SN 12.38 — SN 12:38 Intention | Cetanā Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Intention

Cetanā Sutta (SN 12:38)

This discourse describes the link between fabrications and consciousness in dependent co-arising, and shows how intention and underlying obsessions—with ignorance of the four noble truths being the basis for all obsessions—play a role in constituting awareness of the present moment.

* * *

Staying near Sāvatthī … (the Blessed One said,) “Monks, what one intends, what one arranges, and what one obsesses about1: This is a support for the stationing of

consciousness. There being a support, there is a landing of consciousness. When that consciousness lands and grows, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. When there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Such is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

“If one doesn’t intend and doesn’t arrange, but one still obsesses (about something), this is a support for the stationing of consciousness. There being a support, there is a landing of consciousness. When that consciousness lands and grows, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. When there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Such (too) is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

“But when one doesn’t intend, arrange, or obsess (about anything), there is no support for the stationing of consciousness. There being no support, there is no landing of consciousness. When that consciousness doesn’t land & grow, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. When there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.”

Note

1. The seven obsessions are: the obsession of sensual passion, the obsession of resistance, the obsession of views, the obsession of uncertainty, the obsession of conceit, the obsession of passion for becoming, and the obsession of ignorance. See AN 7:12.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 1:1; SN 12:64; SN 22:53–55; Ud 8:1