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(Satipaṭṭhāna) Bāhiya Sutta

The Bāhiya Discourse (on satipaṭṭhana) | S 47.15

Or **Bāhika Sutta**, The Bāhika Sutta

Theme: The arhathood of Bāhiya

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008, 2014

1 Sutta summary and highlights

1.1 The (Satipaṭṭhāna) Bāhiya Sutta (S 47.15) is a short discourse recounting the arhathood of a monk named Bāhiya [2]. He approaches the Buddha to request for a “short teaching” (*saṅkhitta dhamma*), that is, a meditation topic, for his solitary retreat [§§1-3]. The Buddha first instructs him to make sure that his moral virtue is strong [§§4-5], and then teaches him a standard form of the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) in its 3 modes, that is, internally (in oneself), externally (in another), and in both [§§6-7].

If he were to follow these instructions, the Buddha assures him of his spiritual success [§8]. Bāhiya departs [§9], goes into solitary retreat [§10], and due course attains arhathood [§§11-12].

1.2 At this point, it is helpful to momentarily go to the translated **(Anubaddha) Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 47.15) and read the Introduction (2+3). The Introduction’s Section 3, however, has been reproduced here [2] if you wish to read on without a break. Then, after studying this (Satipaṭṭhāna) Bāhiya Sutta, you may go on to examine the (Anubaddha) Bhikkhu Sutta.

1.3 In the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Bāhiya Sutta is followed by **the (Arahatta) Uttiya Sutta** (S 47.16). They are mutatis mutandis almost identical except for the last line of the Buddha’s instruction [§8 n].¹

2 “Internally, externally, and internally and externally”²

2.1 The main teaching of **the (Anubaddha) Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 47.3)—also called **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Bhikkhu Sutta**—is understandably the practice of the 4 satipaṭṭhanas [§4], that is, the focused observation of the body (*kāyānupassana*), of feelings (*vedanā’nupassanā*), of the mind (*cittānupassanā*) and of dharmas or mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*) [§§4.2+3+4].

2.2 It is interesting, however, that the satipaṭṭhana formula is presented here in 3 modes (*ti, vidhena*)—that is, internally, externally, and both ways—a phrase found in **the (Anubaddha) Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 47.3,4), but not in its parallel passage here in the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Bāhiya Sutta (S 47.15,6). The satipaṭṭhana instructions are otherwise identical in both discourses.

We are to practise satipaṭṭhana *internally*,³ *externally*,⁴ and both *internally and externally*.⁵ All these 3 modes have been explained in some detail in a separate study of **the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** (D 22; M 10).⁶ So we shall deal with them only briefly here.

2.3 The Vibhaṅga offers a very helpful explanation of the 3 modes of satipaṭṭhana practice. It explains the contemplating both “internally and externally,” taking the observed object as it is, without considering it as being a part of one’s subjective experience, or that of others. This is clearly implied in the way the respective satipaṭṭhana contemplations are formulated in **the Vibhaṅga**:

[Contemplation of the body]

355. Internally: Here a monk reviews the body internally...in this body, there... (*idha bhikkhu ajjhataṃ kāyaṃ...paccavekkhati: atthi imasmim kāye...*).

¹ S 47.16/5:166 @ SD 47.11.

² This whole section is from SD 24.6a (3).

³ *Ajjhatta*, see **Satipaṭṭhana Ss** Intro, SD 13.1 (3.7.2).

⁴ *Bahiddhā*, see **Satipaṭṭhana Ss** Intro, SD 13.1(3.7c).

⁵ *Ajjhatta, bahiddhā*, see **Satipaṭṭhana Ss** Intro, SD 13.1 (3.7.4).

⁶ SD 13.1 (3.7.1-3.7.7).

Externally: Here a monk reviews the body externally...in that body, there is... (*idha bhikkhu bahiddhā kāyaṃ... paccavekkhati: atthi 'ssa kāye...*).⁷

Internally and externally: Here a monk reviews the body internally and externally...in the body, there is... (*idha bhikkhu ajjhata, bahiddhā kāyaṃ... paccavekkhati: atthi kāye...*).
(Vbh 355/193 f)

[Contemplation of feelings]

363. Internally: Here a monk, feeling a pleasant feeling, knows, “I feel a pleasant feeling” ... (*idha bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamāno: sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmi ti...*).

Externally: Here, when a pleasant feeling is being felt in another, a monk knows that he (the other person) feels a pleasant feeling... (*idha bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamānaṃ: sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmi ti pajānāti...*).⁸

Internally and externally: Here, when a pleasant feeling is being felt, a monk knows, “Pleasant feeling” ... (*idha bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamānaṃ: sukhaṃ vedanā ti pajānāti...*).
(Vbh 363/195 f)

This similarly applies for the mind (Vbh 365/197 f) and for mind-objects (Vbh 367/199-201).

