

MN 112 The Sixfold Purity - Chabbisodhana Sutta

Dhamma Talk by Ven. Vimalaramsi Oct 2005

BV: I think this one will be very interesting for you. This is called – The Sixfold Purity. It's sutta #112 in the Majjhima Nikaya. These are the questions that, when one becomes an Arahant, they will be asked to see whether they, in fact, are an Arahant, or not. Kind of an interesting sutta.

MN:

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There he addressed the monks thus: "Monks."—"Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Here, monks, a monk makes a declaration of final knowledge thus: 'I understand: Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'

3. "That monk's words should neither be approved nor disapproved. Without approving or disapproving, a question should be put thus: 'Friend, there are four kinds of expression rightly proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. What four? Telling the seen as it is seen; telling the heard as it is heard; telling the sensed as it is sensed; telling the cognized as it is cognized. These, friend, are the four kinds of expression rightly proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. How does the venerable one know, how does he see, regarding these four kinds of expression, so that through not clinging his mind is liberated from the taints?'

BV: Pretty good question.

MN: 4. "Monks, when a monk is one with taints destroyed, who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden,

reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and is completely liberated through final knowledge, this is the nature of his answer:

“Friends, regarding the seen I abide unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated, with a mind rid of barriers.

BV: “Unattracted” – not grasping onto it. “Unrepelled” – not pushing anything away. “Independent, detached, free” – free of any idea that there is any kind of a permanent self. “Dissociated, with a mind rid of barriers” – a mind rid of barriers is a mind that has no hindrances in it at that time. Sometimes, you’ll hear this “mind rid of barriers” when it’s talking about the different jhanas, and it’s talking about while you are in the jhana you have a “mind rid of barriers”. But, an arahat has this “mind rid of barriers” no matter what he’s doing.

MN:

Regarding the heard... Regarding the sensed.... Regarding the cognized I abide unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated, with a mind rid of barriers. It is by knowing thus, seeing thus, regarding these four kinds of expression, that through not clinging my mind is liberated from the taints.’

5. “Saying ‘good’ one may delight and rejoice in that monk’s words. Having done so, a further question may be put thus:

“Friend, there are these five aggregates affected by clinging, rightly proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened.

BV: Now, this is where I kind of take exception, because the five aggregates can be affected by clinging or not, depending on whether you have let go of the craving when that aggregate arises. Now, “affected by clinging” means that you get into your thinking and all of this other stuff – your opinions and ideas.

MN:

What five? They are the material form aggregate affected by clinging, the feeling aggregate affected by clinging, the perception aggregate affected by clinging, the formations aggregate affected by clinging, and the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging. These, friend,

are the five aggregates affected by clinging, rightly proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. How does the venerable one know, how does he see, regarding these five aggregates affected by clinging, so that through not clinging his mind is liberated from the taints?’

6. “Monks, when a monk is one with taints destroyed...and is completely liberated through final knowledge, this is the nature of his answer:

“Friends, having known material form to be feeble, fading away, and comfortless, with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of attraction and clinging regarding material form, of mental standpoints, adherences, and underlying tendencies regarding material form, I have understood that my mind is liberated.

BV: I’m going to do that again, because this is really important.

{Repeats: “Friends, having known material form to be feeble, fading away, and comfortless, with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of attraction and clinging regarding material form, of mental standpoints, adherences, and underlying tendencies regarding material form, I have understood that my mind is liberated.}

MN:

“Friends, having known feeling . . .Having known perception . . .Having known formations . . .Having known consciousness to be feeble, fading away, and comfortless, with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of attraction and clinging regarding consciousness, of mental standpoints, adherences, and underlying tendencies regarding consciousness, I have understood that my mind is liberated.

“It is by knowing thus, seeing thus, regarding these five aggregates affected by clinging, that through not clinging my mind is liberated from the taints.’

7. "Saying 'good,' one may delight and rejoice in that monk's words. Having done so, a further question may be put thus:

"Friend, there are these six elements rightly proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. What six? They are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the air element, the space element, and the consciousness element. These, friend, are the six elements rightly proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. How does the venerable one know, how does he see, regarding these six elements, so that through not clinging his mind is liberated from the taints?"

8. "Monks, when a monk is one with taints destroyed...and is completely liberated through final knowledge, this is the nature of his answer:

"Friends, I have treated the earth element as not self, with no self

B.V. no personal self

MN: based on the earth element. And with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of attraction and clinging based on the earth element, of mental standpoints, adherences, and underlying tendencies based on the earth element, I have understood that my mind is liberated.

