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(Duka) Padhāna Sutta

The (Twos) Discourse on Striving | A 2.2/1:49 = A 2.1.1.2

Theme: The highest striving is that of the abandoning of all acquisitions

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2.1 SUTTA THEME

2.1.1 Difficult life-styles

The **(Duka) Padhāna Sutta** (A 2.2) mentions 2 kinds of difficult life-styles: the first is that of a lay person who strives to regularly offer alms to renunciants, and the other, the renunciant who is bent on “abandoning all acquisitions.” Clearly, these two kinds of practitioners reflect the two sides of the ideal early Buddhist community: the faithful and generous layperson, and the faithful and diligent renunciant.

2.1.2 *Vīriya* and *padhāna*

2.1.2.1 The Commentary defines “striving” (*padhānāni*, plural) as “(all kinds of) efforts” (*vīriyāni*)—this is on account of the 2 kinds of striving mentioned in the Sutta. It adds that **striving** (*padhāna*) is so called on account of “that which should be exerted with effort” (for the worldling), or “on account of the state of striving” (for the learners (*vīriyañhi padahitabbato padhāna, bhava, karaṇato vā padhānan’ti vuccati*)).¹ (AA 2:92)

2.1.2.2 The usual Pali for “effort” is ***vīriya***—literally, “the state of a hero (*vīrassa bhāvo*).”² It can be spelt either as *vīriya* or as *vīriya*.³ As a limb (*aṅga*) of the noble eightfold path, it is called ***vāyāma*** (that is, as “right effort,” *sammā, vāyāma*). These senses of effort that needs to be exerted more deliberately is especially applied to worldlings.

The word “striving” (***padhāna***) is usually applied to the saints of the path, for whom the “energy” is more spontaneous and efficacious.⁴ Hence, the 4 kinds of right “striving” for the saints of the path is called ***samma-p, padhāna***, which is sometimes used as a limb of the noble eightfold path (that is, in reference to the saints). This may be called the “striving of the path,” that is, the spontaneous efforts of the streamwinners and the other saints.

2.2 THE 2 KINDS OF INDIVIDUALS

2.2.2 The faithful generous layperson

2.2.2.1 The Sutta lists the 4 kinds of support (*paccaya*) or requisites (*parikkhāra*) that a lay person may offer to a renunciant—that is, “robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicine and support for the sick” (*cīvara, piṇḍapāta, senāsana, gilāna.paccaya. bhesajja*) [§1]. The Commentary explains that great is the difficulty in obtaining of these 4 supports of robes, etc⁵ (AA 2:92).

¹ See also SD 10.1 (4).

² Sadd 785,18, 790,2.

³ Sadd 785,18, 921,16.

⁴ SD 10.1 (4); SD 10.2 (1.3).

⁵ *Cīvara, piṇḍapāta, senāsana, gilāna.paccaya. bhesajja. parikkhārānuppadān’atthaṃ padhānan’ti* etesaṃ cīva-
r’ādīnaṃ catunnaṃ paccayānaṃ anuppadān’atthāya padhānaṃ nāma durabhisambhavan’ti dasseti. (AA 2:92)

2.2.2.2 The Commentary illustrates these difficulties with a parable of two warring factions, having taken any of these 4 things and saying, “Give to the other side a piece of rag 4 cubits wide, or a meal of a mere handful of rice, or a leaf-hut 4 cubits wide, or a mere bit of oil, ghee or fresh butter as medicine!”⁶ (AA 2:92)

The Commentary then quotes the Buddha as saying in **the Sādhu Sutta** (S 1.33) and **the Āditta Jātaka** (J 425), thus:

*Dānañ ca yuddhañ ca samānam āhu
appāpi santā bahuke jinanti
appam pi ce saddahāno dadāti
ten’eva so hoti sukhī par’atthāti.*

Giving and warfare are similar, it is said:
a few good conquer many.
When one gives even a little with faith,
with that he becomes happy hereafter.

(S 97*/1.33/1:20; J 425) (AA 2:92)

2.2.3 The faithful diligent renunciant

2.2.3.1 The Commentary explains renunciation—the condition of those “**who have gone forth from home into homelessness**”—as that of “the taking up of the going-forth as homelessness, that is, leaving the house, and the benefits of the household life, abstaining from any occupation, such as farming and cattle herding.”⁷ (AA 2:92)

The phrase, “abstaining from any occupation” (*-ādīhi virahitaṃ*), is generic, that is, it also precludes any kind of gainful employment, the spirit of which is clearly highlighted in such texts as **the Kasi Bhāra, dvāja Sutta** (S 7.11 = Sn 1.4), which essentially says that teach or “sing verses” (*gāthā’bhigita*) for a living.⁸ In **the Dhaniya Sutta** (Sn 1.2), the Buddha declares that he is neither a “wage-earner” (*bhata*, Sn 24a) nor a “hireling” (*bhataka*, Sn 25a), and that he owns no cattle, owns nothing, and has “no use for wages” (*attho bhatiyā na vijjati*, Sn 25c).⁹

