Snp 3.2 — Padhana Sutta: Exertion

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

To me — resolute in exertion near the river Nerañjara, making a great effort, doing jhana to attain rest from the yoke — Namuci[1] came, speaking words of compassion: "You are ashen, thin. Death is in your presence. Death has 1,000 parts of you. Only one part is your life. Live, good sir! Life is better. Alive, you can do acts of merit. Your living the holy life, performing the fire sacrifice, will heap up much merit. What use is exertion to you? Hard to follow — the path of exertion — hard to do, hard to sustain." Saying these verses, Mara stood in the Awakened One's presence. And to that Mara, speaking thus, the Blessed One said this: "Kinsman of the heedless, Evil One, come here for whatever purpose: I haven't, for merit, even the least bit of need. Those who have need of merit: those are the ones Mara's fit to address. In me are conviction, austerity, persistence, discernment. Why, when I'm so resolute do you petition me to live? This wind could burn up even river currents. Why, when I'm resolute shouldn't my blood dry away? As my blood dries up gall & phlegm dry up. As muscles waste away, the mind grows clearer; mindfulness, discernment, concentration stand more firm. Staying in this way, attaining the ultimate feeling,[2] the mind has no interest in sensual passions. See: a being's purity! Sensual passions are your first army. Your second is called Discontent. Your third is Hunger & Thirst. Your fourth is called Craving. Fifth is Sloth & Drowsiness. Sixth is called Terror. Your seventh is Uncertainty. Hypocrisy & Stubbornness, your eighth. Gains, Offerings, Fame, & Status

wrongly gained, and whoever would praise self & disparage others. That, Namuci, is your army, the Dark One's commando force. A coward can't defeat it, but one having defeated it gains bliss. Do I carry muñja grass?[3] I spit on my life. Death in battle woud be better for me than that I, defeated, survive. Sinking here, they don't appear, some brahmans & contemplatives. They don't know the path by which those with good practices go. Seeing the bannered force on all sides — the troops, Mara along with his mount — I go into battle. May they not budge me from my spot. That army of yours, that the world with its devas can't overcome, I will smash with discernment — as an unfired pot with a stone. Making my resolve mastered, mindfulness well-established, I will go about, from kingdom to kingdom, training many disciples. They — heedful, resolute doing my bidding — despite your wishes, will go where, having gone, there's no grief."

Mara:

"For seven years, I've dogged the Blessed One's steps, but haven't gained an opening in the One Self-awakened & glorious. A crow circled a stone the color of fat — 'Maybe I've found something tender here. Maybe there's something delicious' — but not getting anything delicious there, the crow went away. Like the crow attacking the rock, I weary myself with Gotama." As he was overcome with sorrow, his lute fell from under his arm. Then he, the despondent spirit, right there disappeared.

Notes

1.

Mara.

2.

The highest equanimity that can be attained through jhana.

3.

Muñja grass was the ancient Indian equivalent of a white flag. A warrior expecting that he might have to surrender would take muñja grass into battle with him. If he did surrender, he would lie down with the muñja grass in his mouth. The Buddha, in asking this rhetorical question, is indicating that he is not the type of warrior who would carry muñja grass. If defeated, he would rather die than surrender.