

Soṇa Sutta

AN VI 55 Soṇa's Awakening
Translated by Ananda
Dec 2020

Thus I have heard,

*The Awakened One was living in Rājagaha,
on Vulture's Peak mountain.*

*At that time,
The venerable Soṇa was also living at Rājagaha,
in the cool meadow.*

*Then, when the venerable Soṇa had gone into retreat,
into solitude,
this reasoning came to him:*

*"I am a follower of Awakened One
who lives putting forth energy.¹
Yet my mind is not liberated from incoming distractions,*

*Considering that my family has great wealth,
I could perform great magnanimous actions.²*

*What if I were to put an end to the training
and having gone back to a lesser mode of life,*

I could perform great charitable actions with my wealth."³

*At that time,
The Awakened One encompassed the mind of the venerable Soṇa
with his own mind.*

*And just as a fit person could
Stretch their bent arm or
flex their outstretched arm,*

*With alike swiftness,
The Awakened One disappeared from Vultures' Peak mountain*

¹ *"ye kho keci bhagavato sāvaka āradhāvīriyā viharanti, ahaṃ tesaṃ aññataro.*

² *Atha ca pana me na anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimuccati, saṃvijjanti kho pana me kule bhogā, sakkā bhogā ca bhuñjituṃ puññāni ca kātuṃ.*

³ *Yannūnāhaṃ sikkhaṃ paccakkhāya hīnāyāvattitvā bhoge ca bhuñjeyyaṃ puññāni ca kareyyan"ti.*

And materialized right in front of the Venerable Soṇa.

*He sat down on a prepared seat,
And the venerable Soṇa paid loving respects
and sat in front of him.*

Then the Buddha said:

*“Didn’t, Soṇa, when you had gone to retreat, to solitude
this reasoning came to you:*

*“I am a follower of Awakened One
who lives putting forth energy.⁴
Yet my mind is not liberated from incoming distractions,*

*Considering that my family has great wealth,
I could perform great magnanimous actions.*

*What if I were to put an end to the training
and having gone back to a lesser mode of life,*

I could perform great charitable actions with my wealth.”

“Yes Bhante”

[Playing the Vīṇa]

*“What do you think Soṇa,
Formerly when living the family life,
were you skilled at playing the Vīṇā?”⁵*

“Yes Bhante”

*“What do you think Soṇa,
When the strings of your Vīṇa were stretched very tight,
Was your Vīṇa well tuned and fit to play?”⁶*

“No Bhante”

*“What do you think Soṇa,
When the strings of your Vīṇa were slackened very loose,
Was your Vīṇa well tuned and fit to play?”⁷*

“No Bhante”

⁴ *“ye kho keci bhagavato sāvaka āradhāvīriyā viharanti, ahaṃ tesaṃ aññataro.*

⁵ *“Taṃ kiṃ maññasi, soṇa, kusalo tvaṃ pubbe agāriyabhūto vīṇāya tantissare” ti? Vīṇa: Indian Lute.*

⁶ *yadā te vīṇāya tantiyo accāyatā honti, api nu te vīṇā tasmīṃ samaye saravatī vā hoti kammaññā vā ” ti?*

⁷ *yadā te vīṇāya tantiyo atisithilā honti, api nu te vīṇā tasmīṃ samaye saravatī vā hoti kammaññā vā ” ti?*

*“But Soṇa,
When the strings of your Vīṇa were neither too loose not too tight,
But were perfectly even-pitched⁸
Was your Vīṇa well tuned and fit to play?”*

“Yes Bhante”

[Tuning the Faculties]

*In the same way Soṇa,
Excessive arousal of energy leads to agitation,
And feeble energy leads to idleness.⁹*

*Therefore Soṇa,
Resolve upon [balancing] energy and tranquility,
With harmonious faculties comes the break through,
Understand this principle.¹⁰*

“Yes Bhante.”

*Then the Buddha,
Having given these instructions to the Venerable Soṇa--*

*Just as a fit person could
Stretch their flexed arm or
Flex their outstretched arm,*

*With alike swiftness,
The Awakened One disappeared from the cool meadow
And materialized on Vultures’ Peak mountain.*

[Soṇa’s Awakening]

*Afterwards, the Venerable Soṇa,
Resolved upon [balancing] energy and tranquility,
To the harmony of the faculties until break through,
And to understanding this principle.*

*Then, the venerable Soṇa,
Dwelling alone,
Secluded,
Attentive,
Intent*

⁸ “Yadā pana te, soṇa, vīṇāya tantiyo na accāyatā honti nātisithilā same guṇe paṭiṭṭhitā, api nu te vīṇā tasmim samaye saravatī vā hoti kammaññā vā ” ti?

⁹ “Evamevaṃ kho, soṇa, accāraddhavīriyaṃ uddhaccāya saṃvattati, atisithilavīriyaṃ kosajjāya saṃvattati.

