

2

Paviveka Sutta

The Discourse on Seclusion | A 3.92 [A:B 3:93]

Theme: The nature of true spiritual seclusion

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2007, 2013

1 Religion as solitude

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

The **Paviveka Sutta** (A 3.92) is about two kinds of seclusion: religious seclusion and spiritual seclusion. These are helpful terms that reflect their essential nature. Each of these kinds of seclusion is further characterized as being of three kinds. Religious seclusion is defined by three kinds of external or formal seclusion [1.2], while spiritual seclusion is defined by the practitioner’s inner state [3].

1.2 PAVIVEKA AND VIVEKA

1.2.1 Etymology and usages of paviveka

1.2.1.1 Paviveka comes from *pa + vi + √VIC*, “to separate,” meaning “retirement, solitude, seclusion.”¹ Semantically, *paviveka* and *viveka* are synonyms. Their difference is that while *paviveka* is more often used in connection with physical solitude and meditation, *viveka* is more often used in the result of meditation or in a spiritual aloneness [1.2.2.1]. Generally,² I have rendered *paviveka* as “seclusion” and *viveka* as “solitude.”

Most early Buddhist terms, like *paviveka* and *viveka*, are not technical terms. They do not have fixed meanings but their sense or usage is clearly apparent from their contexts. Despite being translated differently, both *paviveka* and *viveka* can be rendered as “solitude,” especially in the spiritual context. It is helpful, however, to use their respective translations when we want to know the original Pali word.

1.2.1.2 Often, the difference is not discernible, except from a careful analysis of the context. Here are a few examples:

<i>abhirato paviveko</i>	delighting in seclusion	D 2/1:60 f
<i>pavivekaṃ pītiṃ upasampajja</i>	attained to the zest that is seclusion	M 102/2:235
<i>pavivekādhimutto</i>	fervent devotion to mental seclusion (dhyana)	A 6.55/3:377,20
<i>pavivek’ārāmo paviveka,ratam</i>	(Buddha) enjoying solitude, delighting in seclusion	It 38/31,14
<i>paviveko hi jhāyinam</i>	for, solitude is for meditators	Tha 597

The **Yasa Sutta** (A 8.86) gives a list of 4 joys (*sukha*), that is,

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| (1) the “joy of renunciation,” | <i>nekkhamma,sukha</i> |
| (2) the “joy of solitude,” | <i>paviveka,sukha</i> |
| (3) the “joy of peace,” and | <i>upasama,sukha</i> |
| (4) the “joy of self-awakening.” ³ | <i>sambodha,sukha</i> |

While the Sutta explains the “joy of solitude” as a bliss of being independent of the group and being free from defilements, the Majjhima Commentary says that it refers to *jhāna* (MA 3:171).

¹ V 1:104, 2:258 (*appicchatā santuṭṭhi*~; cf *pavivitta*); D 1:60; M 1:14 f; S 2:202, 5:398; A 1:240; Sn 257; Dh 205 (~*rasa*, cf DhA 3:268); Tha 597; J 1:9; MA 2:244; Vism 41, 73 (~*sukha,rasa*); Sdhp 476; DA 1:169.

² For the sake of discussion, these 2 trs help. However, in actual translation, the context sometimes dictates an idiomatic translation, where for example “solitude” (abstract) for *paviveka*, or seclusion (physical) for *viveka*.

³ A 8.86/4:341-342. See also **Saḷāyatana S** (M 137,16/3:220), SD 29.5; **Pañcak’aṅga S** (S 36.12-15/4:225 f), SD 30.1.

1.2.2 Etymology and usages of *viveka*.

1.2.2.1 *Viveka* comes from *vi+* √VIC, “to separate,” meaning “detachment, aloneness, separateness, seclusion, solitude; ‘singleness’ (of heart), discrimination (of thought).”⁴ On a simpler level, **the Visuddhi,magga** defines the 3 kinds of solitude in terms of the first dhyana, as in this famous pericope:

Quite detached from sensual pleasures, detached from unwholesome mental states, he enters and dwells in **the first dhyana**, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and joy, born of seclusion.⁵ (D 2,75.2/1:73), SD 8.10⁶

The correlation here is as follows:

“**quite detached from sensual pleasures**” (*vivicc’eva kāmehi*) = bodily solitude;
 “**detached from unwholesome mental states**” (*vivicca akusalehi dhammehi*) = “mental solitude;
 “**born of seclusion**” (*viveka,ja*) = the absence of the 5 mental hindrances.

1.2.2.2 Here, we see the form, *vivitta*, “quite detached or secluded (from),” the gerund (or verbal noun) of *viveka*. This word refers to the complete, even if temporary, overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances of sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.⁷

1.2.2.3 Technically, then, the 3 solitudes here are:

- (1) “bodily solitude” (*kāya,viveka*),
- (2) “mental solitude” (*citta,viveka*), and
- (3) “solitude by suppression” (*vikkhambhana,viveka*).⁸

“Bodily solitude” refers to the right conditions for meditation and the removal of mental hindrances; “mental solitude” is that of the dhyanas, and “solitude by suppression” refers to the suspension of all the 5 mental hindrances (sensual lust, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt).

