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Channa Paribbājaka Sutta

The Discourse to Channa the Wanderer | A 3.71

Theme: On overcoming the three unwholesome roots

Translated by Piya Tan ©2007

Introduction

The Channa Paribbājaka Sutta is a short text on the three unwholesome roots, and has a simple structure, consisting of two main parts. The first part [§§1-2] speaks of the dangers and disadvantages of the three roots, following this template:

When the mind overpowered by lust, or by hate, or by delusion,

- one thinks of harming self, of harming other, or of harming both;
- one misconducts oneself through body, through speech, or through mind;
- one does not understand the true benefit for self, for others, or for both;
- lust, or hate, or delusion does not bring about nirvana.

The second part [§3] shows the “way out,” that is, for the abandoning of the three roots, that is, the noble eightfold path.

This simplicity of this Sutta is not merely the result of the oral tradition through which it is transmitted. It is an *intentional simplicity* for the purpose of self or group reflection. Like the other Suttas for reflection, this text should be *read out* or recorded and *listened to* reflectively and constantly, letting the meaning gradually sink into your mind.

For more details on the nature of the unwholesome roots, see **(Akusala,mūla) Añña Titthiyā Sutta** (A 3.68)¹ and **the Mūla Sutta** (A 3.69).²

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Channa Paribbājaka Sutta

The Discourse to Channa the Wanderer

A 3.71³

1 Originating in Sāvattihī.⁴

The three roots

2 Then the wanderer Channa⁵ approached the venerable Ānanda. Having approached the venerable Ānanda, he exchanged friendly greetings with him, and the sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, the wanderer Channa said this to the venerable Ānanda:

¹ A 3.68/1:199-201 (SD 16.4).

² A 3.69/1:201-205 (SD 18.2).

³ The internal numbering here does not follow PTS.

⁴ *Sāvattihī, nidānam*.

⁵ This is neither the Channa in **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16) nor the one of Saṅghādisesa 12 (V 3:177-179).

- 3** “Do you, avuso Ānanda, advocate the abandoning of lust, the abandoning of hate, the abandoning of delusion?”

“Yes, avuso, we do advocate the abandoning of lust, of hate, [216] and of delusion.”

- 4** “But, avuso, what disadvantage⁶ do you see in lust that you advocate its abandoning; what disadvantage do you see in hate that you advocate its abandoning; what disadvantage do you see in delusion that you advocate its abandoning?”

Lust

- 5** “Avuso, when you are inflamed with **lust**, overpowered by it, the mind seized by it, you think of harming yourself, and you feel physical pain and mental pain;⁷

when you are inflamed with lust, overpowered by lust, the mind seized by it, you think of harming others, and you feel physical pain and mental pain, too;

when you are inflamed with lust, overpowered by lust, the mind seized by it, you think of harming of both,⁸ and you feel physical pain and mental pain, too.

- 6** But, **when lust has been abandoned**, you do not think of your own ruin, and you do not feel mental pain or stress;⁹

when lust has been abandoned, you do not think of others’ ruin, and you do not feel mental pain or stress;

when overpowered by lust, you do not think of the ruin of both, and you do not feel physical mental pain or stress.

- 7** Avuso, when you are inflamed with **lust**, overpowered by lust, the mind seized by it, you misconduct yourself through the body;

when you are inflamed with lust, overpowered by lust, the mind seized by it, you misconduct yourself through speech, too;

when you are inflamed with lust, overpowered by lust, the mind seized by it, you misconduct yourself through the mind, too.

- 8** But, **when lust has been abandoned**, you do not misconduct yourself through the body;

when lust has been abandoned, you do not misconduct yourself through speech;

when lust has been abandoned, you do not misconduct yourself through the mind.

- 9** Avuso, when inflamed with **lust**, overpowered by lust, the mind seized by it, you do not understand your own benefit [true goal] according to reality;

when inflamed with lust, overpowered by lust, the mind seized by it, you do not understand others’ benefit [true goal] according to reality, too;

when inflamed with lust, overpowered by lust, the mind seized by it, you understand neither your own benefit [true goal] nor that of others according to reality, too.

⁶ *ādīnava*, or danger.

⁷ *Ratto kho āvuso rāgena abhibhūto pariyādinna, citto atta, vyābādhāya pi ceteti...*, lit “died with lust, friend, overpowered (by it), the mind seized (by it) one [he] thinks of self-ruin ...” which is in 3rd person, which is rather impersonal. Here I have throughout rendered such passages more idiomatically and colloquially, for better mental connection in term of spiritual practice. “Mental pain and physical pain,” *dukkhaṃ domanassaṃ*.

⁸ Here “both” refers to others as a group, ie, society or the world (incl the environment) at large.

⁹ “Mental pain or stress,” *cetasikaṃ dukkhaṃ domanassaṃ*; ie he may notice physical pain or external problems, but his mind is not affected by them.

10 Lust, avuso, blinds you, makes you sightless, makes you ignorant, destroys wisdom, invites trouble, does not bring about nirvana.¹⁰

Hate

11 “Avuso, when you are filled with **hate**,¹¹ overpowered by it, the mind seized by it, you think of your own ruin, and you feel physical pain and mental pain;¹²

when you are filled with hate, overpowered by hate, the mind seized by it, you think of others’ ruin, and you feel physical pain and mental pain, too;

when you are filled with hate, overpowered by hate, the mind seized by it, you think of the ruin of both, and you feel physical pain and mental pain, too.

