

SD 64.12i (Duka) Patipatti Sutta¹

The (Twos) Discourse on Practice

A 2.39

Theme: True practice of Dharma

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 The (Duka) Patipatti Sutta (A 2.39) is a short statement by the Buddha that he does not praise those who practise wrongly (*micchā,paṭipanna*) but praises only those who practise rightly (*sammā,paṭipanna*), whether they are lay (*gihī*) or renunciant (*pabbajita*). Only by the right practice, we attain “the true way that is the wholesome dharma” (*ñāyaṃ dhammaṃ kusalaṃ*).

1.2 “The true way that is the wholesome dharma” is the path, together with insight (*saha,vipassanakam maggaṃ*, AA 2:143,5-7). Specifically, this means the 3 trainings, that is, in *moral conduct* as the basis for mental training in *calm and concentration*, that is, dhyana. The calm and clear concentrated mind is then directed to see impermanence as true reality; this becomes the basis for insight, that is, *wisdom*.

Broadly, “the true way that is the wholesome dharma” refers to the noble eightfold path, with the 9th limb as “right knowledge” (*sammā,ñāṇa*), that is, the insight into true reality, and the 10th limb as “right freedom” (*sammā,vimutti*), that is, arhathood. This set of 10 is called **the ten-limbed “rightness”** (*sammattā*).²

2 Sutta significance

2.1 THE TEACHING: WRONG AND RIGHT

2.1.1 The wrong teaching

2.1.1.1 Being unawakened, we are constantly and habitually driven and defined by the 3 unwholesome roots, that is, *greed, hatred and delusion*. These are not 3 separate entities but aspects of a single universal condition in which and by which we exist, that is, **ignorance** [2.1.1.2]. We have the 5 physical senses which are *how* we experience things that we are and the world around us. These 5 senses work through **the mind** which forms ideas and views about what we sense and experience.

We do not really know what any of these 5 sense-experiences are, except that they arise and pass away. We are able to “make sense” of an experience only through our **memory**, which is the mind recalling a past experience and relating it to the present state. This is not an accurate or actual reality but only a representation or image the mind creates of the new experience, stores as an image mentally, and correlates with our present sense-experience.

These bits of memory work like pieces of a cosmic jigsaw puzzle. Sometimes we think we have pieces that seem to fit nicely together forming a sizeable picture or part of a picture. Very often, we will imagine, that is, “fill in,” what *must* lie or what we *desire* to be the missing piece or pieces. When we think we

¹ For a similar sutta, see **Paṭipadā S 2** (S 45.24/5:18 f), SD 78.4.

² **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,3.3(6)); **Das’uttara S** (D 34,2.2(10)); **Samaṇa Vg** (A 10.103-112), **Paccorohaṇi Vg** (A 10.113-133), **Parisuddha Vg** (A 10.123-133), **Sādhū Vg** (A 10.134-144), **Ariya,magga Vg** (A 10.145-154), **Puggala Vg** (A 10.155-166). See also SD 10.16 (1.2.2); SD 20.4 (3); SD 42.15 (3).

see a beautiful picture, we want to have it, even when we have only imagined it. Indeed, what is in the mind becomes for us *more real* than the external reality that we experience.

2.1.1.2 In other words, we often imagine that there is **something** (*kiñcana*) there—that picture, real or imagined, that we like—and we want it. This basically is called **greed** (*lobha*), an insatiable quest for something. While we are driven, drunk with this vision of “something,” we tend to reject what we think is *not* that something, or which prevents us from getting that *something*. When our greed-rooted drive is strong enough (often it is), we are willing and able even to destroy the distractions, real or perceived, that we face. This is called **hatred** (*dosa*).

Recall I mentioned [2.1.1.1] that these **3 roots** are not separate entities but aspects of our ignorance. Because of our ignorance there is delusion in our experiences: we imagine there is something that delights one of our senses; we imagine that there are things that distract us from having and enjoying these things. We also call this **delusion** (*moha*) because we do not see things as they are, but imagine them biased by our memories. They are thus like image in the water, which we like, or like shadows we think we see and fear.

