# Snp 3.2 — Sn 3:2 Exertion

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/KN/StNp/StNp3_2.html

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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

3:2 Exertion

To me—

my mind resolute in exertion

near the river Nerañjarā,

making a great effort,

doing jhāna

to attain rest from the yoke—

Nāmuci1 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

and 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,

Māra stood in the Awakened One’s presence.

And to that Māra, 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
Māra’s fit to address.

In me are
conviction
austerity,
persistence,
discernment.
Why, when my mind is resolute,
do you petition me
to live?
This wind could burn up
even river currents.
Why, when my mind is 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 sensuality.
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 & Torpor.

Sixth is called Cowardice.

Your seventh is Uncertainty.

Hypocrisy & Stubbornness, your eighth.

Gains, Offerings, Fame,  & Status

wrongly gained,

and whoever would praise self

& disparage others:

That, Nāmuci, 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 would be better for me

than that I, defeated,

survive.4

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, Māra
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 in mind,
doing my bidding—
despite your wishes, will go
where, having gone,
there's no grief."

Māra:
"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.

vv. 425–449

Notes

1. Māra.

2. The highest equanimity that can be attained through jhāna.

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.

4. This line is repeated in Thag 2:37.

## Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 70; SN 4; AN 2:5; AN 5:53