

MN 145 Advice to Puṇṇa – Puṇṇovāda Sutta
01-Jul-08 DSMC

BV: Ok. This is a sutta that I haven't done for quite a while. And when I say quit a while, it's probably been ten or twelve years.
(laughs)

Anyway -

MN:

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvatti in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. Then when it was evening, the venerable Puṇṇa rose from meditation and went to the Blessed One. After paying homage to the Blessed One, he sat down at one side and said to him:

2. "Venerable sir, it would be good if the Blessed One would give me brief advice. Having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I will abide alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and resolute." "Well then, Puṇṇa, listen and attend carefully to what I shall say." "Yes, venerable sir," the venerable Puṇṇa replied. The Blessed One said this:

3. "Puṇṇa, there are forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding to them, delight arises in him. With the arising of delight, Puṇṇa, there is the arising of suffering, I say.

BV: Why is that?

S: ~

BV: Go deeper.

S: ~ you identify with them ~

BV: Ahaaa. Yes, that's it. It's because you take that sight to be yours

and you like it and you try to hold on to it. You try to make it permanent. Any time we try to make anything permanent, that's the cause of suffering, because it's not going to be permanent. And it's the same with sounds, it's the same with tastes, it's the same with odors, it's the same with touch, and it's the same with mind. This kind of delight, this holding on, pulls us out of the present moment. Why? Because I like it so much, I want more of it. And we get caught up in thinking about the sense door, what it's doing, instead of actually seeing what the sense door is doing. As you learn this meditation, you start letting go of the craving. And when you let go of the craving, that means when your eye hits the sight you don't have any clinging arise, and you actually get to see what you're looking at much more clearly. Because you're not thinking the sight, now you're seeing the sight.

MN:

There are, Puṇṇa, sounds cognizable by the ear that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding to them, delight arises in him. With the arising of delight, Puṇṇa, there is the arising of suffering, I say. ... There are, Puṇṇa, mind-objects cognizable by the mind that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding to them, delight arises in him. With the arising of delight, Puṇṇa, there is the arising of suffering, I say.

4. "Puṇṇa, there are forms cognizable by the eye...sounds cognizable by the ear...odors cognizable by the nose...flavors cognizable by the tongue...tangibles cognizable by the body...mind-objects cognizable by the mind that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. If a monk does not delight in them, welcome them, and remain holding to them, delight ceases in him. With the cessation of delight, Puṇṇa, there is the cessation of suffering, I say.

TT: 5:32

BV: In Asia especially, everybody is afraid of being attached, and they think they're attached to things that are... they're really kind of bizarre. There are certain foods that you eat that are more agreeable than other kinds of food. So they say: "I'm attached to this." And maybe they are and maybe they aren't; it depends on what they're doing with their mind at the time. When you eat a certain kind of food and you see that your mind is starting to take off with that, and starting to really like it and want more of it and get caught up in thinking about it and thinking about the different taste while you're eating, you're not tasting, you're thinking. And you're identifying with those thoughts and those feelings about the food, and you're taking them personally, and this is the cause of the suffering. Ok? So the attachment is the actual food itself, it's what the food does to trigger things on your mind.

I love mangos, a great fruit. I just got through hearing a Dhamma talk about how feeling arises, and then craving and clinging and all of this kind of stuff. And I thought: "I wonder what would happen if after the feeling arose" and it's a very pleasant feeling, "If I let go of the craving. What happens after that?" So I put the mango on my tongue, and I tasted the sour taste and then the sweet taste, and it was a pleasant feeling and as soon as that feeling arose, I started relaxing and letting go right then. And I noticed that I didn't have any thoughts, and that I was still eating that piece of mango, and still having those tastes arise, not just the original taste, but it was continuing on, and I noticed all kinds of other things about this, because it started hitting different taste buds on the tongue, and there were subtle little tastes that I didn't even know were there. Why? Because when I was eating it before, the initial taste would hit, and I'd start thinking about how I liked that: "Oh, you know, that's like that mango I ate back then", and then all of a sudden I'm further and further and further away from actually eating it, and actually tasting it. That's attachment. But, when I became fully aware of that and I started eating the mango, and I started every time a pleasant feeling arose I relaxed into that, I became truly amazed at how much better the mango tasted, and I went: "Wow! That's really something! I'm going to do that again!" So I did it again. I took another bite of mango. And I kept on watching the process without identifying with

the process, without getting caught in the distractions. And before long I'd eaten a whole bowl of mango, but I'd done it without attachment. Try it.

MN:

5. "Now that I have given you this brief advice, Puṇṇa, in which country will you dwell?"

