

Anguttara Nikāya

The Numerical Discourses

Ekādasakanipāta
(Book of the Elevens)

AN 11.16

Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta “Discourse at Aṭṭhakanāgara”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

Copyright © Bhikkhu Candana 2023

Once, while Venerable Ānanda was living in the small village of Beluva, in Vesālī, the wealthy merchant householder Dasama of Aṭṭhakanāgara came to Pāṭaliputta, for some business.

Then, one day, the wealthy merchant householder Dasama of Aṭṭhakanāgara went and approached a certain Bhikkhu who was staying at the Roosters’ Monastery, and asked:

“Bhante, we have heard that Venerable Ānanda is here, and we would very much like to see him. Could you please tell us where we might find him?”

“Householder, Venerable Ānanda is currently staying in the small village of Beluva, in Vesālī.”

Then, having already concluded his business in Pāṭaliputta, the wealthy householder Dasama of Aṭṭhakanāgara went and approached Venerable Ānanda in the small village of Beluva. There, he paid homage to Venerable Ānanda, and then sat to one side and said:

“Bhante Ānanda, is there an instruction that is truly spoken and well-declared by The Blessed One, who knows and sees, the Perfectly Awakened, the Self-Awakened Buddha, whereby, when the Bhikkhu takes that teaching and applies it by living according to it, practicing and training in it diligently, every day, he will for sure experience his unreleased heart become fully released, where his mental defilements, his heart’s contaminants, are then completely eradicated, as he arrives to the ultimate and most sublime safety, that is the freedom from bondage?”

“Indeed, there is, householder!” replied Venerable Ānanda.

“And what is that?”

1. “Here, householder, by overcoming these obstructive five hindrances, the Bhikkhu, while being secluded from sensual and unskillful thoughts, enters upon and abides in the *First Jhāna*, which is accompanied by thinking and pondering, with joy and pleasure that arise from such seclusion.

“Now, here, the Bhikkhu reflects by considering the following:

‘This First Jhāna is, in fact, specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

“This, householder, is one instruction that is truly spoken and well-declared by The Blessed One, who knows and sees, the Perfectly Awakened, the Self-Awakened Buddha, whereby, when the Bhikkhu takes that teaching and applies it by living according to it, practicing and training in it diligently, every day, he will for sure experience his unreleased heart become fully released, where his mental defilements, his heart’s contaminants, are completely obliterated, as he arrives to the ultimate and most sublime safety, that is the freedom from bondage.

2. “Also, householder, through the disappearance of both thinking and pondering, the Bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the *Second Jhāna*, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind, this time in the absence of both thinking and pondering, but with the experience of joy and pleasure that arise from *samādhi*, the stable collectedness of the heart.

“Now, here, the Bhikkhu reflects by considering the following:

‘This Second Jhāna is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he

still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

“This, householder, is another instruction that is truly spoken and well-declared by The Blessed One, who knows and sees, the Perfectly Awakened, the Self-Awakened Buddha, whereby, when the Bhikkhu takes that teaching and applies it by living according to it, practicing and training in it diligently, every day, he will for sure experience his unreleased heart become fully released, where his mental defilements, his heart’s contaminants, are completely obliterated, as he arrives to the ultimate and most sublime safety, that is the freedom from bondage.

3. “Further, householder, with the disappearance of joy, the Bhikkhu later comes to rest in equanimity, mindful and fully aware, as he experiences both pleasure and happiness within the body. This happens to be the *Third Jhāna*, for which the Noble Ones state: *‘Such a serene person mindfully rests in happiness, with an ever-present sense of equanimity.’*

“Now, here, the Bhikkhu reflects by considering the following:

‘This Third Jhāna is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

“This, householder, is another instruction that is truly spoken and well-declared by The Blessed One, who knows and sees, the Perfectly Awakened, the Self-Awakened Buddha, whereby, when the Bhikkhu takes that teaching and applies it by living according to it, practicing and training in it diligently, every day, he will for sure experience his unreleased heart become fully released, where his mental defilements, his heart’s contaminants, are completely obliterated, as he arrives to the ultimate and most sublime safety, that is the freedom from bondage.

