

Anguttara Nikāya

The Numerical Discourses

Sattakanipāta
(Book of the Sevens)

AN 7.67

Nagaropama Sutta ***“Comparable to a Fortress”***

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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“Bhikkhus, when the king’s frontier fortress that shields his kingdom with the seven auxiliary protections, is provided for with the four kinds of support, without much trouble and with ease, then, it is worth being designated as a truly unassailable frontier fortress, shielding the kingdom from all its external enemies and their attacks.

“And how can such a frontier fortress protect the kingdom with the seven auxiliary protections?

1. “Here, Bhikkhus, the king’s frontier fortress has pillars with strong foundations, sturdy and driven deep into the ground, securely planted, and are thus utterly unmoving and unshakable. This is the first of auxiliary protections provided by the king’s frontier fortress, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks.

2. “Again, Bhikkhus, the king’s frontier fortress has dug out ditches and moats that are deep and wide. This is the second of auxiliary protections provided by the king’s frontier fortress, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks.

3. “Again, Bhikkhus, the king’s frontier fortress has its patrol path for the soldiers, built both high and wide. This is the third of auxiliary protections provided by the king’s frontier fortress, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks.

4. “Again, Bhikkhus, the king’s frontier fortress has numerous weapons that are kept in stock, with arrows and various kinds of projectiles. This is the fourth of auxiliary protections provided by the king’s frontier fortress, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks.

5. “Again, Bhikkhus, the king’s frontier fortress has many army personnel living within it, such as elephant riders, cavalry, charioteers, archers, standard bearers, camp marshals, supply chain soldiers, dignified royal princes, special forces, shield bearing soldiers, infantry, and slave soldiers. This is the fifth of auxiliary protections provided by the king’s frontier fortress, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks.

6. “Again, Bhikkhus, the king’s frontier fortress has a wise and competent gate keeper, who stops strangers from entering and only allows those to enter who are known as friends. This is the sixth of auxiliary protections provided by the king’s frontier fortress, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks.

7. “Again, Bhikkhus, the king’s frontier fortress has walls that are tall and wide, covered with smooth plaster that is slippery. This is the seventh of auxiliary protections provided by the king’s frontier fortress, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks.

“Thus, the king’s frontier fortress protects the kingdom with the seven auxiliary protections.

“And how is the king’s frontier fortress provided for with the four kinds of support, without much trouble and with ease?

a. “Here, Bhikkhus, within the king’s frontier fortress there is plenty of fuel, such as mounds of grass and firewood that have been accumulated, along with abundant supplies of water, so that all those living within its walls continue living at ease and in comfort, not likely to be troubled by any threats from possible invaders, as they are capable to easily defend themselves against any external dangers.

b. “Again, Bhikkhus, within the king’s frontier fortress there is plenty of grains, such as rice and barley that have been accumulated, so that all those living within its walls continue living at ease and in comfort, not likely to be troubled by any threats from possible invaders, as they are capable to easily defend themselves against any external dangers.

c. “Further, Bhikkhus, within the king’s frontier fortress there are storehouses full of sesame, mung beans, and other types of beans that have been accumulated, so that all those living within its walls continue living at ease and in comfort, not likely to be troubled by any threats from possible invaders, as they are capable to easily defend themselves against any external dangers.

d. “Again, Bhikkhus, within the king’s frontier fortress there are plenty of medical supplies, such as purified ghee, butter, oils, honey, molasses, and salts that have been accumulated, so that all those living within its walls continue living at ease and in comfort, not likely to be troubled by any threats from possible invaders, as they are capable to easily defend themselves against any external dangers.

“In this manner, Bhikkhus, the king’s frontier fortress is provided for with the four kinds of support without much trouble, and with ease.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, when the king’s frontier fortress that shields his kingdom with the seven auxiliary protections, is provided for with the four kinds of support without much trouble, and with ease, then, it is worth being designated as a truly unassailable frontier fortress, shielding the kingdom from all its external enemies and their attacks.

“Now, Bhikkhus, in the same way, when the Noble Disciple is endowed with the seven good qualities, he can (and whenever he desires to) enter into the four *jhānas* in their superior aspects, wherein he dwells now, in this very life, quickly and with no difficulty whatsoever. In being able to do this, the Noble Disciple is said to be beyond the power and reach of Māra, no longer susceptible to Māra’s evil tricks.

“And what are those seven good qualities that the Noble Disciple is endowed with?

