

# SD 62.16 (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta

## The (Nines) Discourse to Tapussa

or **Tapassu Sutta** The Tapassu Discourse

**A 9.41**

Theme: Renunciation and the 9 progressive abodes

Translated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2025

**Notes and cross-references** numbering 3 and above are found in **SD 62.17**, “Truth and Path: Some key terms.”

### 1 Sutta summary and significance

#### 1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

**The householder Tapussa** [2] expresses to Ānanda that it is difficult for the laity, enjoying sensual pleasures, to renounce the world, and expresses his surprise that young men in their prime are willing and able to renounce worldly pleasures for life in the sangha. Ānanda takes Tapussa to see the Buddha, who explains the joy of renunciation (*nekkhamma*) in terms of how he, that is the Buddha himself, gained full awakening by way of the 9 successive abodes<sup>1</sup> (experiential stages) of meditation, namely, *the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless attainments and cessation of perception and feeling*.

The Sutta closes with the Buddha making 2 important statements. The first is that he has attained all these 9 abodes **in both the direct order and the reverse order** [§14.2]. The second is that on account of this he has won “**unshakable freedom of mind**” (*akuppa ceto, vimutti*) [§14.3].

#### 1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

##### 1.2.1 The Sutta’s 2 key points

**1.2.1.0 The (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** teachings have 2 important implications:

- (1) **§§2-4**. The Buddha’s teaching, in essence, is about **renunciation** [1.2.1.1].
- (2) **§§5-14**. That renunciation consists of letting go of mental defilements so that one attains ever **higher states of mental freedom**, culminating in awakening itself [1.2.1.2].

**1.2.1.1** The Sutta opens with **the layman Tapussa** meeting Ānanda and telling him:

“We laymen enjoy sensual pleasures ... ” [§2.1].

Hence, “renunciation is like a precipice to us” [§2.2], meaning that it is almost impossible for laymen (like Tapussa) to let go of sense-pleasures and become renunciants.

Yet, Tapussa is surprised to hear that there are many young renunciants, happily enjoying the monastic life, finding total peace in it. [§2.3]

<sup>1</sup> *Nava anupubba, vihāra*: **Jhānābhiññā S** (S 16.9), SD 50.7 (1.2.1.2); **(Navaka) Jhāna S** (A 9.36), SD 33.8; SD 1.8 (2.2.3) (3)n. These 9 are the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*), the 4 formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti* or *ārūppa*) and the attainment of cessation (*nirodha, samāpatti*). **Analyo**, in *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, notes that these 9 attainments blinding Māra, “occur in similar terms in the preceding discourse, **the Nivāpa Sutta** [M 25/-1:159 f], where the passage fits the context better than in the present instance.” (2005:95): cf A 9.39/4:433 f.

Tapussa then concludes thus:

“This **renunciation** ... is what divides these monks in this Dharma-Vinaya from the crowd.” [§2.4] meaning that letting go of sensual pleasures is what distinguishes true renunciants from members of the worldly crowd.

Since Tapussa has such an insight into the nature of renunciation, Ananda feels that Tapussa would benefit from a deeper teaching from the Buddha himself. Ānanda suggests that Tapussa meet the Buddha [§2.5].

**1.2.1.2** In the second part of the Sutta (that is the bulk of the Sutta), the Buddha elaborates on **true renunciation** as rooted in seeing the danger in sensual pleasures [§4.4]. In due course, says the Buddha, “... having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I developed myself, and having penetrated the benefit in **renunciation**, I pursued it.” [§4.9]

The Buddha then goes on to define renunciation—from the Buddha’s own experience of awakening—as the attaining of **the 9 progressive abodes** (*nava anububba, vihāra*), that is, the 4 form dhyanas [§§5-8], the 4 formless attainments [§§9-12], and the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling [§13]. The textual format of each of the 4 form dhyanas and 4 formless attainments is similar as seen in this comparative table:

<u>form dhyanas</u>	<u>danger</u>	<u>formless dhyanas</u>	<u>danger</u>
1. the 1 <sup>st</sup> dhyana	sensual pleasures	5. the 1 <sup>st</sup> formless attainment	forms
2. the 2 <sup>nd</sup> dhyana	thoughts	6. the 2 <sup>nd</sup> formless attainment	base of infinity of space
3. the 3 <sup>rd</sup> dhyana	zest (joy)	7. the 3 <sup>rd</sup> formless attainment	base of infinity of consciousness
4. the 4 <sup>th</sup> dhyana	equanimity	8. the 4 <sup>th</sup> formless attainment	base of nothingness

The “**danger** or disadvantage” (*ādīnava*) should be transcended in order to attain dhyana or attainment. This *danger* is then said to be an “**affliction** or disease” (*ābādha*)—a metaphor or euphemism for “suffering”—since it prevents the meditator from attaining the following state. In other words, that danger must be renounced for one to progress higher until one is able to overcome all mental defilements.

