




Sn 1.3 PTS: Sn 35-75

Khaggavisana Sutta: A Rhinoceros

translated from the Pali by

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Translator's note: The refrain in this sutta is a subject of controversy. The text literally says, "Wander alone like a 'sword-horn,' which is the Pali term for rhinoceros. The commentary, however, insists that this term refers not to the animal but to its horn, for the Indian rhinoceros, unlike the African, has only one horn. Still, some scholars have noted that while the Indian rhinoceros is a solitary animal, rhinoceros horns don't wander, and that in other verses in the Pali canon, the phrase "wander alone like..." takes a person or an animal, not an animal part, for its object. Thus, for example, in Dhp 329 (repeated below), one is told to "wander alone like a king renouncing his kingdom, like the elephant in the Matanga woods, his herd." It's possible that the rhinoceros was chosen here as an example of solitary wandering both because of its habits and because of its unusual single horn. However, in a translation, it's necessary to choose one reading over the other. Thus, because wandering "like a rhinoceros" sounds more natural than wandering "like a horn," I have chosen the former rendering. Keep in mind, though, that the singularity of the rhinoceros' horn reinforces the image.

As noted under [I.1](#), there is evidence suggesting that the verses here were originally separate poems, composed on separate occasions, and that they have been gathered together because of their common refrain.

Renouncing violence
for all living beings,
harming not even a one,
you would not wish for offspring,
so how a companion?
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

For a sociable person
there are allurements;
on the heels of allurement, this pain.
Seeing allurement's drawback,
wander alone

like a rhinoceros.

One whose mind
is enmeshed in sympathy
for friends & companions,
neglects the true goal.
Seeing this danger in intimacy,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Like spreading bamboo,
 entwined,
is concern for offspring & spouses.
Like a bamboo sprout,
 unentangling,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

As a deer in the wilds,
 unfettered,
goes for forage wherever it wants:
the wise person, valuing freedom,
wanders alone
like a rhinoceros.

In the midst of companions
— when staying at home,
 when going out wandering —
you are prey to requests.
Valuing the freedom
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

There is sporting & love
in the midst of companions,
& abundant fondness for offspring.
 Feeling disgust
at the prospect of parting
from those who'd be dear,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Without resistance in all four directions,
content with whatever you get,
enduring troubles with no dismay,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

They are hard to please,
some of those gone forth,
as well as those living the household life.
Shedding concern

for these offspring of others,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Cutting off the householder's marks,^[1]
like a kovilara tree
 that has shed its leaves,
the prudent one, cutting all household ties,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

If you gain a mature companion,
a fellow traveler, right-living & wise,
overcoming all dangers
 go with him, gratified,
 mindful.

If you don't gain a mature companion,
a fellow traveler, right-living & wise,
 wander alone
like a king renouncing his kingdom,
like the elephant in the Matanga wilds,
 his herd.

We praise companionship
 — yes!
Those on a par, or better,
should be chosen as friends.
If they're not to be found,
 living faultlessly,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Seeing radiant bracelets of gold,
well-made by a smith,
 clinking, clashing,
 two on an arm,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros,

[thinking:]

"In the same way,
if I were to live with another,
there would be careless talk or abusive."
Seeing this future danger,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Because sensual pleasures,
elegant, honeyed, & charming,
bewitch the mind with their manifold forms —
seeing this drawback in sensual strands —
wander alone

like a rhinoceros.

"Calamity, tumor, misfortune,
disease, an arrow, a danger for me."
Seeing this danger in sensual strands,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Cold & heat, hunger & thirst,
wind & sun, horseflies & snakes:
enduring all these, without exception,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

As a great white elephant,
with massive shoulders,
renouncing his herd,
lives in the wilds wherever he wants,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

"There's no way
that one delighting in company
can touch even momentary release."
Heeding the Solar Kinsman's words,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Transcending the contortion of views,
the sure way attained,
the path gained,
[realizing:]
"Unled by others,
I have knowledge arisen,"
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

With no greed, no deceit,
no thirst, no hypocrisy —
delusion & blemishes
blown away —
with no inclinations for all the world,
every world,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Avoid the evil companion
disregarding the goal,
intent on the out-of-tune way.
Don't take as a friend
someone heedless & hankering.
wander alone

like a rhinoceros.

Consort with one who is learned,
 who maintains the Dhamma,
 a great & quick-witted friend.

Knowing the meanings,
subdue your perplexity,
[then] wander alone
like a rhinoceros,

Free from longing, finding no pleasure
in the world's sport, love, or sensual bliss,
abstaining from adornment,
speaking the truth,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Abandoning offspring, spouse,
father, mother,
riches, grain, relatives,
& sensual pleasures
 altogether,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

"This is a bondage, a baited hook.
There's little happiness here,
next to no satisfaction,
all the more suffering & pain."
Knowing this, circumspect,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Shattering fetters,
like a fish in the water tearing a net,
like a fire not coming back to what's burnt,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Eyes downcast, not footloose,
senses guarded, with protected mind,
not oozing — not burning — with lust,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Taking off the householder's marks,^[2]
like a coral tree
 that has shed its leaves,
going forth in the ochre robe,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Showing no greed for flavors, not careless,
going from house to house for alms,
with mind unenmeshed in this family or that,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Abandoning barriers to awareness,
expelling all defilements — all —
non-dependent, cutting aversion,
allurement,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Turning your back on pleasure & pain,
as earlier with sorrow & joy,
attaining pure equanimity,
 tranquillity,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

With persistence aroused
for the highest goal's attainment,
with mind unsmeared, not lazy in action,
firm in effort, with steadfastness & strength arisen,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Not neglecting seclusion, absorption,
constantly living the Dhamma
in line with the Dhamma,
comprehending the danger
in states of becoming,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Intent on the ending of craving & heedful,
learned, mindful, not muddled,
certain — having reckoned the Dhamma —
 & striving,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Unstartled, like a lion at sounds.
Unsnared, like the wind in a net.
Unsmearing, like a lotus in water:
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Like a lion — forceful, strong in fang,
living as a conqueror, the king of beasts —
resort to a solitary dwelling.
Wander alone

like a rhinoceros.

At the right time consorting
with the release through good will,
 compassion,
 appreciation,
 equanimity,
unobstructed by all the world,
 any world,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Having let go of passion,
 aversion,
 delusion;
having shattered the fetters;
undisturbed at the ending of life,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

People follow & associate
 for a motive.
Friends without a motive these days
 are rare.
They're shrewd for their own ends, & impure.
 Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Notes

1. Hair and beard.
2. Lay clothing.



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