"Venerable sir, now that the Blessed One has given me this brief advice, I am going to dwell in the Sunāparanta country."

"Puṇṇa, the people of Sunāparanta are fierce and rough. If they abuse and threaten you, what will you think then?"

"Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta abuse and threaten me, then I shall think: These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they did not give me a blow with the fist.' Then I shall think thus, Blessed One; then I shall think thus, Sublime One."

"But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do give you a blow with the fist, what will you think then?"

"Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do give me a blow with the fist, then I shall think: 'These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they did not give me a blow with a clod.' Then I shall think thus, Blessed One; then I shall think thus, Sublime One."

"But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do give you a blow with a clod, what will you think then?"

"Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do give me a blow with a clod, then I shall think: 'These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they did not give me a blow with a stick.' Then I shall think thus, Blessed One; then I shall think thus, Sublime One."

"But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do give you a blow with a stick, what will you think then?"

“Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do give me a blow with a stick, then I shall think: ‘These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they did not give me a blow with a knife.’ Then I shall think thus, Blessed One; then I shall think thus, Sublime One.”

“But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do give you a blow with a knife, what will you think then?”

“Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do give me a blow with a knife, then I shall think: ‘These people of Sunāparanta are kind, truly kind, in that they have not taken my life with a sharp knife.’ Then I shall think thus, Blessed One; then I shall think thus, Sublime One.”

“But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do take your life with a sharp knife, what will you think then?”

“Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do take my life with a sharp knife, then I shall think thus: There have been disciples of the Blessed One who, being humiliated and disgusted by the body and by life, sought to have their lives deprived by the knife. But I have had my life deprived by the knife without seeking for it.’ Then I shall think thus, Blessed One; then I shall think thus, Sublime One.”

6. “Good, good, Puṇṇa! Possessing such self-control and peacefulness, you will be able to dwell in the Sunāparanta country. Now, Puṇṇa, it is time to do as you think fit.”

7. Then, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s words, the venerable Puṇṇa rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, departed keeping him on his right. He then set his resting place in order, took his bowl and outer robe, and set out to wander towards the Sunāparanta country. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived in the Sunāparanta country, and there he lived. Then, during that Rains, the venerable Puṇṇa established five hundred men lay followers and five hundred women lay followers in the practice, and he himself realized the three true knowledges. On a later occasion, the venerable Puṇṇa attained final Nibbāna.

8. Then a number of monks went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, they sat down at one side and told him: "Venerable sir, the clansman Puṇṇa, who was given brief advice by the Blessed One, has died. What is his destination? What is his future course?"

"Monks, the clansman Puṇṇa was wise. He practiced in accordance with the Dhamma and did not trouble me in the interpretation of the Dhamma. The clansman Puṇṇa has attained final Nibbāna."

{...}

TT: 14:33

BV: Now what happened basically is, he went to this other country which very well could have been Iran. Desert folks have a tendency to be more fierce. It's one of the interesting things about the way religions have grown up, because the Jews, and the Christians, and the Muslims, they grew up where's very harsh climate. It's very hard to continue on. So they had to be tough people. And then when they started expanding their religion, they went into countries like Malaysia and the Philippines and all of these different countries where it's tropical, there's abundant fruit, it's not hard to live at all, and they took this hard religion in with them into that country. So they had some quite different perspectives, and they had to go through their changes in that way. But what he did was he basically went to a very rough, hard kind of people, and taught them how to have a soft, light, uplifted mind, how to have a happy mind, how not to identify with all of the problems and things that generally cause suffering to arise. See the Buddha was really wise, because two times he restated the six sensual pleasures, and how they can cause suffering or not depending on your handling of them.

The whole thing comes down to: when you take things personally, you're seeing life in the world of concepts. Now what's a concept? A concept is a word that describes a lot of things put together to make this idea. You're sitting on a chair. What is a chair? Where is the chair? Is it the seat? Is it the back? Is it the arms? Is it the legs?

Where is the chair? Chair is a concept. Now when you see everything as being personal: this is me; this is mine; this is who I am, then, you're not looking deeply at how things arise. You're not seeing clearly because you're thinking in the concepts. When you let go of the craving, let go of that tension and tightness and relax, and smile, now your mind starts to see the individual pieces. And you see that everything in fact is impersonal. And this is a major insight. It's not a minor one. This is very major. So every time you let go of craving, you start to see how concepts start breaking down, little by little by little by little. Now the whole point with the sense doors and taking delight in them, it is our choice to do that. We start looking outside of ourselves and start identifying with these concepts, and these opinions, and these ideas, we keep on robbing onto these ideas, then there is going to be suffering because we've delighted in it. We have to let go of everything. How do you let go of everything? It doesn't mean you stop things from coming up, because you can't do that. You let go of everything by allowing the space for that to be there, but not keeping your attention on it, and relaxing into that, and smiling into that, and then bringing that feeling back to your object of meditation 18:44 This is a relaxed. This is a flow. As you're flowing, then the six Rs is recognize, release, relax, smile, come back to your object of meditation, and it gets to be a flow. You have to be careful of the amount of energy that you're using while you're doing the six Rs too.

