SN 5.1 — SN 5:1 Sister Āḷavikā | Āḷavikā Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/SN/SN5_1.html

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

Sister Āḷavikā

Āḷavikā Sutta (SN 5:1)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then, early in the morning, Āḷavikā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvatthī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvatthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind, aiming at seclusion.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & addressed her in verse:

“There’s no

escape

in the world,

so what are you trying to do

with seclusion?

Enjoy sensual delights.

Don’t be someone

who later regrets.”

Then the thought occurred to Āḷavikā the nun: “Now who has recited this verse—a human being or a non-human one?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra the Evil One who has recited this verse wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in me, wanting to make me fall away from seclusion.”

Then, having understood that “This is Māra the Evil One,” she replied to him in verses:

“There is

an escape in the world,

well touched by me

with discernment—

something that you,

you Evil One,

kinsman of the heedless,

don’t know.

Sensual pleasures

are like swords & spears;

the aggregates,

their executioner’s block.

What you call sensual delight

is no delight for me.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “Āḷavikā the nun knows me”—vanished right there.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 35:115; Ud 8:1; Iti 43; Iti 72