SN 2.8 — SN 2:8 Tāyana the Deva’s Son | Tāyana Sutta

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

Tāyana the Deva’s Son

Tāyana Sutta (SN 2:8)

The verses from this sutta are chanted throughout Thailand after the fortnightly recitation of the Pāṭimokkha.

Then Tāyana the deva’s son, formerly of another religious sect, in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta’s Grove, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As he was standing there, he recited these verses in the Blessed One’s presence:

“Having striven, brāhman, cut the stream.

Dispel sensual passions.

Without abandoning sensual passions, a sage

encounters no oneness of mind.

If something's to be done, then work at it firmly,

for a slack going-forth

kicks up all the more dust.

It's better to leave a misdeed undone.

A misdeed burns you afterward.

Better that a good deed be done

that, when done, you don't regret.

Just as sharp-bladed grass, if wrongly held,

wounds the very hand that holds it—

the contemplative life, if wrongly grasped,

drags you down to hell.

Any slack act,

or defiled observance,

or fraudulent holy life

bears no great fruit."

That is what Tāyana the deva's son said. Having said it, he bowed down to the Blessed One and, circling him on the right, vanished right there.

Then, toward the end of the night, the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Last night, monks, Tāyana the deva's son, formerly of another religious sect, in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, came to me and, on arrival, having bowed down to me, stood to one side. As he was standing there, he recited these verses in my presence:

'Having striven, brāhman, cut the stream.

Dispel sensual passions.

Without abandoning sensual passions, a sage

encounters no oneness of mind.

If something's to be done, then work at it firmly,

for a slack going-forth

kicks up all the more dust.

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the contemplative life, if wrongly grasped,

drags you down to hell.

Any slack act,

or defiled observance,

or fraudulent holy life

bears no great fruit.’

That is what Tāyana the deva’s son said. Having said it, he bowed down to me and, circling me on the right, vanished right there.

“Learn Tāyana’s verses, monks. Master Tāyana’s verses, monks. Remember Tāyana’s verses, monks. Connected with the goal are Tāyana’s verses, monks, and basic to the holy life.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 35:200; AN 4:245; AN 8:13–14; Sn 2:6; Dhp 307–308; Dhp 311–314; Ud 5:5