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Bahu,dhītara Sutta

Or, **Bahu,dhīti Sutta** The Discourse to the One of Many Daughters | S 7.10 [Ee S 7.1.10]

Or, **Bahu,dhītara Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** The Discourse on Bhāra,dvāja of Many Daughters

Theme: Having nothing is true happiness

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1 Sutta significance

1.1 SUMMARY. The Bahu,dhītara Sutta (S 7.10) relates how a brahmin of the Bhāra,dvāja clan, looking for his lost cows for the last 6 days, meets the Buddha and speaks in verses to the Buddha, of the latter's good fortune of not having to face the 7 kinds of misfortunes and miseries that he has to face [§§4-10], and the Buddha agrees [§§11-17].

The brahmin addresses the Buddha first and he responds accordingly. Inspired by the Buddha's replies, the brahmin goes for refuge in the 3 jewels [§7], renounces the world [§8], and in due course becomes an arhat. [§§9-10]

1.2 This verse section of the Sutta is a pendant¹ to the **Dhaniya Sutta** (Sn 1.2), SD 50.20. However, in the latter, it is Dhaniya who initiates singing his joyful verses (which are just the opposite in theme to the verses of the Bhāra,dvāja brahmin). For every verse that Dhaniya sings of mundane joy, the Buddha replies with his own verses extolling Dharma joy—by way of point and counterpoint.

Dhaniya sings his verses in the comfort of his own house near the Mahī river. At first, he does not see the Buddha, who appears mid-air above his hut. Towards the end of the exchange, realizing it is the Buddha, both he and his wife go for refuge in the 3 jewels, renounce the world, and in due course become arhats.

1.3 The Sutta title is clearly derived from the 5th verse [§8], where Bhāra,dvāja says that all his seven daughters are widowed.² In other words, the brahmin is the only man in the house.

2 Verse analyses

2.1 The Bahu,dhītara Sutta has a total of 14 verses [§§4-17]. Here is a comparative list of the verses:

Bhāra,dvāja's verses

- (1) §4 = S 648 loss of 14 oxen (wealth)
- (2) §5 = S 649 bad sesamum crop
- (3) §6 = S 650 rats in the store-house
- (4) §7 = S 651 mat infested with vermin
- (5) §8 = S 652 7 widowed daughters
- (6) §9 = S 653 ugly shrewish wife
- (7) §10 = S 654 debt-collectors at the door

The Buddha's verses

- (8) §11 = S 655 no loss: he has no wealth
- (9) §12 = S 656 no bad harvest, grows nothing
- (10) §13 = S 657 no rats: owns no buildings
- (11) §14 = S 658 no vermin: owns no mat
- (12) §15 = S 659 no daughters or family ties
- (13) §16 = S 660 not married and celibate
- (14) §17 = S 661 has nothing to do with money

2.2 From the brahmin's verses, it is clear that he is very unhappy with his family life. He has lost all his worldly wealth [§§4-5], even his current assets are destroyed [§§6-7], his family life is miserable

¹ "An additional statement, consideration, etc, which completes or complements another; a complement, counterpart" (OED).

² On the grammatical forms of *dhītā*, see Geiger & Norman, *A Pāli Grammar*, 2000; §91.3.

[§§8-9], and he is in debt [§10]. Unlike Dhaniya, who is rich, Bhāra,dvāja is poor and wretched. It may be said that he renounced the world because of dire straits. This may be so, but his intentions are good enough, as he follows the training and ends up awakening as an arhat. He does not have enough good karma for a happy lay life, but he is karmically ready for renunciation and awakening.

2.3 According to Bhāra,dvāja’s last verse, he is a debtor, and the creditors are at his door demanding for repayment. Obviously, in his current conditions, he is unable to do so. However, the Buddha, in his compassion, accepts Bhāra,dvāja into the order because he is spiritually ready.