1.2.3 The 3 solitudes

The 3 solitudes, on a higher level, are described and defined in greater detail in **the Mahā Niddesa** in terms of

- (1) bodily solitude (*kāya,viveka*),
- (2) mental solitude (*citta,viveka*), and
- (3) solitude from substrates (*upadhi,viveka*) (Nm 26), this last is the same as nirvana.⁹

So here, while (1) is the physical and bodily preparation for meditation and overcoming the mental hindrances, (2) is the actual attaining of dhyana (or at least some level of samadhi), and (3) is the attaining of actual release, often described as “the calming of all formations, the giving up of all substrates, the destruction of lust, on dispassion,¹⁰ cessation of (suffering), nirvana” (Nm 27).¹¹ Details below [1.2.5.4].

⁴ D 1:37, 182, 3:222, 226, 283 = S 4:191 (~*ninna citta*); S 1:2, 194, 4:365 f, 5:6, 240 f; A 1:53, 3:329, 4:224; V 4:241; Sn 474, 772, 822, 851, 915, 1065; Nm 158, 222; J 1:79, 3:31; Dhs 160; Pug 59, 68; Nett 16, 50; DhsA 164, 166; ThaA 64; PvA 43; Sdhp 471.

⁵ *Vivicc’eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi sa,vitakkam sa,vicāram viveka,jam pīti,sukham paṭhama-j,jhānam*

⁶ For further details on the 1st dhyana, see SD 8.4 (5.1).

⁷ See *Viveka,nissita*, SD 20.4 (4).

⁸ Vism 4.82/140, 4.87/141.

⁹ See also D:RD 1:84.

¹⁰ In the *viveka,nissita* formula of the suttas (see foll), *virāga* here includes the preceding sense of “the destruction of lust”; then *virāga* tr as “the fading of lust [dispassion].”

¹¹ *Sabba,sāṅkhāra,samatho sabbūpadhi,paṇinissaggo tanha-k,khayo virāgo nirodho nibbānam* (Nm 26, 140, 157, 341). The sutta (and older) formula for this is: “dependent on solitude, dependent on fading away (of lust) [on dis-

1.2.4 The 5 kinds of solitude

The **Paṭisambhidā,magga** and the Commentaries expand on the second solitude, but omitting the first altogether, to give us **the 5 kinds of solitude**—detailing more on the overcoming of the hindrances (*samyojana*) and the influxes (*āsava*), that is,

- (1) “solitude by displacement” (*tad-aṅga,viveka*), attaining some level of calmness, especially the first dhyana, so that the unwholesome state is at least temporarily suppressed;
- (2) “solitude by suppression” (*vikkhambhana,viveka*), the application of insight into the situation, especially after some level of mental calm;
- (3) “the solitude by uprooting” (*samuccheda,viveka*) occurs “for one who develops the supramundane path that leads to the destruction of the influxes,”¹² and consists in “abandoning of states that are fetters, etc, by means of the knowledge of the noble path, such that they do not occur again.”¹³
- (4) “the solitude by tranquillization” (*paṭipassaddhi,viveka*), occurs at the moment of fruition, and
- (5) “the solitude by escape” (*nissaraṇa,viveka*), the cessation that is nirvana.¹⁴

Technically, numbers (1) and (2) come under “mental solitude” as a temporary suspension of the mental hindrances, and numbers (3) to (5) relate to “solitude from substrates.”

1.2.5 Contrast

1.2.5.1 While both *paviveka* and *viveka* are found in the early Buddhist texts, *paviveka* has a broader sense, including both Buddhist and non-Buddhist meanings. In **the Paviveka Sutta** (A 3.92), we see it applied to both these cases, that is, the non-Buddhist and the Buddhist definitions of solitude.

1.2.5.2 A common intermediate term would be *paṭisallāna*, “solitary retreat,” which is daily done just before sunrise and around sunset by the Buddha and the arhats, and which other monastics are also encouraged to do.¹⁵ *Paṭisallāna* usually refers to the actual practice, which depends on physical and mental solitude, and whose goal is the attaining of deeper mental solitude and the solitude of the substrates, that is, awakening itself.

