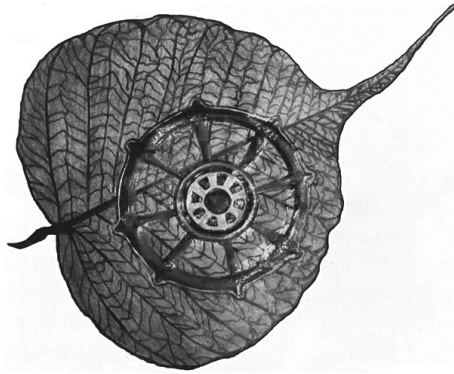


Moving Dhamma,

Volume 2



Bhante Vimalaramsi

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Other books by Bhante Vimalaramsi

Guide to Forgiveness Meditation
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Life is Meditation, Meditation is Life
(2014)

The Breath of Love
(2012)

Moving Dhamma, Volume 1
(2012)

*The Ānāpānasati Sutta: A Practical Guide to Mindfulness of Breathing
and Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation*
(2006)

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Dedication

For all present and future students of the Buddha and
his teachings.

“Strive on with Diligence.”

The Buddha

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Preface

This is the next book of Dhamma Talks which are explanations of the earliest Buddhist suttas available. There is a previous volume one which includes what I consider the basic suttas that are most important for the student to understand. Volume two contains additional talks which fill in some areas which the student will consider important for their own understanding. For example, MN-105, Sunakkhatta Sutta, and MN-106, Āneñjasappāya Sutta, get into the inner workings of *Nibbāna* and the path and fruition. MN-55, Jīvaka Sutta, covers the highly disputed issue of whether the Buddha approved of the monks eating meat.

As I go along I explain the sutta meaning, primarily, as it affects the meditation practice.

My life as a monk has been trying to find the earliest teachings that the Buddha gave to his disciples and his *Saṅgha* of Monks 2600 years ago. I have spent the last 38 years of my life doing just this. I explored many practices during that time, but it was in 1995 that I decided to drop all other practices and just use the Majjhima Nikāya, which had just been translated and published by Bhikkhu Bodhi through Wisdom Publications, and to actually practice the meditation using only those as a guide and nothing else.

Amazingly, I found all of the Buddha's teachings contained right there. And by that I mean the entire meditation instructions, the progress of insight, and the final goal and how that is attained.

You need nothing else but the Majjhima Nikāya and the Saṃyutta Nikāya; however, you do need a guide to help explain these if you have not been down this path.

I have changed some words in the translations to other words with definitions that I think are closer to the original meaning of the Pāli *and* what I believe the Buddha really meant. For example, I use “Collectedness” instead of “Concentration.” Also in some places of the sutta I have put back in the older translation of the sutta that was left out so that you may understand the meaning better.

These talks have been left in most ways unedited so the student may go to the Dhamma Sukha web site and listen to the audio if he/she wishes. We have also embedded the audio files directly into the eBook versions.

The teachings of the Buddha are right here. I hope you find these teachings as interesting as I have.

Bhante Vimalaramsi

Abbot of the Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center

UIBDS United International Buddha Dhamma Society

June 30, 2013

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Many thanks to Jens Tröger, who went through this manuscript in yet another proofreading review and then created eBook and kindle versions. Also to Doug Kraft who helped us get this into a format that would be accepted by the publisher.

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I share the merit of this book with all my students, past and present, the editors and collaborators of this book, Bhikkhu Bodhi and Wisdom Publications, and with my parents who supported and raised me.

Introduction

Bhante Vimalaramsi is an American Buddhist Monk of over 25 years. He started when he was 28 years old practicing meditation in California in the Burmese style of *Vipassanā*. Gradually he gave up the material world and got on a plane for Thailand where he became a monk in 1986. He then went on to practice meditation intensively doing thirty day, three month retreats, and even a two year retreat in Burma under Sayadaw U Janaka.

At the end of this two year retreat his Burmese meditation teacher told him he had nothing left to teach him; he was now ready to go and teach on his own. Even with these high remarks a feeling that there was something more to learn kept nagging at him.

He went on to Malaysia and instead of *Vipassanā* taught *Mettā* (Loving-Kindness) Meditation.

In Sri Lanka Bhante took the advice of a monk to use only the suttas, and he obtained a copy of Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation of the Majjhima Nikāya and headed off for a cave in Thailand where he spent three months practicing with the suttas as a guide and a cobra for company!

He started doing just what the suttas stated. He found out that in the texts there was another step that appears to have been left out by later day teachers. The idea of "Tranquilizing the bodily formations" (*sankhāra*) was included in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta yet had never been mentioned by other teachers Bhante had studied with.

When he added this Relax step, the practice took on a completely new tone. The *jhānas*, as discussed in the suttas, became very real but with a slightly different flavor which Bhante calls a "Tranquil

Aware *Jhāna*.” When he added the Relax step the meditation completely changed and progress was very fast.

This book is the second book of a set of talks that Bhante gives on his 10 day retreats, many of which you may watch directly on the Internet either on the Dhamma Sukha website or on Youtube. Unlike many other teachers he actually reads from the sutta itself and then provides a commentary that explains what the Buddha meant. Every night the student hears a sutta that is geared to where they are in their daily progress on the retreat. Unlike other teachers, he invites questions from the audience and wants to make sure that everyone has understood the text as it is written.

Bhante uses and prefers the translations that are done by Bhikkhu Bodhi vs. others that exist. He also will replace certain words as he reads from the book with his own interpretation of what the word should really be. For example, whenever the word “concentration” is written in the suttas, Bhante will say “collectedness” which he believes is a better translation. So the reader should be aware that Bhante will, at times, substitute his own translation as he reads along so that the text may not fully agree with the printed book by Wisdom Publications.

The book is made up of transcripts of Bhante’s talks. Some of the talks have introductions that we inserted that were written by Phra Khantiphalo, the editor of *A Treasury of the Buddha’s Words: Discourses From the Middle Collection*, translated by Nyanamoli and edited by Phra Khantipalo, with notes by Phra Khantipalo. Then Bhante reads the sutta and comments on them. The actual sutta is bolded in the text of this book. Students ask questions periodically and he answers them, and then continues.

Bhante Vimalaramsi continues to give talks and retreats at his meditation center in Missouri, U.S.A and elsewhere around the world. You may visit his web site at dhammasukha.org.

The Six Rs

*Excerpt from the book "The Breath of Love"
by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi*

Mindfulness (*sati*) is "remembering to observe how mind's attention moves moment-to-moment and remembering what to do with any arising phenomena!" Successful meditation needs a highly developed skill of mindfulness. The 6R's training taught at Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center is a reclaimed ancient guidance system which develops this skill.

The first R is to Recognize but before we do it, the meditator must remember to use their observation power (mindfulness) for the meditation cycle to start running. Mindfulness is the fuel. It's just like gas for an engine. Without mindfulness, everything stops!

Being persistent with this practice will relieve suffering of all kinds.

To begin this cycle smoothly you must start the engine and have lots of gas (mindfulness) in the tank!

Meditation (*bhāvanā*) helps you to let go of such difficult delusional states in life as fear, anger, tension, stress, anxiety, depression, sadness, sorrow, fatigue, condemnation, feelings of helplessness, or whatever the "catch (attachment) of the day" happens to be. Delusional means here, taking things that arise personally and identifying with them to be "I," "Me," "Mine" or "*atta*" in Pāli. These states result in suffering that we cause ourselves. This suffering comes from a lack of understanding in how things actually occur.

The 6R's are steps which evolve into one fluid motion becoming a new wholesome habitual tendency that relieves any dis-ease in mind and body. This cycle begins when mindfulness remembers the 6R's which are:

1. Recognize
2. Release
3. Relax
4. Re-Smile
5. Return
6. Repeat

Development of mindfulness (your observation power) observes each step of the practice cycle. Once you understand what the purpose of mindfulness is, keeping it going all the time is no longer a problem, and this makes the meditation easier to understand, plus, it is much more fun to practice. It becomes a part of happy living and this brings up a smile. Remembering the 6R's leads you to having a wholesome up-lifted mind.

This remembering by mindfulness is very important. Before practicing the 6R's you have to remember to start the cycle! That's the trick! You have to remember to gas-up the engine, so it can run smoothly!

Then we begin to:

Recognize: Mindfulness remembers how you can recognize and observe any movement of mind's attention from one thing to another. This observation notices any movement of mind's attention away from an object of meditation, such as the breath, sending out *mettā*, or doing a task in daily life. You will notice a

slight tightness or tension sensation as mind's attention barely begins to move toward any arising phenomena.

Pleasant or painful feeling can occur at any one of the six sense doors. Any sight, sound, odor, taste, touch, or thought can cause this pulling sensation to begin. With careful non-judgmental observation, the meditator will notice a slight tightening sensation. Recognizing early movement is vital to successful meditation. You then continue on to:

Release: When a feeling or thought arises, you release it, let it be there without giving anymore attention to it. The content of the distraction is not important at all, but the mechanics of “how” it arose are important! Just let go of any tightness around it; let it be there without placing attention on it. Without attention, the tightness passes away. Mindfulness then reminds you to:

Relax: After releasing the feeling or sensation and allowing it to be there without trying to control it, there is a subtle, barely noticeable tension within mind/body. This is why the *Relax* step (“*Tranquilization*” step as stated in the suttas) is being pointed out by the Buddha in his meditation instructions. *Please, don't skip this step!* It would be like not putting oil in a car so the motor can run smoothly. The important Pāli word here is “*pas'sambaya.*” This word specifically means “to tranquilize” and appears as “an action verb to be performed” as described in the suttas, and is not “a general kind of relaxing” that is included within other release steps found in other kinds of meditation. This point is sometimes misunderstood in translation, which then changes the end result!

Without performing this step of relaxing every time in the cycle, the meditator will not experience a close-up view of the ceasing of

the tension caused by craving or the feeling of relief as the tightness is relaxed. Note that craving always first manifests as a tightness or tension in both one's mind and body. You have a momentary opportunity to see and experience the true nature and relief of cessation of tightness and suffering while performing the Release/Relax steps.

Mindfulness moves on by remembering to:

Re-Smile: If you have listened to the Dhamma talks at dhammasukha.org you might remember hearing about how smiling is an important aspect for the meditation. Learning to smile with mind and raising slightly the corners of the mouth helps mind to be observant, alert, and agile. Getting serious, tensing up, or frowning causes mind to become heavy and your mindfulness becomes dull and slow. Your insights become more difficult to see, thus slowing down your understanding of Dhamma.

Imagine for a moment the Bodhisatta resting under the rose apple tree as a young boy. He was not serious and tense when he attained a pleasant abiding (*jhāna*) and had deep insights with a light mind. Want to see clearly? It's easy!

Just lighten up, have fun exploring, and smile! Smiling leads us to a happier and more interesting practice. If the meditator forgets to Release/Relax, rather than punishing or criticizing yourself, be kind, Re-smile and start again. Keeping up your humor, sense of fun exploration, and recycling is important.

After Re-smiling, mindfulness recalls the next step.

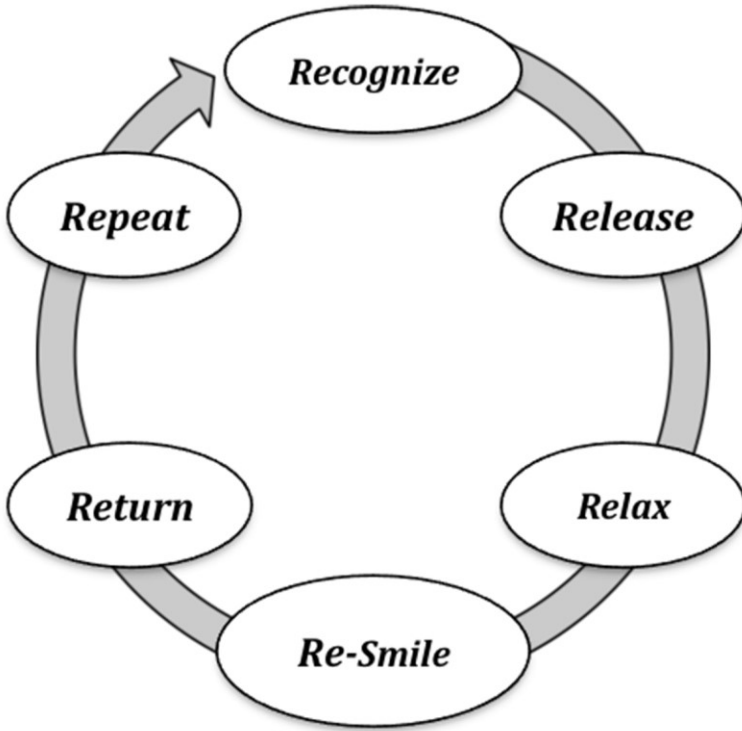
Return or Re-Direct: Gently re-direct mind's attention back to the object of meditation (that is the breath and relaxing, or *mettā* and relaxing) continuing with a gentle collected mind and use

that object as a “home base.” In daily life, having been pulled off task, this is where you return your attention back to releasing, relaxing, and re-smiling into the task.

Sometimes people say this practice cycle is simpler than expected! In history, simple things can become a mystery through small changes and omissions! Doing this practice develops better focus on daily tasks with less tension and tightness. Mind becomes more naturally balanced and happy. You become more efficient at whatever you do in life and, actually, you have more fun doing all of the things that used to be drudgery. Nearing the end of the cycle.

Mindfulness helps with the final remembering to:

Repeat: Repeat your meditation on your object and keep it going as long as you can, and then repeat this entire practice cycle as needed to attain the results the Buddha said could be reached in this lifetime! Repeating the “6R’s cycle” over and over again will eventually replace old habitual suffering as we see clearly for ourselves what suffering actually is; notice the cause of it and how we become involved with the tension and tightness of it; experience how to reach a cessation of that suffering by releasing and relaxing; and discover how we can exercise the direct path to that same cessation of suffering. We achieve this cessation each time we *Release* an arising feeling, *Relax*, and *Re-Smile*. Notice the Relief!



In summary, mindfulness (*sati*) is very relevant to Buddhist meditation and daily life. Sharpening your skill of mindfulness is the key to simple and smooth meditation. The process of remembering keeps the six steps of the practice moving. Practicing this meditation as close to the instructions (found in the suttas) as possible will lighten life's experience. A very similar practice was taught to people in the time of the Buddha. It was taught as Right Effort. Within the 6R's we have added a couple more steps to make things a little easier to understand.

The remarkable results of doing the meditation in this way are "immediately effective" for anyone who diligently and ardently embraces these instructions. When you have an attachment arise this practice will eventually dissolve the hindrance, but it does take persistent use of the 6R's to have this happen.

When you practice in this way, because it is found to be so relevant in daily life, it changes your perspective and leads you to a more successful, happy, and peaceful experience. As mindfulness develops, knowledge and wisdom grow naturally as you see “how” things work by witnessing the impersonal process of Dependent Origination.

This leads to a form of happiness the Buddha called “Contentment.” Contentment is the by-product of living the Buddhist practice. This meditation leads to balance, equanimity, and the dissolution of fear and other dis-ease. With less fear and dread you find new confidence. Then Loving-Kindness, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity can grow in our lives.

Your degree of success is directly proportional to how well you understand mindfulness, follow the precise instructions, and use the 6R’s in both your sitting practice and daily life. This is the way to the end of suffering. It’s interesting and fun to practice this way, and certainly it helps you smile while changing the world around you in a positive way.

When you are practicing TWIM, or Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation, you do not suppress anything. Suppression means we would push down or push away or not allow certain types of experience. This would temporarily stop hindrances from arising. Instead, when a hindrance arises, you must work to open your mind by seeing clearly *anicca* (impermanence, it wasn’t there and now it is), *dukkha* (suffering or unsatisfactoriness, you see that when these distractions arise they are painful), and *anattā* (not taking it personally, seeing the hindrances in the true way as being an impersonal process that you have no control over and not taking these hindrances as “I am that”).

You then let go of this obstruction, relax the tightness in the head, calm mind and finally, redirect your craving-free attention back to the practice of “Mindfulness of Breathing.”

As a result, you begin to see clearly how mind works and this leads to the development of wisdom. Instead of identifying with them, when you allow them and relax, these hindrances will naturally fade away. Mind becomes more clear and bright. Every time you let go of the ego attachment of “I am that,” mind naturally becomes more expanded, alert, and mindful.

Thus, one of the main reasons for this book is to show that whenever you suppress anything, you are not purifying mind or experiencing things as they truly are. At the time of suppression, you are pushing away or not allowing part of your experience. Thus, mind is contracted and pulls the tension even tighter instead of expanding and opening. As a result, this is not purifying mind of ignorance and craving. You are actually stopping the purification of mind!

It is impossible to experience the unconditioned state of the supra-mundane *Nibbāna* when one does not let go of everything that arises, and in that way purifies mind of the ego belief of “I am that.”

The Buddha never taught suppression of any experience nor did he teach a meditation that causes mind to fix on or become absorbed into the meditation object. Remember, he rejected every form of “concentration meditation” as not being the correct way. Actually, any kinds of pain, emotional upset, physical discomfort, and even death must be accepted with equanimity, full awareness and strong attention without identifying with these states or taking them personally.

Real personality change occurs when you open and expand your mind and let go of any kinds of hindrances, pain, suffering, and tension even in your daily life. This means that you open and expand your awareness so that you can observe everything with a silent mind free from tightness and all ego-attachment. You gradually lead a happy and calm life without a lot of mind chatter, especially during your daily activities.

When you practice “concentration meditation,” you will feel very comfortable and happy while in the deep meditation. But, when you get out of these exalted stages, your personality remains the same. Old anger, fears, or anxiety remain. This means when the hindrances attack you, you do not recognize them and open your mind and allow the hindrance to be there without taking it personally. Thus, you contract your mind and become even more attached! You might even become prideful and critical! This is because whenever a hindrance arises during the meditation, you let it go and immediately go back to the object of meditation again. You do this without calming and relaxing the tightness caused by the distraction. While in meditation, your mind tends to close or contract and tighten around that experience until mind becomes more deeply “concentrated.”

As a result, although this suppresses the hindrance, you have not completely let go of the ego-attachment to that distraction. Your mind is also tight and tense because you are not seeing clearly. You are not opening and allowing, but instead you are closing and fighting with that distraction.

This explains why nowadays meditators complain that they have huge amounts of tension in their head. Actually, if you truly let go of any distraction, there will not ever be any tension in the

head. It is as a result of this suppression that there is no real purifying of mind, and thus, personality change does not occur.

The 6R's is a simple technique for the student to use when mind's attention wanders off from the object of meditation. They are a key to cultivating mindfulness, turning hindrances into friends, exploring the Four Noble Truths, living into the Three Characteristics, and more. Getting comfortable and finally mastering this technique fulfills the requirements of the Four Right Efforts and takes you quickly to the goal of staying with your object of meditation and letting go of any of the five hindrances when they arise.

MN-36: The Greater Discourse to Saccaka (Mahāsaccaka Sutta)

Here is Saccaka who, though his name means “truthful,” actually cared little for the truth. He was interested in demonstrating the superiority of his own views and in defeating his opponents. In the previous sutta (MN-35, Cūlasaccaka Sutta) he did not succeed for as the saying goes, “he bit off more than he could chew” and was humbled in the presence of many others by the Buddha. Here we see another side of Saccaka’s unpleasant nature: his sceptical criticism which is mixed with sarcasm — a nasty blend arising from hate and delusion. Even when the truth is made plain to him, his mind, full of uncertainty or skepticism (vicikicchā), will not accept it. He is an expert, not with truth, but at needling people for it seems that he has gone round to various religious teachers trying to provoke them to anger. He did not succeed though, when he came to the Buddha. Our Teacher had the great compassion to spend an hour or two even with people like Saccaka, whose defilements were so dense that he could not, in that life, understand Dhamma. And the time he gave to Saccaka was not the usual teaching time in the afternoon or evening, but just before going out on the alms-round. The Buddha is quite unperturbed by all of Saccaka’s provocations, a point which astonishes Saccaka. Other (and unenlightened) teachers when engaged in debate with Saccaka did three things (still to be seen among those who cling to views): they prevaricated, led the talk aside, and showed anger, hate and surliness, but the Buddha even when personal remarks were directed at him — his skin brightened and his face cleared. — Phra Khantiphalo¹

¹ A Treasury of the Buddha’s Words: Discourses From the Middle Collection, translated by Nyanamoli and edited by Phra Khantipalo, with notes by Phra Khantipalo. Mahamakut Rajavidyalay Press, Bangkok, Thailand. Publication date unknown.

*Presented by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi on 2nd March 2007
at Dhamma Dena Vipassanā Center, Joshua Tree, California*

BV: {Reads from the sutta.}

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Vesālī in the Great Wood in the Hall with the Peaked Roof.

2. Now on that occasion, when it was morning, the Blessed One had finished dressing and had taken his bowl and outer robe, desiring to go into Vesālī for alms.

3. Then, as Saccaka the Nigantha's son was walking and wandering for exercise, he came to the Hall with the Peaked Roof in the Great Wood. The venerable Ānanda saw him coming in the distance and said to the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, here comes Saccaka the Nigantha's son, a debater and a clever speaker regarded by many as a saint. He wants to discredit the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the *Saṅgha*. It would be good if the Blessed One would sit down for a while out of compassion." The Blessed One sat down on the seat made ready. Then Saccaka the Nigantha's son went up to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and said to the Blessed One:

4. "Master Gotama, there are some recluses and brahmins who abide pursuing development of body, but not development of mind. They are touched by bodily painful feeling. In the past, when one was touched by bodily painful feeling, one's thighs would become rigid, one's heart would burst, hot blood would gush from one's mouth, and one would go mad, go out of one's mind. So then the mind was

subservient to the body, the body wielded mastery over it. Why is that? Because the mind was not developed. But there are some recluses and brahmins who abide pursuing development of mind, but not development of body. They are touched by mental painful feeling. In the past, when one was touched by mental painful feeling, one's thighs would become rigid, one's heart would burst, hot blood would gush from one's mouth, and one would go mad, go out of one's mind. So then the body was subservient to the mind, the mind wielded mastery over it. Why is that? Because the body was not developed. Master Gotama, it has occurred to me: 'Surely Master Gotama's disciples abide pursuing development of mind, but not development of body.'"

5. "But, Aggivessana, what have you learned about development of body?"

"Well, there are, for example, Nanda Vaccha, Kisa Sankicca, Makkhali Gosāla.

And he goes through three different ascetic teachers.

They go naked, rejecting conventions, licking their hands, not coming when asked, not stopping when asked; they do not accept food brought or food specially made or an invitation to a meal; they receive nothing from a pot, from a bowl, across a threshold, across a stick, across a pestle, from two eating together, from a pregnant woman, from a woman giving suck, from a woman in the midst of men, from where food is advertised to be distributed, from where a dog is waiting, from where flies are buzzing; they accept no fish or meat, they drink no liquor, wine, or fermented brew. They keep to one house, to one morsel; they keep to two houses,

to two morsels... they keep to seven houses, to seven morsels. They live on one saucerful a day, on two saucerfuls a day... on seven saucerfuls a day. They take food once a day, once every two days... once every seven days; thus even up to once every fortnight, they dwell pursuing the practice of taking food at stated intervals.”

6. “But do they subsist on so little, Aggivessana?” — “No, Master Gotama, sometimes they consume excellent hard food, eat excellent soft food, taste excellent delicacies, drink excellent drinks. Thereby they again regain their strength, fortify themselves, and become fat.”

“What they earlier abandoned, Aggivessana, they later gather together again. That is how there is increase and decrease of this body. But what have you learned about development of mind?”

When Saccaka the Nigantha’s son was asked by the Blessed One about development of mind, he was unable to answer.

7. Then the Blessed One told him: “What you have just spoken of as development of body, Aggivessana, is not development of body according to the Dhamma in the Noble One’s Discipline. Since you do not know what development of body is, how could you know what development of mind is? Nevertheless, Aggivessana, as to how one is undeveloped in body and undeveloped in mind, and developed in body and developed in mind, listen and attend closely to what I shall say.” — “Yes, sir,” Saccaka the Nigantha’s son replied. The Blessed One said this:

Now, Saccaka was what is now called a Jain, and this is part of the Jain religion, what he was talking about.

8. “How, Aggivessana, is one undeveloped in body and undeveloped in mind? Here, Aggivessana, pleasant feeling arises in an untaught ordinary person. Touched by that pleasant feeling, he lusts after pleasure and continues to lust after pleasure. That pleasant feeling of his ceases. With the cessation of the pleasant feeling, painful feeling arises. Touched by that painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, and laments, he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. When that pleasant feeling has arisen in him, it invades his mind and remains because body is not developed. And when that painful feeling has arisen in him, it invades his mind and remains because mind is not developed. Anyone in whom, in this double manner, arisen pleasant feeling invades his mind and remains because body is not developed, and arisen painful feeling invades his mind and remains because mind is not developed, is thus undeveloped in body and undeveloped in mind.

9. “And how, Aggivessana, is one developed in body and developed in mind? Here, Aggivessana, pleasant feeling arises in a well-taught noble disciple. Touched by that pleasant feeling, he does not lust after pleasure or continue to lust after pleasure. That pleasant feeling of his ceases. With the cessation of the pleasant feeling, painful feeling arises. Touched by that painful feeling, he does not sorrow, grieve, and lament, he does not weep beating his breast and become distraught. When that pleasant feeling has arisen in him, it does not invade his mind and remain because body is developed. And when that painful feeling has arisen in him, it does not invade his mind and remain because mind is developed. Anyone in whom, in this double manner, arisen

pleasant feeling does not invade his mind and remain because body is developed, and arisen painful feeling does not invade his mind and remain because mind is developed, is thus developed in body and developed in mind.”

10. “I have confidence in Master Gotama thus: ‘Master Gotama is developed in body and developed in mind.’”

“Surely, Aggivessana, your words are offensive and discourteous, but still I will answer you. Since I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness, it has not been possible for arisen pleasant feeling to invade my mind and remain or for arisen painful feeling to invade my mind and remain.”

11. “Has there never arisen in Master Gotama a feeling so pleasant that it could invade his mind and remain? Has there never arisen in Master Gotama a feeling so painful that it could invade his mind and remain?”

12. “Why not, Aggivessana? Here, Aggivessana, before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I thought: ‘Household life is crowded and dusty; life gone forth is wide open. It is not easy, while living in a home, to lead the holy life utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness.’

13. “Later, while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the

yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness.

This sutta copies below section 14-17 from sutta MN-26, Ariyapariyesāna Sutta.

14. “Having gone forth, Monks, in search of what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to Ālāra Kālāma and said to him: ‘Friend Kālāma, I want to lead the holy life in this Dhamma and Discipline.’ Ālāra Kālāma replied: ‘The venerable one may stay here. This Dhamma is such that a wise man can soon enter upon and abide in it, realising for himself through direct knowledge his own teacher’s doctrine.’ I soon quickly learned that Dhamma. As far as mere lip-reciting and rehearsal of his teaching went, I could speak with knowledge and assurance, and I claimed, ‘I know and see’ — and there were others who did likewise.

“I considered: ‘It is not through mere faith alone that Ālāra Kālāma declares: “By realising for myself with direct knowledge, I enter upon and abide in this Dhamma.” Certainly Ālāra Kālāma abides knowing and seeing this Dhamma.’ Then I went to Ālāra Kālāma and asked him: ‘Friend Kālāma, in what way do you declare that by realising for yourself with direct knowledge you enter upon and abide in this Dhamma?’ In reply he declared the base of nothingness. “I considered: ‘Not only Ālāra Kālāma has faith, energy, mindfulness, collectedness, and wisdom.

The five faculties.

I too have faith, energy, mindfulness, collectedness, and wisdom. Suppose I endeavour to realise the Dhamma that

Ālāra Kālāma declares he enters upon and abides in by realising for himself with direct knowledge?’

“I soon quickly entered upon and abided in that Dhamma by realising for myself with direct knowledge. Then I went to Ālāra Kālāma and asked him: ‘Friend Kālāma, is it in this way that you declare that you enter upon and abide in this Dhamma by realising for yourself with direct knowledge?’ — ‘That is the way, friend.’ — ‘It is in this way, friend, that I also enter upon and abide in this Dhamma by realising for myself with direct knowledge.’ — ‘It is a gain for us, friend, it is a great gain for us that we have such a venerable one for our companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma that I declare I enter upon and abide in by realising for myself with direct knowledge is the Dhamma that you enter upon and abide in by realising for yourself with direct knowledge. And the Dhamma that you enter upon and abide in by realising for yourself with direct knowledge is the Dhamma that I declare I enter upon and abide in by realising for myself with direct knowledge. So you know the Dhamma that I know and I know the Dhamma that you know. As I am, so are you; as you are, so am I. Come, friend, let us now lead this community together.’

That was a real big offer.

“Thus Ālāra Kālāma, my teacher, placed me, his pupil, on an equal footing with himself and awarded me the highest honour. But it occurred to me: This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to *Nibbāna*, but only to reappearance in the base of nothingness.’ Not being satisfied with that Dhamma, disappointed with it, I left.

Now if he would have died at that time, he would have been reborn in a brahma-loka, that lasts for sixty-thousand *mahakappas*, that's expansions and contractions of the universe, that's a long time. And it is in a happy state that he would have lived, but he wasn't satisfied with that.

15. "Still in search, Monks, of what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta

Uddaka Rāmaputta means that he was the son of Rāma, that's what his last name means.

and said to him: 'Friend, I want to lead the holy life in this Dhamma and Discipline.' Uddaka Rāmaputta replied: **'The venerable one may stay here. This Dhamma is such that a wise man can soon enter upon and abide in it, himself realising through direct knowledge his own teacher's doctrine.'** I soon quickly learned that Dhamma. As far as mere lip-reciting and rehearsal of his teaching went, I could speak with knowledge and assurance, and I claimed, 'I know and see' — and there were others who did likewise.

"I considered: 'It was not through mere faith alone that Rāma Rāmaputta's father.

declared: "By realising for myself with direct knowledge, I enter upon and abide in this Dhamma." Certainly Rāma abided knowing and seeing this Dhamma.' Then I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta and asked him: **'Friend, in what way did Rāma declare that by realising for himself with direct knowledge he entered upon and abided in this Dhamma?'** In reply Uddaka Rāmaputta declared the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

“I considered: ‘Not only Rāma had faith, energy, mindfulness, collectedness, and wisdom. I too have faith, energy, mindfulness, collectedness, and wisdom. Suppose I endeavour to realise the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and abided in by realising for himself with direct knowledge.’

“I soon quickly entered upon and abided in that Dhamma by realising for myself with direct knowledge. Then I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta and asked him: ‘Friend, was it in this way that Rāma declared that he entered upon and abided in this Dhamma by realising for himself with direct knowledge?’ — ‘That is the way, friend.’ — ‘It is in this way, friend, that I also enter upon and abide in this Dhamma by realising for myself with direct knowledge.’ — ‘It is a gain for us, friend, it is a great gain for us that we have such a venerable one for our companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and abided in by realising for himself with direct knowledge is the Dhamma that you enter upon and abide in by realising for yourself with direct knowledge. And the Dhamma that you enter upon and abide in by realising for yourself with direct knowledge is the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and abided in by realising for himself with direct knowledge. So you know the Dhamma that Rāma knew and Rāma knew the Dhamma that you know. As Rāma was, so are you; as you are, so was Rāma. Come, friend, now lead this community.’

Rama had already died, and his son took over. But his son was a little bit afraid of following all the way through neither-perception-nor-non-perception. He was comfortable being in the realm of nothingness, but he knew the way to get to that other state. The reason that he was very comfortable with that, is that

the belief in God is still available in the realm of nothingness, but when you get to neither-perception-nor-non-perception, that belief disappears, and he didn't like that idea. So, this is why he said, "Now, you come and lead the community." He didn't say, "Sit beside me and lead the community," because he didn't know that by direct knowledge, that state. So he was offering that, "You just take over, and we'll follow you."

"Thus Uddaka Rāmaputta, my companion in the holy life, placed me in the position of a teacher and accorded me the highest honour. But it occurred to me: 'This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to *Nibbāna*, but only to reappearance in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.' Not being satisfied with that Dhamma, disappointed with it, I left.

Now, if he would have died at that time, he would have been reborn in a brahma-loka that lasts eighty-four thousand *mahakappas*. And at that time, that was the highest anybody could ever attain. *Nibbāna* was not a reality, at that time, it was only a thought in the Bodhisatta's mind.

16. "Still in search, Monks, of what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I wandered by stages through the Magadhan country until eventually I arrived at Senānigama near Uruvelā. There I saw an agreeable piece of ground, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. I considered: This is an agreeable piece of ground, this is a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. This will

serve for the striving of a clansman intent on striving.’ And I sat down there thinking: ‘This will serve for striving.’

Back to sutta MN-36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta.

17. “Now these three similes occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. Suppose there were a wet sappy piece of wood lying in water, and a man came with an upper fire-stick, thinking: ‘I shall light a fire, I shall produce heat.’ What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by taking the upper fire-stick and rubbing it against the wet sappy piece of wood lying in the water?”

“No, Master Gotama. Why not? Because it is a wet sappy piece of wood, and it is lying in water. Eventually the man would reap only weariness and disappointment.”

“So too, Aggivessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who still do not live bodily withdrawn from sensual pleasures, and whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has not been fully abandoned and suppressed internally, even if those good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment; and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment. This was the first simile that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.

18. “Again, Aggivessana, a second simile occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. Suppose there were a wet sappy piece of wood lying on dry land far from water, and a man came with an upper fire-stick, thinking: ‘I shall

light a fire, I shall produce heat.’ What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by taking the upper fire-stick and rubbing it against the wet sappy piece of wood lying on dry land far from water?”

“No, Master Gotama. Why not? Because it is a wet sappy piece of wood, even though it is lying on dry land far from water. Eventually the man would reap only weariness and disappointment.”

“So too, Aggivessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who live bodily withdrawn from sensual pleasures, but whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has not been fully abandoned and suppressed internally, even if those good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment; and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment. This was the second simile that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.

19. “Again, Aggivessana, a third simile occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. Suppose there were a dry sapless piece of wood lying on dry land far from water, and a man came with an upper fire-stick, thinking: ‘I shall light a fire, I shall produce heat.’ What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by rubbing it against the dry sapless piece of wood lying on dry land far from water?”

“Yes, Master Gotama. Why so? Because it is a dry sapless piece of wood, and it is lying on dry land far from water.”

“So too, Aggivessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who live bodily withdrawn from sensual pleasures, and whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has been fully abandoned and suppressed internally, even if those good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are capable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment; and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are capable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment. This was the third simile that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. These are the three similes that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.

Now, we get to a very interesting part.

20. “I thought: ‘Suppose, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrain, and crush mind with mind.’ So, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrained, and crushed mind with mind. While I did so, sweat ran from my armpits. Just as a strong man might seize a weaker man by the head or shoulders and beat him down, constrain him, and crush him, so too, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrained, and crushed mind with mind, and sweat ran from my armpits. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the

painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

Now, I want to go to another sutta, number twenty (MN-20, Vitakkasanṭhāna Sutta), and this is called; “The Removal of Distracting Thoughts.” And you just heard that the Buddha said that this doesn’t work, but in this particular sutta, it says:

7. (v) “If, while he is giving attention to stilling the thought-formation of those thoughts, there still arise in him evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion, then, with his teeth clenched and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, he should beat down, constrain, and crush mind with mind. When, with his teeth clenched and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, he beats down, constrains, and crushes mind with mind, then any evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion are abandoned in him and subside.

Doesn’t sound quite right, does it? Now, this particular sutta is very much liked in Burma, and it is very much suggested that you do, when you have some very strong hindrances arising, that you clench your teeth, and push your tongue against the roof of your mouth, and crush mind with mind, and they suggest that fairly often. Now that doesn’t get rid of a hindrance. It doesn’t stop the hindrance from coming back and causing the same kind of problem over and over again. It just causes your body to be painful, and unlike what the Buddha was saying, it didn’t disturb his mind, this does disturb your mind if you haven’t got the same kind of powers that the Buddha had, the same kind of concentration. So, this was added at another time, into this sutta.

ST: Which sutta is this again?

BV: Twenty. It's called "The Removal of Distracting Thoughts," section number seven. And I kind of attribute this to the brahmins coming in and starting to change things around a little bit, or people that are practicing one-pointed concentration, they thought that this was a good thing to add into this particular sutta, so they just went ahead and put it in. But they got it from sutta number thirty-six (MN-36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta), where it decidedly says this is not a good practice to do.

21. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise the breathingless meditation.' So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth and nose. While I did so, there was a loud sound of winds coming out from my ear holes. Just as there is a loud sound when a smith's bellows are blown, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my nose and ears,

It's supposed to read "nose and mouth".

there was a loud sound of winds coming out from my ear holes. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

22. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.' So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, violent winds cut through my head. Just as if a strong man were splitting my head open with a sharp sword, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth,

nose, and ears, violent winds cut through my head. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

23. “I thought: ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’ So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so,

This particular practice is a brahmin practice by the way, and what they do is, they cut that little partition underneath your tongue, and they can swallow their tongue, and that stops the wind from coming out their mouth. And they plug up their ears real heavily with like cotton balls and that sort of stuff. And you can develop holding your breath for quite a long period of time, but the pains that come in the body are definitely not worth it.

While I did so, there were violent pains in my head. Just as if a strong man were tightening a tough leather strap around my head as a headband, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, there were violent pains in my head. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

24. “I thought: ‘Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.’ So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, violent

winds carved up my belly. Just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up an ox's belly with a sharp butcher's knife, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, violent winds carved up my belly. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

25. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.' So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, there was a violent burning in my body. Just as if two strong men were to seize a weaker man by both arms and roast him over a pit of hot coals, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, there was a violent burning in my body. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

26. "Now when deities saw me, some said: 'The recluse Gotama is dead.' Other deities said: 'The recluse Gotama is not dead, he is dying.' And other deities said: 'The recluse Gotama is not dead nor dying; he is an *arahat*, for such is the way *arahats* abide.'

27. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise entirely cutting off food.' Then deities came to me and said: 'Good sir, do not practise entirely cutting off food. If you do so, we shall infuse

heavenly food into the pores of your skin and you will live on that.’ I considered: ‘If I claim to be completely fasting while these deities infuse heavenly food into the pores of my skin and I live on that, then I shall be lying.’ So I dismissed those deities, saying: ‘There is no need.’

28. “I thought: ‘Suppose I take very little food, a handful each time, whether of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch soup or pea soup.’ So I took very little food, a handful each time, whether of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch soup or pea soup. While I did so, my body reached a state of extreme emaciation. Because of eating so little my limbs became like the jointed segments of vine stems or bamboo stems. Because of eating so little my backside became like a camel’s hoof. Because of eating so little the projections on my spine stood forth like corded beads. Because of eating so little my ribs jutted out as gaunt as the crazy rafters of an old roofless barn. Because of eating so little the gleam of my eyes sank far down in their sockets, looking like the gleam of water that has sunk far down in a deep well. Because of eating so little my scalp shrivelled and withered as a green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun. Because of eating so little my belly skin adhered to my backbone; thus if I touched my belly skin I encountered my backbone and if I touched my backbone I encountered my belly skin. Because of eating so little, if I defecated or urinated, I fell over on my face there. Because of eating so little, if I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair, rotted at its roots, fell from my body as I rubbed.

29. “Now when people saw me, some said: ‘The recluse Gotama is black.’ Other people said: ‘The recluse Gotama is

not black, he is brown.’ Other people said: ‘The recluse Gotama is neither black nor brown, he is golden-skinned.’ So much had the clear, bright colour of my skin deteriorated through eating so little.

30. “I thought: ‘Whatever recluses or brahmins in the past have experienced painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost, there is none beyond this. And whatever recluses and brahmins in the future will experience painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost, there is none beyond this. And whatever recluses and brahmins at present experience painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost, there is none beyond this. But by this racking practice of austerities I have not attained any superhuman states, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones. Could there be another path to enlightenment?’

At the time, it was thought that if you just eat one kind of food, and didn’t eat very much, that that food would cause you to become enlightened. So he tried it with all kinds of different foods, and as you can see it didn’t work. Now these kind of austerities is pretty much ignoring all of the painful feelings and that sort of thing. And it was thought that when you have these painful feelings, then you won’t have any sensual desire arise in you. That’s why they indulged in these kind of painful practices.

31. “I considered: ‘I recall that when my father the Sakyan was occupied, while I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of seclusion. Could that

be the path to enlightenment?’ Then, following on that memory, came the realisation: ‘That is the path to enlightenment.’

32. “I thought: ‘Why am I afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states?’ I thought: ‘I am not afraid of that pleasure since it has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states.’

33. “I considered: ‘It is not easy to attain that pleasure with a body so excessively emaciated. Suppose I ate some solid food — some boiled rice and bread.’ And I ate some solid food — some boiled rice and bread. Now at that time five monks were waiting upon me, thinking: ‘If our recluse Gotama achieves some higher state, he will inform us.’ But when I ate the boiled rice and bread, the five monks were disgusted and left me, thinking: ‘The recluse Gotama now lives luxuriously; he has given up his striving and reverted to luxury.’

34. “Now when I had eaten solid food and regained my strength, then quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of seclusion. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

35-37. “With the stilling of thinking and examining thought, I entered upon and abided in the second *jhāna*... With the fading away as well of joy... I entered upon and abided in the third *jhāna*... With the abandoning of pleasure and pain... I

entered upon and abided in the fourth *jhāna*... But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

What does that mean, “Did not invade my mind and remain?” He wasn’t attached to it; he just saw it as part of a process.

38. “When my collected mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability,

Now this is the description he gives any time someone gains, that is, gets to the fourth *jhāna*. This is why you’re considered a beginner meditator until you get to the fourth *jhāna*. Once you get to the fourth *jhāna*, now you’re considered an advanced student.

I directed it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives. I recollected my manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many aeons of world-contraction, many aeons of world-expansion, many aeons of world-contraction and expansion: ‘There I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I reappeared elsewhere; and there too I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I reappeared here.’ Thus with their aspects and particulars I recollected my manifold past lives.

39. “This was the first true knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute. But such happy feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

So what he was really doing here, when he was seeing his past lifetimes, he was developing his memory; and a lot of people talk about being able to be hypnotized so they can remember a few past lifetimes, and they think that’s really neat. I’ve heard people talk say, “Yeah, I can remember a hundred and twenty three past lifetimes.” You know, and everybody hears that and they go, “Oooo, aaah, that’s really something.” But when you start doing this specific practice, after you’ve gotten into the fourth *jhāna*, its possible that you can remember thousands, and thousands, and thousands, of them.

Not everyone does, however, each time one of those past lifetimes arises, you can see the kind of clothes you were wearing, what clan you were in, what other people around you looked like, what kind of food you ate, what kind of actions you did. And you can see yourself die from that past lifetime, and get reborn in another lifetime, and you can see sometimes that you’re reborn as an animal, depending, or you can be reborn in a deva-loka, or you can be reborn in a hell realm, it just depends on your past actions.

Now a lot of people have questions like, “What’s the big deal about seeing the past lifetimes? Why is this important?” But when you start seeing them over and over again, it starts answering questions about the way you are and the way you act in this lifetime. And you start seeing that you had some problems with relationships, and you could see in your past lifetimes how the

problems you have in your relationship this lifetime, you did the same thing to somebody else in a previous lifetime, and it's just coming back.

So you learn to develop your equanimity; you learn to develop your understanding of how your mind is working in this lifetime, and it's very helpful. Another thing that happens, is that you really, really begin to believe that karma is real because you see, I got thrown off a cliff, in whatever past lifetime, and it might have happened a few times, now you're deathly afraid of heights. Or you're very afraid of drowning in water, because you have drowned in water during a few of your lifetimes. You really lose doubt and come to see that karma is a *real* thing, and that's quite a useful insight!

40. “When my collected mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings.

One of the reasons you need to be in the fourth *jhāna* before you start working with your past lifetimes, is you need that equanimity to see some of the things that happened to you in past lifetimes. Some of it is really not very pleasant. Some of the things that you've done in the past lifetimes are just not very nice, quite often. Some of them can be very wonderful, but somebody can come along and torture you in one way or another in that lifetime and cause a lot of pain, so you need to have this balance of mind before you start looking at past lifetimes.

With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and reappearing, inferior

and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate. I understood how beings pass on according to their actions thus: ‘These worthy beings who were ill conducted in body, speech, and mind, revilers of noble ones, wrong in their views, giving effect to wrong view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in perdition, even in hell; but these worthy beings who were well conducted in body, speech, and mind, not revilers of noble ones, right in their views, giving effect to right view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a good destination, even in the heavenly realms.’ Thus with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and I understood how beings pass on according to their actions.

41. “This was the second true knowledge attained by me in the middle watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

And now we get to the interesting part of this.

42. “When my collected mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I directly knew as it actually is: ‘This is suffering;’ ... ‘This is the origin of suffering;’ ... ‘This is the cessation of suffering;’ ... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering;’ ... ‘These are the taints;’ ... ‘This is the

**origin of the taints;’... ‘This is the cessation of the taints;’...
‘This is the way leading to the cessation of the Taints.’**

Now, what we’re talking about here is, how he saw each of the links of Dependent Origination through the Four Noble Truths. When he’s talking about the taints, he’s directly talking about each one of those links.

With ignorance as condition, formations arise; with formations as condition, consciousness arises; with consciousness as condition, mentality-materiality arises; with mentality-materiality as condition, six sense bases arise; with six sense bases as condition, contact arises; with contact as condition, feeling arises; with feeling as condition, craving arises; with craving as condition, clinging arises; with clinging as condition, habitual tendency arises; with habitual tendency as condition, birth arises; with birth as condition, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair arise. That is this whole mass of suffering.

With the cessation of ignorance, comes the cessation of formations; with the cessation of formation, comes the cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness, comes the cessation of mentality-materiality; with the cessation of mentality-materiality, comes the cessation of the six sense bases; with the cessation of the six sense bases, comes the cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, comes the cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, comes the cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, comes the cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, comes the cessation of habitual tendency; with the cessation of habitual tendency, comes the cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, comes the cessation of ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, and pain, grief, and despair. This is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

And if you'll notice, it is, first, the cessation of ignorance. And what is ignorance?

ST: Ignorance of the Four Noble Truths.

BV: So now you know the Four Noble Truths completely, very well.

Now, it doesn't matter where on this wheel you start; you can start at craving, and then go to ignorance, and then go back up, it doesn't really matter. But craving is the weakest link in the Dependent Origination. And craving always manifests as tension and tightness in your mind and in your body. So, when you are able to recognize feeling, it doesn't matter what kind of feeling it is, pleasant, painful, or neither one of those. When that feeling arises and you relax, immediately, then the craving, the clinging, the habitual tendency, the birth, the ageing and death, the ignorance, the formations, the consciousness, mentality-materiality, six sense doors, and contact.

When you let go of that final craving, all of the rest will follow suit. And that is, seeing the taints, seeing the cause of the taints, seeing the ceasing of the taints, and seeing the way to the ceasing of the taints. Then what happens?

43. "When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated there came the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' I directly knew: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'

44. "This was the third true knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as

happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

45. “Aggivessana, I recall teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of many hundreds. Perhaps each person thinks: ‘The recluse Gotama is teaching the Dhamma especially for me.’ But it should not be so regarded; the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma to others only to give them knowledge. When the talk is finished, Aggivessana, then I steady my mind internally, quieten it, bringing it to stillness, and collected it on that same sign of collectedness as before, in which I constantly abide.”

“This can be believed of Master Gotama, since he is accomplished and fully enlightened. But does Master Gotama recall sleeping during the day?”

46. “I recall, Aggivessana, in the last month of the hot season, on returning from my almsround, after my meal I lay out my outer robe folded in four, and lying down on my right side, I fall asleep mindful and fully aware.”

“Some recluses and brahmins call that abiding in delusion, Master Gotama.”

“It is not in such a way that one is deluded or undeluded, Aggivessana. As to how one is deluded or undeluded, listen and attend closely to what I shall say.” — “Yes, sir,” Saccaka the Nigantha’s son replied. The Blessed One said this:

47. “Him I call deluded, Aggivessana, who has not abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; for it is with the non-abandoning of the taints that one is

deluded. Him I call undeluded who has abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; for it is with the abandoning of the taints that one is undeluded. The Tathāgata, Aggivessana, has abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; he has cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Just as a palm tree whose crown is cut off is incapable of further growth, so too, the Tathāgata has abandoned the taints that defile... done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising.”

It's like getting rid of the ignorance. When you get rid of the ignorance, then everything starts to change.

48. When this was said, Saccaka the Nigantha's son said: “It is wonderful, Master Gotama, it is marvellous how when Master Gotama is spoken to offensively again and again, assailed by discourteous courses of speech, the colour of his skin brightens and the colour of his face clears, as is to be expected of one who is accomplished and fully enlightened. I recall, Master Gotama, engaging Pūrana Kassapa in debate, and then he prevaricated, led the talk aside, and showed anger, hate, and bitterness. But when Master Gotama is spoken to offensively again and again, assaulted by discourteous courses of speech, the colour of his skin brightens and the colour of his face clears, as is to be expected of one who is accomplished and fully enlightened. I recall, Master Gotama, engaging Makkhali Gosāla... Ajita Kesakambalin... Pakudha Kaccāyana... Sañjaya Belatthiputta... the

And then he goes through all of the different teachers, even his own.

Nigantha Nataputta in debate, and then he prevaricated, led the talk aside, and showed anger, hate, and bitterness. But when Master Gotama is spoken to offensively again and again, assailed by discourteous courses of speech, the colour of his skin brightens and the colour of his face clears, as is to be expected of one who is accomplished and fully enlightened. And now, Master Gotama, we depart. We are busy and have much to do.” — “Now is the time, Aggivessana, to do as you think fit.” Then Saccaka the Nigantha’s son, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s words, got up from his seat and departed.

And what that actually means is he thought it was a great talk, but he wasn’t convinced, but he did learn quite a bit from that.

Now, when the Buddha was doing all of his fasting, his golden skin turned black. And quite often, especially in Thailand, you’ll see Buddha images sitting, and they’re black images, and the body is a skeleton, and it always makes you think of how nice it was that he had the patience to go through something like that so we didn’t have to.

There’s other suttas that, it really gets disgusting with some of the things, some of his practices that he did while he was an ascetic, you know, like lying on nails and things like that. But it wasn’t only that, it was he was eating his own feces and drinking his own urine until it disappeared. And then he was following a calf around that was still suckling on the mother, and when the calf would go to the bathroom, he would catch it and eat that. I

mean, he was doing all of the weirdest things, and went as far as you possibly can, to prove that this is not the way.

He was hoping to get enlightenment because they said that that's the way to get enlightenment, but he went as far as anyone could possibly go with that practice, and proved that it didn't work, just like he did with the meditation of one-pointed concentration. And that's why he came up with the middle path: these extremes don't work; these lapses and getting into your sensual pleasures don't work; there's a way in the middle that does work.

An awful lot of people that I met in Asia, they were deathly afraid of pleasurable things because they were afraid they'd become attached, so they became attached to being attached, and they suffered greatly because of it.

I've been to too many retreats where the stress was very, very strong on having painful feeling arise, and then putting your attention in the middle of it, so you can see the elements. And one of the things I noticed when I was doing it was how tight my mind was when a painful feeling arose.

Now, finally I got to a place where my mind was in a state of balance, kind of, but it's not the same kind of balance that we have with what we're practicing here. And then if a pain arose, my mind wasn't shaken by it, and I could put my attention in the middle of it. And then I got to a place where the pain wouldn't arise, no matter how weirdly I sat.

I tried to make pain come up, and I actually went to my teacher and complained because I didn't have any pain. Now, if that's not weird I don't know what is!

And you have to back up just a little bit because not all of sutta twenty (MN-20, Vitakkasanṭhāna Sutta) is incorrect. The first two parts of it are quite correct, but you have to know and understand what he was talking about to really grasp it. But this practice, the way that the Buddha was teaching and if we practice the way the Buddha's teaching, it is immediately effective. And it doesn't take three or four or five years to figure out exactly how to do it; you can do it in one retreat. And this can be taken into your life and practiced, and I encourage you very strongly to do that as much as you possibly can.

And the whole thing that, I know it sounds really odd, but the more you smile, and the less you take things seriously when they arise, the more balance you have in your mind, so you can see when your mind starts to get serious and get heavy, and you can recognize very clearly that "I am that, I am this" whatever seriousness it is; this sadness, this dissatisfaction, this hatred, this anger, whatever it is. And when you recognize how much pain you're causing yourself because of that tight mind, and identifying with it, when you laugh with your mind for being so crazy, then "It's only this," and it's very easy to let it go. It's very easy to let it be, and it doesn't take up any more of your energy.

When somebody walks up to you, and they're angry, and they start giving you anger, you have a choice right then — either you take that anger, make it your own, and then throw your anger back at them, or not. Now when you're very much aware, you see somebody that has anger, you allow them the space to have their anger, this is compassion, and then you start loving them. In your mind you start radiating loving-kindness to them. Their anger will do one of two things: either it will dissipate completely, and then you can find out what the real problem is and talk very nicely to

each other, or they will walk away mumbling to themselves. It takes two to tango.

But if you take their anger and make it yours, and then you get done with your war with each other, because that's what it really is, what do you think about when they walk away? What I said, and what they said, and what I should have said, and I'm right, and they're wrong, there's no question about it. And then, just like it was on a tape deck, comes up again, same order, same words. Any time you see repeat thoughts, that means that there's an attachment, and there's identification with those thoughts and those feelings as being mine personally. So if you don't catch it the first time, catch it the second time, and laugh with it and let it go because it's nothing. It really isn't important.

What is important is being happy. Not discouraged, not upset because somebody said this or that. Who cares what they said? If they said it when they were angry, they probably didn't mean it in the first place. So you have to be able to let that go. And that leads directly to your own happiness and well being. What you put out into the world, will come back at you. If you put anger out into the world, there's more anger that will come back.

If you put happiness out in the world, you're going to see a lot more people smiling; you're going to see how people have a light mind, and how much easier life is. Then life turns into a real fun game, and it's ok for life to be a game. It's preferable for life to be fun and interesting, and happiness to just come through you all the time. The more we can do that, the more contented we become. The more contented we become, the more spiritually advanced we become. That's the way it works. And it's our choice, every time, it's our choice, either to bite into somebody else's anger, or bite into

your own anger, or your own dissatisfaction, and start spreading that, or not, it's your choice.

When you're practicing harmonious communication, that means you stop beating yourself up for not being perfect, for making mistakes, for not having things be the way you want them to be, and you start loving yourself, and accepting yourself, and start having more fun in the present moment.

Then you become incredibly dynamic in whatever you're doing. You become very efficient with whatever you're doing because you don't have all of these thoughts pulling you away. You don't have that restlessness making you think about something else while you're trying to do this, and making mistakes while you're doing this because you're thinking of that.

The more we can keep with smiling and having fun, and not taking things seriously, the easier it is to sit with your meditation, the easier it is to have insights into the true nature of things, because you're not blocking it with the negative energy that you create for yourself. There's nobody out there that causes your pain. You have the choice either to accept that pain or not, and you don't need to.

The more you smile, the more you have fun with what you're doing in the present moment, the easier it is to see how mind's attention moves from one thing to another. And with that comes knowledge and vision, and then wisdom. That's the whole point of doing the meditation. It's not to gain some supernormal powers, it's not to gain deep concentration, it's to gain understanding in how we cause our own suffering and "don't do that anymore!" And what was it?

What you don't think and don't ponder on doesn't come up. We have to be the example so other people can learn from that. So that means we have to learn how to smile all the time.

Ok, any other comments or questions?

ST: The mundane *Nibbāna* you talk about that comes right after releasing the craving?

BV: Yes?

ST: By releasing the craving, there's release?

BV: Yes.

ST: And a feeling of...

BV: Well, clarity. There's no thoughts interfering with what you're observing any more, no doubts.

ST: Then there is joy that arises?

BV: Not every time, but it can after you've let go of some kind of attachment. Then that relief and the different kinds of joy can arise, and then the tranquillity.

ST: But not every time...

BV: There is a sense of relief every time you let go of the craving. But to me, when I see my mind letting go of the craving, I see that there's a little bit of relief, and that turns into more, kind of a peaceful observation.

In the Mahavagga there is a statement, and it says "A person can see one or all of the three characteristics without ever seeing Dependent Origination. But, when one sees Dependent Origination they always see the three characteristics." It's like, seeing the three characteristics just by themselves, but when you see Dependent

Origination with the three characteristics, it's a deeper looking, it's a deeper seeing.

When Buddhadasa would give a talk, and he did this all the time, he talked about suffering, he talked about the cause of suffering, he talked about the way to get out of the cause of suffering, and the cessation of the suffering. He did the Four Noble Truths, but he changed the last two around. And every time you let go of craving, you're practicing the entire Eightfold Path at that time. So, when you let go of the craving and you relax, and there's no tension and tightness, that is the cessation.

MN-9: Right View (Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta)

A sutta which expounds in sixteen ways what “a man of right view” is. There are to be heard in the Buddhist world confused and vague voices which proclaim that everyone is free to believe what they like in Buddhism. This amounts to saying that there is no such thing as Right View in the Buddha’s Teachings. But not only in this sutta but all through the various collections of discourses, one comes upon formulations of wrong views (with the reasons clearly stated why they are wrong), right view as taught by the Buddha, and anyone else who taught or teaches in agreement with Dhamma — this last leading on by practice and attainment to perfect view (the Pāli word sammā can mean either “right” or “perfect”). If one wishes to reach the perfect view of the arahat, then it is necessary to know, and to put one’s knowledge into practice, what right view is. One should know these various formulations of right view so that when one meets situations in one’s own life where they apply, one can use them. And one should know them clearly so that if asked: “What is right view about the Four Noble Truths?” one can answer readily. Of course, the extent to which one can explain any point of Dhamma will depend not so much upon one’s learning as upon one’s practice. Learning piles up facts, but does not clear the mind as practice does. These aspects of right view become clear to those who practice moral conduct, meditation, and have grown in insight-wisdom, and the more they practice the greater will their understanding be. Initially though, one should go through these sixteen headings one by one — the profitable and unprofitable, nutriment, the Four Noble Truths, ageing and death, birth, being, clinging, craving, feeling, contact, the sixfold base, name and form, consciousness, formations, ignorance, taints, and ask oneself: “Do I know what is right view in this case?”

*Compilation of two talks presented by Venerable Bhante
Vimalaramsi on 24th August 2001 and 7th July 2007*

(The following section is from a talk given on 24th August 2001.)

BV: Now, the sutta tonight is called *Sammādiṭṭi* — Right View. The reason that I'm reading this is because it has Dependent Origination in it.

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There the venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks thus: "Friends, Monks." — "Friend," they replied. The venerable Sāriputta said this:

2. "One of right view, one of right view,' is said, friends. In what way is a noble disciple one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma?"

"Indeed, friend, we would come from far away to learn from the venerable Sāriputta the meaning of this statement. It would be good if the venerable Sāriputta would explain the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from him, the monks will remember it."

"Then, friends, listen and attend closely to what I shall say."

"Yes, friend," the monks replied. The venerable Sāriputta said this:

This is what they called each other during the time of the Buddha. They didn't have a hierarchy of saying: Bhante, Reverend Sir, to a senior monk, and *Āvuso*, or Friend, to a junior monk. They just all called each other Friend.

This little simple statement that says, "listen and attend closely to what I shall say" is really a good way of having you settle your mind and let go of any distractions. The closer you listen to this, the deeper your understanding will become. So this is real

important that you listen with your whole mind, not asking questions right now, just listening to the sutta.

3. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands the unwholesome and the root of the unwholesome, the wholesome and the root of the wholesome, in that way he is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

4. “And what, friends, is the unwholesome, what is the root of the unwholesome, what is the wholesome, and what is the root of the wholesome? Killing living beings is unwholesome; taking what is not given is unwholesome; misconduct in sensual pleasures is unwholesome; false speech is unwholesome; malicious speech is unwholesome; harsh speech is unwholesome; gossip is unwholesome; covetousness is unwholesome; ill-will is unwholesome; wrong view is unwholesome. This is called the unwholesome.

5. “And what is the root of the unwholesome? Greed is a root of the unwholesome; hate is a root of the unwholesome; delusion is a root of the unwholesome. This is called the root of the unwholesome.

6. “And what is the wholesome? Abstention from killing living beings is wholesome; abstention from taking what is not given is wholesome; abstention from misconduct in sensual pleasures is wholesome; abstention from false speech is wholesome; abstention from malicious speech is wholesome; abstention from harsh speech is wholesome; abstention from gossip is wholesome; uncovetousness is wholesome; non-ill-will is wholesome; right view is wholesome. This is called the wholesome.

7. “And what is the root of the wholesome? Non-greed is a root of the wholesome; non-hate is a root of the wholesome; non-delusion is a root of the wholesome. This is called the root of the wholesome.

8. “When a noble disciple has thus understood the unwholesome and the root of the unwholesome, the wholesome and the root of the wholesome, he entirely abandons the underlying tendency to lust, he abolishes the underlying tendency to aversion, he extirpates the underlying tendency to the view and conceit ‘I am,’ and by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

9. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

10. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands nutriment, the origin of nutriment, the cessation of nutriment, and the way leading to the cessation of nutriment, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

11. “And what is nutriment, what is the origin of nutriment, what is the cessation of nutriment, what is the way leading to the cessation of nutriment? There are four kinds of nutriment for the maintenance of beings that already have come to be and for the support of those seeking a new existence. What four? They are: physical food as nutriment, gross or subtle; contact as the second; mental volition as the

third; and consciousness as the fourth. With the arising of craving there is the arising of nutriment. With the cessation of craving there is the cessation of nutriment. The way leading to the cessation of nutriment is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, harmonious perspective, harmonious imaging, harmonious communication, harmonious action, harmonious lifestyle, harmonious practice, harmonious attention, and harmonious collectedness.

12. “When a noble disciple has thus understood nutriment, the origin of nutriment, the cessation of nutriment, and the way leading to the cessation of nutriment, he entirely abandons the underlying tendency to greed, he abolishes the underlying tendency to aversion, he extirpates the underlying tendency to the view and conceit ‘I am,’ and by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

13. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

14. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

One thing I want to talk about a little bit is the cessation of suffering. Now, the word *Nibbāna* can be mundane, just “every day,” or it can be supra-mundane. The cessation of suffering,

every time you let go of a hindrance, every time you let go, and relax, and come back to your object of meditation, that is *Nibbāna*. That is the cessation of suffering. “Ni” means no more, “bana” means fire. So, you’re putting out the fire every time you let go of one of these hindrances that pulls you away. The analysing mind, the mind that takes great delight in thinking, is part of restlessness. And even though it might seem pleasurable and real necessary to do, it is a hindrance to your practice because it stops you from seeing what’s happening in the present moment, and you get caught in your head. You get caught in thinking and trying to figure out how every little thing works. Why is it like that? We don’t care why.

What we want to do with this practice is see how the process works. How does the delight and how does the restlessness arise? What do you do with that as soon as it arise? Because it’s a pleasurable feeling, it’s real easy to get sucked into it, and think of all the different little ways about this and how it can be used, but that does not lead to the cessation of suffering; that leads to more suffering. Especially U Pandita, in Burma... when I would go to a Dhamma talk, he gave interviews to every one of the foreign monks. And there was twenty or twenty-five of us there; there was a whole bunch of people there. And right before the Dhamma talk, he’d just sit back and kind of laugh and talk about, “This really is the Western Disease, this analysing, this trying to figure out how everything works. Too bad it doesn’t do anything for you.” It just causes you to want to do it more, and this is leading to psychology.

The Western psychology is about analyzing, it’s about figuring out why, but it doesn’t lead to the cessation of suffering; it leads to the continuation of suffering. So we have to let go of trying to analyze how everything works in a particular way. What we

want to do is see how it arises. What happens first? I'll give you a clue because I haven't done this before... there's a feeling that arises first. That's near to the start of that hindrance, of all hindrances. They all have a feeling that arises first, but what happens is — and there's more before that, and you'll get to see that too — but what happens is, that feeling arises and it's either pleasurable or un-pleasurable. And then there's some little tiny thoughts, little quiet thoughts, and then that makes that feeling get a little bigger, and the thoughts get a little bigger, and the feeling becomes big and the thoughts become big. And then you're out a thousand miles away, trying to figure out why this is the way it is.

The only way to get to the cessation of suffering when a hindrance arises is to see its true nature, to see how it arises. And as you become more familiar with the pattern of how it arises, you'll be able to recognize it more quickly. Now, some people have come to me and they said, "Well, there's some hindrance arises because there's a feeling in the head." There's a feeling before that; you have to look deeper. How do you look deeper? Take more interest in how your mind stays on your object of meditation. The more interested you are in that, the quicker you'll see mind start to wobble and go away. And as you become more familiar with that, you'll be able to let it go right then and your mind will rest on your object of meditation again. It won't turn into this thing that pulls you away and makes your mind think about this and that.

So we need to really take more interest in your object of meditation. Now, you'll notice every time your interest starts to wane a little bit and get a little bit weak, all of a sudden you get carried away by one of these hindrances, and it's painful. It hurts. The only way to let go of this suffering is by seeing it the

way it truly is. It's not a personal process, it happens because conditions are right. And what are those conditions? You're losing your attention on staying on your object of meditation, and then you get pulled away. So to be able to experience the *Nibbāna*, once you get pulled away, now you got some work ahead of you. You got to roll up your sleeves and get down to it, you have to be able to let it go and relax.

What good is all this thinking about anyway? Let it go. Relax the tightness caused by that, and the identification with that, because when you start analyzing, who's analyzing? "I am. I have to find out why this is like this. I have to see all of the different ramifications of this." Now, that "I" causes a lot of tightness and tension to arise in your body, especially in your head. So, the only way to get to the cessation of suffering is by letting go and relaxing, coming back to your object of meditation. And that cessation of suffering might last for just a short period of time before your mind gets pulled away again.

Every time you let go and you relax and come back to your object of meditation there is a little bit of relief. Letting go of the "like of analysing" is not particularly easy because we've been doing it our whole lives. That's what we've been taught to do, but when you start to realize, "This doesn't lead anywhere really; it doesn't lead to my happiness; it doesn't lead to the cessation of suffering; it only causes more suffering, so I should let it go." And then relax, letting go of that tightness that's caused by the distraction, and then gently re-directing your attention back to your meditation. "No, then I won't be able to think about it more. But the only way I can really understand something, is if I think about it." Not true. You understand by direct experience. You understand by letting go of this hindrance, as pleasurable as

it might be. It's still a hindrance and it still causes tension and tightness to arise.

So the more we let go of trying to analyze, and figure out why this is working this way, and start delving into your past, and these kind of things to try to bring up examples. All of this is wasted time, you're not meditating at that time. The only time you're meditating is when you recognize that and don't continue, but let it go — even if you're in mid sentence — doesn't matter. Relax, come back to your object of meditation. Try to see with more interest how your mind gets pulled away so you can recognize it more quickly and let go of it more easily. That is the only way to dig out the roots and the cause of the suffering. Everything else, it might be real exciting, it might be real fun, it doesn't lead to true freedom. Open up and let it go, relax, come back to your object of meditation. I wish I had a nickel for every time I said that. I'd be a wealthy monk. It's too simple. You remember I read that thing yesterday where the universe works on simplicity.

So we have to get down to our basics, the base of the practice, and that is — as much fun as it is to think — there's pain in thinking. Let it go, relax. That doesn't mean occasionally there won't be a thought that's an insight, but it happens one time and then it's gone, unless you attach on to it, "Oh, I got to think about this one now!" It doesn't work. We have to let it go. That's where the true freedom is; that's where the cessation of suffering is; that's where *Nibbāna* is. Let go of all the conditions. Let go of all the little tiny desires and the likes and the wants. Let go of even your aspiration, "I want to be able to get to this or that *jhāna* by the end of the retreat." All of those things are just more hindrances; it's more grist for the mill. The only way we can really progress with the practice is by letting go, opening up to

deeper and deeper levels, letting go of the slightest little tensions in your shoulders, in your back, in your head, but not spend your whole time doing that, just one time; come back to your object of meditation.

Over a period of time, all of these tensions and tightnesses will go away, and then there's only pure mind; there's only the pure observing mind. Even the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, you can be attached to because it is a pleasurable state. All these states of *jhāna* are pleasurable, but the more you like them and the more you want them, the less progress you're going to make in your meditation. That turns into a big mountain that you have to go over, or actually you have to start taking away shovel full by shovel full until it's flat.

So the more we can allow, without getting involved in any way, the more open mind becomes, the clearer mind becomes, the more alert your attention is. It's the continual opening and letting go, allowing, that's your home base. Always coming back to your meditation object; a strong interest on your meditation; not attached to it, but just real strong interest in how everything arises. How it's there, how it disappears, how it's always changing, how it's not yours. It's just there because conditions are right for it to be there. And you'll see how fast those conditions change when you start to analyze, when you start to think about. This practice is about continually opening, beyond anything you've ever opened before, little by little. And you'll see your mind goes deeper every time you open, and relax, and let go, and come back to your meditation.

You will experience *Nibbāna* many, many times — the mundane *Nibbāna* — until finally your mind gets the idea. And it does it automatically, and it happens to be supra-mundane. Can that happen in this lifetime? Yes. Can that happen in this retreat? Yes.

Can you make it happen? No way, but you can continually keep opening and softening, opening and allowing. You can keep letting all of your little likes and dislikes be, relaxing into that, coming back to your meditation.

15. “And what is suffering, what is the origin of suffering, what is the cessation of suffering, what is the way leading to the cessation of suffering? Birth is suffering; ageing is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering; not to obtain what one wants is suffering; in short, the five aggregates affected by clinging are suffering.

If the aggregates are not affected by clinging, that’s not suffering. What’s clinging? Analyzing.

16. “And what is the origin of suffering? It is craving, which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this and that; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being, and craving for non-being. This is called the origin of suffering.

17. “And what is the cessation of suffering? It is the remainderless fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go, and rejecting of that same craving. This is called the cessation of suffering.

18. “And what is the way leading to the cessation of suffering? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

And I’m not going to read through it again.

This is called the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

19. “When a noble disciple has thus understood suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering... he here and now

makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

Now we start to get into the Dependent Origination, and this is real interesting because he only goes from ageing and death backwards to ignorance. So what he's saying is right view is the cessation of suffering.

20. Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

21. "When, friends, a noble disciple understands ageing and death, the origin of ageing and death, the cessation of ageing and death, and the way leading to the cessation of ageing and death, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

22. "And what is ageing and death, what is the origin of ageing and death, what is the cessation of ageing and death, what is the way leading to the cessation of ageing and death? The ageing of beings in the various orders of beings, their old age, brokenness of teeth, grayness of hair, wrinkling of skin, decline of life, weakness of faculties — this is called ageing. The passing of beings out of the various orders of beings, their passing away, dissolution, disappearance, dying, completion of time, dissolution of the aggregates, laying down of the body — this is called death. So this ageing and this death are what is called ageing and death. With the arising of birth there is the arising of ageing and death. With the cessation of birth there is the cessation of ageing and death. The way leading to the cessation of ageing and death is just this Noble Eightfold Path..."

23. “When a noble disciple has thus understood ageing and death, the origin of ageing and death, the cessation of ageing and death, and the way leading to the cessation of ageing and death... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

Moment-to-moment there’s birth/death. There’s the arising and then there’s the passing away. Moment-to-moment everything is in a state of flux, everything is changing. When you see Dependent Origination, you’re seeing the Four Noble Truths in every one of these different links. You’re seeing the cause of all of these things, and the cause is the one closest to it. Like ageing and death is generally the last stage of the Dependent Origination, but the cause of ageing and death is birth. If there’s no birth, there’s no ageing and death. Ok?

24. Saying, “Good, friend,” the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

25. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands birth, the origin of birth, the cessation of birth, and the way leading to the cessation of birth, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

26. “And what is birth, what is the origin of birth, what is the cessation of birth, what is the way leading to the cessation of birth? The birth of beings in the various orders of beings, their coming to birth, precipitation [in a womb], generation, manifestation of the aggregates, obtaining the bases for contact — this is called birth. With the arising of being there

is the arising of birth. With the cessation of being there is the cessation of birth. The way leading to the cessation of birth is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

27. “When a noble disciple has thus understood birth, the origin of birth, the cessation of birth, and the way leading to the cessation of birth... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

So you see if there is no birth, there is no ageing and death. If there is no being, there is no birth; there is no ageing and death.

28. Saying, “Good, friend,” the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

29. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands being, the origin of being, the cessation of being, and the way leading to the cessation of being, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

30. “And what is being, what is the origin of being, what is the cessation of being, what is the way leading to the cessation of being? There are these three kinds of being: sense-sphere being, fine-material being, and immaterial being.

Now, what he’s talking about is having a physical body as in the human body. A fine-material realm is the heavenly realms, the Deva-lokas, the Brahmā-lokas, the hell realms, the asura realms. Animal realm is part of the physical being too. So, that’s what he’s calling being. Now, one of the causes of being is your choice at the moment that something arises, whether you indulge in it

and have it come back over and over and over again — that is reacting — or you respond by seeing a distraction and opening up and letting it go. Ok?

With the arising of clinging there is the arising of being. With the cessation of clinging there is the cessation of being. The way leading to the cessation of being is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

31. “When a noble disciple has thus understood being, the origin of being, the cessation of being, and the way leading to the cessation of being... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

So, if being doesn't arise then birth doesn't arise. If birth doesn't arise, old age and death don't arise.

32. Saying, “Good, friend,” the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

33. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands clinging, the origin of clinging, the cessation of clinging, and the way leading to the cessation of clinging, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

34. “And what is clinging, what is the origin of clinging, what is the cessation of clinging, what is the way leading to the cessation of clinging? There are these four kinds of clinging: clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views,

Analyzing.

clinging to rules and observances,

Rites and rituals.

and clinging to a doctrine of self.

Now, this is all “thinking about,” all of these different things. So instead of saying clinging, let’s change that and read it again.

“There are these four kinds of thinking: thinking of sensual pleasures, thinking of views, thinking about rules and observances, and thinking about the doctrine of self.”

With the arising of craving there is the arising of clinging. With the cessation of craving there is the cessation of clinging. The way leading to the cessation of clinging is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

35. “When a noble disciple has thus understood clinging, the origin of clinging, the cessation of clinging, and the way leading to the cessation of clinging... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

So if there is no clinging, there is no being. Don’t have to make a choice anymore. If there is no being, there is no birth. If there is no birth, there is no ageing and death.

36. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

37. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands craving, the origin of craving, the cessation of craving, and the way leading to the cessation of craving, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

38. “And what is craving, what is the origin of craving, what is the cessation of craving, what is the way leading to the cessation of craving? There are these six classes of craving: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for odours, craving for flavours, craving for tangibles, craving for mind-objects. With the arising of feeling there is the arising of craving. With the cessation of feeling there is the cessation of craving. The way leading to the cessation of craving is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

39. “When a noble disciple has thus understood craving, the origin of craving, the cessation of craving, and the way leading to the cessation of craving... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

So, every time one of the sense doors arises, there's feeling and then there's craving. And what is the craving? It manifests as tightness; it manifests as tension in your body; it manifests as the identification with whatever sense door arises, “This is me. This is mine. This is who I am.” Now, you notice it said something about mind-objects as being one of the sense doors. So that means every time there's a thought, right after that thought there's a feeling, and then the craving arises.

The only way you can have the cessation of craving is by opening up and allowing it to be, and relaxing, letting go of that tightness, that manifestation of craving. And you've heard me say it many times before: when you let go of that tightness, you feel open and then your mind takes a little step down and becomes very calm. There's no thoughts; there's only pure awareness, and you bring that pure awareness back to your object of meditation. And this is the major difference between one-pointed concentration and tranquillity. One-pointed concentration, you can let go of one of the

six sense doors, but immediately you come back to your object of meditation. It doesn't matter whether it's moment-to-moment concentration or absorption concentration. You do it in the same way. So you bring back this subtle ego belief and craving back to your object of meditation.

