Snp 4.3 — Sn 4:3 The Corrupted Octet

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

4:3 The Corrupted Octet

There are some who dispute

corrupted at heart,

and those who dispute

their hearts set on truth,

but a sage doesn’t enter

a dispute that’s arisen,

which is why he has no rigidity

anywhere at all.

Now, how would one
led on by desire,
entrenched in his likes,
forming his own conclusions,
overcome his own views?
He'd dispute in line
with the way that he knows.

Whoever boasts to others, unasked,
of his practices, habits,
is, say the skilled,
ignoble by nature—
he who speaks of himself
of his own accord.

But a monk at peace,
fully unbound in himself,
not boasting of his habits
—"That's how I am"—
he, say the skilled,
is noble by nature—
he with no vanity
anywhere in the world.

One whose doctrines aren't clean—
fabricated, formed, given preference
when he sees it to his own advantage—
relies on a peace
dependent
on the provoked.1

Because entrenchments2 in views
aren't easily overcome
when considering what's grasped
among doctrines,
that's why
a person embraces or rejects a doctrine—
in light of these very
entrenchments.

Now, one who is cleansed3
has no theorized view
about states of becoming
or not-
anywhere in the world.
Having abandoned conceit4 & illusion,
by what means would he go?5
He isn't involved,
for one who's involved
enters into disputes
over doctrines.
But how—in connection with what6—
would you argue
with one uninvolved?
He has nothing
embraced or rejected,7
has sloughed off every view
right here—every one.

vv. 780–787

Notes

1. Kuppa-paṭicca. Underlying many of the Canon's explanations of physical and mental phenomena is the theory of dhātu—element or property—in which phenomena are said to happen because an underlying dhātu, which normally exists in a potential form, is provoked into being actualized. Fires, for instance, come from the provocation of the fire dhātu that is everywhere present. When the provocation ends, the dhātu returns to its potential state, and the phenomenon ends. Thus any phenomenon that depends on provocation is by nature inconstant and unreliable. This is one of the reasons why the experience of full release is said to be unprovoked, because it does not depend on the provocation of a dhātu, and so is free from the potential for change. For more on this point, see MN 29, note 3.

2. Entrenchments: a rendering of the Pali term, nivesana, which can also be translated as dwelling (see Sn 1:12, note 5), abode, situation, home, or establishment.

Nd II illustrates the meaning of "entrenchments in views" with these ten views (found, in various forms, in DN 9, MN 72, and AN 10:93): "The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless." "The cosmos is not eternal…" "The cosmos is finite…" "The cosmos is infinite…" "The soul & the body are the same…" "The soul is one thing & the body another…" "After death a Tathāgata exists…" "After death a Tathāgata does not exist…" "After death a Tathāgata both does & does not exist…" "After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless."

3. Nd I: Cleansed through discernment. See also the explanation of "washed" in Sn 3:6.

4. Nd I explains a variety of ways of understanding the word "conceit," the most comprehensive being a list of nine kinds of conceit: viewing people better than oneself as worse than oneself, on a par with oneself, or better than oneself; viewing people on a par with oneself as worse than oneself, on a par with oneself, or better than oneself; viewing people worse than oneself as worse than oneself, on a par with oneself, or better than oneself. In other words, the truth of the view is not the issue here; the issue is the tendency to compare oneself with others. See AN 6:49. See also AN 4:159.

5. Nd I: "By what means would he go" to any destination in any state of becoming.

6. "In connection with what": a rendering of the instrumental case that attempts to cover several of its meanings, in particular "by what means" and "in terms of what." For a discussion of the use of the instrumental case in the Aṭṭhaka Vagga, see Sn 4:9, note 4.

7. This reading follows the Thai, Sri Lankan, and PTS editions: attaṁ nirattaṁ. The Burmese edition reads, attā nirattā: "He has no self, nor what's opposed to self." As GD points out in its notes to the translation of this verse, the first reading is probably the correct one, as it relates to the poem's earlier reference to a person embracing or rejecting a doctrine. The fact that an awakened person is free from both embracing and rejecting is a recurring theme in this vagga and the next; the confusion at present in the various recensions as to whether similar lines should read attaṁ/nirattaṁ or attā/nirattā is a recurring textual theme as well. (See Sn 4:4, note 4; Sn 4:10, note 7; Sn 4:14, note 2.)

For a discussion of the conditions under which the Buddha would enter into a debate, see Skill in Questions, chapter 5.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 18; MN 22; MN 58; MN 72; AN 2:36