

Anguttara Nikāya

The Numerical Discourses

Sattakanipāta
(Book of the Sevens)

AN 7.66

Sattasūriya Sutta

“Discourse on the Seven Suns”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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I have personally heard this.

At one time, The Blessed One was living in Ambapālī’s mango orchard, in the City of Vesālī. There, The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus and said:

“Bhikkhus!”

“Yes, Bhante,” the Bhikkhus replied.

The Blessed One continued:

“Bhikkhus, all things that are based on conditions are in themselves impermanent and unreliable. There is no point in looking for comfort, or even stability in them.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, seeing this in all conditioned things, you should turn away by becoming disenchanted and disentangled from them, and thereby release yourselves from all of them.

“Bhikkhus, Mount Sineru, the highest peak, is eighty-four thousand yojanas in length, and eighty-four thousand yojanas wide. Its roots reach down to eighty-four thousand yojanas to the bottom of the ocean, and it rises eighty-four thousand yojanas high, from its base.

1. “Bhikkhus, after the passing of many years, many hundreds of thousands of years, there comes a time when there is no more rainfall. And when it no longer rains, all things born from seeds and vegetation, such as medicinal plants, grasses, trees, and all forests dry up and wither and are no more. In this way, Bhikkhus, all things that are based on conditions are in themselves impermanent and unreliable. There is no point in looking for comfort, or even stability in them.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, seeing this about all conditioned things, you should turn away by becoming disenchanted and disentangled from them, and thereby release yourselves from all of them.

2. “Bhikkhus, after the lapse of many years, many hundreds of thousands of years, there comes a time when a second sun appears. Now, with this rising of a second sun, all streams, rivulets, and lakes dry up and wither and are no more. In this way, Bhikkhus, all things that are based on conditions are in themselves impermanent and unreliable. There is no point in looking for comfort, or even stability in them.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, seeing this in all conditioned things, you should turn away by becoming disenchanted and disentangled from them, and thereby release yourselves from all of them.

3. “Bhikkhus, after the lapse of many years, many hundreds of thousands of years, there comes a time when a third sun appears. And with the rising of this third sun, the great rivers such as the Ganges, Yamunā, Aciravatī, Sarabhū and Mahī, all dry up and wither away. In this way, Bhikkhus, all things that are based on conditions are in themselves impermanent and unreliable. There is no point in looking for comfort, or even stability in them.

Therefore, Bhikkhus, seeing this in all conditioned things, you should turn away by becoming disenchanted and disentangled from them, and thereby release yourselves from all of them.

4. “Bhikkhus, after the lapse of many years, many hundreds of thousands of years, there comes a time when a fourth sun appears. And when a fourth sun rises, the great lakes from where the great rivers flow such as Anotatta, Sihapapāta, Rathakāra, Kaṇṇamuṇḍā, Kuṇālā, Chadantā and Mandākinī, all dry up and wither away. In this way, Bhikkhus, all things that are based on conditions are in themselves impermanent and unreliable. There is no point in looking for comfort, or even stability in them.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, seeing this in all conditioned things, you should turn away by becoming disenchanted and disentangled from them, and thereby release yourselves from all of them.

5. “Bhikkhus, after the lapse of many more years, many hundreds of thousands of years, there comes a time when a fifth sun rises. Now, when this fifth sun appears, the water in the great oceans recedes one hundred yojanas, two hundred yojanas, three hundred yojanas, five hundred yojanas, six hundred yojanas and even seven hundred yojanas. The water drops down to the height of merely seven palm trees, or even six, five, four, three, two, and even to a single palm tree’s length. The water recedes down to the height of seven men put together, or even six, five, four, three, two or one man, or even half the height of a single man. It may drop down even to the knee depth of a man, to the ankle depth of a man. Thus, when the fifth sun appears, there would not be enough water in the ocean to even wet the toes up to their joints. In this way, Bhikkhus, all things that are based on conditions are in themselves impermanent and unreliable. There is no point in looking for comfort, or even stability in them.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, seeing this in all conditioned things, you should turn away by becoming disenchanted and disentangled from them, and thereby release yourselves from all of them.

6. “Bhikkhus, after the lapse of many years, many hundreds of thousands of years, there comes a time when a sixth sun rises. And when the sixth sun appears, this entire great earth with even the peak of Mount Sineru, the king of mountains itself, starts smoldering, fuming, and is filled with smoke. Like the potter’s kiln that gets smoldering hot and releases much smoke, as the pottery is placed inside to be cooked, while it gets filled up with smoke, similarly, when the sixth sun appears, this entire great earth with even the peak of Mount Sineru itself, starts smoldering, burning, fuming, and is filled with smoke. In this way, Bhikkhus, all things that are based on conditions are in themselves impermanent and unreliable. There is no point in looking for comfort, or even stability in them.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, seeing this about all conditioned things, you should turn away by becoming disenchanted and disentangled from them, and thereby release yourselves from all of them.

