AN 3.40 — Ādhipateyya Sutta (Authorities)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

40. Ādhipateyya Sutta (Authorities) Bhikkhus, there are these three authorities. What three?

Authority over oneself; taking the world as one's authority; and taking The Dhamma as one's authority.

a. And what, Bhikkhus, is authority over oneself?

Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu goes to the forest, to the root of a tree, or an empty hut, and reflects thus:

"I did not go forth by taking on the robes, going from household life into homelessness, for the sake of robes, alms food, lodging, or for wanting this or that! Rather, it was due to the fervent consideration that:

'I am subject to birth, aging, death, grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and anguish. And seeing that I am subject to suffering, being afflicted by suffering, perhaps an ending to this whole mass of suffering could still be reached, where I may break free from rebecoming altogether.'

Therefore, he goes on reflecting –

"As one who has gone forth from household life into homelessness, I gave up sense pleasures. So, it would be improper, if not far worse, if I were to now go chasing after sense pleasures after having already given them all up."

To this end, the Bhikkhu resolves:

"I will be unshaken in my efforts; I will rouse the energy and not become negligent, as I establish mindfulness before me without perplexity, establishing my body in tranquility and keeping it soft, without creating agitation in my heart, while I develop a deeply collected state of mind."

By making himself his own authority thus, the Bhikkhu relinquishes the unwholesome and develops the wholesome, and by maintaining his growing purity, he abandons blameworthy behaviors as he develops and cultivates for himself a transformed character, one that is truly blameless in all his behavior.

This, Bhikkhus, is what is meant by 'developing authority over oneself.'

b. And what, Bhikkhus, is meant by taking the world as one's authority?

Here, a Bhikkhu goes to the forest, to the root of a tree, or an empty hut, and reflects thus:

"I did not go forth by taking on the robes, going from household life into homelessness, for the sake of robes, alms food, lodging, or for wanting this or that! Rather, it was due to the fervent consideration that:

'I am subject to birth, aging, death, grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and anguish. I am subject to suffering, being afflicted by suffering. So, perhaps an ending to this whole mass of suffering could still be reached.'

Therefore, he goes on reflecting –

"As one who has gone forth from household life into homelessness, I might engage in thinking thoughts about sense pleasures, or entertain thoughts of ill-will, or thoughts of harming others. But in this vast world, there may be very powerful recluses and brahmins, who have the Divine

Eye, and therefore they would be able to know the minds of others. So, while those secret thoughts or mental behaviors could be well-hidden in me from all those that are nearby, they would be clearly visible to them, however, even if they are far away and at considerable distance from me! Thus, in being fully aware of my thoughts, they will come to know me thus:

'Look at this clansman's son who, having gone forth out of faith from household life into homelessness, still continues to have such evil, unwholesome, and harmful thoughts!'

"Also, there exist powerful Devas who have the Divine Eye as well and could clearly know the minds and thoughts of others, whether from a far distance or while in proximity to me. Even though I would not be able to see them, yet they too will most certainly know and look straight into my heart and mind, while exclaiming this about me:

'O, look at this clansman's son! Although having gone forth out of faith from household life into homelessness, he still lives while thinking such evil, unwholesome, and harmful thoughts!'

To this end, the Bhikkhu resolves:

“I will be unshaken in my effort; I will rouse the energy and not become negligent, as I establish mindfulness before me without perplexity, establishing my body in tranquility and keeping it soft, without creating agitation in my heart, while I develop a deeply collected state of mind.”

By taking the world as one’s authority thus, the Bhikkhu relinquishes the unwholesome and develops the wholesome, and by maintaining his growing purity, he abandons blameworthy behaviors as he develops and cultivates for himself a transformed character, one that is truly blameless in all his behavior.

This, Bhikkhus, is what is meant by ‘taking the world as one’s authority.’

c. And what, Bhikkhus, is meant by taking The Dhamma as one’s authority?

Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu goes to the forest, to the root of a tree, or an empty hut, and reflects thus:

“I did not go forth by taking on the robes, going from household life into homelessness, for the sake of robes, alms food, lodging, or for wanting this and that! Rather, it was due to the fervent consideration that:

‘I am subject to birth, aging, death, grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and anguish. I am subject to suffering, being afflicted by suffering. But, perhaps an ending to this whole mass of suffering could still be reached.’

“After all, The Dhamma is well expounded by The Blessed One; it is directly visible; immediately effective; leading onwards; inviting rigorous testing and inspection; for it is truly applicable and personally realizable by the wise, each for oneself.

“And on top of that, I also have my fellow companions in The Holy Life, who both know and see. Therefore, as one who has gone forth from household life into homelessness, in this well-taught Dispensation of The Dhamma by The Blessed One, if I were to be negligent, lazy and heedless, that would be highly inconsiderate, improper, and foolishly disrespectful of me.”

To this end, the Bhikkhu resolves:

“I will be unshaken in my effort; I will rouse the energy and not become negligent, as I establish mindfulness before me without perplexity; establishing my body in tranquility and keeping it soft, without creating agitation in my heart, as I develop a deeply collected state of mind.”

By taking The Dhamma as one’s authority thus, the Bhikkhu relinquishes the unwholesome and develops the wholesome, and by maintaining his growing purity, he abandons blameworthy behaviors as he develops and cultivates for himself a transformed character, one that is truly blameless in all his behavior.

This, Bhikkhus, is what is meant by ‘taking The Dhamma as one’s authority.’

Bhikkhus, these are therefore the three authorities.

‘There is no hiding in the world for the one who engages in evil, After all, the person will be unable to hide even from himself What, in fact, is the truth from all that is false.

But, the eyewitness to it all, Is the benevolent and trustworthy wholesome that is in you, The one you continuously despise, nonetheless, For, it is the one who knows and sees what’s really kept hidden, And all that is unwholesome, which you desperately try to conceal within.

Meanwhile, however, The Tathāgata and the Devas, Through their unobstructed vision, Can clearly see that fool, As he goes on engaging in misconduct, thinking he is well-hidden.

So, one should become one’s own authority by becoming mindful; Taking the world as one’s authority, one should exercise wise consideration and be alert; And through taking The Dhamma as his genuine authority, The Bhikkhu should truly exert himself by going past the point of no return.

By conquering Māra, the end-maker, One realizes for himself the destruction of birth and re-becoming altogether.

So, it is such a wise one, truly, The one who is rightfully declared as the knower of existence, Who, no longer identifying with anything at all, Cannot make or consider anything his own, anymore.’