2.1.1.3 These **3 unwholesome roots**—*greed, hatred and delusion*—are what shape or drive our mind in our waking moments. They are **habits** we have learned since we were born, and which we refine through repetition as we grow and age, and become more conditioned to “know” things. Crudely put, the more things we know, the better we are at deluding ourselves about them.

What is really happening here is that we are simply feeding our greed and becoming better at it; this huge, dark and well-fed greed is called **sensual lust** (*kāma, rāga*). It lurks deep in our mind like a plant’s large storage root buried deep under the ground.

The more we show hate, the more that hatred feeds the latent tendency of **aversion** (*paṭigha*). Hatred is always present with greed or lust; while greed or lust pulls us to the desired object, hatred pushes away what we dislike or think is preventing us from getting or grasping what we desire. They are the two sides of the same coin of unwholesome conditioned behaviour.

Then there is the most tricky of the 3 unwholesome roots: **delusion**. It is devious because we are so conditioned to act and react through greed and hatred that we are simply unaware of its presence. Delusion is mostly ignorance in action. The more we reject or ignore what we do not understand, the more it feeds the latent tendency of **ignorance** (*avijjā*)³

2.1.1.4 Simply put, we are nothing but **our senses**—what we *see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think*—we are created and driven by the mind. The mind works through our 6 senses: **the all** (*sabba*) that we are;⁴ this is all that there *is* to know, this is all we *can* know. What we know creates us, and what we have created leashes us up like **6 wild animals** to the deeply sunken post of ignorance; these animals try to flee in 6 different directions for their own habitats.⁵

Psychologically, we are being bombarded in our waking moments with *sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts* through the 6 sense-faculties. These are the 6 endless streams or influxes (*āsava*) of sense-objects that we experience, arousing in us **sense-desire**, with which we imagine **this and that**, generating all kinds of **views**; we are caught in an endless loop of consuming sense-objects on account of our **ignorance**.

³ **Sammā Ditṭhi S** (M 9,65-67) SD 11.14; **Anusaya** SD 31.3 (8.2).

⁴ See **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.1.

⁵ See **Cha Pāṇā S** (S 35.247), SD 19.15.

2.1.1.5 Through our delusion, we form all kinds of **views** to dismiss our experiences or create grand notions about them. They are all self-centred views rooted in our own ignorance, making us look for answers to what troubles our own minds. These constitute **the influx of views** (*diṭṭh'āsava*), better known as **the 3 fetters**,⁶ which we must urgently break so that we progress as streamwinners towards self-awakening and do not fall into subhuman states. [See Table 2.1.1.5 (1)-(3)]

Meantime, the fetters of sensual lust and repulsion continue to flood our senses as **the influx of sense-desire** (*kām'āsava*). When we are finally able to weaken these unwholesome roots, we become once-returners, returning only one more time to the human world (the sense-world) before awakening. However it is only when we break all the 5 fetters—(1)-(5) in Table 2.1.1.5—that we free ourselves from the sense-world, never to return to it; we become nonreturners.

The nonreturner continues his practice in the pure abodes⁷ to break the last 5 or “higher” fetters, so called because they still hold beings in the higher worlds, that is, the form world and the formless world. These are various higher forms of **existences** (*bhav'āsava*), rooted in **ignorance** (*avijj'āsava*).

