AN 9.40 — AN 9:40 The Tusker | Nāga Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/AN/AN9_40.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

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

The Tusker

Nāga Sutta (AN 9:40)

“When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants go ahead of a wilderness tusker foraging for food and break off the tips of the grasses, the wilderness tusker feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants devour the wilderness tusker’s bunches of 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 broken-off tips. My bunches of branches are devoured. 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 unbroken tips. His bunches of branches are undevoured. 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 broken-off tips. My bunches of branches were devoured. 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 unbroken tips. My bunches of branches are undevoured. 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. He, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, 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 secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, he enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, 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 jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: 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 attending to perceptions of multiplicity, (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 as he sees (that) with discernment, effluents are completely ended. Gratified, he allays his itch.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 14; AN 5:30; AN 6:43; AN 8:103; AN 10:99; Sn 1:3; Sn 1:12