Snp 4.2 — Sn 4:2 The Cave Octet

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.

Text

4:2 The Cave Octet

Staying attached to the cave,

covered heavily over,1

a person sunk in confusion

is far from seclusion—

for sensual pleasures

sensual desires2

in the world

are not lightly let go.

Those chained by desire,
bound by becoming's allure,
aren't easily released
for there's no liberation by others.
Intent, in front or behind,3
on hunger for sensual pleasures
here or before—
greedy
for sensual pleasures,
busy, deluded, ungenerous,
entrenched in the discordant way,4
they—impelled into pain—lament:
"What will we be
when we pass on from here?"

So a person should train
right here-&-now.
Whatever you know
as discordant in the world,
don't, for its sake, act discordantly,
for that life, the enlightened say,
is short.

I see them,
in the world, floundering around,
people immersed in craving
for states of becoming.
Base people moan in the mouth of death,
their craving, for states of becoming & not-,5
unallayed.

See them,
floundering in their sense of mine,
like fish in the puddles
of a dried-up stream—
and, seeing this,
live with no mine,
not forming attachment
for states of becoming.
Subdue desire
for both sides,6
comprehending7 sensory contact,
with no greed.

Doing nothing for which
he himself
would rebuke himself,
the enlightened person doesn't adhere
to what's seen,
to what's heard.
Comprehending perception,
he'd cross over the flood—
the sage not stuck
on possessions.
Then, with arrow removed,
living heedfully, he longs for neither—
this world,
the next.

vv. 772–779

Notes

1. Nd I: "Cave" = the body. "Covered heavily over" = having defilements and unskillful mental qualities.

2. "Sensual desires/sensual pleasures": two possible meanings of kāma. According to Nd I, both meanings are intended here.

3. Nd I: "In front" means experienced in the past (as does "before" two lines down); "behind" means to-be-experienced in the future.

4. Nd I: "The discordant (visama) way" means the ten types of unskillful action (see MN 41, MN 97, and AN 10:176). See also Sn 1:12, note 11.

5. States of not-becoming are oblivious states of becoming that people can get themselves into through a desire for annihilation, either after death or as a goal of their religious striving (see Iti 49 and MN 49). As with all states of becoming, these states are impermanent and stressful.

6. According to Nd I, "both sides" here has several possible meanings: sensory contact and the origination of sensory contact; past and future; name and form; internal and external sense media; self-identity and the origination of self-identity. It also might mean states of becoming and not-becoming, mentioned in the previous verse and below, in Sn 4:5.

7. Nd I: Comprehending sensory contact has three aspects: being able to identity and distinguish types of sensory contact; contemplating the true nature of sensory contact (e.g., inconstant, stressful, and not-self); and abandoning attachment to sensory contact. The same three aspects would apply to comprehending perception, as mentioned in the following verse.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 35:189; Thag 16:4; Sn 4:15