This diagram helps us visualize the connections between **the 10 fetters** and **the 4 influxes** in a graphic manner:⁸

(1) <u>self-identity view</u>	<i>sakkāya, diṭṭhi</i>	}	influx of views (<i>diṭṭh'āsava</i>)
(2) <u>spiritual doubt</u>	<i>vicikicchā</i>		
(3) <u>attachment to rituals and vows</u>	<i>sīla-b. bata, parāmāsa</i>	}	(1) influx of sense-desire (<i>kām'āsava</i>)
(4) <u>sensual lust</u>	<i>kāma, rāga</i>		
(5) <u>repulsion</u>	<i>paṭigha</i> ⁹		
(6) <u>lust for form existence</u>	<i>rūpa, rāga</i>	}	(2) influx of existence (<i>bhav'āsava</i>)
(7) <u>lust for formless existence</u>	<i>arūpa, rāga</i>		
(8) <u>conceit</u>	<i>māna</i>	}	(3) influx of ignorance (<i>avijj'āsava</i>)
(9) <u>restlessness</u>	<i>uddhacca</i>		
(10) <u>ignorance</u>	<i>avijjā</i>		

Table 2.1.1.5. The fetters and the mental influxes¹⁰

2.1.2 The practice and the path

2.1.2.1 The right teaching should be followed up by right practice, which can only begin by avoiding false practice and false teachers. When we depend on others for our personal development, there is always a chance that we could be misled or have misunderstood the teaching. Self-reliance thus entails constantly examining what we have learnt and how it helps or hinders us.

What is **false** only appears to be helpful and good, but in reality, it is unhelpful and bad; it prevents one from growing and from being truly happy. The most unhelpful teachings are any of these wrong views that invariably feed the 3 mental fetters [2.1.1.5], thus:

⁶ **Abhabba Tayo, dhamma S** (A 10.76,6), SD 2.4; **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8; SD 3.3 (5); SD 56.1 (4.4.1).

⁷ On the pure abodes, dimension of nonreturners, see SD 10.16 (13.1.6); SD 23.14 (Table 3).

⁸ On *saṃyojana* + *āsava*, see SD 30.3 (1.3.3): 3 influxes; also SD 50.12 (2.5.2.2) + Table.

⁹ In some places, *paṭigha* is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*).

¹⁰ Compare this with the diagram on the fetters and suffering [SD 50.11, Table 0.2]. On how the set of 3 influxes expanded into a set of 4 influxes, see SD 50.7 (1.3.2.4).

the view:

- (1) that we have an unchanging self or soul
- (2) that we are unable to help ourselves
- (3) that we need external salvation

encourages or leads to (or feeds):

self-identity view;
 self-doubt;
 superstition (attachment to rituals and vows).

In simple terms, these 3 wrong views disempower us by making us think that we are helpless, worthless and sinful. On the other hand, this is not to say, with arrogance or naivety, that “we are already enlightened but only do not know it.” Such statements are just as unhelpful since the idea that we are already “there” means that we do not have to prepare for the journey and make it!

2.1.2.2 The notions (1) that we have an unchanging self, (2) that we cannot help ourselves, or (3) that we need salvation from some power-figure, all mislead us that we must depend on some kind of **external agency**, such as God, gods, or some kind of being or force. If it were as simple as this, the “Being” would come to us and directly show us how they can help us, there would be none of these problems. But this is never the case. Some prophet, teacher or leader would make such a claim—with the provision that only that prophet, teacher or leader can help us. So we only have another person’s word but *without* any personal knowledge or understanding of the truth of such claims. Moreover, such systems also claim that we must have “faith” and blindly believe them.

Such teachers and preachers, for example, often claim: “to believe is to understand.”¹¹ Let the wise beware and think for themselves.¹²

2.1.2.3 A vital aspect of **self-reliance** (*atta, saraṇa*)¹³ is a proper understanding that we are how we think; that the mind is behind all our acts—bodily, verbal and mental—conscious and unconscious. As we think, so is the act that follows. We thus make a self-determined effort to ensure that we are free from an unwholesome mind and to free the wholesome mind.

mano, pubbaṇ, gamā dhammā
mano, seṭṭhā mano, mayā

The mind precedes (unwholesome and wholesome) states;
 the mind is supreme; mind-made are they.

(Dh 1 f)

However, before we can calm and clear the mind, the body—the 5 sense-faculties—through which the mind expresses itself, needs to be tamed. The body should be **morally restrained** by *abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication*. When the body is cultivated (*bhāvita, kāya*) in this way, then it is ready to begin with cultivating the mind.