Because of that one small thing, it will stop anyone from attaining *Nibbāna*, the true *Nibbāna*, the supra-mundane *Nibbāna*. Just by letting go of that little tightness, that little tension and relaxing, and bringing that pure mind back to your object of meditation, that opens the way for you to have a completely unattached mind. And with that unattached mind, *Nibbāna* can occur, and it can occur at any time once you start getting into the *jhānas*. But that subtle letting go is absolutely necessary because that's where the manifestation of "I am that" starts.

That's why, when you have so many different people that might be brilliant meditators, start talking about the ego, and they always talk about, "You got to let it go." They're talking in such general terms, and such gross terms, and people have such a different idea of what ego is. Ego is the thing that binds everything together and causes all of the suffering; it manifests as craving. So, opening and letting go, not continually opening and letting it go if that tightness doesn't go away. Just one time; you're distracted, let go; relax one time; come back to your object of meditation. Because you weren't able to let it go, you'll bounce back and forth with this until you do let it go, and when you do let it go then your mind becomes more clear, more bright, and you go deeper into your meditation.

The practice of loving-kindness is really brilliant because when you're radiating loving-kindness, and you're staying on the object of meditation with interest, there's no tightness, there's no tensions, there's only the opening up and expanding. But as

soon as there's a little bit of disturbance, and that little, sneaky tension and tightness comes up first and then it starts causing all of these other things to arise, now you have to work until you can let it go and get back to this pure state. There's no other way. And this is the teaching of the Buddha.

This is why it's such an incredibly brilliant way of mental development; and that's how you start following the Noble Eightfold Path completely, by getting into the *jhānas*. The last factor in the Eightfold Path is always translated as right concentration, but it makes me cringe using that word because it's so misunderstood. You are developing a kind of concentration, but it's a tranquil concentration, it's not one-pointed.

The thing that makes concentration one-pointed is bringing back that subtle ego tightness and belief, back to your object of meditation, and then your mind goes very deep, but it also suppresses a big part of your personality. With the tranquility meditation, that opening and relaxing, letting go, there is no suppression of anything. There's only complete loving acceptance and openness, and complete relaxation in your body, in your mind, and with that mind, that pure mind, that's not clouded by any kind of disturbance, that is how you will be able to experience *Nibbāna*, the supra-mundane *Nibbāna*.

So if you don't have any craving then you won't have any clinging, and if you don't have any clinging then there's no being, and without any being there's no birth, and without birth there's no death and old age. So you can see how this is right view because you have the Four Noble Truths with each one of these different parts of Dependent Origination, and Dependent Origination is the Four Noble Truths.

On the night that the Buddha became enlightened and the next day, he sat going forward only with Dependent Origination, and

then he sat going backwards only with Dependent Origination, and then he went forwards and backwards until he understood it very well. And this is the thing that when Ānanda came to him one day, he said, “Ah, Dependent Origination, it’s so simple, it’s so easy to understand.” The Buddha scolded him and he said, “This is not easy to understand; this is not simple. It takes a Buddha to come into existence to re-find the subtleness of the way mind and body work. It takes a Buddha mind to be able to see it so clearly, and then be able to explain it to other people, and with that explanation, many people become enlightened.”

40. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

41. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands feeling, the origin of feeling, the cessation of feeling, and the way leading to the cessation of feeling, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

42. “And what is feeling, what is the origin of feeling, what is the cessation of feeling, what is the way leading to the cessation of feeling? There are these six classes of feeling: feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, feeling born of nose-contact, feeling born of tongue-contact, feeling born of body-contact, feeling born of mind-contact. With the arising of contact there is the arising of feeling. With the cessation of contact there is the cessation of feeling. The way leading to the cessation of feeling is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

43. “When a noble disciple has thus understood feeling, the origin of feeling, the cessation of feeling, and the way

leading to the cessation of feeling... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

So with each one of the sense doors there is a feeling that arises, right after that craving arises; real close. And right after that, right on its heels, is that tightness, the tension, that arises in the mind. That’s what I’ve been calling the, “I like it, I don’t like it, mind,” and right after that there’s thinking about all the reasons why you like that or don’t like that, and therein lies the analyzing again. We have to let all of that go. You want to be able to have such strong interest on your object of meditation that you can see a feeling start to arise, and when it arises you can let go of it right then, and then there’s no tension and there’s no tightness. So this is starting to give you more and more an idea of the subtleness that I’m trying to teach you. This is not any gross state; there is very, very subtle movements of mind, and the more interest you take with your object of meditation, the more clearly you’ll be able to see that feeling arise. And when you see that feeling arise, you let go and allow, and your mind will just stay with your object of meditation. There won’t be a distraction, and this is how you purify your mind.

Ok, now we get to contact.

44. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

45. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands contact, the origin of contact, the cessation of contact, and the way leading to the cessation of contact, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

46. “And what is contact, what is the origin of contact, what is the cessation of contact, what is the way leading to the cessation of contact? There are these six classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact. With the arising of the sixfold base there is the arising of contact. With the cessation of the sixfold base there is the cessation of contact. The way leading to the cessation of contact is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

47. “When a noble disciple has thus understood contact, the origin of contact, the cessation of contact, and the way leading to the cessation of contact... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

48. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

49. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands the sixfold base, the origin of the sixfold base, the cessation of the sixfold base, and the way leading to the cessation of the sixfold base, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

50. “And what is the sixfold base, what is the origin of the sixfold base, what is the cessation of the sixfold base, what is the way leading to the cessation of the sixfold base? There are these six bases: the eye-base, the ear-base, the nose-base, the tongue-base, the body-base, the mind-base. With the arising of mentality-materiality there is the arising of the sixfold base. With the cessation of mentality-materiality there is the cessation of the sixfold base. The way leading to

the cessation of the sixfold base is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

51. “When a noble disciple has thus understood the sixfold base, the origin of the sixfold base, the cessation of the sixfold base, and the way leading to the cessation of the sixfold base... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

52. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

53. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands mentality-materiality,

Now mentality-materiality, that is the external object and the sixfold base, together. So you understand, “This is a cup.” You see that, because your eyes are in good working order. You see colour and form, and then perception arises, and you see it as a cup, but at this state, you’re just seeing it as colour and form.

(The following section is from a talk given on 7th July 2007.)

the origin of mentality-materiality, the cessation of mentality-materiality, and the way leading to the cessation of mentality-materiality, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

54. “And what is mentality-materiality, what is the origin of mentality-materiality, what is the cessation of mentality-materiality, what is the way leading to the cessation of

mentality-materiality? Feeling, perception, volition, contact, and attention — these are called mentality.

Right? Ok...

Feeling, perception, volition, contact, and attention — these are called mentality. The four great elements and the material form derived from the four great elements — these are called materiality. So this mentality and this materiality are what is called mentality-materiality. With the arising of consciousness there is the arising of mentality-materiality. With the cessation of consciousness there is the cessation of mentality-materiality. The way leading to the cessation of mentality-materiality is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

55. “When a noble disciple has thus understood mentality-materiality, the origin of mentality-materiality, the cessation of mentality-materiality, and the way leading to the cessation of mentality-materiality... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

56. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

57. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands consciousness, the origin of consciousness, the cessation of consciousness, and the way leading to the cessation of consciousness, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

58. “And what is consciousness, what is the origin of consciousness, what is the cessation of consciousness, what

is the way leading to the cessation of consciousness? There are these six classes of consciousness:

You can think of consciousness as potential because unless there's contact, there is no consciousness arising. Now, what they're talking about here, there is the ability for having the eye consciousness, the ear consciousness, and the rest up to arise, but it has to wait until there's contact.

eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. With the arising of formations there is the arising of consciousness. With the cessation of formations there is the cessation of consciousness. The way leading to the cessation of consciousness is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

59. "When a noble disciple has thus understood consciousness, the origin of consciousness, the cessation of consciousness, and the way leading to the cessation of consciousness... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

60. Saying, "Good, friend," the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

61. "When, friends, a noble disciple understands formations, the origin of formations, the cessation of formations, and the way leading to the cessation of formations, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

62. “And what is formations, what is the origin of formations, what is the cessation of formations, what is the way leading to the cessation of formations? There are these three kinds of formations: the bodily formation, the verbal formation, the mental formations. With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of formations.

What are the three kinds of formations? Body formation, verbal formation, and mental formation.

There are these three kinds of formations: the bodily formation, the verbal formation, the mental formation. With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of formations. With the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of formations.

What is ignorance? Not seeing and understanding the Four Noble Truths.

The way leading to the cessation of formations is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

63. “When a noble disciple has thus understood formations, the origin of formations, the cessation of formations, and the way leading to the cessation of formations... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

64. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced

They do a lot of delighting and rejoicing in this sutta, don't they?

in the venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend,

They keep on asking the same question over and over again.

might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

65. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands ignorance, the origin of ignorance, the cessation of ignorance, and the way leading to the cessation of ignorance, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

66. “And what is ignorance, what is the origin of ignorance, what is the cessation of ignorance, what is the way leading to the cessation of ignorance? Not knowing about suffering, not knowing about the origin of suffering, not knowing about the cessation of suffering, not knowing about the way leading to the cessation of suffering — this is called ignorance. With the arising of the taints there is the arising of ignorance. With the cessation of the taints there is the cessation of ignorance. The way leading to the cessation of ignorance is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

67. “When a noble disciple has thus understood ignorance, the origin of ignorance, the cessation of ignorance, and the way leading to the cessation of ignorance... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

68. Saying, “Good, friend,” the monks delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then they asked him a further question: “But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma?” — “There might be, friends.

69. “When, friends, a noble disciple understands the taints, the origin of the taints, the cessation of the taints, and the way leading to the cessation of the taints, in that way he is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

70. “And what are the taints, what is the origin of the taints, what is the cessation of the taints, what is the way leading to the cessation of the taints? There are these three taints: the taint of sensual desire, the taint of being, and the taint of ignorance. With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of the taints. With the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of the taints. The way leading to the cessation of the taints is just this Noble Eightfold Path...

71. “When a noble disciple has thus understood the taints, the origin of the taints, the cessation of the taints, and the way leading to the cessation of the taints, he entirely abandons the underlying tendency to lust, he abolishes the underlying tendency to aversion, he extirpates the underlying tendency to the view and conceit ‘I am,’ and by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

This is what the venerable Sāriputta said. The monks were satisfied and delighted in the venerable Sāriputta’s words.

So, that’s exactly how Dependent Origination works; exactly, precisely, can’t get any closer than that. And the trick is to be able to see it for yourself, and to understand it because that is the way that you attain *Nibbāna*, through the understanding how this whole process works. I know there are some people that teach

impermanence, suffering, and not-self is the way to attain *Nibbāna*, but you can see one or all of those links without ever seeing Dependent Origination. But when you see Dependent Origination, you always see these links. So, it's a real interesting phenomena to be able to delve deeper in your practice, can see how the process works and to be able to catch it more and more quickly, and more and more easily, as your mind gets more and more peaceful. See, one of the things that happens when we start talk about *Nibbāna*, that's the big cloud in the sky everybody's reaching for, but you will have the opportunity to attain *Nibbāna*, and that is called "gaining path knowledge." But the real personality change doesn't occur until you have fruition knowledge, and fruition knowledge is again... seeing the cessation of perception and feeling, seeing Dependent Origination arise and pass away again, and then having another experience of *Nibbāna*, and that's called the fruition. When you talk about the good qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and the *Saṅgha*; when you're talking about the kind of individuals that are worthy of gifts and veneration, there are these eight kinds of individuals. That is, *sotāpanna* and *sotāpanna* with fruition, *sakadāgāmī* and *sakadāgāmī* with fruition, *anāgāmī* and *anāgāmī* with fruition, *arahat* and *arahat* with fruition. It might happen fast for you, it might happen slow, it might be a few years before you get to the fruition. Now, there is a sutta that talks about this and the importance of... if you have this attainment you need to keep your precepts very, very closely, you don't go back into the way you used to be or you can lose the attainment.

ST: So, it's not promised?

BV: Not until there's the fruition.

So, when you jump in the stream you don't automatically come out the other side. You have to go with the flow and the flow is always seeing Dependent Origination, seeing how it works all the

time in all situations, and seeing how everything really, truly is impermanent and impersonal. So, even though you have the attainment of *Nibbāna*, you still have some work to do. And one of these days I'll go through the sutta and show you. So, you go through some slight change at first, yes you do, and when you get it you walk around smiling for awhile and it's really quite an interesting experience. And then as you start getting used to it that's when your work really needs to take off. And how fast you get to the fruition is entirely up to you, and how serious you are with seeing how Dependent Origination works and the realisations that come along with that; they're pretty amazing. But if you say, "Well, I'm just going to go back and get back into my old lifestyle," then you can pretty much kiss off that attainment. But I've seen these kind of things happen, I've seen people say, "Well, it doesn't matter whether I break these precepts or not. I've already attained this. It doesn't matter whether I give in to my lust and my hatreds and all of this because I'm already attained." And that's a major problem.

Ok, let's share some merit.

MN-43: The Greater Series of Questions and Answers (Mahāvedalla Sutta)

Here are two of the most eminent arahats discussing Dhamma. You might ask: “Well, if they are arahats, how come they are talking about such easy topics? They’re only defining pānā (understanding), instead of discoursing on deep dhammas!” It should be understood that each of these arahats had some unenlightened pupils with him and that the basic questions at the beginning are for their benefit. And if you want deep dhammas, then the sutta later on (MN-44, Cūḷavedalla Sutta) progresses to them, but the points of view of the reader nowadays and those bhikkhus then are quite different. They were hearing enlightened Teachers speak Dhamma, the Dhamma that came from their own hearts. Moreover, they heard it having practised intensively and thus had the possibility of enlightenment while sitting and listening intently. But now if one reads this account of a Dhamma conversation, it will not come to life, unless one’s heart is ready to know that Dhamma in oneself.

Presented by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi on 13th October 2005 at the Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center

BV: The discourse tonight is “The Greater Series of Questions and Answers.”

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattḥī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park.

Then, when it was evening, the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita rose from meditation, went to the venerable Sāriputta, and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and

amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and said to the venerable Sāriputta:

2. “One who is unwise, one who is unwise’ is said, friend. With reference to what is this said: ‘one who is unwise?’”

“One does not wisely understand, one does not wisely understand,’ friend; that is why it is said, ‘one who is unwise.’ And what doesn’t one wisely understand? One does not wisely understand, ‘This is suffering;’ one does not wisely understand: ‘This is the origin of suffering;’ one does not wisely understand: ‘This is the cessation of suffering;’ one does not wisely understand: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ ‘One does not wisely understand, one does not wisely understand,’ friend; that is why it is said, ‘one who is unwise.’”

Saying: “Good, friend,” the venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta’s words. Then he asked him a further question:

3. “One who is wise, one who is wise’ is said, friend. With reference to what is this said: ‘one who is wise?’”

“One wisely understands, one wisely understands,’ friend; that is why it is said, ‘one who is wise.’ What does one wisely understand? One wisely understands, ‘This is suffering;’ one wisely understands: ‘This is the origin of suffering;’ one wisely understands: ‘This is the cessation of suffering;’ one wisely understands: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’”

Ajahn Sumedho wrote an article in one of his books about the Second Noble Truth, and letting go. And it was quite an interesting article. And it just so happens that we agree very much. The only extra step that I would have put in that article

was, “After letting things be the way they are, relaxing and coming back to your object of meditation.” That’s the only thing I would add. That extra step seems to be very elusive to other people that are teaching, and I don’t understand why. It’s so plain in the suttas that you tranquillise on the in-breath and you tranquillise on the out-breath. And any time you ask a teacher, “Well, is that the way you’re teaching?” And they say, “No, it’s not.” And then I ask, “Well, why?” — “Well, because I’m doing this.” But that extra step is the one key ingredient to the Buddha’s type of awakening. Because you notice, every time you relax, every time you let go of even the slightest tension, there’s a clear spot right after that. There’s just this pure observation mind. It’s not clouded with any thoughts; it’s not clouded with anything; it’s just this pure mind. And with that pure mind, you’re able to see and realize the third noble truth; there is no suffering right after you relax; there is no craving. And this is absolutely necessary to be able to do that enough that you finally turn it into a habit, and then you start having a clear mind all the time.

one wisely understands: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ ‘One wisely understands, one wisely understands,’ friend; that is why it is said, ‘one who is wise.’”

4. “‘Consciousness, consciousness’ is said, friend. With reference to what is ‘consciousness’ said?”

“‘It cognizes, it cognizes,’ friend; that is why ‘consciousness’ {repeats} that is why ‘consciousness’ is said. What does it cognize? It cognizes: ‘[This is] pleasant;’ it cognizes: ‘[This is] painful;’ it cognizes: ‘[This is] neither-painful-nor-pleasant.’ ‘It cognizes, it cognizes,’ friend; that is why ‘consciousness’ is said.”

5. “Wisdom and consciousness friend — are these states conjoined or disjoined? And is it possible to separate each of these states from the other in order to describe the difference between them?”

Interesting question.

“Wisdom and consciousness, friend — these states are conjoined, not disjoined, and it is impossible to separate each of these states from the other in order to describe the difference between them.

Now, let’s go back a little bit to the definition that I give you of wisdom. Wisdom is being able to see the process of Dependent Origination. You cannot develop that wisdom without cognizing it. You have to be...

ST: Cognizing it?

BV: Cognizing Dependent Origination. And that’s what they’re talking about here.

For what one wisely understands, that one cognizes, and what one cognizes, that one wisely understands. That is why these states are conjoined, not disjoined, and it is impossible to separate each of these states from the other in order to describe the difference between them.”

6. “What is the difference, friend, between wisdom and consciousness, these states that are conjoined, not disjoined?”

“The difference, friend, between wisdom and consciousness, these states that are conjoined, not disjoined, is this: wisdom is to be developed, consciousness is to be fully understood.”

Got it? We'll do it again, "wisdom is to be developed," developed by being able to see Dependent Origination, and "consciousness is to be fully understood."

ST: The cognizing part.

BV: Fully understood — what you are developing.

ST: Consciousness — that is part of Dependent Origination?

BV: Yes it is, but that is the potential for consciousness to arise when there is contact, when the conditions are right for it to arise. And it cognizes it as part of Dependent Origination. Developing the ability to see Dependent Origination is how you become wise.

One time I went to a church and this preacher got up and for twenty minutes he was ranting and raving about the necessity of developing wisdom. And I'm sitting there going, "All right! We have to develop our wisdom! Tell me how to do it!" And he just, well he got done and walked off. He didn't tell anybody how to do it! So it was all concepts.

It wasn't until I got into Buddhism and started realizing the depth of Buddhism that I started to understand really what wisdom is and how it can be developed. See, having a mind that is very still is great as long as you are alert. That alertness is absolutely necessary to be able to see the tiniest movements of mind begin. So your alertness, your observation power, your mindfulness, if you will, has got to be honed to a very fine degree. That's why I'm saying "What happened before that?" Because there is a process that's happening right before that. So what I'm trying to encourage you to do is have enough interest to be able to really see the minute details of the movement of mind before it gets up and runs away. You know what I mean?

Because if you become familiar with how your mind runs away with a hindrance, you become familiar with it, you start seeing it more and more quickly, and you're caught for less and less a period of time. And this is with your daily activities; this is with your worldly life. This is why you take a retreat, so that you can really see how the process works and you start catching things faster. When you catch things faster, you suffer less. The ranting, the raving, the emotional outbreaks — they can still happen — but they don't keep your attention for as long a period of time because you start seeing it and going, "Whoa, I am causing myself suffering. I don't need to do that anymore." And again this is one of the things that I like to teach is developing the sense of humour. Laughing at how crazy your own mind is. And it's ok to be crazy; we're all crazy until we become *arahats*, that's what the Buddha said. We should all be in an institute.

That kind of reminds me of a story of this one guy that was staying in Malaysia with the chief reverend, and this guy was really off the wall. He never washed his robes, and he had a definite "perfume" about him. And one day he said, "I want to go to Malacca, by bus." So chief reverend arranged to have someone give him the money to go get on the bus. And he got taken to the bus station and he stood right beside the bus, as it took off to go to Malacca. He forgot to get on. This guy was spaced out something fierce. But he was kind of an angry monk too. And chief reverend heard that he'd done that and he said, "This guy's really crazy." And whoever he said it to, went and told that monk, and this monk, he really became unhinged. And he came in to chief reverend and he was ranting and raving about, "How dare you call me crazy." And chief reverend looked at him and he said, "It's ok that you're crazy, everybody is until they get to be an *arahat*." And then he got the guy to laugh and "Oh, ok then

that's alright, you know." He's very skilful that way, he's great fun to be around, I miss him a lot actually.

7. "Feeling, feeling' is said, friend. With reference to what is 'feeling' said?"

"It feels, it feels,' friend; that is why 'feeling' is said. What does it feel? It feels pleasure, it feels pain, it feels neither-pain-nor-pleasure. 'It feels, it feels,' friend, that is why 'feeling' is said.

This is where a lot of the psychotherapists, they take the feeling and they start analysing it and all of these kind of things. Getting caught in the clinging and craving and why you're like that because you were three years old and your mom slapped your hand and all of that. Although it can be useful, is not necessary. It slows down your spiritual practice, the way the Buddha taught. When you see feeling as just pleasant, painful, neither painful-nor-pleasant, and you see that the part of Dependent Origination that arises right after that feeling comes up, is craving, and you become familiar with that process, then you start letting go more and more quickly, more and more easily, relaxing more. And your mind will become more and more still by itself, but there's still going to be some little residuals of our habitual tendencies that cause mindfulness to dip a little bit, and then the hindrance comes up. But as you become more and more familiar with how the process works, the length of time that you're caught becomes less and less, the more equanimity you have. And with that balance also comes the realization that everything is an impersonal process.

It was kind of funny when we went to New Mexico and, Leigh Brasington, when he started talking about feeling, he was so afraid of that word that he started calling it *vedanā* because he thought that everybody would start thinking that it was

emotional. But he didn't take the time to really explain what feeling is. Which was kind of interesting in itself.

8. “‘Perception, perception,’ is said, friend. With reference to what is ‘perception’ said?”

“‘It perceives, it perceives,’ friend; that is why ‘perception’ is said. What does it perceive? It perceives blue, it perceives yellow, it perceives red, and it perceives white.

Now they're just talking about colour here.

Perception has memory in it too. You see this, and you know it's a book. How do you know it's a book? Because your memory helps you to put the name on it.

‘It perceives, it perceives,’ friend; that is why ‘perception’ is said.

9. “Feeling, perception, and consciousness, friend — are these states conjoined or disjoined? And is it possible to separate each of these states from the others in order to describe the difference between them?”

“Feeling, perception, and consciousness, friend — these states are conjoined, not disjoined, and it is impossible to separate each of these states from the others in order to describe the difference between them. For what one feels, that one perceives; and what one perceives, that one cognizes. That is why these states are conjoined, not disjoined, and it is impossible to separate each of these states from the others in order to describe the difference between them.

Interesting. Consciousness is a part of wisdom, it's conjoined with wisdom, it's conjoined with feeling, it's conjoined with perception...

ST: Is feeling and perception conjoined?

BV: Yes, they are. You perceive a pleasant feeling; you perceive a painful feeling, and you cognize it as that.

10. “Friend, what can be known by purified mind-consciousness released from the five faculties?”

“Friend, by purified mind-consciousness released from the five faculties the base of infinite space can be known thus:

Five faculties, ok.

‘Space is infinite;’ the base of infinite consciousness can be known thus: ‘Consciousness is infinite;’ and the base of nothingness can be known thus: ‘There is nothing.’”

11. “Friend, with what does one understand a state that can be known?”

“Friend, one understands a state that can be known with the eye of wisdom.”

That means the clear mind that doesn’t have any craving in it; the pure mind. That’s how you really recognize these states for what they are. You kind of guess when you’re thinking about them, “Maybe I’m in that state, maybe I’m not.” But when you’re in that state and you cognize it, right at that moment, you don’t need to verbalize, “I’m in the realm of this or that”; you know it, and you see it with this pure mind.

12. “Friend, what is the purpose of wisdom?”

“The purpose of wisdom, friend, is direct knowledge, its purpose is full understanding, its purpose is abandoning.”

Ok?

13. “Friend, how many conditions are there for the arising of right view?”

“Friend, there are two conditions for the arising of right view: the voice of another and wise attention. These are the two conditions for the arising of right view.”

ST: The voice of another?

BV: If the Buddha didn’t come along and tell us, and the people of that time didn’t pay close attention to it, we wouldn’t have the Buddha’s teaching right now. And that’s the way it happens with generation after generation. The way that you truly learn is by listening to what a teacher is saying. Ah, let me rephrase that. The way you really understand things is listening to the way the guide is saying, what the guide is saying. I teach meditation, but I’m a guide. You come to me for answers, I’ll tell you flat out, “I don’t know. Go see for yourself. You tell me.” All my job is, is to help you when you start veering off the path, just ask you some questions and get you to start looking in more deeply at how things work. That’s all I do. Easy.

So the two conditions for the arising of right view are the voice of another, and in this case, although it’s not in Pāli, it is the Buddha’s voice you’re listening to. And as long as you keep your wise attention, you don’t start thinking about what’s happening at home, what’s happening over there, over here, you’re paying attention to what is happening in front of you, at the moment.

14. “Friend, by how many factors is right view assisted when it has deliverance of mind for its fruit, deliverance of mind for its fruit and benefit, when it has deliverance by wisdom for its fruit, deliverance by wisdom for its fruit and benefit?”

“Friend, right view is assisted by five factors when it has deliverance of mind for its fruit, deliverance of mind for its fruit and benefit, when it has deliverance by wisdom for its fruit, deliverance by wisdom for its fruit and benefit. Here, friend, right view is assisted by virtue, learning, discussion, serenity, and insight.

Do that one again...

Here, friend, right view is assisted by virtue, learning, discussion,

I think you might even be able to take the word “learning” and change that with “investigating.” That’s a good synonym for “learning.”

discussion, serenity, and insight. Right view assisted by these five factors has deliverance of mind for its fruit, deliverance of mind for its fruit and benefit; it has deliverance by wisdom for its fruit, deliverance by wisdom for its fruit and benefit.

15. “Friend, how many kinds of being are there?”

“There are these three kinds of being, friend: sense-sphere being,

Gross material form.

fine-material being,

Deva-lokas.

and immaterial being.”

Arūpa.

16. “Friend, how is renewal of being in the future generated?”

“Friend, renewal of being in the future is generated through the delighting in this and that on the part of beings who are hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.”

17. “Friend, how is renewal of being in the future not generated?”

“Friend, with the fading away of ignorance, with the arising of true knowledge, and with the cessation of craving, renewal of being in the future is not generated.”

That’s a pretty important statement — “with the fading away of ignorance,” and “with the arising of true knowledge” — that’s seeing Dependent Origination — “And with the cessation of craving, renewal of being in the future is not generated.” That’s it. That’s all you got to do.

18. “Friend, what is the first *jhāna*?”

“Here, friend, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters upon and abides in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with joy and pleasure born of seclusion. This is called the first *jhāna*.”

19. “Friend, how many factors does the first *jhāna* have?”

“Friend, the first *jhāna* has five factors. Here, when a monk has entered upon the first *jhāna*, there occur thinking, examining thought, joy, happiness, and unification of mind. That is how the first *jhāna* has five factors.”

20. “Friend, how many factors are abandoned in the first *jhāna* and how many factors are possessed?”

“Friend, in the first *jhāna* five factors are abandoned and five factors are possessed. Here, when a monk has entered

upon the first *jhāna*, sensual desire is abandoned, ill-will is abandoned, sloth and torpor are abandoned, restlessness and anxiety are abandoned, and doubt and perplexity are abandoned; and there occur thinking, examining thought, joy, happiness, and unification of mind. That is how in the first *jhāna* five factors are abandoned and five factors are possessed.”

You don't have any hindrance arise when you're in the *jhāna*. But as soon as that mindfulness wavers, even a little bit, it becomes weak, your attention becomes not as strong as it could be, the hindrance arises, you're not in the *jhāna* anymore.

21. “Friend, these five faculties each have a separate field, a separate domain, and do not experience each other's field and domain, that is, the eye faculty, the ear faculty, the nose faculty, the tongue faculty, and the body faculty. Now of these five faculties, each having a separate field, a separate domain, not experiencing each other's field and domain, what is their resort, what experiences their fields and domains?”

“Friend, these five faculties each have a separate field, a separate domain, and do not experience each other's field and domain, that is, the eye faculty, the ear faculty, the nose faculty, the tongue faculty, and the body faculty. Now these five faculties, each having a separate field,

You don't see with your tongue. That's what he's talking about.

a separate domain, not experiencing each other's field and domain, have mind as their resort, and mind experiences their fields and domains.”

22. “Friend, as to these five faculties — that is the eye faculty, the ear faculty, the nose faculty, the tongue faculty,

and the body faculty — what do these five faculties stand in dependence on?”

“Friend, as to these five faculties — that is, the eye faculty, the ear faculty, the nose faculty, the tongue faculty, and the body faculty — these five faculties stand in dependence on vitality.”

“Friend, what does vitality stand in dependence on?”

“Vitality stands in dependence on heat.”

“Friend, what does heat stand in dependence on?”

“Heat stands in dependence on vitality.”

“Just now, friend, we understood the venerable Sāriputta to have said: ‘Vitality stands in dependence on heat;’ and now we understand him to say; ‘Heat stands in dependence on vitality.’ How should the meaning of these statements be regarded?”

“In that case, friend, I shall give you a simile, for some wise men here understand the meaning of a statement by means of a simile. Just as when an oil-lamp is burning, its radiance is seen in dependence on its flame and its flame is seen in dependence on its radiance; so too, vitality stands in dependence on heat and heat stands in dependence on vitality.”

Want it again?

ST: The one about the oil-lamp.

“Just as when an oil-lamp is burning, its radiance is seen in dependence on its flame and its flame is seen in dependence on its radiance.”

BV: You don't have radiance without a flame.

ST: I'm trying to understand it.

BV: And you don't... blow, the light.

ST: Going out.

BV: Yeah.

ST: Radiating out.

BV: Right.

ST: And you don't have...

BV: You don't have the flame...

ST: You don't have radiance and if you don't have radiance then you can't see the flame.

BV: Right. Tricky.

23. "Friend, are vital formations things that can be felt or are vital formations one thing and things that can be felt another?"

"Vital formations, friend, are not things that can be felt. If vital formations were things that can be felt, then a monk who has entered upon the cessation of perception and feeling would not be seen to emerge from it. Because vital formations are one thing and things that can be felt another, Ah, let's try it again.

Vital formations, friend, are not things that can be felt. If vital formations were things that can be felt, then a monk who has entered upon the cessation of perception and feeling would not be seen to emerge from it.

ST: But the answer says to a state with the cessation of perception and feeling.

BV: Right, there is no feeling, there is no perception. Then he could never emerge from that.

ST: Because if vital formations...

BV: Because there are vital formations. In other words, the body is still alive, even though the consciousness has turned off.

ST: Right.

BV: And there's not necessarily any feeling, but when they emerge from that state, then the body is there still.

ST: And that's the vital formation.

BV: Right. That's what they're talking about here.

Because vital formations are one thing and things that can be felt another, a monk who has entered upon the cessation of perception and feeling can be seen to emerge from it."

24. "Friend, when this body is bereft of how many states is it then discarded and forsaken, left lying senseless like a log?"

"Friend, when this body is bereft of three states — vitality, heat, and consciousness — it is then discarded and forsaken, left lying senseless like a log."

25. "Friend, what is the difference between one who is dead, who has completed his time, and a monk who has entered upon the cessation of perception and feeling?"

"Friend, in the case of one who is dead, who has completed his time, his bodily formations have ceased and subsided, his verbal formations have ceased and subsided, his mental formations have ceased and subsided, his vitality is

exhausted, his heat has been dissipated and his faculties are fully broken up. In the case of a monk who has entered upon the cessation of perception and feeling, his bodily formations have ceased and subsided, his verbal formations have ceased and subsided, his mental formations have ceased and subsided, but his vitality is not exhausted, his heat has not been dissipated, and his faculties become exceptionally clear. This is the difference between one who is dead, who has completed his time, and a monk who has entered upon the cessation of perception and feeling.”

Now, I got into a pretty strong debate with a venerable monk in West Virginia, and he said, “The only time anyone can experience the cessation of perception and feeling, is if they are either an *anāgāmi* or an *arahat*.” And I showed him suttas that don’t agree with what he said, but he still told me that I was wrong. He said, “This is the Theravāda view, and if it’s the Theravādan view, then I can’t be a Theravādan.” Because the cessation of perception and feeling can happen for anyone when the conditions are right. And the cessation of perception and feeling is not the state of *Nibbāna*. It’s the state right before *Nibbāna*... not exactly right before. There’s the cessation of perception and feeling, when the perception and feeling come back up, you will be able to see very clearly all of the links of Dependent Origination. And because you see the links of Dependent Origination and you realize this to be absolutely true, “This is the way things work,” that realization is so deep that *Nibbāna* occurs; that understanding is so pure that *Nibbāna* occurs. So, and this is something that’s getting mixed up a lot within Theravāda Buddhism right now because they’re saying, “Well if you experience the cessation of perception and feeling, then that’s *Nibbāna*.” Technically it is not. That is not the state of *Nibbāna*. The state of *Nibbāna* occurs after the cessation of

perception and feeling fades away and you see Dependent Origination and realize it for yourself. And that's seeing and realizing the Four Noble Truths. Everything in Buddhism has to do with understanding. But people in this country, especially, are into the razzle-dazzle "Oh wow!" experience without having that deep understanding. And, "I want my enlightenment experience to happen and then I want to start going out and living my life the way I always wanted to live it." And it's slowing down a lot of progress because of that.

26. "Friend, how many conditions are there for the attainment of the neither-painful-nor-pleasant deliverance of mind?"

"Friend, there are four conditions for the attainment of the neither-painful-nor-pleasant deliverance of mind:

Talking about the fourth *jhāna*.

here, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, a monk enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. These are the four conditions for the attainment of the neither-painful-nor-pleasant deliverance of mind."

27. "Friend, how many conditions are there for the attainment of the signless deliverance of mind?"

You'll get it in a second.

"Friend, there are two conditions for the attainment of the signless deliverance of mind: non-attention to all signs and attention to the signless element.

That is the cessation of perception and feeling. And that also can be what happens in that process right after that which would be the complete deliverance of mind.

These are the two conditions for the attainment of the signless deliverance of mind.”

28. “Friend, how many conditions are there for the persistence of the signless deliverance of mind?”

“Friend, there are three conditions for the persistence of the signless deliverance of mind: non-attention to all signs, attention to the signless element, and the prior determination [of its duration]. These are the three conditions for the persistence of the signless deliverance of mind.”

When you become an *anāgāmī* or an *arahat*, you can sit in the cessation of perception and feeling. And before you go in and sit, you make a determination that, “I’m going to sit for five days, twelve hours, thirty-two minutes, and five seconds.” And you do. And you can sit for up to seven days. And it’s pretty impressive being around people that can do that.

You’ve met Dipa Ma, haven’t you? No, didn’t you? Powerful lady. Phew!

29. “Friend, how many conditions are there for emergence from the signless deliverance of mind?”

“Friend, there are two conditions for emergence from the signless deliverance of mind: attention to all signs and non-attention to the signless element. These are the two conditions for emergence from the signless deliverance of mind.”

30. “Friend, the immeasurable deliverance of mind,

What is the immeasurable deliverance of mind?

ST: Immeasurable?

BV: Boundless? The Brahmā Viharas... Brahmā Viharas.

the deliverance of mind through nothingness, the deliverance of mind through voidness, and the signless deliverance of mind: are these states different in meaning and different in name, or are they one in meaning and different only in name?"

"Friend, the immeasurable deliverance of mind, the deliverance of mind through nothingness, the deliverance of mind through voidness, and the signless deliverance of mind: there is a way in which these states are different in meaning and different in name, and there is a way in which they are one in meaning and different only in name.

31. "What, friend, is the way in which these states are different in meaning and different in name? Here a monk abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill-will. He abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with compassion...

He goes through the whole thing again.

He abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with altruistic joy... He abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he abides pervading the

all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with equanimity, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill-will. This is called the immeasurable deliverance of mind.

See, I was right!

32. “And what, friend, is the deliverance of mind through nothingness? Here, with the complete surmounting of the base of infinite consciousness, aware that ‘there is nothing,’ a monk enters upon and abides in the base of nothingness. This is called the deliverance of mind through nothingness.

33. “And what, friend, is the deliverance of mind through voidness? Here, a monk, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, reflects thus: ‘This is void of a self or of what belongs to a self.’ This is called the deliverance of mind through voidness.

34. “And what, friend, is the signless deliverance of mind? Here, with non-attention to all signs, a monk enters upon and abides in the signless concentration of mind. This is called the signless deliverance of mind. This is the way in which these states are different in meaning and different in name.

35. “And what, friend, is the way in which these states are one in meaning and different only in name? Lust is a maker of measurement, hate is a maker of measurement, delusion is a maker of measurement. In a monk whose taints are destroyed, these are abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Of all the kinds of immeasurable deliverance of mind, the unshakeable deliverance of mind is

pronounced the best. Now that unshakable deliverance of mind is void of lust, void of hate, void of delusion.

36. “Lust is a something, hate is a something, delusion is a something. In a monk whose taints are destroyed, these are abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Of all the kinds of deliverance of mind through nothingness, the unshakable deliverance of mind is pronounced the best. Now that unshakable deliverance of mind is void of lust, void of hate, void of delusion.

37. “Lust is a maker of signs, hate is a maker of signs, delusion is a maker of signs. In a monk whose taints are destroyed, these are abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Of all the kinds of signless deliverance of mind, the unshakable deliverance of mind is pronounced the best. Now that unshakable deliverance of mind is void of lust, void of hate, void of delusion. This is the way in which these states are one in meaning and different only in name.”

That is what the venerable Sāriputta said. The venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita was satisfied and delighted in the venerable Sāriputta’s words.

