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Dahara Sutta

The Discourse on the Young | S 3.1/1:68-70

Theme: Do not look down upon the young

Translated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2013

1 Kosala Saṃyutta

King Pasenadi of Kosala, one of the most devoted followers of the Buddha, has a whole chapter of 25 suttas to his name. **The Piya,jātika Sutta** (M 87) relates how Pasenadi, at first resents his queen, Mallikā's devotion to the Buddha, but is in due course inspired by her to have deep devotion him.¹

The Dahara Sutta (S 3.1), the first discourse in the Kosala Saṃyutta, apparently records the king's first meeting with the Buddha. Here, the Buddha is still a young ascetic (probably in his 30's) and the king, too, is of the same age. Surprised at first by the Buddha's youth, compared to the elderly well known teachers of the times, the king is unimpressed, but is proven wrong by the Buddha.

Since Pasenadi is a layman and a busy king at that, the teachings of this chapter are simple but relevant to the lay followers' life, often reminding them to be morally upright while living in the world. **S 3.2, 24** are on the three unwholesome roots, greed, hate and delusion, while **S 3.3** is about impermanence. **S 3.4-7, 17-18** deal with personal integrity through heedfulness (*appamāda*). **S 3.8** deals with the meaning of love, while **S 3.9** is about the true sacrifice. **S 3.10, 19-20** reflect on the nature of wealth and family.

S 3.11 gives us an intimate look at the king's espionage efforts and the Buddha's response. **S 3.12** deals with moral virtue, and in **S 3.13**, the Buddha helps the king to go on a diet. **S 3.14-15** deals with the negative fruits of war. **S 3.24** too alludes to war parables, but relates to the spiritual training. **S 3.16** records the Buddha consoling the king of having a daughter instead of a son, and in **S 3.22**, he consoles the king on the loss of his beloved grandmother. **S 3.21** is a reprise on the 4 kinds of persons in terms of spiritual progress, a teaching found elsewhere. The last sutta of the chapter, **S 3.25**, deals with the difference between political power and spiritual strength.

The Dhamma,cetiya Sutta (M 89) is a moving account of the last meeting between the Buddha and the king, both 80 years old.² Pasenadi then dies a sad and lonely death at the betrayal of his own general, Dīgha Kārāyaṇa, whose uncle and his 32 sons have been ruthlessly killed by the king.³

2 Sutta summary

The Dahara Sutta is a short narrative recounting Pasenadi's meeting, probably his first, with the Buddha. He is surprised by the Buddha's youth and asks about his attainment [§2-3], and the Buddha declares that he is awakened [§4].

Pasenadi then alludes to the six sectarian teachers, well known to the people [§5.1] and who also claim to be awakened [§5.2]. The Buddha however is still young and newly gone forth [§5.3]. The Buddha essentially replies that we should not look down upon the young, as they have the potential for greatness and goodness [§6]. The teaching closes with a set of verses that elaborate of how the young are capable of future greatness and goodness [§§8.13]. Pasenadi is convinced and goes for refuge [§§14-15].

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¹ M 87/2:106-112 = SD 84.11.

² M 89/116-125 = SD 64.10.

³ See **Kosala S 1** (A 10.29/5:59-65), SD 16.15 (2).

The Discourse on the Young

S 3.1/1:68-70

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika's park in Jeta's grove outside Sāvattthī.

Pasenadi asks the Buddha about his awakening

2 Then, the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala approached the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, he sat down at one side.

3 Sitting thus as one side, the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala said this to the Blessed One:

“Does our master Gotama, too, claim that he has fully awakened to the peerless full self-awakening?”

The Buddha declares he is awakened

4 “Maharajah, one speaking rightly of this would speak of me as one who has fully awakened to the peerless full self-awakening.⁴ For, I, maharajah, am one who has fully awakened to the peerless full self-awakening.”

Pasenadi doubts the Buddha

5.1 “But, master Gotama, there are recluses and brahmins, sangha leaders, group leaders, teachers of groups, knowledgeable, famous, ford-makers [saviours], regarded as holy men by the masses, that is to say, Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, Sañjayo Belatṭha,putta, Pakudha Kaccāyana, and Ajita Kesa,kambala.⁵

5.2 They, too, claim that they have fully awakened to the peerless full self-awakening.

5.3 But why, master Gotama is still young, and only newly gone forth?”⁶ [69]

The 4 kinds of young

6 These four, maharajah, should not be despised as being young, should not be disparaged as being young.⁷ What are the four?