We thus see in the Buddha’s account of **the 9 progressive abodes** (*anupubba, vihāra*) [§§4-13] a progressive renunciation of dhyana-factors in each of the “abodes” (the dhyana or the attainment) until the attainment of cessation, when all mental defilements are overcome.

Upon renouncing all mental defilements—basically these are sensual desires, existence, views and ignorance—one attains **arhat**hood, and experiences nirvana in this life itself. This nirvana experience is called **the cessation of feeling and perception** (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*) or simply “cessation.” Another term for this cessation is the “nirvana with residue” (*sa, upādi, sesa nibbāna*). The “residue” here are the karma-free 5 aggregates, where “formation” (*saṅkhāra*) cease to create new karma (whether bad or good). However, some old karma may ripen when the conditions are right but the arhat has no problem at all in facing their fruitions. Upon dying, that is, when the remnants of the 5 aggregates cease to function, the arhat is no more reborn, since consciousness in all its forms (including rebirth-consciousness) have ceased. This is the nirvana without residue (*anupādi, sesa nibbāna*).<sup>2</sup> This is **the highest renunciation**.

<sup>2</sup> *Upādi*, “substrates,” refers to the 5 aggregates: D 22, 22.16 (SD 13.2). On *upādi, sesa*, see **Sa, upādi, sesa S** (A 9.12), SD 3.3(3); SD 41.4 (2.2.1), SD 45.18 (2.5).

### 1.2.2 The 9 progressive abodes

**1.2.2.1** The Buddha’s teaching to both Ānanda and Tapussa, as recorded in **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta**, is to show how meditation—listed as **the “9 progressive abodes”** (*anupubba, vihāra*) [3.1]—is practised as **true renunciation**. By renouncing the world of senses and thoughts (the 6 senses)—represented by the 5 hindrances<sup>3</sup>—one attains the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana [3.1.1.1]. And then by progressively renouncing the 5 dhyana-factors, one progresses through **the 4 form-dhyanas** [3.1.1]. By progressively renouncing consciousness itself, one attains **the 4 formless bases** [3.1.2]. Giving up the mind itself, that is, all consciousness—perception and feeling—one attains **cessation** [3.1.3].

**1.2.2.2** The **9 progressive abodes** are mentioned in a number of suttas either briefly as a set or as part of a lesson to others. They are listed, mostly briefly, in the following suttas:

<b>Raho, gata Sutta</b>	S 36.11/4:217	summary of [§§5-13]	SD 33.6 (3.2);
<b>(Navaka) Anupubba Nirodha Sutta</b>	A 9.31/4:409	= D 33,3.2(6)/3:266	SD 33.6(3.2.3);
<b>(Navaka) Anupubba, vihāra Sutta</b>	A 9.32/4:410		SD 95.1;
<b>(Navaka) Anupubba, vihara Samāpatti Sutta</b> <sup>4</sup>	A 9.33/4:410 f	with some details;	SD 95.2;
<b>(Navaka) Tapussa Sutta</b>	A 9.41/4:438-447		SD 62.16.

## 2 Tapussa

### 2.1 WHICH TAPUSSA?

**2.1.1** Neither **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 9.41) nor its commentary (AA 4:203 f) tells us who Tapussa really was. The Sutta (A 9.41) only tells us about a certain Tapussa who tells Ānanda that to laymen who enjoy sensual pleasures “renunciation seems like a precipice” [§2.2]—it is difficult, even impossible for them— and expresses his surprise at so many young monks who are able to happily enjoy the peace of renunciation. He concludes that “this renunciation is what divides the crowd from the monks in this Dharma Vinaya” [§2.4].

Due to the doubts that **Tapussa** of the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta has in renunciation, it is highly unlikely that he is a streamwinner. Hence, he cannot be Tapussa 1, the layman streamwinner, who is Bhallika’s brother [2.1.3]. For convenience, we can call the former, **Tapussa 2**, the protagonist of A 9.41. Otherwise, we have no other information about him.