MN-44: The Shorter Series of Questions and Answers (Cūḷavedalla Sutta)

In this sutta there is a discussion between the bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā, an arahat, and her former husband, the lay disciple Visākha, who was a non-returner. As in sutta MN-43, Mahāvedalla Sutta, the topics discussed being with well known facts, but there is a difference in quality of knowing between that layman clad in white, seated in front of the bhikkhuni in yellow robes, and ourselves. If they talked about “embodiment” (equals five aggregates, khandha), then they knew from personal experience, or direct knowledge, what those aggregates were, their arising, cessation and the path thereto. But in our case, unless we have practiced vigorously, with a good Teacher, for a long time, it is unlikely that we know much about this subject, apart from what can be gathered from books. The danger of this is that having studied, become learned in the vinaya (Discipline) and the sutta (Discourses) we then think that we know it all. We are able to give learned talks upon Dhamma and cite all sorts of quotations, yet all that is the Buddha’s Dhamma, it is not our Dhamma. Learning Dhamma is a good thing only if it goes hand-in-hand with practice, but if it is learning isolated from practice then it becomes a danger to oneself. Just as the Buddha says: “A snake grasped by the middle or the tail is dangerous, twisting round it bites the arm or body of the person holding it. Why? Because it is wrongly grasped.” In the same way the unwise person grasps Dhamma for fame or gain, and so gets himself into much suffering. But with people like the arahat bhikkhuni of this sutta the Buddha was satisfied, for she had grasped Dhamma rightly.

Presented by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi on 23rd February 2007 at Dhamma Dena Vipassanā Center, Joshua Tree, California

BV: This is a rather deep sutta. So please pay attention closely. You can gain a lot of benefit from this.

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. Then the lay follower Visākha went to the bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā, and after paying homage to her, he sat down at one side and asked her:

2. “Lady, ‘identity, identity’ is said. What is called identity by the Blessed One?”

Now, this is a real interesting thing because Visākha and Dhammadinnā were married, they were husband and wife, and he was very wealthy; he's a business man. And then he started going and he started listening to the Dhamma talks given by the Buddha, and he would practice his meditations once in a while. And one day he was practicing his meditation, and he came home; always when he came home, Dhammadinnā would go out and greet him, and hug him and, and then they would go in, and they would eat together, and then they would go to bed.

Well this particular night, she went out to greet him, and he backed away from her giving him a hug, and then they ate together, and then they laid down. She laid down in the bed, and he got ready to go to sleep, and he laid down on the floor. And she thought that was kind of peculiar; he'd never done that before. So she got down on the floor, and as soon as she did that, he got up in the bed. And she's thinking, “Whoa, this is really strange. Have I done anything to cause him to be upset?”

So she started asking him and he said, “Well, I'm going to have to tell you that while I was meditating today, I became an *anāgāmi*,

and I don't want any kind of sexual activity anymore. So what I'm going to do is, I'm going to go and live at the monastery as a layman, but still live in the monastery, and I'm going to give you the house and give you all of everything in it, everything that you could possibly want, you can have, or we can live as brother and sister in the house, but we would have to have separate rooms."

So she started thinking about that, and she said, "Well, since you want to do that, would you object if I became a bhikkhuni?" And he said, "No." So she became a bhikkhuni, and she practiced meditation very ardently for a few months and became an *arahat*. So now, we have the husband is an *anāgāmī*, and the wife, was a wife, is now an *arahat*! And it's really... in Indian culture, men would never even consider bowing to a woman, but he had such respect for her that he did. And he occasionally would go and talk about the Dhamma with her, and this is one of those occasions.

"Lady, 'identity, identity' is said. What is called identity by the Blessed One?"

"Friend Visākha, these five aggregates affected by clinging are called identity by the Blessed One;

Now, this particular thing, when it's talking about the aggregates being affected by clinging, this is very accurate, not putting anything else in with that — may or may not be affected — because we're talking about identity right here. Anything that is affected by clinging, that means there's ego identification with that aggregate.

that is, the material form aggregate affected by clinging, the feeling aggregate affected by clinging, the perception

aggregate affected by clinging, the formations aggregate affected by clinging, and the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging. These five aggregates affected by clinging are called identity by the Blessed One."

Saying, "Good, lady," the lay follower Visākha delighted and rejoiced in the bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā's words. Then he asked her a further question:

3. "Lady, 'origin of identity, origin of identity' is said. What is called the origin of identity by the Blessed One?"

"Friend Visākha, it is craving, which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this and that; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being, and craving for non-being. This is called the origin of identity by the Blessed One."

This is a formula that's in the book very often, when they're talking about craving, and it always talks about delight and lust, but you have to also understand it is also talking about aversion and dislike, the pushing away. So craving is always either wanting it and pulling it to you, or pushing it away. I don't know why it doesn't have both of them in there, but it can be confusing if you don't understand that.

4. "Lady, 'cessation of identity, cessation of identity' is said. What is called the cessation of identity by the Blessed One?"

"Friend Visākha, it is the remainderless fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go, and rejecting of that same craving. This is called the cessation of identity by the Blessed One."

So what are we practicing whenever we practice the 6Rs? We're practicing the cessation of craving. When we have the cessation of craving, your mind becomes very clear, very bright, and very alert without any thoughts in it, and you're seeing things with a pure mind. This is a form of *Nibbāna*, but this is a mundane *Nibbāna*. Every time you practice the 6Rs and you let go of that craving, then that is the cessation that's talked about here, and you lose the personal identification. You're able to see things as a process rather than "This is me. This is mine. This is who I am." You're letting go of that, and you're seeing things the way they really are, as part of an impersonal process.

If you are chopping vegetables, or you do something and you miss and you cut, or you stub a toe, or you bang yourself in one way or another, the first thing that happens in mind is knowing that that happened. The next thing is the feeling arises right as that is occurring. Then there is the craving that arises and the thoughts about, "Oh, I shouldn't have done that. I wish I wouldn't have done that." Things like that; and your habitual tendency. When you see all of these different things arise, they arise because there was a condition that caused these things to be; there's a cause and effect. When you see them as individual parts, you see that there is no self involved in that. When you let go of the craving, you let go of that tension and tightness, and relax, there is no more personal identification with what arose, and you see it more and more clearly.

Now, why is it an impersonal process? Did you say and plan on, "I'm going to stick my finger right in front of that knife and cut the end of my finger off?" I don't think so. It happened because the conditions were right. Your finger got too close to the knife blade, knife blade went down, feeling arose, craving arose, clinging arose,

and habitual tendency arose. And it does it over and over again. If you get involved in your habitual tendency, quite often people wind up cursing in one way or another, wishing they hadn't done that. And that's when you take it personally. "I cut my finger. I don't like that."

When you let go of the craving, the finger is cut, now let's do something about it and take care of it, without getting involved in the story. Now you're seeing it as part of a process that's impersonal because you didn't ask it to arise, you can't control it once it has arisen. All you can do is relax, let it go. When the pain arises, start sending loving and kindness into the sensation. Now you're seeing it as an impersonal process. That's why this is called the cessation of identity by the Blessed One. Every time anything arises at any one of the sense doors there's contact, then there's feeling. In between the arising, and the feeling, and the craving, if your awareness is sharp enough, that's when you relax, and that's seeing this as part of a process. And it's much easier to let go and take care of whatever needs to be taken care of.

5. "Lady, 'the way leading to the cessation of identity, the way leading to the cessation of identity' is said. What is called the way leading to the cessation of identity by the Blessed One?"

"Friend Visākha, it is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, harmonious perspective, harmonious imaging, harmonious communication, harmonious movement, harmonious lifestyle, harmonious practice, harmonious observation, and harmonious collectedness." (Right view, right intention,

right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.)

6. “Lady, is that clinging the same as these five aggregates affected by clinging, or is the clinging something apart from the five aggregates affected by clinging?”

“Friend Visākha, that clinging is neither the same as these five aggregates affected by clinging nor is clinging something apart from the five aggregates affected by clinging. It is the desire and lust in regard to the five aggregates affected by clinging that is the clinging there.”

That’s either the liking or disliking of what arose, and the story, the words, the verbalization in mind.

7. “Lady, how does identity view come to be?”

“Here, friend Visākha, an untaught ordinary person, who has no regard for noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, who has no regard for true men and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, regards material form as self, or self as possessed of material form, or material form as in self, or self as in material form. He regards feeling as self, or self as possessed of feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling. He regards perception as self, or self as possessed of perception, or perception as in self, or self as in perception. He regards formations as self, or self as possessed of formations, or formations as in self, or self as in formations. He regards consciousness as self, or self as possessed of consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness. That is how identity view comes to be.”

8. “Lady, how does identity view not come to be?”

“Here, friend Visākha, a well-taught noble disciple, who has regard for noble ones and is skilled and disciplined in their Dhamma, who has regard for true men and is skilled and disciplined in their Dhamma, does not regard material form as self, or self as possessed of material form, or material form as in self, or self as in material form. He does not regard feeling as self, or self as possessed of feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling. He does not regard perception as self, or self as possessed of perception, or perception as in self, or self as in perception. He does not regard formations as self, or self as possessed of formations, or formations as in self, or self as in formations. He does not regard consciousness as self, or self as possessed of consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness. That is how identity view does not come to be.”

9. “Lady, what is the Noble Eightfold Path?”

“Friend Visākha, it is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, harmonious perspective, harmonious imaging, harmonious communication, harmonious movement, harmonious lifestyle, harmonious practice, harmonious observation, and harmonious collectedness.”

Harmonious perspective is seeing everything as being an impersonal process.

The harmonious imaging, we are continually pulling up images in our minds; what we like, what we don’t like, what we wish we had, what we don’t have. We pull up — say you stub your toe — at that moment your perspective is not a harmonious perspective because you start taking it personally, “This is my

toe.” And you have the image of disliking that feeling. Now, this is what it’s talking about here with the harmonious imaging.

The harmonious communication is not only your verbal communication, but your mental communication with yourself. And to be in harmony with our communication means that we have to develop more and more loving-kindness towards our self and towards everybody around us.

The harmonious movement, that’s called right action. The harmonious movement is being able to see how mind’s attention moves and how to recognize that movement.

Harmonious lifestyle is kind of an interesting thing because the texts always talks about right livelihood as being: not killing living beings, not using any poisons, not selling any poisons, not taking slaves; that’s right livelihood, not selling slaves. Now, what does that have to do with your meditation practice? Now, if you’ll remember, the first discourse that the Buddha gave, he talked about the Eightfold Path. These monks that he was teaching this to were very virtuous; they weren’t going to kill any living beings; they weren’t going to use any poisons or sell any poisons; they weren’t going to take slaves and sell them. It doesn’t make sense that this is a definition of right livelihood. So when we change the wording a little bit and we say harmonious lifestyle, now this is our practice of how we do our daily activities. With the harmonious communication taking place in our mind, and our harmonious movement of going from one place to another, it’s how we develop our habitual tendencies towards the wholesome. That makes a lot more sense than the standard definition of right livelihood. For laymen... yeah ok, I can see that definition if they’re not really doing any mental

development, but with any kind of mental development that doesn't make sense at all.

Now, when you're practicing with some traditions, they will tell you that right speech, right action, and right livelihood are part of morality. So you don't really need to practice these because you're doing a retreat right now. So it changes the Eightfold Path into a fivefold path because they're saying it doesn't really have anything to do with what you're doing right now because you're automatically practicing these. I have been to retreats where I've seen a lot of people not automatically practicing those. So when we start looking at the Eightfold Path as part of the meditation — and not a passive part and an active part of the meditation — but the whole Eightfold Path is active, then it starts to make more and more sense that you need to be very careful with your mind and practice this way, especially with the 6Rs, so that you are fulfilling the Eightfold Path and the intent of the Eightfold Path.

The next part is called harmonious practice. Now, this is what they call right effort too. And harmonious practice is recognizing that your mind has become distracted, letting go of that distraction, relaxing, re-smiling, bringing up a wholesome object — your object of meditation — and continuing on with your object of meditation. That's harmonious practice.

Then we have harmonious observation, and that is remembering to observe how mind's attention is moving moment-to-moment. As you go subtler and deeper into your meditation, it becomes real fun to be able to observe tiny little movements when they first start. And when you're able to see these — and relax right

then — then your mind is not going to get distracted away. It takes very sharp observation to be able to do that.

Now, the next part of the Eightfold Path is, they call it right concentration, but I shy away from the word “concentration” because, in this country, concentration always refers to one-pointedness of mind. And that is not quite the flavour of the kind of concentration that the Buddha was talking about. The Buddha was talking about developing your *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is a word that the Buddha made up to describe this particular kind of practice. It is not one-pointed concentration, it is the Tranquillity-*Vipassanā* that he was talking about.

When you practice one-pointed concentration, your mind stays on one thing. You can get real peaceful and calm with that, but you don’t really learn how mind’s attention moves when it’s stuck on one thing. So you’re not really seeing the Eightfold Path the way it was intended to. One-pointed concentration and the Tranquillity-*Vipassanā* are two different kinds of *jhāna*. The one-pointed concentration *jhāna*, your mind will go very deep, and because of the depth of the concentration, that concentration will not allow any disturbances or hindrances to arise. This is what the Buddha found when he first became a monk, and started practicing meditation with his first two teachers. He went as far as each of those monks could teach him, and they say, “You can’t go any further than this.” Now, other people can match what he did, nobody can go any further, and he wasn’t satisfied. Why? Because when your hindrances arise, that is where your false idea in a self arises, and when you start believing that this hindrance is “me,” it’s “mine,” it’s who “I am,” you’re not practicing the Eightfold Path; your perspective is not in harmony with reality.

Harmonious collectedness is the four *jhānas*: first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, fourth *jhāna*. The fourth *jhāna* has four parts to it, the immaterial realms: infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, neither-perception-nor-non-perception. So when he's talking about harmonious collectedness, he's talking about experiencing these *jhānas*. And again, they're not the same as the one-pointed *jhāna*. How do you know the difference when you're practicing? Because of the extra step of relaxing that changes the entire meditation. It doesn't allow mind's concentration to really go deep, and the force of the concentration stopping some of your experience from arising.

When you're practicing the kind of *jhānas* that the Buddha is talking about — you can get into any one of these *jhānas* except the eighth *jhāna* — you won't have hindrances arise in the eighth *jhāna* — but when your mindfulness wavers just a little bit, when that happens a hindrance arises. Now you have to deal with the hindrance. Letting it go, relax, coming back to your object of meditation. The hindrances are incredibly important because every time you let go of a hindrance, you go deeper into your meditation. You've let go of a false belief in a self, so when you do that, you're practicing the entire Eightfold Path.

Letting go of the craving is so important that it can't be understated. You've already heard what causes identity to arise and how you let go of that identity, and that's letting go of the craving. If you have hindrances, and the force of your concentration doesn't allow those to arise, then there's still the false belief in a self. And when you get up and start walking around, the hindrances have a tendency to arise big-time, and you have a tendency to get very strongly involved with them. You don't really see this as part of a process; you take the hindrance personally.

And when you take the hindrance personally, you're caught by it. So the importance of — if you're practicing mindfulness of breathing, relaxing on the in-breath and relaxing on the out-breath — that extra step of relaxing, instead of just focusing on the breath itself, is absolutely essential, so that mind will not become absorbed into one object.

Now, this also has to do with the harmonious movement because as soon as that mindfulness wavers a little bit, then mind's attention starts going over to the distraction, the hindrance, whatever it is that arises. And then there is the letting go, and relaxing, and coming back, and then seeing how that process works, how mind's attention moves from one thing to another. It takes sharp observation to be able to do this, but it's absolutely essential, in order to understand exactly what the Buddha was talking about.

When I was practicing other practices, I was told that right concentration also means "access concentration" and "momentary concentration." That is never mentioned in the suttas. There's no such a thing as access concentration or momentary concentration, at all, in the suttas. Those are from commentaries, and the commentaries have been taken, in a lot of instances, to be the same as the Buddha's teaching. But if it's never mentioned in the suttas, I have a lot of doubt as to whether that's what the teaching of the Buddha was.

Access concentration is when you first start to have strong enough concentration that the hindrances are suppressed, pushed down, not allowed to arise. At this point, when you have access concentration, if you try to bring up a hindrance, your mind will not accept it. You bring up a thought of lust, your mind

will say, “No!” and it’ll just drop it right then. This is why it is said that access concentration is where you gain purity of mind. But true purity of mind only comes from letting go of craving. And when you get into access concentration, the only way you can get into that is by practicing one-pointed concentration. Not the same.

10. “Lady, is the Noble Eightfold Path conditioned or unconditioned?”

“Friend Visākha, the Noble Eightfold Path is conditioned.”

11. “Lady, are the three aggregates included by the Noble Eightfold Path, or is the Noble Eightfold Path included by the three aggregates?”

“The three aggregates are not included by the Noble Eightfold Path, friend Visākha, but the Noble Eightfold Path is included by the three aggregates. Right speech, right action, and right livelihood

These aggregates that he’s talking about are the morality, collectedness, and wisdom, and that’s how they’re divided up.

Right speech, right action, and right livelihood — these states are included in the aggregate of virtue. Right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration — these states are included in the aggregate of concentration. Right view and right intention — these states are included in the aggregate of wisdom.”

12. “Lady, what is collectedness (concentration)? What is the basis of collectedness? What is the equipment of collectedness? What is the development of collectedness?”

“Unification of mind, friend Visākha, is collectedness;

Now, isn't that interesting because the Pāli word for unification of mind is always translated as one-pointedness of mind, but here it's saying that it is unification of mind. It's the bringing together of the tranquility and mindfulness, it's the bringing together of this equanimity, so your mind is unified in that way. The Pāli word *ekaggatā*... they always try to break it up with “eka,” meaning one in Pāli. But the word *ekaggatā* is a word on its own. You can't break it up too easily; “ekagga” means tranquility or unified, and “tā” is the action of that, is the bringing together of that. So when you say *ekaggatā*, what you're saying is unification of mind, you're not saying one-pointedness of mind.

the four foundations of mindfulness are the basis of collectedness; the four right kinds of effort are the equipment of collectedness; the repetition, development, and cultivation of these same states is the development of collectedness therein.”

The four foundations of mindfulness: body, feeling, consciousness and dhammas. We'll go more into that later in the week.

The four kinds of effort: seeing an unwholesome object, letting go of the unwholesome object, relaxing, bringing up a wholesome object, smiling, and keeping that wholesome object going.

...the repetition, development, cultivation of these same states is the development of collectedness therein.

That's the practice, and the 6Rs do that.

13. “Lady, how many formations are there?”

“There are these three formations, friend Visākha: the bodily formation, the verbal formation, and the mental formation.”

14. “But, lady, what is the bodily formation? What is the verbal formation? What is the mental formation?”

“In-breathing and out-breathing, friend Visākha, are the bodily formation; thinking and examining thought are the verbal formation; perception and feeling are the mental formation.”

15. “But, lady, why are in-breathing and out-breathing the bodily formation? Why are thinking and examining thought the verbal formation? Why are perception and feeling the mental formation?”

“Friend Visākha, in-breathing and out-breathing are bodily, these are states bound up with the body; that is why in-breathing and out-breathing are the bodily formation. First one applies thinking and examining thought, and subsequently one breaks out into speech; that is why thinking and examining thought are the verbal formation.

And they’re talking about internal verbalization.

Perception and feeling are mental, these are states bound up with the mind; that is why perception and feeling are the mental formation.”

16. “Lady, how does the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling come to be?”

“Friend Visākha, when a monk is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, it does not occur to him: ‘I shall

attain the cessation of perception and feeling,’ or ‘I am attaining the cessation of perception and feeling.’ or ‘I have attained the cessation of perception and feeling;’ but rather his mind has previously been developed in such a way that it leads him to that state.”

So it kind of happens all by itself, automatically. You can’t make a determination for that to happen until after you become an *anāgāmi* with the fruition. Then you can make a determination for that to come up.

17. “Lady, when a monk is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, which states cease first in him: the bodily formation, the verbal formation, or the mental formation?”

“Friend Visākha, when a monk is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, first the verbal formation ceases, then the bodily formation, then the mental formation.”

18. “Lady, how does emergence from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling come to be?”

“Friend Visākha, when a monk is emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, it does not occur to him: ‘I shall emerge from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling.’ or ‘I am emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling.’ or ‘I have emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling;’ but rather his mind has previously been developed in such a way that it leads him to that state.”

When this state arises it arises automatically and it lets go automatically. It doesn't happen for very long. Now, for somebody like venerable Sāriputta, while he was fanning the Buddha, and he let go of that last attachment to the Dhamma, he had the cessation of perception and feeling, and it was momentary, and he had the fruition, which is another cessation of perception and feeling. In between those two, he saw Dependent Origination arising and passing away very quickly. His attention was so strong that he saw it clearly, and that's why he could have that cessation of perception and feeling with the fruition. The fruition happened again right after the cessation of perception and feeling faded away, and that's why he got the fruition. That's how it happens.

19. "Lady, when a monk is emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, which states arise first in him: the bodily formation, the verbal formation, or the mental formation?"

"Friend Visākha, when a monk is emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, first the mental formation arises, then the bodily formation, then the verbal formation."

20. "Lady, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, how many kinds of contact touch him?"

"Friend Visākha, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, three kinds of contact touch him: voidness contact, signless contact, desireless contact."

21. “Lady, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, to what does his mind incline, to what does it lean, to what does it tend?”

“Friend Visākha, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, his mind inclines to seclusion, leans to seclusion, tends to seclusion.”

22. “Lady, how many kinds of feeling are there?”

“Friend Visākha, there are three kinds of feeling: pleasant feeling, painful feeling, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.”

23. “But, lady, what is pleasant feeling? What is painful feeling? What is neither painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”

“Friend Visākha, whatever is felt bodily or mentally as pleasant and soothing is pleasant feeling. Whatever is felt bodily or mentally as painful and hurting is painful feeling. Whatever is felt bodily or mentally as neither soothing nor hurting is neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.”

24. “Lady, what is pleasant and what is painful in regard to pleasant feeling? What is painful and what is pleasant in regard to painful feeling? What is pleasant and what is painful in regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”

“Friend Visākha, pleasant feeling is pleasant when it persists and painful when it changes. Painful feeling is painful when it persists and pleasant when it changes. Neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is pleasant when there is knowledge [of it] and painful when there is no knowledge [of it].”

25. “Lady, what underlying tendency underlies pleasant feeling? What underlying tendency underlies painful feeling? What underlying tendency underlies neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”

“Friend Visākha, the underlying tendency to lust underlies pleasant feeling. The underlying tendency to aversion underlies painful feeling. The underlying tendency to ignorance underlies neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.”

Why is the underlying tendency to ignorance underlie neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling? Why is that tendency there? Because you have indifference to the feeling. Indifference is different than equanimity. Indifference is “I don’t care.” And there’s identification with that. And ignorance is always ignorance of the Four Noble Truths, not seeing the Four Noble Truths, not seeing that that indifference means that you’re identifying with it and you’re taking it personally, you’re not seeing it as part of a process.

26. “Lady, does the underlying tendency to lust underlie all pleasant feeling? Does the underlying tendency to aversion underlie all painful feeling? Does the underlying tendency to ignorance underlie all neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”

“Friend Visākha, the underlying tendency to lust does not underlie all pleasant feeling. The underlying tendency to aversion does not underlie all painful feeling. The underlying tendency to ignorance does not underlie all neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.”

27. “Lady, what should be abandoned in regard to pleasant feeling? What should be abandoned in regard to painful

feeling? What should be abandoned in regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”

“Friend Visākha, the underlying tendency to lust should be abandoned in regard to pleasant feeling. The underlying tendency to aversion should be abandoned in regard to painful feeling. The underlying tendency to ignorance should be abandoned in regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.”

28. “Lady, does the underlying tendency to lust have to be abandoned in regard to all pleasant feeling? Does the underlying tendency to aversion have to be abandoned in regard to all painful feeling? Does the underlying tendency to ignorance have to be abandoned in regard to all neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”

“Friend Visākha, the underlying tendency to lust does not have to be abandoned in regard to all pleasant feeling.

Why? There are some pleasant feelings that arise that there’s no attachment to. Getting into the first *jhāna*. Because it’s a process and it’s a pleasant abiding here and now. I mean that’s described so many times, but there is no identification with that as being yours personally while you’re in that *jhāna*.

Pointing your mind towards the *jhāna* is wholesome, but while you’re in the *jhāna* there is no attachment to the *jhāna*.

“Friend Visākha, the underlying tendency to lust does not have to be abandoned in regard to all pleasant feeling.

Now, this is one of the things that it talks about on the night of the Buddha’s enlightenment. He started realizing that the ascetic practices, they were continually trying to stop joy from arising

because they considered joy to be an attachment. And when he started reflecting, he started thinking, “Not all kinds of joy have attachment in them.” And that’s when he started doing his meditation. It’s ok for some types of joy to arise.

The underlying tendency to aversion does not have to be abandoned in regard to all painful feeling.

Why? Not being attached to the pain, allowing it to be there without identifying with it.

The underlying tendency to ignorance does not have to be abandoned in regard to all neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.

Why? Well, it’s the difference between the equanimity and the indifference. If it’s indifference it has the ignorance in it, and if you have equanimity, you don’t have to abandon the underlying tendency to ignorance, but you see everything in a sense of balance.

“Here, friend Visākha, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters upon and abides in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of seclusion. With that he abandons lust, and the underlying tendency to lust does not underlie that.

“Here a monk considers thus: ‘When shall I enter upon and abide in that base that the noble ones now enter upon and abide in?’ In one who thus generates a longing for the supreme liberations, grief arises with that longing as condition. With that he abandons aversion, and the underlying tendency to aversion does not underlie that.

“Here, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, a monk enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. With that he abandons ignorance, and the underlying tendency to ignorance does not underlie that.”

See, that’s the equanimity. When there is no indifference, there is equanimity. Equanimity is the highest feeling that you can have, and it is a definite feeling of mental balance, which is truly wonderful. And it’s kind of fun because when people come and they’re practicing real hard and they, they’ve been going through the hindrances, and they finally let them go, and they get into this state of equanimity. And then they come and they start talking to me about their meditation experience. As soon as they walk in the room, I know where they are. I mean they sit down, I say, “Well, how’s it going?” And it’s, “Yeah it’s ok. Everything is fine.” Their mind is such a pleasant state of balance that anything can happen, and, “Yeah, that’s fine. That’s ok. No problem.” One woman came in, and I’d ask her the night before to describe certain states, and she came in and she had so much equanimity about her, that I said, “It’s nice, isn’t it?” And she said, “I thought you were going to get me to try to describe this, and I don’t know how.” It’s a real strong feeling of balance, and it’s very pleasant.

29. “Lady, what is the counterpart of pleasant feeling?”

“Friend Visākha, painful feeling is the counterpart of pleasant feeling.”

“What is the counterpart of painful feeling?”

“Pleasant feeling is the counterpart of painful feeling.”

“What is the counterpart of neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”

“Ignorance is the counterpart of neither-painful-nor pleasant feeling.”

“What is the counterpart of ignorance?”

“True knowledge is the counterpart of ignorance.”

“What is the counterpart of true knowledge?”

“Deliverance is the counterpart of true knowledge.”

“What is the counterpart of deliverance?”

“*Nibbāna* is the counterpart of deliverance.”

“Lady, what is the counterpart of *Nibbāna*?”

“Friend Visākha, you have pushed this line of questioning too far; you are not able to grasp the limit to questions. For the holy life, friend Visākha, is grounded upon *Nibbāna*, culminates in *Nibbāna*, ends in *Nibbāna*. If you wish, friend Visākha, go to the Blessed One and ask him about the meaning of this. As the Blessed One explains it to you, so you should remember it.”

30. Then the lay follower Visākha, having delighted and rejoiced in the bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā’s words, rose from his seat, and after paying homage to her, keeping her on his right, he went to the Blessed One. After paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and told the Blessed One his entire conversation with the bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā. When he finished speaking, the Blessed One told him:

31. “The bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā is wise, Visākha, the bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā has great wisdom. If you had asked me the meaning of this, I would have explained it to you in the same way that the bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā has explained it. Such is its meaning, and so you should remember it.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The lay follower Visākha was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

I like this sutta, I really do.

The bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā was the foremost bhikkhuni in wisdom. She was like the counterpart... of the male part, is Sāriputta. He was second to the Buddha in wisdom on the male side; she was second to the Buddha in wisdom on the female side. There’s another sutta that’s in the Aṅguttara Nikāya and I’m anxiously waiting for that to come out from Bhikkhu Bodhi; that she had another sutta in there that was truly magnificent, it was really good. So this is a very deep sutta and to me it’s quite interesting. I hope it was as interesting for you.

The practice of the 6Rs: recognize, release, relax, re-smile, return, repeat. That can take you all the way to *Nibbāna*, and you will experience *Nibbāna* many, many times, in the mundane sense, and eventually the supra-mundane can occur, and it can occur in this lifetime. My teacher, U Silananda, one time he told me that anyone who can experience *jhāna* in this lifetime, can experience *Nibbāna*; and he was talking about the supra-mundane *Nibbāna*.

ST: I’m not sure what you mean by “mundane *Nibbāna*”?

BV: Every time you practice the 6Rs, you’re letting go of the craving, and that is the mundane *Nibbāna*. Eventually the big “Oh Wow” happens. And you can’t want it to happen; you can’t

force it to happen; you have to have your beginner's mind all of the time. You have to have that mind that's curious, that wants to see what's going to happen next. You get into the fun of the practice, and your interest stays high, and with that you have really strong balance; you have that equanimity in your practice. The more interested you are in how the process works, the more clearly you will see it. The more clearly you will see it, the more freedom there is that occurs, and eventually that does lead to deliverance and *Nibbāna*. Simple, right? You guys got another week!

Yes ok, let's go back to this...

{Bhante switches to MN-10:46, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, last paragraph}

“Let alone half a month, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now,

Becoming an *arahat*.

or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

Anāgāmi, seven days.

Anāgāmi is the third stage of enlightenment. That is where your experience would be such that lust and hatred would never arise in your mind ever again. Think about that. I mean think about that! That's really amazing, no aversion ever again. Ah! That's something to work towards, and your wholesome desire means that you point your mind in that direction — *chanda*. So if you can experience a *jhāna* in this life time, you can experience either becoming an *anāgāmi* or an *arahat*.

ST: What is cessation of perception and feeling?

BV: That's when the perception and the feeling no longer arises. It's kind of like a blackout. I mean there's nothing. It's like somebody in a very dark night, they turn out the lights, and you can't even see their hand in front of your face. And it's the complete stopping of all the vibration in mind, complete stilling. When it starts vibrating again, the perception and feeling come back, and your mind is so clear at that time that you are able to see how Dependent Origination arises and how it ceases. And you will see it clearly, and you will understand it. With that understanding comes the true understanding of the Four Noble Truths, and the realization of that, and *Nibbāna* occurs.

ST: So when your meditation is strong enough this occurs?

BV: Well, actually, falling into the stream does not have to occur through meditation. It has to occur through your understanding of the Four Noble Truths and Dependent Origination. And if you listen very attentively to Dependent Origination and discourses on that — and you understand it — you can have the experience of *Nibbāna* while you're listening. That's what happened to Kondañña, when the Buddha went to give his discourse to the five monks. He was listening to the Four Noble Truths and he finally, he got it. But mixed in with that had to be the Dependent Origination of course. But he understood it. And that's why the Buddha stopped his discourse, and he said, "Ah, Kondañña, you understand!"

And he got to that by listening and understanding. He didn't have the fruition of that experience, but he had the path, the path knowledge. And that can happen also with the second stage of enlightenment, called *sakadāgāmi*. Either one of those, you

can — depending on your understanding at the time — you can have the experience of *Nibbāna*. It's not very strong. But when you do the meditation, and it's very plain from this sutta, it says either you're going to be fully enlightened or you're going to be an *anāgāmi* if you do it through meditation. Now, that doesn't mean to say that you can't become a *sotāpanna* through the meditation; you can; or a *sakadāgāmi*. But it's not fully understanding the Four Noble Truths, that stops you from going deeper... the Four Noble Truths and the four foundations, I should say. So there's a variety of ways that it can happen.

ST: Is the difficulty with one-pointed concentration is that it ignores the six sense doors?

BV: When the concentration is deep. It's only a mental state and that's why mentality and materiality... it was like a revelation that the Buddha had when he saw mentality and materiality because they're interconnected. Everybody up until then, they were getting so deep in their one-pointed concentration that they lost the body; they didn't have any feeling in the body. They couldn't feel anything even if it got hit or an animal came and started biting on them, they wouldn't feel it. But when the Buddha came along and said, "There's a mind and body and they're interconnected, and they have to stay interconnected in order for you to attain *Nibbāna*"; that was a heavy duty revelation. And that's one of the reasons that when you do your mindfulness of breathing, you relax on the in-breath and relax on the out-breath. Why? Because you're letting go of tension in the body and in the mind, when you let go of that craving. That's the way it really works.

ST: Why can you not see this if you are in an "absorption" *jhāna*?

BV: Here's the difference. There can be all kinds of contact when you're in one-pointed concentration and you just don't see it. In other words you're not seeing Dependent Origination at all while you're in the one-pointed concentration.

I got in a big discussion with a few monks about the cessation of perception and feeling, and they told me without a doubt — they were Theravāda monks — that without a doubt you cannot experience the cessation of perception and feeling until you become an *anāgāmi*, but that does not really agree too well with the suttas.

The thing is, an *anāgāmi* can make a determination, or an *arahat* can make a determination, to sit in cessation of perception and feeling for up to seven days, and they will do it. But from there they're taking that to mean that nobody can experience the cessation of perception and feeling before then, and that's just not quite right. Actually, it can arise when you're not an *anāgāmi*. It can arise because it arose for Sāriputta when he was a *sotāpanna*. You don't have control over that; that's what this sutta was talking about too. There's no control over it for it happening the first time, but after you attain to a certain level of purity of mind, then that's a situation.

There's a thing that happens when you get into one-pointed concentration where you can experience something similar to the cessation of perception and feeling, but it's not really; kind of like a blackout. But that's the, what do the Zen call it, the satori? Yes. And that's what I honestly believe that their experience is. It's an experience that they call voidness; they call it all kinds of different things. But if you talk to them about their practice they never mention anything about letting go of the craving and

relaxing, and that leads me to believe that this is a similar state, but it's not the actual one. They never talk about Dependent Origination after that. They talk about insight knowledges arising and passing away and things like that, but that's not the description that's given in the suttas; it doesn't match that.

ST: Out of it, it was like all the sense doors just open up.

BV: When you get into neither-perception-nor-non-perception, into the eighth *jhāna*, those kind of experiences can happen, and you're not really cognizant of them at the moment, but when you get out of that *jhāna*, you can reflect that it was that; but that's not the liberation experience. And also there's another experience that can happen — if somebody's energy goes down a little bit, it's just like somebody took an eraser and erased everything, and there's nothing there. And this happens in a lot of different levels of the meditation. It can happen, and that's because the body energy is too low. And the recommendation for that is, get up and do some active walking, get your energy pulled up again, the circulation.

See, the longest that you can stay with the cessation of perception and feeling is seven days. That's the longest; your body will die beyond that. I know a Mahāyāna monk who said that he sat for fourteen days in the cessation of perception and feeling, and I don't think that can happen.

There's one sutta in here where there was one of the current meditation teachers during the time of the Buddha, that he was sitting by the road and five hundred bullock carts came by, and it didn't disturb him at all. And somebody went to the Buddha and said, "This happened to him, isn't that wonderful?" And the Buddha said, "Well, I had an experience once when I was meditating in a barn, and I was meditating through the night, and lightening came

down and struck animals right outside the door. And it killed some animals and maybe some people too, and I didn't even hear the lightening." And what the difference was, was this meditator that he said he wasn't disturbed at all by the bullock carts, there's a lot of noise and that sort of thing that happens — he was sitting in a one-pointed concentration of nothingness, and what the Buddha was sitting in was neither-perception-nor-non-perception. So he wouldn't even be aware of anything that was happening because there was no perception, there was no feeling. And that is in the Middle Length Sayings, in the sixties, I can't remember which sutta.

But the thing with the attainment of *Nibbāna* as I understand it is, you have to know and understand Dependent Origination, and you will see that right before the *Nibbāna* experience occurs. Everything else is just kind of grist for the mill as far as I can see. I don't know. Neither-perception-nor-non-perception, there is still some feeling, and the cessation of perception and feeling means that both of those cease. In neither-perception-nor-non-perception it's hard to see even the slightest vibration of mind; it's hard to tell whether it's really there or not. And the only way you know is when you get out of that state, and you start reviewing what happened while you were in that state. But without any perception and without any feeling, there's no movement or vibration of mind to know anything. I don't know how there could be a knowing if there is no way of perceiving; it's cessation. That means the ceasing of all perception and feeling.

Neither-perception-nor-non-perception is the eighth *jhāna*. While you're in that state, you don't know you're in that state until you get out and reflect on what happened in that state. That's neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and that's what it

says in the suttas. But the cessation of perception and feeling is the state right beyond that, where there is no perception, and there is no feeling, and there is no knowing that you're in it. When you come out, you know that there was this ceasing, but you don't know in the present moment that you're in that state.

The cessation of perception and feeling, *nirodha-samāpatti*. You see Dependent Origination and then you experience *Nibbāna*. When you have the experience the first time, you have path knowledge. Then it can occur at any time that the cessation of perception and feeling arises, and you see Dependent Origination again, and then you have that fruition. That's the way it works.

ST: But the falling away, you know that entering into this...

BV: Entering into *Nibbāna*. Ok, there's some personality development when that happens, but it doesn't happen in a more permanent kind of way until there is the fruition, and that's what it talks about in the Saṃyutta Nikāya a lot.

{Bhante switches to MN-43:26, Mahāvedalla Sutta}

26. "Friend, how many conditions are there for the attainment of the neither-painful-nor-pleasant deliverance of mind?"

"Friend, there are four conditions for the attainment of the neither-painful-nor-pleasant deliverance of mind: here, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, a monk enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. These are the four conditions for the attainment of the neither-painful-nor-pleasant deliverance of mind."

27. “Friend, how many conditions are there for the attainment of the signless deliverance of mind?”

The signless deliverance of mind is what we’ve been talking about, the cessation of perception and feeling.

“Friend, there are two conditions for the attainment of the signless deliverance of mind: non-attention to all signs and attention to the signless element. These are the two conditions for the attainment of the signless deliverance of mind.”

