SN 12.55 — SN 12:55 The Great Tree | Mahārukkha Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro 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

The Great Tree

Mahārukkha Sutta (SN 12:55)

Dwelling near Sāvatthī. “Monks, when one remains focused on the allure of phenomena that offer sustenance for clinging,1 craving grows. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“Suppose that there were a great tree. All its roots growing downward & outward would provide it with water & nutriment, so that the great tree—thus nourished, thus

sustained—would stand for a long, long time.

“In the same way, monks, when one remains focused on the allure of phenomena that offer sustenance for clinging, craving grows. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“But when one remains focused on the drawbacks of phenomena that offer sustenance for clinging, craving ceases. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“Suppose there were a great tree. A man would come, bringing a shovel & basket, and would cut down the tree at its root. Having cut it at the root, he would dig it up. Having dug it up, he would pull out the roots, down to the rootlets & root fibers. Then he would cut the tree into pieces; having cut the pieces, he would split them; having split them, he would make them into slivers. Having made the slivers, he would dry them in the wind & sun. Having dried them in the wind & sun, he would burn them in a fire. Having burned them in a fire, he would reduce them to ashes. Having reduced them to ashes, he would winnow them before a high wind or let them be washed away by a swift-flowing stream. Thus the great tree, cut at the root, would be made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

“In the same way, monks, when one remains focused on the drawbacks of phenomena that offer sustenance for clinging, craving ceases. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

Note

1. Upādāniyesu dhammesu: This can also be translated as “clingable phenomena” or “phenomena that offer sustenance.” SN 22:121 identifies these phenomena as the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness. See the discussions in The Mind Like Fire Unbound, Chapter Three, and The Paradox of Becoming, Chapter Four.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 11; MN 44; SN 22:57; SN 22:60; SN 22:122