SN 5.10 — SN 5:10 Sister Vajirā | Vajirā 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 Vajirā

Vajirā Sutta (SN 5:10)

This discourse dramatizes a problem that often arises in meditation practice—a speculative question arises that, if followed, pulls one out of concentration. Sister Vajirā shows how to deal with the situation: Recognize that the terms in which the question is expressed are just that—terms—and that whatever reality there is in the issue raised by the question can be reduced to phenomena observable in the immediate present. In ultimate terms, this comes down to the arising and passing away of stress, which should be observed and comprehended to the point where one can see through to that which neither arises nor passes away.

* * *

Near Sāvatthī. Then, early in the morning, Vajirā 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 being created?

Where is the being's maker?

Where has the being originated?

Where does the being

cease?"

Then the thought occurred to Vajirā 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:

"What? Do you assume a 'being,' Māra?

Do you take a position?

This is purely a pile of fabrications.

Here no being

can be pinned down.

Just as when, with an assemblage of parts,

there's the word,

chariot,

even so when aggregates are present,

there's the convention of

a being.

For only stress is what comes to be;

stress, what remains & falls away.

Nothing but stress comes to be.

Nothing ceases but stress."

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "Vajirā the nun knows me"—vanished right there.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 121; SN 12:15; SN 22:36; SN 23:2; SN 35:85; SN 35:205; SN 36:11; SN 38:14; Ud 1:10