28. “Friend, how many conditions are there for the persistence of the signless deliverance of mind?”

“Friend, there are three conditions for the persistence of the signless deliverance of mind: non-attention to all signs, attention to the signless element, and the prior determination [of its duration].”

Now, this is talking about an *anāgāmi*.

So, that didn’t help at all because what it winds up saying is there’s attention to the signless element, and I don’t know what that means, I honestly do not. Every kind of words that you can use, like focus, means that there’s some movement or vibration energy that occurs. When mind hits the cessation of perception and feeling there is no movement of mind; there is none. And also there is the fact that when you run across somebody that has had that experience, they just say, “Everything stopped. There was no... but when I came out, I saw the arising and passing away of everything that happened before and after that, but I can’t tell you what happened during that.”

ST: And how does he know that?

BV: Well he knows that everything stopped. He knows what happened right before, and he knows what happened right after, but he's not able to recall anything in that space. There is no time, there's no anything that I can think of that could describe any of that.

The cessation is not *Nibbāna*; it hasn't occurred yet. *Nibbāna* only occurs through seeing, understanding, and realizing Dependent Origination and the Four Noble Truths.

ST: But why do they say that the Buddha would go into that state. For what purpose?

BV: You can go into that cessation of perception and feeling as long as you make a determination when you're going to come out. When I talked with people that had that experience, they said that it was relief more than anything. So that's why he did it, just to get some relief from everybody bothering him for twenty-two hours a day or so.

Ok, why don't we share some merit now?

MN-19: Two Kinds of Thoughts (Dvedhāvitakka Sutta)

This sutta opens with the words “before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta.” We may not be Bodhisattas but we are unenlightened so the Dhamma of this sutta has some application to our condition. If we are to apply it, then we shall need mindfulness enough to distinguish Wrong Intention (thought) — which is thoughts of sensual desire, ill-will and cruelty, from the second factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Intention (thought) — thoughts of renunciation, non-ill-will and non-cruelty. The last two are positively phrased, loving-kindness (mettā) and compassion (karunā). On becoming aware of thoughts of sensual desire, ill-will, or cruelty, one should consider them in this way: They harm me or they harm others or they harm both or they prevent the development of insight-wisdom, increase trouble and lead away from Nibbāna. It is well to note the warning that the way a person habitually thinks will increase his tendency to think like that in future. (What you think and ponder on...) The other kind of thinking, with renunciation, loving-kindness and compassion, should be cultivated because it will never lead to any being’s harm and does lead to Nibbāna. Still, continuous thought of this sort could be tiring (and all kinds of thinking is tiring) which makes for a troubled mind and loss of concentration. So even this stage of training should be transcended by meditation to become one-pointed (collected) in jhāna. The sutta closes with the famous simile of the herd of deer which illustrates the Buddha’s Great Compassion to lead beings out of the marsh of sensual desires to the safe and good path that leads to their happiness.

Presented by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi on 18th February 2007 at Dhamma Dena Vipassanā Center, Joshua Tree, California

BV: This particular sutta, if you've listened to some of the talks on the website, you've probably heard it before. This is called the "Two Kinds of Thought." And this is a kind of an important sutta because it brings up a lot of very interesting points, not only having to do with your meditation, but also having to live your life.

A while back we developed a kind of systematic way of practicing the meditation. And we call it the 6Rs because each one of these starts with an "R" word. We *Recognize* when mind has gone away from the object of meditation. We *Release* that distraction. In other words, we let it be there by itself, but we don't give it any more attention. We *Relax* the tension and tightness caused in our head and in our mind. We *Re-smile*. Now, you've heard me talk a lot yesterday and during the interviews about smiling, and I want you to be serious about that; I want you to smile a lot. It improves your mindfulness so much that it's unbelievable. It's a very good tool. After Re-smiling then you *Return* to your object of meditation and you *Repeat* — staying with your object of meditation and repeat the whole thing over again when mind gets distracted.

Each part of the 6Rs is run by mindfulness. Now, what's the definition of mindfulness? I need a definition for mindfulness; what is it? It's remembering to watch how mind's attention moves from one thing to another. That's what mindfulness actually is. It doesn't have anything to do with concentration or staying on one thing in the present moment. It is just about observing how mind's attention is moving from one thing to another, in the present moment. So, with each of these 6Rs, Recognizing takes remembering to watch. Releasing means remembering to let go. See how remembering is mixed up in all

of this. It's remembering to relax; it's remembering to smile; coming back to your object of meditation. All of these different Rs has mindfulness in them. It's like mindfulness is the gas for the vehicle to work. And if you don't have this gas then you kind of wind up floundering in your meditation, not quite knowing exactly what to do. But practicing the 6Rs is the way to remember how to do the meditation, how to do it exactly, how to do it precisely.

Now, when something arises, and it pulls your attention from one thing to another, it always happens in the same way. Your mind is on your object of meditation, and you lose your mindfulness. You lose the observation of staying with your object of meditation at that time. It gets weak for whatever reason, it's just distracted. Now, your mind goes from your object of meditation to the distraction. Distraction: any one of the six sense doors. Doesn't matter what it is. It just pulls your attention away. Now, the question that we need to answer is: how did that happen? Why it happened — we don't care. How did this process work? The Buddha taught us precisely and exactly how mind's attention goes from one thing to another. And I'm not going to go through the entire Dependent Origination tonight, but there is a feeling that arises at one of the sense doors. Now, feeling isn't about emotion necessarily. Feelings are pleasant, or painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant. That's what feelings are. Right after feeling arises, craving arises. Craving is the "I like it, I don't like it" mind. Craving always manifests as a slight tightness or tension in your mind and in your body. Right after the craving arises, then the clinging arises. What's clinging? Give it a try.

Ok, it's "I am that feeling, I am these thoughts." That's what attachment always is. And when you hear about greed, hatred,

and delusion, delusion is always taking the greed into the lust, and the hatred as being mine personally, “This is me, this is who I am.” So, both of those have the same definition. I get real big on definitions whenever I give a talk because there’s a lot of words that we’re supposed to understand, but we don’t always have a clear idea; like the word “mindfulness.” It’s talked about a whole lot, but I’ve read countless numbers of books that say this is what mindfulness is and they go off on some story and they never tell you what it is. So, that’s why I gave you that definition: it’s remembering to observe how mind’s attention moves from one thing to another. With that definition, all the other descriptions can start to make sense. So, that’s why I do that with definitions.

Clinging is all of the stories, all of the concepts, all of your opinions, all of your ideas about why you like or dislike the feeling that arises, and this is where the real strong reinforcement of “I am that” comes from. It starts with the craving, but it gets built up real strong once there’s thoughts about the stories, the opinions, the ideas. After clinging arises then there is your habitual tendencies. Now, a lot of different teachers will give different definitions for the Pāli word “*bhāva*.” Some of them will give a definition of experience, being, existence, things like that. I had a real deep talk with my teacher, who was an abhidhamma scholar for many years; a couple years ago he just passed away, U Silananda, he was a Burmese scholar. And we had a long discussion about the word: *bhāva* and he was giving me all of these abhidhamma quotes about *bhāva*, and I asked him if we could say that it is the “habitual tendency.” And he stopped for a little while, and he said, “Actually, that’s a good definition.” So, that’s the one I’m going to go with. And your habitual tendency is, “Whenever this feeling arises, I always

act that way.” When this feeling arises, the craving is there, the concepts, the opinions, the ideas about it, always make this set of thoughts come up, or this set of feelings, or this desire to control the situation.

Now, when we start talking about the psycho-physical process of mind and body: we have a physical body; we have feeling — that’s pleasant, unpleasant, neutral; there is perception, perception is a part of the mind that looks at this and says, “This is a glass” — that’s that part of the mind that names things; we have thoughts; and we have consciousness. Now, what happens to us all the time is a feeling arises — it doesn’t matter whether it’s pleasant or unpleasant, but most often when it’s unpleasant — that’s when the thoughts really come up strong and want to control the feeling. But feelings are one thing and thoughts are something else. You can’t control the feelings with the thoughts. Every time you try to control the feeling with the thought, you get caught in your habitual tendency of thinking, “I am that feeling. I want it to be the way I want it to be when I want it that way,” and “I really suffer a lot, because I’m indulging in these desires to control the feeling.” So, the more we can recognize that feelings are one thing and thoughts are something else, then we can let go of the thoughts about it, and see the feeling for what it is, and allow the feeling to be without trying to control it, without trying to make it any different than it is. When a feeling arises, did you ask it to come up? Did you say, “Well, you know, I haven’t been sad for a long time; I haven’t been worried for a long time; I haven’t been upset for a long time; it’s time to have that feeling come up?” Nobody’s going to do that. It comes up because the conditions are right for it to arise. Whatever arises in the present moment dictates what happens in the future. If

you resist the present moment, if you fight with the present moment, if you try to control the present moment in any way, you can look forward to a lot of suffering and pain.

Now, this is where we have our choice. This is a volitional choice that we can make right at that moment. When this painful feeling comes up, and we let go of the thoughts about it, and we can allow the feeling to be or we can fight with it, and it's always our personal choice. When we allow the feeling to be, what are we doing at that moment? We're letting go of the identification with that feeling. The feeling is just the feeling. I didn't ask it to come up, it's up by itself. It's all right for it to be there; it has to be all right because that's the truth, that's the Dhamma. Now, you can notice as you allow that feeling to be that there's some tension and tightness kind of wrapped around that feeling, and that tension and tightness is the craving. Now, let's take a look at the Four Noble Truths. We have suffering; yeah we have it, that's for sure. There's a cause of suffering. What's the cause of suffering? Craving, and craving always manifests as this tension and tightness; remember that, this is an important thing. Then you have the cessation of suffering. How do you have the cessation of suffering? By letting go of the craving, by letting go of that tension caused in your mind and in your body, letting it be. And you do this by following the Eightfold Path. So, we have a choice: whenever a feeling arises, we can take that feeling personally and wrestle with it, and fight with it, and try to control it, and dislike it or indulge in it, or not. That's our choice.

As you become more familiar with the 6Rs: Recognize, Release, Relax — see, that's letting go of that craving — Re-smile, Return, Repeat. As you become more familiar with that process, you start to see more and more clearly how mind's attention moves

from one thing to another. As you become more familiar with how mind's attention moves from one thing to another, you start recognizing it more quickly, you start letting it go more easily. In other words, you're letting go of the hindrance when it arises. So, it doesn't catch you for as long. That's how you purify your mind. Every time you let go of craving, every time you relax that craving, your mind is pure at that time. There's no thoughts in your mind, there's only this real, real, pure, alertness, and a peaceful calm feeling, and you want to bring that mind back to your object of meditation. That's the mind that's free from the craving. That's how you purify your mind.

Now, old habitual habits are going to stick around for a period of time. How long have you been practicing this habit of this being this way? It's not going to take that long to let it go and change that habit, but it's going to take a while. As you start to learn how you cause yourself pain and suffering, as you start to see how you not only cause yourself pain and suffering, but you cause pain and suffering to other people around you, then you start going, "Oh, I don't want to do that. Let's let that go." Now, with the instructions last night, I told you I want you to smile and I want you to laugh. "Oh gee, this is a spiritual path, we're not supposed to laugh." But the thing is, the fastest way to change your perspective, the fastest way to let go of the "I am that," is to laugh with your mind at how crazy it is for being attached. And as soon as you do that, you're no longer attached. That attachment that you had of, "I am that" changes very, very quickly from "I am that" to "It's only that"; "I'm mad..." to "Oh, it's only anger. I don't need to get angry at anything." It's easy to let go of when you have that change in perspective.

That is the first part of the Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path, they call it right view, they call it right understanding; I have another definition of “*sammā*” which to me is a little bit softer, and I call it “harmonious.” When you think of “right” then the opposite always comes up in your mind whether you really like to think about it or not, and there’s “wrong.” So, everything is black and white. But when you use the word “harmonious,” that takes it out of that realm and makes it a little bit more fluid. So, I kind of prefer “harmonious perspective” instead of “right understanding” or “right view.” When you have harmonious perspective, you have the perspective that everything is impersonal, and there’s happiness; there’s a collectedness; there’s a kind of contentment with that kind of view whenever you can remember to do this.

Some years back I was teaching loving-kindness meditation, but at the time I was practicing mindfulness of breathing — because I’ve done both meditations for a long period of time — and one of my students walked up to me and they said, “You’re not smiling when you sit.” And I really let people know, “I want you to smile all the time. Sit with a smile on your face.” Well, I wasn’t practicing loving-kindness, so I didn’t even consider that I should smile, and as soon as they said that, I went, “Yeah, that’s right, doesn’t matter which meditation it is. If you’re going to practice the 6Rs, you got to practice them all the way, so you got to smile.” And then I started watching very closely what happened when there was a smile on your lips and a smile in your heart. Your awareness is so much uplifted; your agility of mind and your mindfulness is so much sharper. It’s easier to recognize when your mind is starting to go away, so you can catch it more quickly and let go more easily. So, I started saying, “Ok, we’ll try that one and see how it goes.” And I really became

impressed with the speed of the progress in the meditation whenever you add a smile with your practice. It really works.

And you add your sense of humour to that, and what does that do? When you have a sense of humour about how crazy your mind can be, you're not crazy anymore, you're in the present moment. And you haven't got that identification with this feeling that can seem overwhelming because it's so big and makes you feel so bad, but when you laugh with that, all of a sudden you see this huge mountain that's completely overwhelming is nothing but this little bump. The only reason it turned into the huge mountain was because of your perspective. And when you laugh with this it changes your perspective, and all of a sudden your mindfulness picks up, your alertness picks up, and you start to see more clearly how mind becomes serious about things. And when it becomes serious, that means there's an attachment there. There's the "I am that" that is caught up in that.

Ok, here is the "Two Kinds of Thought."

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There he addressed the monks thus: "Monks." — "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Monks, before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, it occurred to me: 'Suppose that I divide my thoughts into two classes.' Then I set on one side thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill-will, and thoughts of cruelty, and I set on the other side thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of non-ill-will, and thoughts of non-cruelty.

What are thoughts of non-ill-will?

ST: Loving-kindness.

BV: Hmm. What are thoughts of non-cruelty?

ST: Compassion.

BV: She's already heard this talk probably twenty times. Give me a definition of compassion.

It's accepting that another person has pain. Allowing them the space to have that pain. You can't take another's pain away from them; their pain is their pain. As you allow them the space to have their pain, you love them unconditionally. That's compassion.

I just went to a talk where somebody was giving a definition of compassion of taking their pain away a little bit, and that's the fastest way to make yourself sad. "Oh, you poor dear. I feel so sorry for you." Well, all I'm doing is making myself feel lousy, and I'm certainly not helping them out any. I used to go to the hospital a lot when I was in Asia. A lot of people had cancer and had different kinds of diseases where there was a lot of pain. Always before I went, when I was walking down the hall, I was preparing myself to walk into the room. And I did that by telling myself, "It doesn't matter what their pain is, it's ok for them to have that. I can be happy." And I would repeat that, as I was walking down the hallway, and I always walked in and I had smile on my face and, "Hey, how's it going?" And they would tell me things like — as soon as I walked into the room — it was like fresh air coming into the room because their pain is their pain, and it's ok. It has to be ok because that's the truth. And I was radiating loving-kindness. So, that's my definition of compassion. There's probably a lot more to it than that, but that's the way I found it to be most useful.

3. "As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of sensual desire arose in me. I understood thus: 'This

thought of sensual desire has arisen in me. This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, and to the affliction of both; it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from *Nibbāna*.'

When there's sensual desire or any of the hindrances that arise in your mind, they will cause pain in you and can cause pain in other people around you when you're not practicing your mindfulness. Now, the hindrances, as much as people don't like me saying this, are your best teachers. I mean head and shoulders higher than any other kind of teaching that you could possibly learn because the hindrances are showing you where your attachments are. They're your best friends. Every hindrance has "I am that" attached to it, so there's a real strong identification with this hindrance or that one, and there's a lot of craving involved with it, "I like this and I want to keep this; I love this feeling when it comes up, and I indulge in it that way." Or when it comes up, "Oh, no I don't want that and I try to push it away, I try to control it." But it's always "I am that." Now, when a hindrance arises, it is showing you exactly where your attachment is and how attached you are to that hindrance, to either the liking or the disliking it.

The whole part of being able to see how mind's attention moves from one thing to another, is a very important aspect of how the process of this mind and body actually works. The whole point of the meditation is to see this process as clearly as you possibly can. It always happens in the same way: there's contact with one of the sense doors, the feeling arises — pleasant, unpleasant, neutral — craving arises, clinging arises, habitual tendency is there. I won't go on to explain all of the Dependent Origination, but this is enough to give you the idea that you have to be able to see how that hindrance pulls your mind from your object of

meditation — where you're peaceful, and calm, and smiling, and happy, and very much at ease — to being, sad, anxious, worried, depressed, fearful, whatever the catch of the day happens to be. How did that happen? That is the key question that we need to look at in Buddhism.

Over the years it seems that there's been a bigger stress on why does something happen. And when I was in Burma, one of my teachers, he used to kind of laugh because all of the Westerners, they were always worried about why. And he said, "It's a Western disease. It's analysing things. It's trying to figure out why something happens. Who needs that?" When we let go of the "why" and start looking at the "how," we start seeing it more and more as part of an impersonal process, just to be observed rather than a personal process to try to control. So, it's a very necessary thing to have the hindrances arise. And they will always accommodate you when your mindfulness is a little bit weak, when it's not as sharp as it could be. And there's all kinds of reasons for your mindfulness wavering in one way or another, but we don't care about "why," we just care about "how." So, the more we can start to observe, "How'd that happen? What happened first? What happened after that? What happened after that? What happened next?" As you're able to see the process, you start becoming more and more familiar with how this process works.

As you become more familiar with this, you start letting go as you start recognizing this process more and more easily, more and more quickly. You start letting go of some of your habitual tendencies; you start letting go of the thoughts about; you start letting go of the craving; you start letting the feeling be. And as you become more and more familiar with that, you do that faster

and faster. When you treat a hindrance in this way, you're seeing it as an impersonal process. It doesn't have anything to fight with; it doesn't have anything to push back against because "I'm not there. I'm not trying to control it. I'm not trying to fight with it. I'm allowing this feeling to be there by itself, letting go of the thoughts and the cravings about that feeling." As you do that, that hindrance becomes weaker and weaker until finally it fades away.

When that happens there's a huge sense of relief. It's like somebody just took this big bag of rocks off of your shoulders and you didn't even know you were carrying it; feels really good. And then you feel joy. You feel really, really happy. And the joyful feeling, this kind of joyful feeling is different from other kinds of joyful feeling. This is called uplifting joy, and this joy you feel very light in your mind. You feel very light in your body, almost like you're floating. It's like you could take a walk out in the desert and almost not leave any footprints; that's how light you feel. Now, that will last for a period of time and then when that fades away, you'll feel more comfortable than you've ever felt before. You'll feel comfortable in your mind; you'll feel very comfortable in your body. This is what the Buddha called "*sukha*," happiness. Your mind becomes very tranquil, very much at ease. You've let go of this hindrance that kept on pulling your mind's attention away. Now, your mind's attention just stays on the object of meditation by itself. It's no effort. This is what they call effortless effort. Your mind is very tranquil, it's very easy to notice when a thought starts to come up, and you can let it go very quickly, relax, and then come back.

What I've just described to you is the experience of the first *jhāna*. Now, the thing with the word "*jhāna*" is, it's gotten such a

bad rap in so many different areas, that the understanding of the word “*jhāna*” isn’t as clear as it could be. The word “*jhāna*” means a level of understanding, and you’ve gained that understanding by letting go of the hindrance. You’ve gained the understanding by seeing how this process worked, and how it was part of an impersonal process. So, there was the letting go of this attachment, and that leads to this stage of understanding, and there’s a lot of insight into this. Your insight is the thing that helps you develop your wisdom. The definition of wisdom is seeing the process of Dependent Origination, always. Every time the word wisdom is used in the scriptures, in the texts, it’s talking about Dependent Origination, bar none, always that.

Now, when, say, the sensual desire comes up, it’s a pleasant feeling and your mind grabs onto that and says, “Hey, I like that. This is really something.” And then there’s that craving that says, “I like it. I want it. I want it to stay the same all the time.” And then your thoughts and your opinions about why you like that feeling, and your habitual tendency. As you begin to become familiar with this, and it takes effort to see how this practice actually does work, and the effort is this: — and we’ll go back to the Eightfold Path — noticing when an unwholesome state arises; letting go of that unwholesome state, and relaxing; bringing up a wholesome state, and smiling; and keeping that wholesome state going. So, sensual desire arises, “I like it. I want it to be this way. I want it never to change.” But of course everything does change.

And it’s real exciting and all of whatever the cause of the sensual desire is. But your mind grabs on to it and says, “This is really great.” Now, why is this called a hindrance? Because you don’t even know where you are any more. You don’t know you have a

body. You don't even know what your mind is doing. All you know is that you like it. And you're indulging in all of these thoughts. And you're identifying with all of these thoughts, and taking them personally. That's why it's a hindrance. So, this can cause affliction for yourself. It can cause a lot of pain to arise in yourself because you're taking it personally, "This is who I am." You can cause pain in other people because your desire to have that sensual pleasure, you can wind up stepping on other people's toes to get that pleasure. You can cause pain for other people. You can cause pain for both of you.

it obstructs wisdom

Now, remember the definition of wisdom is seeing Dependent Origination. You're not able to see how the process works because you're so involved in trying to obtain that sensual pleasure.

causes difficulties

I think that everybody can probably agree with that.

and leads away from *Nibbāna*.

Anything that leads away from wisdom leads away from *Nibbāna*.

When I considered: 'This leads to my own affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to others' affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to the affliction of both,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from *Nibbāna*,' it subsided in me. Whenever a thought of sensual desire arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it.

And the way you do that is always by practicing the 6Rs.

Translating is really a difficult thing because you're going from one language to another, and there's always different nuances in the way words are being used and that sort of thing. And when you hear in a translation what this just said, "I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it" — it gives the feeling, with this translation, of: you took it, you manhandled it, and you pushed it away, but that's not the real feeling of it. It's seeing it, allowing it to be, not getting involved with it, relaxing, smiling, come back to your object of meditation. That's how you develop your wisdom. So, we have to kind of be careful with all of our different translations.

I happened to be up in Seattle where they have some of the oldest texts they just found in Afghanistan, and it was "Writings of a Monk" in his original language, whatever that happened to be, I don't remember the name of it. But I got invited to a translation party with the scholars to see what was being said, and it was a real good experience. And they were trying to be as clear and precise with the words as they could possibly be, and I really appreciated that. They came up with one definition of the word "perception" that I really didn't like what they were saying, and I suggested that they change the definition of perception into "naming" instead of what they used — I don't remember right off. But it was a real interesting experience to be there and see how truly interested they are in trying to be as precise as possible, and a couple of them weren't Buddhists, they didn't care. It was just an intellectual exercise. And this is where we have to be real careful with our translations because there has to be the practical aspect of the translation. If you're too literal, it can lead one direction; if you're not literal enough, it can lead in another direction. So, I suggested to some of them that it would

be good if they started meditating, so that they could get clearer with the definitions that they were using.

And there was a Mahāyāna monk that was there, and he was real interested in the meditation. As a matter of fact, we stopped for about fifteen minutes and the nun wanted to talk to me about meditation the way I was teaching it. And the whole time that we'd been in the room — she was like real nondescript — and I went out and I talked to her. She said that she practiced this form and that form of meditation and what did I think? And I said, "Well, I don't know, but I do it according to the original suttas as much as I possibly can. And we practice the 6Rs." And I explained the 6Rs to her. Now, this was just a fifteen-minute chit-chat that we had. She walked back into the room and you could have turned all of the lights off. I mean, she was glowing. She was so happy that she finally ran across something that seemed to make sense, and she promised me that she was going to try it, so we'll see.

Anyway, this goes through repeating the same thing again with thoughts of ill-will, and thoughts of cruelty, and how they cause pain for others:

4-5. "As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of ill-will arose in me... a thought of cruelty arose in me. I understood thus: 'This thought of cruelty has arisen in me. This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, and to the affliction of both; it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from *Nibbāna*.' When I considered thus... it subsided in me. Whenever a thought of cruelty arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it.

He 6Red it. Then, this is one of my favourite things in all of the texts. It says...

6. “Monks, whatever a monk frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of sensual desire, he has abandoned the thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of sensual desire.

Now, what’s this talking about? Our old habitual tendencies — what do we think about? The more you think about something, the more your mind inclines to think about it; the more you indulge in thoughts of sensual desire, the more you’re going to have thoughts of sensual desire; the more you think about having a pure mind and letting go of craving, the more your mind will tend towards doing that. What you think and ponder on, that’s the inclination of your mind.

If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of ill-will... upon thoughts of cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of non-cruelty to cultivate the thought of cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of cruelty.

I had a friend a few years ago, she was really an amazing person; she was a nurse, but she really, really, heavily indulged in worry and the “What if?” — “What if this happens? What if that happens?” And she really indulged in it a lot. And the more she did it, the more she did it! And she was coming up — she really got into her imagination very heavily, about “Worry about this” and “Worry about that” — and she was an emotional wreck because that’s what was happening. She was worrying about something that didn’t have to do with what’s happening right

here, right now. “Well, what if this happens?” and “What if that happens?” and I kept on saying, “You know you really cause yourself an awful lot of pain. And what if it doesn’t happen? Can we worry about that? What if there is no disaster? Oh, shucks! Let’s worry about not having a disaster instead of having one!”

And finally I got to her and I started showing her that the more you think and ponder on these kind of problems, the more you tend to think about it. So, start developing a mind that has loving-kindness in it. A mind that, as you think more and more kind and loving thoughts, your mind will tend towards that. You want to affect the world around you in a positive way? Change what you think about. What you think and ponder on, that’s the inclination of your mind. If you spend time thinking and pondering on thoughts of sensual desire, you’re going to have a lot of thoughts of sensual desire. You’re going to start indulging in thoughts of ill-will towards other people, you’re going to have a lot of thoughts of ill-will. But it’s not only towards other people. A lot of people, and I want to say a lot of people, they indulge in self-critical thinking.

Now, we get into the Eightfold Path again. And we have the one part of the Eightfold Path that says right speech. And I’ve always not liked that definition, so I change it, what the heck? And I call it, “harmonious communication.” Now, when you have harmonious communication, that means communication with yourself as well as with everybody else around you. Who do you spend the most time with? Who are you most critical of? Who needs the most love? Who needs more understanding, more openness, more kindness? We need to practice it for ourselves before we can give it away.

If you don’t have it, you can’t give it. That’s why this retreat is an important thing; I’m telling you I want you to practice loving-kindness. Bring that feeling of loving-kindness up, radiate that

feeling, but make a wish for your own happiness for the first ten minutes of every sitting. And you do that, when you make the wish, you want to feel the wish. You make a wish — say your mind is very active — ok, you make a wish for a peaceful and calm mind. Now, feel what it's like to be peaceful and calm. Take that feeling, put it in your heart, surround yourself with it. Radiate that feeling to yourself. If you're being very judgmental on yourself, you're very cruel to yourself; then it's time to give yourself a lot of love and kindness.

If your mind is very scattered, then feel what it's like to have a mind that's very centred. See, that's the way you use the wish. You have to feel that wish before you can give it to anyone, including yourself. That takes it out of the realm of wishful thinking into the realm of reality. And the more you can practice sending loving and kind thoughts to your spiritual friends, the more you can give them that love and that kindness. You can't give something you don't have. Wish we could, but it doesn't work that way. So, we have to have that feeling before we can give that feeling away. And when we give it away, we're helping that other person, not just a little bit, and we're helping ourself at the same time.

And then again, this is where the smile comes in because it's real easy to send that loving-kind feeling when you're smiling to your spiritual friend in your mind, in your eyes, with your mouth, in your heart. The more you can radiate that kind feeling — I don't care what you're doing, whether it's with chopping up vegetables, cleaning out the toilet, going to the bathroom, taking a shower, eating your food, walking from here to there, it doesn't matter what you're doing — use your mindfulness. Remember to observe what your mind is doing in the present moment, and to stay with

your object of meditation as much as you can. That's one of the reasons I want you to smile because it helps remind you more easily. So, I'm a sneaky monk. I can't help it. I want you to be happy. I really want you to be happy! And I'm trying to suggest ways for you to practice so you can be. And as you become happier in yourself, everybody else around you starts to feel that happiness. I mean that's why you work here because you're around a wonderful person that has that. It's worth it being here. She has a very clear mind. You want some? She gives it away all the time.

See, one of the things about Buddhism that is not as clearly understood as it could be is that meditation is not just about sitting. There are three different aspects to meditation. The Buddha said the first part is practicing your generosity. That's part of meditation, to give your happy feelings away, give your smile away, get in the habit of giving as much as you possibly can. Now, there's three ways of giving. You give with your speech, you give with your physical actions, and you give with your mind. The more you can practice giving in that way the more you'll affect the world around you in a positive way.

The second part of the meditation is taking and keeping your precepts. Don't break your precepts. That leads to a mind that is more alert to what you're going to do before you do it. And then you make the conscious decision, "No, I don't want to do that, I don't want to say that because that can cause harm." And that leads to a very calm mind; that leads to a very accepting mind; that leads to a mind that is ready to do the sitting. What is the cause of the hindrances arising? Breaking the precepts. And we've all broken all of the precepts from time immemorial, so they're going to come up at different times, depends on the conditions. How we handle the hindrances is very important. As

we let go of the unharmonious communication with ourself, and develop the harmonious communication, we are able to give that harmony to the world around us. That's the way it works.

So, whatever a monk frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of mind. If you want to indulge in critical mind, if you want to indulge in angry mind, "That person is stupid even for thinking that or saying that!" Then you can look forward to that arising over and over again. You can look forward to having more and more anger and dissatisfaction and the need to "vent," which means, "Taking that anger and throwing it out at the universe because I don't want it inside anymore." But it doesn't get rid of the problem. If you don't want to live a life where you have to vent, then you have to start becoming more aware of how mind's attention moves, and you have to start becoming more aware of your frequently thought and pondered upon ideas, and thoughts, and your inclinations of mind. "Well, I've been acting this way for the last fifty years, I don't see a reason to stop." Does it lead to your happiness and the happiness of everyone around you, or not? That's what dictates whether we should practice that or not. And if it doesn't, then it's time to change. "Oh, geez, change? You mean I have to change, I can't stay the same all the time?" Well, if you want to be happy, yeah.

Change from your old habits, develop new habits; change from having anger arise because somebody says or does something that you don't like, or worry, or anxiety, or frustration, whatever it happens to be — change. Start focusing on loving-kindness; start focusing on an uplifted mind; smile more. That helps to overcome the problems. The Buddha was probably the greatest problem solver ever; except for when there was another Buddha before him — I can't say ever. And his solution was very simple,

and it's so simple that when we run across the answer today, we go, "No! No, we can't do that! That's too easy!" But it is that simple. See, the trick is following the directions that the Buddha gave as closely as you possibly can. That is the trick.

And the instructions — like the instructions of mindfulness of breathing — they're only four sentences. But if you don't follow these four sentences, they're not going to lead to the same end result. The first two sentences are about breathing in long and breathing out long, and short. And the key words for that are you understand what you're doing. You understand when you breathe in long and out long, when you breathe in short and out short. It doesn't say nostril tip; it doesn't say upper lip; it doesn't say abdomen; it doesn't say follow the breath all the way in and all the way out; it just says you understand that it's your breathing. Then it says you "train." Ok, now we're getting right down to the nitty gritty. You train by experiencing the entire body on the in-breath, and experience the entire body on the out-breath. It doesn't say "breath-body," it says "body." Breath-body is commentary; body is sutta. And then the last part of the instructions is very, very clear. You train thus: on the in-breath, relax; on the out-breath, relax. It says tranquilize your bodily formation on the in-breath, and tranquilize your bodily formation on the out-breath. You do that. You don't add anything, you don't subtract anything. You will get good results very quickly.

Don't follow what a commentary says if it doesn't tell you to do that exactly. There are commentaries that are quite good. There are commentaries that are very misleading. We have to be careful with that. Always check what a commentary says against the original teaching. And even some of the original teachings, there's problems.

It was roughly two hundred and thirty-five years after the Buddha died, there was an awful lot of brahmins that started taking on the robes, and they were giving their teaching and saying that it was the Buddha's teaching. So, they called a Buddhist council. And they were asking these monks detailed questions about what the Buddha taught, and if they couldn't answer about the Four Noble Truths, and Dependent Origination, and things like that, then they were disrobed. But they had influenced an awful lot of the teaching, and put in a lot of things that were actually kind of sexist about the nuns and laywomen, and things like that, that are still in our text today. Now, there's rules for the nuns, they say if you're going to be a nun, then she has to follow these rules, and the first rule is: if a nun has been a nun for a hundred years, and somebody becomes a monk that very day, the nun has to bow to the monk. Let's not do that now. It all has to do with respect. It's learning how to live together.

The nuns and the monks, they have different quarters, they've sectioned off, and that's ok. But there's still interaction between the monks and the nuns where every new moon and full moon the monks are supposed to give Dhamma talks, but sometimes the nuns can come to the monks and give Dhamma talks. So, there's this and that — never by reading some of the rules — that never would actually come into being if we followed those rules without using our common sense and good judgment. One of the suttas, it says that women could never run a government. And how many women are there running governments now? Do you know? Well, that's a flat out falsehood because it's happening. That says that that was a Brahmin that wrote that because they were very much against women. They wanted the women to be in the house and be a slave. They couldn't go out of

the house by themselves. There were all kinds of things like that during the time of the Buddha, and the Buddha was very big on letting go of those kinds of restrictions. That's why he allowed women to become bhikkhunis. He was saying that women can get the same attainment as men can, see? And that was so politically incorrect at that time that it was remarkable.

7. “Just as in the last month of the rainy season, in the autumn, when the crops thicken, a cowherd would guard his cows by constantly tapping and poking them on this side and that with a stick to check and curb them. Why is that? Because he sees that he could be flogged, imprisoned, fined, or blamed [if he let them stray into the crops]. So too I saw in unwholesome states danger, degradation, and defilement, and in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing.

8. “As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of renunciation arose in me. I understood thus: ‘this thought of renunciation has arisen in me. This does not lead to my own affliction, or to others’ affliction, or to the affliction of both; it aids wisdom, does not cause difficulties, and leads to *Nibbāna*. If I think and ponder upon this thought even for a night, even for a day, even for a night and day, I see nothing to fear from it. But with excessive thinking and pondering I might tire my body, and when the body is tired, the mind becomes disturbed, and when the mind is disturbed, it is far from collectedness.’ So I steadied my mind internally, quieted it, brought it to stillness, and collected it. Why is that? So that my mind should not be disturbed.

Now, I know that — I was in Asia for twelve years — I know that there's a big push for monks to only get four hours sleep a night, and I did that. I was at Mahasi Center for eight months, and I got

there, we went to bed at eleven o'clock, we got up at three o'clock, started meditating. And then when it got to be rains retreat, and I'd been there for about five months, and the teacher said, one day — when I went in to the interview — “How much sleep you taking?” And I said, “Four hours.” He said, “Why are you sleeping so much?” So I said, “Ok.” So, I cut it in half for three months; lousy meditation. Took a lot of energy to stay awake that long, and I was eating huge quantities of food and losing weight because it took so much energy. Now, when I got done — it was when there was a lot of social unrest in Burma in 1988 — the government asked all of the foreign monks to leave the country. So, we had to leave or I would have kept going. But I got back into Thailand and I went to Malaysia, and I wound up sleeping huge quantities of time to catch up in the amount of sleep that I really needed.

9-10. “As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of non-ill-will arose in me... a thought of non-cruelty arose in me. I understood thus: ‘This thought of non-cruelty has arisen in me. This does not lead to my own affliction, or to others’ affliction, or to the affliction of both; it aids wisdom, does not cause difficulties, and leads to *Nibbāna*. If I think and ponder upon this thought even for a night, even for a day, even for a night and day, I see nothing to fear from it. But with excessive thinking and pondering I might tire my body, and when the body is tired, the mind becomes strained, and when the mind is strained, it is far from concentration.’ So I steadied my mind internally, quieted it, brought it to singleness, and concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind should not be strained.

Now, with this retreat, I say, “Go to bed at ten o’clock, get up at five o’clock.” That’s seven hours sleep right there. I’m being fairly lenient. And then after lunch, I say, “Take another hour of sleep. So, you’re going to get eight hours of sleep. Why? Because your meditation is better that way. The idea that you can force yourself to take less sleep... a lot of people, they can force that to happen for a long period of time — ten or fifteen years — and then they go crazy for a period of time. And then they go into the hospital and they give them all kinds of drugs, and they wind up sleeping like twenty hours a day until they catch up, and then they’re fine, they’re not crazy anymore. You have to take the right amount of sleep, don’t over push it. Eight hours is fine, even for monks eight hours is fine. I have this one friend in Northern California that, he’s been practicing going to bed at midnight and getting up at two o’clock for years and years and years. And he’s oh, eighty-five now I think? And he does it! And he also takes naps. Takes a nap in the morning, takes a nap after lunch, takes a nap in the evening, but he only gets two hours sleep!

So, the whole point of this is learning to recognize when you have unwholesome states in your mind, not only while you’re sitting, but while you’re living. And what do you do with the unwholesome states when they arise? That’s where your mindfulness has to be able to be clear enough to be able to recognize there’s a hindrance there. There’s sadness, there’s worry, there’s anxiety, there’s fear, there’s depression, there’s frustration, there’s anger. You have to be alert enough to see how that process works so you stop identifying with it. You stop getting caught by your habitual tendency. Somebody calls me on the phone and they ask me a dumb question and I yell at them?

And tell them they're stupid? No. That's just an old habit. That's just an old tendency that you're not being aware of, and you need to practice your 6Rs right then, right there. You're causing harm to yourself; you're causing harm to other people by showing anger, by giving that anger away. You're not creating a world that has peace in it. You're creating a world that has a lot of adversity in it. And we have to clean up our act here on this planet. And when we start acting this way by seeing what we think and ponder on, that's the inclination of our mind, and we start recognizing it and letting it go, and relaxing, and changing what we think and ponder on, then we start affecting the world around us in a positive way. So, that's what this whole sutta is actually about, and this is telling us how we should use our mindfulness.

