

THE LONG DISCOURSE GIVING ADVICE TO RAHULA



The Long Discourse Giving

Advice to Rāhula

(Mahārāhulovādasuttamī, MN 62)

Translated by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu

(revised edition, November, 2008)

1: Being Advised

1a: Receiving Good Advice

Thus I heard:

at one time the Gracious One was dwelling near Sāvattḥī at Anāthapiṇḍika's grounds in Jeta's Wood. Then the Gracious One, having dressed in the morning time, after picking up his bowl and robe, was entering Sāvattḥī for alms.

Also venerable Rāhula, having dressed in the morning time, after picking up his bowl and robe, followed along close behind the Gracious One.

Then the Gracious One, looking back, addressed venerable Rāhula, saying: "Whatever form there is, Rāhula, past, future, or present, inside or outside, gross or subtle,

base or excellent, whether far or near, (in regard to) all form: "This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self," like this it ought to be seen as it really is, with right wisdom."

"Only form, Gracious One? Only form, Fortunate One?"

"Form, Rāhula - and feelings, Rāhula - and perceptions, Rāhula - and (mental) processes, Rāhula - and consciousness, Rāhula."

1b: Receiving Further Advice

Then venerable Rāhula thought: “Who today, when the Gracious One has advised him with (such) advice to his face, could enter a village for alms?”

Therefore having turned back he sat down at the root of a certain tree. After folding his legs crosswise, and setting his body straight, he established mindfulness at the front.

Venerable Sāriputta saw that venerable Rāhula was sitting down at the root of a certain tree, and had folded his legs crosswise, set his body straight, and established mindfulness at the front, and having seen him, he addressed venerable Rāhula, saying: “Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is mindfulness while breathing. Mindfulness while breathing, Rāhula, when it has been developed and made much of yields great fruit and brings great advantages.”

Then venerable Rāhula rising from seclusion in the evening time approached the Gracious One, and after approaching and worshipping the Gracious One, he sat down on one side.

While sitting on one side, venerable Rāhula said this to the Gracious One: “How, reverend Sir, does mindfulness while breathing when it has been developed and made much of yield great fruit, bring great advantages?”

2: The elements, first meditation¹

2a: Earth is Not Self

“Whatever there is, Rāhula, that is inside, in oneself, that is hard or has become solid, and is attached to, like this:

head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin,
flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys,
heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs,
intestines, mesentery, undigested food, excrement -

or whatever else there is that is inside, in oneself, that is hard, or has become solid, and is attached to, that, Rāhula, is called the internal earth element. Now, that which is the internal earth element, and that which is the external earth element, that is only the earth element. “This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self,” like this it ought

¹ Here the meditation on the elements is worked out in detail. Commenting on the meditation as given in brief in Mahāsatipatṭhānasuttaṃ (D. 22), Visuddhimagga (11. 30) says: *Just as a cow-butcher while fattening a cow, bringing it to the slaughter-house, binding it up and making it stand there; then slaying it and seeing it slain and dead, still doesn't lose the idea: 'this is a cow' so long as he has not torn it apart and dismembered it. But after dismembering it, while sitting there, he loses the idea of 'cow', and the idea of 'meat' occurs, and he doesn't think: 'I am selling a cow, this is cow they are carrying off', rather he thinks 'I am selling meat, this is meat they are carrying off'. So too, a monk...does not lose the idea 'this is a being, this is a person, this is an individual', so long as he does not review this body...and classify what is (otherwise) dense into the elements. But after reviewing the elements he loses the idea 'this is a being (etc.)' and on account of the elements he settles his mind.*

to be seen, as it really is, with right wisdom. Having seen it like this, as it really is, with right wisdom, one loses interest in the earth element, one detaches the mind from the earth element.

2b: Water is Not Self

And what, Rāhula, is the water-element? The water element may be internal or may be external. And what, Rāhula, is the internal water element? That which is inside, in oneself, that is water, or has become watery, and is attached to, like this:

bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, oil,
tears, grease, spit, mucus, synovial fluid, urine -

or whatever else there is that is inside, in oneself, that is water, or has become watery, and is attached to, that, Rāhula, is called the internal water element. Now, that which is the internal water element, and that which is the external water element, that is only the water element. “This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self,” like this it ought to be seen, as it really is, with right wisdom. Having seen it like this, as it really is, with right wisdom, one loses interest in the water element, one detaches the mind from the water element.