### 2.1.2 Tapussa and Bhallika

**2.1.2.1** **Tapussa 1** appears early in the Buddha’s ministry, in fact, on the 49<sup>th</sup> day after the great awakening. This Tapussa, a householder, was the brother of Bhallika, both of whom were merchants. On meeting the newly awakened Buddha, they became the first to go for refuge before the Buddha, thus

<sup>3</sup> The 5 mental hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*) are: (1) sensual lust (*kāma-c, chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca, kukkucca*), (4) sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*): see **Nīvaraṇa**, SD 32 esp (1) & **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55), SD 3.12. Cf **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39,13/1:274); see also **Mahā Sati-paṭṭhāna S** (D 22,13), SD 13.2; **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,36), SD 13.3, on how to deal with the hindrances in one’s meditation; **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,68/1:71), SD 8.10.

<sup>4</sup> Also called **Anupubba Vihāra Sutta 2**.

becoming the first lay followers. There is no mention of Bhallika, even indirectly, in the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta or its commentary.

**2.1.2.2 The Thera,gātha Commentary**—commenting on **the Bhalliya Thera,gāthā** (Tha 7)—recounts that the brothers Tapussa and Bhallika (called Bhalliya in the Thera,gāthā) visited the Buddha again after taking refuge in the Buddha and the Dharma. After the Buddha had given the 1<sup>st</sup> discourse to the 5 monks in the deer park at Benares, he walked in stages and reached Rāja,gaha, where he stayed.

There, Tapussa and Bhallika approached the Buddha and were given Dharma teachings. On account of listening to that teaching, **Tapussa** became a layman streamwinner, while Bhallika renounced the world to join the sangha, and became an arhat in due course. (ThaA 1:50,25-30)

## 2.2 (CHAKKA) TAPUSSA SUTTA (A 6.110), SD 87.15

**2.2.1** Besides the Tapussa of **the (Navaka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 9.41), there is another Tapussa mentioned in **the (Chakka) Tapussa Sutta** (A 6.119), SD 87.15. The Sutta Commentary says that this Tapussa is the lay follower who was “a two-refuge goer” (*dve,vācika,upāsako*) (AA 3:416,2). We shall call this **Tapussa 1**—the elder brother of Bhallika, both of whom were the first lay disciples by taking the 2 refuges [2.1.2].

**2.2.2 Tapussa 1** is described at **A 6.119** as having 6 special qualities, that is, faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the sangha, and who has the moral virtue, the wisdom and freedom of the noble ones. In short, Tapussa 1 is a streamwinner. As a streamwinner, it is impossible that Tapussa would have held any view of the difficulties regarding renunciation, as **Tapussa 2** does as recorded in **A 9.41**.

Clearly, Tapussa 2 (of **A 9.41**) could not be the same Tapussa as that of **A 6.110**, which describes him as “having gained certainty” by way of wise faith in the 3 jewels, that is, as a streamwinner who is “a seer of the deathfree, one who lives having realized the deathfree.”<sup>5</sup>

[For passages numbering “3, 3.1,” and so on, see **SD 17.18**.]

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<sup>5</sup> A 6.119/3:450 f (SD 87.15).

## Navaka) Tapussa Sutta

### The (Nines) Discourse to Tapussa

A 9.41

(Thus have I heard.)

1 At one time the Blessed One was staying among the Mallas.<sup>6</sup> There was a Malla market-town called Uruvela,kappa.<sup>7</sup> Then, in the morning, the Blessed One dressed, took his bowl and robe, and entered Uruvela,kappa for alms.

1.2 When he had walked for alms in Uruvela,kappa, after his meal, on returning from his almsround, he addressed the venerable Ānanda:

“Stay right here, Ānanda, while I enter the great wood (*mahā,vana*) to pass the day.”

“Yes, bhante,” the venerable Ānanda replied.

1.3 Then the Blessed One entered the great wood and sat down at the foot of a certain tree to pass the day.

2 [Ee 2]<sup>8</sup> Then, the householder **Tapussa** approached the venerable Ānanda, saluted him, sat down at one side, and said to him:

“Bhante Ānanda, we laymen love sensual pleasures, enjoy sensual pleasures, delight in sensual pleasures, rejoice in sensual pleasures.

