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Saṇamāna Sutta

The Discourse on Murmuring | S 1.15

Ee **Sakamāna Sutta** The Discourse on the Joyful

or **Santi,kaya Sutta** The Discourse on Bodily Peace*

Theme: The awakened find the solitary forest blissful

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018

1 Sutta highlights

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 Sutta teaching

1.1.1.1 The Saṇamāna Sutta (S 1.15), the discourse on murmuring, is a short and delightful text of a rustic scene during the dry hot season, when, during the noon heat, the birds and beasts are all resting together quietly. A great sound comes from the forest depths as the wind blows through the trees, bamboo clusters and hollows.

1.1.1.2 The Sutta highlights how a lone dryad (forest-deity) fears the forest sounds in the warm solitude of a summer noon. The Buddha, on the other hand, sings of the blissful peace that the forest sounds evoke. The Buddha is happy because he has given up all attachment to the world, and hence has no fear of losing anything, not even his own life. [1.2.1.2]

1.1.1.3 All the manuscripts read *majjhantike* [S 28a* = 29s*]. Only the Burmese edition reads *maj-jh'anhika* [S 28a* = 29a*], resolved as *majjha*, “mid-, middle” + *anha* (usually *aṇha* = *aha*, “day”) + *ika*, here suggesting a duration), hence, “midday,” rather than “noon.” This is the preferred reading since it fits the context best. If it were merely “noon,” the duration would be too short. This would be the period from 10 am to 2 pm when the sun shines hottest during the dry season, that is, during the month of Āsāḷha (June-July).¹ However, the monk would have finished his meal by noon (when the sun is above the head at the meridian), and spend the rest of the midday meditating.

1.1.2 The fearful deity. At that time, a slow-witted (*dandha,paññā*) deity, unable to find a companion with whom to sit and chat amicably, utters the 1st stanza [S 28]. This verse reflects how a forest deity, still unawakened, is troubled by the forest solitude and his own loneliness, reflecting his sensuality.

However, when a monk returns from his alms-round, he sits alone in a secluded forest-abode. Having finished his meal, he meditates all alone and feels great joy (SA 1:35,3-7)—as attested in the Buddha’s verse [S 29].

1.2 SUTTA HIGHLIGHT

1.2.1 Mirror verses

1.2.1.1 The verses of **the Saṇamāna Sutta** (S 1.15), S 28* and 29*, are mirror verses. They reflect each other almost verbatim, and the 2nd verse is the Buddha’s reply to the 1st spoken by a deity, a dryad or forest deity, who fears the solitude of the forest at noon [1.1.2]. In reply, the Buddha changes only 3

¹ On the Indian calendar, see DEB (App 1).

syllables (or 2 words) of the last line of the verse, that is, from “how fearful” (*taṃ bhayaṃ*) of S 28d* to “how delightful” (*sā ratī*) of SD 29d*.

1.2.1.2 The Buddha’s reply to the deity’s verse [S 28*] is instructive. To the deity, fearful of the forest solitude and sounds, the Buddha must have explained why, unlike the deity, he delights in the forest solitude and sounds. The Commentary gives us a hint of this: a monk, after his almsround and meal, retires at noon to the forest to meditate.

A monk meditating in a forest is instructed by the Buddha to cultivate lovingkindness and radiate it to all the forest beings. Since the meditator himself has lovingkindness, he will not fear. The forest beings, sensing the meditator’s lovingkindness, feel no threat from him, and would even make the place more conducive for his meditation.²

1.2.2 The deity. We have no information whether the deity (*devatā*) is male or female. *Devatā* is a generic term for any kind of fairy or divine being, terrestrial or celestial. Hence, the word is often translated as “deity,” both as a common noun and in the abstract sense. In this case, it is highly likely that the *devata* or deity is an earthbound deity, and probably a forest deity or **dryad**.³ Perhaps, he is a newly arisen dryad, which would explain his fear of the forest solitude and sounds.

2 Sutta analysis

2.1 PROBLEMATIC WORDS

2.1.1 Sannisīva or sannisinna

2.1.1.1 In line b of S 28*+29*, the Saṃyutta Burmese edition (Be) and the Sinhalese edition (Ce) read **sannisīvesu**, a word not found anywhere else, while PTS edition (1884) & PTS edition 2 (1998) (both following the Sinhalese manuscript),⁴ read *sannisinnesu*, which seems to be an attempt at correcting the original wrong reading. The Subcommentary (*ṭīka*), Burmese edition, similarly reads *sannisīvesu* but glosses it with *sannisinnesu* (SAṬ:Be 1:78).

2.1.1.2 The Saṃyutta Commentary explains **sannisinnesu** as “when they arrived at a pleasant spot, they settled down together to rest” (*yathā phāsuka-t, thānaṃ upagantvā sannisinnesu vissamānesu*, SA 1:34,31-33). The Ancient Subcommentary explains that they all did so to overcome their tiredness by sitting together. This gloss is effected by replacing the letter “v” in (presumably) *sannisīvesu* and a “d” (*parissama, vinodaṇ’atthaṃ sabbaso sannisīdantesu; d-kārassa hi v-kāraṃ katvā niddeso*, SAṬ:Be 1:78.) Hence, it accepts the original reading as *sannisīvesu*.

2.1.1.3 Lines ab, then, is saying that during the midday heat, all the birds (and other animals), tired by it, are quietly resting together to dispel their tiredness.

² On cultivating lovingkindness when meditating in a forest, see (**Karaṇīya**) **Metta S** (Sn 1.8 = Khp 9) + SD 38.3 (1.2): see also KhpA 232-235 (SnA 193).

³ On **dryad**, see SD 54.2 (3.2.2.2(1)).

⁴ See n of the texts.

2.1.2 Saṇate or saṇati

2.1.2.1 In line c, the resolution of *saṇate'va* is problematic. The Commentary glosses it as *saṇati viya mahā, viravaṃ viya vuccati*, “it seems as if to make a sound, as if it to utter a great roar” (SA 1:34,25 f). This implies that the Commentary resolves the compound as *saṇate iva*. Ee2 apparently accepts this with its reading *saṇate va*.

2.1.2.2 *Saṇate* is probably an old dialectic form of *saṇati*. Hence, we can read the compound as *saṇati eva*, meaning that it is the forest itself is making the sound. The verb *saṇati* means “to make a (loud) sound,”⁵ and is used in **the Nālaka Sutta** (S 3.11) to describe a noisy brook: “noisily goes the brook [rivulet]” (*saṇantā yanti kussobhā*, Sn 720c), “What is not full makes a noise” (*yad ūnakam tam saṇati*, Sn 721a). However, in the case of **S 28c* + 28b***, it is more likely that the forest would seem to “murmur” rather than make a “roar.”

2.1.3 Paṭibhāti

2.1.3.1 In line d, the verb *paṭibhāti*, is glossed by the Commentary with “serves, nurses, heals” (*upat-thāti*, SA 1:35,3). The meaning is that the forest “heals” and helps us in our meditation with its trees, shade, coolness and “murmur.” The Commentary tells us that during the dry season, at high noon, when the birds and beasts are all sitting together quietly, a great sound arises from the depths of the forest as the wind blows through the trees, bamboo clusters, and hollows. (SA 1:34 f)

2.1.3.2 The word *paṭibhāti* [*paṭi*, a prefix suggesting reaction + *vbhā*, “to shine”] “to appear, to be evident, to come into one’s mind, to occur to one, to be clear.” This sentence comes from a well-known stock for inviting the Buddha to teach Dharma, occurring in **the (Pasāda Kampana) Moggallāna Sutta** (S 51.14): “It would be good indeed if the Blessed One were to explain its meaning” (*sādhu vata bhante bhagavantam yeva paṭibhatu etassa bhāsītassa attho*).⁶ In **the Aruṇa, vatī Sutta** (S 6.14), the past Buddha Sikhī instructs his disciple Abhibhū to teach Dharma to the Brahmas.⁷ **The Vimāna, vatthu Commentary** shows how it is used to ask a question: “I should like to ask a question” (*maṃ paṭibhāti ekaṃ pañham pucchitum*), (VVA 78 = 159).⁸

In **the Pavāraṇā Sutta** (S 8.7), *paṭibhāti maṃ* seems to mean “I have an inspiration!” (when Vaṅgīsa declares that he has a poem in mind). And the Buddha replies, *paṭibhātu taṃ*, “Let it be evident,” or something like “Show us; inspire us!” In the context of **S 1.15** here, the word probably simply means, “It seems; it occurs” to come one (that “the forest solitude and sounds” are fearful or are delightful).⁹

2.1.4 A slow-witted deity

2.1.4.1 At that time, a slow-witted deity [1.2.2], unable to find a companion with whom to sit and chat amicably, utters the 1st stanza [S 27]. But when a monk has returned from his alms-round and sits

⁵ S 1:7,6 = 1:103,29; Sn 720, 721; Miln 414; J 6:507

⁶ S 51.14/5:270 (SD 27.8).