1.2.5.3 *Viveka*, on the other hand, has a more specific and technical application. It is more often used in a spiritual and psychological context of meditation and its results, that is, in relation to mental states that are related to the stages of the path and to awakened states. On a meditation level, the first dhyana, for example, is said to be “zest and happiness born of solitude” (*viveka,ja pīti,sukha*), that is, the result of letting go or renouncing “the world” or the 5 physical sense-stimuli and thinking.¹⁶ [1.2.2.2]

1.2.5.4 The third kind of solitude—**the solitude from the substrates**—is the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all substrates, the destruction of lust, fading away, cessation, nirvana. This refers to the letting go of and freedom from the 5 aggregates,¹⁷ sensual desire,¹⁸ mental defilements,¹⁹ and

passion], dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements).” (*viveka,nissitam virāga,nissitam nirodha,nissitam vossagga,pariṇāmin*): see **Viveka,nissita**, SD 20.4. For a tr of Nm 27, see UA: M 667-669.

¹² *Samuccheda-p,pahānaṅ ca lokuttara-khaya,gāmi,maggaṅ bhāvaṃyato* (PM 1:27). “**Influxes**” or mental influxes (*āsava*), comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as influxes, taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, bad (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists **4 influxes** as the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām ’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav ’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh ’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 33,1.10(20)/-3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these āsavas is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: āsava.

¹³ *Ariya,magga,ñāṇena samyojanādīnaṃ dhammānaṃ yathā na puna pavattanti* (Vism 22.122/696). Pm 1:27 also mentions a variety of subsidiary types of abandoning.

¹⁴ Pm 1:27, 2:219-224; MA 1:85; UA 32 (see UA:M 57 f); Vism 13.12/410, 22.110/693; Dhs §160; DhsA 12, 164. For details, see **Sati’paṭṭhāna Ss**, SD 13.1 (4.2.3).

¹⁵ See **Paṭisallāna S** (It 45) + SD 41.4 (1), & **Viveka,ja S** (S 28.1), SD 33.3a.

¹⁶ See **Viveka,nissita**, SD 20.4 (4).

¹⁷ On the 5 aggregates, see SD 17.

karma,²⁰ collectively known as “the substrates” (*upadhi*), the essentials of life or substratum of existence, or simply, the fuel of life. It is often mentioned in the suttas, especially in the older sections.²¹

1.3 RELIGIOUS SOLITUDE

1.3.0 Definition

1.3.0.1 “Seclusion” (*paviveka*) refers to the ritual conduct of “outside sectarian wanderers” (*nānā, titthiya paribbājaka*), that is, the seclusion of robes, of almsfood, and of lodging [§1]. Here, seclusion is the means by which someone or a group is set apart from others—to be an individual “set apart” from others, or a group that is unique or “exclusive” in a spiritual sense. Ritually, this “seclusion” is a special conduct or appearance with which one identifies so that one is legitimate and authentic as a recluse.

1.3.0.2 At best, these are external seclusion or formal displays of solitude without any inner content. At worst, they are examples of false religions, those that employ religious externality to exploit the pious and gullible. In other, for false recluses, these modes of “seclusion” are merely means of earning a living or making a career out of the holy life.

1.3.0.3 These lists of materials for robes and for almsfood (that is, excepting the places for lodging) are stock passages found in a well-known longer pericope, especially those of the first 13 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya (D 1-13).²² This pericope describes the asceticism of “outsiders,” that is, they are not practised or used by the Buddhist monastics or they are misused by these outside sectarian wanderers in the name of religion.

1.3.1 The seclusion of robes

The Sutta gives us a long list of materials used as robes by the outside sectarian wanderers [§1.2]. Of the 13 kinds of materials listed, only the first 4 have any semblance of cloth, but only “shrouds” (*chava, dussa*, “corpse-cloth”) and “dust-heap cloths” (*paṃsukūla*) are used by the Buddhist monastics. The other materials come from grass, trees, birds or animals. These bizarre forms of materials, such as “owl-wings” (*ulūka, pakkhika*) are clearly used to exude a sense of holiness or “otherness,” of being apart from the common masses, or to attribute themselves with charisma or an aura of superiority, so as to attract devotion and patronage from others.

1.3.2 The seclusion of almsfood

The term *piṇḍa, pāta* [§1.3], as used by the Buddhists means “almsfood.” It literally means “morsels (or lumps or balls of rice); (*piṇḍa*) “dropped” (*pāta*) (into the almsbowl).²³ The general meaning is that this is food offered as alms to others, that is, the Buddhist monastics as well as the outside sectarian wanderers.

Amongst the brahmins, *piṇḍa* refers to ritual rice-balls offered to the departed (*preta*),²⁴ as funerary offerings (*śrāddha*, P *saddha*)²⁵ for raising their status to a higher liberated state as heavenly “fathers” (*pitṛ*). The ritual includes meal-offerings to invited brahmins, who represent the ancestors. A large section of the third book of Māṇava Dharmaśāstra (122-286) centres around *śrāddha*.²⁶

¹⁸ On sensual desire, see *Kāma-c, chanda*, SD 32.2.

¹⁹ On mental defilements, see *Sexuality*, SD 31.7.

²⁰ See *Karma*, SD 18.1.

