AN 3.34 — Nidana Sutta: Causes

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

"Monks, these three are causes for the origination of actions. Which three? Greed is a cause for the origination of actions. Aversion is a cause for the origination of actions. Delusion is a cause for the origination of actions.

"Any action performed with greed — born of greed, caused by greed, originating from greed: wherever one's selfhood turns up, there that action will ripen. Where that action ripens, there one will experience its fruit, either in this very life that has arisen or further along in the sequence.

"Any action performed with aversion — born of aversion, caused by aversion, originating from aversion: wherever one's selfhood turns up, there that action will ripen. Where that action ripens, there one will experience its fruit, either in this very life that has arisen or further along in the sequence.

"Any action performed with delusion — born of delusion, caused by delusion, originating from delusion: wherever one's selfhood turns up, there that action will ripen. Where that action ripens, there one will experience its fruit, either in this very life that has arisen or further along in the sequence.

"Just as when seeds are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind & heat, capable of sprouting, well-buried, planted in well-prepared soil, and the rain-god would offer good streams of rain. Those seeds would thus come to growth, increase, & abundance. In the same way, any action performed with greed... performed with aversion... performed with delusion — born of delusion, caused by delusion, originating from delusion: wherever one's selfhood turns up, there that action will ripen. Where that action ripens, there one will experience its fruit, either in this very life that has arisen or further along in the sequence.

"These are three causes for the origination of actions.

"Now, these three are [further] causes for the origination of actions. Which three? Non-greed is a cause for the origination of actions. Non-aversion is a cause for the origination of actions. Non-delusion is a cause for the origination of actions.

"Any action performed with non-greed — born of non-greed, caused by non-greed, originating from non-greed: When greed is gone, that action is thus abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

"Any action performed with non-aversion — born of non-aversion, caused by non-aversion, originating from non-aversion: When aversion is gone, that action is thus abandoned, destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

"Any action performed with non-delusion — born of non-delusion, caused by non-delusion, originating from non-delusion: When delusion is gone, that action is thus abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

"Just as when seeds are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind & heat, capable of sprouting, well-buried, planted in well-prepared soil, and a man would burn them with fire and, burning them with fire, would make them into fine ashes. Having made them into fine ashes, he would winnow them before a high wind or wash them away in a swift-flowing stream. Those seeds would thus be destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

"In the same way, any action performed with non-greed... performed with non-aversion... performed with non-delusion — born of non-delusion, caused by non-delusion, originating from non-delusion: When delusion is gone, that action is thus abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

"These, monks, are three causes for the origination of action."

A person unknowing: the actions performed by him, born of greed, born of aversion, & born of delusion, whether many or few, are experienced right here: no other ground is found.[1] So a monk, knowing, sheds greed, aversion, & delusion; giving rise to clear knowledge, he sheds all bad destinations.[2]

Notes

1.

According to the Commentary, "right here" means within the stream of one's own "selfhood" (attabhava), i.e., one's own chain of rebirth. "No other ground is found" means that the fruit of the action is not experienced by any other person's chain of rebirth.

2.

The Commentary notes that this verse refers to the attainment of arahantship, and that an arahant — in reaching nibbana — sheds not only bad destinations, but also good ones.

The word "sheds" acts as a "lamp" in this verse — it appears only once, but functions in two phrases, as I have rendered it in the translation. On the use of the lamp as a literary figure of speech, see the Introduction to Dhammapada: A Translation.

See also: SN 42.8; AN 3.99.