A noble [warrior],	maharajah, should not be despised as being young, should not be disparaged as being young.
A snake,	maharajah, should not be despised as being young, should not be disparaged as being young.
Fire,	maharajah, should not be despised as being young,

⁴ *Yam hi tam mahā,rāja sammā vadamāno vadeyya* “*anuttaram sammā,sambodhiṃ abhisambuddho* ‘ti. The phrase *sammā vadamāno vadeyya*, “(one) speaking rightly would say...” is very a common stock: **Jana.vasabha S** (D 18/2:217,12+ 15); **Pāsādika S** (D 29/3:126,12+15+24, 127,1+9+11); **Bhaya Bherava S** (M 4/1:21,25+28), **Mahā Siha,nāda S** (M 12,14+17), **Cha-b,bisodhana S** (M 112/3:28,35, 29,3+8+11), **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 129/3:-165,15+17, 172,2+4); cf 3:274,13-14; but occurs as *vadamāno sammā vadeyya*, “(one) speaking...would be speaking rightly” in **Soṇa,daṇḍa S** (D 4/1:119,32, 120,12+25+30, 121,9+13+23+27+35, 123,28+32. This stock is found in all the 4 Nikāyas and the Vinaya. For other occurrences, search CSCD with “sammā vadamāna vadeyya”.

⁵ These are the 6 heterodox teacher often known as “ford-makers” (*tittha,kara*) or “saviours,” mentioned in various suttas, esp **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,16-32/1:52-60), SD 8 & **Kutūhala,sālā S** (S 44.9) @ SD 23.15 (2).

⁶ *Kim pana bhavam gotamo daharo c’eva jātiyā, navo ca pabbajjāyāti.*

⁷ *Cattāro kho’me mahā,rāja daharāti na uññātabbā daharāti na paribhotabbā.* Comy glosses “should not be despised” as “should not be looked down upon,” and “should not be disparaged” as “should not be treated with contempt” (*na uññātabbāti na avajānitabbā. Na paribhotabbāti na paribhavitabbā*). For example: We “despise” a young prince, if when meeting him, we do not give way or remove our cloak or rise from our seat, etc. We “disparage” him if we say such things as: “This prince has a large neck, or large ears, or large belly. How will he be able to rule?”(SA 1:132). From this, the comy takes it we “despise” another through our deeds, while we “disparage” another through speech.

A monk, should not be disparaged as being young.
 maharajah, should not be despised as being young,
 should not be disparaged as being young.

These four, maharajah, should not be despised as being young, should not be disparaged as being young.

7 The Blessed One said this. The Blessed One, having said this, the Teacher, the Sugata [well-farer], further said this:

The verses on the young

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| <p>8.1 <i>Khattiyam jāti, sampannam
 abhijātam yasassinam
 daharo 'ti nāvajāneyya
 na nam paribhave naro</i></p> | <p>A kshatriya [noble] of birth,
 high-born, of great fame,
 should not be looked down upon as “young”—
 no man should disparage him. 374</p> |
| <p>8.2 <i>ṭhānam hi so manuj'indo
 rajjam laddhāna khattiyō
 so kuddho rāja, daṇḍena
 tasmim pakkamate bhusam
 tasmā tam parivajjeyya
 rakkham jīvitam attano</i></p> | <p>For, it is possible that he would be lord of man,
 a kshatriya who gains kingship.
 An angry king, with royal punishment
 harshly punishes him.
 Therefore, one would avoid it,
 guarding one's own life. 375</p> |
| <p>9 <i>Gāme vā yadi vā raññe
 yattha passe bhuj'aṅgamam
 daharo 'ti nāvajāneyya
 na nam paribhave naro</i></p> <p><i>Uccā'vacehi vaṇṇehi
 urago carati tejasi⁹
 so āsajja ḍamse bālam
 naram nārim ca ekadā
 Tasmā tam parivajjeyya
 rakkham jīvitam attano</i></p> | <p>Whether in a village or in a forest,
 wherever one sees a young serpent,
 look not down on it as one young,
 no man should disparage it. 376</p> <p>In various shapes,⁸
 the belly-goer moves with mighty fire:
 he sets on and stings the fool,
 man or woman, all the same.
 Therefore, one would avoid it,
 guarding one's own life. 377</p> |
| <p>10.1 <i>Pahūta, bhakkham jālinam
 pāvakam kaṇha, vattaniṃ
 daharo 'ti nāvajāneyya
 na nam paribhave naro</i></p> | <p>A fire is a great devourer,
 leaving only a black trail where it goes:
 look not down on the young,
 a man should not disparage it. 378</p> |
| <p>10.2 <i>Laddhā hi so upādānam
 mahā hutvāna pāvako
 So āsajja ḍahe¹⁰ bālam
 naram nārim ca ekadā
 tasmā tam parivajjeyya
 rakkham jīvitam attano</i></p> | <p>For when it gains fuel,
 becoming great bright flame:
 it might hit and burn the fool,
 a man or a woman, all the same:
 therefore, one would avoid it,
 guarding one's own life. 379</p> |

