AN 9.36 — AN 9:36 Mental Absorption | Jhāna Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Mental Absorption

Jhāna Sutta (AN 9:36)

“I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the first jhāna… the second jhāna… the third… the fourth… the dimension of the infinitude of space… the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness… the dimension of nothingness. I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

“‘I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the first jhāna.’ Thus it has been said. In reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards

whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena and, having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.'

"Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena and, having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and from the total ending of the five lower fetters [self-identification views, grasping at habits & practices, uncertainty, sensual passion, and irritation]—he is due to arise spontaneously (in the Pure Abodes), there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

"'I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the first jhāna.' Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said.

[Similarly with the second, third, and fourth jhāna.]

"'I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the dimension of the infinitude of space.' Thus it has been said. In reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk—with the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity, (perceiving,) 'Infinite space'—enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena and, having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.'

"Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case

where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena and, having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this very Dhamma-delight, and from the total ending of the five lower fetters—he is due to arise spontaneously (in the Pure Abodes), there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

"'I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the dimension of the infinitude of space.' Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said.

[Similarly with the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness and the dimension of nothingness.]

"Thus, as far as the perception-attainments go, that is as far as gnosis-penetration goes. As for these two dimensions—the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception & the attainment of the cessation of perception & feeling—I tell you that they are to be rightly explained by those monks who are meditators, skilled at attainment, skilled at attainment-emergence, who have attained & emerged in dependence on them."

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 52; MN 111; MN 140; SN 22:122; AN 4:94; AN 4:170; AN 4:179; AN 5:28; AN 9:43—45; AN 10:13; Dhp 372