

SD 61.7

(Māra) Sakalika Sutta

The (Māra) Discourse on the Splinter | S 4.13/1:110-112

Theme: The Buddha sleeps happily

Translated by Piya Tan ©2011, 2024

1 Introduction

1.1 SUTTA BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

1.1.1 Sutta summary

The (Māra) Sakalika Sutta (S 4.13) relates the Buddha as resting because his foot is badly cut by a splinter that flew from a boulder hurled down from the top of Mount Vulture Peak by Devadatta. While the Buddha is mindfully resting in a reclining posture, Māra appears to mock him for “lazing around” like an intoxicated poet. The Buddha at once identifies the voice as being that of Māra, and Māra vanishes.

A related text is the (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta (S 1.38), SD 61.4 (1.2.1).

1.1.2 Sutta background

1.1.2.1 Devadatta, filled with lust for gain, honour and fame, desired to take over the sangha from the aging Buddha, but the Buddha turned him down. Furious at this rejection, Devadatta planned to kill the Buddha and take over the sangha. Devadatta, using his psychic powers, impressed the young naïve prince Ajātasattu, son of king Bimbisāra of Magadha, to work with him to share political power: Ajātasattu would usurp the throne of Magadha by killing Bimbisāra, and Devadatta would kill the Buddha to be Lord of the Sangha.

Devadatta had the prince order some archers to kill the Buddha, but they, profoundly moved by the Buddha’s charisma, converted and gave up their contract. Devadatta decided to kill the Buddha himself. Knowing that the Buddha often walked in meditation in the shade of Mount Vulture Peak, Devadatta went up to the top of the Mount and pushed down a huge boulder.

The falling boulder was abruptly lodged in between two rock outcrops, but a splinter broke off and cut the Buddha’s foot, causing it to bleed.¹ The (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta (S 1.38) account starts from here.

1.1.2.2 The (Devatā) Sakalika Sutta (S 1.38) relates to the same occasion—probably after Māra had left—when 700 devas appeared to the ailing Buddha, and 7 of them praised the Buddha using various metaphors of fortitude and nobility. (SD 61.4 (2))

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

Note that the Sutta only says that “Māra the evil one approached the Blessed One and addressed him in verse” [§4]. There is no mention of what he looks like. Moreover, if the Buddha is resting mindfully, he is likely to have closed his eyes. We could say that it is an inner voice that he hears—like a passing thought we are aware of.

It is as if the Buddha is smiling at himself, reclining in a restful manner, when he has been admonishing others to sit diligently in meditation. This is a kind of self-criticism, and an inner dialogue: what would other people think? Māra takes the role of the “other people.”

¹ The full account is given in **Cv 7.2.1** (V 2:184-203); see also SD 54.7 (2.3) n. See also Ñāṇamoli, *Life of the Buddha*, 1992:261 f). For a contemporary description of Mount Vulture Peak, see H Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha*, vol 2, tr G Sekimori, Tokyo: Kosei, 2005:32-34

The Buddha then admonishes himself and dismisses that self-criticism, by reflecting on his own state of mind. Since the Buddha is open about everything—what he thinks, speaks and does—we relate this inner dialogue for the benefit of others, and as a lesson for us today.

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(Māra) Sakalika Sutta

The (Māra) Discourse on the Splinter

S 4.13

Thus have I heard.

1 At one time the Blessed One was staying in the Maddakucchi deer park at Rājagaha.

2 Now, at that time, the Blessed One's foot had been cut by a stone splinter.

Severe pains assailed the Blessed One—bodily feelings that were painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, and disagreeable.²

But the Blessed One endured them, mindful and fully aware, without becoming distressed.

3 Then the Blessed One, having folded his outer robe fourfold, lay down on his right side in the lion-posture, with one leg resting on the other, mindful and fully aware.³

4 Then, Māra the evil one approached the Blessed One and addressed him in verse:

[Māra:]

*Mandiyā nu kho sesi udāhu kāveyya,matto
atthā nu te sampacurā na santi
eko vivitte sayan'āsanamhi
niddā,mukho kim idam soppase'vā ti*

S 470

Are you lying in a daze, or drunk in poetry?
Aren't there enough goals for you to meet?
Alone in a secluded dwelling,
why do you sleep like this, a sleepy face?

