

# 3

## Ādhipateyya Sutta

The Discourse on Priorities | A 3.40

Theme: On the true priorities that bring liberation

Translated by Piya Tan ©2007, 2009

### 1 Introduction

*Ādhipateyya* (often wrongly spelt as *adhipateyya* in European manuscripts) comes from *adhi* (prefix meaning “over, above, supreme”) + *pati* (“lord”) + *eyya* (suffix that makes it an abstract noun). The Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (BHS) form is *ādhipateya*,<sup>1</sup> and the Sanskrit is approximately *ādhipatyā* (BHSD; found, for example, in the *Abhidharma,kośa*). It is related to these Sanskrit words:

- *adhi,pā* (Vedic), “a ruler, king, sovereign”;
- *adhi,pati* (1) = *adhi,pa*; (2) a particular part of the head (where a wound proves instantly fatal).

The psychological sense, as used in this Sutta, is apparently not found in the Sanskrit texts. As a Pali term, *ādhipateyya* is used in the following senses:<sup>2</sup>

- (1) (n)
  - (a) (literal:) sovereignty, lordship, overlordship, supremacy, rule, predominance, authority, control, controlling influence, power: A 1:115,9 ≠ 2:133,7 (AA 3:243,23) ≠ D 3:146,5 ≠ S 4:275,4-18; A 4:76,22; Ap (2) 537,29; DhA 3:293,18; CA 167,9, 331,13; Pm 2:49,12-51,30, PmA 562,14,26); PmA 38,13 (A 4:61,1).
  - (b) (psychological:) influence, controlling influence, dominant influence, especially the influences (*thāna*) which induce one to follow virtue, prime motivation: D 3:220,7 *tīṇi ~āni*; DA 1005,36 ≈ A 1:147,20; AA 2:243,9.
- (2) (mfn) ruling, governing, dominant, powerful, controlling: A 1:148,7, 4:338,13, 339,1, 5:106,16, 107,2; A 2:17,16, AA 3:21,3; AA 3:217,6.

The sense of *ādhipateyya* as used in **the Ādhipateyya Sutta** is that of (1b), that is, the psychological sense. *Ādhipateyya*, as such, refers to a quality that has a strong controlling influence over our actions, speech and thoughts. However, this need not be a conscious influence, even though we are able to cultivate it. For these reasons, I have translated *ādhipateyya* here as “priority.”

### 2 Ādhipateyya as priority

#### 2.1 THE 3 PRIORITIES

**2.1.1** In a practical sense, the term *ādhipateyya*, as used in **the Ādhipateyya Sutta** (A 3.40),<sup>3</sup> refers to *spiritual priorities*, that is, what we commit ourselves most to in our quest for spiritual liberation. According to the Sutta, we should give proper priorities to three things, that is, *the self, the world and the Dharma*. They can be defined as follows:

- **Self-priority** (*att’ādhipateyya*) or “self-supremacy,” is self-reflection, self-regard, and self-respect. We reflect on our state as a renunciant or a lay follower that the Dharma is neither about material gains nor sensual pleasures.<sup>4</sup> It is about knowing and ending suffering, and making an effort in mental cultivation by abandoning the bad and promoting the good, and looking after our own moral virtue and mental purity<sup>5</sup> [§1]. In other words, in a positive sense, this is moral shame (*hiri*) [2.2], if it is motivated by respect for others, or moral fear (*ottappa*) [2.2.5], if it is motivated by a sense of karmic accountability.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> However, there is little evidence of use in these senses in BHS.

<sup>2</sup> These defs have been culled from CPD, DP & BHSD.

<sup>3</sup> A 3.40/1:147-150, SD 27.3; see also **The teacher or the teaching?** SD 3.14(14).

<sup>4</sup> See **Dhamma,dāyāda S** (M 3), SD 2.18.

<sup>5</sup> See Dh 183: **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74), SD 16.1 (6).

<sup>6</sup> See SD 27.3 (2.2).

In a negative sense (if it is not properly understood), self-priority can be self-pride and a fear of “losing face,” which moulds our thoughts and motivates our actions in the wrong way. It becomes a measuring of oneself against others, and favouring those whom we perceive as being pleasant, rich or powerful, and rejecting those we see as unpleasant, unsuccessful or lowly.<sup>7</sup>

- **World-priority** (*lok’ādhipateyya*) or “other-supremacy,” is other-regard and respect for others. We reflect on our status as a renunciant or as a lay follower that the Dharma is not about material things.

It is about knowing and ending suffering. If as practitioners we were to have thoughts of sensual pleasure, or of ill will or of violence, there are those whom we see not but will know our real mind and blame us. Hence, we should make every effort in mental cultivation by abandoning the bad and promoting the good, and looking after our own moral virtue and mental purity. [§2]

In a negative sense, world-priority or “world-supremacy” is a measuring of others on how to manipulate or use others for the sake of self-glorification or selfish benefits. Positively, this is respect (*gāraṇa*) for others,<sup>8</sup> and moral fear (*ottappa*), that is, a regard of moral responsibility or karmic accountability<sup>9</sup> [2.2], or moral shame [2.2.5].