2c: Fire is Not Self

And what, Rāhula, is the fire element? The fire element may be internal or may be external. And what, Rāhula, is the internal fire element? That which is inside, in oneself, that is fire, or has become fiery, and is attached to, like this:

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that by which one is heated, by which one grows old, by which one is burned up,

by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed, and tasted, gets completely digested -

or whatever else there is that is inside, in oneself, that is fire, or has become fiery, and is attached to, that, Rāhula, is called the internal fire element. Now, that which is the internal fire element, and that which is the external fire element, that is only the fire element. “This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self,” like this it ought to be seen, as it really is, with right wisdom. Having seen it like this, as it really is, with right wisdom, one loses interest in the fire element, one detaches the mind from the fire element.

2d: Wind is Not Self

And what, Rāhula, is the wind element? The wind element may be internal or may be external. And what, Rāhula, is the internal wind element? That which is inside, in oneself, that is wind, or has become windy, and is attached to, like this:

winds that go up, winds that go down, winds in the bowels,

winds in the belly, winds that go through the limbs, in-breath, out-breath -

or whatever else there is that is inside, in oneself, that is wind, or has become windy, and is attached to, that, Rāhula, is called the internal wind element. Now, that which is the internal wind element, and that which is the external wind element, that is only the wind element. “This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self,” like this it ought

to be seen, as it really is, with right wisdom. Having seen it like this, as it really is, with right wisdom, one loses interest in the wind element, one detaches the mind from the wind element.

2e: Space is Not Self¹

And what, Rāhula, is the space element? The space element may be internal or may be external. And what, Rāhula, is the internal space element? That which is inside that is space, or has become spacy, and is attached to, like this:

ear-holes, nose-holes, the door of the mouth,

and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed, and tasted is swallowed,

that place where what is eaten, drunk, chewed, and tasted settles,

and the lower part by which that which is eaten, drunk, chewed, and tasted goes out -

or whatever else there is that is inside, in oneself, that is space, or has become spacy, and is attached to, that, Rāhula, is called the internal

¹ Sometimes this meditation is given in regard to 4 elements only (e.g. M 28). But here the space element (*ākāśadhātu*) is also included. Elsewhere these 5 plus consciousness (*viññāṇa*) are combined (e.g. M 140). The renderings that have been adopted here are largely determined by the need for coherence in regard to the two meditations on the elements that are taught in this discourse. It should be remembered though that the first four elements also represent qualities which Visuddhimagga (11. 39) defines like this: *the characteristic mark of the earth element is firmness (thaddha)...of water is bonding (ābandhana)...of fire is maturing (paripācana)...and of wind is supporting (vitthambana)*.

space element. Now, that which is the internal space element, and that which is the external space element, that is only the space element. “This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self,” like this it ought to be seen, as it really is, with right wisdom. Having seen it like this, as it really is, with right wisdom, one loses interest in the space element, one detaches the mind from the space element.

3: The Elements, second meditation

3a: Being Even as the Earth

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is to be even as the earth,¹ for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as the earth, appealing and unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

¹ *Develop the meditation - bhāvanam bhāvehi*, could be more literally rendered as *develop the development* if it wasn't so unidiomatic. Fortunately *meditation* has a broad range of meanings in English, sufficient to adequately cover the usage in the Pāḷi but it is as well to bear in mind the more literal meaning in the original. *Even as the earth - paṭhavīsamaṃ*, - there is evidently a pun intended in the Pāḷi here on *-sama*, which may mean *similar to* or *the same as* on the one hand; and *calm* or *peaceful* on the other. The present translation is an attempt to maintain the same ambiguity in the English. If we took the liberty to translate the word twice we could give it as: *develop the meditation that is to be peaceful just as the earth is...* With this advice on meditation cf. the similar instruction given in Kakacūpamasuttam M. 21.

