SN 36.7 — Gelañña Sutta: The Sick Ward (1)

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

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesali, in the Great Forest, at the Gabled Pavilion. Then, in the late afternoon, he left his seclusion and went to the sick ward and on arrival sat down on a prepared seat. As he was sitting there, he addressed the monks: "A monk should approach the time of death mindful & alert. This is our instruction to you all.

"And how is a monk mindful? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk is mindful.

"And how is a monk alert? When going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away... when bending & extending his limbs... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe & his bowl... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring... when urinating & defecating... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert. This is how a monk is alert.

"So a monk should approach the time of death mindful & alert. This is our instruction to you all.

"As a monk is dwelling thus mindful & alert — heedful, ardent, & resolute — a feeling of pleasure arises in him. He discerns that 'A feeling of pleasure has arisen in me. It is dependent on a requisite condition, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on this body. Now, this body is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. Being dependent on a body that is inconstant, fabricated, & dependently co-arisen, how can this feeling of pleasure that has arisen be constant?' He remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the body & to the feeling of pleasure. He remains focused on dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pleasure. As he remains focused on inconstancy... dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pleasure, he abandons any passion-obsession with regard to the body & the feeling of pleasure.

"As he is dwelling thus mindful & alert — heedful, ardent, & resolute — a feeling of pain arises in him. He discerns that 'A feeling of pain has arisen in me. It is dependent on a requisite condition, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on this body. Now, this body is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. Being dependent on a body that is inconstant, fabricated, & dependently co-arisen, how can this feeling of pain that has arisen be constant?' He remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the body & to the feeling of pain. He remains focused on dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pain. As he remains focused on inconstancy... dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pain, he abandons any resistance-obsession with regard to the body & the feeling of pain.

"As he is dwelling thus mindful & alert — heedful, ardent, & resolute — a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain arises in him. He discerns that 'A feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain has arisen in me. It is dependent on a requisite condition, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on this body. Now, this body is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. Being dependent on a body that is inconstant, fabricated, & dependently co-arisen, how can this feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain that has arisen be constant?' He remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the body & to the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He remains focused on dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. As he remains focused on inconstancy... dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he abandons any ignorance-obsession with regard to the body & the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain.

"Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he discerns that it is inconstant, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pain... Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he discerns that it is inconstant, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain... Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it disjoined from it. When sensing a feeling limited to

the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' He discerns that 'With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'

"Just as an oil lamp burns in dependence on oil & wick; and from the termination of the oil & wick — and from not being provided any other sustenance — it goes out unnourished; in the same way, when sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' He discerns that 'With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'"

See also: Straight from the Heart.