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Māna-t,thaddha Sutta

The Discourse on Pridestiff | S 7.15 [Ee S 7.2.5]

Theme: Respect should be shown to whom respect is due

Translated by Piya Tan ©2017

1 Introduction

1.1 Like the **Mahā,sāla Sutta** (S 7.14), which precedes it, the **Māna-t,thaddha Sutta** (S 7.15) has a social theme—it deals with the showing of respect to whom respect is due. The brahmin Pridestiff (*māna-t,thaddha*) is so arrogant that he does not show respect even to his parents, elders, or anyone worthy of respect. The situation, however, dramatically changes when he learns that the Buddha is able to read his mind. Impressed, he now “over-compensates” for his arrogance and falls at the Buddha’s feet. The Buddha has to invite him to get up and sit down on a proper seat.

1.2 The **Jenta Thera,gāthā** (Tha ch 218) relates the same story about the elder Jenta (Tha 423-438).¹ He is the son of the king of Kosala’s purohit (chaplain). In his youth, he is stiff with conceit (*māna-t,thaddha*). The term is a description, not a name.

The Thera,gāthā Commentary states that he is humbled by the Buddha’s verses [§§14-16] as related here. Upon hearing these verses, he becomes a streamwinner. Then, he renounces the world as a monk, and, in due course, attains arhathood. (ThaA 2:179 f)

1.3 “PRIDESTIFFS” IN OUR MIDST

1.3.1 The brahmin Māna-t,thaddha and the young Jenta are both examples of a person who is “stiff with pride” or puffed up with arrogance and conceit. We often see such people in the urban temples and Buddhist centres, especially the bigger ones patronized by the rich and the elite. The Māna-t,thaddha Sutta describes in keenly revealing details the characteristics of such a conceited person.

1.3.2 The Sutta describes him as someone who does not respectfully salute anyone. However, in our contemporary situation, the “**pridestiff**” is likely to be one who selective in his show of respect. He is more likely to greet those whom he regards as equals or as being superior to him, or someone whom he sees as being profitable for his desires or purposes. These are clear characteristics of conceit (*māna*).²

1.3.3 The Sutta describes the psychological traits of one conceited as that of being drawn to large gatherings and the presence of dignitaries. In our contemporary setting, this will be some public occasion, such as a talk by a well-known speaker or illustrious monastic. A pridestiff is likely to move around with an air of self-importance, ignoring others, but seeking the right kind of people who will greet him *first* and whom he deems as worthy of his response. [§4]

1.3.4 A wise and compassionate teacher will at some point present the teaching of the Māna-t,thaddha Sutta for the benefit of his audience. When such a teaching is given in the proper context of a Dharma talk, it will be easier for a pridestiff to see his own flaw and correct himself accordingly. Remaining silent about such conduct only condones and encourages the weakness, which may lead to other more complicated issues, especially when such a spiritually weak person becomes a Buddhist leader or elite.

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¹ Tha 218/423-428/179. There is another elder of the same name (but a different person) at **Tha 111**.

² On conceit (*mānā*), see SD 50.12 (2.4.3).

The Discourse on Pridestiff

S 7.15

The brahmin approaches the Buddha

1 Originating in Sāvattḥī.

2 Now at that time, a brahmin named Māna-t,thaddha (Pridestiff)³ was living in Sāvattḥī. He does not respectfully salute mother, nor father, nor teacher, nor eldest brother.⁴

3 Now at that time, the Blessed One was teaching the Dharma surrounded by the large assembly.

4 Then, it occurred to the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha:

“This recluse Gotama is teaching the Dharma to a large assembly. What now if I were to approach the recluse Gotama. If the recluse Gotama addresses me, I will address him, too. If the recluse Gotama does not address me, then, I will not address him!”

The Buddha addresses the brahmin

5 Then, the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha approached the Blessed One, and remaining silent, stood at one side.

But the Blessed One did not address him. Then, the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha thought:

“This recluse Gotama knows nothing!”⁵ and decided to turn back.⁶ [178]

6 Then, the Blessed One, knowing, with his own mind, the thoughts in the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha’s mind, uttered this verse:

7 *Na mānaṃ brūhaṇā⁷ sādhu
atthi,kassīdha brāhmaṇa.
Yena atthena āgacchi⁸
tam evam anubrūhaye’ti.⁹*

Harbouring conceit is not good
for one’s welfare here, brahmin.
If you have come for your welfare,
then, devote yourself to just that.

³ *Māna*, “conceit, arrogance, pride” + *thaddha* (past part of *thambhati*, “become stiff or rigid”), “hard, stiff.” *Māna-t,thaddha* is clearly either the brahmin’s nickname for him, reflecting the occasion. The name, Pridestiff, was invented by C A F Rhys Davids (S:RD 1:224). As “conceit, etc,” *māna* (ts) is der from VMĀ, to measure (eg Dh 74, 94, 150, 407). It is also related to Skt *māna* < VMĀN, to think. See Dh:N 115 n221.

⁴ *So n’eva mātarāṃ abhivādeti, na pitarāṃ abhivādeti, na ācariyaṃ abhivādeti, na jeṭṭha,bhātaraṃ abhivādeti.* On the karmic benefits of respectfully saluting elders and seniors, see Dh 109.

⁵ The brahmin thinks: “This recluse does not show any hospitality to one like me, a brahmin accomplished in birth. Hence, he knows nothing!” (*yasmā ayaṃ samaṇo mādisse jāti,sampanna,brāhmaṇe sampatte paṭisanthāra,mattam pi na karoti, tasmā na kiñci jānātīti*, SA 1:264).

