SN 23.2 — Satta Sutta: A Being

English translation by Thanissaro 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

Translator's note: A number of discourses (among them, SN 35.191; AN 6.63) make the point that the mind is fettered, not by things like the five aggregates or the objects of the six senses, but by the act of passion & delight for them. There are two ways to try to cut through this fetter. One is to focus on the drawbacks of passion & delight in & of themselves, seeing clearly the stress & suffering they engender in the mind. The other is to analyze the objects of passion & delight in such a way that they no longer seem worthy of interest. This second approach is the one recommended in this discourse: when the Buddha talks of "smashing, scattering, & demolishing form (etc.) and making it unfit for play," he is referring to the practice of analyzing form minutely into its component parts until it no longer seems a fit object for passion & delight. When all five aggregates can be treated in this way, the mind is left with no conditioned object to serve as a focal point for its passion, and so is released — at the very least — to the stage of Awakening called non-return.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Then Ven. Radha went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "'A being,' lord. 'A being,' it's said. To what extent is one said to be 'a being'?"

"Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Radha: when one is caught up[1] there, tied up[2] there, one is said to be 'a being.'[3]

"Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for feeling... perception... fabrications...

"Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for consciousness, Radha: when one is caught up there, tied up there, one is said to be 'a being.'

"Just as when boys or girls are playing with little sand castles:[4] as long as they are not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for those little sand castles, that's how long they have fun with those sand castles, enjoy them, treasure them, feel possessive of them. But when they become free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for those little sand castles, then they smash them, scatter them, demolish them with their hands or feet and make them unfit for play.

"In the same way, Radha, you too should smash, scatter, & demolish form, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for form.

"You should smash, scatter, & demolish feeling, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for feeling.

"You should smash, scatter, & demolish perception, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for perception.

"You should smash, scatter, & demolish fabrications, and make them unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for fabrications.

"You should smash, scatter, & demolish consciousness and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for consciousness — for the ending of craving, Radha, is Unbinding."

Notes

1.

Satta.

2.

Visatta.

3.

Satta.

4.

Lit.: "dirt houses."