4. “Afterwards, householder, by giving up both pleasure and pain, and having already gone beyond joy and anguish, the Bhikkhu remains in a state of purifying mindfulness with the ever-growing sense of equanimity, while experiencing neither pleasure nor pain, having gone beyond both, as he attains to the *Fourth Jhāna*.

“Now, here too, the Bhikkhu reflects while considering the following:

‘This Fourth Jhāna is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

“This, householder, is another instruction that is truly spoken and well-declared by The Blessed One, who knows and sees, the Perfectly Awakened, the Self-Awakened Buddha, whereby, when the Bhikkhu takes that teaching and applies it by living according to it, practicing and training in it diligently, every day, he will for sure experience his unreleased heart become fully released, where his mental defilements, his heart’s contaminants, are completely obliterated, as he arrives to the ultimate and most sublime safety, that is the freedom from bondage.

5. “Then, householder, the Bhikkhu trains himself as he comes to possess a heart that has left behind all manner of coveting, that has abandoned all hostility, and now lives mindfully, unconfused and with full awareness. With his heart brimming with *Mettā*, he finds it naturally flowing, abundantly, thus permeating its universally benevolent loving kindness (*Mettā*), shining it in one direction of space.

“Similarly, he does so with the second direction, the third direction, and the fourth direction.

“In the same way, he continues spreading it in the direction above him, below his feet, permeating it all around him, and finally much like a sphere, radiating in all directions at once, encompassing all beings, everywhere, with universally benevolent loving kindness, as if to himself, while continuing to live with a heart that is suffused with *mettā*, as it increasingly grows and becomes vastly boundless, exalted, beyond all measure, beyond any danger, without any hostility or fear.

“Here too, the Bhikkhu reflects while considering the following:

‘This Release of the Heart through the application of Mettā (universally benevolent loving kindness) is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

6. “Furthermore, householder, the Bhikkhu trains himself as he comes to possess a heart that has left behind all manner of coveting, that has abandoned all hostility, and now lives mindfully, unconfused and with full awareness. Then, with his heart brimming with *Karunā*, he finds it naturally flowing, abundantly, thus permeating its universal compassion (*Karunā*), and shining it in one direction of space.

“Similarly, he does so with the second direction, the third direction, and the fourth direction.

“In the same way, he continues spreading it in the direction above him, below his feet, permeating it all around him, and finally much like a sphere, radiating in all directions at once, encompassing all beings, everywhere, with universal compassion, as if to himself, while continuing to live with a heart that is suffused with *Karunā*, as it increasingly grows and becomes vastly boundless, exalted, beyond all measure, beyond any danger, without any hostility or fear.

“Here too, the Bhikkhu reflects while considering the following:

‘This Release of the Heart through the application of Karunā (universal compassion) is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever is specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

7. “Then, householder, the Bhikkhu trains himself as he comes to possess a heart that has left behind all manner of coveting, that has abandoned all hostility, and now lives mindfully, unconfused and with full awareness. Then, with his heart brimming with *Muditā*, he finds it naturally flowing, abundantly, thus permeating its universal altruistic joy (*Muditā*), shining it in one direction of space.

“Similarly, he does so with the second direction, the third direction, and the fourth direction.

“In the same way, he continues spreading it in the direction above him, below his feet, permeating it all around him, and finally much like a sphere, radiating it in all directions at once, encompassing all beings, everywhere, with universal altruistic joy, as if to himself, while continuing to live with a heart that is suffused with *Muditā*, as it increasingly grows and becomes vastly boundless, exalted, beyond all measure, beyond any danger, without any hostility or fear.

“Here too, the Bhikkhu reflects while considering the following:

‘This Release of the Heart through the application of Muditā (universal altruistic joy) is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

8. “Next, householder, the Bhikkhu trains himself as he comes to possess a heart that has left behind all manner of coveting, that has abandoned all hostility, and now lives mindfully, unconfused and with full awareness. Then, with his heart brimming with *Upekkhā*, he finds it naturally flowing, abundantly, thus permeating its equanimity (*Upekkhā*), shining it in one direction of space.

