

Tranquillity and Insight in Early Buddhist Discourse

by Bhikkhu Anālayo

lecture 8

MA 77 – Discourse on Three Clansmen at Sāketa (Parallel to MN 68/ MN I 462)

The Blessed One asked: "Anuruddha, for what reason does the Tathāgata declare of disciples who have died that So-and-so has been reborn in a such-and-such a place, and So-and-so has been reborn in such-and-such a place.

"... Anuruddha, the Tathāgata does not say this in order to amuse people. It is not in order to deceive people, or out of a wish to make people happy, that he declares of disciples who have died that So-and-so has been reborn in a such-and-such a place, and So-and-so has been reborn in such-and-such a place.

"Anuruddha, the Tathāgata does it just so that pure and faithful clansmen and clanswomen, who have great faith, great devotion, may develop great delight; and so that on hearing this true Dharma and discipline, they might wish to follow those examples thus and thus. It is for this reason that the Tathāgata declares of disciples who have died that So-and-so has been reborn in a such-and-such a place, and So-and-so has been reborn in such-and-such a place.

"A monk may hear that the venerable So-and-so has died at such-and-such a place and that the Buddha has declared that [the deceased] had attained final knowledge, knowing as it really is: 'Birth is ended, the holy life has been established, what was to be done has been done, there will not be another existence.' Either he may have himself seen that venerable one, or he may have frequently heard others say:

"That venerable one had faith thus, adhered to the precepts thus, had much learning thus, practiced kindness and generosity thus, had wisdom thus.' Having heard that, this person recollects the faith of that venerable one, his adherence to the precepts, his much learning, his kindness and generosity, his wisdom. Having heard this true Dharma and discipline, that monk may aspire to follow this example thus and thus. Anuruddha, in this way he will certainly attain some level of distinction and peacefully abide in it.

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(same for non-return, once return and stream-entry)

(then same for a nun in relation to four levels of awakening)

(then same for male lay follower and female lay follower in relation to non-return, once-return and stream-entry, last of which reads as follows:)

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"Again, Anuruddha, a female lay disciple may hear that the female lay disciple So-and-so has died at such-and-such a place and that the Buddha has declared that she had eradicated three fetters and attained stream-entry; that without falling into evil states, she will certainly proceed towards right awakening; after experiencing at most seven existences, being reborn seven times among gods and human beings, she will attain the ending of *dukkha*.

"Either she may have herself seen that female lay disciple, or she may have frequently heard others say:

"That female lay disciple had faith thus, adhered to the precepts thus, had much learning thus, practiced kindness and generosity thus, had wisdom thus.'

"Having heard that, this person recollects the faith of that female lay disciple, her adherence to the precepts, her much learning, her

kindness and generosity, her wisdom. Having heard this true Dharma and discipline, that female lay disciple may aspire to follow this example thus and thus. Anuruddha, in this way she will certainly attain some level of distinction and peacefully abide in it.

"Anuruddha, for this reason the Tathāgata declares of disciples who have died that some are reborn in a such-and-such a place, some [others] are reborn in such-and-such a place."

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main points:

- importance of joy and delight in the spiritual life
- restraint and seclusion are of continued relevance
- the function of inspiration by hearing about the accomplishments of others

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MA 78 – Discourse on Brahmā's Invitation to the Buddha

(Parallel to MN 49/ MN I 326)

At that time there was a certain Brahmā dwelling in the Brahmā world, who had given rise to this wrong view: 'This realm is permanent; this realm is everlasting; this realm endures forever; this realm is the essence; this realm is of an unending nature. This realm is release; there is no other release superior to this release. This is the supreme, the sublime, the ultimate.'

Then, the Blessed One, who with his knowledge of other minds had come to know the thoughts in the mind of that Brahmā, entered a certain concentrated state. Through this concentrated state, just as a strong man might bend and stretch out his arm, he disappeared from Jeta's grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's park at Sāvatthī and appeared in the Brahmā world.

At that time, on seeing the Blessed One arrive, that Brahmā invited the Blessed One: "Welcome, Great Seer! This realm is permanent; this realm is everlasting; this realm endures forever; this realm is the essence; this realm is of an unending nature. This realm is release; there is no other release superior to this release. This is the supreme, the sublime, the ultimate."

