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Paṭhama Dhāraṇa Sutta

The 1st Discourse on Remembering | S 56.15

Theme: Remembering and reflecting on the 4 noble truths

Translated by Piya Tan ©2018

1 Sutta significance

1.1 The Paṭhama Dhāraṇa Sutta (S 56.15), “the 1st discourse on remembering,” is a brief text on correctly recalling the 4 noble truths, and reflecting on them. Further, we can say that we should not only remember these 4 truths, but we should also constantly reflect on them as the basis for wisdom leading to the path of awakening.

1.2 A closely related text is **the Dutiya Dhāraṇa Sutta** (S 56.16), “the 2nd discourse on remembering,” that is, remembering the 4 noble truths correctly, without confusing them with later or outside teachings. We should then reflect on them as the basis for wisdom leading to the path of awakening.

1.3 TRUTH SEQUENCE. The commonly known sequence of the 4 noble truths—as (1) suffering, (2) arising (craving), (3) ending (nirvana) and (4) the path (the noble eightfold path)—is **the teaching model**, used in explaining to beginners and the unawakened on the nature of the truths. It is also called the “Dhamma,-cakka” sequence (SD1.1), which is familiarly listed as “**1-2-3-4**” in **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), thus,

suffering → arising → ending → path. (S 56.11,5-8) + SD 1.1 (6.2.2.2)

It is not, however, the only truth model. An older model, **the practice model**, arranges the truths as 1-2-4-3. This model is found, for example, in **the Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika Sutta** (M 140), SD 41.9; hence, it is also called the Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika sequence.

The oldest truth model, however, is clearly the one that the Buddha states that he himself had realized awakening with, that is, the sequence 1-4-2-3, also called the Sela sequence, since it is found in **the Sela Sutta** (M 92 = Sn 558), SD 45a.7.¹

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Paṭhama Dhāraṇa Sutta

The 1st Discourse on Remembering

S 56.15

- 1 “Bhikkhus, do you remember **the 4 noble truths** taught by me?”²
- 2 When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One: [427]
“I remember, bhante, the 4 noble truths taught by the Blessed One.”

¹ For details on these truth sequences, see SD 53.26 (2).

² *Dhāretha no tumhe bhikkhave mayā cattāri ariya,saccāni desitānīti.*

3 “But how, bhikshu, do you remember *the 4 noble truths* taught by me?”

4 THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS

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| (1) “Bhante, I recall suffering | as the 1 st noble truth taught by the Blessed One. |
| (2) Bhante, I recall the arising of suffering | as the 2 nd noble truth taught by the Blessed One. |
| (3) Bhante, I recall the ending of suffering | as the 3 rd noble truth taught by the Blessed One. |
| (4) Bhante, I recall the path leading to
the ending of suffering | as the 4 th noble truth taught by the Blessed One. |

Thus, bhante, do I remember the 4 noble truths taught by the Blessed One.”

5 “Sadhu! Sadhu! Bhikshu, you do remember the 4 noble truths taught by me.

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| (1) <u>Suffering</u> , | bhikshu, is indeed the 1 st noble truth taught by me: remember it thus! |
| (2) <u>The arising</u> of suffering, | bhikshu, is indeed the 2 nd noble truth taught by me: remember it thus! |
| (1) <u>The ending</u> of suffering, | bhikshu, is indeed the 3 rd noble truth taught by me: remember it thus! |
| (2) <u>The path</u> that is the ending
of suffering, | bhikshu, is indeed the 4 th noble truth taught by me: remember it thus! |

This is indeed the way, bhikshu, remember the 4 noble truths as taught by me.

6 Therefore, bhikshus,

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| You should devote yourself (to the reflection): ³ | “This is suffering.” |
| <i>You should devote yourself (to the reflection):</i> | “This is the arising of suffering.” |
| <i>You should devote yourself (to the reflection):</i> | “This is the ending of suffering.” |
| <i>You should devote yourself (to the reflection):</i> | “This is the path leading to the ending of suffering.” |

— evaṃ —

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³ *Idaṃ dukkhan’ti yogo karaṇīyo.*