¹⁰ vīriyasamathaṃ adhiṭṭhaha, indriyānaṃca samataṃ paṭivijjha, tattha ca nimittaṃ gaṇhāhī”ti.

And resolute,

*In no long time,
Attained the purpose for which
Sons of good families
Honestly leave their home
And become homeless [seekers],
Seeking for the highest,*

The complete perfection of the holy life.¹¹

And having realized the Dhamma by his own direct knowledge,

He abided in it.

*He directly knew:
Rebirth is no longer possible,
Lived is the holy life,
Done was what should be done,
There is no more conceit here¹².*

And the monk became another one of the Arahants.

[Declaration to the Buddha]

*Then the Venerable Soṇa,
having arrived at worthiness thought thus:*

*“Perhaps I could visit the Awakened One
And announce final knowledge in his presence?”¹³*

*Then the Venerable Soṇa went to the Awakened One,
Paid loving respects sat down in front of him and said:*

*One who is a Worthy One Bhante,
Who is done with distractions,
Who is perfected [in mind],
Who has done what had to be done,
Who has laid down the burden,
Who has arrived at true happiness,
Completely shattered the fetters of becoming,
Release by perfect knowledge;*

¹¹ *Brahmacariyapariyosānaṃ*

¹² *Nāparaṃ itthattāyā: distortion of this word is icchatta.*

¹³ *Atha kho āyasmato soṇassa arahattappattassa etadahosi: “yannūnāhaṃ yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkameyyaṃ; upasaṅkamitvā bhagavato santike aññaṃ byākareyyaṃ”ti*

[That person]lives, devoted to six things, one is:¹⁴

- (1) Devoted to letting go,
- (2) Devoted to disengaging,
- (3) Devoted to kindness,
- (4) Devoted to calming of tension,
- (5) Devoted to non accumulation,
- (6) Devoted to mental clarity.¹⁵

[Freedom from the Three Roots]

- (1) It could be Bhante,
That here some venerable ones might question:

‘Surely it must be completely out of confidence in oneself
that this venerable one is devoted to letting go.’¹⁶

But this is not how it should be seen Bhante,

For one who is done with distractions,
Who is perfected, who has done what had to be done,
One sees nothing left to be done in oneself or to be improved.¹⁷

With the end of longing, free from longing they are devoted to letting go.
With the end of dislike, free from dislike they are devoted to letting go.
With the end of confusion, free from confusion they are devoted to letting go.¹⁸

- (2) It could be Bhante,
That here some venerable ones might question:

‘Surely, it is for the sake of worldly gains that
this venerable one does not mind the senses and is devoted to disengaging’¹⁹

But this is not how it should be seen Bhante,

For one who is done with distractions,
Who is perfected, who has done what had to be done,
One sees nothing left to be done in oneself or to be improved.

¹⁴ “Yo so, bhante, bhikkhu araham khīṇāsavo Vusitavākatakarāṇīyo ohitabhāro anuppattasadattho parikkhīṇabhavaśaṃyojano sammadaññāvimutto, so cha tñhānāni adhimutto hoti—

¹⁵ nekkhammādhimutto hoti, pavivekādhimutto hoti, abyāpajjādhimutto hoti, taṇhākkhayādhimutto hoti, upādānakkhayādhimutto hoti, asammohādhimutto hoti.

¹⁶ idhekaccassa āyasmato evamassa: “kevalaṃsaddhāmatṭakam nūna ayamāyasmā nissāya nekkhammādhimutto’ti.

¹⁷ Khīṇāsavo, bhante, bhikkhu vusitavā katakarāṇīyo karāṇīyam attano asamanupassanto katassa vā paṭicayam

¹⁸ khayā rāgassa vītarāgattā nekkhammādhimutto hoti, khayā dosassa vītadosattā nekkhammādhimutto hoti, khayā mohassa vītamohattā nekkhammādhimutto hoti. (1)

¹⁹ ‘lābhasakkārasilokaṃ nūna ayamāyasmā nikāmayamāno pavivekādhimutto’ti.

*With the end of longing, free from longing they are devoted to disengaging.
With the end of dislike, free from dislike they are devoted to disengaging.
With the end of confusion, free from confusion they are devoted to disengaging.*

(3) *It could be Bhante, that here some venerable ones might question:*

*'Surely it is by falling back onto and being given [blind] observances and practices
that the venerable is devoted to kindness'²⁰*

But this is not how it should be seen Bhante,

*For one who is done with distractions,
Who is perfected, who has done what had to be done,
One sees nothing left to be done in oneself or to be improved.*

*With the end of longing, free from longing they are devoted to kindness.
With the end of dislike, free from dislike they are devoted to kindness.
With the end of confusion, free from confusion they are devoted to kindness.*

(4) *With the end of longing, free from longing they are devoted to calming the tension.
With the end of dislike, free from dislike they are devoted to calming the tension.
With the end of confusion, free from confusion they are devoted to calming the tension.*