11. "Bhikkhus, whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of renunciation, he has abandoned the thought of sensual desire to cultivate the thought of renunciation, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of renunciation. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of non-ill-will... upon thoughts of non-cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of cruelty to cultivate the thought of non-cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of non-cruelty.

12. "Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been brought inside the villages, a cowherd would guard his cows while staying at the root of a tree or out in the open, since he needs only to be mindful that the cows are there; so too, there was need for me only to be mindful that those states were there.

As you continue developing, and thinking and pondering on wholesome things, then your mindfulness doesn't need to be as sharp. See, the whole thing with learning how to smile and learning how to laugh is to keep that balance of mind. When your mind starts to get out of balance, your alertness — you can really see it very quickly — and come back into the balance when you practice the 6Rs. That's what the whole message that the Buddha is giving us.

And this sutta goes on and it describes about how you experience the *jhānas*. And I've already gone into that, how you get into the *jhānas* by letting go of the hindrances, and it's not just one time. Hindrances have a real habit of coming up over and over again. You got all kind of hindrances that'll arise. But every time they do as you see them, allow them to be, relax, smile, come back to your object of meditation. It gets weaker and weaker, and this is how you go through the *jhānas*. Now, I already described what happens when you do that the first time, letting go of the hindrance, then you have this relief, and joy, and happiness, tranquillity, steadiness of mind. Eventually, your mindfulness is going to waver, it's going to get weak, and when that happens, guess what? You get another friend to come visit. But now you're starting to understand how the process worked, so you don't get so caught up in the hindrance itself. You start to say, "Ok, we have this here, and this is how this is working, and I see that more and more clearly." So, you let go until finally it fades away and you'll go into the next *jhāna*.

The hindrances are the necessary part of your practice because they help you to purify your mind if you treat them in the right way. As you allow them to be and relax, and not get involved with them, you are purifying your mind, you're changing your

old habitual tendencies from, “Every time this happens I always act that way.” Well, now you say, “Every time this happens there’s a new way to act.” You don’t have to get involved; you don’t have to try to control the situation; you can give more space; you can allow things to be much more easily when you start letting go of the hindrances. And every time you let go of a hindrance, you go deeper into your practice. It’s great stuff. Your understanding becomes so much more clear. See, we’re all a bunch of slow learners. We really are. We have to see the same thing over and over and over and over and over again before we finally start to grasp, “Oh, this is what’s happening.” And that’s where your mindfulness kicks in, remembering to observe how this happens.

I’ve been talking for a long time, ho-hum, just like always. Anybody have any questions, comments, statements?

ST: How do you use the breath when doing *ānāpānasati* practice?

BV: Yes, it’s like you know that you’re breathing, and you know when the breath is long and when it’s short, but you don’t have to focus on it. And when you’re doing the breathing meditation, you use the breath as the reminder to relax the tension and tightness. There’s always tension and tightness in your head. See, a lot of people in this country, when you start talking about “relax the body,” they think your body is from your neck down, and actually it’s from the top of your head down. And the tightness that happens is in the head.

When people come and practice with me, I generally encourage them not to read anything for a year. Just listen to the Dhamma talks because I’m reading the suttas to you, but I’m explaining what the suttas mean, and you’ll start to recognize, “Oh, I’ve had

that experience and it says that here.” And after you do that for awhile, then you pick up the suttas and you understand the suttas very easily. So, continually referencing the body, even in the Kāyagatāsati Sutta, the first part of the instructions on the body is the breath. And those are exactly the same instructions: to relax on the in-breath and relax on the out-breath. It’s, you notice your entire body, and the way you notice your entire body is if you see tension and tightness; you have a shoulder that’s pulled up, or you have tightness in your back, or you have tension in your knees, or you have a cramp starting to come, whatever; and relax that, but also it’s the relaxing of the tension and tightness in the head. That’s the subtle tightness that almost everyone misses. But you don’t necessarily really understand until you’re doing the meditation.

And when you do the meditation then the suttas, they just start opening up in ways that you’ve never experienced before, and it gets to be really, really fun. So, my suggestion is: do the practice for awhile first — do a fairly long retreat if you have the time, so that you can really start understanding what mind is doing and how it works, and using the 6Rs with it, and that sort of thing, and then come back to the sutta. But in this particular book, don’t start with sutta number one. It’s the longest, most complicated sutta in the entire book. But the way I used to use the book was I would just open it up to a page and go, “Oh, this looks interesting, ok, let’s see what it says about this.” And I would just go kind of random, “Oh, this looks like it would be a fun sutta to read now.” And you’d be surprised how the questions you had all of a sudden get answered because you just randomly, “Oh, let’s try this one. Oh wow, I’ve been wondering that for a long time.” And it really gets to be kind of fun.

But we have to be patient. Every time your mind gets pulled to that sensation, let go of the thoughts about it, relax, allow that sensation to be there by itself, relax, come back to your object of meditation. Eventually one of two things will happen. Either that sensation will go away or it won't. If it goes away then you just continue on with your practice. If it doesn't go away, your mind will have developed equanimity that's so strong that the sensation doesn't pull your attention to it anymore. So, the thing that I want to stress is, if you have that sensation arise every time you sit, and you sit in exactly the same way, change your posture a little bit. It doesn't mean you have to uncross your legs, or maybe you want to uncross one leg or both legs, or however you... but try changing your posture a little bit to see whether that sensation still comes up. If it does, and as soon as you get up from your meditation, you don't notice it anymore, that is a meditation pain and that's helping you to gain your balance. Otherwise, don't hurt your body from forcing that sensation to arise.

I learned that when I was in Burma. The teacher said... I kept on coming to him and he'd say, "Well, why don't you sit longer?" And I'm sitting three hours and he said, "Sit longer." And I sit longer, and I sit four hours and he said, "Sit longer." And before long, I was sitting seven or eight hours, and I was forcing it, and I was sitting with my legs very tight, and I developed blood clots in my legs. Why do I sit on a chair instead of sit on the floor and give a Dhamma talk? Because I have blood clots, my legs go to sleep. I don't recommend doing that. Sit in a way that is comfortable, and the circulation is good, and always when you get done with your sitting, you should walk, get your circulation moving. Don't hurt your body by doing this.

Another quick story: the whole time I was in Burma, and before — which was about fifteen years of practice before I went to Burma — they told me over and over again that the best meditation object you can have is pain. So, when I went there and I finally got so that I had real strong equanimity to the pain, I couldn't make the pain arise anymore. And I actually went to the teacher and complained because I didn't get any pain, and I was trying to sit in all kinds of ways that would definitely cause pain to arise, but it wouldn't come up!

ST: I have a question, and seems very silly question, but... when you talk about a short breath what do you mean?

BV: Well, it's short in regard to the depth of the breath when you take a real deep breath. You know, there's times that you can be breathing and it's very shallow, very fast and it's not particularly deep, and other times you take a real deep breath; it's just knowing when you take a long breath and short, that way. When the breath is coarse and when it's fine, when it's fast and when it's slow. It's noticing those kinds of things about the breath, that's what it's really talking about. Ok? Anything else? Is that all?

{Bhante leaves out the rest of the sutta as already covered in other talks, but it is left here so as to complete the sutta text.}

13. "Tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was tranquil and untroubled, my mind concentrated and unified.

14. "Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.

15. “With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, I entered upon and abided in the second *jhāna*, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration.

16. “With the fading away of rapture, I abided in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, I entered upon and abided in the third *jhāna*, on account of which noble ones announce: ‘He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.’

17. “With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, I entered upon and abided in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

18. “When my concentrated mind was purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of recollection of past lives. I recollected my manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many aeons of world-contraction, many aeons of world-expansion, many aeons of world-contraction and expansion, “There I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I reappeared elsewhere; and there too I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I

reappeared here.’ Thus with their aspects and particulars I recollected my manifold past lives.

19. “This was the first true knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was banished, and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished, and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute.

20. “When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings. With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate. I understood how beings pass on according to their actions thus: ‘These worthy beings who were ill conducted in body, speech, and mind, revilers of noble ones, wrong in their views, giving effect to wrong view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in perdition, even in hell; but these worthy beings who were well conducted in body, speech, and mind, not revilers of noble ones, right in their views, giving effect to right view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a good destination, even in the heavenly world.’ Thus with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and I understood how beings pass on according to their actions.

21. “This was the second knowledge attained by me in the middle watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true

knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute.

22. "When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright and unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is suffering;' I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the origin of suffering;' I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the cessation of suffering;' I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' I directly knew as it actually is: 'These are the taints;' I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the origin of the taints;' I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the cessation of the taints;' I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of the taints.'

23. "When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated, there came the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' I directly knew: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'

24. "This was the third true knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute.

25. "Suppose, bhikkhus, that in a wooded range there was a great low-lying marsh near which a large herd of deer lived.

Then a man appeared desiring their ruin, harm, and bondage, and he closed off the safe and good path to be travelled joyfully, and he opened up a false path, and he put out a decoy and set up a dummy so that the large herd of deer might later come upon calamity, disaster, and loss. But another man came desiring their good, welfare, and protection, and he reopened the safe and good path that led to their happiness, and he closed off the false path, and he removed the decoy and destroyed the dummy, so that the large herd of deer might later come to growth, increase, and fulfilment.

26. “Bhikkhus, I have given this simile in order to convey a meaning. This is the meaning: ‘The great low-lying marsh’ is a term for sensual pleasures. ‘The large herd of deer’ is a term for beings. ‘The man desiring their ruin, harm, and bondage’ is a term for Māra the Evil One. ‘The false path’ is a term for the wrong Eightfold Path, that is: wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, and wrong concentration. ‘The decoy’ is a term for delight and lust. ‘The dummy’ is a term for ignorance. ‘The man desiring their good, welfare, and protection’ is a term for the Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened. ‘The safe and good path to be travelled joyfully’ is a term for the Noble Eightfold Path, that is: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

“So, bhikkhus, the safe and good path to be travelled joyfully has been reopened by me, the wrong path has been closed off, the decoy removed, the dummy destroyed.

27. “What should be done for his disciples out of compassion by a teacher who seeks their welfare and has compassion for

them, that I have done for you, bhikkhus. There are these roots of trees, these empty huts. Meditate, bhikkhus, do not delay or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

Ok, let’s share some merit then.

MN-128: Imperfections (Upakkilesa Sutta)

The first part of this sutta shows the gross influence of the defilements on people's speech and bodily actions, while the second part illustrates the subtle ways in which defilements, called "imperfections" here, can cause meditation to fail. Even when the Buddha was alive there were people who openly quarreled with him and even among bhikkhus — there was this infamous "stabbing of each other with verbal daggers." Like many quarrels in the world now it began with a very small matter in Vinaya which was badly handled by the bhikkhus concerned. A learned sutta teacher went to the latrine and after he had finished, a Vinaya-Master entered. He found some water left in the water scoop used for cleaning oneself after excretion. He reproved the sutta teacher for this who excused himself saying that he did not know that it was an offence (of wrong-doing) and had not done it intentionally. At this, the Vinaya-Master said: "Well, if you not do it intentionally, then you have not fallen into an offence." So the sutta teacher thought: "I am free from offence." It ought to have ended here but unwisely the Vinaya-Master said rather self-righteously to his pupils: "You know that sutta teacher? He does not know what is and what is not an offence! He has done like this and that." Those pupils spoke to the sutta teacher's pupils: "Your Teacher is guilty of an offence..." — and they went and told their Teacher. He said: "That Vinaya-Master first says I have no offence and now he says I have. He is a liar..." And so the quarrel spread! It is a good illustration of the way things "catch fire," one person's heart fired by another. And all from a little water in a water dipper! By contrast with these quarrelsome bhikkhus, venerable Bhagu lives peacefully by himself, while the three Anurddhas live "in concord and agreement as undisputing as milk with water." How they do so can be read in detail in sutta MN-31, Cūḷagosīṅga Sutta. Here they are developing meditation and have not yet reached arahatship, while in sutta MN-31 they have already won to the highest

attainment. After leaving the Anuruddhas, the Buddha spent the three months of the Rains alone in the forest where even animals had the wisdom to recognize his loving-kindness and compassion, ignored by the quarrelsome bhikkhus of Kosambī. An elephant and a monkey served him faithfully, while back in Kosambī the laypeople would not serve those bhikkhus since they had driven the Buddha away! All the bhikkhus of Kosambī had to go to ask the pardon of the Buddha after the Rains. They were shamed into humility by the pointing fingers of people: "Look, there they go, those stupid quarrelling bhikkhus of Kosambī..." So the whole incident closed and the Saṅgha of Bhikkhus was united peacefully again.

*Presented by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi on 16th November
2005 at the Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center*

BV: The sutta I want to talk about tonight is number MN-128 in *The Middle Length Sayings*, it's called the "Upakkilesa Sutta," the "Imperfections." This starts out with the Buddha, being really tired of the way that monks are treating each other in the town of Kosambī. You remember I gave you a discourse on the monks that studied the suttas, and the monks that studied the Vinaya, and how they were fighting back and forth, ok, this is a continuation for a little bit.

- 1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Kosambī in Ghosita's Park.**
- 2. Now on that occasion the monks at Kosambī had taken to quarrelling and brawling and were deep in disputes, stabbing each other with verbal daggers.**
- 3. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he stood at one side and said: "Venerable sir, the monks here at Kosambī have taken to**

quarrelling and brawling and are deep in disputes, stabbing each other with verbal daggers. It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One would go to those monks out of compassion.” The Blessed One consented in silence.

4. Then the Blessed One went to those monks and said to them: “Enough, Monks, let there be no quarrelling, brawling, wrangling, or dispute.” When this was said,

And this next line just blows my mind; how could anybody say this to the Buddha?

a certain monk said to the Blessed One: “Wait, venerable sir! Let the Blessed One, the Lord of the Dhamma, live at ease devoted to a pleasant abiding here and now. We are the ones who will be responsible for this quarrelling, brawling, wrangling, and dispute.”

He’s telling the Buddha, “Hey boy, go away. You’re bothering me.” {Laughs}

For a second time... For a third time the Blessed One said: “Enough, Monks, let there be no quarrelling, brawling, wrangling, or dispute.” For a third time that monk said to the Blessed One: “Wait, venerable sir! We are the ones who will be responsible for this quarrelling, brawling, wrangling, and dispute.”

5. Then, when it was morning, the Blessed One dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, entered Kosambī for alms. When he had wandered for alms in Kosambī and had returned from his almsround, after his meal he set his resting place in order, took his bowl and outer robe, and while still standing uttered these stanzas:

**6. “When many voices shout at once
None considers himself a fool;
Though the *Saṅgha* is being split
None thinks himself to be at fault.**

**They have forgotten thoughtful speech,
They talk obsessed by words alone.
Uncurbed their mouths, they bawl at will;
None knows what leads him so to act.**

**‘He abused me, he struck me,
He defeated me, he robbed me’
In those who harbour thoughts like these
Hatred will never be allayed.**

**‘He abused me, he struck me,
He defeated me, he robbed me’
In those who do not harbor thoughts like these
Hatred will readily be allayed.**

**For in this world hatred is never
Allayed by further acts of hate.
It is allayed by non-hatred:
That is the fixed and ageless law.**

**Those others do not recognize
That here we should restrain ourselves.
But those wise ones who realize this
At once end all their enmity.**

Breakers of bones and murderers,

**Those who steal cattle, horses, wealth,
Those who pillage the entire realm —
When even these can act together
Why can you not do so too?**

He's slapping the entire *San̄gha* pretty well.

**If one can find a worthy friend,
A virtuous, steadfast companion,
Then overcome all threats of danger
And walk with him content and mindful.**

**But if one finds no worthy friend,
No virtuous, steadfast companion,
Then as a king leaves his conquered realm,
Walk like a tusker in the woods alone.**

**Better it is to walk alone,
There is no companionship with fools.
Walk alone and do no evil,
At ease like a tusker in the woods.”**

7. Then, having uttered these stanzas while standing, the Blessed One went to the village of Bālakaloṇakāra.

I love these names.

On that occasion the venerable Bhagu was living at the village of Bālakaloṇakāra. When the venerable Bhagu saw the Blessed One coming in the distance, he prepared a seat and set out water for washing the feet. The Blessed One sat down on the seat made ready and washed his feet. The venerable Bhagu paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side, and the Blessed One said to him: “I hope you are keeping

well, monk, I hope you are comfortable, I hope you are not having any trouble getting almsfood.”

“I am keeping well, Blessed One, I am comfortable, and I am not having any trouble getting almsfood.”

Then the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, and gladdened the venerable Bhagu with talk on the Dhamma, after which he rose from his seat and went to the Eastern Bamboo Park.

8. Now on that occasion the venerable Anuruddha,

Anuruddha was Ānanda’s elder brother, and he became a monk at the same time.

the venerable Nandiya and the venerable Kimbila were living at the Eastern Bamboo Park. The park keeper saw the Blessed One coming in the distance and told him: “Do not enter this park, recluse. There are three clansmen here seeking their own good. Do not disturb them.”

9. The venerable Anuruddha heard the park keeper speaking to the Blessed One and told him: “Friend park keeper, do not keep the Blessed One out. It is our Teacher, the Blessed One, who has come.” Then the venerable Anuruddha went to the venerable Nandiya and the venerable Kimbila and said: “Come out, venerable sirs, come out! Our Teacher, the Blessed One, has come.”

10. Then all three went to meet the Blessed One. One took his bowl and outer robe, one prepared a seat, and one set out water for washing the feet. The Blessed One sat down on the seat made ready and washed his feet. Then those three venerable ones paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side, and the Blessed One said to them: “I hope

you are all keeping well, Anuruddha, I hope you are comfortable, I hope you are not having any trouble getting almsfood.”

“We are keeping well, Blessed One, we are comfortable, and we are not having any trouble getting almsfood.”

11. “I hope, Anuruddha, that you are all living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes.”

“Surely, venerable sir,

What a relief to hear that one.

we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes.”

“But, Anuruddha, how do you live thus?”

12. “Venerable sir, as to that, I think thus: ‘It is a gain for me, it is a great gain for me that I am living with such companions in the holy life.’ I maintain bodily acts of loving-kindness towards these venerable ones both openly and privately; I maintain verbal acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately; I maintain mental acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately. I consider: ‘Why should I not set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do?’ Then I set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do. We are different in body, venerable sir, but one in mind.”

The venerable Nandiya and the venerable Kimbila each spoke likewise, adding: “That is how, venerable sir, we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without

disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes.”

13. “Good, good, Anuruddha. I hope that you all abide diligent, ardent, and resolute.”

“Surely, venerable sir, we abide diligent, ardent, and resolute.”

“But, Anuruddha, how do you abide thus?”

14. “Venerable sir, as to that, whichever of us returns first from the village with almsfood prepares the seats, sets out the water for drinking and for washing, and puts the refuse bucket in its place. Whichever of us returns last eats any food left over, if he wishes; otherwise he throws it away where there is no greenery or drops it into water where there is no life.

That’s one of the rules for the monks. If we throw food that we don’t want away on greenery, it can harm insects and that sort of thing, so we have to be real careful of that and we can’t put it in where there’s fish even because it can rot and it can foul the water.

He puts away the seats and the water for drinking and for washing. He puts away the refuse bucket after washing it, and he sweeps out the refectory. Whoever notices that the pots of water for drinking, washing, or the latrine are low or empty takes care of them.

If they are too heavy for him, he calls someone else by a signal of the hand and they move it by joining hands, but because of this we do not break out into speech. But every five days we sit together all night discussing the Dhamma. That is how we abide diligent, ardent, and resolute.”

When I was in Burma, the first time I went, it's a huge meditation center, and there's thousands and thousands of people around. Fortunately most of them are Burmese, so they left the Westerners alone, but among the Westerners, because we were the minority by far, we kind of clumped together, and anytime you get together with another one in a foreign country you have the tendency to talk, but they kept on telling us, "Don't talk, keep noble silence." So finally I got the idea, and I started not going around where they were gathering, I was just doing my own meditation, I did this for six weeks. The only person I talked to every day was the teacher about the meditation And with that I found that my meditation really took off, really did well. But after about six weeks, that's about as long as I could stand it, I was about ready to pop, so I started talking again.

And right after that, this was during the time when the army was shooting people in the streets in Rangoon, and you'd hear gunfire, sometimes it wouldn't be very far away. And we were always thinking that the government was going to expel us, just kick us out no matter what. They did show restraint and waited till after the rain's retreat. And they said, "The rain's retreat ends on Wednesday. You have to leave Wednesday night." But they didn't have any airplanes leaving. And they were really unreasonable about it, they kept on saying, "You have to leave Wednesday." And I kept saying, "But how can we leave Wednesday? There's no way to get out." Finally they let us leave on Thursday.

But that was a real interesting time, I'd never been in an entire country that shut down everything. They shut down their electricity, they shut down their phones, they shut down the mail, they just closed everything. And we didn't get any food into the monastery for awhile. And what they were trying to do was they were stopping the food from coming into the city to try to

suppress the city, but there became such an outrage that, I was at Mahasi Center which is very highly respected, there was such an outrage that we didn't have any food coming in, that the people were taking their own private stashes and bringing food in and then they really started fighting the government, and the government finally let food come into us anyway. But it wasn't much, it was just like a couple handfuls of rice and maybe one vegetable, and that was it.

So I got to watch all kinds of cravings for food arise, which was pretty amazing because some of the foods I craved, I didn't eat. Mustard, I never eat mustard, and all of a sudden I have this huge craving for mustard, and I'm going, "Where did that come from?" And pizza, oh, I would have given my right arm for a pizza. But it's just one of the tricks that mind likes to play, so it was very hard to remain diligent, ardent, and resolute, as these monks did, in those times, because you would hear gunfire, when you would be sitting and all of a sudden it's like less than a block away. One time I was out walking and I saw a guy line up and shoot the gun, and I saw somebody fall. But after the army guy, he just turned around and walked away, they just got up and ran away. I don't think he hit him but... {Laughs} You talk about having a real active mind right after that. It was really amazing because all of these fears and anxieties and you know these guys are shooting guns so close, what happens if one ricochets off and comes at me? You know, oh, boy. But, as it turns out it was just more grist for the mill. And it was a good lesson in how to let go of these kind of anxieties and all of those kind of things.

15. "Good, good, Anuruddha. But while you abide thus diligent, ardent, and resolute, have you attained any superhuman

states, a distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, a comfortable abiding?”

He’s asking whether he’s either gotten into any psychic abilities, or does he have any attainment of *Nibbāna*.

“Venerable sir, as we abide here diligent, ardent, and resolute, we perceive both

Now here the word is translated as “light.” In Pāli the word is “*obhāsa*” which is “radiant,” and that changes everything.

we perceive both light [radiance] and a vision of forms. Soon afterwards the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappear, but we have not discovered the cause for that.”

The upakkilesa. The kilesas are what obstruct your meditation. And it basically comes down to generally speaking, the five hindrances. They’re called hindrances because they stop you from meditating right then, and then you have to work with that until you can let it go.

16. “You should discover the cause for that, Anuruddha.

Now this is how he did it.

Before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I too perceived both light [radiance] and a vision of forms. Soon afterwards the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. I thought: ‘What is the cause and condition why the light [radiance] and the vision of forms have disappeared?’

So that’s a question you can ask yourself when a hindrance comes up. “What is the cause and condition of this?”

Then I considered thus: ‘Doubt arose in me, and because of the doubt my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my

concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] ‘I shall so act that doubt will not arise in me again.’

In other words, what he’s starting to do is he’s starting to question whether he’s doing it correctly or not. So, what he basically did when he said, “I shall act so that doubt will not arise again” is if there’s any doubt that comes up he will dispel it right then. He’ll notice that it’s there and let go and say, “Let’s continue this to the end,” see where it leads to, see what it boils down to. And there is the clinging mind in this, because we all have views of the way we think it should be. Sometimes we have to let go of our views in order to let go of the doubt. So that he’s talking about being exceptionally mindful and alert as to how this process is working. And you have to understand too, that while he was the Bodhisatta, he was investigating all of the links of Dependent Origination at different times. But he was investigating those, so he was getting the general idea of how this all worked so that he could sharpen his mindfulness.

17. “As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute, I perceived both light [radiance] and a vision of forms. Soon afterward the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. I thought: ‘What is the cause and condition why the light [radiance] and the vision of forms have disappeared?’ Then I considered thus: ‘Inattention arose in me, and because of inattention my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] ‘I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention will arise in me again.’

Now this is the one thing that I've talked to you a few times about, keeping your interest, your interest in your meditation object. When that interest in that starts to waver a little bit, that's when inattention comes, and it's almost always followed with sloth and torpor.

And this is part of the balancing act of what meditation is all about. You need to have the right amount of energy. If you put in too much energy, you're forcing it, you're trying too hard. I've had students that I've jumped up and down and done everything I could think of, "Stop trying so hard!" Finally, to one of them, I said, "You can't do this anymore. So let's go for a walk."

And we went by a... I don't know if I should tell this or not. {Laughs} We went by a little pond. It was right by the road, There wasn't a railing there, it was just a little lip. And I kept walking a little closer to the pond, and they were on that side, and finally they got close enough and I pushed them into the water. {Laughs} And then I said, "Now have some fun!" And they got out and they were furious with me, they were really angry at me because I'd done something like that, and I "ruined" their meditation.

So we had a long talk about that, as to what really meditation is all about. And every time you see that your mind is getting serious, there's an attachment, and there's the identification with whatever that is. And it causes that craving, the "I don't like it" or "I like it," whichever one it is, it causes that to close down around it, and it causes that to continue to arise over and over again.

But the arising over and over again is, like I was talking last night, it's like being on a tape deck. It's the same words, it's the same phrases, it's in the same order, and if there is something

that arises like that and it continually comes up, that is your key to saying, "I'm identifying with this, this seems like a big problem to me right now, it's like a huge mountain, and I don't know how to overcome the mountain." So, what to do? That's the question.

How to overcome this huge problem in your mind, and the way to do it, is to laugh right with it. When you laugh with it, all of a sudden this huge mountain, it's a little tiny bump in the road. That's what the identification with your thoughts and feelings does to us, and I say to us because it does to all of us. Nobody is unique. So anytime you see repeat thoughts about the same thing, then it's time to stand back and take a look at it, and as you develop your sense of humor about how badly you got caught by this one again, then you're not caught.

Every time, and this was an accident that I found this out, every time you laugh at yourself for thinking that this is such a big thing and it's such a big problem, all of a sudden it only turns into, "It's only this, what's such a big problem about that? It's nothing. Relax!"

And it was like I said, when I found out it was pretty amazing. And the way I found out, I was a layman and I was in Hawaii, I decided that one of my friends, he was starting to build his house by himself. And I decided, "Well, I'll give him a hand." So I was doing this for no money, I was just going and helping him every day and we were getting it done. And all of a sudden he started thinking he was my boss.

He started telling me I got to do this by this time and it started really getting to me. And he went away and I was walking back up to my truck to go home, and I started thinking, "That sucker thinks that he's my boss." And I'm walking along and my heels

are digging into the ground and I'm really "Grrrrrrr!" And I really didn't like that whole situation. And then it dawned on me how absurd it was that he thought that he was my boss.

Here I am giving him all my energy and he thinks he's my boss and it struck me as funny. As soon as I laughed, all of a sudden it went from, "I'm angry, I don't like this situation" to "Oh, it's only anger." And that doesn't mean that I didn't solve the problem later by telling him, "You're not my boss, don't think you're my boss, I don't want to be bossed around or I'm out of here." But it was the laughter that broke the cycle. And I started using that in other instances, and I began to see that all of these major things that I have built up in my mind that are insurmountable mountains, they're just these little tiny bumps, bump, bump, bump, so I started developing a sense of humor about how crazy my mind is, because it is.

I used to have contests with some people who'd say, "Whose mind's crazier, yours or mine?" And, especially when I was teaching a retreat and someone would come up with a big thing and what I would say was, "Oh, my mind's a lot crazier than yours, try this one!" {Laughs}

But what the sense of humor does, is it helps you put a perspective, that's a little bit different from, "I am this, I don't like this situation, I want it to be different than it is." And grumble, grumble, grumble, and you know how your mind takes off with this kind of stuff, it really kind of enjoys it, it's entertaining to it. And then when you laugh, "My mind really took off on that one, that was great stuff!" And you start reflecting on it, then you find out that there's no holding on to it. "It's just these thoughts, ah the thoughts are nothing."

Every time we get serious, things get more and more difficult to do. When you keep your mind filled with loving-kindness and that sense of fun, magic happens. Everything gets easy, the people that you had disagreements with before all of a sudden they become agreeable.

I mean there's all kinds of magical things that happen, and like I told you before I used to go to visit the hospital often. It's easier for me to go visit the hospitals in Asia than it is here, and it's kind of interesting because I would go to visit mostly Chinese in Malaysia, in the hospital, and I would be radiating loving-kindness and I was really with them and helping whatever way I could. And then I would walk from that bed over to the next bed which has a little Muslim man and he's going {Gesture} "Come on over here," and he grabs on to my hand. "Do some of that for me." And Muslims don't like Buddhists, and they especially don't like Buddhists in robes, that's really strange to them.

But it's so universal, everybody, bar none, everybody wants to be loved. So I saw it as my job to do that. That's what my job is as much as I possibly can. And that's not to say I still don't get caught, still run around with the mental states that keep going back and forth. But it doesn't happen near as often as it used to.

So if you start noticing repeat thoughts, take that as a sign to lighten up and start smiling. If you can laugh, laugh, if you can't, at least smile with yourself and try to do something particularly nice for whoever is around you at that time. Like I was in the store and there was some very offensive things that were happening — I won't go into that. But I had to wait in line to get whatever needed to be got, and instead of my dwelling on what those offensive things were, I started looking at the hard time that the cashier was having with everybody. It's like she was

fumbling and she wasn't very good, and she was having trouble with the computer, and so it was a long wait.

So I started radiating loving-kindness to her. And then when I got up to her, I said something about, "Some days are real hard, but you know, I feel so happy today and I saw you smile this one time and that really made me feel good, thank you." All of a sudden my mind is exceptionally clear and bright, and so is hers. So it's the practice of doing those kind of things that you change the world around you by your mental state.

You can change the world around you in a positive way or a negative way, that's where your free will comes in, it's your choice whether you're going to do it or not. But the more that you focus on the wholesome, on the kind, on the gentle, the easier everything becomes around you. And your mind because of that develops that joy, and with the joy is that incredible alertness that when your mind starts to heavy out again, you can notice it more quickly and let go more easily.

And this comes back to what I was saying here, about the inattention. We get so caught up in the game that we lose attention to what's really important, and as we start to develop our mindfulness; which the function of mindfulness is to remember. To remember what? To remember to smile. It always comes back to smile.

I mean I've been practicing for so long, I ought to have a smile on my face all the time, but I know that I don't. But putting in a sense of fun to whatever you're doing, helps overcome inattention, even though there's some, "I know I have this meeting and I've got a talk with this person and it's not going to be an easy thing." But if you still put loving-kindness into the

meeting before you go in to the meeting, for instance, when I was a layman and I was building these expensive houses.

I was working with presidents of banks, and they were Chinese. They didn't have any time to mess around. They wanted you to get in there, say what you had to say, make the decision and get out. So I always went five to ten minutes early into the building. I would go to the bathroom, I would look in the mirror, and I would start smiling, and in my mind I was radiating loving-kindness to the person I had to talk to. I was radiating loving-kindness into the meeting as it's guiding so that everything will work out so it's agreeable for everyone, and I was radiating loving-kindness to myself.

Now I did this for five to ten minutes. You want to try an experiment, take a watch, stand in front of a mirror and smile for five minutes. You've never known five minutes could be so long! {Laughs} But look at how you feel afterwards. The thing that I noticed when I first started doing it, my judging mind will come out and say, "God, what an ugly smile that is. You know, you're not very good looking," and my mind was playing all these numbers, and before long, "Ah, that's nothing. Let it go. Let it go. Just keep smiling."

Once you get into smiling, then you go into the meeting, and it was amazing how easy the meeting was. I'd go in there and say, "Look at it. You wanted to do this, we can't do it this way, we have to do it this way, and it's going to cost more money because of that." And saying that to a Chinese is very difficult thing because they expect everything for nothing, that's what it boils down to, but I couldn't run the business that way. And I'd say, "Well, there's these other options." And I'd point out the other options. "What do you want to do? I can do it for the same

money if we do it this way, but it won't be quite as nice, so it's your choice." And more often than not, they would go with the more expensive thing, which made everybody happy. {Laughs}

But the times I didn't prepare myself, I'd be late for one reason or another, and I went right into the office, "Ahhh!" Difficult. I couldn't get my point across, he wasn't attentive to what I was talking about, I wasn't really hearing what he was talking about, what he wanted and all of that. It would be a meeting that would drag on for fifteen or twenty minutes and it was hell.

So I got in the habit of always making sure that I got there early so I could smile. And Lou is on the phone a lot, and I told her that she has to have a mirror set up so that while she's on the phone, she could look at that and smile, and just before we left to come here, I told her that every day she had to stand in front of the mirror for ten minutes and smile. And geez, is she ever pleasant to be around. {Laughs}

I'd get up in the morning, I'd go in and get my coffee and she'd come bouncing in with a radiant face and happy, and, "Oh, I like this stuff, this is great stuff." So it does come down to smile, because there's some study, I think it was the University of Minnesota if I'm not mistaken. They did a test, psychological test on the corners of your mouth. And they found out when the corners of your mouth go down, your mental state goes down. When the corners of your mouth go up, guess what? So why do I make this a smiling meditation? I'm a sneaky monk. I'm really a sneaky monk. So if your mind is going to be uplifted, when you see that you're starting to heavy out, things aren't going quite the way you want, that's the time that you really need to focus more with the smile, and softening into these things. Not becoming upset because it doesn't happen the way you want it

to, but taking it as, “This is what’s happening right now, I have two choices. I can push and try and make it stop and go away, but that’s only going to lead to more suffering, or I can smile and relax into it.” And it’s your choice.

And we all have these lessons that we have to teach ourselves. And you can say, “Well, I’m your teacher.” I’m not your teacher, I’m your reminder. The more times I get to remind you to relax, and smile, the more it sinks in and the easier your meditation, and nothing makes me happier then to see people smiling and having a good meditation. It’s really true.

I did a practice for awhile while I was in Malaysia, and because I was a monk I could do this sort of thing but, and I can recommend it for other people but it’s really a difficult practice. And that is every time I came to a doorway, I practiced loving-kindness, in the doorway. If I was sitting, and I got up to walk, my first step was with loving-kindness. It’s not an easy practice, and I was doing that. I must have been doing that for about three months before I would pretty much hit it every time. And then it got to be a fun thing, but it was difficult, because I’d forget, and what I made myself do was, if I got up and started walking and I didn’t have the first step with loving-kindness, then I would walk backwards to where I was sitting and sit down and then get up again and say, “Ok, now we’re going to do it right.”
{Laughs}

Or the same thing going through the doorway. Every doorway I went through, I’d try to practice loving-kindness. It’s just using little keys like that, and then developing it into a habit, and then you start finding that you carry it for longer and longer, and it gets easier over time, but it’s not an easy practice, it’s really

difficult. But, being a monk, I didn't have anything better to do with my time so... {Laughs} It was either that or read, so...

Ok, where was I?

18. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent... I considered thus: 'Sloth and torpor arose in me, and because of sloth and torpor my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] 'I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention nor sloth and torpor will arise in me again.'

The inattention leads to sloth and torpor, it leads to a mind that dulls out pretty easily, and it leads to a sleepy mind.

One of the things with an awful lot of people, when they're doing a retreat, I say, "Well you notice the sloth and torpor and you let it be and relax." And you say, "Well I'm already sleepy, why should I relax?" But there's a tension and tightness behind it, and that's the, "I am sleepy." And the identification with it that causes the clinging and the views and all of this kind of thing to arise, so you need to relax that and come back. And again try sitting a little bit more... I want to say rigidly, but that's not a good word for it. A little bit straighter. And you'll find that you can catch when your back is starting to slump, and right then you're not completely caught by the sloth and torpor, so it's easy to let go and relax.

But the thing with sloth and torpor is it's particularly persistent, so what everybody does with sloth and torpor is try to put in a whole lot of effort, so it won't bother, and then all of a sudden you're caught with it again. So, it's the learning how to investigate the sloth and torpor, how to investigate how it arises,

and then your energy increases as you become more interested in how this process works.

And that's a slow building of the energy; I say slow building, it's five or ten minutes of that before you finally realize that the sloth and torpor doesn't bother you anymore, you can just let it be. So that's the way we handle that one. Because there's a lot of different things that you never really recognized with the sloth and torpor before, but now as you start to, you get to the place where your back starts doing that, {Slumping} and you see that, and you let it go and you say, "What happened right before that?" And then you recognize a feeling, a thought, something like that, and then you come back and you see that feeling or thought and then the back starts doing that and you go, "Ah, now we're starting to see a pattern."

Now what happened right before that one? But then you have to start taking the interest in how it arises, you sit just a little bit more erect and then you put a mental note with that, "When my back starts to slump more, I'll notice it." And that's the way that I found that I could overcome the sloth and torpor without having my head bouncing around.

Just about everybody that starts a retreat, you go through a period of sloth and torpor, and it's kind of funny because when I was in Asia, I'd been meditating for two years without a break, and there would be other people coming through, and I'm sitting there in meditation and all of a sudden I'm feeling, guy on this side is starting to go, "Zeeep, zeeep, zeeep" and the guy on this side is starting to go like that too. And I thought, "Ok, I'm going to break my meditation," and I get up and I look and sure enough they're both going like that and I started calling them the bobbing bookends. {Laughs}

And we had group interviews, there would be six or eight of us that would go to see the teacher at one time, and he would talk to each one and you'd get up and leave. And the first one came into the interview and he said, "I've got sloth and torpor something fierce." And the Sayadaw said, "Is your head bobbing up and down like this?" And he said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, this is like those lizards, they're bouncing their head up and down, so you have lizard mind." {Laughs} You have to understand, this Sayadaw has no sense of humor at all. {Laughs} And to come out and say something like that was really a shock.

19. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent... I considered thus: 'Fear arose in me, and because of fear my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared.' Suppose a man set out on a journey and murderers leaped out on both sides of him; then fear would arise in him because of that. So too, fear arose in me... the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] 'I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention nor sloth and torpor nor fear will arise in me again.'

How do you not have fear arise? When it comes up, it's real hard, your mind is like stuck in ice, it's frozen, and that fear is real and it affects your body and it contracts your mind. The easiest way to overcome that fear is first by noticing the tensions in your body, where they are, and try to relax them as best you can. And when you get to a certain place, you'll notice that your mind is not so rock hard with the fear and it's a little bit easier to relax, but it takes a lot of work, you're going to be bouncing back and forth for a little while, letting the fear go, you'll find it in your arms, your shoulders, small of your back, your buttocks, even your feet have tension in them, and your jaw, your neck.

But as you put your attention on that and relax, smile, wish yourself well. There are times in the meditation that you need loving-kindness more than anybody else, so give it to yourself, it's ok to do that, and then when that fear comes back you say, "Well I had this real tightness here," and you relax that and look at your throat and relax that and wish yourself well again, and relax the shoulders and the stomach and...

So you're practicing your loving-kindness and you start to see that the fear is just a feeling. And you can be sitting and all of a sudden a noise can come up or there can be a flash of light or something and your mind will just catch on to that and all of a sudden there's these ghosts that are fifteen feet high that are going to eat you alive. And your mind really takes that as for real. But as you continually relax into that, and send your loving-kindness to yourself, then it won't come up so much. And you're starting to see, "This is how this process works." So it's easier to let go of that way.

20. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent... I considered thus: 'Elation arose in me, and because of elation my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared.' Suppose a man seeking one entrance to a hidden treasure came all at once upon five entrances to a hidden treasure; then elation would arise in him because of that. So too, elation arose in me... the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] 'I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention... nor fear nor elation will arise in me again.'

The elation is joy that you grab onto, and you get involved in with the thinking about. So you stay with your object of

meditation, you don't have much problem with that. So that's actually a reasonably easy one to let go of, but that's the one that all of the Asians are deathly afraid of. "Don't be attached!" — "Ok, piece of cake."

21. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent... I considered thus: 'Inertia arose in me, and because of inertia my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] 'I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention... nor elation nor inertia will arise in me again.'

Inertia is another word for torpor, it's just dullness. It's like you put your butter in the freezer, and you have fresh baked bread, and you want to put some butter on it so you get it out of the freezer and you scrape real hard, and then you try to put it evenly on the bread.

Your mind is like that butter, it just doesn't spread so easily, it just kind of dulls out, it doesn't want to move. It just wants to be there and that's it. And again, the way to overcome this is by taking an interest in how this whole process works. One of the things that helps overcome inertia, is by doing your walking meditation and walking backwards, because it helps you to pick up your energy, and it puts a little bit more sharpness to your mindfulness, because you're afraid you're going to walk too far and fall over or whatever, so you have to be a little bit more alert, and that helps overcome inertia.

Ok...

22. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent... I considered thus: 'Excess of energy arose in me, and because of excess of energy my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my

concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared.’ Suppose a man were to grip a quail tightly with both hands; it would die then and there. So too, an excess of energy arose in me... the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] ‘I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention... nor inertia nor excess of energy will arise in me again.’

So when you feel this excess of energy, it is always restlessness. It comes for a lot of different reasons, but it’s always, the start of it is “I want.” You have an expectation, you want things to be in a particular way, you use an excess of energy to get it, and your mind becomes more and more active and more and more energetic, and more effort is put into it, and it seems like you’re at war with yourself.

So you have to let go of all of the expectations of what you want to see happen during the meditation, and it can be a subtle little thing like I was telling you before, this one lady was very good at getting into *jhāna*, and she tried the determination of, “I want to get into *jhāna*.” And every time she sat after that, she was putting in that little extra effort to get there, and that was the thing that stopped her from getting into it.

When I got her to change the determination to have her mind be alert, peaceful, calm, then the *jhāna* came back very easily because that stopped her from that little, it doesn’t take much, just a little extra push can cause the restlessness really to run away with you.

Now I was at a meditation center and I was doing all kinds of things, I was busy building this and doing that, and a guy came and he wanted to be doing a one month retreat, so the teacher came to me and he said, “I want you to stop what you’re doing

and I want you to meditate with him.” Well, that’s what I was there for. But I really, in the back of my mind, I said, “Well you know I want to get this done and I want to get that done, but I want to meditate too, a good month’s retreat, that’s ok.”

So two days into it I have restlessness like you can’t believe, I can’t sit for more than twenty minutes, and I’m going out of my tree, and I started doing some walking and when I did the walking meditation, it was almost like a run. And finally I went, “Well, what’s the cause of this? This really hurts, I don’t want this to be like this, what is the cause of that?” And that’s when my intuition kicked in, and it said, “You don’t really want to be doing this.” And when I recognized that, it was like, “Oh, just that little desire to be doing something else, it’s caused me two days of hell. Well, I want to be meditating more than anything else, this other stuff is just nuts, why do I want to do that? Just let it go, it will take care of itself.” And I had a great retreat after that, I mean really great retreat. But it was just asking the question and then settling down a little bit, and waiting for your intuition to come and give you the answer, and it will, with each one of these things, it does happen that way.

23. “As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent... I considered thus: ‘Deficiency of energy arose in me, and because of deficiency of energy my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared.’ Suppose a man were to grip a quail loosely; it would fly out of his hands. So too, a deficiency of energy arose in me... the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] ‘I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention... nor excess of energy nor deficiency of energy will arise in me again.’

So what are we talking about here? We're talking about that balance of your energy and you have to be real careful with it, and this is a learning process. So you have to let go of the, "I want," and you have to start looking at the amount of energy you're putting into your interest. And your interest is incredibly important, your curiosity as to how all of this works, what the right amount of energy is for this time, because it's not going to be the next time you come and sit, it's going to have to be adjusted a little bit.

That's one of the reasons that I was telling you last night, this is the most fascinating process that I've ever run across, I can't imagine being anything but a Buddhist, because there's so many "Oh, wows," and they're little ones for yourself, you know, "Oh, wow, I was doing it like that and it was knocking me off balance."

Now you have to be more heedful of, "Oh, we have to adjust a little bit here, a little bit there." and its just like little tiny tweaks, and at the base of that is your smile, because that helps you to get into your intuition. And you've heard me say before, play this like it's a game, and I literally mean that, this is a game to be experimenting with, and tweaking here and tweaking there, and see if, "Does this work? Well it didn't work so well, let's try this one." It's ok to experiment, as long as you're smiling. Got to smile. {Laughs}

24. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent... I considered thus: 'Longing arose in me, and because of that longing my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] 'I

shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention... nor deficiency of energy nor longing will arise in me again.'

Longing, that subtle little desire for the goal. Just, "I wish it would hurry up, I've been doing this long enough, I want it to happen now." It's not a very loud kind of thing that happens in your mind, but it has some impatience with it and gee, "You know, Reverend's been talking about this for so long and, it should be happening now."

So that longing pulls you out of the present moment and it causes all kinds of problems, and one of the longings that does occur, is when the hindrance does come, the longing for it to go away, that will make it stay longer. So we have to be really careful of that and just notice that your mind has a tendency to want things to be in a particular way, and let go of that, you never know what's going to happen next.

Ok...

25. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent... I considered thus: 'Perception of diversity arose in me, and because of perception of diversity my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] 'I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention... nor longing nor perception of diversity will arise in me again.'

Now what you're going to see, and you can get hooked by it, is how impermanent everything is and you start watching that. But, the problem with watching impermanence isn't doing that in particular, it's the starting to think about it, and you get caught with your thoughts as you're watching these impermanent things arise, and these things happen very fast, and you've got change

happening, happening, happening, happening, happening really, really quickly, but if you get caught in just watching it at one level, you don't go any deeper, that's one of the things that's probably my biggest challenge for showing people how to meditate, is saying, "Well what came before that?"

This is a question that drives her (SK) crazy, because she'll come and she'll tell me some real neat insight and how it all worked and all of this stuff, I say, "Yeah, what happened before that?" — "Before that? You mean there is a before that?" {Laughs}

Now this one is going to get you...

26. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent... I considered thus: 'Excessive meditation upon forms arose in me, and because of excessive meditation upon forms my concentration [collectedness] fell away; when my concentration [collectedness] fell away, the light [radiance] and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] 'I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention... nor perception of diversity nor excessive meditation upon forms will arise in me again.'

Whoa, what does that mean? Excessive meditation, there's no such a thing as excessive meditation, is there? But you can get stale, ok, you try so hard for so long, and it just seems like your progress just isn't there and you keep doing it, you're doing it in the same way and you haven't got that enthusiasm which you need.

And that happened with some students when we were up on the ridge and we did our morning sit and I said, "Today, I don't want you to meditate at all, today's a play day." And what I said was, "There's only one catch to playing today, you can't take anything seriously, no matter what happens today, you can't take it seriously. I don't care what you do today, you can go down on

the river, you can play in the forest, you can do anything you want, but don't take it seriously."

So, there was an awful lot of laughter and a lot of playing that happened that day and we have big rocks on the road and we had to clear them out, and we had to clear them out so she got them to make a game out of getting the rocks and throwing them off the cliff, and there was one person that was driving up, he was kind of a grumpy individual, but this man, who was starting to have fun, got him so enthusiastic that he started smiling and having fun throwing rocks off.

It got time for the Dhamma talk, and they were all in, they were glowing, everybody was really doing good, and I said, "Well, how did your meditation go today?" — "Oh, we didn't meditate." And I said, "You didn't? Did you take anything seriously today?" — "Oh no, you told us we couldn't." And I said, "Good meditation, wasn't it?" And then we had a long discussion about how sneaky a monk I am. {Laughs}

But that's the way mindfulness needs to be: light — don't take any of this stuff seriously. Lightly, lightly — doesn't mean that you don't get things done, they cleaned that road off beautifully; they got a lot done. But they had fun doing it. And with that sense of fun came this lightness and alertness of their mind, when it started to get heavy, they started, "Oh, I'm being serious, I don't want to do that now." So they'd laugh, and make somebody else laugh along with them, and they affected the world around them, especially with this grumpy guy. He didn't like to laugh so much, but he was having a great time because that's the kind of energy there was.

27. "When, Anuruddha, I understood that doubt is an imperfection of the mind, I abandoned doubt, an imperfection

of the mind. When I understood that inattention... sloth and torpor... fear... elation... inertia... excess of energy... deficiency of energy... longing... perception of diversity... excessive meditation upon forms is an imperfection of the mind, I abandoned excessive meditation upon forms, an imperfection of the mind.

28. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute, I perceived light [radiance] but I did not see forms; I saw forms but I did not perceive light [radiance], even for a whole night or a whole day or a whole day and night. I thought: 'What is the cause and condition for this?' Then I considered thus: 'On the occasion when I do not attend to the sign of forms but attend to the sign of light [radiance], I then perceive light [radiance] but do not see forms.

So he was doing it in an imbalanced way.

On the occasion when I do not attend to the sign of light [radiance] but attend to the sign of forms, I then see forms but do not perceive light [radiance], even for a whole night or a whole day or a whole day and night.'

29. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute, I perceived limited light [radiance] and saw limited forms; I perceived immeasurable light [radiance] and saw immeasurable forms, even for a whole night or a whole day or a whole day and night. I thought: 'What is the cause and condition for this?' Then I considered thus: 'On the occasion when concentration [collectedness] is limited, my vision is limited, and with limited vision I perceive limited light [radiance] and limited forms. But on the occasion when concentration [collectedness] is immeasurable, my vision is immeasurable, and with immeasurable vision I perceive

immeasurable light [radiance] and see immeasurable forms, even for a whole night or a whole day or a whole day and night.'

30. "When, Anuruddha, I understood that doubt is an imperfection of the mind and had abandoned doubt, an imperfection of the mind; when I understood that inattention is an imperfection of the mind and had abandoned inattention... abandoned sloth and torpor... abandoned fear... abandoned elation... abandoned inertia... abandoned excess of energy... abandoned deficiency of energy... abandoned longing... abandoned perception of diversity... abandoned excessive meditation upon forms, an imperfection of the mind; then I thought: 'I have abandoned those imperfections of the mind. Let me now develop concentration [collectedness] in three ways.'

31. "Thereupon, Anuruddha, I developed concentration [collectedness] with applied [thinking] and sustained [examining] thought; I developed concentration [collectedness] without applied [thinking] but with sustained [examining] thought only; I developed concentration [collectedness] without applied [thinking] and without sustained [examining] thought;

He's talking about getting into the first *jhāna*, getting into the second *jhāna*.

I developed concentration [collectedness] with rapture [joy]; I developed concentration [collectedness] without rapture [joy]; I developed concentration [collectedness] accompanied by pleasure [happiness]; I developed concentration [collectedness] accompanied by equanimity.

32. “When, Anuruddha, I had developed concentration [collectedness] with applied [thinking] thought and sustained [examining] thought... when I had developed concentration [collectedness] accompanied by equanimity, the knowledge and vision arose in me: ‘My deliverance is unshakeable; this is my last birth; now there is no renewal of being.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Anuruddha was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

Everybody has a different idea of what meditation is but it’s really about watching the more and more subtle things as they’re starting to arise, not holding on to any one thing so tightly that it makes everything else unobservable, so doing it with a light mind, doing it with a sense of fun is absolutely necessary, and you have no idea how much resistance people have to hearing that in Buddhism. “Life is supposed to be suffering.” — “Ok, you can suffer all you want, I don’t care, I’m going to have fun!” The Buddha said we’re the happy ones, and that makes sense to me. So be happy.

Let’s share some merit then:

MN-121: The Shorter Discourse on Voidness (Cūlasuññata Sutta)

The meaning of voidness (suññata) is very precisely defined by the Buddha in this Sutta. We are told, step by step, “exactly what is void and what, still remaining, has to be recognized as not void.” And we begin in this world of the senses which we know fairly well. Then by stages we withdraw to the forest, from that to the earth, and using that as a kasiṇa, a base for concentration, arrive after long efforts, maybe, at the base of infinite space. All that has gone before, all experience while in that concentration, is of infinite space. Now, one who does not have a good Teacher might stop here imagining that he had arrived at voidness and perhaps mistake it for Nibbāna. But he has to push on through the other three formless concentrations until he attains to the signless concentration mind in which there is no discrimination of “marks” or “signs.” This has to be seen as a conditioned state, impermanent and liable to cessation. Having seen this, he is free from birth and death, free from ignorance, an arahat.

Presented by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi on 3rd April 2007 at the Seattle Area Retreat, Woodinville, Washington

BV: This is a rather interesting discourse because there’s an awful lot of people that have different ideas about what voidness is and what it isn’t. So I thought it would be a good idea to go to the suttas and see what the Buddha said about voidness.

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in the Eastern Park, in the Palace of Migāra’s Mother.

2. Then, when it was evening, the venerable Ānanda rose from meditation, went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said to the Blessed One:

3. “Venerable sir, on one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Sakyan country where there is a town of the Sakyans named Nagaraka. There, venerable sir, I heard and learned this from the Blessed One’s own lips: ‘Now, Ānanda, I often abide in voidness.’ Did I hear that correctly, venerable sir, did I learn that correctly, attend to that correctly, remember that correctly?”

“Certainly, Ānanda, you heard that correctly, learned that correctly, attended to that correctly, remembered that correctly. As formerly, Ānanda, so now too I often abide in voidness.

4. “Ānanda, just as this Palace of Migāra’s Mother is void of elephants, cattle, horses, and mares, void of gold and silver, void of the assembly of men and women, and there is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the *Saṅgha* of monks;

Now let me explain about Migāra’s Mother’s Palace. The Buddha’s chief female supporter was named Visākhā, and she was from a super wealthy family. And when she got married, she married into Migāra’s family. Migāra was actually her father-in-law. But he didn’t really like her very much, and he started to look for things that would cause her embarrassment, and maybe he could get rid of her so she’d be sent back to the other family.

She had a favourite horse, and this horse was giving birth to a foal. So she stayed up all night with the horse, making sure that

everything went well with it and that sort of thing, so she wasn't in the house in the morning, when the father-in-law got up. Now, one of the things of the tradition in India is that the son and his wife always paid homage to the parents right after they got up. She wasn't there to do that, so he started criticizing her for that.

Another time, Migāra was eating food. And a monk came to the door, and was on almsround. And Migāra ignored him. So Visākhā said, "Please monk, go somewhere else. Migāra is eating stale fare." Stale, is like stale food. And that really got him upset. So, he wanted to cast her out of the house. But, she had eight very wise people. It was like a court that any grievance, they had to judge whether it was for real or not.

So they went and convened this court, and Migāra got up and he said, "She wasn't there to pay homage one morning, and that's the duty of his daughter-in-law to do that every morning. Why wasn't she there? She was out fooling around in the stables." And she got up and said, "Well, actually, my favourite horse was giving birth, so I was helping with that process. And I stayed up all night so that I could help, and everything turned out just great." So he begrudgingly said, "Ah, well, that's ok. But then there was the time I was eating, and my daughter-in-law said that I'm eating stale food." And she said, "No, I didn't say you were eating stale food, I said you're eating stale fare, which means that your wealth right now has come to you because of your past action of generosity. But you're just living on that action; you're not creating new action of generosity. So it's eating the stale karma, and not creating new karma. And that's why I said that." He became so impressed with her, that he said, "From now on I'm going to consider you my mother." So that's how Migāra's mother got to be in the suttas; it's actually Visākhā was her name. And it's kind of an inside monk joke, to call it "The Palace of Migāra's Mother".

Now, when she got married, she was quite an exceptional person. She was very strong in her body and very beautiful; came from a super, super rich family. And the gown that she got married in, it was made out of gold and many, many gems, diamonds, and rubies, and sapphires, and all of those kind of things. And because she had such exceptional physical strength, she could wear this without any problem.

One day she and one of her attendants went to listen to the Buddha give a talk after she was wearing this robe and she said, "Ah, I can't wear this in front of the Buddha; it's not right." So she gave it to her attendant, after folding it up very nicely, and her attendant sat it down, and then they went to listen to the Dhamma talk. And they were so inspired by the talk that they left and forgot the robe. So Visākhā, instead of becoming angry with the attendant, she was very happy that this happened, and she said, "I want you to go back to the monastery to pick up this robe and bring it back. But if Venerable Ānanda has touched the robe, you have to leave it there."

Venerable Ānanda, his habit was always going around cleaning things up. So, of course he got the robe and he put it in a place that was safe, and she found out that Venerable Ānanda had touched the robe. So, she went back and Visākhā said: "Ah, you've given me an opportunity to make more merit." And she said, "What I'm going to do is, I'm going to sell this robe, and then with the money I get for this robe, I'm going to build a monastery for all of the monks." But nobody could afford it, so she bought it back herself. And then she used that money for... it was such a spectacular place that they called it a palace. It had many, many rooms of many stories, very nicely done; very well done. So, this gives you an idea of some of the inside jokes that we have about this of the monks. And when it says that there

was no cattle, there was no horses, there was no elephants... of course not, it was a monastery. And they didn't allow those kind of things in the monastery, they had to be in stalls outside.

4. “Ānanda, just as this Palace of Migāra’s Mother is void of elephants, cattle, horses, and mares, void of gold and silver, void of the assembly of men and women, and there is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the *Saṅgha* of monks; so too, a monk — not attending to the perception of village, not attending to the perception of people — attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of forest. His mind enters into that perception of forest and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: ‘Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of village, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of people, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of forest.’ He understands: ‘This field of perception is void of the perception of village; this field of perception is void of the perception of people. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of forest.’ Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: ‘This is present.’ Thus, Ānanda, this is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

Now, did you understand that? If you go into the forest from a village where there are a lot of people, you leave the village and you leave all of those people alone, and your only perception now is in the forest. So you're void of the village, and you're void of the people. Now your only perception is in the forest. And

that's the way the Buddha was talking about voidness. He's saying these things are void, but there is the perception of something else that's there; it's not that everything is void. There's still the perception of the forest. And we go on and we go deeper and deeper into this. But this gives you more of the idea of what the Buddha was talking about when he was talking about voidness or emptiness. So your perception of the village, and your perception of people is empty in your perception; it's not there any more. There's only this perception: forest.

So this statement:

Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: 'This is present.' Thus, Ānanda, this is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

5. "Again, Ānanda, a monk — not attending to the perception of people, not attending to the perception of forest — attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of earth.

He's using earth as his meditation, which is a very specialized kind of meditation, but we can change that. We could say, instead of perception of earth, we could say perception of loving-kindness. It's basically the same thing. Any of the objects of meditation that the Buddha taught can be added in here.

His mind enters into that perception of earth and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. Just as a bull's hide becomes free from folds when fully stretched with a hundred pegs; so too, a monk — not attending to any of the ridges and hollows of this earth, to the rivers and ravines, the tracts of stumps and thorns, the mountains and uneven places — attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of

earth. His mind enters into that perception of earth and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: ‘Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of people, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of forest, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of earth.’ He understands: ‘This field of perception is void of the perception of people; this field of perception is void of the perception of forest. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of earth.’ Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: ‘This is present.’ Thus, Ānanda, this too is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

6. “Again, Ānanda, a monk — not attending to the perception of forest, not attending to the perception of earth — attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite space.

Now, before we get too far gone in this, what we’re really talking about here is: he was talking about with the earth, or with loving-kindness, or whatever kind of meditation you are doing... getting to the fourth *jhāna*, and these are called the material *jhānas*. These are levels of understanding where there are certain things that happen. As you get from the first *jhāna*, the second *jhāna*, the third *jhāna*, the fourth *jhāna*, your level of equanimity, balance of mind, it gets stronger, and stronger, and stronger.

And then you get into what the Buddha called the *arūpa jhānas*, the immaterial realms, and that is: infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, neither perception-nor-non-perception. This is where you don't have any feeling in your body unless there is contact. If I come and I touch you, you will know that that happened. Sound, you will be able to hear, but your equanimity is so strong that it doesn't make your mind shake. You hear the sound, it just goes through. This is different than the descriptions of a lot of the other one-pointed kinds of concentration, where they say, "You don't have any feeling in your body at all no matter what happens. I can come and I can move your hand, you wouldn't know that your hand was moved. I could make loud sounds right beside your ear, you wouldn't hear that at all, you wouldn't know that it happened." And that is a way that they test to see whether someone is in deep concentration or not, by touching them, and making sounds, and seeing if there's any kind of reaction. But that is when you don't add that extra step of relaxing. Your mind will become very deeply focused just on one thing. You become very, very tranquil and very, very peaceful, but your mind just stays on one thing only. It doesn't move. When you're practicing the way that the Buddha was talking about, you're still able to see things, and hear things, and when I say see things, you're able to recognize with your mind these things when they come up.

So you're still learning how this process of the Dependent Origination arises. So you're able to see that there's contact, and then there's feeling, and then there's craving, and then there's clinging, and then your habitual tendency. You'll be able to see these things, and as soon as you start recognizing when mind starts to get tight, you start relaxing right then. You go deeper into your meditation. Now, one of the advantages of doing this

meditation is: when your mindfulness slips, when your mindfulness is not always as sharp as it could be, what happens is, one of the hindrances can arise. And this is a good thing. The hindrances, “I like it” mind, “I don’t like it” mind. That’s greedy mind, hatred mind. Dullness — you don’t have sleepiness at this level. Restlessness — you can still have some doubt, but it’s really very faint by this time.

When these hindrances arise, they will take you away from the meditation, but you recognize that and you let it be and you relax and you come back. Now you start to see how your mind’s attention moves away from being with your object of meditation to being on the hindrance. See, that’s always the test, and you get to see at deeper and deeper levels how this process works. You start catching it a lot more quickly, you start relaxing into it much more easily, and you’re starting to see that all of these things are part of an impersonal process. It’s part of... because this arose, then the feeling arose; because the feeling arose, the craving is there; let go of the craving, your mind is brilliant, and clear, and bright. As you let go of the hindrance, then you go deeper into your meditation. So, you need the hindrances.

When you practice one-pointed concentration — which is mostly being taught in the world today — that doesn’t add that extra step of relaxing, and that extra step is very, very important for the Buddha’s teaching. When you don’t add that one extra step, your mind becomes very, very concentrated, but the force of the concentration stops the hindrances from coming up. So you don’t really have that process of learning how all of these things arise and how to let go of them, and you’re not learning very much; your mind becomes just stuck on one thing. Even though it’s peaceful and calm, being stuck on one thing means

that you don't gain more knowledge and vision. You don't gain more understanding of how the process works.

And the whole thing from the very first day that you start meditating until you're done, until you attain *Nibbāna*, the whole of the process is learning how to see mind's attention, how it moves from one thing to another. You're training yourself to see it more and more easily, more and more quickly, more and more clearly. And as you do that, it's so much easier to recognize, and not get caught personally with thoughts and feelings that arise. Now, this is a process that you see very, very closely when you're sitting in meditation.

But as you're able to recognize that when you're doing your quiet meditation, and your daily meditation, you're able to see the hindrances when they come up more quickly and more easily. So, you start letting go of those, so you start gaining balance all of the time.

In your daily life, your children, or your husband, or your wife, will start to notice that you don't get angry like you used to, that you take care of things without having the emotional ups and downs. Now you still have the problems, but they're not such big problems to you. And that's one of the ways that you tell that you're progressing in your practice... is that the things that used to get you mad, they don't get you mad so much anymore, and your sense of humour starts to improve. You start laughing with things. And you'll start noticing... somebody can come up and tell you a joke, and it puts down one ethnic group or another, whatever, and it's not funny to you. But they come up and they tell you something that their child did that was just great, and you find yourself smiling and laughing because of that, because

that was a happy moment. So your sense of humour starts to change as you go deeper in your meditation.

Ok, so we were at the base of infinite space...

His mind enters into that perception of the base of infinite space and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: ‘Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of forest, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of earth, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite space.’

ST: You mentioned earlier on that the earth was the object of meditation. So that means that if you do the *kasiṇa* in this stage you’re not...

BV: You see, I’ve never run across a teacher that has been able to teach me *kasiṇas* to my satisfaction. And I’ve looked; believe me, I’ve looked. So I don’t know how quite to answer you, because when you do the way the Buddha teaches and add that extra step, *kasiṇa* has always been a one-pointed kind of concentration. And with that, you stay with — they call it the *nimitta* — it’s a sign that comes up in your mind: it’s like a silver moon, it’s kind of shiny. So you wouldn’t stay with the earth *kasiṇa* any more when you have that arise. But the thing is, that arises before you get into the *jhāna*. So you wouldn’t be with the earth *kasiṇa* even while you were in the first *jhāna*. You would be with the perception of that *nimitta*, that sign that comes up in your mind. So that’s why I suggested you could replace it with loving-kindness. And when you get to the fourth *jhāna*, the loving-kindness changes — or right after the fourth *jhāna* when

you start to get into the *arūpa jhānas* — it changes. That's why I like that example better because I understand it.

ST: How does it work for, if you would do *ānāpānasati*, watching the breath?

BV: You still have all of these things arising, but you're staying with the breath and relaxing. And then you notice the expansion of infinite space and that sort of thing. It doesn't really change, the breath doesn't change at all. It stays the same and you relax in the same way, but you start observing other things that arise.

This sutta is a blessing in some ways and a curse in another because it is talking about the *kaṣiṇas*. And like I said, I went through Burma begging for somebody to teach me *kaṣiṇas*. Everybody talks about, "Well, there's real advantage of doing this *kaṣiṇa* or that *kaṣiṇa*," but nobody told me how to do it. And I went through Thailand, I went through Sri Lanka... looking. I couldn't find anybody. Everybody talks about it, but nobody talks about how, how to do it. And I have run across teachers that teach the meditation very similar to the way that I teach, and they can't explain the *kaṣiṇa* meditation at all. They come up with some imaginary thing, but it doesn't have anything to do with the actual practice.

See, when I started out doing so much meditation, I wanted to be a very well rounded meditator that any kind of meditation that the Buddha taught, I wanted to be able to have the experience of being able to do it. And I couldn't do it because there wasn't a teacher of the *kaṣiṇas*. And that's eight meditations right there.

It's a one-pointed kind of meditation that is being practiced right now. I don't know how the Buddha taught it, or if he actually taught it. See the thing is, about two hundred and fifty years

after the Buddha died there were a lot of Hindus and Brahmins that started wearing robes, but they were teaching their Hindu and the Vedas and all of that sort of thing. And they were mixing a lot of the meditation techniques that the Vedas say, and they were using Buddhist terminology. Eventually, they were expelled — couldn't wear those robes any more. They were questioned on what the Buddha taught, and they didn't know what the Buddha taught, so they had to disrobe. They took on the robes because they could get free food and that was very appealing to them.

But a lot of their ideas are still mixed up in the suttas themselves. And the one-pointed concentration got very mixed up with the Buddha's teaching. And because of that, there's been major problem with being able to attain *Nibbāna* the way the Buddha was talking about because the one-pointed concentration — he practiced that when he was a bodhisatta — and he said, "I've gone as far as I can go with this, this does not lead to *Nibbāna*. I quit! I don't want to do that any more. It doesn't work." So that's why he went out on his own. And he found this one extra step and the importance of adding that into the meditation, and how it changed the entire meditation, not just a little bit, but a lot. So you could see the individual pieces of how everything works. You can see that; you can recognize that; you can let it go. And when you do that, you let go of the suffering. It takes practice. This is a gradual teaching and a gradual learning. It happens a lot faster than it does with other meditations, I can guarantee you that, but still it doesn't happen right away. So you have to have some patience when you do your practice.

But the earth *kaṣiṇa*, what it basically is, the way that it's described in commentaries — which I find suspect, they had a lot of Vedic ideas in there — is a disk that's about this big. And

you take soil and mud, and put on a piece of cloth over the disk and let it dry, and then you hold it up, or hang it up, and you start staring at it, just saying, “Earth, earth, earth, earth, earth.” Now, they do that with all of the elements, and with some of the elements it’s a hole that’s cut out of a piece of wood or something like that, where they would put in front of a fire, and you would look at the fire and you say, “Fire, fire, fire, fire” like that. So that’s how the *kasiṇa*... *kasiṇa* basically means a round disk. Now there can be a disk that you stare at or it can be a disk that you’re looking through.

And there are four colours of which there’s a lot of fighting about what those four colours are. Some people say that brown is mixed in with it, other people say there’s blue mixed in with it, some people say there’s green; there’s all of these different ideas of the colours. That leaves me to think that that wasn’t part of the Buddha’s teaching. But the *kasiṇas* are mentioned a few times in the suttas, and it might be that was because of the Brahmin influence. I just don’t know because I certainly haven’t run across anybody that can understand it according to the way the Buddha teaches it. See, that extra step of relaxing is so incredibly important, and when it’s not in that meditation then it is suspect of being something other than the Buddha’s teaching, and I haven’t run across anybody that teaches it with the relaxing step in it. I have considered spending time doing a *kasiṇa* with the relaxing step to see what happens.

So when you get to the realm of infinite space, what you feel is... there’s a feeling of expansion that just keeps going out and out and out, and it goes in all the directions at the same time. But there’s no centre point, it’s just a feeling of expansion.

So...

Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: ‘This is present.’ Thus, Ānanda, this too is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

7. “Again, Ānanda, a monk — not attending to the perception of earth, not attending to the perception of the base of infinite space — attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness. His mind enters into that perception of the base of infinite consciousness and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: ‘Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of earth, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of infinite space, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness.’ He understands: This field of perception is void of the perception of earth; this field of perception is void of the perception of the base of infinite space. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness.’

So, what happens when you get into infinite consciousness is you start seeing individual consciousnesses arise and pass away. Now, {Snaps finger} that was a million consciousnesses arising and passing away, so we’re talking about being able to see this very, very finely. And you’re looking at something and it will be like you’re seeing something, but you’re seeing it like it’s a movie that’s going too slow, and there’s a flicker in between each picture. See, that’s what it’s like, but it’s like that with all of the sense doors: with the ear, with the tongue, with the nose, with

the body, feeling, and with mind. You see mind arising and passing away very quickly. When you see this, you are very, very convinced that everything is impermanent.

Nothing is like we think it is. We like to think that everything is permanent. We're always looking for things that are permanent. But when you start seeing the individual consciousnesses arise and pass away, arise and pass away, you start seeing the unsatisfactory nature of this. There's nothing that's permanent. Because of that, it's a form of suffering; it's a form of unsatisfactoriness because it's always changing. And, you see that there is no controller at all. These things happen because the conditions are right for you to see, so you see, and you see it as individual consciousnesses arising and passing away. But there's no self in that. It's not personal at all. This is an impersonal process that is happening. Because the eye hits colour and form, that meeting of the three is eye consciousness; that's called contact. And then a feeling arises and all of the rest of Dependent Origination. So what you're learning how to do when you get to that is see the individual consciousnesses and relax into that. Then you start looking more at the space in between those consciousnesses. And it's the blink in between... is a little bit longer and a little bit longer as you become more familiar with the process.

Ok...

8. "Again, Ānanda, a monk — not attending to the perception of the base of infinite space, not attending to the perception of the base of infinite consciousness — attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness. His mind enters into that perception of the base of nothingness and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He

understands thus: ‘Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of infinite space, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness.’ He understands: ‘This field of perception is void of the perception of the base of infinite space; this field of perception is void of the perception of the base of infinite consciousness. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness.’

Now, when you get into the base of nothingness, what happens is, mind is not looking outside of itself any more. There’s still things that are happening, but they’re more like factors that arise. It’s not so much seeing and thinking and getting caught up in the six senses any more, but you are starting to see mind in a lot more clear way. And what you’re starting to do is to recognize how to keep that equanimity, that balance of mind going, without getting caught up with putting too much energy into watching, or not enough energy. So now you’re starting to learn how to fine tune your meditation when you get to this stage.

I know an awful lot of monks that are teaching meditation and they won’t even talk about these kind of things because they say, “It takes you years and years and years to get to this.” I’m here to tell you it doesn’t; it doesn’t take years and years when you’re practicing with that relaxing step. It can take up to a year for some people. It depends on how much you do it, how much you meditate, how clear you are on what you’re seeing while you’re doing your meditation. I have seen some people that can do it in

seven days when they come and do a retreat. Some people are slow, they take eight... He he!

But this is probably the most interesting state in the meditation — at least it seems that to me — because it is such fine tuning that you have to do with your little bit too much energy and watching, then your mind gets a little restless, and you have to work with that and let it go. And then not quite enough, your mind gets a little dull, and you have to work with that. So now you're getting to really see what fine-tuning is all about because it's just little tiny bits of energy that you're working with. And it's real fun!

9. "Again, Ānanda, a monk — not attending to the perception of the base of infinite consciousness, not attending to the perception of the base of nothingness — attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. His mind enters into that perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.' He understands: This field of perception is void of the perception of the base of infinite consciousness; this field of perception is void of the perception of the base of nothingness. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on

the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.'

What happens when you get into neither-perception-nor-non-perception, where before you were feeling your mind expand out. Now it starts to get very, very small, and very, very tiny, and it gets to be hard to tell whether it's really there or not. And there still is some things that are arising in this state, but you won't notice it until you get out of that state, and then you start to reflect on what happened while you were in that meditation state.

By now, you've got the habit of relaxing. Every time mind wobbles a little tiny bit then there's the relaxing and letting go of that. See, the relaxing is the state that brings up the cessation of all kinds of movement and suffering that happens in the mind. So, what you're doing is you're practicing how to become more and more calm, and when you do that your mind might be moving like this, and as you practice more and more, it becomes less, and less, and less, and less, until finally it's hard to tell whether there's any movement there or not. There is some, but not much. There's still feeling there. There's still — kind of — there's still perception. It's hard to talk about because it's such a tiny little bit, but this is not *Nibbāna* yet.

Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: 'This is present.' Thus, Ānanda, this too is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

10. "Again, Ānanda, a monk — not attending to the perception of the base of nothingness, not attending to the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception — attends to the singleness dependent on the signless concentration of

mind. His mind enters into that signless concentration of mind and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understand thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life.'

So what happens is: as you continually go, and you continually relax more and more, you will get to a state where there is no movement of mind. Body is still here, but you don't see it. It's just like somebody turning off the lights; you're not able to see anything at all. You'll be in that state for a little while. There's no movement of mind's attention at all, absolutely none.

You come out of that state and the first thing you see is how mind's attention, and how the process of mind occurring, happens. And you see ignorance; and with ignorance as condition, you see mental formations; with mental formations as condition, you see consciousness; with consciousness as condition, you see mentality-materiality; with mentality-materiality as condition, you see the six sense bases; with the six sense bases as condition, you see contact; with contact as condition, feeling arises; with feeling as condition, craving arises; with craving as condition, clinging arises; with clinging as condition, habitual tendency arises; with habitual tendency as condition, birth arises; with birth as condition, old age, and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, arise. This is this whole mass of suffering, this is how it works, and you see this very clearly. Good place to stop wasn't it?

Now, what I'm telling you is the version of Dependent Origination that the Buddha was very clear in giving us, over and over again, he gave eighty-four different discourses just in one section (in the Saṃyutta Nikāya) on Dependent Origination and how it works. So that gives you an idea of some of the importance of being able to understand this, according to the Buddha. Now you will see this all automatically. It will happen very fast and your attention is so strong that you'll be able to recognize all of these different states.

And then it will occur to you to notice that when ignorance does not arise then the mental formations don't arise; if the mental formations don't arise, consciousness won't arise; if consciousness doesn't arise, mentality-materiality won't arise; if mentality-materiality doesn't arise, the six sense bases don't arise; if the six sense bases don't arise, contact won't arise; if contact doesn't arise, then feeling won't arise; if feeling won't arise, craving won't arise; when craving won't arise, clinging won't arise; when clinging won't arise, your habitual tendency won't arise; when the habitual tendency doesn't arise, birth doesn't arise; if birth doesn't arise, old age, and death, pain, sorrow, lamentation, they all will not arise. Now this is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

And when you see that, your understanding is so brilliant, at that time, that you experience *Nibbāna*. That's the way you get to understand how the process works. That's how you never have any doubt again as to whether this is real or not. And you see that this is all part of an impersonal process. It carries on because of conditions. That's how it arises, and that's how it ceases. So when you have the experience of *Nibbāna*, it's not this mystical, magical flash; what it is, is your deep understanding and seeing very clearly how this process works. So that's a little bit different than a lot of people are teaching these days.