1. “Bhikkhus, much like the king’s frontier fortress that has pillars with strong foundations, sturdy and driven deep into the ground, securely planted and thus utterly unmoving and unshakable, whereby it shields the kingdom with internal protection, repelling all its external enemies and their attacks,

“In the same way, the Noble Disciple is endowed with unshakeable faith, whereby he places his strong confidence and faith in the Awakening of The Blessed One. Thus, he knows for certain that *The Blessed One is an Arahant, Perfectly Awakened, endowed with Sublime Knowledge and Supremely Pure Conduct, the Well-Gone, the Knower of worlds, the Incomparable Tamer of those to be tamed, the Teacher of gods and humans, the Enlightened and Blessed.*’

“Therefore, the Noble Disciple himself becomes a pillar of faith as he inspires and triggers the growth of faith in others, as he walks away from all unwholesome actions while cultivating and developing wholesome actions throughout his behavior. Similarly, he abandons behavior that brings blame, while cultivating a behavior that is pure due to his blameless actions. Thus, by living with purity throughout, the Noble Disciple is recognized as being endowed with his first good quality.

2. “Bhikkhus, just like the king’s frontier fortress that has dug out ditches and moats that are deep and wide, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks,

“In the same way, the Noble Disciple is endowed with a strong sense of wise moral shame. He looks upon all types of unwholesome bodily, verbal, and mental behavior, as well as all unwholesome actions with a strong sense of wise moral shame. Thus, he protects himself from acquiring any unwholesome traits or from developing any immoral qualities. Bhikkhus, the Noble Disciple puts to use his wise moral shame much like a strong fortress’s dug-out ditches and moats that are deep and wide, as he carefully examines his behavior and walks away from all unwholesome actions while cultivating and developing wholesome actions throughout his behavior. Similarly, he abandons behavior that brings blame, while cultivating a behavior that is pure due to his blameless actions. Thus, by living with purity throughout, the Noble Disciple is recognized as being endowed with his second good quality.

3. “Bhikkhus, just like the king’s frontier fortress that has its patrol path for its soldiers, built both high and wide, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks,

“In the same manner, the Noble Disciple is endowed with a strong sense of wise moral fear. He looks upon all types of unwholesome bodily, verbal, and mental behavior, as well as all unwholesome actions with a strong sense of wise moral fear. Thus, he protects himself from acquiring any unwholesome traits or from developing any immoral qualities. Bhikkhus, the Noble Disciple puts to use his wise moral fear much like the king’s frontier fortress’s patrol path for its soldiers, as he carefully examines his behavior and walks away from all unwholesome actions while cultivating and developing wholesome actions throughout his behavior. Similarly, he abandons behavior that brings blame, while cultivating a behavior that is pure due to his blameless actions. Thus, by living with purity throughout, the Noble Disciple is recognized as being endowed with his third good quality.

4. “Bhikkhus, much like the king’s frontier fortress that has numerous weapons that are kept in stock, with arrows and various kinds of projectiles, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks,

“In the same manner, the Noble Disciple has learned and studied much for his personal development, to gain a better understanding of the Dhamma, constantly recalling what he has memorized by heart, applying the Teachings he has learned throughout his life, the Dhamma that is beautiful in its beginning, beautiful at its middle, and beautiful in its end, full of meaning and balanced in its expression and phrasing, while declaring and revealing to him the completeness and purity of the Holy Life. Thus, the Noble Disciple, having studied and learned, while memorizing the Teachings, continuously places his attention on them, examining them, whereby he experientially tastes their truth by penetrating them with Right View. Therefore, the Noble Disciple protects himself with the Dhamma he has learned as his mighty arsenal, walking away from all unwholesome actions while cultivating and developing wholesome actions throughout his behavior. Similarly, he abandons behavior that brings blame, while cultivating a behavior that is pure due to his blameless actions. Thus, by living with purity throughout, the Noble Disciple is recognized as being endowed with his fourth good quality.

5. “Bhikkhus, just like the king’s frontier fortress that has many army personnel living within it, such as elephant riders, cavalry, charioteers, archers, standard bearers, camp marshals, supply chain soldiers, dignified royal princes, special forces, shield bearing soldiers, infantry, and slave soldiers, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks,

“In the same manner, the Noble Disciple keeps his energy up, for he has within him persevering effort to walk away from all unwholesome actions while cultivating and developing wholesome actions throughout his behavior. Being firm in resolve, he remains strong with heedfulness, never slacking or pulling back from his fervent dedication to develop wholesome qualities within himself. Thus, using his persevering energy as his troops, the Noble Disciple abandons all types of unwholesome actions while cultivating and developing wholesome actions; walking away from behavior that brings blame, while cultivating a behavior that is pure due to his blameless

actions. Thus, by living with purity throughout, the Noble Disciple is recognized as being endowed with his fifth good quality.

