AN 5.51 — Avarana Sutta: Obstacles

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

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Savatthi, in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's Monastery. There he addressed the monks, "Monks!"

"Yes, lord," the monks replied to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: "These five are obstacles, hindrances that overwhelm awareness and weaken discernment. Which five?

"Sensual desire is an obstacle, a hindrance that overwhelms awareness and weakens discernment. Ill will... Sloth & drowsiness... Restlessness & anxiety... Uncertainty is an obstacle, a hindrance that overwhelms awareness and weakens discernment. These are the five obstacles, hindrances that overwhelm awareness and weaken discernment. And when a monk has not abandoned these five obstacles, hindrances that overwhelm awareness and weaken discernment, when he is without strength and weak in discernment: for him to understand what is for his own benefit, to understand what is for the benefit of others, to understand what is for the benefit of both, to realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction in knowledge & vision: that is impossible.

"Suppose there were a river, flowing down from the mountains — going far, its current swift, carrying everything with it — and a man would open channels leading away from it on both sides, so that the current in the middle of the river would be dispersed, diffused, & dissipated; it wouldn't go far, its current wouldn't be swift, and it wouldn't carry everything with it. In the same way, when a monk has not abandoned these five obstacles, hindrances that overwhelm awareness and weaken discernment, when he is without strength and weak in discernment for him to understand what is for his own benefit, to understand what is for the benefit of others, to understand what is for the benefit of both, to realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction in knowledge & vision: that is impossible.

"Now, when a monk has abandoned these five obstacles, hindrances that overwhelm awareness and weaken discernment, when he is strong in discernment: for him to understand what is for his own benefit, to understand what is for the benefit of others, to understand what is for the benefit of both, to realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction in knowledge & vision: that is possible.

"Suppose there were a river, flowing down from the mountains — going far, its current swift, carrying everything with it — and a man would close the channels leading away from it on both sides, so that the current in the middle of the river would be undispersed, undiffused, & undissipated; it would go far, its current swift, carrying everything with it. In the same way, when a monk has abandoned these five obstacles, hindrances that overwhelm awareness and weaken discernment, when he is strong in discernment: for him to understand what is for his own benefit, to understand what is for the benefit of others, to understand what is for the benefit of both, to realize a superior human state, a truly noble distinction in knowledge & vision: that is possible."

See also: SN 46.51.