- **Dharma-priority** (*dhamm’ādhipateyya*) is or “supremacy of truth,” is respect for the Dharma. We reflect on our status as a renunciant or as a lay follower that the Dharma is not about material things.

There is the Buddha Dharma and those who practise it who are wise and observant. Hence, it would not be proper if we as a renunciant or a lay follower neglect our practice.<sup>10</sup>

Hence, we should make every effort in mental cultivation by abandoning the bad and promoting the good, and looking after our own moral virtue and mental purity. [§3]

In a negative sense, Dharma-priority can be that of having a narrow dogmatic views, lacking the awareness of the mental state or spiritual level of others.<sup>11</sup> Positively, it is about understanding that all views are provisional, helping us to straighten them so that we learn to let go of them by way of mental stillness and insight, resulting in liberating wisdom.<sup>12</sup>

**2.1.2 Buddhaghosa**, in his *Visuddhi,magga*, explains these priorities or predominances in terms of moral virtue, as follows:

...that which is expressed out of a desire to abandon what is unbecoming to self, out of self-regard by one with self-respect, is the moral virtue *that takes the self as the highest priority*.

That which is expressed out of a desire to ward off the world’s censure, out of regard for the world, is the moral virtue *that takes the world as the highest priority*.

That which is expressed out of a desire to honour the Dharma’s greatness, out of regard for the Dharma, is the moral virtue *that takes Dharma as the highest priority*. (Vism 1.34/13 f)

According to the 3 priorities or supremacies (*ādhipateyya*), our first priority is to *ourselves*, that is, to personal development. With at least a wholesome desire and aspiration towards personal development, we are in a healthy position to help *others*, or to face our second priority, *the world*, and better it, so that we create and maintain a wholesome environment wherever we are, or as far as our compassionate wisdom can reach (through our writings, the Internet, etc). When we have truly understood and tasted personal development (self-priority) and the betterment of others (world-priority), we begin to experience our third priority, *the Dharma*, that is, true reality and self-liberation.

<sup>7</sup> In a worst-case situation, one can sink into becoming an asura personality (an embodiment of a violent narcissistic demon): see SD 39.2 (1.3); SD 40a.1 (11.2.2).

<sup>8</sup> On respect, see SD 38.4 (5.1).

<sup>9</sup> See **Karma**, SD 18.1.

<sup>10</sup> Even the Buddha holds the Dharma above himself: see **Gāraṇa S** (S 6.2), SD 12.3.

<sup>11</sup> See **Skillful means**, SD30.8.

<sup>12</sup> See **The notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40a.1.

**2.1.3** Here, we can also take *dhamma* to mean “mental states” or what we understand as *our mind*. When we understand ourselves, we begin to understand others, and when we understand both self and other, we understand what the mind really is and how it works. Now, we understand that the self and the world are not separate processes, but interrelated mental states or events. We create our own world, we create our own God, gods and demons: only we can liberate ourselves from them. For, *we are the world*.

## 2.2 OUR PRIORITIES AND THE TWO BRIGHT STATES

**2.2.1 The 2 bright states.** The Commentaries sometimes explain the first two priorities—that of the self and the world—in terms of moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*), also known as “the 2 bright states” (*dve sukkā dhammā*). **The Hiri Ottappa Sutta** (A 2.9) is a short sutta defining moral shame and moral fear as “the two bright states that protect the world,”<sup>13</sup> and is quoted here in full:

Bhikshus, there are two bright states that protect the world. What are the two?  
Moral shame and moral fear.

Bhikshus, if these two bright states were not to protect the world, then there would be no mothers nor mothers’ sisters nor uncles’ wives nor teachers’ wives nor guru’s wives. Instead, the world would come to confusion such as there is amongst goats and sheep and fowl and pigs and dogs and jackals.

But, bhikshus, since these two bright states do protect the world, therefore there are seen mothers, mothers’ sisters, uncles’ wives, teachers’ wives and gurus’ wives. (A 2.9/1:51), SD 2.5

**2.2.2 The 2 world protectors.** **Moral shame** (*hiri*) is a sense of revulsion with wrong-doing and bad. The Abhidhamma defines moral shame as “to be ashamed of what one ought to be ashamed of, to be ashamed of doing bad and unwholesome deeds” (Pug 2.15).<sup>14</sup> It is one of the 7 noble treasures (*ariya, -dhana*),<sup>15</sup> that is, faith, moral conduct, moral shame, moral fear, learning, generosity, and wisdom.

Moral shame is often paired with **moral fear** (*ottappa*).<sup>16</sup> It is fear of karmic repercussions in doing wrong or bad. The Abhidhamma defines moral fear as “to be fearful of what one ought to fear, to be fearful of doing bad and unwholesome deeds” (Pug 2.15).<sup>17</sup> It is also one of the 7 noble treasures [above].