"Friends, I have treated the water element . . . the fire element . . . the air element . . . the space element . . . the consciousness element as {impersonal} , with no {personal} self based on the consciousness element. And with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of attraction and clinging based on the consciousness element, of mental standpoints, adherences, and underlying tendencies based on the consciousness element, I have understood that my mind is liberated.

"It is by knowing thus, seeing thus, regarding these six elements, that through not clinging my mind is liberated from the taints.'

BV: One of the things about craving is our adherence to views and concepts and ideas, and are through attachment to these – this is the

way it is, and that's good, or bad, or indifferent. When you let go of clinging, when you first see clinging beginning to arise and you let go right then, you don't have that disturbance any more. Now, the nice thing about doing a retreat is it gives you time to be able to settle down and actually see these things. But, I want you to be able to see them with your daily activities, I want you to be able to watch how your mind grabs onto things and ideas and concepts, and "it should be this way", and "it should be that way", and how your mind, because of these attachments, causes so much suffering. And we do it to ourselves. That's all you can say – we just do it to ourselves. We are by far our own worst enemies. There is no enemy out there that hurts us near as much as we hurt ourselves, by adhering to all of these concepts and ideas and "shoulds" and habitual tendencies and all of that sort of thing. It's really amazing to be around people who have practiced awareness for years and years and years, and see how light their mind truly is - it doesn't grab out on things, it doesn't grab onto things. That doesn't mean that, occasionally, dissatisfaction won't arise and then they might show some anger. But, it doesn't mean that they are really angry. It means that they are trying to make a point and the only way that you'll be able to understand that point is if you see that anger come out. You can have anger with equanimity. An example is a little child – they do something that's dangerous for them, and you warn them, and you warn them, and you warn them, and they keep on doing it, until finally – "That's it, that's enough, you have to start paying attention now! You're going to harm yourself if you keep doing this, stop doing it!" And sometimes that's the only way to get the idea across. It's like that old farmer that...His neighbor sold him a mule, and the neighbor told him that he's really well trained, and he'll do anything you want, just help you in any number of ways. And, he couldn't get that mule to do anything. The mule just did whatever he felt like doing. So he went back to his neighbor and he said – "Listen, you told me that this mule was trained, and I can't get him to do anything". And the neighbor said – "I know. I'll come over and visit you and straighten everything out." So he comes over to the neighbor's house, and the mule's right there, and the neighbor picks up a 2 by 4 and whops him right in the middle of the head. And the old farmer says – "Why did you do that

for?" And the neighbor says – "Well, if you want him to do something, you have to get his attention first."

S: (laughing)

BV: And that's how you use anger, so that it's not a destructive force. Sometimes it takes that before somebody else – "Oh? Really?"

S: (laughing)

BV: Have you ever heard that story?

S: No.

BV: Aaah.

MN:

9. "Saying 'good,' one may delight and rejoice in that monk's words. Having done so, a further question maybe put thus:

"But, friend, there are these six internal and external bases rightly proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. What six? They are the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and flavors, the body and tangibles, the mind and mind-objects. These, friend, are the six internal and external bases rightly proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. How does the venerable one know, how does he see, regarding these six internal and external bases, so that through not clinging his mind is liberated from the taints?"

10. "Monks, when a monk is one with taints destroyed...and is completely liberated through final knowledge, this is the nature of his answer:

"Friends, with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of desire, lust, delight, craving, attraction, and clinging, and of mental standpoints, adherences, and underlying tendencies regarding the eye, forms, eye-consciousness, and things cognizable by the mind through eye-consciousness, I have understood that my mind is liberated.

“With the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of desire, lust, delight, craving, attraction, and clinging, and of mental standpoints, adherences, and underlying tendencies regarding the ear, sounds, ear-consciousness, and things cognizable by the mind through ear-consciousness . . . regarding the nose, odors, nose-consciousness, and things cognizable by the mind through nose-consciousness

BV: My dyslexia is really playing havoc with me right now (laughs).

S: (laughing)

MN:

. . . regarding the tongue, flavors, tongue-consciousness, and things cognizable by the mind through tongue consciousness . . . regarding the body, tangibles, body-consciousness, and things cognizable by the mind through body-consciousness . . . regarding the mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and things cognizable by the mind through mind-consciousness, I have understood that my mind is liberated.

“It is by knowing thus, seeing thus, regarding these six internal and external bases, that through not clinging my mind is liberated from the taints.’