2.4 The Vibhaṅga Commentary, after explaining that “internally” means “in oneself,” and “externally” as “in another,” succinctly explains “the body internally and externally” (*ajjhata, bahiddhā, kāye*), thus:

By “**the body internally and externally**” is meant that at times, in one’s own body, at times, in another’s body. By the first method, laying hold of the body in one’s own body is meant. By the second method, doing so in another’s body. By the third method, at times in one’s own body, and at times in another’s body. But there is no combined internal-external object. Here is stated the time when one who is familiar with his meditation object goes back and forth (from one object to the other).⁹
(VbhA §1038/219)

Analayo then remarks that

Practised in this way, satipatthana contemplation shifts towards an increasingly “objective” and detached stance, from which the observed phenomena are experienced as such, independent of whether they occur in oneself or others.

(Analayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, Kandy, 2003:98)

2.5 This approach is further supported by **the Sāmagāma Sutta** (M 104), where the same two terms are used when countering various unwholesome states and behaviour, whether personally (*ajjhata*) or in others (*bahiddhā*).¹⁰ Further, in **the Jana,vasabha Sutta** (D 18), in a context directly related to satipatthana, “external” explicitly refers to the body, the feelings, the mind and the dharmas of others.¹¹ Analayo notes that this passage is very significant “since it is the only discourse to provide additional information on the nature of ‘external’ satipatthana.” (2003:99)

⁷ Here *atthi 'issa* = *atthi assa*, where *assa* is 3rd sg m of *ayam*, usu tr as “this” (pointing to a near object), or equivalent of “that” in English when the object is out of one’s reach.

⁸ The syntax here is a bit tricky: lit “Here when a pleasant is felt, thus, ‘I feel a pleasant feeling,’ the monk is aware [knows].”

⁹ *Ajjhata, bahiddhā kāye ti kālena attano kāye, kālena parassa kāye. Paṭhama, nayena hi attano kāye kāya, parigahō vutto, dutiya, nayena parassa kāye, tatiya, nayena kālena attano kālena parassa kāye. Ajjhata, bahiddhā pana ghaṭit'ārammaṇaṃ nāma n'atthi. Paṅga, kammaṭṭhānassa pana aparāparam sañcaraṇa, kālo ettha kathito.* (VbhA 219)

¹⁰ M 104,7-11/2:246 @ SD 62.4.

¹¹ D 18,26/2:216 @ SD 62.3.

2 Monks named Bāhiya

2.1 The name Bāhiya is often linked to **Bāhiya Dāru,cīriya**. We know from **the (Arahatta) Bāhiya Sutta** (U 1.10), that Bāhiya Dāru,cīriya, the “bark-wearer,” becomes an arhat while still a layman, whole listening to the Buddha himself teaching. However, before he is able to find the robes and bowl for his ordination, he is gored to death by an agitated goat or cow on the same day.¹²

2.2 The interlocutor of **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Bāhiya** is also called Bāhiya. However, we do not have any details of his identity. The Sutta records that he is taught the 4 satipatthanas in its 3 modes [2.2], and practising them, attains arhathood, and that he is also known as **Bāhika**.¹³ Surely then, he cannot be Bāhiya Dāru,cīriya, the best known of the monks named Bāhiya [2.1].

2.3 To complicate matters, we apparently have a third Bāhiya—that of **the (Anattā) Bāhiya Sutta** (S 35.89)—who is also an arhat, but his practice, given by the Buddha upon his own request, is the reflection on the impermanence, suffering and non-self of the 6 sense-faculties and their respective external sense-bases, sense-consciousnesses, sense-contacts and feelings. As a result of this practice, he becomes an arhat.¹⁴ He is definitely neither of the previous two monks named Bāhiya. This Bāhiya, however, is not listed in the Dictionary of Pali Proper Names.

2.4 In summary, then, we have the following three monks bearing the name Bāhiya:

Bāhiya 1 , or Bāhiya Dāru,cīriya	(Arahatta) Bāhiya Sutta	U 1.10	SD 33.7	[2.1]
Bāhiya 2 , also known as Bāhika	(Satipaṭṭhāna) Bāhiya Sutta	S 47.15	SD 47.10	[2.3]
Bāhiya 3	(Anattā) Bāhiya Sutta	S 35.89	SD 93.14	[2.4]

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The Bāhiya Discourse (on satipatthana)

S 47.15

Bāhiya requests for a short teaching

1 Originating in Sāvattī.

2 Then, the venerable Bāhiya approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, the venerable Bāhiya said this to the Blessed One:

3 “It would be good, bhante, if the Blessed One were to teach me the Dharma in brief,¹⁵ having heard the Dharma from the Blessed One, I would dwell alone, aloof [secluded],¹⁶ diligent, exertive and resolute.”¹⁷

¹² U 1.10/8-11 + SD 33.7 (2.2.3).

