AN 3.40 — Adhipateyya Sutta: Governing Principles

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

"There are these three governing principles. Which three? The self as a governing principle, the cosmos as a governing principle, and the Dhamma as a governing principle.

"And what is the self as a governing principle? There is the case where a monk, having gone to a wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, reflects on this: 'It is not for the sake of robes that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; it is not for the sake of almsfood, for the sake of lodgings, or for the sake of this or that state of [future] becoming that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness. Simply that I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress, [and I hope,] "Perhaps the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!" Now, if I were to seek the same sort of sensual pleasures that I abandoned in going forth from home into homelessness — or a worse sort — that would not be fitting for me.' So he reflects on this: 'My persistence will be aroused & not lax; my mindfulness established & not confused; my body calm & not aroused; my mind centered & unified.' Having made himself his governing principle, he abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is unblameworthy, and looks after himself in a pure way. This is called the self as a governing principle.

"And what is the cosmos as a governing principle? There is the case where a monk, having gone to a wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, reflects on this: 'It is not for the sake of robes that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; it is not for the sake of almsfood, for the sake of lodgings, or for the sake of this or that state of [future] becoming that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness. Simply that I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress, [and I hope,] "Perhaps the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!" Now if I, having gone forth, were to think thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, or thoughts of harmfulness: great is the community of this cosmos. And in the great community of this cosmos there are brahmans & contemplatives endowed with psychic power, clairvoyant, skilled [in reading] the minds of others. They can see even from afar. Even up close, they are invisible. With their awareness they know the minds of others. They would know this of me: "Look, my friends, at this clansman who — though he has in good faith gone forth from the home life into homelessness — remains overcome with evil, unskillful mental qualities." There are also devas endowed with psychic power, clairvoyant, skilled [in reading] the minds of others. They can see even from afar. Even up close, they are invisible. With their awareness they know the minds of others. They would know this of me: "Look, my friends, at this clansman who — though he has in good faith gone forth from the home life into homelessness — remains overcome with evil, unskillful mental qualities."' So he reflects on this: 'My persistence will be aroused & not lax; my mindfulness established & not confused; my body calm & not aroused; my mind centered & unified.' Having made the cosmos his governing principle, he abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is unblameworthy, and looks after himself in a pure way. This is called the cosmos as a governing principle.

"And what is the Dhamma as a governing principle? There is the case where a monk, having gone to a wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, reflects on this: 'It is not for the sake of robes that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; it is not for the sake of almsfood, for the sake of lodgings, or for the sake of this or that state of [future] becoming that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness. Simply that I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress, [and I hope,] "Perhaps the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!" Now, the Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be seen by the wise for themselves. There are fellow practitioners of the chaste life who dwell knowing & seeing it. If I — having gone forth in this well-taught Dhamma & Vinaya — were to remain lazy & heedless, that would not be fitting for me.' So he reflects on this: 'My persistence will be aroused & not lax; my mindfulness established & not confused; my body calm & not aroused; my mind centered & unified.' Having made the Dhamma his governing principle, he abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is unblameworthy, and looks after himself in a pure way. This is called the Dhamma as a governing principle.

"These are the three governing principles."

There is in the cosmos no secret place for one who has done an evil deed. Your own self knows, my good man, whether you are true or false. You underestimate the fine witness that is yourself, you with evil in yourself that then you hide. The devas & Tathagatas see the fool who goes about out of tune with the cosmos. Thus you should go about self-governed, mindful; governed by the cosmos, masterful, absorbed in jhana; governed by the Dhamma, acting in line with the Dhamma. The sage who makes an effort in truth doesn't fall back. Whoever through striving — overpowering Mara, conquering the Ender — touches the stopping of birth, is Such, a knower of the cosmos, wise, a sage unfashioned with regard to all things.