12 But, **when hate has been abandoned**, you do not think of your own ruin, and you do not feel mental pain or stress;

when hate has been abandoned, you do not think of others’ ruin, and you do not feel mental pain or stress;

when overpowered by hate, you do not think of the ruin of both, and you do not feel physical mental pain or stress.

13 Avuso, when you are filled with **hate**, overpowered by hate, the mind seized by it, you misconduct yourself through the body;

when you are filled with hate, overpowered by hate, the mind seized by it, you misconduct yourself through speech, too;

when you are filled with hate, overpowered by hate, the mind seized by it, you misconduct yourself through the mind, too.

14 But, **when hate has been abandoned**, you do not misconduct yourself through the body;

when hate has been abandoned, you do not misconduct yourself through speech;

when hate has been abandoned, you do not misconduct yourself through the mind.

15 Avuso, when you are filled with **hate**, overpowered by hate, the mind seized by it, you do not understand your own benefit [true goal] according to reality;

when you are filled with hate, overpowered by hate, the mind seized by it, you do not understand others’ benefit [true goal] according to reality, too;

when you are filled with hate, overpowered by hate, the mind seized by it, you understand neither your own benefit [true goal] nor that of others according to reality, too.

16 Hate, avuso, blinds you, makes you sightless, makes you ignorant, destroys wisdom, invites trouble, does not bring about nirvana.

Delusion

17 “Avuso, when you are lost in **delusion**,¹³ overpowered by it, the mind seized by it, you think of your own ruin, and you feel physical pain and mental pain;

¹⁰ *Rāgo kho āvuso andha, karaṇo acakkhu, karaṇo aññāṇa, karaṇo paññā, nirodhiko vighāta, pakkhiko anibbāna-saṁvattaniko.*

¹¹ “Filled with hate,” *duṭṭho...dosenā*, lit “hateful with hate.”

¹² *Ratto kho āvuso rāgena abhibhūto pariyādinna, citto atta, vyābādāya pi ceteti...*, lit “dyed with lust, friend, overpowered (by it), the mind seized (by it) one [he] thinks of self-ruin ...” which is in 3rd person, which is rather impersonal. Here I have throughout rendered such passages more idiomatically and colloquially, for better mental connection in term of spiritual practice. “Mental pain and physical pain,” *dukkhaṁ domanassam*.

¹³ “Lost in delusion,” *mūlho ... mohena*, lit “deluded with delusion.”

when you are lost in delusion, overpowered by delusion, the mind seized by it, you think of others' ruin, and you feel physical pain and mental pain, too;

when you are lost in delusion, overpowered by delusion, the mind seized by it, you think of the ruin of both, and you feel physical pain and mental pain, too.

18 But, **when delusion has been abandoned**, you do not think of your own ruin, and you do not feel mental pain or stress;

when delusion has been abandoned, you do not think of others' ruin, and you do not feel mental pain or stress;

when overpowered by delusion, you do not think of the ruin of both, and you do not feel physical mental pain or stress.

19 Avuso, when you are lost in delusion, overpowered by **delusion**, the mind seized by it, you misconduct yourself through the body;

when you are lost in delusion, overpowered by delusion, the mind seized by it, you misconduct yourself through speech, too;

when you are lost in delusion, overpowered by delusion, the mind seized by it, you misconduct yourself through the mind, too.

20 But, **when delusion has been abandoned**, you do not misconduct yourself through the body;

when delusion has been abandoned, you do not misconduct yourself through speech;

when delusion has been abandoned, you do not misconduct yourself through the mind.

21 Avuso, when you are lost in delusion, overpowered by **delusion**, the mind seized by it, you do not understand your own benefit [true goal] according to reality;

when you are lost in delusion, overpowered by delusion, the mind seized by it, you do not understand others' benefit [true goal] according to reality, too;

when you are lost in delusion, overpowered by delusion, the mind seized by it, you understand neither your own benefit [true goal] nor that of others according to reality, too.

22 **Delusion**, avuso, blinds you, makes you sightless, makes you ignorant, destroys wisdom, invites trouble, does not bring about nirvana.”

The way out

23 “But, avuso, is there a path, is there a way, for the abandoning of this lust, of this hate, of this delusion?”

“There is the path, avuso, there is the way, for the abandoning of this lust, of this hate, of this delusion.”

24 “But what, avuso, is that path, what is that way for the abandoning of this lust, of this hate, of this delusion?”

“It is this noble eightfold path,¹⁴ that is to say,

- (1) right view,
- (2) right thought,
- (3) right speech,
- (4) right action,
- (5) right livelihood,
- (6) right effort,
- (7) right mindfulness,
- (8) right samadhi.

¹⁴ See **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,21/2:311-314), SD 13.2. For an insightful study of the eightfold path, see R E M Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:190-226 (ch 6).

This, avuso, is the path, this is the way, for the abandoning of this lust, of this hate, of this delusion.”

25 “Blessed, avuso, is the path, blessed is the way, for the abandoning of this lust, of this hate, of this delusion! And, avuso Ānanda, it is sufficient for heedlessness!”¹⁵

— evaṃ —

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¹⁵ *Bhaddako āvuso maggo bhaddikā paṭipadā etassa rāgassa dosassa mohassa pahānāya ti. Alaṅ ca pan' āvuso Ānanda appamādāyā ti.* That is, the noble eightfold path is totally efficacious in making one heedful in working for awakening,