Then the Blessed One said: "Brahmā, you are praising as permanent what is impermanent; you are praising as everlasting what is not everlasting; you are praising as enduring what is not enduring; you are praising as the essence what is not the essence; you are praising as having an unending nature what is of a nature to end. You are praising as release what is not release, [claiming] that there is no other release superior to this release, that this is the superb, the sublime, the ultimate. Brahmā, this is ignorance on your part. Brahmā, this is ignorance on your part."

At that time, Māra the Evil One was among that assembly. Then, Māra the Evil One said to the Blessed One: "Monk, do not contradict what this Brahmā says! Do not oppose what this Brahmā says! ...

"Great Seer, if a renunciant or brahmin detests [the element] earth and disparages earth ... water ... fire ... air ... spirits ... gods ... Pajāpati ... if he detests Brahmā and disparages Brahmā, then on the breaking up of the body at death he will certainly be reborn among the lowliest nymphs.

"Great Seer, if a renunciant or brahmin delights in earth and praises earth ... water ... fire ... air ... spirits ... gods ... Pajāpati ... if he delights in Brahmā and praises Brahmā, then on the breaking up of the body at death he will certainly be reborn among the highest and most venerated Brahmās ...

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(the Buddha realizes that this is Māra; Brahmā repeats his claims; the Buddha points out that he knows more than Brahmā)

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Then the Brahmā said to the Blessed One: "Great Seer, how is it that ... whatever knowledge and vision I possess, you too possess this knowledge and vision; whatever knowledge and vision I do not possess, you yourself possess that knowledge and vision; whatever knowledge and vision I and my retinue possess, you too possess that knowledge and vision; and whatever knowledge and vision I and my retinue do not possess, you yourself possess that knowledge and vision?

"Great Seer, are you not saying this out of desire? On being cross-questioned you will not know [how to reply] and become ever more confused ...

[The Brahmā said]: "Great Seer, I now wish to make myself disappear."

The Blessed One said: "Brahmā, if you wish to make yourself disappear, then do as you wish."

Then, wherever Brahmā tried to make himself disappear, the Blessed One immediately knew: 'Brahmā, you are over there. You are here. You are in between.'

Then the Brahmā did all he could to manifest his supernormal power. He wished to make himself disappear, but was unable to disappear. He returned, remaining within the Brahmā realm.

Then the Blessed One said: "Brahmā, now I too wish to make myself disappear."

The Brahmā said to the Blessed One: "Great Seer, if you wish to make yourself disappear, do as you wish."

Then the Blessed One had this thought: "Let me now manifest supernormal power such that I send forth an extremely bright light, illuminating the entire domain of Brahmā while remaining invisible myself, so that Brahmā and his retinue will only hear my voice and not see my appearance.'

Then the Blessed One manifested supernormal power such that he sent forth an extremely bright light, illuminating the entire Brahmā world while remaining invisible himself, so that Brahmā and his retinue only heard his voice and did not see his appearance.

Then Brahmā and everyone in Brahmā's retinue had this thought: "The renunciant Gotama is most wonderful, most remarkable, he has great supernormal power, great and mighty virtue, great merit, great divine might. Why? He has sent forth an extremely bright light, illuminating the entire Brahmā world while remaining invisible himself, so that I and my retinue only hear his voice and do not see his appearance."

... then the Blessed One withdrew his supernormal power and returned to remain within the Brahmā world ... at that time King Māra said to the Blessed One: "Great Seer, you see well, you know well, you realize well. But do not teach and instruct disciples, and do not teach the Dharma to disciples! "Do not become attached to [having] disciples ...

Then the Blessed One said: "Māra, Evil One, it is not because you seek benefit, seek welfare, seek happiness, seek ease for me, that you tell me: ' Do not teach and instruct disciples and do not teach the Dharma to disciples. Do not become attached to [having] disciples ...

"Māra, Evil One, you have this thought: 'This renunciant Gotama will teach the Dharma to disciples. Having heard the Dharma, the disciples will get out of my domain'. Māra, Evil One, it is for this reason that you tell me: 'Do not teach and instruct disciples and do not teach the Dharma to disciples ...

