Snp 1.12 — Muni Sutta: The Sage

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

Danger is born from intimacy,[1] society gives birth to dust.[2] Free from intimacy, free from society: such is the vision of the sage. Who, destroying what's born wouldn't plant again or nourish what will arise: They call him the wandering, singular sage. He has seen the state of peace. Considering the ground, crushing the seed, he wouldn't nourish the sap[3] — truly a sage — seer of the ending of birth, abandoning conjecture, he cannot be classified. Knowing all dwellings,[4] not longing for any one anywhere — truly a sage — with no coveting, without greed, he does not build,[5] for he has gone beyond. Overcoming all knowing all, wise. With regard to all things: unsmeared. Abandoning all, in the ending of craving, released: The enlightened call him a sage. Strong in discernment, virtuous in his practices, centered, delighting in jhana, mindful, freed from attachments, no constraints :: no fermentations:[6] The enlightened call him a sage. The wandering solitary sage, uncomplacent, unshaken by praise or blame. Unstartled, like a lion at sounds. Unsnared, like the wind in a net. Unsmeared, like a lotus in water. Leader of others, by others unled: The enlightened call him a sage. Like the pillar at a bathing ford,[7] when others speak in extremes. He, without passion, his senses well-centered: The enlightened call him a sage. Truly poised, straight as a shuttle,[8] he loathes evil actions. Pondering what is on-pitch and off:[9] The enlightened call him a sage. Self-restrained, he

does no evil. Young and middle-aged, the sage self-controlled, never angered, he angers none: The enlightened call him a sage. From the best the middling the leftovers he receives alms. Sustaining himself on what others give, neither flattering nor speaking disparagement: The enlightened call him a sage. The wandering sage abstaining from sex, in youth bound by no one, abstaining from intoxication[10] complacency totally apart: The enlightened call him a sage. Knowing the world, seeing the highest goal, crossing the ocean,[11] the flood,[12] — Such — [13] his chains broken, unattached without fermentation: The enlightened call him a sage. These two are different, they dwell far apart: the householder supporting a wife and the unselfish one, of good practices. Slaying other beings, the householder is unrestrained. Constantly the sage protects other beings, is controlled. As the crested, blue-necked peacock, when flying, never matches the wild goose in speed: Even so the householder never keeps up with the monk, the sage secluded, doing jhana in the forest.

Notes

1.

Dangers in intimacy: Craving and views.

2.

Dust: Passion, aversion, and delusion.

3.

Ground, seed, and sap: The khandhas (body, feelings, perceptions, thought formations, and consciousness), sense spheres, and elements form the ground in which grows the seed of constructive consciousness — the consciousness that develops into states of being and birth. The sap of this seed is craving and views.

4.

Dwellings: States of becoming and birth.

5.

He does not build: He performs none of the good or bad deeds that give rise to further states of becoming and birth.

6.

No fermentations (asava): He has none of the forms of defilement — sensual desire, views, states of becoming, or ignorance — that "flow out" of the mind and give rise to the flood of the cycle of death and rebirth.

7.

The pillar at a bathing ford: The Cullavagga (V.l) describes this as an immovable pillar, standing quite tall and buried deep in the ground near a bathing place, against which young villagers and boxers would rub their bodies while bathing so as to toughen them. The "extremes" in which others speak, according to the Commentary, are extremes of praise and criticism: These leave the sage, like the pillar, unmoved.

8.

Straight as a shuttle: Having a mind unprejudiced by favoritism, dislike, delusion, or fear.

9.

On-pitch and off (sama and visama): Throughout ancient cultures, the terminology of music was used to describe the moral quality of people and acts. Discordant intervals or poorly-tuned musical instruments were metaphors for evil; harmonious intervals and well-tuned instruments were metaphors for good. In Pali, the term sama — "even" — described an instrument tuned on-pitch: There is a famous passage where the Buddha reminds Sona Kolivisa — who had been over-exerting himself in the practice — that a lute sounds appealing only if the strings are neither too taut or too lax, but 'evenly' tuned. This image would have special resonances with the Buddha's teaching on the middle way. It also adds meaning to the term samana — monk or contemplative — which the texts frequently mention as being derived from sama. The word samañña — "evenness," the quality of being in tune — also means the quality of being a contemplative. This concept plays an important role in the Instructions to Rahula, below. The true contemplative is always in tune with what is proper and good.

10.

Intoxication: The three intoxications are intoxication with youth, with good health, and with life.

11.

Ocean: The way defilement splashes into undesirable destinations (so says the Commentary).

12.

Flood: The flow of defilement: sensual desires, views, states of becoming, and ignorance.

13.

Such: Unchanging; unaffected by anything.