AN 9.41 — With the Householder Tapussa

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/an9.41/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
License: CC0-1.0 — https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/

Text

Numbered Discourses 9.41

4. The Great Chapter

With the Householder Tapussa

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Mallas, near the Mallian town named Uruvelakappa.

Then the Buddha robed up in the morning and, taking his bowl and robe, entered Uruvelakappa for alms. Then, after the meal, on his return from almsround, he addressed Venerable Ānanda, “Ānanda, you stay right here, while I plunge deep into the Great Wood for the day’s meditation.”

“Yes, sir,” Ānanda replied. Then the Buddha plunged deep into the Great Wood and sat at the root of a tree for the day’s meditation.

The householder Tapussa went up to Venerable Ānanda, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Honorable Ānanda, we are laypeople who enjoy sensual pleasures. We like sensual pleasures, we love them and take joy in them. But renunciation seems like an abyss. I have heard that in this teaching and training there are very young mendicants whose minds leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in renunciation. They see it as peaceful. Renunciation is the dividing line between the multitude and the mendicants in this teaching and training.”

“Householder, we should see the Buddha about this matter. Come, let’s go to the Buddha and inform him about this. As he answers, so we’ll remember it.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Tapussa. Then Ānanda together with Tapussa went to the Buddha, bowed, and sat down to one side. Ānanda told him what had happened.

“That’s so true, Ānanda! That’s so true! Before my awakening—when I was still unawakened but intent on awakening—I too thought, ‘Renunciation is good! Seclusion is good!’ But my mind did not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in renunciation. I didn’t see it as peaceful. Then I thought, ‘What is the cause, what is the reason why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in renunciation? Why don’t I see it as peaceful?’ Then I thought, ‘I haven’t seen the drawbacks of sensual pleasures, and so I haven’t cultivated that. I haven’t realized the benefits of renunciation, and so I haven’t developed that. That’s why my mind does not

leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in renunciation. And it's why I don't see it as peaceful.' Then I thought, 'Suppose that, seeing the drawbacks of sensual pleasures, I were to cultivate that. And suppose that, realizing the benefits of renunciation, I were to develop that. It's possible that my mind would leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in renunciation. And I would see it as peaceful.' And so, after some time, I saw the drawbacks of sensual pleasures and cultivated that, and I realized the benefits of renunciation and developed that. Then my mind leapt forth, gained confidence, settled down, and became decided in renunciation. I saw it as peaceful. And so, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered and remained in the first absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of seclusion, while placing the mind and keeping it connected. While I was in that meditation, perception and focus accompanied by sensual pleasures beset me, and that was an affliction for me. Suppose a happy person were to experience pain; that would be an affliction for them. In the same way, when perception and focus accompanied by sensual pleasures beset me, that was an affliction for me.

Then I thought, 'Why don't I, as the placing of the mind and keeping it connected are stilled … enter and remain in the second absorption?' But my mind did not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in not placing the mind. I didn't see it as peaceful. Then I thought, 'What is the cause, what is the reason why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in not placing the mind? Why don't I see it as peaceful?' Then I thought, 'I haven't seen the drawbacks of placing the mind, and so I haven't cultivated that. I haven't realized the benefits of not placing the mind, and so I haven't developed that. That's why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in not placing the mind. And it's why I don't see it as peaceful.' Then I thought, 'Suppose that, seeing the drawbacks of placing the mind, I were to cultivate that. And suppose that, realizing the benefits of not placing the mind, I were to develop that. It's possible that my mind would leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in not placing the mind. And I would see it as peaceful.' And so, after some time, I saw the drawbacks of placing the mind and cultivated that, and I realized the benefits of not placing the mind and developed that. Then my mind did leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in not placing the mind. I saw it as peaceful. And so, as the placing of the mind and keeping it connected were stilled … I entered and remained in the second absorption. While I was in that meditation, perception and focus accompanied by placing the mind beset me, and that was an affliction for me. Suppose a happy person were to experience pain; that would be an affliction for them. In the same way, when perception and focus accompanied by placing the mind and keeping it connected beset me, that was an affliction for me.

Then I thought, 'Why don't I, with the fading away of rapture, enter and remain in the third absorption, where I will meditate with equanimity, mindful and aware, experiencing for themselves the bliss of which the noble ones declare, "Equanimous and mindful, one meditates in bliss"?' But my mind did not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in freedom from rapture. I didn't see it as peaceful. Then I thought, 'What is the cause, what is the reason why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in freedom from rapture? Why don't I see it as peaceful?' Then I thought, 'I haven't seen the drawbacks of rapture, and so I haven't cultivated that. I

haven't realized the benefits of freedom from rapture, and so I haven't developed that. That's why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in freedom from rapture. And it's why I don't see it as peaceful.' Then I thought, 'Suppose that, seeing the drawbacks of rapture, I were to cultivate that. And suppose that, realizing the benefits of freedom from rapture, I were to develop that. It's possible that my mind would leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in being free from rapture. And I would see it as peaceful.' And so, after some time, I saw the drawbacks of rapture and cultivated that, and I realized the benefits of freedom from rapture and developed that. Then my mind leapt forth, gained confidence, settled down, and became decided in freedom from rapture. I saw it as peaceful. And so, with the fading away of rapture … I entered and remained in the third absorption. While I was in that meditation, perception and focus accompanied by rapture beset me, and that was an affliction for me. Suppose a happy person were to experience pain; that would be an affliction for them. In the same way, when perception and focus accompanied by rapture beset me, that was an affliction for me.