Just as, Rāhula, they throw what is clean on the earth, and they throw what is unclean, and they throw what has become dung, and they throw what has become urine, and they throw what has become spit, and they throw what has become pus, and they throw what has become blood,¹ but the earth is not distressed, or ashamed, or disgusted by it, just so do you, Rāhula, develop the meditation that is to be even as the earth, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as the earth appealing and unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

3b: Being Even as the Water

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is to be even as water, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as water, appealing and unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

Just as, Rāhula, they wash away what is clean in the water, and they wash away what is unclean, and they wash away what has become dung, and they wash away what has become urine, and they wash

¹ *What has become dung...urine...spit...pus...blood - gūhagataṃ... muttagataṃ... khelagataṃ... pubbagataṃ... lohītagataṃ...* (see also *kharigataṃ, āpogataṃ, tejogataṃ, vāyogataṃ, and ākāśagataṃ* in the first of the meditations above). The translation here sounds rather literal, but it's hard to avoid, as all the words in question are in common use without the affix *-gataṃ*, and we must presume that it's use is intended to add meaning to the words and not simply be synonymous with them.

away what has become spit, and they wash away what has become pus, and they wash away what has become blood, but the water is not distressed, or ashamed, or disgusted by it, just so do you, Rāhula, develop the meditation that is to be even as water, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as water appealing and unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

3c: Being Even as Fire

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is to be even as fire, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as fire, appealing and unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

Just as, Rāhula, they burn what is clean in fire, and they burn what is unclean, and they burn what has become dung, and they burn what has become urine, and they burn what has become spit, and they burn what has become pus, and they burn what has become blood, but the fire is not distressed, or ashamed, or disgusted by it, just so do you, Rāhula, develop the meditation that is to be even as fire, or, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as fire appealing and unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

3d: Being Even as the Wind

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is to be even as the wind, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as the wind, appealing and unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

Just as, Rāhula, the wind blows over what is clean, and it blows over what is unclean, and it blows over what has become dung, and it blows over what has become urine, and it blows over what has become spit, and it blows over what has become pus, and it blows over what has become blood, but the wind is not distressed, or ashamed, or disgusted by it, just so do you, Rāhula, develop the meditation that is to be even as the wind, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as the wind appealing and unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

3e: Being Even as Space

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is to be even as space, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as space, appealing and unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

Just as, Rāhula, space doesn't settle anywhere, just so do you, Rāhula, develop the meditation that is to be even as space, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is to be even as space, appealing and

unappealing contacts that have arisen in the mind will not take a hold there.

4: Six Further Meditations

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is friendliness, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is friendliness ¹whatever ill-will there is will be given up.

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is kindness, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is kindness whatever violence there is will be given up.

¹ The first four meditations given in this section constitute what are collectively known as the *spiritual moods* (*brahmavihāra*), or the *measureless states* (*appamañña*). The teaching given here is also confirmed in a discourse by Ven Sāriputta (D. 33), where he says: *It is impossible, friend, it cannot happen, that when the freedom of mind (cetovimutti) that is friendliness has been developed...that ill-will can take hold of the mind - that surely will not be, for this is the escape from ill-will, namely, the freedom of mind that is friendliness.* The discourse continues in the same way in regard to compassion & violence, and gladness & discontent. There, however, equanimity (*upekkhā*) is said to overcome passion, not resentment as here. It is possible that this reflects a change in the meaning of the word *upekkhā*. In the Buddhist tradition there is unanimity, it seems, on the meaning of *upekkhā* as equanimity, literally: *on-looking*, from prefix *upa on* + √ *ikkha look*. However, *upa* also has the meaning of *over*, and in this sense we then get the meaning *over-looking*, or as we might say, *forgiveness*, which seems to be a better antonym to resentment, and more coherent with the other three moods.

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Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is gladness, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is gladness whatever discontent there is will be given up.

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is equanimity, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is equanimity whatever resentment there is will be given up.

