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Anuggahita Sutta

The Discourse on the Supported | A 5.25/3:20 f

Theme: Conditions for the arising of right view

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2013

1 Meaning of key terms

1.1 KEY PHRASES. The **Anuggahita Sutta** (A 5.25) is a very short discourse on how right view is brought about through proper support in 5 ways, that is, through moral virtue, learning, discussion, calm and insight. The Papanca, sūdanī, the commentary to the Aṅguttara Nikāya, explains the key terms of the Sutta as follows:

Right view (*sammā, diṭṭhi*) is the right view of insight.

The fruit of mental liberation (*ceto.vimutti, phala*) and so on refers to the mental liberation that is the samadhi [concentration] of the path and fruit.

The liberation by wisdom (*paññā, vimutti*) is the knowledge that is the fruit (of the path).

Supported by moral virtue (*sīlānuggaha*) means helped and guarded by moral virtue.

Supported by learning (*sutānuggaha*) means helped by great learning [much listening].

Supported by discussion (*sākaṅkhaṇṇānuggaha*) means helped by Dharma discussion.

Supported by calm (*samathānuggaha*) means helped by the oneness of the mind. (AA 3:229)

1.2 RIGHT VIEW. Theoretically, “right view” (*sammā, diṭṭhi*) here refers to fully walking on the eightfold path, whose factors are all pervaded with right view.¹ The path as we know is the fourth noble truth. Right view, then, also means a full understanding of the four noble truths, that is, in theory, practice and realization.² One who fully understands these truths and is so liberated is called an arhat, a fully awakened person.

Such an awakened person fully and truly understands the **meaning** of life, as embodied in the first two truths. The first noble truth is a statement of the true nature of life: everything in this world is conditioned and impermanent, and as such unsatisfactory, and ultimately without any abiding entity. The second noble truth explains why life is such: we suffer as long as we are controlled and conditioned by craving, that is, a sense of lack arising from our measuring things and comparing ourselves with others.

Once the meaning of life is clearly understood, we go on to understand the **purpose** of life, which is defined by the last two noble truths. The third noble truth defines the ideal condition of non-suffering, beyond all conditionality, that is, nirvana. And the fourth noble truth is the way to this ideal state of full awakening, that is, the noble eightfold path.

Understanding the four noble truths means that we have walked the eightfold path and reached the journey’s goal, or the destination is within clear sight. Hence, for the arhat, right view is *no* view at all: his whole life is morally pure and his mind upright and wise: he *is* right view. In this sense, we say that such a noble disciple is “one who has practised well” (*supaṭipanna*). Ultimately, right view is the freedom from all views: to be of right view then is to be “accomplished in conduct and wisdom” (*vijjā, carana, sampanna*).³

1.3 LIBERATION OF MIND

1.3.1 The meaning of “liberation” here. The Sutta mentions two important terms related to awakening, that is, “the fruit of mental liberation” (*ceto.vimutti, phala*) and “the fruit of liberation by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutti, phala*), and their “benefit” (*ānisaṃsa*). This benefit is that of the fruit of arhatood, that is, full-fledged arhatood.

¹ See **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117.4/3:71) @ SD 6.10.

² See **Dhamma, cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11/5:420-424) @ SD 1.1.

³ See **The notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40a.1.

The commentary to **the Ākaṅkheyya Sutta** (M 6), commenting on “mental liberation” (*ceto, vimutti*) and “liberation by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutti*)⁴, defines the former as the concentration (*samādhi*) pertaining to fruit of arhathood, and the latter as the wisdom (*paññā*) pertaining to the fruit of arhathood.

