

SN 47.6

Mahāvagga Saṃyutta

(Connected Discourses On the Great Section)

Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta

(Connected Discourses on the Establishments of Mindfulness)

Ambapālī Vagga

(The Section on Ambapālī, the Courtesan)

Sakuṇagghi Sutta

“Simile of the Hawk”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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“Bhikkhus, long ago in the distant past, a hawk was flying in the sky, when suddenly it went into a dive and grabbed hold of a quail in mid-flight, as it fell prey to the hawk’s sharp talons.

“Now, when the confused quail being carried off by the hawk, began coming out of its stupor, he realized what was happening and started lamenting:

‘I have no luck! No good thing ever happens to me! I have no merits whatsoever! So stupid of me to have strayed away from my ancestral home! I should have simply stayed put within the protective area of my sanctuary, instead of wandering off to the domains of others!’

‘Ah, if I only had resorted to my ancestral home today, instead of leaving its safe and protective boundaries, there would be no way this hawk could have possibly grabbed hold of me! No possibility for this hawk to make me his prey today! If only I was in my ancestral domain, this hawk wouldn’t stand a chance against me, nor put me into submission like this!’

“Now, the hawk in hearing this, replied:

‘And where might be this resort or sanctuary that would give you protection from me? What is this ancestral home of yours that you speak of, that would make you safe from me?’

“And the quail replied:

‘Down there! My home is the newly ploughed fields you see, where there are many places for me to hide and take cover, among the chunks of removed soil.’

“The self-confident hawk, assured of his own strength and agility, certain of his own abilities to swoop down and grab the quail again, intentionally releases the quail from his talons, while saying:

*‘Go ahead, quail. I’m setting you free, for now!
Go to your home, but you’ll soon find out that there is no way of escaping me!’*

“Then, Bhikkhus, the quail flew straight to the newly ploughed field, and sat atop a large chunk of removed soil, and began shouting at the hawk:

*‘Now, hawk, try and catch me if you can!
Come and get me now, hawk! I dare you to come and grab me!’*

“Then, the self-confident hawk, assured of his own strength and agility, certain of his own abilities, quickly collapsed its wings as it went straight down at an incredible speed, about to make his assault on the quail, that was now sitting at the bottom.

“But the quail, carefully observing how the hawk was descending fast, watchfully attentive of the hawk’s speedy attack, suddenly jumped inside one of the clumps of removed soil, going underneath it.

“The hawk, however, sweeping down with such force and speed, slammed its body against the clumps of removed soil, the ancestral home of the quail, and thereby shattered his breast, right on the spot.

“So it is, Bhikkhus, when one strays outside of one’s own ancestral home, away from the protection of his own sanctuary and into the domain of others.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, do not stray outside into the domains of others, move back to your ancestral home, resort back to the protection of your own sanctuary! Otherwise, Māra will truly grab hold of the hearts of all those, who stray from their ancestral home, those who resort outside into the domain of others, away from the protection of their own sanctuary, thereby giving Māra the power to grab and bind them into his submission.

“And what is it, that is never to be considered a Bhikkhu’s ancestral home, his own protective domain, for they truly are the domain and territory of others?

“It is the five strands of sensual stimulation. And what are these five?

“These are visible forms that are caught by the awareness of the eyes, that are enjoyed for causing one pleasure, for being delightfully enticing, which provoke lust to arise in the heart; sounds that are caught by the awareness of the ears, that are enjoyed for causing one pleasure, for being delightfully enticing, which provoke lust to arise in the heart; odors that are caught by the awareness of the nose, that are enjoyed for causing one pleasure, for being delightfully enticing, which provoke lust to arise in the heart; flavors that are caught by the awareness of the tongue, that are enjoyed for causing one pleasure, for being delightfully enticing, which provoke lust to

arise in the heart; touches that are caught by the awareness of the body, that are enjoyed for causing one pleasure, for being delightfully enticing, which provoke lust to arise in the heart.

“These, therefore, are the five strands of sensual stimulation, which are never to be considered a Bhikkhu’s ancestral home, his own protective domain and sanctuary, for they truly are the domain and territory of others.

“So, Bhikkhus, move back to your ancestral home, resort back to your own protective domain. For truly, Māra will never be able to grab hold of the hearts of all those, who move back to their ancestral territory, those who resort back to the protection of their own sanctuary. Māra will simply be powerless to grab hold of them again!

“And what is a Bhikkhu’s ancestral home? How does he resort to the protection of his own sanctuary?

“All this is to be found within the Four Bases of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). And what are these four?

“Here Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu dedicates himself to meditating while being fully attentive and aware of the body, carefully staying with the body, by observing whatever he detects to be *the* most pronounced bodily sensation that is occurring at that time. He does this, while he trains ardently but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“Also, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu dedicates himself to meditating while being fully attentive and aware of feelings, carefully staying with whatever he detects to be *the* most pronounced feeling occurring at that time, mindful of it in all its transitions and everchanging states. He does this, while he trains ardently but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“Also, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu dedicates himself to meditating while being fully attentive and aware of whatever state that is occurring in the Heart (*Citta*), carefully staying with whatever he detects to be *the* most pronounced experience taking place within the *Citta*, at that time, remaining mindful of it in all its transitions and everchanging states. He does this, as he trains ardently but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“Also, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu dedicates himself to meditating while being fully attentive and aware of whatever mental phenomena or states (*dhamma*), along with their relationships, that are occurring at that time, carefully staying with whatever he detects to be *the* most pronounced mental phenomenon he is experiencing, mindful of it in all its transitions and everchanging states. He does this, as he trains ardently but *without* having any thoughts or attitudes of either longing or resentment towards the world.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, the *Satipaṭṭhāna* *is* a Bhikkhu’s ancestral home, where he resorts to gain the protection of his own sanctuary.”

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