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, on the unattractive, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation on the unattractive whatever passion there is will be given up.¹

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is the perception of impermanence, for, Rāhula, from developing the meditation that is the perception of impermanence whatever (kind of) 'I am' conceit there is will be given up.²

¹ The meditation on the unattractive (*asubha*) here is said by the commentary to refer to what are known as the charnel-ground (*sīvathīka*) meditations. In Visuddhimagga 10 kinds of corpse in various stages of decay are described for contemplation, which only partially coincides with the same contemplation as given in the discourses (cf. M. 10 etc.).

² cf. Saṃ 22. 49: *those who, in regard to form, which is an impermanent, suffering, and changeable thing, do not look on it, thinking 'I am better', 'I am the same', or 'I am lower', they see things as they really are...* (the same is then said in regard to feelings, perceptions, (mental) processes, and consciousness).

5: Mindfulness while Breathing

5a: Preliminaries

Develop the meditation, Rāhula, that is mindfulness while breathing, mindfulness while breathing, Rāhula, when developed and made much of yields great fruit, brings great advantages. And how, Rāhula, does mindfulness while breathing when it has been developed and made much of yield great fruit and bring great advantages?

Here, Rāhula, a monk who has gone to the wilderness, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down. After folding his legs crosswise, setting his body straight, and establishing mindfulness at the front, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.

5b: Mindfulness of the Body

While breathing in long, he knows “I am breathing in long”, while breathing out long, he knows “I am breathing out long”, while breathing in short, he knows “I am breathing in short”, while breathing out short, he knows “I am breathing out short”, he trains like this: experiencing the whole body I will breathe in, he trains like this: experiencing the whole body I will breathe out, he trains like this: making the bodily process calm I will breathe in, he trains like this: making the bodily process calm I will breathe out.

5c: Mindfulness of Feelings

He trains like this: experiencing happiness I will breathe in,
he trains like this: experiencing happiness I will breathe out,
he trains like this: experiencing pleasure I will breathe in,
he trains like this: experiencing pleasure I will breathe out,
he trains like this: experiencing the mental process I will breathe in,
he trains like this: experiencing the mental process I will breathe out,
he trains like this: making the mental process calm I will breathe in,
he trains like this: making the mental process calm I will breathe out.

5d: Mindfulness of the Mind

He trains like this: experiencing the mind I will breathe in,
he trains like this: experiencing the mind I will breathe out,
he trains like this: gladdening the mind I will breathe in,
he trains like this: gladdening the mind I will breathe out,
he trains like this: concentrating the mind I will breathe in,
he trains like this: concentrating the mind I will breathe out,
he trains like this: freeing the mind I will breathe in,
he trains like this: freeing the mind I will breathe out.

5e: Mindfulness of (the Nature of) Things

He trains like this: contemplating impermanence I will breathe in,
he trains like this: contemplating impermanence I will breathe out,
he trains like this: contemplating dispassion I will breathe in,
he trains like this: contemplating dispassion I will breathe out,
he trains like this: contemplating cessation I will breathe in,

he trains like this: contemplating cessation I will breathe out,
he trains like this: contemplating letting go I will breathe in,
he trains like this: contemplating letting go I will breathe out.

The Conclusion

In this way, Rāhula, mindfulness while breathing when it has been developed like this and made much of yields great fruit, brings great advantages.

In this way, Rāhula, through the development of mindfulness while breathing, through making much of it, the in-breaths and the out-breaths at the end are understood as they cease, they are surely understood.”¹

¹ Visuddhimagga (VIII. 241): *...on account of cessation there are three times (breath) has an end: the end in existence, the end in absorption, and the end in death. Regarding existence, in- and out-breaths occur in sense-existence (kāmahava), but they do now occur in form or formless existence (rūpārūpabhava), therefore they end in existence. Regarding absorption they occur in the first three absorptions (jhāna), but not in the fourth, therefore they end in absorption. But those that have arisen with the sixteenth consciousness that precedes the death consciousness cease with the death consciousness - this is called the end in death. Those that end in death are what is intended here by **at the end**. ...are surely understood - no aviditā is literally: are not not understood or are not un-understood. A double negative, as here, indicates strong emphasis in Pāḷi, but the conventions of English grammar prevent its use in translation.*

The Gracious One said this,

and venerable Rāhula was uplifted and greatly rejoiced in what was said by the Gracious One.