2.2 On account of *our loving sensual pleasures, enjoying sensual pleasures, delighting in sensual pleasures, rejoicing in sensual pleasures*,<sup>9</sup>

**renunciation** seems to us to be a precipice!<sup>10</sup>

2.3 Bhante, I have heard that ‘In this Dharma-Vinaya there are many very young monks, whose minds plunge into **renunciation**, radiant, settled, freed,<sup>11</sup> seeing, “This is peaceful.”’

2.4 This **renunciation**, bhante, is what divides these monks in this Dharma-Vinaya from the crowd.”<sup>12</sup>  
[439]

<sup>6</sup> Be Ee *mallesu*; Se *mallakesu*; Ce AA 4;203,16 *malatesu*. **Bhadraka S** (S 42.11/4:327), SD 55.7, is also set at Uruvela,kappa, which is said to be a town of the Mallas.

<sup>7</sup> *Ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā mallesu viharati, uruvela,kappaṃ nāma mallānaṃ nigamo*. This sentence does not actually say in which place the Buddha is staying. A similar sentence structure is used in the opening of **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,1), SD 13.2, **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,1.1 n), SD 13.1; **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 15,1), SD 5.17; see esp SD 13.1 (1.3.1.2). The quaint opening sentence—like D 22,1 = M 10,22, *kammāsa,dhammaṃ nāma kurūnaṃ nigamo*—is to simply highlight that Uruvela,kappa is a crowded, prosperous market-town, and that the Buddha would not stay in such a place. However, he stayed nearby so that its people would benefit from the Dharma.

<sup>8</sup> “Ee” (European ed of the Pali), ie, PTS numbering within [square brackets] throughout. The Ee numbering conforms to the paragraph numbering in Be, reflecting the transitions in the Sutta better than in Ce.

<sup>9</sup> *Tesaṃ no bhante amhākaṃ gihīnaṃ kāma,bhogīnaṃ kām’ārāmānaṃ kāma,ratānaṃ kāma,sammuditānaṃ*.

<sup>10</sup> *Papāto viya khāyati, yad idaṃ nekkhammaṃ*. **Khāyati** is or 3 sg of *khāti*, “is known, named; seems, appears, is known.”

<sup>11</sup> Comy glosses *vimuccati* here as “liberated from the opposing qualities” (*paccanīka,dhammehi ca vimuccati*). Since all MSS read *vimuccati* which Comy follows, the tr follows this. However, it is likely that the original reading was *adhimuccati*, “resolved upon” or “focused on.” Following the text, we see the bodhisattva *vimuccati/adhimuccati* each successive meditative attainment before he actually achieves it. Clearly, then, the context dictates “focused on” rather than “liberated in.”

<sup>12</sup> *Tayidaṃ bhante imasmiṃ dhamma,vinayaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ bahunā janena visabhāgo yad idaṃ nekkhammaṃ ti*. Paraphrased, this sentence means “Renunciation is what separates the Dharma-spirited monastics from the world.”

2.5 “This, householder, is a talk that is worthy of our seeing the Blessed One.

Come, let’s go and see the Blessed One and report this matter to him. We shall keep in mind what the Blessed One explains to us.”

“Yes, bhante,” the householder Tapussa replied.

**3** [Ee 3] Then, the venerable Ānanda, together with the householder Tapussa, went to the Blessed One, saluted him, sat down at one side, and said:

“Bhante, this householder Tapussa speaks thus:

3.2 *‘Bhante Ānanda, we laymen love sensual pleasures, enjoy sensual pleasures, delight in sensual pleasures, rejoice in sensual pleasures.*

3.3 *On account of our loving sensual pleasures, enjoying sensual pleasures, delighting in sensual pleasures, rejoicing in sensual pleasures,*

**renunciation** *seems to us to be a precipice!*

3.4 *Bhante, I have heard that “In this Dharma-Vinaya there are many very young monks, whose minds plunge into renunciation, radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’*

3.5 *This **renunciation**, bhante, is what divides these monks in this Dharma-Vinaya from the crowd.”*

3.6 “So it is, Ānanda! So it is, Ānanda!<sup>13</sup>

### Before the awakening

**4** [Ee 4] Before my awakening, Ānanda, while I was still a bodhisattva, not yet fully awakened, it occurred to me, too:

‘**Good is renunciation! Good is solitude!**’ (*sādhū nekkhammaṃ, sādhū paviveko ti*)

4.2 Yet, my mind neither plunged into renunciation, nor became radiant, settled, freed, (though) seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

4.3 It occurred to me, Ānanda:

‘What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind *neither plunged into renunciation, nor became radiant, settled, freed, though seeing, “This is peaceful”?*’

4.4 It occurred to me, Ānanda:

‘Indeed, I have not seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I have not developed that (insight); neither have I penetrated it [440] nor pursued it.