1.3.2 “Mental liberation.” *Ceto, vimutti* or “mental liberation” or “liberation of mind” is sometimes translated as “liberation by concentration” (A 1:60), that is, the mind is freed through the destruction of the mental hindrances,⁵ meaning, through attaining dhyana.⁶ Generally, mental liberation can apply to a temporary experience of mental freedom, such as the attainment of the fourth dhyana or the development of any of the divine abodes.⁷

While “liberation by wisdom” [1.3.3] refers to arhathood or the attaining of nirvana, “mental liberation” does not imply this, unless it is specified to be the “unconditional unshakable liberation of mind” (*asāmāyikā akuppā ceto, vimutti*).⁸ This is the freedom from the defilements and that has nothing to do with the temporal, that is, unconditioned by time. As such, it is freedom that is immovable and supramundane. It consists of “the four noble paths and the four fruits of recluseship” (that is, the paths and fruits) (MA 4:159), which quoting **the Paṭisambhīdā, magga** (Pm 2:40), adds nirvana.⁹ Such a liberated person, who has destroyed all the mental hindrances, is able to attain dhyana at will.

1.3.3 “Liberation by wisdom.” One who is *liberated by wisdom* “may not have gained the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha vimokkha*)¹⁰ in his own body (that is, personally), but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed” (M 70.16/1:478). All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration, that is, attaining the more subtle aspects of dhyana.¹¹

Those who can attain the 8 liberations, which include the 4 formless attainments (*samāpatti*), and the attainment of cessation (*nirodha, samāpatti*), are called **liberated both ways** (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*), that is, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “liberated both ways.” The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **the Mahā, nidāna Sutta** (D 2:70 f) and **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 1:477 f).

As such, the two terms—mental liberation [1.3.2] and liberation of mind—do not refer to two different approaches to awakening, but two aspects of the meditative path, one which is sufficient by itself (liberation by wisdom), one which is not (mental liberation).¹²

2 The Sutta training

2.1 MORAL VIRTUE. Since we basically comprise of body and mind, and our bodies are the more apparent of the two, spiritual training begins with understanding, respecting and disciplining our body, which includes speech, too. Our bodies not only define our presence amongst others—a presence of close proximity or some kind of communicative link—but we interact with them. This is the most basic reality of a functional society and healthy community.

The true purpose of moral virtue, however, is to be “bodily cultivated” (*bhāvita, kaya*), that is, physically prepared for mental cultivation (*citta, bhāvanā*). This can be explained as setting all our physical senses on “silent” mode, so to speak. This is, in fact, the first step in sitting meditation: we calm our whole body down so that, undistracted by the senses, we can fully focus on the mind.

⁴ M 6.19/1:35,36-36 @ SD 59.1.

⁵ See *Nīvaraṇa*, SD 32.1.

⁶ See *Dhyana*, SD 8.4.

⁷ See eg M 43.25/1:296 @ SD 30.2; also Lily de Silva 1978:120.

⁸ **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122.4.1/3:110) & SD 11.4 (3).

⁹ See M:NB 1224 n348.

¹⁰ For full list of the 8 deliverances, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/2:70 f), SD 5.17. See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/4:306; also M 120.37/3:103 = SD 3.4.37.

¹¹ See **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/2:70 f) @ SD 5.17.

¹² Further see Analayo 2003:90 n102.

2.2 LEARNING. To properly cultivate moral virtue as the basis of mental cultivation is neither a ritual nor a chance affair. We need to know what moral virtue is and how to cultivate it; we need to know what mental cultivation is and how to cultivate it. This is best done by studying relevant suttas and related passages. The suttas, after all, have been preserved for posterity for just this purpose, as an elaborate manual and systematic programmes for moral and mental cultivation, of the development of body and mind.

It helps here to understand how the suttas are arranged and how to study them. Basically, there are two vital ways of appreciating the suttas. The first is that they are instructive, and we need to understand what they are trying to teach us about human behaviour and the human mind. Sometimes these teachings are straightforward (*nī'tattha*), and sometimes we need to draw out the meaning (*neyy'attha*).¹³

Often the suttas are repetitive, and there is an important purpose behind this, than merely as a mechanism for an effective oral tradition. These repetitive passages serves a reflections for vital teachings that are meant to touch and tap out hearts, and to bliss us out a taste of say, impermanence or unsatisfactory or non-self. Even a gently cursory glimpse of such a reality is enough to empower us to still our minds, and if we are inclined, to move on to deeper meditation.