Together as the foundation for morality, they are called “the world-protectors” (*loka, pāla*, A 2.9/1:51), since they are the preconditions for a functional and productive society. Together they are also the synonym of moral virtue (*sīla*).<sup>18</sup>

**2.2.3** According to **the Visuddhi, magga**, the proximate cause for moral shame is *self-respect*, while for moral fear it is *respect for others*. Out of self-respect (*attāna garu katvā*), one, like the daughter of a good family, rejects bad-doing through moral shame. Out of respect for others (*param garu katvā*), one, like a courtesan, rejects bad-doing through moral fear (Vism 14.142/464 f).<sup>19</sup> The former is sometimes known as self-regarding moral conduct (motivated by the *shame* the deed entails), while the latter as other-regarding moral conduct (motivated by the healthy *fear* of karmic repercussions). As such, these two actions are known as *the two bright states that protect the world*.

<sup>13</sup> *Dve sukkā dhammā lokam pāleni*. “Bright states,” *sukka dhamma*, that is, wholesome conditions. See (**Vitthāra**) **Kamma S** (A 4.232), SD 4.13 (2.1).

<sup>14</sup> *Yaṃ hiriyati hiriyitabbena hiriyati pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ samāpattiyā, ayaṃ vuccati hiri* (Pug 2.15/23 f; cf Vism 14.142/464; J 1:129 f). Cf DhS:R 18 f.

<sup>15</sup> D 3:163, 251; A 4:5; VvA 113; DA 2:34; ThaA 240. Cf A 3:53; Sn 77, 462 (= D 1:168), 719.

<sup>16</sup> Eg M 1:271; S 2:220; A 2:78; It 34; Tikap 61; J 1:127; Vism 221; DhA 3:73. The term *ottappa* is derived from *apa* + √TRAP (to be abashed) [Skt \**āpatrapya* > *apatrapā* (Trenckner)]. Andersen suggests that this etym must be preferred to that of Childers: \**autappya* > *uttāpa*, *ut* + √TAP (heat) (PG 62). Edgerton (BHSD) has *apatrāpya* and the cpd *hrīr-apatrāpya* (P *hiri, ottappa*).

<sup>17</sup> *Yaṃ ottappati ottappitabbena ottappati pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ samāpattiyā, idaṃ vuccati ottappam* (Pug 2.5/24).

<sup>18</sup> On the 2 bright states that protect the world, see **Hiri Ottappa S** (A 2.9), SD 2.5(2c).

<sup>19</sup> In his tr, Ñāṇamoli renders *hiri* as “conscience,” but apparently mistranslates *ottappati* as “is ashamed” and *ottappa* as “shame,” Vism:Ñ 524 f.

**2.2.4 The Attha,sālinī**, the commentary to the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī (the first book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka) gives a similar explanation of the first two priorities (DhsA 124-128). It explains in some detail how moral shame arises on account of self-priority (*attādhipati hirī nāma*), and how moral fear arises on account of world-priority (*lokādhipati ottappam nāma*). Moral shame has a personal or psychological origin (*ajjhatta,samuṭṭhāna*), namely, class (*jāti*), age (*vaya*), courage (*sūra,bhāva*) and learning (*bāhu,-sacca*), reflecting on these, we, out of moral shame, should not break any precept or do any bad.<sup>20</sup>

**How is moral shame called self-priority?** (*Katham attā'dhipati hiri nāma.*) Here a certain son of family having taken the self as supreme, the highest priority, refrains from bad, thinking, “It is not proper that such a one as I, who have renounced the world out of faith, possessed of wide learning, devoted to the ascetic practices [dhutanga], should do bad.” Thus, moral shame is called self-priority.

As such, the Blessed One said: “He, having made only the self as his priority, his foremost, abandons the unwholesome, cultivates the wholesome, abandons the blameworthy, cultivates the blameless—he keeps himself pure.” [≈ A 3.40,1.3/1:148] (DhsA 126 f)<sup>21</sup>

**How is moral fear called world-priority?** (*Katham lokādhipati ottappam nāma.*) Here, the practitioner reflects that this world is very extensive and has those with supernormal abilities of clairvoyance (able to see what is beyond normal human sight) and mind-reading. Such people would know if he were not really living the holy life or when he does bad. In this way, his moral fear is called world-priority. Similarly, he does no bad out of respect for others who are respectable, and for fear of falling in suffering states.

The two moral qualities can be illustrated by the simile of two iron balls, one cold and smeared with dung, and the other red-hot and fiery. A wise man would not touch either of them. Not touching the cold ball fearing being smeared with dung is like refraining from bad due to moral shame. Not touching the burning ball out of fear of being burnt is like refraining from bad due to moral fear, such as creating karma that would bring him to a suffering state. (DhsA 127)

**2.2.5 Universal role of moral shame and moral fear.** As moral shame and moral fear work together to protect the world (to make a healthy family and wholesome society possible), they both can apply to any or all of the 3 priorities. Moral fear also applies to self-priority; moral shame to world-priority; and both to Dharma-priority.

