

## 8

**(Agāra) Āditta Sutta**

The Burning (House) Discourse | S 1.41  
 Theme: On having the right priorities in life  
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2003; rev 2010

Introduction

The two main stanzas of the (Agāra) Āditta Sutta (S 136-137) are also found in **the (Āditta) Jana Sutta** or **Dutiya Dve Brāhmaṇa Sutta** (in WT) (A 3.52/1:156) and **the Āditta Jātaka** (J 424),<sup>1</sup> which should all be studied together. Although stanza 138 is found in the Lannā (Thai) manuscript, the Jātaka Commentary (J 2:58) and the Visuddhi,magga, Bhikkhu Bodhi omits it in his translation, since “if the verse was originally part of the text, [the Saṃyutta Commentary] would surely have incorporated here the commentary on it found, with the verse itself, at Vism 236-37 (Vism:Ñ 8.29-34)” (S:B 374 n96). The verse runs thus:

*Jīvitam byādhi kālā ca  
 deha,nikkhepanam gati  
 pañc’ete jīva,lokasmim  
 animittā na nāyare*

The life-span, the illness, and the time,  
 where the body will be laid down, and the destiny:  
 these 5 things in the world can never be known;  
 there are no signs (by which one can tell).<sup>2</sup> (S 138)

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**The Burning (House) Discourse**

S 1.41

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s park in Jeta’s grove near Sāvattthī. When the night was far spent, a certain deity of exceeding beauty, lighting up the whole of Jeta’s grove, went up to the Blessed One. Having approached, he saluted the Blessed One, stood at one side, and uttered these stanzas before the Blessed One:

2 *Ādittasmim agārasmim  
 yaṃ nīharati bhājanam  
 tam tassa hoti atthāya  
 no ca yaṃ tattha ḍayhati.*

When a house is ablaze,  
 the vessel<sup>3</sup> that one saves,  
 is of use to one,  
 not the one left there to burn. (S 136)<sup>4</sup>

3 *Evam ādīpito<sup>5</sup> loko  
 jarāya maraṇena ca  
 nīhareth’eva dānena  
 dinnam hoti sunīhatam.*

Even so, is the world is ablaze  
 with decay and death:  
 let one take out (one’s wealth) by giving:  
 what is given is well-saved. [32] (S 137)

<sup>1</sup> **Āditta J** (J 424.11/3:471), SD 22.10a.

<sup>2</sup> J 2:58; Vism 8.29/236: it is not found in any of the sutta MSS.

<sup>3</sup> *Bhājanam*, Comy glosses as “a useful object; implement” (*upakaranam*). (J 3:472)

<sup>4</sup> This n is mentioned in n 1. See intro above. Should be omitted.

<sup>5</sup> Ce *ādīpito*; Se *ādittiko*.

- 4 *Dinnam sukha, phalam hoti  
nādinnaṃ hoti taṃ tathā,  
corā haranti rājāno  
aggi dahati nassati.* What is given yields happy fruit,  
but not so what is not given.  
Thieves or kings take it away;  
fire burns it, it is destroyed. (S 139)
- 5 *Atha antena jahati  
sarīraṃ sapariggahaṃ  
etad aññāya medhāvī  
bhuñjetha ca dadetha ca  
datvā ca bhutvā ca yathā'nubhāvaṃ  
anindito saggam upeti ṭhānanti* Then, in the end one leaves  
the body along with one's (loved ones and) possessions.<sup>6</sup>  
Having understood this, let the wise  
enjoy himself but also give.  
Having given and enjoyed as fits his means,  
the blameless goes to heaven." (S 140)

— evaṃ —

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<sup>6</sup> "With one's possessions," *sa,pariggahaṃ*. The word *pariggaha* can also mean "married," see **Te,vijja S** (D 13,31/1:247), SD 1.8. As such, the line here can be rendered as: "Then, in the end one leaves the body along with one's loved ones and possessions."