11. “Saying ‘good’ one may delight and rejoice in that monk’s words. Having done so, a further question may be put thus:

“But, friend, how does the venerable one know, how does he see, so that in regard to this body with its consciousness and all external signs, I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit have been eradicated in him?’

12. “Monks, when a monk is one with taints destroyed...and is completely liberated through final knowledge, this is the nature of his answer:

“Friends, formerly when I lived the home life I was ignorant. Then the Tathāgata or his disciple taught me the Dhamma. On hearing the Dhamma I acquired faith in the Tathāgata. Possessing that faith, I considered thus: “Household life is crowded and dusty; life gone forth

is wide open. It is not easy while living in a home to lead the holy life utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness." On a later occasion, abandoning a small or a large fortune, abandoning a small or a large circle of relations, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness.

13. "Having thus gone forth and possessing the monks' training and way of life... abandoning the killing of living beings, he abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, I abided compassionate to all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, I abstained from taking what is not given; taking only what is given, expecting only what is given; by not stealing I abide in purity. Abandoning incelibacy, he observe celibacy, living apart, abstaining from the vulgar practice of sexual intercourse.

"Abandoning false speech, I abstain from false speech; I speak truth, adhere to truth, I am trustworthy and reliable, one who is no deceiver of the world. Abandoning malicious speech, I abstain from malicious speech; I do not repeat elsewhere what I have heard here in order to divide those people from these, nor do I repeat to these people what I have heard elsewhere in order to divide these people from those; thus I am one who reunites those who are divided, a promoter of friendships, who enjoys concord, rejoices in concord, delights in concord, I am a speaker of words that promote concord. Abandoning harsh speech, I abstain from harsh speech; I speak such words as are gentle, pleasing to the ear, and loveable, as go to the heart, are courteous, desired by many and agreeable to many. Abandoning gossip, I abstain from gossip; I speak at the right time, speak what is fact, speak on what is good, speak on the Dhamma and the Discipline; at the right time I speak such words as are worth recording, reasonable, moderate, and beneficial.

"I abstain from injuring seeds and plants. I practice eating only meal a day, abstaining from eating at night and outside the proper time. I abstain from dancing, singing, music, and theatrical shows. I abstain from wearing garlands, smartening myself with scent, and embellishing myself with unguents. I abstain from high and large

couches. I abstain from accepting gold and silver. I abstain from accepting raw grain. I abstain from accepting raw meat. I abstain from accepting women and girls. I abstain from accepting men and women slaves. I abstain from accepting goats and sheep. I abstain from accepting fowl and pigs. I abstain from accepting elephants, cattle, horses, and mares. I abstain from accepting fields and land. I abstain from going on errands and running messages. I abstain from buying and selling. I abstain from false weights, false metals, and false measures. I abstain from cheating, deceiving, defrauding, and trickery. I abstain from wounding, murdering, binding, brigandage, plunder, and violence.

“I become content with robes to protect my body and with almsfood to maintain my stomach, and wherever I go I set out taking only these with me. Just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden, so too, I become content with robes to protect my body and with alms-food to maintain my stomach, and wherever I go I set out taking only these with me. Possessing this aggregate of noble virtue, I experience within myself a bliss that is blameless.

14. “On seeing a form with the eye, I don’t grasp at its signs and features. Since, if I left the eye faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade me, I practice the way of its restraint, I guard the eye faculty, I undertake the restraint of the eye faculty. On hearing a sound with the ear...On smelling an odor with the nose...On tasting a flavor with the tongue...On touching a tangible with the body...On cognizing a mind-object with the mind, I do not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if I left the mind faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade me, I practice the way of its restraint, I guard the mind faculty, I undertake the restraint of the mind faculty. Possessing this noble restraint of the faculties, I experience within myself a bliss that is unsullied.

15. “I become one who acts in full awareness when going forward and returning; who acts in full awareness when looking ahead and looking away; who acts in full awareness when flexing and extending my limbs; who acts in full awareness when wearing my robes and carrying my outer robe and bowl; who acts in full awareness when

eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting; who acts in full awareness when defecating and urinating; who acts in full awareness when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent.

16. "Possessing this aggregate of noble virtue, and this noble restraint of the faculties, and possessing this noble mindfulness and full awareness, I resorted to a secluded resting place: the forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a ravine, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, an open space, a heap of straw.