**Self-priority**, then, is rooted in moral fear, where we consider how doing bad deed would have karmic consequences. Keeping the precepts, too, is a self-regarding practice, as our moral virtue is the basis for our mental cultivation for liberating wisdom. Above all, moral fear is the understanding that whatever we do to others have its moral implications. [Cf 2.1.1]

**World-priority** is rooted in moral shame, in that we fear being blamed or shamed by others on account of our misconduct or breaking the law. Keeping the precepts, too, is a world-regarding practice, in that we need lovingkindness and compassion towards others to be fully and effectively good. Moral shame, in short, is the understanding that whatever we do will somehow be known to others. [Cf 2.1.1]

**Dharma-priority**, of course, works with both moral shame and moral fear. Out of self-regard, we need the Dharma for personal development and mental cultivation. Out of other-regard, we use the Dharma to help others help themselves. The Dharma, in other words, make us truly moral individuals and members of a wholesome community who have the real opportunity for self-awakening in this life itself.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Evam tava jātim paccavekkhitvā vayam paccavekkhitvā sūra,bhāvam paccavekkhitvā bāhu,saccam paccavekkhitvā...pāṇātipāt'ādi,pāpam akaronto hirim samuṭṭhāpeti* (DhsA 125).

<sup>21</sup> *Katham attādhipati hirī nāma. Idh 'ekacco kula,putto attānam adhipatiṃ jetṭhakaṃ katvā mādisassa saddhā,-pabbajitassa bahu-s,tasa dhutaṅga,dharassa na yuttam pāpa,kammaṃ katun ti pāpam na karoti. Evam attā'dhipati hirī nāma hoti. Ten'āha bhagavā: so attānam yeva adhipatiṃ jetṭhakaṃ karitvā akusalam pajahati kusalam bhāveti. sāvajjam pajahati anavajjam bhāveti, suddham attānam pariharaṭi ti.* (DhsA 126). Note that the Dhs quote varies slightly from the Sutta text.

<sup>22</sup> See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

### 3 Making moral judgments in spiritual cultivation

#### 3.1 SELF-MASTERY

**3.1.1** The singularly remarkable, even unique, characteristic of early Buddhism is that the Buddha teaches that we are all capable of spiritual liberation through self-effort (*atta,kāra*), without relying on any external agency (be it God, god, destiny, karma, or nature). Indeed, there is no salvation beyond self-effort. Any talk of one saving another is likely to be, wittingly or unwittingly, politically motivated (the power mode) on the part of “saviour.” Our true quest should be about *self-mastery*.

<i>Attā hi attano nātho</i>	The self is the master of the self;
<i>ko hi nātho paro siyā</i>	for, who else could the master be?
<i>attanā’va sudantena</i>	With a self that is well-tamed, indeed,
<i>nātham labhati dullabham</i>	one gains a master that is hard to find.

(Dh 160; cf 380)<sup>23</sup>

The most significant quality about self-effort is that we are able to test the truth for ourselves, and not blindly rely on others to lead our lives. Once we accept that self-effort is possible, then we have a number of guidelines for building up our moral and mental strengths leading to the insight into true reality and liberation.

**3.1.2** The first guideline is that of self-comparison (*attūpama*), which is an effort we make to put ourselves in the place of another, which is succinctly put by this Dhammapada verse:

<i>Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa</i>	All tremble at the rod [violence],
<i>sabbe bhāyanti maccuno</i>	all fear death:
<i>attānam upamaṃ katvā</i>	making oneself the example, <sup>24</sup>
<i>na haneyya na ghāteyya</i>	one should neither kill nor cause to kill. (Dh 129)

The **Dhammika Sutta** (Sn 2.14) reflects the same sentiment:

<i>Pāṇam na hane, na ca ghātayeyya</i>	Let one not destroy life, nor cause to kill,
<i>na cānujaññā hanatam paresam</i>	nor approve of killing by others,
<i>sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍam</i>	Laying aside the rod [violence] toward all beings,
<i>ye thāvarā ye ca tasanti loke</i>	both the still and the moving in the world. (Sn 394)

**3.1.3** The most detailed explanation of the golden rule (as it is called), is found in **the Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7), in the case of the precept against killing (which applies mutatis mutandis to the other precepts):

“Here, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus:

‘I am one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die. I desire happiness and dislike suffering. Since I am one who wishes to live...and dislike suffering, if someone were to take my life, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me

Now, if I were to take the life of another—of one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die, who desires happiness and dislikes suffering—that would not be desirable and agreeable to him, too.

What is undesirable and disagreeable to me is undesirable and disagreeable to others, too. How can I inflict upon another what is undesirable and disagreeable to me?’

Having reflected thus, he himself abstains from harming life, exhorts others to abstain from harming life, and speaks in praise of abstaining from harming life.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See **Spiritual friendship: A textual study**, SD 34.1(5.2).

<sup>24</sup> Ie, taking oneself to be the other person or being, putting oneself in the place of another.

<sup>25</sup> “[H]e himself abstains from harming life, exhorts others to abstain from harming life,” that is, one keeps the precepts oneself and encourages others to do the same: this is “one who lives both for his own good and for the good

Thus, his bodily conduct is purified in three respects.<sup>26</sup>

(S 55.7,6/5:353 f), SD 1.5

### 3.2 THE 3 PRIORITIES AS MORAL GUIDELINES

**3.2.1** A second set of guidelines for moral action is **the 3 priorities** (*ādhipateyya*), by which we examine the moral quality of an act from three different viewpoints: those of oneself, of other, and of the Dharma. In the first priority, that is, self-priority (*attādhipateyya*), we examine whether an act we are going to commit would result in self-blame or remorse. This seems to suggest the concept of “conscience,” but such a concept is alien to early Buddhism.<sup>27</sup> In this first guideline, we take ourselves as the priority.

