SN 47.6 — SN 47:6 The Hawk | Sakuṇagghi Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

The Hawk

Sakuṇagghi Sutta (SN 47:6)

“Once a hawk suddenly swooped down on a quail and seized it. Then the quail, as it was being carried off by the hawk, lamented, ‘O, just my bad luck and lack of merit that I was wandering out of my proper range and into the territory of others! If only I had kept to my proper range today, to my own ancestral territory, this hawk would have been no match for me in battle.’

“‘But what is your proper range?’ the hawk asked. ‘What is your own ancestral territory?’

“‘A newly plowed field with clumps of earth all turned up.’

“So the hawk, without bragging about its own strength, without mentioning its own strength, let go of the quail. ‘Go, quail, but even when you have gone there you won’t escape me.’

“Then the quail, having gone to a newly plowed field with clumps of earth all turned up and climbing up on top of a large clump of earth, stood taunting the hawk, ‘Now come and get me, you hawk! Now come and get me, you hawk!’

“So the hawk, without bragging about its own strength, without mentioning its own strength, folded its two wings and suddenly swooped down toward the quail. When the quail knew, ‘The hawk is coming at me full speed,’ it slipped behind the clump of earth, and right there the hawk shattered its own breast.

“This is what happens to anyone who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others.

“For this reason, you should not wander into what is not your proper range and is the territory of others. In one who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others, Māra gains an opening, Māra gains a foothold. And what, for a monk, is not his proper range and is the territory of others? The five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. Sounds cognizable by the ear… Aromas cognizable by the nose… Flavors cognizable by the tongue… Tactile sensations cognizable by the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. These, for a monk, are not his proper range and are the territory of others.

“Wander, monks, in what is your proper range, your own ancestral territory. In one who wanders in what is his proper range, his own ancestral territory, Māra gains no opening, Māra gains no foothold. And what, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory? The four establishings of mindfulness. Which four? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves… mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 35:189; SN 35:199