2.1.2.4 Essentially, **mental cultivation** entails freeing the mind from being distracted by any of the 5 sense-experiences or any thought; these are the 6 sense-objects. When the mind is *distracted* by any of the 6 sense-objects, the mind is invariably rooted in either *greed* or *hatred*, always in the presence of some level of *delusion*. In our waking moments, our mind is **wholesome** so long as none of these 6 sense-objects is rooted in greed or in hatred. Since we are unawakened there is always some trace of delusion present when we attend to any of these objects, even with a wholesome mind.

¹¹ Such a statement may work in the context of poetry and fiction, but in any teaching of true reality, it simply flies in one’s face! On the theistic view, “believe that we may understand,” see SD 49.2 (3.5.2); on “rootless” faith, SD 56.18 (1.2.1.2).

¹² SD 49.2 (3.5.2); SD 56.18 (1.2.1.2); SD 62.1 (2.4.1.5); SD 63.4 (1.2.2.6).

¹³ **The one true refuge**, SD 3.1 (3.2); SD 27.3 (3.1.1).

However, so long as we mindfully attend to a sense-object as it is (merely as “seeing,” “hearing,” and so on) or as “impermanent,” we are in those mindful moments free from delusion. But such moments are temporary, and delusion rushes back in as soon as we are less mindful. Delusion fills the vacuum left by mindfulness.

2.1.2.5 Explained in simple terms, we can say that in our daily waking moments, we should keep our mind free from *greed, hatred and delusion* as much as possible, especially by cultivating non-greed (thoughts of generosity), non-hatred (thoughts of lovingkindness) and non-delusion (such as thoughts of impermanence). This is how *both monastics and lay practitioners* should maintain their minds in their daily lives, even when they are enjoying sensual pleasures; especially when they are doing so.

Monastics should in fact only enjoy a minimum of sensual pleasures—even then only to see their impermanence—and to constantly direct their minds to be mindful of the body (such as the breath, postures and bodily decay), of feelings (their rising and falling), of thoughts (their impermanence), and of mental states (aspects of true reality); these are **the 4 satipatthanas**, ways of stationing the mind in mindfulness, freeing the mind and gaining samadhi and dhyana.

In these ways, both the laity and the monastics are keeping to the right practice.

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(Duka) Patipatti Sutta¹⁴

The (Twos) Discourse on Practice

A 2.39

1 “Bhikshus, **I do not praise the wrong practice** of 2 [kinds of people]: a layperson and one gone forth [into homelessness].

Whether it is a layperson or one gone forth who is practising wrongly, because of wrong practice, they do *not* attain the true way that is the wholesome dharma.¹⁵

2 Bhikshus, **I praise the right practice** of 2 [kinds of people]: a layperson and one gone forth.

Whether it is a layperson or one gone forth who is practising rightly, because of right practice, they attain the true way that is the wholesome dharma.¹⁶

—evam—

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¹⁴ For a similar sutta, see **Paṭipadā S 2** (S 45.24/5:18 f), SD 78.4.

¹⁵ *Gihī vā bhikkhave pabbajito vā micchā,paṭipanno micchā,paṭipattādhikaraṇa,hetu na ārādhako hoti ñāyaṃ dhammaṃ kusalaṃ*. The structure *micchā,paṭipattādhikaraṇa,hetu* is also found in other compounds such as: *micchā,paṭipattādhikaraṇa,hetu* (M 2:197,13 = S 5:19,1); *sammā,paṭipattā*° (M 2:197,16; S 5:19,10); cf *kim-ādhikaraṇaṃ*, “on what account?” (J 4:4,11*); *yatvā’dhikaraṇaṃ* (*yato + ādhikaraṇaṃ*), “by reason of which; because” (D 1:70,9, 3:225; M 1:346; Dhs 231).

¹⁶ *Ñāyaṃ dhammaṃ kusalaṃ*. Comy: “The path together with insight.” (AA 2:143,5-7)