⁶ *Nāyaṃ samaṇo gotamo kiñci jānātīti tato’va puna nivattitu,kāmo ahoṣi.*

⁷ Ce so; other MSS, incl ThaA 2:179, have *brāhmaṇa*, so that this voc repeats in line b. Ce reading is best.

⁸ Be Ee *āgacchi*; Ce Se *āgañchi*.

⁹ *Anubrūhaye*, 2 sg, S 1:178,5* (Skt *anu* + √BṛmH, VṛmH: see CPD: *anu-brūheti*) to make increase (gradually), to throw strain upon, to devote oneself to, to practise (acc), to foster. Pres part middle voice Ap 174,17 (Ee ~anto) = Tha:Ce 201,31*; J 5:456,23; pres part mid, m ~*ayamāno* (*vivekaṃ*), M 3:116,11; imper 2 sg ~*ehi* (*tam eva* ~), Thī 163; pot 3 sg ~*aye* (*vivekaṃ*), Dh 75 (DhA); M 3:187,25*, qu Ap 506,4; ~*eyya* (*cāgaṃ*), M 3:239,14; aor 1 sg ~*ayim* (*sarivegaṃ*), C 3:1,2 (cf J 4:120,13 f); fut 1 sg ~*essāmi* (*vivekaṃ*), 3:31,14, 6:256,30 (°*brūhissāmi*); 1 pl ~*essāma* (*suññāgāraṃ*), J 3:191,5 (cf M 1:33,12); inf ~*etuṃ* (*vivekaṃ*), J 1:9,31, qu Sadd 459,9; past part *anu-brūhita*: CPD sv.

The brahmin converts

8 Then, the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha realized: “The recluse Gotama knows my mind!”

And right there fell on his face at the Blessed One’s feet, kissed and stroke them,

9 and announced his name:

“I am the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha, master Gotama! I am the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha, master Gotama!”¹⁰

10 Then, the assembly was struck with wonder, and said (to one another):

“How amazing, sirs! How wonderful, sirs! This brahmin Māna-t,thaddha does not even respectfully salute mother, nor father, nor teacher, nor eldest brother.

11 But, he shows such supreme obeisance to the recluse Gotama!”¹¹

The Buddha instructs the brahmin

12 Then, the Blessed One said to the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha:

“Enough, brahmin! Please get up. Sit on your own seat, as your mind is filled with faith in me.”¹²

13 Then, the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha sat down on his own seat and addressed the Blessed One in verse:

<p>14 <i>Kesu na mānaṃ kayirātha</i>¹³ <i>kesu c’assa sagāravo.</i> <i>Ky-assa apacitā assu</i> <i>Ky-assu sādhu supūjitā’ti.</i></p>	<p>690</p>	<p>Toward whom should not show conceit? To whom should one show respect? To whom should honour be shown? Whom is it good to properly venerate?</p>
<p>15 <i>Mātari pitari cāpi</i> <i>atho jeṭṭhamhi bhātari.</i> <i>ācariye catutthamhi.</i> <i>Tesu na mānaṃ kayirātha,</i> <i>tesu assa sagāravo.</i> <i>Tyassa apacitā assu</i> <i>tyassu sādhu supūjitā.</i></p>	<p>691</p>	<p>Father and mother, too, and also one’s eldest brother; a teacher is the fourth. One should show no conceit to them. One should show them respect. One should honour them. It is good to properly venerate them.</p>
<p>16 <i>Arahante sītī,bhūte</i> <i>kata,kicce anāsava</i> <i>nihacca mānaṃ athaddho</i> <i>te namasse anuttare’ti.</i></p>	<p>682</p>	<p>The arhats, whose hearts are cool,¹⁴ whose work is done, influx-free, who have overcome conceit, humble, the unsurpassed—one should honour them.</p>

¹⁰ In **Ahiṃsaka S** (S 7.15,3), we see Ahiṃsaka similarly introducing him at the start of his meeting the Buddha (SD 50.21).

¹¹ *Atha ca pana samaṇe gotame eva,rūpaṃ parama,nipacca,kāraṃ karotīti.* **Nipacca** (“obeisance”) is absol of *nipatati*, “falls down (before someone).” *Nipacca* expresses the abstract but observable state evoked by such an action. This phrase *eva,rūpaṃ parama,nipacca,kāraṃ karoti* similarly describes king Pasenadi’s attitude to the Buddha in **Dhamma,cetiya S** (M 89,9/2:120,6), SD 64.10. On the wholesome reason for arhats to show such supreme honour to the Buddha, see **Sūkara,khata S** (S 48.58/5:234), SD 110.6.

¹² *Alaṃ brāhmaṇa utṭhehi sake āsane nisīda, yato te mayi cittaṃ pasannaṃ’ti.*

¹³ For a parallel to the story of the elder Jenta, see (1.2). Cf the story of the arrogant brahmin Jāti,manta, proud of his birth, humbled by the Bodhisattva in **Mātaṅga J** (J 497/4:388).

¹⁴ “Cool” (*sīti*) here contrast with the burning fires (*aggi*) of greed, hate and delusion: cf Thī 15. A syn is “cooled” (*nibbuta*) (ThA 21).

17 When this was said, the brahmin Māna-t,thaddha said to the Blessed One:

“Wonderful, master Gotama! Wonderful, master Gotama! Just as if one

were to place upright what had been overturned, or

were to reveal what was hidden, or

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 master Gotama has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

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

May master Gotama remember me as a layman who has gone for refuge from this day forth for life.”

— evaṃ —

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