4.5 Therefore, my mind *neither plunged into **renunciation**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”*

4.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘If, having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I would have developed myself; having penetrated the benefit in **renunciation**, I would enjoy it.

4.7 It is, then, possible that my mind will plunge into renunciation, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

4.8 On another occasion, Ānanda, having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I developed myself, and having penetrated the benefit in **renunciation**, I pursued it.

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Comy interprets renunciation (*nekkhamma*) here as “going forth” (*pabbajjā*) into homelessness. But the text itself seems to highlight **renunciation** as an internal quality, implicitly identified with being firmly established in the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana, ie, the overcoming of sensual pleasures.

<sup>13</sup> I follow the section divisions of Ee, which conform to the paragraph divisions in Be and show the transitions in the Sutta better than the divisions in Ce. The open quote at the start here closes right at the end of the Sutta [§14.3].

## THE 9 PROGRESSIVE ABODES [1.1]

NAVA ANUPUBBA, VIHĀRA

(§§5-13)

### (1) The 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana

5 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **renunciation** and became radiant with faith, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’<sup>14</sup>

5.2 Ānanda, quite secluded [detached] from sense-objects,<sup>15</sup> secluded from unwholesome mental states,

I attained and dwelled in **the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana**,

accompanied by initial application and sustained application, and  
with zest and joy born of solitude.<sup>16</sup>

5.3 Then, Ānanda, as I was dwelling in this state,  
perception and attention **accompanied by sensuality** arose in me:

I felt it as an affliction!<sup>17</sup>

5.4 Just as pain, Ānanda, would arise for one feeling pleasure, only to afflict one,  
so, too, when perception and attention accompanied by sensuality, arose in me, I felt it as **an affliction**.

### (2) The 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana

6 [Ee 5] Then, Ānanda, it occurred, to me:  
‘What now if I, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application,  
gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind,  
were to attain and dwell in **the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana**,  
free from initial application and sustained application,  
with zest and joy born of concentration?’<sup>18</sup>

6.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind, neither plunged into **the thought-free**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

6.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

<sup>14</sup> (Chakka) Paṭhama Jhāna S (A 6.73/3:428 f) states that the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana is attained only with the transcending of the 5 hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*), viz: *sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt*.

<sup>15</sup> On the tr of *kāmehi* (pl), see SD 8.4 (5.1.1.1).

<sup>16</sup> “Born of solitude,” *viveka,ja*; ie, it is the result of abandoning the hindrances: on the 3 kinds of solitude, see **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (1.5). On the omission of “one-pointedness of mind” (*cittassa ek’aggatā*) and “stillness” (*samādhī*) here, see **The layman and dhyana** @ SD 8.5.

<sup>17</sup> This para also describes Moggallāna’s experience: **Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.2), SD 24.12a. Both this and foll para recur in **Nibbāna Sukha S** (A 9.34), SD 55.1.

<sup>18</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya,tuṇhī,bhāva*) because within it initial application and sustained application (thinking and discursion, *vitakka,vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur. (S 2:273); cf S 4:293 where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī,saṅkhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech. In **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 1:161), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to “either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence” (ie either talk Dharma or meditate). See **Dutiya Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.-2/4:263 f), SD 24.12.



‘What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind did not plunge into the thought-free nor became radiant, settled, freed, though I see that “This is peaceful”?’

6.4 Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in thoughts**, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in being thought-free [441] nor pursued it.<sup>19</sup>

6.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into **the thought-free**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’*

6.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘If, having seen the danger in thoughts,<sup>20</sup> I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the thought-free**, pursue it,<sup>21</sup>

6.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the thought-free, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”’

6.8 On another occasion,<sup>22</sup> Ānanda, having seen **the danger in thoughts**, I would develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in the thought-free, I pursued it;

6.9 then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into the thought-free, became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

6.10 Now, Ānanda, on another occasion, with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, I attained and dwelled in **the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, with zest and joy born of concentration.

6.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention accompanied by thinking<sup>23</sup> assailed me:<sup>24</sup> *I felt it as an affliction.*

6.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one, so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by thought [initial application] arose in me, I felt it as **an affliction**.

