Snp 1.3 — Khaggavisana Sutta: A Rhinoceros

English translation by Thanissaro 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

Translator's note: The refrain in this sutta is a subject of controversy. The text literally says, "Wander alone like a 'sword-horn,' which is the Pali term for rhinoceros. The commentary, however, insists that this term refers not to the animal but to its horn, for the Indian rhinoceros, unlike the African, has only one horn. Still, some scholars have noted that while the Indian rhinoceros is a solitary animal, rhinoceros horns don't wander, and that in other verses in the Pali canon, the phrase "wander alone like..." takes a person or an animal, not an animal part, for its object. Thus, for example, in Dhp 329 (repeated below), one is told to "wander alone like a king renouncing his kingdom, like the elephant in the Matanga woods, his herd." It's possible that the rhinoceros was chosen here as an example of solitary wandering both because of its habits and because of its unusual single horn. However, in a translation, it's necessary to choose one reading over the other. Thus, because wandering "like a rhinoceros" sounds more natural than wandering "like a horn," I have chosen the former rendering. Keep in mind, though, that the singularity of the rhinoceros' horn reinforces the image.

As noted under I.1, there is evidence suggesting that the verses here were originally separate poems, composed on separate occasions, and that they have been gathered together because of their common refrain.

Renouncing violence for all living beings, harming not even a one, you would not wish for offspring, so how a companion? Wander alone like a rhinoceros. For a sociable person there are allurements; on the heels of allurement, this pain. Seeing allurement's drawback, wander alone like a rhinoceros. One whose mind is enmeshed in sympathy for friends & companions, neglects the true goal. Seeing this danger in intimacy, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Like spreading bamboo, entwined, is concern for offspring & spouses. Like a bamboo sprout, unentangling, wander alone like a rhinoceros. As a deer in the wilds, unfettered, goes for forage wherever it wants: the wise person, valuing freedom, wanders alone like a rhinoceros. In the midst of companions — when staying at home, when going out wandering — you are prey to requests. Valuing the freedom wander alone like a rhinoceros. There is sporting & love in the midst of companions, & abundant fondness for offspring. Feeling disgust at the prospect of parting from those who'd be dear, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Without resistance in all four directions, content with whatever you get, enduring troubles with no dismay, wander alone like a rhinoceros. They are hard to please, some of those gone forth, as well as those living the household life. Shedding concern for these offspring of others, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Cutting off the householder's marks,[1] like a kovilara tree that has shed its leaves, the prudent one, cutting all household ties, wander alone like a rhinoceros. If you gain a mature companion, a fellow traveler, right-living & wise, overcoming all dangers go with him, gratified, mindful. If you don't gain a mature companion, a fellow traveler, right-living & wise, wander alone like a king renouncing his kingdom, like the elephant in the Matanga wilds, his herd. We praise companionship — yes! Those on a par, or better, should be chosen as friends. If they're not to be found, living faultlessly, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Seeing radiant bracelets of gold, well-made by a smith, clinking, clashing, two on an arm, wander alone like a rhinoceros,

[thinking:]

"In the same way, if I were to live with another, there would be careless talk or abusive." Seeing this future danger, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Because sensual pleasures, elegant, honeyed, & charming, bewitch the mind with their manifold forms — seeing this drawback in sensual strands — wander alone like a rhinoceros. "Calamity, tumor, misfortune, disease, an arrow, a danger for me." Seeing this danger in sensual strands, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Cold & heat, hunger & thirst, wind & sun, horseflies & snakes: enduring all these, without exception, wander alone like a rhinoceros. As a great white elephant, with massive shoulders, renouncing his herd, lives in the wilds wherever he wants, wander alone like a rhinoceros. "There's no way that one delighting in company can touch even momentary release." Heeding the Solar Kinsman's words, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Transcending the contortion of views, the sure way attained, the path gained,

[realizing:]

"Unled by others, I have knowledge arisen," wander alone like a rhinoceros. With no greed, no deceit, no thirst, no hypocrisy — delusion & blemishes blown away — with no inclinations for all the world, every world, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Avoid the evil

companion disregarding the goal, intent on the out-of-tune way. Don't take as a friend someone heedless & hankering. wander alone like a rhinoceros. Consort with one who is learned, who maintains the Dhamma, a great & quick-witted friend. Knowing the meanings, subdue your perplexity, [then] wander alone like a rhinoceros, Free from longing, finding no pleasure in the world's sport, love, or sensual bliss, abstaining from adornment, speaking the truth, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Abandoning offspring, spouse, father, mother, riches, grain, relatives, & sensual pleasures altogether, wander alone like a rhinoceros. "This is a bondage, a baited hook. There's little happiness here, next to no satisfaction, all the more suffering & pain." Knowing this, circumspect, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Shattering fetters, like a fish in the water tearing a net, like a fire not coming back to what's burnt, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Eyes downcast, not footloose, senses guarded, with protected mind, not oozing — not burning — with lust, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Taking off the householder's marks,[2] like a coral tree that has shed its leaves, going forth in the ochre robe, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Showing no greed for flavors, not careless, going from house to house for alms, with mind unenmeshed in this family or that, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Abandoning barriers to awareness, expelling all defilements — all — non-dependent, cutting aversion, allurement, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Turning your back on pleasure & pain, as earlier with sorrow & joy, attaining pure equanimity, tranquillity, wander alone like a rhinoceros. With persistence aroused for the highest goal's attainment, with mind unsmeared, not lazy in action, firm in effort, with steadfastness & strength arisen, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Not neglecting seclusion, absorption, constantly living the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, comprehending the danger in states of becoming, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Intent on the ending of craving & heedful, learned, mindful, not muddled, certain — having reckoned the Dhamma — & striving, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Unstartled, like a lion at sounds. Unsnared, like the wind in a net. Unsmeared, like a lotus in water: wander alone like a rhinoceros. Like a lion — forceful, strong in fang, living as a conqueror, the king of beasts — resort to a solitary dwelling. Wander alone like a rhinoceros. At the right time consorting with the release through good will, compassion, appreciation, equanimity, unobstructed by all the world, any world, wander alone like a rhinoceros. Having let go of passion, aversion, delusion; having shattered the fetters; undisturbed at the ending of life, wander alone like a rhinoceros. People follow & associate for a motive. Friends without a motive these days are rare. They're shrewd for their own ends, & impure. Wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Notes

1.

Hair and beard.

2.

Lay clothing.