Snp 3.2 — Padhāna Sutta — On Striving

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Text

Snp. 3.2

Padhāna Sutta

“On Striving”

425. “While in meditation near the Nerañjarā River, I was driven to practice by striving with determination and utmost resolution, simply to reach the safety of no longer being bound up and imprisoned.

426. “Then, Namucī (Māra) approached me and began speaking kind words to me, feigning compassion:

‘You are so weak and emaciated with barely any color left on your skin. Surely, you are on the brink of death!’

427. “‘It takes a thousand stages to reach death, and already you are at the very last stage. I find you being much closer to death, than to life! But to live is much better than to die. So live, My Dear Sir! For that way, you could still gain merits!’

428. “‘As long as you can maintain the sacred fire, you would be living the holy life, and thus accumulating many merits. So, why even bother with so much striving?’

429. “‘To strive in such resolute manner is truly a difficult path, so very hard to overcome the challenges and thus attain what you seek!’

These were the verses spoken by Māra, who stood there waiting, right next to The Buddha.

430. “When this was said, The Blessed One addressed Māra, by saying:

‘O! Evil One, You who are the kinsman of all those who are heedless! You have crept here with your cunning ways, trying to deceive.’

431. “‘I haven’t the slightest need for any merits, but those who continue to look upon the Holy Life, as no more than the accumulation of merits, let Māra go and speak to them instead.

432. “‘There is much effort, with such strong faith, in the life I am living, along with wisdom found in me, to be striving resolutely like this, so why even bring up a question about wanting to live?

433. “‘If the wind that blows could dry up even the powerful rivers, then why should my blood also not get dried up, in the face of my resolute striving?

434. “‘And when the blood dries up, the bile and phlegm contained within also dry up. As the flesh begins fading away too, the heart however, becomes pure and bright, not to mention the mindfulness, which now has developed to an exceedingly refined level, along with wisdom and collectedness of heart, that are always present and firmly established.

435. “‘Meditating like this, I have reached the highest form of feeling; as a result, the heart no longer has in it any interest or longing for sensual pleasures. Now, behold the purity of such a being!

436. “‘Desire for sensuality is your first army, while hatred is your second, followed by your third army, which is hunger and thirst, whereas craving, makes up your fourth army.

437. “‘Drowsiness and procrastination make up your fifth army, and fear happens to be your sixth, followed by your seventh army, which is skeptical doubt, whereas belittling others and pigheadedness, are none other than your eighth army.

438. “‘Profiting and gaining fame, or obtaining honor and renown through wrong means and falsehood, while praising oneself and disparaging others,

439. “‘All these are your armies too, Namucī, for they’re always at your service, Kaṇha: their Dark Lord. But whoever is not a true warrior, cannot defeat or conquer them. Yet, it is only by vanquishing them all, that true happiness could be attained.

440. “‘So, I will push through my austerities and continue wearing the muñja grass, and if necessary, let even death come! For I’d rather die in battle, than allow myself to be defeated against your armies!

441. “‘I will not give up, like some other recluses and brahmins, who get gobbled up without ever being seen or heard of again, for they do not know nor understand the path that is taken, by those truly living the Holy Life.

442. “‘Witnessing Māra approach at the head of his vast army, mounted on his elephant, charging at me in full force, as I too march forward unflinchingly to meet them all in battle, for there can never be any retreat for me; there is no deterring or budging me from my position.

443. “‘Even though the world, with its armies of Devas and humans, does not have a chance of going against you, let alone vanquishing you, yet, standing here, I will break your entire armies with wisdom, much like an unfired clay pot is smashed into bits with a rock.

444. “‘With mindfulness well established, I masterfully take control of my thoughts; I will wander from region to region, training a great number of disciples, everywhere.

445. “‘And those disciples also will work diligently and with unshakable resolve, as they keep my teachings in their hearts, following them and remaining undeterred, despite your best efforts, as they too, having gone beyond, will grieve no more.’

446. “‘For seven years, step by step, I followed closely behind The Blessed One. Yet, no opportunities did I obtain to see some weakness or vulnerability in Him, the ever-mindful Buddha.

447. “‘Just like a predatory bird that circles in the sky, looking for its prey, then spots a golden hued stone, and imagining it to be a piece of tender fatty meat, suddenly sweeps down to attack. It comes seeking gratification, desiring to grab itself a quick, sweet, and easy meal.

448. “‘But, not finding that satisfaction of a sweet and easy meal, the bird fled from there. And now, just like that crow that came

attacking the stone, but only ended up leaving despondently, I too find myself leaving Gautama alone, utterly dejected.’

449. “And right at that moment, the string instrument fell from the waist belt of that grief stricken being, that Yakkha who fled and vanished from the scene, completely upset and displeased.”