### (3) The 3<sup>rd</sup> dhyana

7 [Ee 6] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:  
‘What now if I, with the fading away of zest, remaining equanimous, mindful and clearly understanding, and

<sup>19</sup> *Vitakkesu kho me ādīnavo aditṭho, so ca me abahulīkato, avitakke ca ānisaṃso anadhigato, so ca me anāsevito.*

<sup>20</sup> During meditation, here, preparing for the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana.

<sup>21</sup> *Sace kho ahaṃ vitakkesu ādīnavāṃ disvā taṃ bahulaṃ kareyyaṃ, avitakke ānisaṃsaṃ adhigamma tam āseveyyaṃ.*

<sup>22</sup> “At another time” (*aparena samayena*). In this Sutta this time-marker refers the same night of the great awakening.

<sup>23</sup> Here “thinking” (*vitakka*) is a shorthand for both “initial application and sustained application” (*vitakka, vicāra*) but when the mind is already concentrated.

<sup>24</sup> *Tassa mayhaṃ, āvuso, iminā vihārena viharato vitakka, sahaḡatā saññā, manasikārā samudācaranti.* Comy to S 40.2,5 (SD 24.12a): One is distracted by sense-objects (*ārammaṇa*) (SA 3:90,2 f).



feeling joy with the body,<sup>25</sup>

were to attain and dwell in **the 3<sup>rd</sup> dhyana**,

of which the noble ones declare, “Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness”?’

7.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind, neither plunged into **the zest-free**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

7.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What is the reason, what is the cause that my zest-free mind *neither plunged into the zest-free nor became radiant, nor settled, [442] nor freed, seeing, “This is peaceful”?*’

7.4 Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in zest**, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in being zest-free nor pursued it.

7.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into **the zest-free**, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”*

7.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘If, having seen **the danger in zest**, I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the zest-free**, were to pursue it,

7.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the zest-free, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”’

7.8 On another occasion, Ānanda, having seen **the danger in zest**, I developed that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in the zest-free, I pursued it.

7.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into the zest-free, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

7.10 Now, Ānanda, on another occasion,<sup>26</sup> with the fading away of zest,

I remained equanimous, mindful and clearly understanding, and felt joy with the body.

I attained and dwelled in **the 3<sup>rd</sup> dhyana**,

of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.’

7.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by zest** arose in me: *I felt it as an affliction.*

7.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one, so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by zest arose in me, I felt it as **an affliction**.

#### (4) The 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana

8 [Ee 7] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What now if I, with the abandoning of joy and abandoning of pain,<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> On this point, see **The Buddha discovers dhyana**, SD 33.1b (6.4.1): On coming out of dhyana.

<sup>26</sup> Ee Se read *aparena samayena* here and in each of the corresponding sections that follow. Be and Ce omit it in later sections.

and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure,  
 were to attain and dwell in **the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana**  
 that is neither painful nor pleasant, and  
 with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity?<sup>28</sup>

8.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into **the neither pleasurable nor painful** [the neutral], nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

8.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind *neither plunged into the neither pleasurable nor painful, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful”*?’

8.4 Then it occurred to me:

‘Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in the pleasure in equanimity**,<sup>29</sup> and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in **the absence of pleasure and pain**<sup>30</sup> nor pursued it.

8.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into the absence of pleasure and pain*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

8.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘If, having seen **the danger in the pleasure in equanimity**, [443] I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the absence of pleasure and pain**, were to pursue it,

8.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into **the absence of pleasure and pain**, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

8.8 On another occasion, Ānanda,

having seen **the danger in the pleasure in equanimity**, I developed that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the absence of pleasure and pain**, I pursued it.

8.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged in **absence of pleasure and pain**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

8.10 Now, Ānanda, on another occasion,

with the abandoning of joy and abandoning of pain,

and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure,

I attained and dwelled in **the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana**

that is neither painful nor pleasant, and

with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.’

8.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by pleasure in equanimity** arose in me:<sup>31</sup> *I felt it as an affliction.*

8.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,

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<sup>27</sup> “Joy and pain,” *sukha, dukkha*: this refers to the physical feelings. The next phrase—“pleasure and displeasure,” *domanassa, somanassa*—refers to mental feelings, which have been transcended earlier. Mental feelings need to be overcome first so that the mind is not distracted by itself, as it were. Then, all the other feelings (arising from the physical sense-contacts) are transcended: on its significance, see **Sall’atthena S** (S 36.6/4:207-210), SD 5.5.

<sup>28</sup> Here, **Vibhaṅga** gives, according to the Sutta analysis (Vbh 261), 3 factors of the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana—equanimity (*upekhā*), mindfulness (*sati*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek’aggatā*); and, according to the Abhidhamma analysis (Vbh 164), 2 factors—equanimity and one-pointedness of the mind—(Vism 4.183/165). See **Dhyana @ SD 8.4** (5.4).

<sup>29</sup> *Upekha, sukhe ... ādīnavo*. See A 9.34, 7.2 n (SD 55.1).

<sup>30</sup> *Adukkham-asukha*.

<sup>31</sup> This follows Be MSS listed in Ee, which read *upekhā, sukha, sahaḡatā*, “accompanied by the pleasure in equanimity.” This fits the context better than the reading *upe(k)khā, sahaḡatā* found in Be Ce Se.

so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by pleasure in equanimity arose in me, I felt it as **an affliction**.

### (5) The base of the infinity of space

9 [Ee 8] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What now if I, by completely transcending the perceptions of form, with the disappearance of the perceptions of sense-reaction,<sup>32</sup> with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, aware that ‘Space is infinite,’

were to attain and dwell in **the base of the infinity of space** [the base of infinite space]?’

9.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into the base of the infinity of space, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

9.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind *neither plunged into the base of the infinity of space, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’*’

9.4 Then it occurred to me:

‘Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in forms**, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the base of the infinity of space, nor pursued it.

9.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into the base of the infinity of space*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, [444] seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

9.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘If, having seen the danger in forms, I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the base of the infinity of space**, were to pursue it,

9.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the base of the infinity of space, become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

9.8 On another occasion, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

having seen **the danger in forms**, I developed that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in the base of the infinity of space, I pursued it.

9.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the base of the infinity of space**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

9.10 Now, Ānanda, by completely transcending perceptions of form, with the disappearance of the perceptions of sense-reaction, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, aware that ‘Space is infinite,’

I attained and dwelled in **the base of the infinity of space**.

9.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by forms** arose in me: *I felt it as an affliction*.

9.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,

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<sup>32</sup> “Perceptions of sense-reaction,” *paṭigha, saññā*, also “sensory impact” (M:ÑB 267), “resistance-perception, reflex-perception” (BDict), said to be absent in the formless dhyanas. This is one of those terms that are only used contextually. See Vibh 245, §262; Vism 10.12-16.

so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by forms arose in me,  
I felt it as **an affliction**.

## (6) The base of the infinity of consciousness

10 [Ee 9] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What now if I, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of space,  
aware that “Consciousness is infinite,”  
were to attain and dwell in **the base of the infinity of consciousness?**’

10.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into the base of the infinity of consciousness, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

10.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind neither plunged into *the base of the infinity of consciousness, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’*’

10.4 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in the base of the infinity of space**, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the base of the infinity of consciousness, nor pursued it.

10.5 As such, my mind *neither plunged into the base of the infinity of consciousness*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

10.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘If, having seen the danger in the base of the infinity of space, [445] I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the base of the infinity of consciousness**, were to pursue it,

10.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the base of the infinity of consciousness, and become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”’

10.8 On another occasion, Ānanda,

having seen **the danger** in the base of the infinity of space, I developed that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in the base of the infinity of consciousness, I pursued it.

10.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the base of the infinity of consciousness**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

10.10 Now, Ānanda, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of space,  
aware that ‘Consciousness is infinite,’

I attained and dwelled in **the base of the infinity of consciousness**.

10.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by the base of the infinity of space** arose in me: I felt it as an affliction.

10.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one,  
so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by the base of the infinity of space arose in me,  
I felt it as **an affliction**.

## (7) The base of nothingness

11 [Ee 10] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What now if I, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of consciousness,  
aware that ‘There is nothing,’ (*n’atthi kiñcī ti*),  
I were to attain and dwell in **the base of nothingness**?’

11.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into the base of nothingness, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

11.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What is the reason, what is the cause that *my mind neither plunged into the base of nothingness, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful’?*

11.4 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in the base of the infinity of consciousness**, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the base of nothingness, nor pursued it.

11.5 As such, *my mind neither plunged into the base of nothingness*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”’

11.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘If, having seen the danger in the base of the infinity of consciousness, I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the base of nothingness**, were to pursue it,

11.7 it may then be possible that my [446] mind will plunge into the base of nothingness, and become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”’

11.8 On another occasion, Ānanda, having seen the danger in the base of the infinity of consciousness, I developed that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in the base of nothingness, I pursued it.

11.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the base of nothingness**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

11.10 Now, Ānanda, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of consciousness, aware that “*There is nothing*,”

I attained and dwelled in **the base of nothingness**.

11.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by the base of the infinity of consciousness** arose in me: I felt it as an affliction.

11.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one, so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by the base of the infinity of consciousness arose in me, I felt it as **an affliction**.

## (8) The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception

12 [Ee 11] Then, Ānanda’, it occurred to me:

‘What now if I, by completely transcending the base of nothingness, were to attain and dwell in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**?

12.2 Yet, Ānanda, my mind neither plunged into the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”’

12.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind neither plunged into *the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful’?

12.4 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in the base of nothingness**, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, nor pursued it.

12.5 As such, my mind neither plunged into *the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”

12.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘If, having seen **the danger in the base of nothingness**, I were to develop that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**, I would pursue it,

12.7 it may then be possible that my mind will plunge into the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.” [447]

12.8 On another occasion, Ānanda, having seen **the danger in the base of nothingness**, I developed that (insight), and, having penetrated the benefit in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I pursued it.

12.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

12.10 Now, Ānanda, by completely transcending the base of nothingness, I attained and dwelled in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**.

12.11 Yet, Ānanda, while I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention **accompanied by the base of nothingness** arose in me: I felt it as an affliction.

12.12 Just as pain, Ānanda, might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict one, so, too, when that perception and attention accompanied by the base of nothingness arose in me, I felt it as **an affliction**.

## (9) The cessation of perception and feeling

13 [Ee 12] Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What now if I, by completely transcending the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, were to attain and dwell in **the cessation of perception and feeling**.

13.2 Yet, Ananda, my mind neither plunged into the cessation of perception and feeling, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”

13.3 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘What is the reason, what is the cause that my mind neither plunged into *the cessation of perception and feeling*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful’?

13.4 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘Indeed, I have not seen **the danger in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception**, and have not developed that (insight); I have neither penetrated the benefit in the cessation of perception and feeling nor have pursued it.

13.5 As such, my mind neither plunged into *the cessation of perception and feeling*, nor became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”

13.6 Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me:

‘If, having seen **the danger** in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I would develop that (insight), and if, having penetrated the benefit in **the cessation of perception and feeling**, I would pursue it,

13.7 it may be possible that my mind will plunge into the cessation of perception and feeling, and become radiant, settled, freed, seeing, “This is peaceful.”

13.8 On another occasion, Ānanda,,  
having seen the danger in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I developed that (insight);  
[448] and, having penetrated the benefit in the cessation of perception and feeling, I pursued it.

13.9 Then, Ānanda, my mind plunged into **the cessation of perception and feeling**, and became radiant, settled, freed, seeing, ‘This is peaceful.’

13.10 Then, Ānanda, by completely transcending the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I attained and dwelled in **the cessation of perception and feeling**, and having seen with wisdom, my influxes were utterly destroyed.

## Conclusion

**14** [Ee 13] So long, Ānanda, as I did not attain and emerge  
from these **9 attainments of progressive dwellings** in *direct order and reverse order*,

I did not claim to have awakened to the peerless perfect awakening  
in this world with its devas, its brahmas and Māra,<sup>33</sup>

this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers<sup>34</sup> and people.

14.2 But when I had attained and emerged from these 9 attainments of progressive dwellings  
in direct order and reverse order,

then I claimed to have awakened to the peerless perfect awakening

*in this world with its devas, its brahmas, and Māra,*

*this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people.*

14.3 The knowledge and vision arose in me:

‘Unshakable is my freedom of mind; this is my last birth; now there is no more (for me)!’<sup>35</sup> [449]

— evaṃ —

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<sup>33</sup> On this phrase, “brahmas and Māra,” see SD 61a (2.5.2.9).

<sup>34</sup> “Rulers,” *devā*, here in the sense of “devas by convention” (*sammati,deva*), ie, kings and rulers. The other 2 types of *deva* are “gods by rebirth” (*upapatti,deva*) and “gods by purification” (*visuddhi,deva*), ie, the Buddhas, pratyeka-buddhas and arhats. (Nc 307; KhA 123)

<sup>35</sup> *Akuppā me ceto,vimutti. Ayaṃ antīmā jāti, n’atthi dāni punabbhavo ti.* See SD 4.25 (2.3-2.4).