Māra, Evil One, as to whether I do or do not teach the Dharma to disciples – you just keep out of that! I now know for myself when it is proper to teach the Dharma to disciples and when it is not proper to teach the Dharma to disciples."

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main point:

- liberating insight is superior to absorption and to rebirth in the corresponding heavenly realms

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MA 79 – Discourse on the Existence of Higher Gods

(Parallel to MN 127/ MN III 144)

"Venerable Anuruddha, [regarding] 'expansive liberation of mind' and 'immeasurable liberation of mind,' do these two liberations differ in both wording and meaning? Or do they differ only in wording, while having the same meaning?"

The venerable Anuruddha said: "Chamberlain, as to this question you have just asked, first answer it yourself; after that I shall answer."

The chamberlain Isidatta said: "Venerable Anuruddha, [regarding] 'expansive (*mahaggata*) liberation of mind' and 'immeasurable (*appamāṇa*) liberation of mind,' [I think] that these two liberations differ only in wording, while having the same meaning."

[Thus] the chamberlain Isidatta was not able to answer the question [properly].

The venerable Anuruddha said: "Chamberlain, listen while I explain to you what is 'expansive liberation of mind' and what is 'immeasurable liberation of mind.'

"Regarding 'expansive liberation of mind,' suppose that a renunciant or brahmin, staying in a forest area, goes to the base of a tree in an empty quiet place. Dwelling in dependence on this one tree, he achieves, through mental resolve, pervasion [of the area beneath the tree] with his expansive liberation of mind. His liberation of mind has this limit and does not go beyond it.

"Suppose that, dwelling in dependence on not [just] one tree but two or three trees ... a forest ... two or three forests ... a village ... two or three villages ... a country ... two or three countries ... this whole great earth, as far as the great ocean, he achieves, through mental resolve, pervasion [of that vast area] with his expansive liberation of mind. [Yet] his liberation of mind has this limit and does not go beyond it. This is what is meant by 'expansive liberation of mind.'

"Chamberlain, what is 'immeasurable liberation of mind'? Suppose that a renunciant or brahmin, staying in a forest area, goes to the base of a tree in an empty quiet place. He dwells with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, pervading one direction, likewise the second, the third, and the fourth direction, and also the four intermediate directions, above, and below, all around, everywhere. He dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, without fetters or resentment, without ill-will or contention, [a mind] that is boundless, exalted, immeasurable, and well cultivated

"... he dwells with a mind imbued with compassion ... with empathic joy ... with equanimity ... this is what is meant by 'immeasurable liberation of mind.'

"This expansive liberation of mind and this immeasurable liberation of mind – do these two liberations differ in both wording and meaning or do they differ only in wording while having the same meaning?"

The chamberlain Isidatta said to the venerable Anuruddha: "As I have [just now] heard it from the venerable Anuruddha and consequently understood the meaning of it, these two liberations differ in wording and also in meaning."

The venerable Anuruddha said: "Chamberlain, there are [these] three classes of gods: the gods of Radiance, the gods of Pure Radiance, and the gods of Pervasive Pure Radiance.

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in MN 127 the discussion is about four types of *devas*:

- limited radiance,
- boundless radiance,
- defiled radiance,
- pure radiance

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MA 79

"Of these the gods of Radiance are born in one [particular] realm. They do not have the thought: 'This belongs to me, that belongs to me'; instead, wherever these gods of Radiance go, they delight in that place.

Chamberlain, it is just as a fly on a piece of meat does not have the thought: 'This belongs to me, that belongs to me; instead, wherever that fly goes on the piece of meat, it delights in that place. In the same way, the gods of Radiance do not have the thought: 'This belongs to me, that belongs to me; instead, wherever these gods of radiance go, they delight in that place.

"There are times when the gods of Radiance assemble in one place. Then, although their bodies are different, their light is the same.

Chamberlain, it is just as when a person lights numerous lamps and places them in one room; although those lamps are different, their light is the same. In the same way, when the gods of Radiance assemble in one place, then, although their bodies are different, their light is the same.