7. “Bhikkhus, after the lapse of many years, many hundreds of thousands of years, there comes a time when a seventh sun appears. When the seventh sun arises, this entire great earth starts burning, along with the peak of Mount Sineru, the king of mountains itself that catches fire, as it starts burning and blazing, with its flames tossed by the winds reaching up all the way to the world of Brahmā.

“Now, when Mount Sineru blazes and burns, being destroyed by the scorching heat of those ravaging fires, the peaks of other mountains of a hundred yojanas, crumble and disintegrate as well, along with mountain peaks of two hundred yojanas’ height, three hundred yojanas, four hundred yojanas and five hundred yojanas, all similarly crumble and are destroyed.

“Bhikkhus, when this great earth and Mount Sineru, the king of mountains, keeps burning and blazing with the ravaging fires, no ash or soot is seen. Just like when ghee or oil is burning and blazing, no ash or soot is to be witnessed, similarly, this great earth and Mount Sineru, the king of mountains, will keep burning and blazing with the ravaging fires. In this way, Bhikkhus, all things that are based on conditions are in themselves impermanent and unreliable. There is no point in looking for comfort, or even stability in them.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, seeing this in all conditioned things, you should turn away by becoming disenchanted and disentangled from them, and thereby release yourselves from all of them.

“Bhikkhus, who besides those who have seen the truth, could fathom or be convinced that this great earth and Mount Sineru, the king of all mountains, would one day be blazing and burning, crumbling down, and getting destroyed?

“Bhikkhus, long time ago, there was a teacher by the name of Sunetta, the founder of a religious order who was himself free from lust. He helped many to cross the ford, for Sunetta, Bhikkhus, had many hundreds of students, as he taught them to be born into the world of Brahmā. Now, those who completely understood the dispensation taught by Sunetta and benefitted from it, after death, reappeared into a good state in the Brahmā world. Meanwhile, some who did not understand fully the dispensation taught by Sunetta, after death, were reborn in the company of those who manipulate the creation of other Devas. Yet others were reborn in the company of

Devas who enjoy creating; some were reborn as Devas in Tusita heaven, some in the company of the Yāma Devas, some others were reborn in the company of the Thirty-three Gods with Sakka, some with the company of the Devas of the Four Great Kings. Still others, after death, were reborn as humans within the royal warrior class of Khattiyas, or the Brahmins, or other wealthy and influential householder families.

“Then it occurred to the teacher Sunetta: *‘It is not suitable for me to be reborn in the same plane as my disciples, after death. What if I were to develop loving kindness further?’*

“Then, the Teacher Sunetta practiced loving kindness as his object of meditation for seven years. And by having developed loving kindness for seven years, he did not come to this world system for seven eons of cosmic expansion and contraction. Thus, during the periods of cosmic contraction, he was reborn as a radiantly glowing Deva, and during the eons of cosmic expansion he was reborn in the empty Brahmā paradise as the Great Brahmā God, becoming the great conqueror, the undefeated, universal seer, the one who wields mighty power.

“After that long period was over, he reappeared as Sakka, ruler of the Devas, thirty-six times over. And for many hundreds of times, he was reborn as the righteous Wheel Turning Universal Monarch, who ruled by the Dhamma, conquering, and winning over the hearts of countless peoples throughout the four directions, without any bloodshed, and establishing peaceful stability in his entire domain. Further, he was endowed with the seven treasures, as well as being the father of over a thousand courageous sons, who were each a hero, with valiant figures, ready to crush any marauding foreign armies. And they all lived by ruling over the earth righteously, without weapons as far as the boundaries of the ocean.

“However, Bhikkhus, despite having such a long-life, reigning for many years, Sunetta the teacher still was not released from birth, ageing and death, grieving, wailing, distress, torment, depression, and anguish. Therefore, I declare that he was still not liberated from suffering.

“And what was the reason for this? It was due to him not having deeply understood, nor experienced, four things. What four?

“He had not deeply understood nor experienced having the virtuous behavior of the Noble Ones; he had not deeply understood nor experienced the Samādhi of the Noble Ones; he had not deeply understood nor experienced the Wisdom of the Noble Ones; and he had not deeply understood nor experienced the Liberation of the Noble Ones.

“But Bhikkhus, now having awakened, the virtuous behavior of the Noble Ones has been deeply understood and experienced; the Samādhi of the Noble Ones has been deeply understood and experienced; the wisdom of the Noble Ones has been deeply understood and experienced; and the Liberation of the Noble Ones has been deeply understood and experienced.

“Craving for becoming has been pulled out from its roots. Destroyed is the doorway for re-becoming. Now there is no more birth, and no more renewed existence, anywhere.”

Having uttered these words, The Blessed One continued by saying:

*“The Glorious Gautama having awakened by Himself,
Has deeply understood and experienced the Noble Ones’ Perfect Liberation
Through Virtuous Behavior, Samādhī, Wisdom, and Release.
Thus, having directly understood and realized It by Himself,
The Blessed One declared the Dhamma to his Bhikkhus,
The Teacher, the Ender of suffering,
The Wise One, by having directly understood and seen it,
Has attained to the extinguishment that is Nibbāna supreme,
While showing to all, the Way to the ending of all suffering.”*

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu