SN 17.3 — Kumma Sutta: The Turtle

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

Staying at Savatthi. "Monks, gains, offerings, & fame are a cruel thing, a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage.

"Once, monks, a large family of turtles had lived for a long time in a certain freshwater lake. Then one turtle said to another, 'My dear turtle, don't go to that area.' But the turtle went to that area, and because of that a hunter lanced him with a harpoon. So he went back to the first turtle. The first turtle saw him coming from afar, and on seeing him said to him, 'I hope, dear turtle, that you didn't go to that area.'

"'I went to that area, dear turtle.'

"'Then I hope you haven't been wounded or hurt.'

"'I haven't been wounded or hurt, but there's this cord that keeps dragging around behind me.'

"'Yes, dear turtle, you're wounded, you're hurt. It was because of that cord that your father & grandfather fell into misfortune & disaster. Now go, dear turtle. You are no longer one of

us.'

"The hunter, monks, stands for Mara, the Evil One. The harpoon stands for gains, offerings, & fame. The cord stands for delight & passion. Any monk who relishes & revels in gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen is called a monk lanced by the harpoon, who has fallen into misfortune & disaster. The Evil One can do with him as he will. That's how cruel gains, offerings, & fame are: a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage.

"So you should train yourselves: 'We will put aside any gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen; and we will not let any gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen keep our minds consumed.' That's how you should train yourselves."

See also: SN 17.5; SN 17.8