called right effort.

30. “And what, friends, is right mindfulness? Here a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. This is called right mindfulness.

31. “And what, friends, is right concentration? Here, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhana, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, he enters upon and abides in the second jhana, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he enters upon and abides in the third jhana, on account of which noble ones announce: ‘He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.’ With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters upon and abides in the fourth jhana, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. This is called right concentration.

“This is called the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

32. “At Benares, friends, in the Deer Park at Isipatana the Tathagata, accomplished and fully enlightened, set rolling the matchless Wheel of the Dhamma, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Mara or Brahma or anyone in the world — that is, the announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of these Four Noble Truths.”

That is what the venerable Sariputta said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the venerable Sariputta’s words.