6. “Bhikkhus, much like the king’s frontier fortress that has a wise and competent gate keeper, who stops strangers from entering and only allows those to enter who are known as friends, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks,

“In the same manner, the Noble Disciple is ever mindful and attentive, recalling with prudence what was done, mentioned, and told to him, even from a long time ago. Thus, by having ever present mindfulness as his competent gatekeeper, the Noble Disciple abandons all types of unwholesome actions while cultivating and developing wholesome actions, as he walks away from behavior that brings blame and cultivates a behavior that is pure due to his blameless actions. Thus, by living with purity throughout, the Noble Disciple is recognized as being endowed with his sixth good quality.

7. “Bhikkhus, just like the king’s frontier fortress which has walls that are tall and wide, covered with smooth plaster that is slippery, shielding the kingdom with internal protection, and repelling all its external enemies and their attacks,

“In the same manner, the Noble Disciple possesses the wisdom that sees both the rising and fading away of the five grabbing aggregates, which is itself noble and penetrating in insight, as it leads to the complete elimination of suffering. Therefore, Bhikkhus, the Noble Disciple, by possessing the shielding anointment of wisdom in his heart, abandons all types of unwholesome actions while cultivating and developing wholesome actions, as he walks away from behavior that brings blame and cultivates a behavior that is pure due to his blameless actions. Thus, by living with purity throughout, the Noble Disciple is recognized as being endowed with his seventh good quality.

“Bhikkhus, these are the seven good qualities the Noble Disciple is endowed with.

“And what, Bhikkhus, are the four *jhānas* in their superior aspects, wherein the Noble Disciple dwells now, in this very life, quickly and with no difficulty whatsoever?

1. “Bhikkhus, just like within the king’s frontier fortress there is plenty of fuel, such as mounds of grass and firewood that have been accumulated, along with abundant supplies of water so that all those living within its walls continue living at ease and in comfort, not likely to be troubled by any threats from possible invaders, as they are capable to easily defend themselves against any external dangers,

“In the same manner, the Noble Disciple, by secluding himself from sensual pleasures and pulling himself inwards from all manners of evil and unwholesome states, enters upon and abides in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by thinking and pondering, along with joy and pleasure that arise from such a seclusion. He does this so that he experiences the state of non-agitation, dwelling happily within himself, experiencing peace and comfort, in preparation for entering Nibbāna.

2. “Further, Bhikkhus, just like within the king’s frontier fortress there is plenty of grains, such as rice and barley that have been accumulated so that all those living within its walls continue living at ease and in comfort, not likely to be troubled by any threats from possible invaders, as they are capable to easily defend themselves against any external dangers,

“In the same manner, the Noble Disciple continues advancing in his *jhānic* ladder, whereby through the disappearance of both thinking and pondering, he enters upon and abides in the second *jhāna*, which has self-confidence and unification of mind with no more thinking and pondering, but while experiencing joy and pleasure that are the result of his deepening of collectedness of mind. He does this so that he experiences the state of non-agitation, dwelling happily within himself, experiencing peace and comfort, in preparation for entering Nibbāna.

3. “Further, Bhikkhus, just like within the king’s frontier fortress there are storehouses full of sesame, mung beans, and other types of beans that have been accumulated, so that all those living within its walls continue living at ease and in comfort, not likely to be troubled by any threats from any possible invaders, as they are capable to easily defend themselves against any external dangers.

“In the same manner, the Noble Disciple enters the third *jhāna*, about which the Noble Ones declare: ‘Such a one mindfully abides in happiness, with an ever-present equanimity.’ Mindful and fully aware, the Noble Disciple continues feeling pleasure and happiness within the body, and with the disappearance of joy, he remains experiencing equanimity. He does this so that he experiences the state of non-agitation, dwelling happily within himself, experiencing peace and comfort, in preparation for entering Nibbāna.

4. “Again, Bhikkhus, just like within the king’s frontier fortress there are plenty of medical supplies, such as purified ghee, butter, oils, honey, molasses, and salts that have been accumulated, so that all those living within its walls continue living at ease and in comfort, not likely to be troubled by any threats from possible invaders, as they are capable to easily defend themselves against any external dangers,

“In the same manner, the Noble Disciple, by giving up both pleasure and pain altogether, and already having gone beyond both delight and distress, where he no longer experiences pleasure nor discomfort, and while remaining in the ever-present state of purifying mindfulness, with the overwhelming presence of equanimity, he attains to the fourth *jhāna*. He does this also, so that he experiences the state of non-agitation, dwelling happily within himself, experiencing peace and comfort, in preparation for entering Nibbāna.

“These, Bhikkhus, are the four *jhānas* in their superior aspects, wherein the Noble Disciple dwells now, in this very life, quickly and with no difficulty whatsoever.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, when the Noble Disciple is endowed with these seven good qualities, he can (and whenever he desires to) enter the four *jhānas* in their superior aspects, wherein he dwells now, in this very life, quickly and with no difficulty whatsoever.

“In being able to do this, the Noble Disciple is said to be beyond the power and reach of Māra, no longer susceptible to Māra’s evil tricks.”

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu