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(Duka) Vassūpanāyika SuttaThe (Twos) Discourse on Rains-entry | **A 2.10**

Theme: The two rains-entries

Translated and annotated by Piya Tan ©2017

7.1 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

The (Duka) Vassūpanāyika Sutta (A 2.10) deals with the rains-entry (*vassūpanāyika*)—the taking of the observance of the annual monastic 3-month (around June-October) rains-retreat. The Sutta simply states that there are 2 such entries (*upanāyika*) into the rains-retreat (*vass'āvāsa*). This is purely a Vinaya matter but is curiously included here as the last entry in **the Kamma,kāraṇa Vagga**.

The nature of the Sutta teaching is very obvious, that it is not a Dhamma topic, but is still included amongst the suttas. Hence, it was not an editorial error, but an intentional addition. After all, this is **the Duka Nipāta**, “the book of twos,” and the 2 kind of rain-entries fits here as a sort of miscellany entry, as if hinting at a monastic practice—broadly pointing to the path of renunciation—as the way out of all the tortures (*kamma,kāraṇa*) that can befall us in the world. The rains-retreat signifies the joyfully peaceful way out of such sufferings.

7.2 The rains-retreat (*vass'āvāsa*)**7.2.1 After the first 20 years**

7.2.1.1 According to **the Vinaya** (Mv 3.1)—and echoed by the Commentary (AA 2:97)—during the first 20 years of his ministry, the Buddha did not institute any entry into the rains-retreat. Whether it was the months of rains (*vasse*) or outside these rainy months (*utu,vasse*),¹ that is, the cold season (*hemanta*) or the hot season (*gimha*), the monks had no fixed residence (*anibaddha,vāsā*), and wandered about as they liked.

People protested, “How can these recluses, sons of the Sakya, wander about during the cold season, the hot season and the rains, trampling down the crops and grasses, harming single-facultied life and destroying so many small creatures?”² They commented that even the outside sectarians, who by nature behave badly, keep the rains retreat, as do the birds in their nests in the tree-tops! (Mv 3.1.2)

7.2.1.2 On being informed of these protestations, the Buddha addresses the monks, saying, “I allow you, monks, to enter into the rains” (*anujānāmi bhikkhave vassam upagantum*, Mv 3.1.3). The rains-retreat is to be observed during the rains (*vassanā*) (Mv 3.2.1).³ The rains last for 4 months, but the monks are to keep the rains-retreat (*vassa*) for 3 out of the 4 months of the rains.

7.2.1.3 In due course, when the monks inquire, the Buddha allows 2 dates for entering the rains-retreat, thus:

¹ *Utu,vassa* (masc, neut), the seasons other than the rainy season: B 2:148 (*samaye ~e vā*; BA 110,31: *samaye ti vassasamaye, ~e ti hemanta,gimhesu*) = J 1:23,21 (Be, Ce, Se so; Ee wr *utu,passe*); VA 1061,19 (*so ca kho ~e yeva, vassāne pana ...*); AA 2:97,6 (*vasse pi ~e pi*). See also CPD: *utu-vassa*.

² *Katham hi nāma samaṇā sakya,puttiyā hemantam pi himham pi vassam pi cārikaṃ carissanti haritāni tiṇāni sammaddantā ek'indriyaṃ jīvaṃ viheṭhenti bahū khuddake pāṇe saṅghātaṃ āpādentā*.

³ V 4:74, 100, 286.

“There are, bhikshu, these two rain-entries (*vassūpanāyika*): the early and the late. **The early one** (*purimikā*) should be entered on the day after the Āsāḥī full-moon. **The later one** (*pacchimikā*) should be entered a month after the Āsāḥī full moon. (Mv 3.2.2) [7.2.2.2]

7.2.2 The monastic rains-retreat

7.2.2.1 The rains-retreat is observed by monastics during the three months of the rainy season in the central Gangetic plain. During this period, monks and nuns must reside for full three months at their chosen place of rains-retreat. They are, however, permitted to leave for up to seven days if there is a suitable reason.

7.2.2.2 There are 2 dates on which monks may start (“enter”) the rains-retreat: (1) the early rains-entry (*purimikā vassūpanāyikā*), or (2) the late rains-entry (*pacchimikā vassūpanāyika*). We are informed of this in **the (Duka) Vassūpanyika Sutta** (A 2.10) and in chapter 3 of **the Mahā, vagga** of the Vinaya itself.⁴

The early rains-retreat (*purimika vassa*) starts on the day after the full-moon of Āsāḥa (Skt *āṣāḍha*), that is, the 1st day of Sāvana (Skt *śrāvana*) (June-July), and extends to the full-moon (the last day) of Kattikā (Skt *kārttika*) (October-November) lasting for a period of 3 months.⁵ This is the most common practice amongst the monastics.

The late rains-retreat (*pacchimika vassa*) is exactly one lunar month later, that is, for the rains-retreat that begins on the 1st day of Sāvana (July-August) and ends one month after the earlier one, that is, on the last day of full moon of Māga,sira (Skt *mārga,śīrśa*).⁶

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The (Twos) Discourse on Rains-entry

A 2.10

- 1 Bhikshus, there are these two rains-entries. What are the two?
- 2 The earlier and the later. *Purimikā ca pacchimikā ca.*
- 3 These, bhikshus, are the two rains-entries.

— evaṃ —

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⁴ Mv 3 (V 1:137-156); see esp Mv 3.2.2 (V 1:137,27-30).

⁵ Vism:Ñ 15 n10; VvA:M 107 n102. The Indian month begins on the first day of the waning moon and ends on the full moon. On the Indian months and seasons, see SD 1.1(1) n; also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_calendar.

⁶ See AA 2:97.