Then I thought, 'Why don't I, with the giving up of pleasure and pain, and the disappearance of former happiness and sadness, enter and remain in the fourth absorption, without pleasure or pain, with pure equanimity and mindfulness?' But my mind did not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in being without pleasure and pain. I didn't see it as peaceful. Then I thought, 'What is the cause, what is the reason why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in being without pleasure and pain? Why don't I see it as peaceful?' Then I thought, 'I haven't seen the drawbacks of bliss with equanimity, and so I haven't cultivated that. I haven't realized the benefits of being without pleasure and pain, and so I haven't developed that. That's why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in being without pleasure and pain. And it's why I don't see it as peaceful.' Then I thought, 'Suppose that, seeing the drawbacks of bliss with equanimity, I were to cultivate that. And suppose that, realizing the benefits of being without pleasure and pain, I were to develop that. It's possible that my mind would leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in being without pleasure and pain. And I would see it as peaceful.' And so, after some time, I saw the drawbacks of bliss with equanimity and cultivated that, and I realized the benefits of being without pleasure and pain and developed that. Then my mind did leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in being without pleasure and pain. I saw it as peaceful. And so, giving up pleasure and pain … I entered and remained in the fourth absorption. While I was in that meditation, perception and focus accompanied by bliss with equanimity beset me, and that was an affliction for me. Suppose a happy person were to experience pain; that would be an affliction for them. In the same way, when perception and focus accompanied by bliss with equanimity beset me, that was an affliction for me.

Then I thought, 'Why don't I, going totally beyond perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of impingement, not focusing on perceptions of diversity, aware that "space is infinite", enter and remain in the dimension of infinite space?' But my mind did not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of infinite space. I didn't see it as peaceful. Then I thought, 'What is the cause, what is the reason why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and

become decided in the dimension of infinite space? Why don't I see it as peaceful?' Then I thought, 'I haven't seen the drawbacks of forms, and so I haven't cultivated that. I haven't realized the benefits of the dimension of infinite space, and so I haven't developed that. That's why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of infinite space. And it's why I don't see it as peaceful.' Then I thought, 'Suppose that, seeing the drawbacks of forms, I were to cultivate that. And suppose that, realizing the benefits of the dimension of infinite space, I were to develop that. It's possible that my mind would leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of infinite space. And I would see it as peaceful.' And so, after some time, I saw the drawbacks of forms and cultivated that, and I realized the benefits of the dimension of infinite space and developed that. Then my mind leapt forth, gained confidence, settled down, and became decided in the dimension of infinite space. I saw it as peaceful. And so, going totally beyond perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of impingement, not focusing on perceptions of diversity, aware that 'space is infinite', I entered and remained in the dimension of infinite space. While I was in that meditation, perception and focus accompanied by forms beset me, and that was an affliction for me. Suppose a happy person were to experience pain; that would be an affliction for them. In the same way, when perception and focus accompanied by forms beset me, that was an affliction for me.

Then I thought, 'Why don't I, going totally beyond the dimension of infinite space, aware that "consciousness is infinite", enter and remain in the dimension of infinite consciousness?' But my mind did not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of infinite consciousness. I didn't see it as peaceful. Then I thought, 'What is the cause, what is the reason why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of infinite consciousness? Why don't I see it as peaceful?' Then I thought, 'I haven't seen the drawbacks of the dimension of infinite space, and so I haven't cultivated that. I haven't realized the benefits of the dimension of infinite consciousness, and so I haven't developed that. That's why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of infinite consciousness. And it's why I don't see it as peaceful.' Then I thought, 'Suppose that, seeing the drawbacks of the dimension of infinite space, I were to cultivate that. And suppose that, realizing the benefits of the dimension of infinite consciousness, I were to develop that. It's possible that my mind would leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of infinite consciousness. And I would see it as peaceful.' And so, after some time, I saw the drawbacks of the dimension of infinite space and cultivated that, and I realized the benefits of the dimension of infinite consciousness and developed that. Then my mind leapt forth, gained confidence, settled down, and became decided in the dimension of infinite consciousness. I saw it as peaceful. And so, going totally beyond the dimension of infinite space, aware that 'consciousness is infinite', I entered and remained in the dimension of infinite consciousness. While I was in that meditation, perception and focus accompanied by the dimension of infinite space beset me, and that was an affliction for me. Suppose a happy person were to experience pain; that would be an affliction for them. In the same way, when perception and focus accompanied by the dimension of infinite space beset me, that was an affliction for me.