**3.2.2** The second moral priority is that given to “the world” (*lok’ādhipateyya*), that is, an other-priority, which requires us to examine whether our act will be approved or disapproved by the wise (*viññū*). Here, we would take the wisdom of those in their special fields, and who are morally upright, as our yardstick. We may regard this guideline as “public opinion,” but it is not as most of us understand it today, that is, as the opinion of the majority (which is usually wrong). It is the opinion of the *informed* public, that is, those *other* than ourselves, who are well informed on the subject and are morally upright—that is, the *viññū, purisa* (“wise persons”). This is the guideline we should adopt when we deal with public issues or when confronted by others’ opinions. Hence, what is morally acceptable is referred to as being “praised by the wise” (*viññu-p, pasattha*) and, conversely, what is morally reprehensible is said to be “censured by the wise” (*viññu, garahita*).<sup>28</sup>

**3.3.3** The third moral guideline with which to examine our acts is that of taking the Dharma as priority (*dhamm’ādhipateyya*), that is, whether our premeditated action conforms to the Dharma. This sort of examination is useful as a check so that we refrain from what is unwholesome, and to act on what is wholesome.

#### 3.3.4 The priorities as a whole truth

**3.3.4.1** As a set and whole, the three priorities or supremacies are about being courageously truthful. The Buddha Dharma is about knowing ourselves—or, more exactly, our “self,” the mind—which entails that we should **be true to ourselves**. This means we begin by accepting what we *are*, not what we have.

There is always a limit to helping others with what we “have” (money, things, etc), but when we teach others with what we *are*, then we help and help other by empowering them to help themselves by seeing the goodness and genius in themselves. “Self supremacy” (*att’ādhipateyya*) means that we start by showing ourselves with the greatest respect, and we should show that same self-acceptance to unconditionally accept others, too. That is how we really begin to know ourselves, that is, our weaknesses and strengths.

“World supremacy” (*lok’ādhipateyya*) means accepting others as we would accept ourselves, as we have noted earlier. This is how we help and heal others so that we transform them into true individuals.<sup>29</sup> We cannot really change, much less “save,” the world (except as a ploy for a grandiose triumphalist self-agenda). We can only help transform individuals, after we have transformed ourselves to some extent at least. In short, this means that we should **be true to others**, to the world, and to the future, which will remember us for our bad and good. If our good is remembered, then we continue to better this world or, at least, some people.

Thirdly, “Dharma supremacy” (*dhamm’ādhipateyya*) is about giving due honour to what really transforms us into true individuals, empowering us to truly help others that they may help themselves. The

of others” (*Atta,hita S*, A 4.96/2:96 f; *Sikkhā S*, A 4.99/2:98 f). “[He] speaks in praise of abstaining from harming life” refers to spiritual friendship and the practice of gladness (*muditā*).

<sup>26</sup> He does not kill, nor cause to kill, nor approve of killing.

<sup>27</sup> Loosely used, the word “conscience” may apply here, but technically it is either a theistic concept (related to the God-idea) or psychological (a learned response), both of which are alien to early Buddhism.

<sup>28</sup> Containing both *viññu-p, pasattha* and *viññu, garahita*: *Aggañña S* (D 27,5/3:82 f), *Kesa,puttiya S* (A 3.65/-1:190×2, 191×3, 193, 196×3), *Bhaddiya S* (A 4.194/2:190, 191, 193×2). Containing only *viññu-p, pasattha*: *Pañca,vera,bhaya S* (S 12.41/2:70), *Sakka S* (S 40.10/4:272, 279), *Cakka,vatti,rāja S* (S 55.1/5:343); *Puññābhisanda S 2* (A 4.52/2:57), *Gihī S* (A 5.179/3:213), *Vera S 1* (A 9.27/4:407), *Vera S 2* (A 9.408/4:407).

<sup>29</sup> On the “true individual,” see *Sappurisa S* (M 113), SD 29.6.

Dharma is our mirror of self-knowing, self-training and self-liberation; it is about us, how we can rise above the self, to be more than what our bodies merely are, and to rise even beyond the mind to the peace, joy and wisdom even transcending the divine.<sup>30</sup>

Hence, the 3 priorities or supremacies taken together can also be called “the 3 truths,” that is, being true to ourself, to others, and to our ideals. The benefits of these 3 truths are self-empowerment, other-love, and full liberation. This is another way of looking at spiritual friendship, the totality of the spiritual life.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.4 FOR THE GOOD OF SELF AND OTHERS

**3.4.1** Although Buddhism exhorts us to work out our own salvation (just as a sick person must take the medicine himself), we should also help heal others when we have the ability and occasion to do so. In terms of working for our own good and that of others, there is often a tension between egotism and altruism. **The Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33.1), for example, lists these 4 types of persons:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (1) one who benefits himself but not others; <sup>32</sup>     | <i>atta, hitāya paṭipanno hoti no para, hitāya</i>       |
| (2) one who benefits others but not himself; <sup>33</sup>     | <i>para, hitāya paṭipanno hoti no atta, hitāya</i>       |
| (3) one who benefits neither himself nor others; <sup>34</sup> | <i>n’eva atta, hitāya paṭipanno hoti no parahitāya</i>   |
| (4) one who benefits both himself and others. <sup>35</sup>    | <i>atta, hitāya c’eva paṭipanno hoti para, hitāya ca</i> |