⁷ “Brahmin, would you like to give a Dharma talk to Brahma, Brahma’s retinue and Brahma’s assembly?” (*paṭi-bhātu brāhmaṇa taṃ brahmuno ca brahma, parisāya ca brahma, pārisajjānañ ca dhammi, kathā’ti*, S 6.14/1:155,-29 f), SD 54.17.

⁸ Comy on Sn 450: *paṭibhāti man’ti mama bhāgo pakāsati* (SnA 398 f). See also Nm 234 = Nc 386 (also future *paṭibhātu bhāyissati*, “there will be fear [danger], it seems”); J 5:410.

⁹ See **Pavāraṇa S** (S 8.7,10-11), SD 49.11,

alone in a secluded forest-abode attending to his meditation great happiness arises (SA 1:35,3-7)—as shown in the Buddha’s reply [S 28].

2.1.4.2 In this connection—a solitary monk happily meditating in the forest—the Commentary quotes 2 beautiful verses about the joy of forest solitude (SA 1:35,9 f): Dh 373 and Tha 537.

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| <p><i>suññāgāraṃ pavitṭhassa</i> <i>santa,cittassa bhikkhuno</i> <i>amānusī ratī hoti</i> <i>sammā dhammaṃ¹¹ vipassato</i> (Dh 373)</p> | <p>For one who has gone into an empty place, a monk with a peaceful heart, there is a joy beyond the human,¹⁰ rightly seeing into reality.</p> |
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2.1.4.3 The next verse quoted by the Saṃyutta Commentary (SA 1:35,12 f) in connection with the joy of forest solitude is the 1st verse from **the Mahā,kappina Thera.gāthā** (Tha 537):

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| <p><i>purato pacchato vāpi</i> <i>aparo ce na vijjati</i> <i>atīva phāsu¹² bhavati</i> <i>ekassa vasato vane</i> (Tha 537)</p> | <p>If in front or at the back, no one else is to be found, it is exceedingly pleasant for one dwelling alone in the wood.</p> |
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¹⁰ *Amānusī ratī hoti*. Comy: “By *amānusī* is meant that the delight that arises is divine, that is, in terms of the 8 attainments (the 4 form dhyanas and 4 formless attainments)” (*amānusī’ti atṭha,samāpatti,sāṅkhātā dibbā pi rati hoti uppajjatīti attho*, DhA 4:110,9 f).

¹¹ While the Patna Dh has sg *dharmam* (Dh:P 62), Udāna,varga has pl *dharmām*, “realities” (Uv 32.9). Cf n on *amānusī ratī hoti* above. The meaning is that it is easy for such a monk to attain dhyana in a forest ambience.

¹² PED is wrong in saying that *phāsu* does not occur by itself: see Tha 538c. For a discussion of *phāsu*, see Caillat 1960:42-64.

Saṇamāna Sutta

The Discourse on Murmuring

S 1.15

1 At Sāvattthī.

(A deity):¹³

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| <p>2 <i>Ṭhite majjh'anhike¹⁴ kāle</i> <i>sannisīvesu¹⁶ pakkhisu</i> <i>saṇate'va¹⁷ brah'āraññaṃ¹⁸</i> <i>taṃ bhayaṃ paṭibhāti¹⁹ man'ti</i> (S 28)</p> | <p>When time stands at midday,¹⁵ when birds are settled down, the great forest itself murmurs— how fearful that seems to me!</p> |
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(Bhagavā:)

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| <p>3 <i>Ṭhite majjh'anhike kāle</i> <i>sannisīvesu pakkhisu</i> <i>saṇate'va brah'āraññaṃ</i> <i>sā ratī paṭibhāti man'ti.</i> (S 29)</p> | <p>When time stands at midday. when birds are settled down, the great forest itself murmurs— how delightful that seems to me!</p> |
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— evaṃ —

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¹³ These verses recur in **Majjhantika S** (S 789*=790* at **S 9.12/1:203,28-31**).

¹⁴ Be Comy Subcomy *majjh'anhike* (*majjha + anha*); all MSS *majjhantike*. *Anha*, usu *aṇha = aha*, “day.”

¹⁵ On *majjh'anhika* and “midday,” see (1.1.1.3).

¹⁶ Be Ce *sannisīvesu*; Ee Ee2 Se *sannisinnesu*.

¹⁷ *Saṇate = senate*: see Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar*, 1994: §42.5; also Sn:N 188 n100..

¹⁸ Be *brahā,raññaṃ*; Be:Ka Ce Ee Ke Se *mahā,raññaṃ*. On *arañña*, see SD 54.2i (2.1).

¹⁹ *Paṭibhāti maṃ*, see (2.1.3.2).