It is clear, then, a renunciant—if he is to follow the Buddha’s teaching—will be a “career cleric,” such as working as a salaried teacher or lecturer.¹⁰ Only the 4 supports and allowable requisites should be offered to monastic renunciants, and they should reject whatever that is offered that is unallowable (such as money and luxury items).¹¹

2.2.3.2 The Sutta goes on to tell us that, of the two kinds of striving (*padhāna*), that the of renunciant is “the foremost” (*agga*), because it is the striving for “the abandoning of all acquisitions” (*sabbūpādhi, paṭinissagga*). This is, of course, a synonym for the attaining of the path of awakening, ending in nirvana itself.

The Commentary mentions 3 kinds of acquisitions (upādhi):

- (1) the 5 aggregates (*khandha*), which refers to our own “personality” of body and mind;
- (2) the defilements (*kilesa*), that is, all that is rooted in greed, hate and delusion; and
- (3) the volitional formations (*abhisāṅkhāra*), that is, all our other mental activities, whether good, bad or neutral [1.2.2.5].

⁶ Catu, ratanikam pi hi pilotikaṃ, pasata, taṇḍula, mattaṃ vā bhattaṃ, catu, ratanikaṃ vā paṇṇa, sālāṃ, tela, sappi, nava. nīṭ’ādisu vā appa, mattakam pi bhesajjaṃ paresaṃ dethāti vattum pi nīharitvā datum pi dukkaraṃ ubhato, vyūḷha, saṅgāma-p, pavesana, sadisaṃ. (AA 2:92)

⁷ **Agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajitānaṃ**’ti gehato nikkhamitvā agārassa ghar’āvāsassa hitā, vahehi kasi, go, rakkh’-ādīhi virahitaṃ anagāriyaṃ pabbajjaṃ upagatānaṃ.

⁸ SD S 7.11 (S 641) = Sn 1.4 (Sn 82 = 481), SD 69.6.

⁹ Sn 1.2 (SD 50.20).

¹⁰ See **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8 (1.4.3).

¹¹ See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19-23.

The “abandoning of all acquisitions,” as a synonym for nirvana refers to the striving for this goal of self-awakening, or, more specifically, this is the energy that arises with insight and the path.¹² (AA 2:92)

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The (Two) Discourse on Striving

A 2.2

- 1 “Bhikshus, there are these two kinds of striving difficult to fulfill in the world.¹³ What are the two?
- 2 (1) The striving of the laity dwelling at home wishing¹⁴ to offer robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicine and support for the sick;¹⁵ and
(2) the striving of the renunciants who have gone forth from home into homelessness for the sake of the abandoning of all acquisitions.¹⁶
These, bhikshus, are the two kinds of striving difficult to fulfill in the world.
- 3 Of these two kinds of striving bhikshus, the foremost is the striving for the abandoning of all acquisitions.
- 4 Therefore, bhikshus, you should train yourselves thus:
‘We will strive for the abandoning of all acquisitions.’
- 5 This, bhikshus, is how you should train yourselves.”

— evaṃ —

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¹² *Sabbūpadhi, paṭinissagg’atthāya padhāna*’ti sabbesaṃ khandhūpadhi, kilesūpadhi, abhisāṅkhārūpadhi, saṅkhātānaṃ upadhīnaṃ paṭinissagga, saṅkhātassa nibbānassa atthāya vipassanāya c’eva maggena ca saha jāta, vīriyaṃ. (AA 2:92)

¹³ *Dve’ māni bhikkhave padhānāni durabhisambhavāni lokasmim*. The cpd *durabhisambhava* (mfn, pres), “difficult to obtain, attain, handle, master”: *du-* (“difficult”) + *r* (sandhi infix) + *abhi-sam-bhava* (M 1:16,30; A 5:202,4; Sn 429, 701; SnA 492,2; J 2:233,14’, 5:269,11*, 6:139,6*, 143,29*, 439,21*; compar D 2:131,6; S 5:454,2); a rare word.

¹⁴ Contextually, *-attha-* (which usu means “for the purpose or sake of”) [as in (2)] should here be rendered as “wishing, desiring,” which makes good sense.

¹⁵ *Yaṅ ca gihīnaṃ agāraṃ ajjhāvasataṃ cīvara, piṇḍapāta, senāsana, gilāna, paccaya, bhesajja, parikkhārānuppadānāthaṃ padhānaṃ*. On *-anuppadānātha* in the same context (of offering the requisites), see M 3:254,12; A 1:49,16, 123,32; Miln 315,9.

¹⁶ *Yaṅ ca agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajitānaṃ sabbūpadhi, paṭinissagg’atthaṃ padhānaṃ*. See (2.2.3.2).