There is an apparent problem here. The Vinaya forbids any **debtor** from ordaining—that is, they need to discharge all their debts before renouncing the world. The Mahāvagga of the Vinaya relates how this rule was introduced when a debtor, fleeing his creditors, was admitted, and there was a public uproar (Mv 1.1.46).³

It should be noted here this is a common cause for the introduction. Vinaya rules were introduced as a result of public complaints, to prevent monastics from exploiting the laity, and to remove any danger or distraction to monastic life. Anyway, it is clear that Bhāra,dvāja renounces the world before this rule was made. This, then, also attests to the earliness of this Sutta.

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The Discourse to the One of Many Daughters

S 7.10

1 At one time, the Blessed One was staying in a certain thick wood.

At that time, fourteen oxen of a certain brahman of the Bhāra,dvāja clan were lost.

2 Then, the brahmin of the Bhāra,dvāja clan, seeking his oxen, came to that thick wood. There, he saw the Blessed One sitting cross-legged, keeping his body upright and keeping his mindfulness before him.⁴

3 Seeing the Blessed One, he approached him, and standing in the Blessed One’s presence, uttered these verses:

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|----------|--|-------|---|
| 4 | (1) <i>Na hi nūn’imassa⁵ samaṇassa
balībaddā catu-d,dasa
ajja,satṭhiṃ na dissanti
tenâyaṃ samaṇo sukhī.</i> | S 648 | Surely, for this recluse, there are no
fourteen oxen
not seen for the last six days—
hence, this recluse is happy. |
| 5 | (2) <i>Na hi nūn’imassa samaṇassa
tilā,khettasmi pāpakā
eka,paṇṇā dupaṇṇā⁶ ca
tenâyaṃ samaṇo sukhī.</i> | S 649 | Surely, for this recluse, there is no
bad field of sesamum,
some single-leafed, some with two—
hence, this recluse is happy. |

³ Mv 1.1.46 (V 1:76,8-19).

⁴ On the terms in this line, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,4.2) n, SD13.3.

⁵ Be Ee so; Ce Ke Se *nahanūnimassa*.

⁶ Be so; Ce Ee *dvi,paṇṇā*.

- 6 (3) *Na hi nūn'imassa samaṇassa
tuccha,koṭṭhasmi mūsikā
ussoḷhikāya⁷ naccanti
tenāyaṃ samaṇo sukhī.* S 650 Surely, for this recluse there are no rats in an empty store-house, briskly dancing around— hence, this recluse is happy.
- 7 (4) *Na hi nūn'imassa samaṇassa
santhāro satta,māsiko
uppātakehi sañchanno
tenāyaṃ samaṇo sukhī.* S 651 Surely, for this recluse there is no floor-mat that is, for seven months, infested with a vermin swarm⁸— hence, this recluse is happy.
- 8 (5) *Na hi nūn'imassa samaṇassa
vidhavā satta dhītaro
eka,puttā⁹3 ca
tenāyaṃ samaṇo sukhī.* S 652 Surely, for this recluse there are no seven daughters who have been widowed, some with a son, some with two¹⁰— hence, this recluse is happy.
- 9 (6) *Na hi nūn'imassa samaṇassa
piṅgalā tilakāhatā
sottarṃ pādena bodheti
tenāyaṃ samaṇo sukhī.* S 653 Surely, for this recluse there is no tawny, speckled wife¹¹ who wakens the sleeping with her foot— hence, this recluse is happy.
- 10 (7) *Na hi nūn'imassa samaṇassa
paccūsamhi iṅāyikā
detha dethāti codenti
tenāyaṃ samaṇo sukhīti.* S 654 Surely, for this recluse there are no debt-collectors at day-break, berating, “Pay up! Pay up!”— hence, this recluse is happy.

[The Blessed One:]

- 11 (8) *Na hi mayhaṃ brāhmaṇa
balībaddā catu-d,dasa
ajja,satṭhim na dissanti
tenāhaṃ brāhmaṇā sukhī.* S 655 Indeed, brahmin, there are for me no fourteen oxen not seen for the last six days— hence, O brahmin, happy am I!
- 12 (9) *Na hi mayhaṃ brāhmaṇa
tilā khattasmi pāpakā
eka,paṇṇā du,paṇṇā ca
tenāhaṃ brāhmaṇā sukhī.* S 656 Indeed, brahmin, there is for me no bad field of sesame, some single-leafed, some with two— hence, O brahmin, happy am I!

