Thag 15.2 — Thag 15:2 Udāyin

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/KN/Thag/thag15_2.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

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

Thag 15:2 Udāyin

In AN 6:43, Ven. Udāyin recites these verses spontaneously in the Buddha’s presence after the king’s elephant (nāga) has passed by, and the Buddha defines the foremost nāga in these terms: “But, Udāyin, whoever in this world—with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, its people with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & commonfolk—does no misdeed in body, speech, or mind: That’s whom I call a nāga.” The Buddha’s definition hints at a play on words: “Does no misdeed,” in Pali, is āguṁ na karoti, which could be rephrased as na āguṁ karoti, yielding a play on the word nāga. In these verses, Ven. Udāyin shows that he has picked up on the hint by rephrasing it in precisely that way.

A human being, self-awakened,

his mind tamed, concentrated,
traveling along the Brahmā road,
delighting in the stilling of the mind:
He, having gone beyond all dhammas,1
to whom human beings pay homage,
the devas pay homage as well—
so I have heard from the Worthy One
—to him, gone past all fetters,
gone from the forest to the clearing,2
delighting in the renunciation of sensuality,
released like gold from its ore.

He, the nāga outshining all others,
as the Himalayas, rocky hills:
Among all things named nāga,
he, unexcelled, is truly named.

I will praise the nāga to you—
for he does no misdeed.
Composure & harmlessness
are the nāga's two feet.
Austerity & celibacy
are the nāga's two other feet.
Conviction is the great nāga's trunk,
his hand;3
equanimity, his white tusks.
Mindfulness his neck; his head:
discernment,
discrimination,
reflection on dhammas;
Dhamma the balanced heat of his digestion;

seclusion his tail.
He, in jhāna, delighting in assurance,
inwardly well-concentrated,
the nāga, when going, is concentrated,
when standing, the nāga is concentrated,
when reclining, the nāga is concentrated,
when sitting, the nāga is concentrated.
Everywhere he's restrained, the nāga:
That is the nāga's consummation.

He eats what is blameless;
doesn't eat what is not;
on gaining food & clothing,
doesn't store it up.
Having cut all bonds,
fetters tiny & large,
wherever he goes,
he goes without longing.
Like a white lotus, born & growing in the water,
but not smeared by the water
—fragrant, delightful—
even so the awakened one,
well-born in the world, lives in the world,
but is not smeared by the world,
like the lotus, by the water.

A great blazing fire
unnourished grows calm,
and though its embers exist4
is described as unbound:
Conveying an instructive meaning,

this image is taught by the observant.

Great nāgas will recognize

the nāga as taught by the nāga

as free from passion,

free from aversion,

free from delusion,

effluent-free.

His body discarded, the nāga

will, without effluent,

totally unbind.

Notes

1. On the point that arahants have gone beyond all dhammas, see AN 3:137, note 1.

2. Clearing = nibbāna, which is here presented as a play on the word, vana, or forest.

3. In Pali, an elephant's trunk is called its "hand" (hattha). In fact, one of the words for "elephant" is hatthin, "one having a hand."

4. Aṅgāresu ca santesu. The phrase is apparently meant as a play on words, in that santesu can be the locative either of santa, calm, or sant, existing. Either possibility fits into what seems to be point of this last section of the poem, which is to provide an image to illustrate the difference between the sa-upādisesa-nibbāna of the living arahant—literally, unbinding with fuel remaining—and the anupādisesa-nibbāna of the arahant who has passed away—literally, unbinding with no fuel remaining. In other words, the unbinding of the living arahant is like a fire that has grown calm and whose embers are calm but still warm; the unbinding of the arahant after death is like a fire whose embers have grown totally cold.

Iti 44 describes the property of sa-upādisesa-nibbāna as follows: "His [the arahant's] five sense faculties still remain and, owing to their being intact, he experiences the pleasing & the displeasing, and is sensitive to pleasure & pain. His ending of passion, aversion, & delusion is termed the unbinding property with fuel remaining." Its description of the property of anupādisesa-nibbāna is: "For him, all that is sensed, being unrelished, will grow cold right here. This is termed the unbinding property with no fuel remaining." For further discussion of this distinction, see The Mind Like Fire Unbound, chapter 1.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 1; SN 12:51; AN 6:43; AN 9:7; AN 9:62; AN 10:81; Iti 44