17. "On returning from his almsround, after my meal I sit down, folding my legs crosswise, setting my body erect, and establishing mindfulness before me. Abandoning covetousness for the world, I abide with a mind free from covetousness; I purify my mind from covetousness. Abandoning ill will and hatred, I abide with a mind free from ill will, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings; I purify my mind from ill will and hatred. Abandoning sloth and torpor, I abide free from sloth and torpor, mindful and fully aware; I purify my mind from sloth and torpor. Abandoning restlessness and remorse, I abide unagitated with a mind inwardly peaceful; I purify my mind from restlessness and remorse. Abandoning doubt, I abide having gone beyond doubt, unperplexed about wholesome states; I purified my mind from doubt.

18. "Having thus abandoned these five hindrances, imperfections of the mind that weaken wisdom, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first jhana, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. With the stilling of thinking and examining thought, I entered upon and abided in the second jhana...With the fading away as well of rapture...I entered upon and abided in the third jhana...With the abandoning of pleasure and pain...I entered upon and abided in the fourth jhana, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

19. "When my collected mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfections, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the destruction of the

taints. I directly knew as it actually is: "This is suffering"... "This is the origin of suffering"... "This is the cessation of suffering"... "This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering." I directly knew as it actually is: "These are the taints"... "This is the origin of the taints"... "This is the cessation of the taints"... "This is the way leading to the cessation of the taints."

20. "When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated there came the knowledge: "It is liberated." I directly knew: "Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being."

"It is by knowing thus, seeing thus, friends, that in regard to this body with its consciousness and all external signs, I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit have been eradicated in me.'

21. "Saying 'good,' monks, one may delight and rejoice in that monk's words. Having done so, one should say to him: 'It is a gain for us, friend, it is a great gain for us, friend, that we see such a companion in the holy life as the venerable one.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. The monks were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

BV: It's a kind of an interesting sutta, and it touches all kinds of different aspects. And I like it and I wish wasn't so tired, then I would explain more of it to you (laughs).

S: I have one question. When you talked about eye-consciousness and the eye and the form – I thought that the eye only perceived color.

BV: It's color and form.

S: I thought that color makes the form, but we interpret it as form from...

BV: You're getting back to perception again aren't you? (laughs)
There's three things that have to be in good working order in order

for sight to arise. There has to be form, there's the shape, there's the color and there has to be light, cause if there's no light, then it doesn't matter what the color or shape is – you can't see it. The eye-consciousness arises, meeting of the three is called contact, and this is the way it is. See these things happen very, very quickly, and you are getting into the perception and the perception does happen.

S: ~ I thought that the eye perceives color and the brain organizes it into form. Now, whether that is organized in what is understood as the complex of the eye ~

BV: I'm going to have to think about that one a little while. One of the things that I've been told by absolutely great meditation people, and I've been told that over and over even, that I have a very deep mind, but it's not quick. You can ask me a question and I can give you somewhat of an answer, and then it might even be the next day and all of a sudden the answer comes. So it just doesn't happen as fast as it could.

S: ~ It's fine, I'm just bringing it up for clarification. ~

From what you were saying the other day, that the different links of dependent origination are the leader and then there's perception right after that, that follows it, and that really does take place... Color and form – I've always heard it as "color and form". But the form would have to do with the perception too. If you only saw color then everything would just kind of ...it would just be like... blobs... they would just mesh together, there would be no distinction between...

S: ~

BV: Yeah.

S: Right, but that's what my understanding is ~ that the eye is stimulated by light and color and the brain organizes these patterns into form and then ~

BV: Yeah. Interesting.

S: I haven't read that deeply, I thought that this was my superficial impression.

S: Are we talking babies, color, form and all that~

BV: No, it's just the organization of how it happens. Eye sees color and then brain turns it into form.

KK: Right, that's cognition – cognizes it. It seems to me that the cognizing, that ~ presented ~, that matched what the Buddha had taught and he showed us how cognition operated exactly precisely the way the Buddha had presented it, from the medical stuff that he presented.

S: Well maybe there does have to be form.

BV: It seems like it does. The eye sees the color in an organized way, which means that it is seeing form and color at the same time, because there are distinctive lines that distinguish it from... and then... I don't know... It seems that, and I'll have to get back to you later after it penetrates in, it seems that it's mind that recognizes the form, but the form is already there. That's the way what it seems like to me.

BV: Interesting question. I always love to have you in retreat, because you always make me think. (laughs).

Let's share some merit.

May suffering ones, be suffering free

And the fear struck, fearless be

May the grieving shed all grief

And may all beings find relief.

May all beings share this merit that we have thus acquired

For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.

May beings inhabiting space and earth

Devas and nagas of mighty power

Share this merit of ours.

May they long protect the Buddha's dispensation.

Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . .

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