Thag 5.2 — Subhūta

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/thag5.2/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
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Text

Verses of the Senior Monks 5.2

The Book of the Fives

Chapter One

Subhūta

When a person, wishing for a certain outcome,

applies themselves where they ought not;

not achieving what they worked for,

they say: “That’s a sign of my bad luck.”

When a misfortune is extracted and beaten,

to surrender it in part would be like losing at dice;

but to surrender it all you’d have to be blind,

not seeing the even and the uneven.

You should only say what you would do;

you shouldn’t say what you wouldn’t do.

The wise will recognize

one who talks without doing.

Just like a glorious flower

that’s colorful but lacks fragrance;

well-spoken speech is fruitless

for one who does not act on it.

Just like a glorious flower

that’s both colorful and fragrant,

well-spoken speech is fruitful

for one who acts on it.