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(Agāra) Āditta Sutta

The Burning (House) Discourse | S 1.41
 Theme: On having the right priorities in life
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2003; rev 2010

Introduction

The two main stanzas of the (Agāra) Āditta Sutta (S 136-137) are also found in **the (Āditta) Jana Sutta** or **Dutiya Dve Brāhmaṇa Sutta** (in WT) (A 3.52/1:156) and **the Āditta Jātaka** (J 424),¹ which should all be studied together. Although stanza 138 is found in the Lannā (Thai) manuscript, the Jātaka Commentary (J 2:58) and the Visuddhi, magga, Bhikkhu Bodhi omits it in his translation, since “if the verse was originally part of the text, [the Saṃyutta Commentary] would surely have incorporated here the commentary on it found, with the verse itself, at Vism 236-37 (Vism:Ñ 8.29-34)” (S:B 374 n96). The verse runs thus:

*Jīvitam byādhi kālā ca
 deha, nikkhepanam gati
 pañc’ete jīva, lokasmim
 animittā na nāyare*

The life-span, the illness, and the time,
 where the body will be laid down, and the destiny:
 these 5 things in the world can never be known;
 there are no signs (by which one can tell).² (S 138)

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The Burning (House) Discourse

S 1.41

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Anātha, piṇḍika’s park in Jeta’s grove near Sāvattihī. When the night was far spent, a certain deity of exceeding beauty, lighting up the whole of Jeta’s grove, went up to the Blessed One. Having approached, he saluted the Blessed One, stood at one side, and uttered these stanzas before the Blessed One:

2 *Ādittasmim agārasmim
 yaṃ nīharati bhājanam
 taṃ tassa hoti atthāya
 no ca yaṃ tattha ḍayhati.*

When a house is ablaze,
 the vessel³ that one saves,
 is of use to one,
 not the one left there to burn. (S 136)⁴

3 *Evam ādīpito⁵ loko
 jarāya maraṇena ca
 nīhareth’eva dānena
 dinnam hoti sunīhatam.*

Even so, is the world is ablaze
 with decay and death:
 let one take out (one’s wealth) by giving:
 what is given is well-saved. [32] (S 137)

¹ **Āditta J** (J 424.11/3:471), SD 22.10a.

² J 2:58; Vism 8.29/236: it is not found in any of the sutta MSS.

³ *Bhājanam*, Comy glosses as “a useful object; implement” (*upakaranam*). (J 3:472)

⁴ This n is mentioned in n 1. See intro above. Should be omitted.

⁵ Ce *ādīpito*; Se *ādittiko*.

- 4 *Dinnam sukha, phalam hoti
nādinnaṃ hoti taṃ tathā,
corā haranti rājāno
aggi dahati nassati.* What is given yields happy fruit,
but not so what is not given.
Thieves or kings take it away;
fire burns it, it is destroyed. (S 139)
- 5 *Atha antena jahati
sarīraṃ sapariggahaṃ
etad aññāya medhāvī
bhuñjetha ca dadetha ca
datvā ca bhutvā ca yathā'nubhāvaṃ
anindito saggam upeti ṭhānanti* Then, in the end one leaves
the body along with one's (loved ones and) possessions.⁶
Having understood this, let the wise
enjoy himself but also give.
Having given and enjoyed as fits his means,
the blameless goes to heaven." (S 140)

— evaṃ —

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⁶ "With one's possessions," *sa,pariggahaṃ*. The word *pariggaha* can also mean "married," see **Te,vijja S** (D 13,31/1:247), SD 1.8. As such, the line here can be rendered as: "Then, in the end one leaves the body along with one's loved ones and possessions."