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Samudaya,dhamma Sutta 1

Paṭhama Samudaya,dhamma Sutta

The First Discourse on That Which Arises by Nature | S 22.126/3:170-172

Theme: Reflection on impermanence of the five aggregates

Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

Introduction

The most universal spiritual exercise in early Buddhism is the perception of impermanence, traditionally called *anicca saññā*, but which can take many forms of spiritual exercise. Two such exercises are described in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**¹ in the second and fourth parts of its “insight refrain,”² namely: (2) “Watching the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away.”³ In the course of watching the body, feelings, the mind, and dharmas, the practitioner goes on to watch the “nature of arising” (*samudaya,dhamma*), the “nature of passing away” (*vaya,dhamma*), and the “nature of (both) arising and passing away” (*samudaya,vaya,dhamma*).⁴

The Samudaya,dhamma Sutta 1 is a reflection on the impermanence of the five aggregates. It should also be noted that the sutta defines “ignorance” (*avijjā*) as not knowing that the five aggregates are of the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away; and “true knowledge” as truly knowing that the five aggregates are of the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away.

The Avijjā Sutta 1⁵ gives instructions in another exercise in the perception of impermanence by way of noting that the senses, sense-objects and feelings that arise on account of the senses (whether pleasant, painful or neutral) are all impermanent—knowing this, one abandons ignorance, and true knowledge arises in one. While **the (Āyatana) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 1**⁶ shows how the mind is liberated through seeing the six senses as impermanent, its parallel, **the (Āyatana) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 2**,⁷ shows how the mind is liberated through seeing the six sense-objects as impermanent. Another parallel sutta, **the (Khandha) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 1**,⁸ on the other hand, shows how the reflection on the aggregates as being impermanent liberates one’s mind.

How to use a sutta

This sutta, like many others in the Sutta Discovery series, has been translated with the repetition cycles (*peyyāla*) given in full. In this way, the sutta teaching is given in full, without the mind filling in too much of its own details in the perceived gaps. One should study a sutta not merely to *know* it, but to learn to “let go” of the self (or more correctly, the notion of a self). To this effect, the sutta should be mindfully read, or listened to, and reflected upon, again and again, like taking a regular dose of medicine. The roots of realization are growing even as you do so, and before you know it, it flowers and bears fruit!

¹ D 22; M 10; see SD 13 see esp SD 13.1(3.8).

² SD 13.1(3.0).

³ Colloquially, this is often spoken of as “Watching the nature of rising, of falling (away), and of rising and falling (away).”

⁴ See Gethin 2001:53 & Analayo 2003: 102 f. Cf AK Warder 1971b:282 f on this usage of *-dhamma* in the Nikāyas. The Comys, however, take *dhamma* as indicating the conditions for the arising and fall of the body, etc (see DA 3:765, 768, 769; MA 1:249 f), although the Subcomys also allow that *dhamma* can have the sense of “nature” here (DAṬ 2:381; MAPṬ:Be 1:350: *pakati,vācī vā dhamma,saddo*). In the end the point would seem to make little difference to the general purport of the expression: the *bhikkhu* sees how body, etc, arise and fall away. (Gethin’s fn; normalized)

⁵ S 35.79/4:50 = SD 12.6.

⁶ S 35.155/142 = SD 12.7.

⁷ S 35.156/142 = SD 12.8.

⁸ S 22.51/3:51 = SD 12.9.

The First Discourse On That Which Arises by Nature

S 22.126/3:170-172

What is ignorance?

- 1 At Sāvattthī. In the forest monastery. [171]
- 2 Then a certain monk approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and sat down at one side. Having sat down at one side, he said this to the Blessed One:
- 3 “Venerable sir, it is said, ‘Ignorance, ignorance (*avijjā*).’ What now, venerable sir, is ignorance, and in what way is one ignorant (*avijjā,gato*)?”

The 5 aggregates are subject to change

4 (1) “Here, monk, an uninstructed worldling⁹ does not know as it really is that **form** is of the nature of arising, thus:

‘Form is of the nature of *arising*.’

He does not know as it really is that form is of the nature of falling away [ending], thus:

‘Form is of the nature of *falling away* [ending].’

He does not know as it really is that form is of the nature of arising and falling away [arising and ending], thus:

‘Form is of the nature of *arising and falling away* [arising and ending].’

5 (2) He does not know as it really is that **feeling** is of the nature of arising, thus:

‘Feeling is of the nature of *arising*.’

He does not know as it really is that feeling is of the nature of falling away, thus:

‘Feeling is of the nature of *falling away*.’

He does not know as it really is that feeling is of the nature of arising and falling away, thus:

‘Feeling is of the nature of *arising and falling away*.’

6 (3) He does not know as it really is that **perception** is of the nature of arising, thus:

‘Perception is of the nature of *arising*.’

