SN 5.9 — SN 5:9 Sister Selā | Selā 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 Selā

Selā Sutta (SN 5:9)

Near Sāvatthī. Then, early in the morning, Selā 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 sat down at the foot of a tree for the day’s abiding.

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:

“By whom was this doll created?

Where is the doll’s maker?

Where has the doll originated?

Where does it cease?”

Then the thought occurred to Selā 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:

“This doll isn’t self-made,

nor is this misery made by another.*

In dependence on a cause

it comes into play.

With the dissolution of the cause

it ceases.

Just as a seed grows

—when planted in a field—

because of the soil’s savor

together with moisture;

in the same way, these

aggregates,

properties,

sense media

—in dependence on a cause—

come into play.

With the dissolution of the cause

they cease.”

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

*Alternative reading:

This doll, this misery,

isn’t created.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 12:25; SN 22:53–55