(5) *With the end of longing, free from longing they are devoted to non-accumulation
With the end of dislike, free from dislike they are devoted to non-accumulation
With the end of confusion, free from confusion they are devoted to non-accumulation*

(6) *With the end of longing, free from longing they are devoted to mental clarity.
With the end of dislike, free from dislike they are devoted to mental clarity.
With the end of confusion, free from confusion they are devoted to mental clarity.*

[Unaffected by the Senses]

*With such utterly complete mental release Bhante,
Even if one should witness abundant forms
at the visual field of perception,
One's mind cannot be overcome by it.²¹*

*In this way one's mind remains unaltered
It sees its passing away,
Firmly attained to immovability²²*

²⁰ *'sīlabbataparāmāsaṃ nūna ayamāyasmā sārato paccāgacchanto abyāpajjādhimutto'ti.*

²¹ *Evaṃ sammā vimuttacittassa, bhante, bhikkhuno bhusā cepi cakkhuvīññeyyārūpā cakkhussa āpāthaṃ āgacchanti,
nevassa cittaṃ pariyādiyanti.*

²² *Amissikatamevassa cittaṃ hoti t̥hitaṃ āneñjappattaṃ vayañcassānupassati.*

*Even if one should witness abundant sounds
At the field of auditive perception,
One's mind cannot be overcome by it.*

*In this way one's mind remains unaltered
It sees its passing away,
Firmly attained to immovability*

*Even if one should witness abundant smells
At the field of olfactive perception,
One's mind cannot be overcome by it.*

*In this way one's mind remains unaltered
It sees its passing away,
Firmly attained to immovability*

*Even if one should witness abundant tastes
At the field of gustative perception,
One's mind cannot be overcome by it.*

*In this way one's mind remains unaltered
It sees its passing away,
Firmly attained to immovability*

*Even if one should witness abundant tangibles
At the field of bodily perception,
One's mind cannot be overcome by it.*

*In this way one's mind remains unaltered
It sees its passing away,
Firmly attained to immovability*

*Even if one should witness abundant mental activity
At the field of mental perception,
One's mind cannot be overcome by it.*

*In this way one's mind remains unaltered
It sees its passing away,
Firmly attained to immovability.*

[Simile of Mountain of Solid Rock]

*Bhante, just as if there were a mountain of solid rock,
Which was free from cracks,
Unbroken,
Free from depressions,*

*that held together as one.*²³

*Then even if there came a storm with heavy wind and rain from the east
It would not budge,
nor would it tremble,
nor would it be affected,*²⁴

*Then even if there came a storm with heavy wind and rain from the west
It would not budge,
nor would it tremble,
nor would it be affected,*

*Then even if there came a storm with heavy wind and rain from the north
It would not budge,
nor would it tremble,
nor would it be affected,*

*Then even if there came a storm with heavy wind and rain from the south
It would not budge,
nor would it tremble,
nor would it be affected,*

*In the same way Bhante,
With such utterly complete mental release,
Even if one should witness abundant [contact]
at each of the fields of perception,
One's mind cannot be overcome by it.*

*In this way one's mind remains unaltered
It sees its passing away,
Firmly attained to immovability*

*Devoted to letting go,
With mind disengaged;
Devoted to kindness,
And not accumulating.*²⁵

*Devoted to the end of tension,
With mental clarity,
Seeing the arising of the senses
With a mind wholly freed.*²⁶

With such a released mind,

²³ *Seyyathāpi, bhante, selo pabbato acchiddo asusiro ekagghano.*

²⁴ *Atha puratthimāya cepi disāya āgaccheyya bhusā vātavuṭṭhi neva naṃ saṅkampeyya na sampakampeyya na sampavedheyya,*

²⁵ *Nekkhammaṃ adhimuttassa, pavivekaṅca cetaso; Abyāpajjādhimuttassa, upādānakkhayassa ca.*

²⁶ *Taṅhākkhayādhimuttassa, asammohaṅca cetaso; Disvā āyatanuppādaṃ, sammā cittaṃ vimuccati.*

*One is at peace;
With nothing more to add,
Nothing more to be understood.²⁷*

*Like one solid mass of rock,
The winds cannot move;
Just so, forms, tastes, sounds,
Odors, tangible – all of it,²⁸*

*The wished for and the unwished for,
Cannot affect one like this;
With a mind firmly standing in continual release,
Seeing the passing away [of all.]²⁹*

²⁷ *Tassa sammā vimuttassa, santacittassa bhikkhuno; Katassa pañicayo natthi, karaṇīyaṃ na vijjati.*

²⁸ *Selo yathā ekagghano, vātena na samīrati; Evaṃ rūpā rasā saddā, gandhā phassā ca kevalā.*

²⁹ *Iññhā dhammā aniññhā ca, nappavedhenti tādino; Tītaṃ cittaṃ vippamuttaṃ, vayañcassānupassatī” ti.*