² For the same incident, see (Devatā) Sakalika S (S 1.38,2 f), SD 61.4

³ “Lay down ... fully aware,” *dakkhiṇena passena sīha,seyyaṃ kappesi pāde pādāṃ accādhāya sato sampajāno*: as at S 1.38,3 (SD 61.7); also D 33/3:209; M 39,10/1:274, 53,5 +10/1:354 f; S 4.7/1:107, 4.12/14:110 f, 35.120/4:105, 35.239/4:177, 35.243/4:184; A 3.16/1:114, 4.23/2:40, 4.58.9/4:87, 8.9,4/4:168, 10.67,1/5:123, 10.68.1/5:126; U 8.5/84. Going to sleep as an example of “sleeping mindfully” is mentioned in Sati'paṭṭhāna S (M 10,8(7)/1:57). In Pacalā S (A 7.58), the Buddha exhorts, “Moggallāna, mindful and fully aware, you should lie down lion-like on your right side, placing foot on foot, keeping in mind the thought that on awakening, you would get up quickly, thinking, ‘I will dwell without indulging in the pleasure of sleep, or in the pleasure of reclining, or in the pleasure of drowsiness’” (*na seyya,dukhaṃ na passa,sukhaṃ na middha,sukhaṃ anuyutto*) (A 7.58/4:87), SD 4.11. On this mental noting of rising up again, see also n at Mahā Parinibbāna S (D 16,4.14/2:135 + 5.1/2:137), SD 9 §§4.40.

[The Buddha:]

*na mandiyā sayāmi nāpi kāveyya,matto
attham̄ sameccāham-apeta,soko
eko vivitte sayan'āsanamhi
sayām-aham̄ sabba,bhūtānukampī* **S 471** Undazed I lie nor drunk in poetry,⁴
the goal have I attained, sorrow-free.⁵
Alone I lie in a secluded dwelling,
I lie down with compassion for all beings.

*Yesam pi sallam̄ urasi paviṭṭham̄
muhum̄ muhum̄ hadayam̄ vedhamānam̄
te'pīdha soppam̄ labhare sa,sallā
tasmā⁸ aham̄ na supe vīta,sallo* **S 472** Even those with a dart in the breast,⁶
piercing the heart time after time,⁷
even those with a dart fall asleep here:
so why not I, whose dart is drawn out?

*Jaggam̄ na sañkena'pi bhemi sottum̄
rattin,divā nānutapanti māmam̄
hānim̄ na passāmi kuhlīci loke
tasmā supe sabba,bhūtānukampī ti* **S 473** I lie not awake with doubt, nor sleep in fear,
neither night nor day afflicts me.
No decline whatever do I see in the world:
so I sleep with compassion for all beings.

5 Then, Māra the evil one, realizing,
“The Blessed One knows me! The Sugata [well-farer] knows me!”
pained and saddened, disappeared right there and then.⁹

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⁴ Comy paraphrases *kāveyya,matto* in line a thus: “Do you lie down thinking up a poem like a poet who lies down intoxicated with composing poetry?” (SA 1:176,17-19; see n there). The phrase recurs at *753a in (**Arahatta**) **Vaṅgīsa S** (S 8.12), SD 92.6b. *Sampacurā*, glossed by *bahuvo*, is at A 2:59,12 and 61,10, also in apposition to *attha*.

⁵ The “sorrow-free” (*apeta,soko*) is nirvana.

⁶ “With a dart in the breast” (*sallam̄ urasi*). “Dart” (*salla*) is a metaphor for the sharp pains of suffering commonly arising on account of our physical being (“the breast”). Broadly, this refers to the various suffering (*dukkha*) that comes with existence (“the breast”).

⁷ “Time after time,” (*muhum̄ muhum̄*). *Muhu*, found in the suttas, is not in PED but sv *muhutta* (from Ved *muhur-ta*, from *muhur*, “suddenly.” Comys are silent, but see SED, sv *muhur*, “suddenly, at once, in a moment ...”; *muhur muhur*, “now and again” Cf BHSD *muhūrta*. At **Tha 125d**, it is glossed by *abhikkhaṇam̄*, “repeatedly, again and again, constantly” (ThaA 2:7,13-14). **125** qu in comy on **Tha 1** replaces *muhum̄ muhum̄* by *punappunam̄*, “again and again” (ThaA 1:29,12). At Tha 1129b, glossed by *abhiṅhaso* (syn of *abhikkhaṇa*) (ThaA 3:158,8 f). Both glosses mean “often,” but here the sense clearly is “constantly, moment by moment.” The dart (*salla*) is elsewhere identified with craving; see ***214c** (S 1.66/1:40), ***737c** (S 8.7/1:192). **Ejā S 1** (S 35.90/4:64,33 f) says that the dart is the state of “being stirred” (*ejā sallam̄*), *ejā* being a synonym for *taṇhā*; and the Tathāgata, dwells “with the dart removed” (*vīta,sallo*), who is unstirred by craving (SD 29.10). **Sunakkhatta S** (M 105,27/2:260,17): *sallan ti kho sunakkhatta taṇhāy'etaṃ adhivacanam̄*, “The dart, Sunakkhatta, it is a term for craving.” (SD 94.3).

⁸ Be Ee; Ce Se *kasmā*.

⁹ *Atha kho māro pāpimā “jānāti maṃ bhagavā, jānāti maṃ sugato ti dukkhī dummano tatth'ev'antaradhāyī ti.*