⁸ Comy, reflecting popular folk beliefs, says that the serpent is able to assume various shapes such as that of an ordinary snake (*sappa*), a water-snake (*deddubha*), a rat-snake (*dhamani* or *dhammani*) or even as a squirrel (*antamaso kalandaka*) (SA 1:133). **Vinaya** records the serpent Mucalinda sheltering the Buddha (Mv 1.3 @ V 1:3); SD 36.5 (2.1.2.4); SD 26.1 (5) Week 6; a serpent is said to have appeared as a young man seeking ordination (V 1:86 f).

⁹ Be Ce Se *tejasā*; Ee *tejasi*.

¹⁰ Be *dahe dahati*.

- 11 *Vanam yad aggi dahati¹¹
pāvako kaṇha,vattanī
jāyanti tattha pārōhā
aho,rattānam accaye* A forest burnt down by fire,
the bright flame leaves but a black trail,
there shoots sprout forth
in the passing of day and night. 380
- 12 *Yañ ca kho sīla,sampanno
bhikkhu dahati tejasā
na tassa puttā pasavo
dāyādā vindare dhanam
Anapaccā adāyādā
tālā,vatthū bhavanti te [70]* But if he is steeped in moral goodness,
a monk who burns with majesty—
for that one¹² nor son, nor cattle,
nor heir to wealth would find,
childless, heirless:
they are but palmyra stumps!¹³ 381
- 13 *Tasmā hi paṇḍito poso
sampassam attham attano
bhujāṅgamañ pāvakañ ca
khattiyañ ca yasassinam
bhikkhuñ ca sīla,sampannam
samma-d-eva samācāreti.* Therefore, a wise man,
seeing his own good,
and seeing the belly-crawler as a bright flame,
a kshatriya of great fame,
or a monk, steeped in moral goodness,
he would indeed rightly hold himself. 382

14 When this was said, Pasenadi, the rajah of Kosala, said this:

“Excellent, bhante! Excellent, bhante!

Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned,
were to reveal what was hidden,
were to show the way to one who was lost, or
were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,

in the same way, in numerous ways, has the Dharma been made known by the Blessed One.

15 I go to master Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge, from this day forth, for life.”

— evaṃ —

130301; 130308; 130503r

¹¹ Be *dahe dahati*.

¹² Ie, the one who despises or disparages such a monastic.

¹³ Comy explains the terrible consequences of despising and disparaging a virtuous monk arise not from the actual acts themselves, but from that person’s unwholesome intentions. Even if the monk were to respond here, the “fire” (*tejasā*) of his moral virtue is unable to harm anyone. That person is only harmed when the monk suffers in patience (SA 1:134). Unlike the proverbial benignity of a Buddhist monastic, other “holy men” are known to inflict curses of their detractors, as infamously recounted in **Isayo Samuddaka S** (S 11.10/1:117 f), SD 39.2. See also **Assalāyana S** (M 93,18/2:155), SD 40a.2; also SD 21.3 (4.1.4).