MN 52 — MN 52 To the Man from Aṭṭhakanagara | Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

To the Man from Aṭṭhakanagara

Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta (MN 52)

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying near Vesālī at Veḷuvagāmaka. Now on that occasion Dasama the householder from Aṭṭhakanagara1 had arrived at Pāṭaliputta on some business. Then he went to a certain monk at Kukkaṭa Monastery and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the monk, “Where is Ven. Ānanda staying now? I’d like to see him.”

“Householder, the Ven. Ānanda is staying near Vesālī at Veḷuvagāmaka.”

Then Dasama the householder from Aṭṭhakanagara, on completing his business at Pāṭaliputta, went to Ven. Ānanda at Veḷuvagāmaka near Vesālī. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda: "Venerable sir, is there a single quality declared by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—where the unreleased mind of a monk who dwells there heedful, ardent, & resolute becomes released, or his unended effluents go to their total ending, or he attains the unexcelled security from the yoke that he had not attained before?"

"Yes, householder, there is...."

"And what is that one quality, venerable sir...?"

"There is the case, householder, where a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born from seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He reflects on this and discerns, 'This first jhāna is fabricated & intended. Now whatever is fabricated & intended is inconstant & subject to cessation.' 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 wasting away 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.

"This, householder, is a single quality declared by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—where the unreleased mind of a monk who dwells there heedful, ardent, & resolute becomes released, or his unended effluents go to their total ending, or he attains the unexcelled security from the yoke that he had not attained before.

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

"Then again, a monk keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with goodwill, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with goodwill—abundant, expansive, unlimited, without hostility, without ill will. He reflects on this and discerns, 'This awareness-release through goodwill is fabricated & intended. Now whatever is fabricated & intended is inconstant & subject to cessation.' 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 wasting away 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.

"This too, householder, is a single quality declared by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—where the unreleased mind of

a monk who dwells there heedful, ardent, & resolute becomes released, or his unended effluents go to their total ending, or he attains the unexcelled security from the yoke that he had not attained before.

[Similarly with awareness-release through compassion, through empathetic joy, & through equanimity.]

"Then again, 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 reflects on this and discerns, 'This attainment of the infinitude of space is fabricated & intended. Now whatever is fabricated & intended is inconstant & subject to cessation.' 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 wasting away 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.

"This too, householder, is a single quality declared by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—where the unreleased mind of a monk who dwells there heedful, ardent, & resolute becomes released, or his unended effluents go to their total ending, or he attains the unexcelled security from the yoke that he had not attained before.

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

When this was said, Dasama the householder from Aṭṭhakanagara said to Ven. Ānanda, "Venerable Ānanda, just as if a man seeking a single opening onto treasure were all at once to come upon eleven openings onto treasure, in the same way I—seeking a single doorway to the deathless—have all at once come to hear of eleven doorways to the deathless. And just as if a man whose house had eleven doors could take himself to safety by means of any one of those doors, in the same way I can take myself to safety by means of any one of these eleven doors to the deathless. Venerable sir, when sectarians search for a teacher's fee for their teachers, why shouldn't I pay homage to Ven. Ānanda?"

So Dasama the householder from Aṭṭhakanagara, having assembled the Saṅgha of monks from Vesālī and Pāṭaliputta, with his own hands served & satisfied them with refined staple & non-staple foods. He presented a pair of cloths to each monk, and a triple robe to Ven. Ānanda. And for Ven. Ānanda he had a dwelling built worth five hundred (kahāpanas).

Note

1. The term aṭṭhakanāgara—with the fourth "a" marked with a macron—means, "a person from Aṭṭhakanagara."

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 140; AN 9:36