### 3.4.2 Suttas related to the 4 types of persons

3.4.2.1 Here is a list of discourses that variously treat the four types of persons in terms of cultivating personal good and the good of others:

<b>Saṅgīti Sutta</b>	(D 33,1.11(48)/3:233)	Basic list of 4 types of persons;
<b>Atta,hita Sutta 1</b>	(A 4.95/2:95 f)	Similes of the firebrand & cow’s products;
<b>Atta,hita Sutta 2</b>	(A 4.96/2:96 f)	Restraint towards the 3 unwholesome roots;
<b>Atta,hita Sutta 3</b>	(A 4.97/2:97 f)	Learning and teaching the Dharma;
<b>Atta,hita Sutta 4</b>	(A 4.98/2:98)	Basic list of 4 types of persons;
<b>Atta,hita Sutta 5<sup>36</sup></b>	(A 4.99/2:98 f)	Practice of the 5 precepts;
<b>Hita Sutta 1</b>	(A 5.17/3:12 f)	One has 5 qualities but does not benefit others;
<b>Hita Sutta 2</b>	(A 5.18/3:13)	One set on other’s good but not his own;
<b>Hita Sutta 3</b>	(A 5.19/3:13 f)	One strives to perfect oneself and others, too;
<b>Hita Sutta 4</b>	(A 5.20/3:14)	One has 5 qualities and benefits others, too.

3.4.2.2 These suttas deal with 4 types of individuals in terms of self-cultivation and other-concern. In the basic list (D 33.11; A 4.98), the first person strives for his own wellbeing (*atta,hita*) but not for that of others (*para,hita*). The second individual is one who strives for the well-being of others but fails to strive for his own. The third person is one who neither strives for his own well-being nor for that of others. The fourth individual is one who strives for his own well-being as well as for the well-being of others.

3.4.2.3 It should be noted that not all the discourses list these four kinds of person in the same sequence. The priority, however, is always given *personal wellbeing*. It is important to note here that in all these discourses, “well-being” (*hita*) refers to moral wellbeing and spiritual liberation (the Dharma), and not material or worldly happiness. Two out of the 4 types of persons have personal wellbeing; one has only other-concern; and the last has neither. It is obvious here that the one who has personal wellbeing and strives for the wellbeing of others is the best.

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<sup>30</sup> On how this is done, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 & **Brahma, vihāra**, SD 38.5.

<sup>31</sup> See **Spiritual friendship: Stoeriwes of kindness**, SD 8.1 & **Spiritual friendship: A textual study**, 34.1.

<sup>32</sup> Such as the monk Vakkali, who is morally virtuous but does not exhort others to be so (DA 3:1025).

<sup>33</sup> Such as Upananda, whose is immoral, but exhorts others to be morally virtuous (DA 3:1025).

<sup>34</sup> Such as Devadatta, who is immoral, and exhorts others in the same way (DA 3:1025).

<sup>35</sup> Such as Mahā Kassapa, who is morally virtuous, and exhorts others to be so, too (DA 3:1025).

<sup>36</sup> Also called **Atta,hita Sikkhāpada S.**

## The Discourse on Priorities

A 3.40

1 Bhikshus, there are these 3 priorities [supremacies].<sup>37</sup>

What are the three?

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| (1) Self-priority [the supremacy of self],           | <i>att'ādhipateyya</i>   |
| (2) World-priority [the supremacy of the world], and | <i>lok'ādhipateyya</i>   |
| (3) Dharma-priority [the supremacy of the Dhamma],   | <i>dhamm'ādhipateyya</i> |

1.2 And what is **self-priority** (*att'ādhipateyya*)?

Here, bhikshus, a monk, having gone into a forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty abode, reflects thus:

“It is not for the sake of *robes* that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; nor is it for the sake of *almsfood*; nor is it for the sake of *lodgings*; nor for the sake of *this or that state of existence* that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness.

But indeed I am pierced [beset]<sup>38</sup> by birth, decay, and death; by sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, despair; pierced by suffering, overcome with suffering—

Surely the end of this whole mass of suffering might be known!

1.3 Now, if I were [148] to seek the kind of sense-pleasures that I have abandoned through going forth from home into homelessness, or indeed, were to seek a worse kind<sup>39</sup>—that would not be proper for me!”

So he reflects thus:

“Effort shall be roused by me; I will not be lax, but be one with mindfulness established, unconfused; my body stilled, unruffled; the mind focussed, unified.”<sup>40</sup>

1.4 Giving the highest priority to *the self*, he abandons the unwholesome, cultivates the wholesome, abandons the blameworthy, cultivates the blameless, and looks after his own purity.<sup>41</sup>

This is called the self-priority.<sup>42</sup>

2 And what is **world-priority** (*lok'ādhipateyya*)?

Here, bhikshus, a monk, having gone into a forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty abode, reflects thus:

<sup>37</sup> “Priorities” (*ādhipateyya*): for meaning, see Intro (1); for 3 kinds, see Intro (2).