²¹ Sn 33c, 33d || 364a, 34c, 374c546a = 572a, 728ce = 1051ac.

²² Eg *Kassapa Siha, nāda S* (D 8,14/1:165-167 @ SD 77.1) = *Udumbarikā Siha, nāda S* (D 25,8b/3:41 @ SD 1.4) = *Mahā Siha, nāda S* (M 12,45/1:77 f @ SD 49.1) = *Kandaraka S* (M 51,8/1:342 f @ SD 32.9) = *Apaṇṇaka S* (M 60,36/1:412 @ SD 35.5, with 6 additional observances) = *Ghoṭa, mukha S* (M 94,10/2:161 @ SD 77.2) = *Acelaḥka Paṭipadā S* (A 3.141/1:295) = *Atta, daṇḍa Sutta N* (Nm 15/416 f).

²³ V 1:253, 2:32, 299, 3:15; M 1:30, 3:41; S 1:76; A 3:391; Sn 217, 388, 391; Pug 59, 69; J 1:7; Miln 243.

²⁴ Skt cognate of P *peta*, “the departed”: see SD 2.7 (3).

²⁵ This is the theme of (*Saddha*) *Jāṇussoṇi S* (A 10.177), SD 2.6a.

²⁶ Klaus K Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism*, Albany: State Univ of New York Press, 1994; Dakshina Ranjan

In the case of the outside sectarian wanderers, it is likely that they consume these almsfood fresh or raw, except in the case of rice-remnants (which are cooked) and cow-dung (which are probably dried, so that they do not stink). Again here, the agenda is to present themselves as being apart from the common masses, so as to attract charisma and devotion from the masses.

1.3.3 The seclusion of lodging

The Sutta lists 7 places that the outside sectarian wanderers regard as “seclusion” [§1.4]. These places are part of a well known stock. **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2) gives a fuller set of 9 places suitable for meditation, and the spiritual preparation for living in such places, thus: “Possessing this aggregate of noble moral virtue, this aggregate of noble sense-restraint, this aggregate of noble mindfulness and clear comprehension, and this aggregate of noble contentment, he resorts to a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a gorge, a hillside cave, a cemetery, a remote forest [jungle grove], the open air, a heap of straw.”²⁷

The earliest version of such a place-list is probably a stock phrase of 3 places (forest, *arañña*; the foot of a tree, *rukkha,mūla*; empty place, *suññ'āgāra*), conducive to meditation.²⁸ These are clearly the kinds of places that the early itinerant monks would resort to. As the order grew and spread, the forest monks made use of more places.

The oldest reference to an ideal meditation spot is in **the Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26) and **the Saṅgā-rava Sutta** (M 100): “Still in search of the wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I walked by stages through Magadha until eventually I arrived at Senānigama near Uruvelā. There I saw an agreeable spot, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. I sat down there thinking: ‘This is conducive for spiritual striving.’”²⁹

Such places for living and meditating were easily available outside of the crowded urban areas. As such, they were not merely restricted to Buddhist forest monks but available to any wanderers who lived away from villages or urban areas. Perhaps here, the outside sectarian wanderers were trying to emulate the Buddhist eremites.

2 Spiritual seclusion

2.1 THE TRUE MONASTIC PRACTICE

True spiritual solitude or seclusion is that of a true monastic or practitioner, and is defined as (1) bodily solitude, (2) mental solitude, and (3) supramundane solitude, respectively, thus:

- (1) a monk is morally virtuous, and immorality has been abandoned by him, and so is secluded;³⁰
sīlavā ca hoti, dussīlyañ c'assa pahīnam hoti, tena ca vivitto hoti
- (2) he is of right view, and has given up wrong views,³¹ and so is secluded;
sammā,dīṭṭhiko ca hoti, micchā,dīṭṭhi c'assa pahīnā hoti, tāya ca vivitto hoti.
- (3) he is one who has destroyed the defilements, having given up the influxes, and so is secluded.

Shastri, *Origin and Development of Rituals of Ancestor Worship in India*, Calcutta: Bookland, 1963.

²⁷ *So iminā ca ariyena sīla-k,khandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya,samvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati,sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhitāya samannāgato vivittam senāsanam bhajati, arañnam rukkha,mulam pabbatam kandaram giri,guham susanam vana,pattham abbhokasam palala,puñjam, D 2.67/1:71 @ SD 8.10; V 2:146; M 3:3; A 2:210. These are def at DA 209-210, VbhA 366 f.*

²⁸ D 2:291; M 1:56, 297, 398, 425, 2:263, 3:82, 89, 4:297; S 5:311, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 323, 329, 336; A 1:-147, 148, 149, 3:92, 100, 4:437, 5:109, 110, 111; Pm 1:175, 2:36.

²⁹ M 26.17/1:167 = 100.13/2:212). See A:W 1:220 n8.

³⁰ *Sīlavā ca hoti, dussīlyañ c'assa pahīnam hoti, tena ca vivitto hoti.*

³¹ Comy says that “his abandoning of immorality” (*dussīlyañ c'assa pahīnam*) and “his giving up of wrong views” (*micchā,dīṭṭhi c'assa pahīnā*) is spoken of in reference to the state of letting-go (or abandoning of defilements) by the path of streamwinning (AA 2:355).

khīṇ'āsavo ca hoti, āsavā cāssa pahīnā honti, tehi ca vivitto hoti. [§2.3]

The phrase “**true monastic**” is vital here—for, there are many who don the cloth but are simply making a career or a convenience of a respectable lifestyle, many even fallen into the rut of being what the suttas call “yellow-necks” (*kāsāva,kaṇṭhā*), “members of the religious lineage, immoral, of bad nature.”³² Such teachings are clear reminders of the tasks of a monastic, that of moral virtue, meditation and awakening in this life itself.

2.2 MEDITATION AS SECLUSION

That the 3 solitudes directly refer to meditation, and spiritual practice is also clearly mentioned in the Commentaries, where they are listed as follows:³³

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) solitude of the body | (<i>kāya viveka</i>), | that is, physical solitude, |
| (2) solitude of the mind | (<i>citta viveka</i>), | that is, spiritual solitude, and |
| (3) solitude from the substrates | (<i>upadhi viveka</i>), | that is, nirvana. |

2.2.1 Bodily solitude

The Paviveka Sutta broadly defines “**bodily solitude**” (*kāya,viveka*) as moral virtue and the abandoning of immorality. The Sutta here is not being repetitive or verbose at all. “Moral virtue” refers to the keeping of the precepts: a monastic keeping to the monastic precepts and related decorum, and the laity keeping at least to the 5 precepts. These precepts have to do with the body (the first 3 of the 5 precepts) and speech (the fourth precept). The fifth precept has to do with keeping the mind unclouded and clear so that we are mindful.³⁴

“The abandoning of immorality” has to do with the keeping of the body and speech steadily in moral virtue so that none of the 5 physical senses is the source of any distraction or defilement for the mind. Technically, this is the abandoning of the 5 mental hindrances (sensual lust, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt).³⁵ This is defined in a well known stock passage on meditation:

Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome mental states, he attains and dwells in the first dhyana...³⁶

So vivicc'eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi...paṭhama-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.

(D 2,75b/1:73), SD 8.10

2.2.2 Mental seclusion

Here, the phrase “quite secluded from sensual pleasures,” refers to “the abandoning of immorality,” and, in meditation, is the precursor to the cleansing of the mind, described by “secluded from unwholesome mental states.” On account of an undistracted mind that is wholesomely purified, dhyana arises. In short, this is mental solitude.

2.2.3 Supramundane seclusion

This is the highest kind of solitude, and technically known as “solitude from the substrates” (*upadhi,viveka*). The Mahā Niddesa, a canonical commentary on the Sutta Nipāta, defines this as follows:

³² *Gotrabhuno kāsāva,kaṇṭhā dussīlā pāpa,dhammā.* On *kāsāva,kaṇṭha*, see M 142,8/3:256,7 @ SD 1.9 n ad loc; It 43, 90 (ItA 177); Dh 307a (Dh:P 113, Dh:P 113 *kāsāya,kamthā*; Uv 11.9 *kāsāya,kaṇṭhā*; DhA 3:478) qu at V 3:-90,35* (VA 486,22); AA 1:90,13+24, wr *kāsāva,khaṇḍam*; SnA 162,2, 164,23; Sadda,nīti 78,4, 78,1 *kaṇṭha,samaṇa*.

³³ Nm 27, 140, 157, 341; DA 169; MA 2:142; UA 163, 206, 231, 396; SA 3:122; DhA 2:103, 3:129.

³⁴ On the 5 precepts, see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S**, SD 1.5 (2).

³⁵ See eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,67-68/1:71), SD 8.10. On the 5 mental hindrances, see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32.1.

³⁶ On dhyana, esp 1st dhyana, further see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (5.1).

What is **the solitude from the substrates**? “Substrate” (*upadhi*) refers to the defilements (*kilesa*), the aggregates (*khandha*), and the formations (*abhisankhāra*). “The solitude from the substrates” refers to the deathfree, nirvana. It is the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all substrates, the destruction of lust, fading away, cessation, nirvana. *This is the solitude of the substrates.*

Physical solitude is for those with bodily aloofness (*vūpakaṭṭha,kāya*), who delight in renunciation. Mental solitude is for those whose minds are completely pure, who have reached the highest purification. Solitude from the substrates is for those individuals who are without any substrate, who are attained to the freedom from formations (*visaṅkhāra,gata*).

(Nm 27; slightly abridged)³⁷

2.3 SECLUSION AS RITUAL AND AS PRACTICE

2.3.1 The wanderers’ ritualism

From our discussion so far, it should be clear that while the “seclusion” (*paviveka*) of the outside sectarian wanderers is purely ritualistic, that of true monastics is a spiritual practice. In other words, the outside sectarian wanderers put on a religious garb, adopt a special diet, and resort to living in places regarded as conducive for the spiritual quest merely as a front for presenting themselves as a religious or holy persons, worthy of the respect and patronage of the masses. Their lifestyle is essentially, what we today would say, of marketing themselves or their religiosity.

2.3.2 Buddhist ritualism

This is not to say that any “Buddhist” monastic or priest practising “seclusion” is worth his salt. Most Buddhist clerics today wear comfortable robes, even elaborate and expensive ones; are not clean-shaven, even sporting long hair; and dress almost like laymen—the purpose is clearly to reflect status and power, rather than *renunciation*. As a rule, Buddhist monastics are very well fed and Buddhist clerics enjoy even a more luxurious life than the average laity. Although such monastics are said to have “left home,” they have done so for bigger and more luxurious residences, where they live what can rightly be described as contemporary royalties.

All this is possible because the masses accept them as being “religious,” or perhaps lack the information or the courage to speak their minds or right such wrongs. So silence becomes acquiescence. There is also the sad fact that most of us are still very superstitious, especially about personal problems (including wrong view about karma) and death. Since we lack effective understanding of the suttas and the Dharma, we turn to such professionals to help and heal us, as we would consult a witch-doctor or fortune-teller. So it is a vicious cycle of living only on the thin virtual surface of life without much insight or courage to face life and learning from it.

2.3.3 Dharma practice

2.3.3.1 To the true renunciants and lay practitioners, their mode of dress, eating habits, and dwelling-places, are merely **supports for life** that conduce to Dharma practice. Such basic supports are not marketing strategies to project status, power, religiosity or perfection. Rather they are a lifestyle and livelihood that help to cut down worldliness and mental distractions for the sake of a morally virtuous life.³⁸

Furthermore, **moral virtue** (*sīla*), too, is not a ritual lifestyle to attract charisma and devotion from others, but a personal quest for mental cultivation (*sa,ādhi* or *bhāvanā*), to rid the mind of negative emotions and defilements, so that our lives are sustained by joy. For without joy, no good meditation is possible. Without joy, we would neither be creative ourselves nor helpful to others.

³⁷ For another tr, see UA:M 667 n263. On the 3 kinds of solitude, see *Viveka,nissita*, SD 20.4 (4.2).

³⁸ On moral virtue, see *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6 (1) & SD 1.5 (2). On right livelihood, see *Right livelihood*, SD 37.8.

2.3.3.2 Joy is a feeling, and is a great way of keeping our minds free of unnecessary thoughts, which are simply the effects of wrong views. As we devote ourselves, or some time, to sutta study and reflection, our joy fuels our efforts in understanding the Buddha’s teaching, and our growing understanding enhances the joy. All this works like the two wings of a flying bird, blessing us with calm and insight into our own lives.

Such a **wisdom** reveals to us a world of impermanence. Since everything in this universe and within ourselves is impermanent, we cannot hold on to them. Since the beings around us too are impermanent, we would not have them around for very long. Hence, we begin to appreciate their being—for the living love life—and our wisdom is expressed as compassion. Without wisdom, compassion is lame; without compassion, wisdom is blind.

2.3.3.3 Living such a life, even when we are overwhelmed by suffering, we are in a learning mode, seeing truth and beauty in the impermanence of suffering. Our spirituality allows us to healingly respond to the world and to help ourselves in rising to greater spiritual heights. Ultimately, such a practice leads us to the uprooting of all defilements so that we attain nirvana.

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The Discourse on Seclusion

A 3.92

Outside sectarian views of seclusion

1 Outside sectarian wanderers, bhikshus, prescribe **these 3 kinds of seclusion**.³⁹

What are the three?

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| (1) The seclusion of robes . ⁴⁰ | <i>cīvara,paviveka</i> |
| (2) The seclusion of almsfood . | <i>piṇḍapāta,paviveka</i> |
| (3) The seclusion of lodging . | <i>senāsana,paviveka</i> |

1.2 Here, bhikshus, the outside sectarian wanderers prescribe **the seclusion of robes**, thus:

- | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| they wear | hemp robes; | <i>sāṇān iṇi dhārenti</i> |
| they wear | rough hemp-mixed robes; ⁴¹ | <i>masāṇāni pi dhārenti</i> |
| they wear | shrouds; ⁴² | <i>chava,dussāni pi dhārenti</i> |

³⁹ *Tīṇ ’imāni bhikkhave añña,titthiyā paribbājakā pavivekāni paññāpentī.*

⁴⁰ Comy explains “the solitude of robes” as the separation from defilements arising from the dependence on robes (*cīvara,pavivekan’ti cīvaram nissāya uppajjanaka,kilesehi vivitta,bhāvam*. AA 2:354). The remaining 3 solitudes are explained in a similar way.

⁴¹ *Masāṇa* (PED: etym? prob provincial & local) a coarse cloth of interwoven hemp and other materials (D 1:160; M 1:308, 345; A 1:241, 295; Pug 55. Only in ref to garb of such wanderers. This is poss *śmasāna* or *śmāsāna* (P *susāna* (n), charnel-ground, cemetery; adj *sosānika*, of the charnel-ground). SED: “burning ground” (prob a later meaning). If we accept the former sense, then this is the wanderers’ version of the Buddhist *pāmsukūla* (“dust-heap” or discarded) cloth. But cf *pāmsukūla* below here.

⁴² *Chava,dussa*, cloth of coverlet woven from cat-tail grass (cf CPD), Comy here says that it refers to discarded cloth made of *eraka*, taken from corpses and made into garments (*Chava,dussānīti mata,sarīrato chaḍḍita,vatthāni, eraka,tiṇ ’ādīni vā ganthetvā kata,nivāsanāni*, AA 2:354). *Eraka* (Skt; Marathi) is Typha grass (PED; CPD), prob Typha elephantine, also called bulrush, cat-tail grass, or Indian reed mace, one of the most universal of perennial grasses, which grows in wetlands and watersides. In ancient India, it was often woven together as rough clothing or mats. See J A Parrotta, *Healing Plants of Peninsular India*, NY: CABI Publishing, 2001; Malten 2003, See Daniel F

they wear	dust-heap [refuse] cloths;	<i>paṃsukūlāni pi dhārenti</i>
they wear	<i>tirīṭa</i> -tree ⁴³ bark;	<i>tirīṭāni pi dhārenti</i>
they wear	antelope hide;	<i>ajinam pi dhārenti</i>
they wear	strips of antelope hide;	<i>ajina-k, khipam pi dhārenti</i>
they wear	kusa-grass robes;	<i>kusa, cīram pi dhārenti</i>
they wear	bark-cloth;	<i>vāka, cīram pi dhārenti</i>
they wear	wood-shaving cloth;	<i>phalaka, cīram pi dhārenti</i>
they wear	a human-hair-blanket;	<i>kesa, kambalam pi dhārenti</i>
they wear	a bristle-blanket; ⁴⁴	<i>vāla, kambalam [241] pi dhārenti</i>
they wear	owl's-wings garment.	<i>ulūka, pakkhikam pi dhārenti</i>

This, bhikshus, is what outside sectarian wanderers prescribe as the seclusion of robes.

1.3 Here, bhikshus, the outside sectarian wanderers prescribe **the seclusion of almsfood**, thus:

they eat	greens [are vegetarians]	<i>sāka, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they eat	millet;	<i>sāmāka, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they eat	wild-rice;	<i>nīvāra, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they eat	hide-parings;	<i>daddula, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they eat	water-lettuce; ⁴⁵	<i>haṭa, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they eat	rice-bran;	<i>kaṇa, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they eat	rice-remnants; ⁴⁶	<i>ācāma, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they eat	sesamum flour;	<i>piññāka, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they eat	grass;	<i>tiṇa, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they eat	cow-dung;	<i>go.maya, bhakkhā pi honti</i>
they live on	forest roots and fruits.	<i>vana, mūla, phal'āhārā yāpentī</i>
they live on	windfall [available fruits]. ⁴⁷	<i>pavatta, phala, bhojī</i>

This, bhikshus, is what outside sectarian wanderers prescribe as the seclusion of almsfood.

1.4 Here, bhikshus, the outside sectarian wanderers prescribe **the seclusion of lodging**, thus:⁴⁸

a forest;	<i>arañña</i> ⁴⁹
the foot of a tree;	<i>rukkha, mūla</i>
a charnel-ground;	<i>susāna</i>
a jungle grove;	<i>vana, pattha</i>
the open-air;	<i>abbhokāsa</i>
a heap of straw;	<i>palāla, puñja</i>
a threshing-house.	<i>bhus'āgāra</i> ⁵⁰

Austin, "Sacred connections with cat-tail," *Ethnobotany Journal* 5, 2007:273-303:

<http://www.ethnobotanyjournal.org/vol5/i1547-3465-05-273.pdf>

⁴³ *Tirīṭa* (ts; BHS *tirīṭī*), which PED & BHSD identify as *Symplocos racemosa* (V 1:306 ~ka; D 1:166 = A 1:295; M 1:343; Pug 51). Its Indian names are the lodh tree lodhra, tilva, or shavara; also śrimala ("propitious") or tilak (because it is used to make the *tilaka* or forehead mark). Its bark has medicinal usages. *Iranian Journal of Pharmaceutical Research*, Supplement 2 2004:44.

⁴⁴ *Vāla* specifically refers to the horse's tail or the hair at the end of the tail. Here, it refers to any kind of animal hair.