So when Punṇa went to this country and he started teaching people, again we have the number five hundred coming up, which just basically means he had a lot of students. And he was teaching men and women equally. There's no difference between men and women when it comes to Dhamma, when it comes to the Teaching. There is a difference between men and women. There really is. Women think about men. Men think about women. That's the difference. And I get in real trouble saying that in San Francisco because there's so many gay people. (laughs) Anyway. Our mind works in exactly the same way. So the teaching is asexual. Doesn't have anything to do with sexual differences because, where is the man and women in the eye, seeing color and form, and contact arises, and contact arises, and with contact as condition, feeling arises, with feeling as condition,

craving arises, with craving as condition clinging arises, where's the man or woman in there?

TT: 19:54

Now when he was talking about: "he realized the three true knowledges", now this is the kind of practice that the Buddha did. He got to the fourth jhāna. That's the kick off point. Then he started remembering past life times. As he remembered past life times and worked with that, then eventually his mind took another step deeper, and he was able to see beings in all of the different realms, in the heavenly realms and the hell realms, the ghost realms, the human realm, the deva lokas, the Brahmin loka. He's able to see all of those, and see the arising and passing away of beings in these realms. Now what's the advantage of that? Your understanding of how karma actually works becomes unshakable. Your understanding of how concepts arise becomes very clear and you stop identifying with them. You stop taking them personally. Now the last true knowledge is seeing dependent origination, and you can see that in all of the different past meditation's experiences that you've had, remembering how karma works, and seeing your past lifetimes makes a lot of sense for you now, and seeing other beings in other realms, they're going through their changes, you can see dependent origination and karma in their existence. And it is such a big strong realization that your mind stops for a moment, in the cessation of perception and feeling. When it comes back, you see the dependent origination very clearly, and obtain nibbāna.

Now, there are three ways of obtaining nibbāna, three, I guess you could call them paths or types of meditation. What I generally like to teach people is going through all of the rūpa jhānas, going through the arūpa jhānas, just like Sāriputta did. There are some people that are very sensitive to feeling. And because they're very sensitive to feeling, they develop certain abilities, reading minds, using the divine eye, using the divine ear, things like that, flying in the air, walking through walls, all of those kind of things. I have some students that have those abilities to do that. It's not for everyone. It depends on you and your sensitivity to feeling. But eventually they get to a place

where they're seeing dependent origination, and then there's the cessation of perception and feeling and then seeing the dependent origination and nibbāna. Now of these three ways, the fastest way to obtain nibbāna is the way the Buddha did it, by seeing past life times, seeing the passing away and arising of beings in the different realms, seeing dependent origination in everything and nibbāna. I call that the fast track because it really doesn't take very long. But I prefer teaching the rūpa and arūpa jhānas, because your insights are very deep and profound. Not that they aren't with any other kind of meditation that the Buddha taught, they certainly are, but for this time and place, this seems to be the most appropriate. Well I've taught enough of a lot of people how to remember their past life times, and they'll do it for a little while and quit. They don't keep going on. And then they say: "Well ok. Now I've done that. Now I'll go back to the rūpa and arūpa jhānas. They don't see the need to remember past life times, and it's too bad because there is very deep insights in it. But it's up to them. If they want me to guide them one way, I'll guide them that way. If they want me to guide them another way, I'll guide them another way, as long as they stay on the path that the Buddha taught. During the time of the Buddha, the most popular way of obtaining nibbāna was with the tevijjas, three knowledges. And I think it was probably most popular because that's the way the Buddha did it, and everybody wanted to do it the way the Buddha did it because it seemed to work the best that way.

TT: 25:31

So, that is what the Buddha said. This particular sutta is not very long, because Puṇṇa asked just to be taught in brief. Because he already understood an awful lot. He'd done a lot of meditation on his own. He listened to the Buddha talk a lot. He wanted the Buddha to tell him the things that are most important for him when he's going out to another place, and how to handle these other people. That's why he asked that whole series of questions.

Ok. Any questions?

Then 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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