<sup>38</sup> **Otiṅṅo**, pp of *otarati* (cf *avatiṅṅa*; Skt & BHS *avatīrṇa*); here meaning “pierced by (with instr)”: *~o'mhi jātiyā jarā, maraṇena sokehi... upāyāsehi, dukkho, tiṅṅo dukkha, pareto* (M 1:192,6 f), (*yassa jāti anto pavitthā so jātiyā ~o nāma*, MA 2:231,17) = 460,5 f = 3:93,9 (-'amhi; vll in Ee ~'amha; *okinnāmhī; anto anupavittho*, SA 2:302,6) = A 1:147,27 f (**anupavittho**, “immersed in,” AA 2:243,17) = It 89,15 (-'amhā; = *otiṅṅā amhā*, ItA 2:113,20); *~o sātarūpena*, A 4:290,13\* qu Nc 63,8\* (*madhura, sabhāvena rāgena ~o ogāhito*, Nc 2:133,19); *issāya ~ā maraṇaṃ upe-si*, J 5:98,12' (ad 98,8\* “*issāvatiṅṅā*”). Also possibly “fixed upon (in a psychological sense,” ie infatuated, obsessed with. (CPD sv)

<sup>39</sup> “Of a worse kind,” Comy: **pāpiṭṭhatareti lāmakatare**, “*pāpiṭṭhāyate* means ‘of a worse kind,’ ie more bad, base, etc” (AA 2:243).

<sup>40</sup> *So iti paṭisañcikkhati—āraddhaṃ kho pana me vīriyaṃ bhavissati asallīnaṃ, upaṭṭhitā sati asammuttā, pas-saddho kāyo asāraddho, samāhitaṃ cittaṃ ekaggan'ti.*

<sup>41</sup> *So attānaṃ yeva ādhipateyyaṃ karitvā akusalaṃ pajahati kusalaṃ bhāveti savajjaṃ pajahati anavajjaṃ bhāveti suddhaṃ attānaṃ pariharati. **Suddhaṃ attānaṃ pariharati**, lit “he looks after the self’s purity.” Here, esp mental purity is meant, since purity of body and speech has previously (even temporarily) been achieved before meditating. Comy says that this specifically” (*pariyāyena*) refers to the fruit of arhatood, and “generally” (*nippariyāyena*), refers to the attaining of any of the fruits (*phala*) (AA 2:244). On meaning of *pariyāyena* and *nippariyāyena*, see **Pariyāya Nippariyāya**, SD 68.2.*

<sup>42</sup> See Intro (3).



“It is not for the sake of *robes* that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness;  
nor is it for the sake of *almsfood*;  
nor is it for the sake of *lodgings*;  
nor for the sake of *this or that state of existence* that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness.

*But indeed I am pierced [beset] by birth, decay, and death; by sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, despair; pierced by suffering, overcome with suffering—  
Surely the end of this whole mass of suffering might be known!*

2.2 Now, if I, having **thus gone forth**, were to have sensual thoughts, or to have thoughts of ill will, or were to have thoughts of violence<sup>43</sup>—

Great indeed is **this society** in the world!<sup>44</sup>—

Surely, in this great society, there are recluses and brahmins with psychic powers, with the divine eye, with the power to read the minds of others. Even from afar, they can see me; though close by, they may be invisible, and they know my mind, too!

They would know me thus:

“Look, sirs, at this son of family, gone forth from the home life into homelessness, but he dwells drenched in bad, unwholesome states!”

2.3 There are devas, too, with psychic powers, with the divine eye, with the power to read the minds of others. Even from afar, they can see me; though close by, they may be invisible, and they know my mind, too!

They, too, would know me thus:

“Look, sirs, at this son of family, gone forth from the home life into homelessness, but he dwells drenched in bad, unwholesome states!”<sup>45</sup>

*So he reflects thus:*

*“Effort shall be roused by me; [149] I will not be lax, but be one with mindfulness established, unconfused; my body stilled, unruffled; the mind focussed, unified.”*

2.4 Giving the highest priority to **the world**, he abandons the unwholesome, cultivates the wholesome, abandons the blameworthy, cultivates the blameless, and looks after his own purity.

This is called the world-priority.<sup>46</sup>

### 3 And what is **Dharma-priority** (*dhamm’ādhipateyya*)?

*Here, bhikshus, a monk, having gone into a forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty abode, reflects thus:*

“It is not for the sake of *robes* that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness;  
nor is it for the sake of *almsfood*;  
nor is it for the sake of *lodgings*;