Then I thought, ‘Why don’t I, going totally beyond the dimension of infinite consciousness, aware that “there is nothing at all”, enter and remain in the dimension of nothingness?’ But my mind did not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of nothingness. I didn’t see it as peaceful. Then I thought, ‘What is the cause, what is the reason why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of nothingness? Why don’t I see it as peaceful?’ Then I thought, ‘I haven’t seen the drawbacks of the dimension of infinite consciousness, and so I haven’t cultivated that. I haven’t realized the benefits of the dimension of nothingness, and so I haven’t developed that. That’s why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of nothingness. And it’s why I don’t see it as peaceful.’ Then I thought, ‘Suppose that, seeing the drawbacks of the dimension of infinite consciousness, I were to cultivate that. And suppose that, realizing the benefits of the dimension of nothingness, I were to develop that. It’s possible that my mind would leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of nothingness. And I would see it as peaceful.’ And so, after some time, I saw the drawbacks of the dimension of infinite consciousness and cultivated that, and I realized the benefits of the dimension of nothingness and developed that. Then my mind leapt forth, gained confidence, settled down, and became decided in the dimension of nothingness. I saw it as peaceful. And so, going totally beyond the dimension of infinite consciousness, aware that ‘there is nothing at all’, I entered and remained in the dimension of nothingness. While I was in that meditation, perception and focus accompanied by the dimension of infinite consciousness beset me, and that was an affliction for me. Suppose a happy person were to experience pain; that would be an affliction for them. In the same way, when perception and focus accompanied by the dimension of infinite consciousness beset me, that was an affliction for me.

Then I thought, ‘Why don’t I, going totally beyond the dimension of nothingness, enter and remain in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception?’ But my mind did not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. I didn’t see it as peaceful. Then I thought, ‘What is the cause, what is the reason why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception? Why don’t I see it as peaceful?’ Then I thought, ‘I haven’t seen the drawbacks of the dimension of nothingness, and so I haven’t cultivated that. I haven’t realized the benefits of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, and so I haven’t developed that. That’s why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. And it’s why I don’t see it as peaceful.’ Then I thought, ‘Suppose that, seeing the drawbacks of the dimension of nothingness, I were to cultivate that. And suppose that, realizing the benefits of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, I were to develop that. It’s possible that my mind would leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. And I would see it as peaceful.’ And so, after some time, I saw the drawbacks of the dimension of nothingness and cultivated that, and I realized the benefits of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception and developed that. Then my mind leapt forth, gained confidence, settled down, and became decided in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. I saw it as

peaceful. And so, going totally beyond the dimension of nothingness, I entered and remained in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. While I was in that meditation, perception and focus accompanied by the dimension of nothingness beset me, and that was an affliction for me. Suppose a happy person were to experience pain; that would be an affliction for them. In the same way, when perception and focus accompanied by the dimension of nothingness beset me, that was an affliction for me.

Then I thought, 'Why don't I, going totally beyond the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, enter and remain in the cessation of perception and feeling?' But my mind did not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the cessation of perception and feeling. I didn't see it as peaceful. Then I thought, 'What is the cause, what is the reason why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the cessation of perception and feeling? Why don't I see it as peaceful?' Then I thought, 'I haven't seen the drawbacks of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, and so I haven't cultivated that. I haven't realized the benefits of the cessation of perception and feeling, and so I haven't developed that. That's why my mind does not leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the cessation of perception and feeling. And it's why I don't see it as peaceful.' Then I thought, 'Suppose that, seeing the drawbacks of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, I were to cultivate that. And suppose that, realizing the benefits of the cessation of perception and feeling, I were to develop that. It's possible that my mind would leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the cessation of perception and feeling. And I would see it as peaceful.' And so, after some time, I saw the drawbacks of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception and cultivated that, and I realized the benefits of the cessation of perception and feeling and developed that. Then my mind did leap forth, gain confidence, settle down, and become decided in the cessation of perception and feeling. I saw it as peaceful. And so, going totally beyond the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, I entered and remained in the cessation of perception and feeling. And, having seen with wisdom, my defilements were ended.

As long as I hadn't entered into and withdrawn from these nine progressive meditative attainments in both forward and reverse order, I didn't announce my supreme perfect awakening in this world with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans.

But when I had entered into and withdrawn from these nine progressive meditative attainments in both forward and reverse order, I announced my supreme perfect awakening in this world with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans.

Knowledge and vision arose in me: 'My freedom is unshakable; this is my last rebirth; now there'll be no more future lives.'"