Thag 17.2 — Thag 17:2 Sāriputta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

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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

Thag 17:2 Sāriputta

This is not a single, unified poem. Instead, it is a compilation of verses that—apparently over the course of many years—became associated with Ven. Sāriputta’s name. Some of them may have been his original compositions. Others are verses that other people spoke about him. One in particular is also found in Ud 3:4, where the Buddha is said to have exclaimed it on seeing Sāriputta meditating. Some of the verses that make no mention of Sāriputta are, in other parts of the Canon, attributed to the Buddha, suggesting that they might have been those that Sāriputta’s liked to repeat.

One of the verses, toward the end of the collection, makes reference to the perfection of discernment. The teaching on the perfections is elsewhere found only in later additions to the Canon, suggesting that this compilation as a whole was also late. This, however, does

not rule out the possibility that some of the individual verses were early.

Also, it should be noted that a large number of the verses here are also found in Thag 14:1. This pattern of borrowing that occurs from one poem to another is a common occurrence in the Theragāthā, suggesting that the compilers of the collection felt no qualms about standardizing the sentiments of the great elders.

Mindful, heedful,

his mind well-centered,

absorbed with restrained resolves,1

inwardly delighting

in his conduct, his mindfulness,

alone, content:

He's called a monk.

Eating moist or dry food,

he shouldn't be heavily sated.

With unfilled belly, with measured food,

the monk should wander

mindfully.

Leaving four or five mouthfuls uneaten,

he should drink water:

This is enough

for the easeful abiding

of a resolute monk.

And he covers himself with a proper robe

enough for that purpose:

This is enough

for the easeful abiding

of a resolute monk.

As he sits cross-legged,

it doesn't rain on his knees:

This is enough
for the easeful abiding
of a resolute monk.

Whoever sees pleasure as pain,
and pain as an arrow,
and that there's nothing between the two:
With what will he be what in the world?

"May I never have anything to do
with a person of evil desires,
lazy, lowly in his persistence,
with little learning, disrespectful":
With what will he be what in the world?

But one who is learned, wise,
well-centered in virtues,
devoted to tranquility of awareness:
Let him stand at the head.

One who is devoted to objectification,2
his heart delighting in objectification,
attains no unbinding,
the unexcelled rest from the yoke.

But whoever, abandoning objectification,
delighting in the path of non-objectification,
attains unbinding,
the unexcelled rest from the yoke.

In village or wilds,
valley, plateau:
that place is delightful
where arahants dwell.

Delightful wilds
where the crowds don’t delight,
those free from passion
delight,
for they’re not searching
for sensual pleasures.3

Regard him as one who
points out
treasure,
the wise one who
seeing your faults
rebukes you.
Stay with this sort of sage.
For the one who stays
with a sage of this sort,
things get better,
not worse.

Let him admonish, instruct,
deflect you
away from poor manners.
To the good, he’s endearing;
to the bad, he’s not.4

He, the Blessed One, the One
Awakened, the One with Eyes,
was teaching Dhamma to another.
And while the Dhamma was being taught,
I, desiring the Dhamma,
turned an attentive ear.

My listening was not in vain:
I'm released, effluent-free.5

Not for knowledge of previous lifetimes,
nor for the divine eye,
nor for knowledge of others' minds,
nor for psychic power,
nor for knowledge of beings dying & being reborn,
nor for purifying the divine ear
did I have any aspiration.

Sitting at the root of a tree,
with shaven head,
wrapped in an outer robe,
the elder foremost in discernment:
Upatissa does jhāna.6

Attaining no-thinking,
the disciple of the Rightly
Self-Awakened One
is endowed with noble silence
straightaway.7

As a mountain of rock
is unwavering, well-settled,
so a monk whose delusion is ended
doesn't quiver—
just like a mountain.8

To a person without blemish,
in constant quest of what's pure,
a hair-tip of evil
seems a storm cloud.

I don’t delight in death,
don’t delight in living.
I await my time
like a worker his wage.
I don’t delight in death,
don’t delight in living.
I await my time,
mindful, alert.

On either side is death,
it’s not non-death, ahead or behind.
Practice, don’t perish.
Don’t let the moment pass you by.

As a frontier fortress is guarded
within & without,
you should safeguard yourselves.
Don’t let the moment
pass you by.
Those for whom the moment is past
grieve, consigned to hell.9

Calmed, restrained,
giving counsel unruffled,
he shakes off evil qualities—
as the breeze,
a leaf from a tree.10

Calmed, restrained,
giving counsel unruffled,
he removed evil qualities—
as the breeze,

a leaf from a tree.

You shouldn't trust in this way
some householders or those gone forth.
Having been good, they become bad.
Having been bad, they become good.

Sensual desire, ill will,
sloth & torpor,
restlessness & uncertainty:
These, for a monk, are the five defilements.

The concentration of one
dwelling in heedfulness
doesn't waver,
whether he is honored or not.
Doing jhāna, persevering,
having
subtle insight into
subtle views,
delighting in the ending of clinging:
He's called a man of integrity.

The great ocean, the Earth,
a mountain, even the wind
aren't fitting as a comparison
for the Teacher's foremost release.

Keeping the (Dhamma) wheel going,
the elder of great knowledge, centered,
being like earth, fire, & water,
is neither impassioned nor angered.11

Having attained perfection in discernment,12

greatly intelligent, a great sage,

not dull, though seemingly dull,

he always wanders unbound.

The Teacher has been served by me;

the Awakened One's bidding,

done;

the heavy load, laid down;

the guide to becoming, uprooted.

Attain consummation

through heedfulness:

That is my message.

So then, I'm about to

unbind.

I'm released

everywhere.13

Notes

1. Reading yatasaṅkappajjhāyi with the Burmese edition. The Thai edition has yathāsaṅkappacariyāya, "in line with the conduct of his resolves."

2. Papañca. On the topic of objectification, see the introduction to MN 18.

3. These two verses = Dhp 98–99.

4. These two verses = Dhp 76–77.

5. See MN 74.

6. Upatissa was Ven. Sāriputta's personal name.

7. Noble silence is the second jhāna. See SN 21:1.

8. In Ud 3:4, the Buddha uses this verse to describe Ven. Sāriputta.

9. This verse = Dhp 315.

10. This verse = Thag 1:2.

11. See MN 141.

12. The reference to the perfection (pāramita) of discernment suggests that this verse, at least, is a later composition.

13. See Thag 14:1, note 3.