¹³ The reading *bāhika* is found in some Sinhala MSS (Ce), and so noted in Malalasekera’s DPPN, sv 3. Bāhiya (2:282).

¹⁴ S 35.89/4:63 f @ SD 93.14.

¹⁵ *Sādhū me bhante bhagavā saṅkhittena dhammaṃ desetu*. This is stock, and flows into the next sentence.

¹⁶ “Aloof,” *vūpakaṭṭha* (pp), “alienated, withdrawn, drawn away (from), secluded: often in phrase,” as in stock, *eko vūpakaṭṭho appamatto ātāpī*, etc (see PED: arahant II.B.): D 3:76; S 1:117, 2:21, 244, 3:35, 73 f, 4:72; A 4:299. It is uncertain whether it comes from *vi+upakaṭṭha* (since the latter is only used of time), or from *vavakaṭṭha*, of which it is a synonym. Cf also BHS *vyapakṛṣṭa* (AvadŚ 1:233, 2:194) of which it might be a retranslation. Cf also A 4:435 (*gaṇasmā* ~, (of an elephant) “secluded from the herd”). Its verb *vūpakāseti* is caus (1) of *vavakassati*, “to draw away, alienate, distract, exclude” (V 4:326; A 5:72 f; caus (2) *vūpakāsāpeti*, “to cause to distract or draw away” (V 1:49, 4:326).

¹⁷ *Yam ahaṃ bhagavato dhammaṃ sutvā eko vūpakaṭṭho appamatto ātāpī pahit’atto vihareyyan’ti*. This is stock: V 2:258; M 1:177; A 2:258, 3:218; U 24. The first word, “alone” (*eka*) refers to bodily aloneness and physical solitude; “aloof” (*vūpakaṭṭha*) is mental solitude; both body and mind are aloof from the objects of sense-pleasures;

Cultivating moral virtue

- 4 ¹⁸“In that case, Bāhiya, **purify the very beginning of wholesome states.**
- 5 And what is the very beginning of wholesome states?
It is moral virtue that is well purified, and view that is straight.¹⁹
- 6 Then, Bāhiya, when your moral virtue is well purified, and your view is straight,
depending on that moral virtue, based on that moral virtue,
cultivate the 4 focuses of mindfulness [the 4 satipatthanas].²⁰

The 4 satipatthanas in its 3 modes²¹

- 7 What are the four?
- (1) CONTEMPLATING THE BODY
Here, Bāhiya, dwell ²²exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating [watching] the body in the body, ²³internally,²⁴
removing²⁵ covetousness and displeasure²⁶ in the world.²⁷
Dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating [watching] the body in the body, externally,²⁸
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.
Dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating the body in the body, internally and externally,²⁹
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.
- (2) CONTEMPLATING FEELINGS
Here, Bāhiya, dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,

often this word alone refers to a practitioner’s effort to rid the mind of sense-desire (M 36/1:246f = 85/2:93); “**diligent**” (*appamatta*), keeping to his meditative mindfulness“; **exertive**” (*ātāpī*) is putting forth both physical and effort; “**resolute**” (*pahit’atta*, pp of *padahati*,”to exert, take a stand”: see U:W 27 n2), “mentally resolute” by absence of longing regarding the body or life itself (DA 2:363; MA 1:180). Also as *ekā vūpakaṭṭhā appamattā ātāpino pahit’attā vihareyya* (V 2:258; A 3:218 (Ke Se ekeka...), 4:280). Sometimes the initial *eka* is omitted from the pericope. See below §10 nn.

¹⁸ From hereon, as at (**Anubaddha**) **Bhikkhu S** (S 47.3), which is prob given to Udāyī (S 47.3,3.4 etc), SD 24.6a.

¹⁹ Prev line and this one: *Ko c’ādi kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ, sīlaṅ ca suvisuddhaṃ diṭṭhi ca ujukā*. “View that is straight,” *diṭṭhi ca ujukā*, ie, the view that we are responsible for our own actions (*kamma-s,sakatā,diṭṭhi*) (SA 3:-199). This entails both acceptance of karma and rebirth. See Intro (2).

²⁰ *Yato kho te bhikkhu sīlaṅ ca suvisuddhaṃ bhavissati diṭṭhi ca ujukā tato tvaṃ bhikkhu sīlaṃ nissāya sīle patiṭṭhāya cattāro satipaṭṭhāne ti,vidhena bhāveyyāsi*. In the parallel passage in (**Anubaddha**) **Bhikkhu S** (S 47.3), the closing phrase here reads “cultivate the 4 focuses of mindfulness [satipatthanas] in a threefold manner” (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāne ti,vidhena bhāveyyāsi*) (S 47.3.4), but *ti,vidhena* is omitted in S 47.15 and S 47.16 @ SD 47.11.

