AN 9.40 — Naga Sutta: The Tusker

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

"When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants go ahead of a wilderness tusker foraging for food and cut off the tips of the grasses, the wilderness tusker feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants chew up the wilderness tusker's stash of broken-off branches, he feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants go ahead of the wilderness tusker on his way down to his bath and stir up the mud in the water with their trunks, he feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When cow-elephants go along as the wilderness tusker is bathing and bang up against his body, he feels irritated, upset, & disgusted.

"Then the thought occurs to the wilderness tusker, 'I now live hemmed in by elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants. I feed off grass with cut-off tips. They chew up my stash of broken-off branches. I drink muddied water. Even when I bathe, cow-elephants go along and bang up against my body. What if I were to live alone, apart from the crowd?'

"So at a later time he lives alone, apart from the crowd. He feeds off grass with uncut tips. They don't chew up his stash of broken-off branches. He drinks unmuddied water. When he bathes, cow-elephants don't go along and bang up against his body. The thought

occurs to him, 'Before, I lived hemmed in by elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants. I fed off grass with cut-off tips. They chewed up my stash of broken-off branches. I drank muddied water. Even when I bathed, cow-elephants would go along and bang up against my body. But now I live alone, apart from the crowd. I feed off grass with uncut tips. They don't chew up my stash of broken-off branches. I drink unmuddied water. When I bathe, cow-elephants don't go along and bang up against my body.' Breaking off a branch with his trunk and scratching his body with it, gratified, he allays his itch.

In the same way, when a monk lives hemmed in with monks, nuns, male & female lay followers, kings, royal ministers, sectarians, & their disciples, the thought occurs to him, 'I now live hemmed in by monks, nuns, male & female lay followers, kings, royal ministers, sectarians, & their disciples. What if I were to live alone, apart from the crowd?'

"So he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a wilderness, the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a forest grove, the open air, a heap of straw. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he sits down, crosses his legs, holds his body erect, and brings mindfulness to the fore.

"Abandoning covetousness with regard to the world, he dwells with an awareness devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness. Abandoning ill will and anger, he dwells with an awareness devoid of ill will, sympathetic with the welfare of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of ill will and anger. Abandoning sloth and drowsiness, he dwells with an awareness devoid of sloth and drowsiness, mindful, alert, percipient of light. He cleanses his mind of sloth and drowsiness. Abandoning restlessness and anxiety, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness and anxiety. Abandoning uncertainty, he dwells having crossed over uncertainty, with no perplexity with regard to skillful mental qualities. He cleanses his mind of uncertainty.

"Having abandoned these five hindrances — corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment — then quite withdrawn from sensual pleasures, withdrawn from unskillful qualities, he enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. Gratified, he allays his itch.

"With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation — internal assurance. Gratified, he allays his itch.

"With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' Gratified, he allays his itch.

"With the abandoning of pleasure & stress — as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress — he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. Gratified, he allays his itch.

"With the complete transcending of perceptions of [physical] form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, [perceiving,] 'Infinite space,' he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. Gratified, he allays his itch.

"With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, [perceiving,] 'Infinite consciousness,' he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. Gratified, he allays his itch.

"With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, [perceiving,] 'There is nothing,' he enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. Gratified, he allays his itch.

"With the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, he enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Gratified, he allays his itch.

"With the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. And, having seen [that] with discernment, his mental fermentations are completely ended. Gratified, he allays his itch."