Snp 3.11 — Nalaka Sutta: To Nalaka

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

Asita the seer, in his mid-day meditation, saw the devas of the Group of Thirty — exultant, ecstatic — dressed in pure white, honoring Indra, holding up banners, cheering wildly, & on seeing the devas so joyful & happy, having paid his respects, he said: "Why is the deva community so wildly elated? Why are they holding up banners & waving them around? Even after the war with the Asuras — when victory was the devas'. the Asuras defeated — even then there was no excitement like this. Seeing what marvel are the devas so joyful? They shout, they sing, play music, clap their hands, dance. So I ask you, who live on Mount Meru's summit. Please dispel my doubt quickly, dear sirs." "The Bodhisatta, the foremost jewel, unequaled, has been born for welfare & ease in the human world, in a town in the Sakyan countryside, Lumbini. That's why we're all so wildly elated. He, the highest of all beings, the ultimate person, a bull among men, foremost of all people, will set turning the Wheel [of Dhamma] in the grove named after the seers, like a strong, roaring lion, the conqueror of beasts." Hearing these words, Asita quickly descended [from heaven] and went to Suddhodana's dwelling. There, taking a seat, he said to the Sakyans: "Where is the prince? I, too, want to see him." The Sakyans then showed to the seer named Asita their son, the prince, like gold aglow, burnished by a most skillful smith in the mouth of the furnace, blazing with glory, flawless in color. On seeing the prince blazing like flame, pure like the bull of the stars going across the sky — the burning sun, released from the clouds

of autumn — he was exultant, filled with abundant rapture. The devas held in the sky a many-spoked sunshade of a thousand circles. Gold-handled whisks waved up & down, but those holding the whisks & the sunshade couldn't be seen. The matted-haired seer named Dark Splendor, seeing the boy, like an ornament of gold on the red woolen blanket, a white sunshade held over his head, received him, happy & pleased. And on receiving the bull of the Sakyans, longingly, the master of mantras & signs exclaimed with a confident mind: "This one is unsurpassed, the highest of the biped race." Then, foreseeing his own imminent departure, he, dejected, shed tears. On seeing him weeping, the Sakyans asked: "But surely there will be no danger for the prince?" On seeing the Sakyans' concern he replied, "I foresee for the prince no harm. Nor will there be any danger for him. This one isn't lowly: be assured. This prince will touch the ultimate self-awakening. He, seeing the utmost purity, will set rolling the Wheel of Dhamma through sympathy for the welfare of many. His holy life will spread far & wide. But as for me, my life here has no long remainder; my death will take place before then. I won't get to hear the Dhamma of this one with the peerless role. That's why I'm stricken, afflicted, & pained." He, having brought the Sakyans abundant rapture, the follower of the holy life left the inner chamber and, out of sympathy for his nephew, urged him on toward the Dhamma of the one with the peerless role: "When you hear from another the word, "Awakened One," or "Attaining self-awakening, he lays open the path of the Dhamma," go there & ask him yourself. Follow the holy life under that Blessed One." Instructed by the one whose mind was set on his benefit, Such, seeing in the future the utmost purity, Nalaka, who had laid up a store of merit, awaited the Victor expectantly, guarding his senses. On hearing word of the Victor's turning of the foremost wheel, he went, he saw the bull among seers. Confident, he asked the foremost sage about the highest sagacity, now that Asita's forecast had come to pass.

[Nalaka:]

Now that I know Asita's words to be true, I ask you, Gotama, you who have gone to the beyond of all things. I'm intent on the homeless life; I long for the almsround. Tell me sage, when I ask you, the utmost state of sagacity.

[The Buddha:]

I'll explain to you a sagacity hard to do, hard to endure. Come now, I'll tell you. Be steadfast. Be firm. Practice even-mindedness, for in a village there's praise & abuse. Ward off any flaw in the heart. Go about calmed & not haughty. High & low things will come up like fire-flames in a forest. Women seduce a sage. May they not seduce you.[1] Abstaining from sexual intercourse, abandoning various sensual pleasures, be unopposed, unattached, to beings moving & still. 'As I am, so are these. As are these, so am I.' Drawing the parallel to yourself, neither kill nor get others to kill. Abandoning the wants & greed where people run-of-the-mill are stuck, practice with vision, cross over this hell. Stomach not full, moderate in food, having few wants, not being greedy, always not hankering after desire: one without hankering, is one who's unbound. Having gone on his almsround, the sage should then go to the forest, standing or taking a seat at the foot of a tree. The enlightened one, intent on jhana, should find delight in the forest, should practice jhana at the foot of a tree, attaining his own satisfaction. Then, at the end of the night, he should go

to the village, not delighting in an invitation or gift from the village. Having gone to the village, the sage should not carelessly go among families. Cutting off chatter, he shouldn't utter a scheming word. 'I got something, that's fine. I got nothing, that's good.' Being such with regard to both, he returns to the very same tree. Wandering with his bowl in hand — not dumb, but seemingly dumb — he shouldn't despise a piddling gift nor disparage the giver. High & low are the practices proclaimed by the contemplative. They don't go twice to the further shore. This [Unbinding] isn't sensed only once.[2] In one who has no attachment — the monk who has cut the stream, abandoning what is & isn't a duty — no fever is found. I'll explain to you sagacity: be like a razor's edge. Pressing tongue against palate, restrain your stomach. Neither be lazy in mind, nor have many thoughts. Be committed to taintlessness, independent, having the holy life as your aim. Train in solitude & the contemplative's task, Solitude is called sagacity. Alone, you truly delight & shine in the ten directions. On hearing the fame of the enlightened — those who practice jhana, relinquishing sensual pleasures — my disciple should foster all the more conviction & conscience. Know from the rivers in clefts & in crevices: those in small channels flow noisily, the great flow silent. Whatever's not full makes noise. Whatever is full is quiet. The fool is like a half-empty pot; one who is wise, a full lake. A contemplative who speaks a great deal endowed with meaning: knowing, he teaches the Dhamma, knowing, he speaks a great deal. But he who, knowing, is restrained, knowing, doesn't speak a great deal: he is a sage worthy of sagehood; he is a sage, his sagehood attained.

Notes

1.

For an instance of a man who tried to seduce a nun, see Therigatha XIV.

2.

According to the Commentary, the high and low practices taught by the Buddha are, respectively, the practice-mode of pleasant practice and quick intuition, and the practice-mode of painful practice and slow intuition (see AN 4.162; The Wings to Awakening, passage 84). These modes of practice don't go twice to the further shore in the sense that each of the four paths — to stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship — abandons whatever defilements it is capable of abandoning once and for all. There is no need to repeat the path. Unbinding is not attained only once in the sense that it is touched as the result of each of the four paths.

See also: AN 3.120.