"There are times when the gods of Radiance separate from one another. When they are separate from one another, their bodies are different and their light is also different. Chamberlain, it is just as when a person takes numerous lamps from one room and places them separately in many different rooms; those lamps are different and their light is also different ...

Then the venerable Kaccāna the Real said: "Venerable Anuruddha, regarding those gods of Radiance that are born in the one realm, can one know their relative superiority, their degrees of subtlety?"

... the venerable Anuruddha replied: "Venerable Kaccāna, suppose that a renunciant or brahmin, staying in a forest area, goes to the base of a tree in an empty quiet place. Dwelling in dependence on this one tree, he achieves, through mental resolve, perception [of the area beneath the tree] with [mentally produced] light. His perception with mentally produced light is extremely abundant. [Yet] his liberation of mind has this limit and does not go beyond it.

"Suppose that, dwelling in dependence on not [just] one tree but two or three trees ... a forest ... this whole great earth, as far as the great ocean, a renunciant or a brahmin achieves, through mental resolve, perception [of this vast area] with [mentally produced] light. His perception with mentally produced light is extremely abundant. [Yet] his liberation of mind has this limit and does not go beyond it ... this is the cause, this is the reason why, regarding those gods of Radiance that are born in the one realm, one can know their relative superiority, their degrees of subtlety. Why? It is due to the relative superiority of their minds when they were human beings. In their development there were degrees of fineness or crudeness. Because of the degrees

of fineness or crudeness in their development, human beings have degrees of superiority."

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(this is followed by a similar question and answer exchange for gods of Pure Radiance and gods of Pervasive Pure Radiance)

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main points:

- difference between liberation of the mind that is immeasurable, and liberation of the mind that is expansive
- differences in concentration lead to differences in rebirth

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MA 80 – Discourse on Cloth for Robes

(no parallel)

Then the Blessed One spread out the cloth and cut it to size for the venerable Anuruddha. The monks together cut it into pieces, stitched them together, and sewed it up. In a single day they completed three robes for the venerable Anuruddha.

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(the Buddha then asks Anuruddha to give a talk)

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At that time, the venerable Anuruddha addressed the monks: "Venerable friends, when I had not yet gone forth to train in the path, I had [already] become weary of birth, old age, disease, death, sorrow and distress, weeping and lamentation, and aspired to abandon this great mass of *dukkha*. Venerable friends, having

become weary, I had this contemplation: 'The household life is confined, a dusty place; going forth to train in the path is [like] emerging into a vast open space.

"Now for me at home, chained with [such] chains, it is not possible to completely devote my life to the practice of the holy life. Let me forsake [my] wealth, little or much, forsake [my] relatives, few or many, shave off beard and hair, don the yellow robe and, out of faith, leave the home life, and become homeless to train in the path.'

"... Venerable friends, having gone forth to train in the path, having forsaken the family life, I received the training of monkhood. I practiced the precepts, upholding the code of rules. I also carefully maintained proper conduct and etiquette, always fearing the slightest fault, upholding the training in the precepts.

"Venerable friends, I abstained from killing ... from taking what was not given ... from sexual activity ... from false speech ... from divisive speech ... from harsh speech ... from frivolous speech ...

... from eating after noon, having abandoned eating after noon. I took a single meal [each day], not eating at night, training in eating [only] at the [proper] time. I purified my mind with regard to eating after noon.

"Venerable friends, having accomplished this noble aggregate of virtue, I further trained in supreme contentment, taking robes [just] to cover the body, taking food [just] to sustain the physical body. I took [just] robes and bowl with me, without concern or longing.

"Just as a wild goose flies through the air with [only] its two wings, venerable friends, I was like that, wherever I went, taking [just] robes and bowl with me, without concern or longing.

"Venerable friends, having accomplished this noble aggregate of virtue and this supreme contentment, I further trained in guarding the senses. Always mindful of stopping thoughts of desire, with clear

understanding, successfully guarding the mind through mindfulness, I constantly aroused right attentiveness. On seeing a form with the eye I did not grasp its appearance nor did I savor the form. That is to say, in order to [avoid] conflict I guarded the eye faculty so that no covetousness or sorrow, evil and unwholesome states, would arise in the mind. To that end I guarded the eye faculty.

