Snp 1.12 — Sn 1:12 The Sage

English translation by Ṭhānissaro 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.

PDF presentation: discretionary soft-hyphen layout hints are omitted; original TXT and HTML retain them.

Text

1:12 The Sage

Danger is born from intimacy,1

a home gives birth to dust.2

Free from a home,

free from intimacy:

Such is the vision of the sage.3

Who, destroying what’s born,

wouldn’t plant (again)
or nourish what’s taking birth:
They call him the wandering, solitary sage.
He, the great seer
has seen
the state of peace.

Considering the ground,
crushing the seed,
he wouldn’t nourish the sap4
—truly a sage—
seer of the ending of birth,
abandoning conjecture,
he cannot be classified.

Knowing all dwellings,5
not longing for any one anywhere
—truly a sage—
with no coveting, without greed,
he does not build,6
for he has gone beyond.

Conquering all
knowing all,
wise.
With regard to all things:
unsmeared.
Abandoning all,
in the ending of craving,
released:
The enlightened call him a sage.

With discernment his strength,
well-endowed in habit & practice,
centered,
delighting in jhāna,
mindful,
released from attachments,
free from rigidity, free
from effluent7:
The enlightened call him a sage.

The solitary wandering sage,
uncomplacent, unshaken by praise or blame—
unstartled, like a lion at sounds,
uncaught, like the wind in a net,
unsmeared, like a lotus in water,8
leader of others, by others unled:
The enlightened call him a sage.

Who becomes
like the pillar at a bathing ford,9
when others speak in extremes;
he, without passion,
his senses well-centered:
The enlightened call him a sage.

Truly poised, straight as a shuttle,10
he loathes evil actions.
Pondering what is consonant & discordant11:
The enlightened call him a sage.

Restrained in mind, he does no evil.
Young & 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 intoxication12
complacency,
totally apart:
The enlightened call him a sage.

Knowing the world,
seeing the highest goal,
crossing the ocean,13 the flood,14
—Such15—
his chains broken,
unattached,
without effluent:
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.

Just 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

in the forest,

doing jhāna.

vv. 207–221

Notes

1. SnA: Dangers in intimacy = Craving and views.

2. SnA: Dust = Passion, aversion, and delusion.

3. This verse is quoted in the Milinda Pañhā. The poem as a whole is apparently the same as the Munigāthā mentioned in King Asoka's Calcutta-Bairāṭ edict.

4. SnA: Ground, seed, and sap = The aggregates, sense media, and properties form the ground in which grows the seed of constructive consciousness—the consciousness that develops into states of being and birth. (For other instances of this image, see SN 22:53–55.) The sap of this seed is craving and views.

5. SnA: Dwellings (nivesanāni) = States of becoming and birth. This term can also be translated as "entrenchments." See Sn 4:3, note 2.

6. SnA: He does not build = He performs none of the good or bad deeds that give rise to further states of becoming and birth. See Dhp 39, 267, and 412.

7. Effluent (āsava): Three qualities—sensual desire, states of becoming, or ignorance—that "flow out" of the mind and defile it. Sometimes a fourth quality—views—is added to the list, to connect these qualities with the four floods (ogha), which are identical to the four yokes. See AN 4:10.

8. See Sn 1:3.

9. The pillar at a bathing ford: Cv 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 SnA, are extremes of praise and criticism: These leave the sage, like the pillar, unmoved.

10. SnA: Straight as a shuttle = Having a mind unprejudiced by desire, aversion, delusion, or fear. See AN 4:19.

11. Consonant and discordant (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. AN 6:55 contains a famous passage in which the Buddha reminds Ven. Soṇa Kolivisa—who had been over-exerting himself in the practice—that a lute sounds appealing only if the strings are neither too taut nor 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 samaṇa—monk or contemplative—which the texts frequently mention as being derived from sama. The word sāmaññā—"evenness," the quality of being concordant and in tune—also means the quality of being a contemplative. The true contemplative is always in tune with what is proper and good. See also DN 2, MN 61, MN 97. Nd II, in commenting on Sn 4:2, equates discordant conduct with the ten types of misconduct described in MN 41.

12. Intoxication: The three intoxications are intoxication with youth, with good health, and with life. See AN 3:39.

13. SnA: Ocean = The way defilement splashes into undesirable destinations.

14. Flood: The flow of defilement: sensuality, becoming, views, and ignorance. See SN 45:171.

15. Such (tādiṁ): Unchanging; unaffected by anything, while at the same time undefined.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: AN 3:123; Dhp 268–269; Iti 66–67; Sn 3:11