²¹ For a briefer (where the 3 modes are not mentioned) formulation—the “comprehensive mode”—see (**Arahatta**) **Uttiya S** (S 47.16,7), SD 47,11.

²² *Ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassaṃ*. Here we find 4 of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc’-indriya*) in action: see SD 13.1(4.2).

²³ “Observing the body in the body” (*kāye kāyānupassī*). See SD 13.1 (3.4).

²⁴ *Ajjhattaṃ*, ie within oneself.

²⁵ *Vineyya* can mean “should remove” (as pot, like *vineyya*, Sn 590) or as “having removed” (as ger, like *vinaitvā*, Pm 1:244), and both senses apply in Satipaṭṭhāna S. U **Silananda** similarly ends the sentence with “removing covetousness and grief in the world” (*The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, 1990:177); also 1990:22-25. See SD 13.1 (4.2.3).

²⁶ “Covetousness and displeasure,” *abhijjhā,domanassaṃ*, alt trs: “desire and discontent,” “desiring and disliking,” or “longing and loathing.” Walshe (1995:335 & n632) renders it as “hankering and fretting [for the world].” See SD 13.1(4.2).

²⁷ “World” (*loka*). See SD 13.1 (4.2.4).

²⁸ *Bahiddhā*, ie in another.

²⁹ See Intro (3).

contemplating feelings in the feelings, internally,
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

Dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating [watching] feelings in the feelings, externally,³⁰
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

Dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating [watching] feelings in the feelings, internally and externally,
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

(3) CONTEMPLATING THE MIND

Here, Bāhiya, dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating the mind in the mind, internally,
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

Dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating [watching] the mind in the mind, externally,
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

Dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating the mind in the mind, internally and externally,
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

(4) CONTEMPLATING DHARMAS

Here, Bāhiya, dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating dharmas [phenomena] in the dharmas, internally,
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

Dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating [watching] dharmas in the dharmas, externally,
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

Dwell exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating dharmas in the dharmas, internally and externally,
removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.

Benefits of the practice

8 Bāhiya, when, depending on that moral virtue, based on that moral virtue, you cultivate the 4 focuses of mindfulness [satipaṭṭhanas],

then, the night or day will come when you can be certain of growth in the wholesome states, not decline.³¹ [166]

9³² Then, the venerable Bāhiya, delighted, rejoiced in the Blessed One's word, [S 5:144] rose from his seat and, after paying homage to the Blessed One, keeping him on his right, departed.

Bāhiya's arhathood

10 THE FULL ARHATHOOD PERICOPE.³³ Then, the venerable Bāhiya, dwelling *alone*,³⁴ *aloof, diligent, exertive, and resolute*,³⁵

in no long time at all, right here and now, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge,

³⁰ Comy is silent here, but see Intro (3).

³¹ *Tato tuyham bāhiya yā ratti vā divaso vā āgamissati, vuddhiy-eva pāṭikāṅkhā kusalessu dhammesu, no parihānīti.* While the whole Sutta is mutatis mutandis identical with (Arahatta) Uttiya S (S 47.16), it is here that they differ. Here (Arahatta) Uttiya S reads: “then, Uttiya, you will go beyond Māra’s realm” (*Tato tvam uttiya gamissasi maccu’dheyyassa pāran’ti*) (S 47,16,8/5:166,15), SD 47.11.

³² From here right to the end, very similar to the closing of **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.2/1:203), SD 7.14.

³³ For details, see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.2+56.3), SD 7.14.

³⁴ “Alone,” Ee *eke* (preferred); Ce *eko*; Be Se omit.

³⁵ *Atha kho āyasmā bāhiyo eko vūpakaṭṭho appamatto ātāpī pahit’atto viharanto.* This is stock: see §3 above n.

attained and dwelled in the supreme goal of the holy life,
for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness.

11 THE ARHAT'S REVIEW KNOWLEDGE. He directly knew:

“Birth is destroyed,	<i>khīṇa,jāti</i>
the holy life has been lived,	<i>visitam brahma,cariyaṃ</i>
done what is to be done,	<i>katam karaṇīyaṃ</i>
there is no more of this state of being.” ³⁶	<i>nāparam itthattāyāti</i>

12 And the venerable Bāhiya became one of the arhats.³⁷

— evaṃ —

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³⁶ On this para and the next (the attainment of arhathood), see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56.2/1:203) n, SD 7.14.

³⁷ On the prec and this para (the attainment of arhathood), see **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,56b/1:203) n, SD 7.14.