“Similarly, he does so with the second direction, the third direction, and the fourth direction.

“In the same way, he continues spreading it in the direction above him, below his feet, permeating it all around him, and finally much like a sphere, radiating it in all directions at once, encompassing all beings, everywhere, with equanimity, as if to himself, while continuing to live with a heart that is suffused with *Upekkhā*, as it increasingly grows and becomes vastly boundless, exalted, beyond all measure, beyond any danger, without any hostility or fear.

“Here too, the Bhikkhu reflects while considering the following:

‘This Release of the Heart through the application of Upekkhā (equanimity) is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

9. “Next, householder, by having completely transcended and gone beyond the confines of the physical world and of tangibility, along with the disappearance of perceptions dealing with sensory reflexive contact, and by no longer paying any attention to the multiplicity of unending perceptions, and instead remaining fully aware that *‘space is infinitely boundless,’* the Bhikkhu enters upon and dwells in the dimension of ‘Boundless Infinity of Space.’

“Here too, the Bhikkhu reflects while considering the following:

‘This attainment of the dimension of ‘Boundless Infinity of Space’ is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

10. “Also, householder, by having completely transcended the state of space being infinitely boundless, and by experiencing and being fully aware of how *‘consciousness is boundlessly infinite,’* the Bhikkhu enters upon and dwells in the dimension of ‘Boundless Infinity of Consciousness.’

“Here too, the Bhikkhu reflects while considering the following:

‘This attainment of the dimension of ‘Boundless Infinity of Consciousness’ is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.

11. “And, householder, by having completely transcended the state of consciousness being infinitely boundless, and while experiencing and remaining fully aware that ‘*there is nothing at all*,’ the Bhikkhu enters upon and dwells in the dimension of ‘Nothingness.’

“Here too, the Bhikkhu reflects while considering the following:

‘This attainment of the dimension of Nothingness is also specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, which is facilitating its manifestation.’

“And as such, he directly understands that whatever **is** specifically activated and prepared, and therefore the product of volitional thinking, is itself not permanent, and will thereby come to cease at some point, sooner or later, for it is unreliable.

“Now, at that moment, while directly understanding and realizing this truth, and becoming anchored on this realization, the Bhikkhu gains the possibility to destroy the *āsavas*, the heart’s contaminants, then and there. However, if he does not, due to his greed and attachment towards The Dhamma, then by defeating the five lower fetters, when he dies, at the end of his life, if he still has not attained Perfect Awakening, he will be reborn into the Pure Abodes, where he will attain to Perfect Awakening, without ever returning back from that world.”

Then, once Venerable Ānanda spoke these words, the wealthy merchant Dasama of Atthakanāgara said:

“Bhante Ānanda, just like a man who went out searching for a single gateway to a treasure, an entrance to a hidden treasure, but instead of just one, he was granted access to much more, and thus suddenly obtained eleven treasures all at once!

“Similarly, Bhante Ānanda, I was looking for a single door, a gateway to take me to The Deathless, and instead, I was shown and granted access to not one, but eleven doors to The Deathless!

“Just like a man living in a house with eleven doors, when that house catches fire, he will have eleven exit points, eleven doors to escape the house that is ablaze, and set himself free by fleeing from its ravaging flames.

“Likewise, I now have eleven doors to my freedom, eleven doors that will take me to the Deathless, whereby I can attain for myself, the safety that I seek.

“Bhante, while the ascetics of other sects have to pay their teachers compensation to receive their instruction, then why should I not make an offering here to the Venerable Ānanda!”

Then, the householder Dasama of Atthakanāgara invited and assembled the Sangha of Bhikkhus from both Vesālī and Pāṭaliputta, and with his own hands offered delicious and nutritious foods and sustenance to them, and they were all satisfied. Afterwards, he also gave each Bhikkhu a set of two robes and offered Venerable Ānanda a set of three robes. He also built a dwelling big enough for five hundred monks and donated it to Venerable Ānanda.

Sādhū

Sādhū

Sādhū