⁷ *Ussolhikāya*, from *ussoḷhī* (persevering exertion; great energy) + *kā* (fem suffix). Appears only here. Comy: “They spring up, squeaking and vigorous, their ears, tails, and so on, erect” (*ussāhena kaṇṇa,naṅgutṭh'ādini ukkhipitvā viravantā uppatanti*) and sporting inside the empty store-house the way they sport outside (SA 1:239,9).

⁸ Comy: No one attends to the floor-mat he has made up of straw and leaves to rest on after his labours, so that vermin infest it and assail him (SA 1:239,15 ff).

⁹ Be so; Ce Ee *dvi,puttā*.

¹⁰ Comy: The wives send their children to cadge food from the grandfather's meal, crowding out his hand from his own plate (SA 1:239 25 ff).

¹¹ “Wife” is implied on account of the feminine gender of the subject. Comy: Kept awake at night by rats and vermin, the brahmin lies sleepless till dawn. But, as soon he was able to close his eyelids, she kicks and summons him with a list of chores for the day (SA 1:239,30-240,3).

- 13** (10) *Na hi mayhaṃ brāhmaṇa
tuccha,koṭṭhasmi mūsikā
ussolhi,aya naccanti
tenâham brāhmaṇā sukhī.* S 657 Indeed, O brahmin, there are for me
no rats in an empty store-house,
briskly dancing around—
hence, O brahmin, happy am I!
- 14** (11) *Na hi mayhaṃ brāhmaṇa
santhāro satta,māsiko
uppātakehi sañchanno
tenâham brāhmaṇā sukhī.* S 658 Indeed, O brahmin, there is for me
no mat that for seven months
infested with a vermin swarm—
hence, O brahmin, happy am I!
- 15** (12) *Na hi mayhaṃ brāhmaṇa
vidhavā satta dhītarō
eka,puttā du,puttā ca
tenâham brāhmaṇā sukhī.* S 659 Indeed, O brahmin, there are for me
no seven daughters who have been widowed,
some with a son, some with two—
hence, O brahmin, happy am I!
- 16** (13) *Na hi mayhaṃ brāhmaṇa
piṅgalā tilakâhatā
sottaṃ pādena bodheti
tenâham brāhmaṇā sukhī.* S 660 Indeed, O brahmin, there is for me
no tawny, speckled wife who
wakens the sleeping with her foot—
hence, O brahmin, happy am I!
- 17** (14) *Na hi mayhaṃ brāhmaṇa
paccūsamhi iṇāyikā
detha dethāti codenti
tenâham brāhmaṇā sukhīti.* S 661 Indeed, O brahmin, for me there are
no debt-collectors at day-break,
berating, “Pay up! Pay up!”—
hence, O brahmin, happy am I!

7 When this was spoken, the brahmin of the Bhāra,dvāja clan said to the Blessed One:
“Excellent, Master Gotama! Excellent! Master Gotama!

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 clear by the Blessed Gotama.

I go to the Blessed Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.

May the Blessed Gotama give me the going-forth (*pabbajjā*), give me the ordination (*upasampadā*).”

8 The brahmin of the Bhāra,dvāja clan received the going-forth and the ordination in the Blessed One’s presence.

Bhāra,dvāja becomes an arhat

9 THE FULL ARHATHOOD PERICOPE¹²

Then, not long after he was ordained, the venerable Bhāra,dvāja, dwelling alone, aloof, diligent, exertive, and resolute,

in no long time at all, right here and now, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge,
attained and dwelled in the supreme goal of the holy life,

for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness.

¹² For details, see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.2+56.3), SD 7.14.

10 THE ARHAT'S REVIEW KNOWLEDGE

He directly knew:

“Birth is destroyed,
the holy life has been lived,
done what is to be done,
there is no more of this state of being.”¹³

And the venerable Bhāra,dvāja became one of the arhats.

— evaṃ —

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¹³ On this para and the next (the attainment of arhathood), see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.2/1:203) n, SD 7.14.