SN 5.5 — SN 5:5 Sister Uppalavaṇṇā | Uppalavaṇṇā 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

Sister Uppalavaṇṇā

Uppalavaṇṇā Sutta (SN 5:5)

Near Sāvatthī. Then, early in the morning, Uppalavaṇṇā 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 to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she stood at the root of a flowering Sal tree.

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:

“You’ve come, nun,

to this Sal tree

with its fine flowering crest,

and stand alone

at its root,

with no one

to match you in beauty.

In your foolishness,

aren’t you afraid

of rape?”

Then the thought occurred to Uppalavaṇṇā 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 concentration.”

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

“If even a hundred-thousand rapists

came across me like this,

I wouldn’t stir a hair.

I’d feel no terror,

and I’m not afraid of you, Māra,

even alone like this.

Here—I disappear.

I slip into your belly

or stand between your eyebrows,

and you

don’t see me.

I have mastery

over the mind,

have well-developed

the bases of power.1

I’m released from all bonds,

and not afraid of you,

my friend.”

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

Note

1. See SN 51:20