2.3 DISCUSSION. Sutta learning is not always easy by oneself. It is greatly facilitated by spiritual friendship,¹⁴ traditionally defined as the relationship between a meditation teacher and his pupil, or here between a Dharma teacher and his student. There are numerous helpful books and materials on the suttas, but these are only as useful as you understand them. They can never replace a living discussion between an experienced teacher and an attentive student.

Dharma discussion not only clarifies difficulties in the suttas and incidental doubts, but it also helps us see new aspects of the Dharma or connect various teachings we have learned to form more connected wholes, so that we are inspired with a better understanding and the joy to cultivate and strengthen our inner stillness.

2.4 CALM. Proper sutta study and spiritual friendship have a healthy calming effect upon us. It helps us attain some level of inner calm, even to the level of dhyana, or a glimpse of it. Even without dhyana, we are able to healthily function as an individual, serving as an inspiration for others to touch the Dharma and change their own lives.

The cultivation of calm is a gradual yet deepening process. First, we learn some basic steps in staple meditations such as the breath meditation and lovingkindness meditation. It is not how long we are able to sit, but how well we integrate such mindfulness in our daily lives, whether we are standing, walking, sitting or lying down. The idea is to train ourselves to readily and effectively clear our minds of negative states, and sustain an inner core of stillness: a still eye in life's storm.

2.5 INSIGHT. Calm and insight are like the two sides of our palm or a coin: they naturally go together. A clam mind become clear; a clear mind enhances our calm, and so on, *pari passu*. Insight is of two kinds: know how and knowing what. The "knowing how" insight is the total effect of all the preceding whole-some factors: through moral virtue, learning, and discussion we become better in our meditation.

The fruit of such meditations is to enhance our wisdom, that is, understanding of ourselves, that is, our minds. As this inner understanding grows, we better understand how the outer reality works, how other people think and act. We are empowered to unconditionally accept them as they are, and to inspire them to grow in the Dharma and head for spiritual awakening.

3 Parable of the well-cared mango tree

The commentary to the Sutta explains its teaching by way of a parable—that of a well-cared mango tree, thus:

A person wishing to grow mangoes would do as follows:

Support

¹³ See *Neyy'attha Nī'tattha S* (A 2.3.5-6/1:60), SD 2.6b.

¹⁴ See *Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness*, SD 8.1.

Plants the seed of a sweet mango	the right view of insight
Sets up a boundary all around it	keeping to the precepts
Waters it at the proper time	learning
Cleans the foot of the tree at the proper time	discussion
Removes bugs from the tree at the proper time	clearing away any threat to dhyana and insight as a support for calm ¹⁵
Clears away cobwebs from time to time	strong insight [vipassana]

As a tree thus well cared for, will grow quickly and bear fruit, so will right view, supported by moral virtue and so on, grow quickly on account of the way and bear the fruit of mental liberation and liberation by wisdom. (AA 3:230)

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The Discourse on the Supported

A 5.25/3:20 f

1 Bhilshus, when right view is supported by five factors,
there is the fruit of mental liberation and the benefit of the fruit of mental liberation,
and the fruit of liberation by wisdom and the benefit of the fruit of liberation by wisdom.
What are the five? [21]

2 Here, bhikshus, right view is

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| (1) supported by | moral virtue, | <i>sīla</i> |
| (2) supported by | learning [listening], | <i>suta</i> |
| (3) supported by | discussion, | <i>sākacchā</i> |
| (4) supported by | calm [samatha], | <i>samatha</i> |
| (5) supported by | insight [vipassana]. | <i>vipassanā</i> |

3 Bhikshus, when right view is supported by these five factors,
there is the fruit of mental liberation and the benefit of the fruit of mental liberation,
and the fruit of liberation by wisdom and the benefit of the fruit of liberation by wisdom.

— evaṃ —

130128; 130129; 130331

¹⁵ *Pāṇaka, haraṇaṃ viya jhāna, vipassanā, pāripanthika, sodhana, vasena samathānuggaṇhanam. Jhāna, vipassanā*
is taken as a dvandva.