"In the same way, on [hearing a sound] with the ear ... [smelling an odor] with the nose ... [tasting a flavor] with the tongue ... [experiencing a touch] with the body ... coming to know a mental object with the mind ...

"Venerable friends, having accomplished this noble aggregate of virtue, this supreme contentment, and this guarding of the senses, I further trained in right attentiveness when going out or coming in, contemplating and distinguishing well when bending or stretching [my limbs], when lowering or raising [my head]; with orderly manners and appearance, I properly carried the outer robe, the other robes, and the bowl; when walking, standing, sitting, and reclining, when going to sleep or waking up, when speaking or keeping silent, always I had right attentiveness.

"Venerable friends, having accomplished this noble aggregate of virtue, this supreme contentment, this guarding of the senses, and this right attentiveness when going out or coming in, I further trained in dwelling alone and in seclusion. I stayed in a forest area, or at the base of a tree in an empty peaceful place, in a mountain cave, on a heap of straw in an open place, in the midst of a forest, or in a cemetery.

"Venerable friends, staying in a forest, or having gone to the foot of a tree in an empty peaceful place, I spread out my sitting mat and sat down cross-legged with body erect. With right mental aspiration and undivided mindfulness, I abandoned and removed covetousness ... ill-will ... sloth-and-torpor ... restlessness-and-worry ... doubt, overcoming delusion, becoming free from vacillation in regard to wholesome states. I purified my mind with regard to doubt.

"Venerable friends, when I had abandoned these five hindrances, which are blemishes of the mind that weaken wisdom, separated from desires, separated from evil and unwholesome states ... (*up to*) ... I dwelt having attained the fourth absorption.

"Venerable friends, having thus attained concentration, with a mind purified and without blemish or affliction, soft and supple, well steadied, a mind that had attained immovability, I trained in the realization of supernormal powers.

"Venerable friends, I attained immeasurable supernormal powers ... the supernormal knowledge of the divine ear ... the supernormal knowledge of other minds ... the supernormal knowledge of recollection of past lives ... the supernormal knowledge of birth and death ...

"Venerable friends, having thus attained concentration, with a mind purified and without blemish or affliction, soft and supple, well steadied, a mind that had attained immovability, I trained in and realized the supernormal knowledge of destruction of the influxes.

"Venerable friends, I knew *dukkha* as it really is, knew the arising of *dukkha*, knew the cessation of *dukkha*, and knew the path to the cessation of *dukkha* as it really is.

"I knew the influxes as they really are, knew the arising of the influxes, knew the cessation of the influxes, and knew the path to the cessation of the influxes as it really is.

"Knowing thus, seeing thus, my mind was liberated from the influx of sensual desire, from the influx of existence, and from the influx of ignorance. It being liberated, I knew it was liberated. I understood as it really is: 'Birth is ended; the holy life has been established; what was to be done has been done; there will not be another existence.'

"Venerable friends, if a monk transgresses against the precepts, breaks the precepts, falls short of the precepts, violates the precepts, defiles the precepts, blackens the precepts; and if he wishes, relying on the precepts, established in the precepts, using the precepts as his ladder, to ascend to the hall of unsurpassable wisdom, to the pavilion of the true Dharma, that is not possible.

"Venerable friends, it is as if, not far from a village, there were a viewing tower surmounted by a pavilion, and inside the tower a ladder had been set up which had ten or twelve rungs. If a man comes along wanting to ascend to that pavilion, then if he does not mount the first rung of the ladder, desiring instead to [directly] mount the second rung, that is not possible. If he does not mount the second rung of the ladder, desiring instead to [directly] mount the third or fourth rung to ascend to the pavilion, then that too is not possible ...

"Venerable friends, relying on the precepts, established in the precepts, using the precepts as my ladder, I ascended to the hall of unsurpassable wisdom, to the pavilion of the true Dharma and, with little effort, I observed the thousand worlds.

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(The Buddha gets up and praises Anuruddha)

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main point:

- gradual path of training sets context for meditation practice