SN 1.38 — Sakalika Sutta: The Stone Sliver

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

Translator's note: Cullavagga VII tells of how Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin, tried unsuccessfully in various ways to wrest leadership of the Sangha from the Buddha. In Cv VII.3.9, he tries to kill the Buddha by hurling a rock down a mountainside. The rock is crushed, and so misses the Buddha, but sends out a splinter that pierces the Buddha's foot, drawing blood. According to the Commentary, this discourse together with SN 4.13 describe the Buddha's reaction to this attempt on his life.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rajagaha at the Maddakucchi Deer Reserve. Now at that time his foot had been pierced by a stone sliver. Excruciating were the bodily feelings that developed within him — painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable — but he endured them mindful, alert, & unperturbed. Having had his outer robe folded in four and laid out, he lay down on his right side in the lion's posture, with one foot placed on top of the other, mindful & alert.

Then 700 devatas from the Satullapa retinue, in the far extreme of the night, their extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Maddakucchi, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they stood to one side.

As she was standing there, one of the devatas exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a naga is Gotama the contemplative! And like a naga, when bodily feelings have arisen — painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable — he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a lion is Gotama the contemplative! And like a lion, when bodily feelings have arisen — painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable — he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a thoroughbred is Gotama the contemplative! And like a thoroughbred, when bodily feelings have arisen — painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable — he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a peerless bull is Gotama the contemplative! And like a peerless bull, when bodily feelings have arisen — painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable — he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a strong burden-carrier is Gotama the contemplative! And like a strong burden-carrier, when bodily feelings have arisen — painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable — he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a tamed one is Gotama the contemplative! And like a tamed one, when bodily feelings have arisen — painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable — he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "See a concentration well-developed, a mind well-released — neither pressed down nor forced back, nor with mental fabrication kept blocked or suppressed. Whoever would think that such a naga of a man, lion of a man, thoroughbred of a man, peerless bull of a man, strong burden-carrier of a man, such a tamed man should be violated: what else is that if not blindness?"

Five-Veda Brahmans, living austerely for 100 years: Their minds are not rightly released. Lowly by nature, they've not gone beyond. Overpowered by craving, bound up in precepts & practices, performing wretched austerities for 100 years: Their minds are not rightly released. Lowly by nature, they've not gone beyond. For one fond of conceit, there's no taming; for one uncentered, no sagacity. Though alone in the wilderness, if one lives heedlessly, one won't cross over, beyond Mara's sway. But having abandoned conceit, well-centered within, with right awareness everywhere fully released, alone in the wilderness, heedfully living, one will cross over, beyond Mara's sway.

See also: SN 4.13; SN 36.6; AN 5.129.