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Āghāta Paṭivinaya Sutta 1

Paṭhama Āghāta Paṭivinaya Sutta | A 5.161
The First Discourse on Removing Resentment
Theme: Anger management
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2005

1 Introduction

Of the five methods mentioned in the Āghāta Paṭivinaya Sutta 1 for overcoming resentment, the first three are the first, second and fourth divine abodes (brahma, vihāra), that is, lovingkindness, compassion and equanimity, respectively. The Sutta Commentary says that altruistic joy (muditā) is missing because it is difficult to show altruistic joy to the one whom we resent (AA 3:294).

This Sutta should be studied with the Vitakka Saṅthāna Sutta (M 20) where 5 methods are given for the overcoming of distracting thoughts during meditation. Here is a collation of the 2 sets of mental strategies:

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2 Anger management

[Here is a valuable piece of self-analysis of anger through personal insight by a forest monk, Ajahn Thiradhammo.]

In winter [at Dhammapala Monastery in Switzerland], 2 we have three months of monastic retreat. It’s a good time for practice, and usually, it’s a peaceful and quiet time. But about a month into the retreat this year, I had this little encounter with somebody. Afterwards, I was left with a discomfort; maybe you could call it anger. It wasn’t somebody in the monastery. If it had been somebody in the monastery, I could have talked to them and we could have worked it out. It was somebody in a chance encounter I had on a walk, and then, they were gone. I couldn’t even chase after them and sort it out. So there I was in the middle of a monastic retreat, no distractions, and there was this thing.

I called it “anger” as a way to deal with it, and this “anger” just wouldn’t go away. I found it troublesome in the peaceful monastic setting to have this anger nagging at me. But I finally gave in: I realised, “This is a good chance to learn.”

I began to contemplate this irritation, to examine what was going on. It was an unpleasant physical sensation around my heart. As I looked at it, this “anger” suddenly turned out to be something else: resentment. It surprised me, because the person I was resenting wasn’t even there!

It was just a memory, imagination. So I contemplated this resentment for the next two or three days. I found it was resentment at being misunderstood. It went back to something that happened decades ago. I began to look at it, to be open to it, to receive it non-judgementally. As I did so, it began

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1 M 20/1:119-122.
2 A slightly revised version of this article—with the additional information within [square brackets]—is found in The Forest Sangha, ed Ajahn Varado, Penang: Inward Path, 2004.

http://dharmafarer.org
In October 2003 Ajahn Thiradhammo, “about ourselves whether we want to hear it or not. That quality, not about pushing it away, or trying to strangle it or ignore it. Anger is telling us something about ourselves whether we want to hear it or not. We should remember the teaching of Ajahn Chah, that “all things are teaching us,” and remember that the things we don’t like are probably the things that are teaching us most of all.

Ajahn Thiradhammo,
Cittaviveka Monastery,
October 2003
In Forest Sangha Newsletter, April 2004, no 68: http://www.fsnewsletter.net/68/68.htm
Aṅguttara Nikāya 5, Paññaka Nipāta 4, Catuttha Paññāsaka 2, Āghāta Vagga 1

Āghāta Paṭivinaya Sutta 1
The First Discourse on Removing Resentment
A 5.161

1 Monks, there are these 5 ways of removing resentment, by means of which a monk would be able to remove all resentment that has arisen in him.

What are the five?³
(1) When resentment arises in a person, lovingkindness should be cultivated in that person.⁴ In this way, resentment would be removed in that person.
(2) When resentment arises in a person, compassion should be cultivated in that person. In this way, resentment would be removed in that person.
(3) When resentment arises in a person, equanimity should be cultivated in that person. In this way, resentment would be removed in that person.
(4) When resentment arises in a person, that person should neither be mindful of it nor attend to it.⁵ In this way, resentment would be removed in that person.
(5) When resentment arises in a person, that person should determine the ownership of karma in that person thus:⁷
“This venerable one⁸ is the owner of his karma, heir to karma, born in karma, bound by karma, has karma as his refuge.⁹ Whatever karma one does, good or evil, one is heir to it.”¹⁰ In this way, resentment would be removed in that person.

2 Monks, these are these 5 ways of removing resentment, by means of which a monk would be able remove all resentment that have arisen in him.

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³ In the foll, we see 3 of the divine abodes (brahma, vihāra), without the 3rd, ie, altruistic joy (muditā). Comy says that altruistic joy is not mentioned because it is difficult to cultivate it towards those whom one resents (AA 3:294).
⁴ Yasmiṁ bhikkhave puggale āghāto jāyetha, mettā tasmiṁ puggale bhāvetabbā. This sentence, though it looks simple, is somewhat tricky as puggale can be tr either as acc pl (“to the persons”) or as loc sg (“in the person”). Since yasmiṁ (“in whomever”) clearly qualifies puggale, the phrase yasmiṁ...puggale should be tr as “in whichever person” or such like. Comy speaks of yattha ārammane bhikkhuno āghāto uppanno, “wherever the monk’s resentment in the object,” he should remove it with these five (methods) (AA 3:294).
⁵ On the absence of “altruistic joy” (muditā), see Introd.
⁶ Yasmiṁ bhikkhave puggale āghāto jāyetha, asati amansikarāto tasmiṁ puggale āpajjitabbo, lit “Monks, when resentment arises in a person, non-mindfulness, non-attention should be entered upon in that person.” Cf Vitakka Saṅhāna S (M 20,5/1:120): it is one of the 5 methods of overcoming distractions during meditation. MA suggests 5 other methods for disregarding distracting thoughts: (1) occupy oneself with something else; (2) recite some text explaining Dharma; (3) read a Dharma text (eg a pūja book); (4) examine the parts of an object from one’s bag, eg, fire-sticks (“this is the upper stick; this is the lower stick”); (5) carefully and reflectively examine requisites (“this is the awl;... a pair of scissors;... the nail cutter;... the needle”); (6) darn the worn-out parts of the robe. (MA 3:90 f).
⁷ This reflection on karma is given in the 3rd person pl (“beings”) in Čūla Kamma Vibhaṅga S (M 135,4/3:202).
⁸ Ayaṁ āyasmaḥ, ie, the one whom one resents.
¹⁰ Kammassakko ayaṁ āyasmaṁ kamma,dāyādo kamma,yoni kamma,bandhu kamma,patisarano, yaṁ kammaṁ karissati kalyāṇam vā pāpakam vā tassa dāyādo bhavissatī ti. As at Thāna S (A 5.57/3:71-75), SD 5.12, where it is said to that these should be constantly reflected upon.