<sup>43</sup> This line apparently is an **anacoluthon**, ie, an abrupt break (ie an ellipse) in a thought-flow or syntax, and going into another idea or grammatical construction, often for rhetorical effect, eg, “Had ye been there—for what could that have done?” (John Milton in *Lycidas*, 1638), or more simply, “You really ought to—well, do it your way!” Or, from Shakespeare: “I will have such revenges on you both | That all the world shall—I will do such things,” (*King Lear* II.iv.271-272); “It came even from the heart of—O! she’s dead.” (*King Lear* V.iii.224). Scholars are not agreed on where the line should be drawn between anacoluthon and **aposiopesis**. According to Patrick Galloway (of San Francisco State Univ), while both figures involve an abrupt break in a line, ending in a dash and followed by a new sentence or fragment which tends to redirect the narrative flow, in an **aposiopesis** the reader understands what would have followed had the break not occurred, while in **anacoluthon** the break and redirect are so radical and abrupt that the result is ambiguity. Here is a good example of aposiopesis from Voltaire: “Once win upon your justice, to forgive— | I am distracted—“ (*Volpone* x.4-5). Here, we know that he meant to say “forgive me,” the line is not ambiguous and is, therefore, an aposiopesis. See <http://www.cyberpat.com/shakes/rhet.html>. For another example, see **Mahā Kamma, vibhaṅga S** (M 136), SD 4.16 (3).

<sup>44</sup> *Mahā kho paṇāyam loka, sannivāso.*

<sup>45</sup> Qu at DhsA 1:126.

<sup>46</sup> See Intro (3).

nor for the sake of *this or that state of existence* that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness.

*But indeed I am pierced [beset] by birth, decay, and death; by sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, despair; pierced by suffering, overcome with suffering—*

*Surely the end of this whole mass of suffering might be known!*

3.2 Well-taught<sup>47</sup> is the true teaching of the Blessed One,

visible here and now,  
immediate [having nothing to do with time],  
inviting one to come and see,  
accessible [leading up to the goal],  
to be personally known by the wise.

Now, there are **fellow brahmacharis** [colleagues in the holy life] who dwell, knowing and seeing. Now, if I, having thus gone forth in this Dharma that is well-proclaimed, were to dwell lazily and heedlessly, it would not be proper for me.

*So he reflects thus:*

*“Effort shall be roused by me; I will not be lax, but be one with mindfulness established, unconfused; my body stilled, unruffled; the mind focussed, unified.”*

3.3 Giving the highest priority to the **Dharma**, he abandons the unwholesome, cultivates the wholesome, abandons the blameworthy, cultivates the blameless, and looks after his own purity.

This is called the Dharma-priority.<sup>48</sup>

These, bhikshus, are the 3 priorities [supremacies].<sup>49</sup>

4 *N’atthi loke raho nāma,  
Pāpa,kammaṃ pakubbato  
Attā te purisa jānāti  
saccaṃ vā yadi vā musā*

There is in the world no secret  
of one who does a bad deed.<sup>50</sup>  
You yourself, O man,  
know what is true or what is false!

5 *Kalyāṇaṃ vata bho sakkhi  
attānaṃ atimaññasi  
Yo santaṃ attani pāpaṃ  
attānaṃ pariḡūhasi*

Alas! Sir, you, the witness,  
look down upon your own self!  
How can you hide the bad that there is  
in the self from the self? [150]

6 *Passanti devā ca tathāgatā ca  
lokasmim bālaṃ visamaṃ carantaṃ  
Attādhipako sako care<sup>51</sup>  
lokādhipo ca nipako ca jhāyī*

The devas and the Tathagatas [Buddhas thus come]  
see the fool living falsely in the world.  
The one who lives with self as supreme,  
and the one for whom the world is supreme, should  
be wise and engaged in meditation.

7 *Dhamm’ādhipo ca anudhamma,cārī  
na hīyati sacca,parakkamo muni  
Pasayha māraṃ abhibhuyya antakaṃ  
yo ca phusī jāti-k,khayaṃ padhānavā  
So tādiso loka,vidū sumedho*

For whom the Dharma is supreme, keeping to the Dharma,  
let him not give up being a sage striving for the truth.  
Having strived and conquered Māra the end-maker,  
that striver who has touched the end of birth,  
such<sup>52</sup> a one is wise, knower of worlds:<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Here begins the 6 qualities of the Dharma (*cha dhamma,guṇa*) (M 1:37; A 3:285), which are commented on at Vism 7.68-88/213-218. See **Dhammānussati**, SD 15.9.

<sup>48</sup> See Intro (3).

<sup>49</sup> On these verses, cf A 1:213 f, 4:252; Dh 178; J 3:19; VA 1:215, 238.

<sup>50</sup> These 2 lines are esp well known: J 3:19; VA 1:215, 238.

<sup>51</sup> Be Ce Ee Ke Se; Ce *Tasmā hi attādhipateyyako ca*, “Therefore the one who gives priority to self and.”

<sup>52</sup> “**Such,**” *tādiso*: see SD 15.7 (2.2.2).

<sup>53</sup> “**Knower of worlds,**” *loka,vidū*, one of the 9 qualities of the Buddha: see SD 15.7 (3.5).

*sabbesu dhammesu atammayo munī ti.* a silent sage, unshaped by anything in anyway.<sup>54</sup>

— evaṃ —

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<sup>54</sup> See Ñāṇānanda, *Concept and Reality*, 1971:29 & Santikāro Bhikkhu, “Atammayatā: The rebirth of a lost word.” *Crossroads* 4,2 1989:87-90. On “unshaped” (*atammaayo*), see *Atammayatā*, SD 19.13 ; also **Dependent Arising**, SD 5.15.