He does not know as it really is that perception is of the nature of falling away, thus:

‘Perception is of the nature of *falling away*.’

He does not know as it really is that perception is of the nature of arising and falling away, thus:

‘Perception is of the nature of *arising and falling away*.’

7 (4) He does not know as it really is that **mental formations** are of the nature of arising, thus:

‘Mental formations are of the nature of *arising*.’

He does not know as it really is that mental formations are of the nature of falling away, thus:

‘Mental formations are of the nature of *falling away*.’

He does not know as it really is that mental formations are of the nature of arising and falling away, thus:

‘Mental formations are of the nature of *arising and falling away*.’

8 (5) He does not know as it really is that **consciousness** is of the nature of arising, thus:

‘Consciousness is of the nature of *arising*.’

He does not know as it really is that consciousness is of the nature of falling away, thus:

‘Consciousness is of the nature of *falling away*.’

He does not know as it really is that consciousness is of the nature of arising and falling away, thus:

⁹ “Uninstructed worldling,” *assutavā puthujano*, is unskilled (*akovida*), ie, lacks theoretical knowledge of the Dharma, and is also undisciplined (*avinīta*), ie, he lacks practical training in the Dharma. He is not a “seer of the noble ones” (*ariya,dassavī*), ie, of the Buddha and the noble disciples (the saints), because he lacks the wisdom-eye that discerns the truth they have seen. “Noble ones” (*ariya*) and “true persons” (*sappurisa*) are synonymous. MA 1:20-25; SA 2:98-101, 2:251 f; AA 1:61-63; Nc 75-78; Pm 2:445-449; DhsA 348-354. Cf “instructed noble disciple” at §11.

‘Consciousness is of the nature of *arising and falling away*.’

9 This, monk, is called ‘ignorance’ and one is ignorant in this way.”

What is true knowledge?

10 When this was said, the monk said this to the Blessed One:

“Venerable sir, it is said, ‘True knowledge, true knowledge (*vijjā*).’ What now, venerable sir, is true knowledge, and in what way does one truly know (*vijjā, gato*)?”

The 5 aggregates are subject to change

11 “Here, monk, an instructed noble disciple¹⁰ knows as it really is that **form** is of the nature of arising, thus:

‘Form is of the nature of *arising*.’

He knows as it really is that form is of the nature of *falling away [ending]*, thus:

‘Form is of the nature of *falling away*.’ [172]

He knows as it really is that form is of the nature of *arising and falling away [ending]*, thus:

‘Form is of the nature of *arising and falling away*.’

12 He knows as it really is that **feeling** is of the nature of *arising*, thus:

‘Feeling is of the nature of *arising*.’

He knows as it really is that feeling is of the nature of *falling away*, thus:

‘Feeling is of the nature of *falling away*.’

He knows as it really is that feeling is of the nature of *arising and falling away*, thus:

‘Feeling is of the nature of *arising and falling away [ending]*.’

13 He knows as it really is that **perception** is of the nature of *arising*, thus:

‘Perception is of the nature of *arising*.’

He knows as it really is that perception is of the nature of *falling away*, thus:

‘Perception is of the nature of *falling away*.’

He knows as it really is that perception is of the nature of *arising and falling away*, thus:

‘Perception is of the nature of *arising and falling away*.’

14 He knows as it really is that **mental formations** are of the nature of *arising*, thus:

‘Mental formations are of the nature of *arising*.’

He knows as it really is that mental formations are of the nature of *falling away*, thus:

‘Mental formations are of the nature of *falling away*.’

He knows as it really is that mental formations are of the nature of *arising and falling away*, thus:

‘Mental formations are of the nature of *arising and falling away*.’

15 He knows as it really is that **consciousness** is of the nature of *arising*, thus:

‘Consciousness is of the nature of *arising*.’

He knows as it really is that consciousness is of the nature of *falling away*, thus:

‘Consciousness is of the nature of *falling away*.’

He knows as it really is that consciousness is of the nature of *arising and falling away*, thus:

‘Consciousness is of the nature of *arising and falling away*.’

¹⁰ “Instructed noble disciple,” *sutavā ariya, sāvaka*, is one who is skilled (*kovida*), ie, has theoretical knowledge of the Dharma, and is disciplined (*vinīta*), ie, has practical training in the Dharma. He is a “seer of the noble ones” (*ariya, dassavī*), ie, of the Buddha and the noble disciples (the saints), because he has the wisdom-eye that discerns the truth they have seen. In other words, he is at least a stream-winner. MA 1:20-25; SA 2:98-101, 2:251 f; AA 1:61-63; Nc 75-78; Pm 2:445-449; DhsA 348-354. Cf “uninstructed worldling” at §4.

16 This, monk, is called ‘true knowledge’ and one truly knows in this way.”

— evaṃ —

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