⁴⁵ "Water-lettuce," *haṭa*, a kind of water-plant, *Pistia stratiotes* (PED) of the Arales order.

⁴⁶ "Rice-remnants," *ācāma*, "the moisture of boiled rice, rice-scum, rice-water (without condiments, a mean un-savoury food—hence, prob interpreted as the burnt crust sticking to the pot" (CPD): DA 356,15 = MA 2:45,12 = AA 2:355,17 = PugA 232,25; ie "burnt rice remnants in a pot," or "kerak nasi" in Malay.

⁴⁷ Ie a windfall-eater.

⁴⁸ See Intro (1.2.3).

⁴⁹ Be vl (Ka) *rukkha, mūlam bhus'āgāram susānam*.

⁵⁰ Be vl (Ka) *suññāgāram*, "an empty building."

This, bhikshus, is what outside sectarian wanderers prescribe as the seclusion of lodging.

1.5 Outside sectarian wanderers, bhikshus, prescribe these three kinds of seclusion.

Seclusion in the Buddha's teaching

2 But, bhikshus, in this Dharma-Vinaya [teaching and discipline], there are **these 3 kinds of seclusion** for monks.

What are the three?

2.2 Here, bhikshus, a monk

(1) is **morally virtuous**, and immorality has been abandoned by him, and so is secluded;⁵¹

(2) he is of **right view**, and has given up wrong views,⁵² and so is secluded;

(3) he is one who **has destroyed the defilements**, having given up the influxes, and so is secluded;

2.3 Bhikshus, insofar as a monk is

morally virtuous, and immorality has been abandoned by him, and so is secluded;

of right view, and has given up wrong views, and so is secluded;

one who has destroyed the defilements, having given up the influxes, and so is secluded

—this monk, bhikshus, I call one who

has attained **the foremost**,

agga-p,patto

has attained **the essence** (of goodness),

sāra-p,patto

is purified, **established in the essence** (of goodness).⁵³

suddho sāre patiṭṭhito

Parable of the houselord ploughman

3 Suppose, bhikshus, a houselord ploughman's **field of hill-rice has ripened**, that houselord ploughman

having quickly harvested it,	would quickly harvest it;	<i>vapāpeyya</i>
having quickly had it collected,	he would quickly have it collected;	<i>lavāpeyya</i>
having quickly had it transported,	he would quickly have it transported; [242]	<i>saṅghārāpeyya</i>
having quickly had it piled up,	he would quickly have it piled up;	<i>ubbahāpeyya</i>
having quickly had it threshed,	he would quickly have it threshed;	<i>puñjam kārāpeyya</i>
having quickly had it removed,	he would quickly have it removed;	<i>maddāpeyy</i>
having quickly had it removed,	he would quickly have the straw removed;	<i>palālāni uddharāpetvā</i>
having quickly had it removed,	he would quickly have the chaff removed;	<i>bhusikaṃ uddharāpetvā</i>
having quickly had it winnowed,	he would quickly have it winnowed;	<i>opunāpetvā</i>
having quickly had it brought over,	he would quickly have it brought over;	<i>atiharāpetvā</i>
having quickly had it pounded,	he would quickly have it pounded;	<i>koṭṭāpetvā</i>
having quickly had it husked,	he would quickly have it husked.	<i>thusāni uddharāpeyya</i>

3.2 In this way,⁵⁴ bhikshus, the houselord ploughman's grains

have attained the foremost,

have attained the essence (of goodness),

is purified, established in essence (of goodness) [filled with the essence of goodness].

4 Even so, bhikshus, insofar as a monk is

morally virtuous, and immorality has been abandoned by him,

and so is secluded;

of right view, and has given up wrong views,

and so is secluded;

⁵¹ *Sīlavā ca hoti, dussīlyaṅ c'assa pahīnam hoti, tena ca vivitto hoti.*

⁵² Comy says that "his abandoning of immorality" (*dussīlyaṅ c'assa pahīnam*) and "his giving up of wrong views" (*micchā, diṭṭhi c'assa pahīnā*) is spoken of in reference to the state of letting-go (or abandoning of defilements) by the path of streamwinning (AA 2:355).

⁵³ *Ayam vuccati bhikkhave bhikkhu agga-p,patto sāra-p,patto suddho sāre patiṭṭhito.*

⁵⁴ Be Ce Ee Se *evam assu*; Be:Ka *evassu*.

one who has destroyed the defilements, having given up the influxes, and so is secluded —this monk, bhikshu, is called *one who has attained the foremost, has attained the essence, is purified, established in the essence (of goodness)*.⁵⁵

— evaṃ —

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⁵⁵ Ee here mistakenly continues with **Sārada S** (A 3.92), SD 70.14, centering on the autumn parable, making it as part of this Sutta. Be Ce Se treat the two as separate suttas.