AN 3.156 — Paṭhama Paṭipadā Sutta (Modes of Practice – Part 1)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

AN III

Suttas 155-156

Paṭipadā Vagga “The Section on The Path of Practice”

155. Paṭhama Paṭipadā Sutta (Modes of Practice – Part 1) Bhikkhus, these are the three methods of practice. What three?

The pleasurable and sensually indulgent method of practice; the scorching method of practice that wastes the person away; and the method that is declared The Practice of the Middle Path.

a. And what, Bhikkhus, is the pleasurable and sensually indulgent method?

Here, Bhikkhus, someone holds on to the wrong view, exclaiming: ‘There is nothing wrong in seeking pleasure or indulging in sensual pleasures,’ as he falls for the bait of sensual pleasures, while seeking their gratification, endlessly.

This, Bhikkhus, is the pleasurable and sensually indulgent method of practice.

b. And what, Bhikkhus, is the scorching method of practice that wastes the person away?

Here, Bhikkhus, someone lives without wearing any clothes, rejecting proper conventions of behavior within society; licks his hands, slurps his food loudly; does not invite nor accept invitations from anyone, neither offering a meal himself, nor accepting what is brought to him. He does not accept a special preparation, or an invitation to a meal. He does not accept a serving of food from a pot, from a cooking vessel, or a stick, or even pushed towards him on a broom. He does not accept food from two individuals who are eating, from a woman bearing a child, from a breast-feeding woman, from a woman living with a man, from a place where she is supported, or from a place where flies and dogs gather. He does not accept fish, meat, intoxicating drinks, brewed drinks and gruel.

Furthermore, he supports himself by going to a single house for food, to two houses, three houses, four houses, five houses, six houses or seven houses. Or he supports himself with what is brought from a single house with one morsel of food, from two houses and two morsels, from three houses and three morsels, from four houses and four morsels, from five houses and five morsels, from six houses and six morsels, from seven houses and seven morsels.

He supports himself by eating once a day, once every two days, once every three days, and as such, up to once every two weeks.

While eating, he takes vegetables, millet, raw rice, dark rice, moss, finely broken rice, rice foam, sesame flour, grass, cow dung, roots and fruits from the forest, and whatever is picked from the ground. He wears robes made of hemp, robes made of coarse cloth interwoven with hemp, robes made of rags, robes made from tree barks or kusa grass, from antelope hide, from strips of antelope hide, from strips of wood, and from owl's wings. He wears robes made of grass, from blankets made of head hair and blankets made of horse's tail.

He pursues the practice of pulling out his head hair and beard; continuously standing as penance while rejecting seats, or maintaining a squatting position at all times. He tortures himself by wearing thorns and sleeping on a bed of sharp thorns. He continuously practices bathing for an extended period, up to three times per day, as well as in the evenings. Thus, he exposes himself and his body to various kinds of torture.

This, Bhikkhus, is the scorching method of practice that wastes the person away.

c. And what, Bhikkhus, is the method that is declared The Practice of the Middle Path?

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu abides while being anchored within the body, staying with and observing the body as it moves through its many transitions, changes, interactions and positions, while remaining steadfast and mindful, clearly comprehending and fully aware, as he constantly keeps removing any thoughts of craving or resentment that may arise in the heart, towards the world and its conditions.

Similarly, the Bhikkhu abides while closely staying with feelings, and observing their shifting and ever-changing states, as they occur, while he remains steadfast and mindful, clearly comprehending and fully aware, as he constantly keeps removing any thoughts of craving or resentment that may arise in the heart, towards the world and its conditions.

Similarly, the Bhikkhu abides reflecting on the quality of the mind within the mind, and its ever-changing states, staying with and observing whatever is occurring in the mind, while remaining steadfast and mindful, clearly comprehending and fully aware, as he constantly keeps removing any thoughts of craving or resentment that may arise in the heart, towards the world and its conditions.

Likewise, the Bhikkhu abides reflecting on the various phenomena and their relationships (dhammas) as they arise and shift, staying with and observing the various mind objects as they occur, while remaining steadfast and mindful, clearly comprehending and fully aware of them, as he constantly keeps removing any thoughts of craving or resentment that may arise in the heart, towards the world and its conditions.

Bhikkhus, this is the method that is declared “The Practice of the Middle Path.”

Therefore, Bhikkhus, these are the three methods of practice.