ST: Sounds like the ending point is the state of emptiness.

BV: Well, when you see the cessation, the complete cessation — that is *Nibbāna* — but it's not nothing; it is something. But it's difficult to talk about because it's an unconditioned state. Everything we know is conditioned. So I get away from talking about what *Nibbāna* is because you can't talk about it. Any way of talking about it is putting conditions on it, and it's unconditioned, it's beyond that.

ST: We'll see it when we get there.

BV: Yeah, you'll know — then come back and tell me. And the thing is, right after you have this experience there is so much relief. You've been carrying around this burden of always thinking that everything is personal, and seeing things in a very distant way, not seeing closely. And now you understand and you will be happy for a few days like you've never been happy before. And even after that experience, it still has effects on the way you see the world around you.

Now, what I just described to you is called the “path knowledge.” That isn't the end of the road. Just having the path knowledge, there is some personality change, but not a lot. You will have to have this experience again. That is the cessation of perception and feeling, and then when you get out of that, you will see Dependent Origination arising and passing away. When that happens, that is what you call the “fruition knowledge,” and that's where the personality development really takes place.

If you're doing it through meditation then that will happen in such a way that lust and hatred will never enter your mind again. Now think about that. Your mind will never get angry again. It's worth working for. You never have any doubt. You see

everything as part of an impersonal process. You never take things personally any more. That means you have this balanced mind that's balanced all the time. You never have any doubt whether this is the right way to go or not. You know it's the right way to go because of your deep experience. So it's really nice when you can get the fruition.

Now the fruition can happen at any time. You do your meditation and you get the path knowledge, and then you go home and you start washing the dishes, and you feel your mind starting to go very deep. Or you're cleaning the house or you're doing something, and you say, "Well, let's let that go," and then you sit for a little while and you watch your mind go deep and experience that cessation of perception and feeling, and then you see the Dependent Origination arising and passing away. And you might see it three times, or you might see it four times, depending on what your experience is. And after that it's completely unshakable that you will never have anger arise in your mind again. You never have lust, greed for things. Well, so it's definitely worth working for, I think!

Ok, so...

He understands: 'This field of perception is void of the perception of the base of nothingness; this field of perception is void of the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life.'

In other words, you can sit for a period of time, up to seven days, and your body will stay alive. But there's no disturbance in your mind at all. There is no perception, there is no feeling. For seven days you can do this. And I did know one person that did that.

And I said, “Why?” And they said... see, I gave them a one word question... they gave me a one word answer, “Relief.” Think about you’re not having any disturbance in your mind at all for that period of time. There’s so much relief that happens because there is no movement and thoughts coming in and that sort of thing; it’s just at ease.

ST: Is that why they meditate, they don’t feel the need to eat anything?

BV: Unless I talk with the monks about that, I don’t know. I’d have to talk with the individual monks to see what was happening. There are states that you can get into that the devas — the heavenly beings — will pour food into your pores, so you don’t have to eat for long periods of time or drink. There are those states and that might be what they’re getting into, or maybe not. I’d have to talk with them individually to see. So it’s a difficult question to give you a definite answer on.

Ok...

He understands thus: ‘This signless concentration of mind is conditioned and volitionally produced. But whatever is conditioned and volitionally produced is impermanent, subject to cessation.’ When he knows and sees thus, his mind is liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When it is liberated there comes the knowledge: ‘It is liberated.’ He understands: ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.’

12. “He understands thus: ‘Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the taint of sensual desire, those are

not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the taint of being, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the taint of ignorance, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life.’ He understands: ‘This field of perception is void of the taint of sensual desire; this field of perception is void of the taint of being; this field of perception is void of the taint of ignorance. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life. Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: ‘This is present.’ Thus, Ānanda, this is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness, supreme, and unsurpassed.

13. “Ānanda, whatever recluses and brahmins in the past entered upon and abided in pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness, all entered upon and abided in this same pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness. Whatever recluses and brahmins in the future will enter upon and abide in pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness, all will enter upon and abide in this same pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness. Whatever recluses and brahmins in the present enter upon and abide in pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness, all enter upon and abide in this same pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness. Therefore, Ānanda, you should train thus: ‘We will enter upon and abide in pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ānanda was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

So, that gives you an idea of what to look forward to.

ST: It is so deep that I can't quite comprehend it.

BV: As you get more settled in your meditation, it will start to make more and more sense, I promise. I know that it was an advanced teaching today. But it's real good to become familiar with it even if you don't quite understand what I was saying. As you hear it over and over again, which you will, then it becomes more clear as you go deeper in your meditation.

Ok, let's share some merit then.

MN-105: To Sunakkhatta (Sunakkhatta Sutta)

Sunakkhatta (his name means “one who has a good horoscope”) seems to have been misnamed. He became a bhikkhu and then not only disrobed, but spread all sorts of reports intended to discredit his former Teacher. In sutta MN-12, Mahāsīhanāda Sutta, he has only just left the Saṅgha while in this sutta we must presume that th has been a layman for some time. Even when he was a bhikkhu (see DN-24, Pāṭika Sutta) he was plagued by uncertainties and skepticism, and here we see him still troubled that anyone could really declare “final knowledge” (aññā) which means arahatship. The Buddha admits that some who do so make this declaration from an overestimation of their attainments.

Then stage by stage the Buddha shows what different people are interested in and how their minds turn away from lower goals. This discourse leads up to Nibbāna and one who wrongly esteems it through overestimation, and one who rightly does so. The simile of the dart is introduced here to show how even one who is near to the final attainment should be careful, not careless. If he becomes careless even at this stage he dies (disrobes and returns to lay life) or experiences deadly suffering (committing some offence of a sexual nature). But the careful person heals his wound (a name for the sense-bases) and comes to be completely free of the essentials of existence — “it is not possible that he would either employ his body or bestir his mind about the essential of existence.” Such is the arahat’s state.

*Presented by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi on 10th October
2006 at the Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center*

BV: This is a rather interesting sutta, because it talks about what can happen if you don’t get the fruition, if you just have the

experience of the path, without getting the fruition and being careful.

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Vesālī in the Great Wood in the Hall with the Peaked Roof.

2. Now on that occasion a number of monks had declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One thus: “We understand: Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.”

3. Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, heard: “A number of monks, it seems, have declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One thus: ‘We understand: Birth is destroyed... there is no more coming to any state of being.’” Then Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said to the Blessed One:

Now, this is after he had disrobed and had been criticizing the Buddha for not showing off any supernatural powers.

4. “I have heard, venerable sir, that a number of monks have declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One. Did they do so rightly or are there some monks here who declare final knowledge because they overestimate themselves?”

5. “When those monks, Sunakkhatta, declared final knowledge in my presence, there were some monks who declared final knowledge rightly and there were some who declared final knowledge because they overestimated themselves. Therein, when monks declare final knowledge rightly, their declaration is true. But when monks declare final knowledge

because they overestimate themselves, the Tathāgata thinks: ‘I should teach them the Dhamma.’ Thus it is in this case, Sunakkhatta, that the Tathāgata thinks: ‘I should teach them the Dhamma.’ But some misguided men here formulate a question, come to the Tathāgata, and ask it. In that case, Sunakkhatta, though the Tathāgata has thought: ‘I should teach them the Dhamma,’ he changes his mind.”

6. “This is the time, Blessed One, this is the time, Sublime One, for the Blessed One to teach the Dhamma. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“Then listen, Sunakkhatta, and attend closely to what I shall say.”

“Yes, venerable sir,” Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

7. “There are, Sunakkhatta, these five cords of sensual pleasure. What are the five? Forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. Sounds cognizable by the ear... Odours cognizable by the nose... Flavours cognizable by the tongue... Tangibles cognizable by the body that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. These are the five cords of sensual pleasure.

8. “It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on worldly material things. When a person is intent on worldly material things, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the imperturbable is going on, he will not listen to it or give it

ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

9. “Suppose, Sunakkhatta, a man had left his own village or town a long time ago, and he were to see another man who had only recently left that village or town. He would ask that man whether the people of that village or town were safe, prosperous, and healthy, and that man would tell him whether the people of that village or town were safe, prosperous, and healthy. What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Would that first man listen to him, give him ear, and exert his mind to understand?” — “Yes, venerable sir.” — “So too, Sunakkhatta, it is possible that some person here may be intent on worldly material things. When a person is intent on worldly material things, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the imperturbable is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that. He should be understood as a person who is intent on worldly material things.

10. “It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the imperturbable. When a person is intent on the imperturbable, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about worldly material things is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to

understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

11. “Just as a yellow leaf that has fallen from its stalk is incapable of becoming green again, so too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is intent on the imperturbable he has shed the fetter of worldly material things. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of worldly material things who is intent on the imperturbable.

12. “It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the base of nothingness. When a person is intent on the base of nothingness, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the imperturbable is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it.

The imperturbable is the first part of the fourth *jhāna* and it's also talking about the realm of infinite space and the realm of infinite consciousness. That's what he's lumping together as the imperturbable. As your mind gets more and more balanced, more and more calm, you start to see when your mind is doing this and you let it go right then and relax, and then you see what happens right before your mind had the bigger movements. As you go deeper and deeper into that you will eventually get to a state of nothingness, where mind is not looking outside of itself. The six sense doors don't come into being unless there's contact, but you still have the six sense doors at that time. When you get to neither-perception-nor-non-perception, there is no more sense doors.

He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

So, once you start getting into the deeper realms you really feel like talking to other people that have the same kind of experience, and talking about other things just doesn't hold it for you so much, doesn't hold your attention.

13. "Just as a thick stone that has split in two cannot be joined together again, so too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is intent on the base of nothingness his fetter of the imperturbable has been split. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the imperturbable

The fetters are the disturbances of the lower *jhānas* and the lower *jhānas* being infinite space, infinite consciousness.

He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the imperturbable who is intent on the base of nothingness.

14. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. When a person is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the base of nothingness is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it.

Because he already knows it.

He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

When you get into the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception it's really tough to see what's happening in the present. There's still things that are happening. By the time that you get to this state, you should automatically have the relaxing every time mind does anything at all. Anything that arises in the mind, just relaxing into it, relax, relax, relax, relax... Now, there's still things that happen while you're in this realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, but the perception is so fine that you can't tell whether it's really there or not in the present moment. When you come out and you start reflecting about what happened while you were in that state, then you start remembering some of the things that were happening. There is still feeling in that state. I've had some students that have asked, you know they say "You know, I don't know whether I was asleep or not." And the way you tell whether there was any sloth and torpor is by reflecting what happened while you were in that state. So, if you get into that state, then when you come out you need to spend time reflecting on what happened. If you can remember what happened then you are experiencing that state. If you can't remember what was happening then you were dulling out, and that means that your energy was not balanced. There was too little energy you were putting in. So, what we need to do with something like that is walk a little bit more briskly so that your blood gets flowing a little bit more, but still staying with your meditation all of the time, developing that habit of continually relaxing. That's utmost important.

"It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. When a person is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, only talk concerning that interests him,

This is an incredibly fine state, but it's also a very interesting state because all kinds of wonderful things start happening.

only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the base of nothingness is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

15. **“Suppose a person has eaten some delicious food and thrown it up. What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Could that man have any desire to eat that food again?”**

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because that food is considered repulsive.”

“So too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, his fetter of the base of nothingness has been rejected. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the base of nothingness who is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

16. **“It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be completely intent on *Nibbāna*. When a person is completely intent on *Nibbāna*, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.**

So, we're talking right now about a person that has experienced the path knowledge. That's the first experience of *Nibbāna* where you see a very brief glimpse of Dependent Origination, but it is a very profound glimpse of Dependent Origination!

17. “Just as a palm tree with its top cut off is incapable of growing again, so too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is completely intent on *Nibbāna*, his fetter of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception has been cut off — cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that it is no longer subject to future arising. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception who is completely intent on *Nibbāna*.

18. “It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some monk here might think thus: ‘Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humour of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill-will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; the poisonous humour of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on *Nibbāna*.’ Since he conceives himself thus, though it is contrary to fact, he might pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on *Nibbāna*.

That means he has experienced the path, but he hasn't experienced the fruition. The fruition is where you have the experience and it really sets in deep and that's where the personality change occurs. People that experience the path without the fruition can still lose that experience if they're not careful, you'll see.

He might pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye, he might pursue unsuitable sounds with the ear, unsuitable odours with the nose, unsuitable flavours with the tongue,

unsuitable tangibles with the body, or unsuitable mind-objects with the mind. When he pursues the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye... unsuitable mind-objects with the mind, lust invades his mind. With his mind invaded by lust, he would incur death or deadly suffering.

So, if you're not really careful and you don't really keep your precepts very well and you don't keep your practice going, you can lose that experience. That's a little bit different than what most people have heard before.

ST: Can you say more about this?

BV: It means if you don't gain the fruit of that experience there is no personality change, and if there's no personality change you still have a tendency to break the precepts, you still have a tendency to get caught up in your lust and hatred and delusion. This is a state where people will start puffing their chest up and saying I have this experience and I'm better than everybody else, and they think that they can do anything they want because "I've had this experience," but they're not being mindful, they're not watching. Yes they're close to the personality development of seeing the fruition of that, but they still have to keep going.

Now, for some people like Sāriputta, as soon as he had the path knowledge all of a sudden his mind just trotted right into the fruition, and that happened a lot more during the time of the Buddha than it does now. The fruition might take a week, it might take a month, it might take five years, but you have to keep your mindfulness going. You have to develop the habit of not getting caught by lust or hatred. You don't have the emotional upsets. You don't have the mind that grabs onto things with dissatisfaction anymore because you're being mindful when it starts to arise. It can still arise at any time and if you get into your old habitual

tendency of somebody said something I don't like and I explode at them, you're going to lose that whole experience and you're going to have to start over again.

See, the whole thing with this practice is learning how to develop equanimity all of time, not just while you're sitting, not just while you're doing your retreat, but in your daily life, and having the balance in your daily life. Like your mate says something and normally that would set your mind off, but when your mindfulness is good, you see that as part of a process and you start relaxing into that and letting it go without reacting like you always acted before. Now you start responding with letting go of the craving, you don't have to protect yourself because when you let go of the craving there's nothing to protect. There's just seeing what arises, and letting it go. And it takes a great deal of balance to do that. It takes remembering not to get into the old habitual tendency, not to continue on doing the same way you've always done it. There has to be some change in perspective. There has to be some change in "I always would control a situation by acting in this way," now you have to let go of the control. And now you have to start seeing it for what it really is instead of getting caught up in it, letting it go and relaxing.

19. "Suppose, Sunakkhatta, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon. The surgeon would cut around the opening of the wound with a knife, then he would probe for the arrow with a probe, then he would pull out the arrow and would expel the poisonous humour, leaving a trace of it behind. Thinking that no trace was left behind

Thinking that the wound is completely clean when it's not. Now, this is referring back to what happens when you might have a

very deep spiritual experience, but you fall back into your old habitual tendency of giving into the lust and the hatred and the delusion, but thinking that you're beyond that.

he would say: 'Good man, the arrow has been pulled out from you; the poisonous humour has been expelled with no trace left behind,

Now, what this is talking about here is also talking about a teacher that doesn't really understand when the poisons of lust hatred and delusion are gone.

and it is incapable of harming you. Eat only suitable food; do not eat unsuitable food or else the wound may suppurate. From time to time wash the wound and from time to time anoint its opening, so that pus and blood do not cover the opening of the wound. Do not walk around in the wind and sun or else dust and dirt may infect the opening of the wound. Take care of your wound, good man, and see to it that the wound heals.'

20. "The man would think: 'The arrow has been pulled out from me; the poisonous humour has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming me.' He would eat unsuitable food, and the wound would suppurate. He would not wash the wound from time to time nor would he anoint its opening from time to time, and pus and blood would cover the opening of the wound. He would walk around in the wind and sun, and dust and dirt would infect the opening of the wound. He would not take care of his wound, nor would he see to it that the wound heals. Then, both because he does what is unsuitable and because a trace was left behind when the foul poisonous humour was

expelled, the wound would swell, and with its swelling he would incur death or deadly suffering.

So he's really saying you got to be careful of the three poisons of lust, hatred, and delusion, and not get caught in that. Take care of that, watch how mind grabs onto dissatisfaction when it doesn't meet an expectation and let go of the expectation and let go of the tightness caused by that craving and clinging.

21. "So too, Sunakkhatta, it is possible that some monk here might think thus: 'Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humour of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill-will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; the poisonous humour of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent upon *Nibbāna*.' Because he conceives himself thus, though it is contrary to fact, he might pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on *Nibbāna*. He might pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye,

And this is where the pride really comes in and the thinking that it's ok for me to do this because I've had this experience...

he might pursue unsuitable sounds with the ear, unsuitable odours with the nose, unsuitable flavours with the tongue, unsuitable tangibles with the body, or unsuitable mind-objects with the mind. When he pursues the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye... unsuitable mind-objects with the mind, lust invades his mind. With his mind invaded by lust, he would incur death or deadly suffering.

So, until there is the experience of fruition, you still are walking a very fine line. When you have the experience of fruition, of either becoming an *anāgāmi* or an *arahat*, when you have the fruition, lust and hatred will not arise in your mind ever again. So, it doesn't

matter if these other things, these unsuitable things, arise, it won't pull your mind to it at all. You won't even want to do them. You'll just say "No, I'm going to go over here and do this. I don't need to be around that kind of energy, I don't want that kind of thing coming into my consciousness," and you'll do it automatically. You'll be repulsed by things that you used to find, the worldly things that you used to find very compelling, but your mind becomes so pure because there's no lust and there's no hatred in your mind ever again. Everything becomes more clear, more bright, more easily recognized, and your mindfulness is so sharp, that you see Dependent Origination in everything. So, you see it as being part of an impersonal process, everything that arises, and there is the letting go, continually, and that is so automatic that you don't even notice it anymore. That's how automatic it becomes.

22. "For it is death in the Discipline of the Noble One, Sunakkhatta, when one abandons the training and reverts to the low life;

Now he's talking about Sunakkhatta, who was a monk, and then he disrobed.

and it is deadly suffering when one commits some defiled offence.

23. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some monk here might think thus: 'Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humour of ignorance

What's ignorance? Ignorance is not seeing how the Four Noble Truths work in Dependent Origination.

the poisonous humour of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill-will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; the poisonous humour of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on *Nibbāna*.' Being one who

really is completely intent on *Nibbāna*, he would not pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on *Nibbāna*. He would not pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye, he would not pursue unsuitable sounds with the ear, unsuitable odours with the nose, unsuitable flavours with the tongue, unsuitable tangibles with the body, or unsuitable mind-objects with the mind. Because he does not pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye... unsuitable mind-objects with the mind, lust does not invade his mind. Because his mind is not invaded by lust, he would not incur death or deadly suffering.

24. “Suppose, Sunakkhatta, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon. The surgeon would cut around the opening of the wound with a knife, then he would probe for the arrow with a probe, then he would pull out the arrow and would expel the poisonous humour without leaving a trace of it behind. Knowing that no trace was left behind, he would say: ‘Good man, the arrow has been pulled out from you; the poisonous humour has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming you. Eat only suitable food; do not eat unsuitable food or else the wound may suppurate. From time to time wash the wound and from time to time anoint its opening, so that pus and blood do not cover the opening of the wound. Do not walk around in the wind and sun or else dust and dirt may infect the opening of the wound. Take care of your wound, good man, and see to it that the wound heals.’

25. “The man would think: ‘The arrow has been pulled out from me; the poisonous humour has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming me.’ He

would eat only suitable food, and the wound would not suppurate. From time to time he would wash the wound and from time to time he would anoint its opening, and pus and blood would not cover the opening of the wound. He would not walk around in the wind and sun, and dust and dirt would not infect the opening of the wound. He would take care of his wound and would see to it that the wound heals. Then, both because he does what is suitable and because no trace was left behind when the foul poisonous humour was expelled, the wound would heal, and because it had healed and was covered with skin, he would not incur death or deadly suffering.

26. "So too, Sunakkhatta, it is possible that some monks here might think thus: 'Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humour of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill-will. That arrow of craving has been pulled out from me; the poisonous humour of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on *Nibbāna*.' Being one who really is completely intent on *Nibbāna*, he would not pursue those things unsuitable for one completely intent on *Nibbāna*... (as above) Because his mind is not invaded by lust, he would not incur death or deadly suffering.

27. "Sunakkhatta, I have given this simile in order to convey a meaning. This is the meaning here: 'Wound' is a term for the six internal bases. 'Poisonous humour' is a term for ignorance.

Not seeing the Four Noble Truths.

'Arrow' is a term for craving. 'Probe' is a term for mindfulness. 'Knife' is a term for noble wisdom. 'Surgeon' is

a term for the Tathāgata, the Accomplished One, the Fully Enlightened One.

28. “That monk, Sunakkhatta, is one who practises restraint in the six bases of contact. Having understood that acquisition is the root of suffering, being acquisitionless, liberated in the destruction of the acquisitions, it is not possible that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any acquisition.

29. “Suppose, Sunakkhatta, there were a bronze cup of beverage possessing a good colour, smell, and taste, but it was mixed with poison, and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure and recoiled from pain. What do you think, Sunakkhatta, would that man drink that cup of beverage, knowing: ‘If I drink this I will incur death or deadly suffering?’” — “No, venerable sir.” — “So too, that monk is one who practises restraint in the six bases of contact. Having understood that acquisition is the root of suffering, being acquisitionless, liberated in the destruction of acquisitions, it is not possible that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any acquisition.

30. “Suppose, Sunakkhatta, there were a deadly poisonous snake, and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure and recoiled from pain. What do you think, Sunakkhatta, would that man give that deadly poisonous snake his hand or his thumb, knowing: ‘If I am bitten by him I will incur death or deadly suffering?’” — “No, venerable sir.” — “So too, when a monk practises restraint in the six bases of contact, and having understood that attachment is the root of suffering, is without attachment, liberated by the destruction of attachment, it is not possible that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any object of attachment.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Now, this is a real interesting thing because this is what I was starting to write about with this particular sutta, that had to do with fruition. Fruition occurs at any time when mind is developed enough. So, you can still have the experience of *Nibbāna*, but you haven't got a firm hold on it. It's a tenuous hold. If you keep getting involved with the six sense doors and identifying with it then you soon forget and you don't look deep at "this is part of an impersonal process." This is the most important aspect of the Buddha's teachings is the impersonal nature of everything. The craving, when it arises, that's the start of the "I am," "I like this," "I don't like that." So, when you start to see everything as being part on an impersonal process, it doesn't hold your attention, it doesn't make your mind go to it. You don't seek out material things, and because your mind doesn't tend towards that, you start looking more at how the impersonal process of Dependent Origination works in everything. And that doesn't mean that you still won't have some emotional things come up. You still can when you've just had the path knowledge, but you start recognizing it really quickly, and you start letting go of it very quickly. And with that, doing that enough, then you'll have the fruition experience.

When you have the path experience, you have what I said was a brief glimpse of Dependent Origination. You had the cessation of perception and feeling, when the perception and feeling come back, you saw one time Dependent Origination, you saw all of the links and how each link has the cessation to it. When you have the experience of fruition, you will see that happen either three times or four times depending on whether you become an *anāgāmi* or an *arahat*. When you see it happen three times you'll go through the

whole process, and then you'll go through the whole process, and then you'll go through the whole process again, and you really got it. But there's still some attachment, there's still some slight desires that you have, that this experience didn't burn away. This experience will burn away the lust and the greed, but you still have some little tiny fetters, if you're an *anāgāmī*. You still have a little bit of pride. You still have some restlessness, some dullness. You still have a desire to experience another realm. You still have some ignorance. Now, when you become an *arahat*, the fruition experience is seeing it four times in a row. And when you see that, that last time of seeing it burns away all of these other fetters and you see clearly Dependent Origination and the Four Noble Truths, and this is a deep realization. It's such a deep realization that it changes everything, and there is no more becoming because of that.

ST: What is *magga*, *phala*?

BV: *Magga* is the path, and *phala* is the fruition. Let's say you have the experience and it's a very light experience, not necessarily to do with meditation. Like Visākhā was a chief supporter for the Buddha, female supporter. When she was eight years old, she heard the Dhamma and her mind was so intelligent that she understood what was being said and she became a *sotāpanna* right then and right there. Now, this is a real "Oh wow" experience, and she could have had the fruition of that experience, and the fruition of that experience is just seeing that one time again. Anāthapiṇḍika's daughter, she heard some discourses by the Buddha and she became a *sakadāgāmī*. Now, this is just from hearing, it's not from practice, and it can happen through practice, or not, depending on your understanding. The only way you can become an *anāgāmī* or an *arahat* is through practice. Now, you know there's a lot of the monks that became

enlightened and became full-on *arahats* listening to a discourse, but they had had so much practice all they needed was a tweak in their understanding of what they were seeing, and that was enough to make them become *arahats*, but they'd done lots and lots of practice before that.

This is one of the things, there's no such a thing as bad meditation, there's just different end results of the meditation. And somebody that can be doing meditation, it doesn't matter whether it's straight *Vipassanā* or *samatha* meditation, whatever. When their understanding gets tweaked so that they change their perspective a little bit, they're opening themselves up to some really wonderful experiences. Now, the thing with the *Vipassanā* is, it never goes deep enough to experience the cessation of perception and feeling. That only happens through *jhāna*, and not the absorbed *jhāna*, but the aware *jhāna* as it is explained in these suttas. Now, it can happen in any one of the *jhānas*. It can be in the first *jhāna*, it can arise, it doesn't matter. So, that's a prerequisite; *jhāna* is a necessary part of the practice, to have that experience, so that you can get to the cessation of perception and feeling. And sometimes people, they can have this experience to start off with; they have the path knowledge, and when you're talking about the good qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and *Saṅgha*, when you're talking about the *Saṅgha* one of the things it says these eight kind of individuals, these four pairs of beings... now what it's talking about is somebody that has a path, somebody that has a path and fruit of the first step, and it goes through all of the steps that way. So, you can become an *arahat*, but without the fruition you can lose that attainment if you let your mind slip and not get the fruition. So, you have to really be careful of what mind is doing in the present moment, and this is all the time and this is what the practice really is.

ST: *Vipassanā* teachers say you don't need *jhāna*.

BV: Mahasi Sayadaw came up with this method because there was the idea that getting *jhāna* took too long and he was looking for a more direct path, and to be quite honest, you know for a fact *jhāna* doesn't take that long when you're doing the practice in the right way. If you're not doing it in the right way it can take a long time.

And the reason it takes nine or fifteen years for the monks to experience that is because they sit for half an hour or forty-five minutes a day. You know, and then they're off doing whatever they do, and they don't... see, during the time of the Buddha there was no such a thing as doing a retreat. You had your own time and you could do whatever you wanted with it, and a lot of the monks chose to do the meditation, but it wasn't a group meditation so much as it was individual.

ST: So they didn't do retreats?

BV: The idea of a "retreat" is really fairly new. Yes, and I'm not saying it's good, bad or indifferent. I'm just saying that it's just a different way of doing things. The Japanese have been doing this for a long time. I mean they've been doing it for hundreds of years, that they all get up and they walk their little circle and then they sit and they do their meditation, they get up and they walk in their little circle...

ST: They stress quiet and noble silence.

BV: Yes, and that's the big discussion about whether to have a fan on because the noise disturbing my meditation is just a classic way of understanding that they were doing one-pointed concentration rather than Tranquillity-*Vipassanā*.

Sayadaw U Jotika used to always say that noise is a thorn in the side of a meditator. So, if you're going to get up and move around, do it quietly.

But the practice of lessening the involvement with the sense doors means that there is the practice of recognizing when that sense door arises and starting to relax into that as soon as you possibly can remember because the danger of it is, at first you start thinking about that sense door, and then you're thinking about this, and then you're thinking about that, and then you're thinking about that, and you go a long ways away with the thinking, and this is with your daily activities. If you want to become super-efficient at whatever you want to do you have to be able to recognize the craving and the clinging and let it go, right then, and then you're just staying with what you're doing with that super-clear mind that's quiet. And that doesn't mean to say that you don't have thoughts arise, but the thoughts that arise are what is happening in the present moment. That's the kind of clear thinking that has intuition in it. If it's thoughts of the past, it's thoughts of the future, those are the thoughts that have the craving and the clinging in it, and I can't stress enough the importance of smiling into everything that you're doing. The more you can smile, the more clear your mind becomes, the more alert your mind becomes, and that's really the best mindfulness builder that I can think of!

MN-106: The Way to the Imperturbable (Āneñjasappāya Sutta)

This is one of those suttas which begins at a level of attainment which few people even end with. For not many people attain the fourth jhāna from which by stages the sutta progresses through the four formless attainments to Nibbāna. At each stage the Buddha shows how a bhikkhu considers what should be abandoned, aspiring to what “is more peaceful, a superior goal”

The two sections “With clinging there is no Nibbāna” and “Without clinging there is Nibbāna” are important, for they bring out two different ways of regarding the attitude embodied in the phrases: “If I were not, and naught were mine, I shall not be and naught will be mine. And what there is, has come to be, that I abandon.”

Venerable Ānanda Thera exclaims of this sutta: “It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvelous! For each stage of attainment, it seems, the crossing of the flood (of saṃsāra) has been told to us by the Blessed One.” Then the sutta ends with that stirring passage in which the Buddha urges the bhikkhus not to delay their meditation lest later you regret it, and he points out the roots of trees and empty huts where it can be done.

*Presented by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi on 9th October 2005
at the Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center*

BV: Ok, the sutta tonight is sutta number 106, “The Way to the Imperturbable.” This is from the Majjhima Nikāya.

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Kuru country where there was a town of the Kurus named Kammāsadhamma. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: “Bhikkhus.” — “Venerable sir,” they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. “Bhikkhus, sensual pleasures are impermanent, hollow, false, deceptive; they are illusory, the prattle of fools. Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come — both alike are Māra’s realm, Māra’s domain, Māra’s bait, Māra’s hunting ground. On account of them, these evil unwholesome mental states such as covetousness, ill-will, and presumption arise, and they constitute an obstruction to a noble disciple in training here.

Now this is kind of an interesting thing, because we’re talking about sensual pleasures, then we’re talking about sensual perceptions. Perceptions are the name that we give things. We see color and form, and our perception says, “This is a cup.” And it comes from our past experience. But it also carries on to future experiences. So when we perceive sensual pleasures like lust, we have a name for it. We have a name for that like of the sight or sound or taste or touch or odor, or thought. We have these group of things that we identify with and we call them our own, and we delight in them. So it’s not only just the sensual pleasure itself, it’s the perception of the sensual pleasure. The naming of the sensual pleasure and then you’re just carried away with whatever it happens to be.

3. “Therein, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come, constitute an obstruction to a noble disciple in training here. Suppose I were to abide with a mind abundant and exalted, having transcended the world and made a firm determination with the mind.

Now a mind that is abundant and exalted, is a mind that is in *jhāna*. When you look at the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, it talks about

being able to recognize an exalted mind as an exalted mind. That means you recognize a mind in *jhāna* as a mind being in *jhāna*. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which really is talking about the practice of *jhāna* and mindfulness being together, they're yoked together, just like two oxen pulling a cart, they're held together by this yoke over their necks, they pull at the same time, they happen at the same time. The *jhāna*, and your mindfulness, and insight, happens at the same time.

“Having transcended the world,” another thing it says in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, is, “having an unworldly experience.” An unworldly wholesome experience is being in *jhāna*, again.

When I do so, there will be no more evil unwholesome mental states such as covetousness, ill-will, and presumption in me, and with the abandoning of them my mind will be unlimited, immeasurable, and well developed.'

Now, we're not talking about the lower *jhānas*, we're not talking about the first three *jhānas*, we're starting to talk about the fourth *jhāna*, and the different aspects of the fourth *jhāna*.

A lot of people, when they give a talk, they talk about having eight *jhānas*, but that's just a way of talking.

The fourth *jhāna* is divided into the realms of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, neither-perception-nor-non-perception. These are all parts of the fourth *jhāna*. To keep everything straight, they talk about eight *jhānas*. Now talking about an unlimited and immeasurable mind, to me, what this is talking about is the Brahmā Vihāras, because all of the Brahmā Vihāras are unlimited and immeasurable.

When he practises in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the imperturbable now or else

he resolves [upon it] with wisdom, on the dissolution of the body, after death it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable.

That means going into the Brahmā-lokas, and these are the higher Brahmā-lokas. The realm of infinite space, if you're reborn in that realm, it would last for sixteen thousand *mahakappas*. {Laughs} If you're reborn in infinite consciousness, you would stay in that realm for thirty two thousand *mahakappas*. If you died and you had the realm of nothingness, that would last for sixty thousand *mahakappas*. If you have neither-perception-nor-non-perception, that state would last for eighty four thousand *mahakappas*. Long, long, long time, and you don't have a physical body, it's just consciousness.

ST: Now that's if you're in that state when you pass away?

BV: Good one, eh? If you have attained that state sometime in your life. See, just attaining *jhāna*, one time in your life, you'll be reborn in a Brahmā-loka, because it is such good merit having attained that, and unless you commit a pretty grievous offense, like killing your mother, killing your father, killing an *arahat*, attempting to kill a Buddha, causing a schism in the order, if you commit one of these five, they call them heinous crimes, you'll be reborn in a hell realm, doesn't matter. But, if you haven't done one of those bad things, you would be reborn in... because of the power of the merit of getting into the *jhāna*, you would be reborn in a Brahmā-loka. All the Brahmā-lokas last for a pretty long period of time, let's just put it that way.

What I don't understand is when it says, "he either attains to the imperturbable now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom." I really don't understand that statement. Ok, what it is is that they spend more time in the imperturbable, instead of seeing Dependent Origination and gaining wisdom on how it works.

See, I'm kind of a sneaky monk, and what I do is I encourage you to have insight in each of the *jhānas*, so you're not just dwelling in the *jhāna*, with a completely clear, calm, still mind that doesn't move. I'm teaching you insight, and seeing a process of how things are continually changing. So you don't go quite as deeply into the *jhāna* as you could, but you're gaining wisdom in that process all the time, and I'm always encouraging you to resolve upon the imperturbable with wisdom.

This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the first way directed to the imperturbable.

4. "Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: '[There are] sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come; whatever material form [there is], all material form is the four great elements and the material form derived from the four great elements.' When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the imperturbable now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death,

That's saying that you continue on with your practice after you die, but you're seeing it more clearly when you get out of the gross material form, you're seeing it more clearly, and you're continuing on with your practice.

it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the second way directed to the imperturbable.

5. "Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: 'Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to

come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come, material forms here and now and material forms in lives to come, perceptions of forms here and now and perceptions of forms in lives to come — both alike are impermanent. What is impermanent is not worth delighting in, not worth welcoming, not worth holding to.’ When he practises in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base.

That’s when you’re getting into the *arūpa jhānas*, you don’t have any more physical body that you’re feeling, unless you’re being touched or something like that.

Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the imperturbable now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the imperturbable. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the third way directed to the imperturbable.

So, we’re talking about the lower *arūpa jhānas* here; that’s the realm of infinite space and infinite consciousness. Now we get into the higher *arūpa jhānas*, the base of nothingness.

6. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come, material forms here and now and material forms in lives to come, perceptions of forms here and now and perceptions of forms in lives to come, and perceptions of the imperturbable — all are perceptions. Where these perceptions cease without remainder, that is the peaceful, that is the sublime, namely, the base of nothingness.’

Now you remember when I was describing about the base of nothingness, I was saying that now you don't go outside of the body. All there is, is arising things, and passing away. But it's the arising and passing away of the five aggregates, of contact, it's not body any more, it's contact, feeling, perception, *sañkhāra*, it's not thoughts any more, so much as it is volition. Volition in directing your mind on what you want to see, and consciousness, Those are still here in the realm of nothingness. And you go back to Sāriputta's experience of *Nibbāna*, and we're talking about the base of nothingness, the perception of the base of nothingness. When you're in the base of nothingness, you know you're in the base of nothingness.

{Bhante switches to MN-111, Anupada Sutta.}

16. And the unification of mind;

You feel your mind becoming very still and unified and easily directed.

the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; the [enthusiasm], decision,

That's another aspect of volition.

energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention — these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred;

This is what happens in the realm of nothingness. You still have the seven factors of enlightenment, and you're still able to recognize these factors, so there's still a lot of things that's going on in the realm of nothingness, but it's nothing outside of mind.

{Bhante switches back to MN-106, Āneñjasappāya Sutta.}

When he practises in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base.

You start recognizing all of these different things and you start being able to say, “Yeah, that’s right! I know that. I know, I see it very clearly.” And you’re able to see subtle little things that normally you would have missed, but now you’re starting to catch them. And as you’re starting to catch them, you start seeing them more and more often, your confidence starts to get really, really good because, “Now I can really see this.”

Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the base of nothingness now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the base of nothingness.

Sixty thousand *mahakappas* of nothing!

This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the first way directed to the base of nothingness.

7. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, considers thus: “This is void of a self or of what belongs to a self.”

You start seeing everything as just part of a process, and I’m continually encouraging you to see that process through Dependent Origination. You see the six sense doors, whichever one arises. You see the contact and that consciousness arising. You see feeling: pleasant; unpleasant; neutral. And you’re seeing each one of these individually. You see craving begin arising as the tension or tightness.

If your mindfulness is exceptionally sharp and quick at that time, as soon as a feeling comes up, pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, you start relaxing right then. Then you’re not distracted. There’s no hindrance that can ever arise, there’s no pulling away from the process at all, there’s just the observation of the process. If

your mindfulness isn't sharp enough, then there is a little bit of tightness that occurs and there is the view of self still there. "This is me, this is happening to me, this is what I see, what I feel." And this is where your habitual tendencies kick in, and then there's birth and death, and all the other things that arise.

So when you see this is void of a self, or of what belongs to a self, when you really see it, that means you are no longer caught by craving, because you've let go of that slight pull in both mind, but you don't see it in body any more, it's only mind, although it does occur in body, it's just that you don't see it, so you relax right then.

The process of relaxing can never be stated enough, can never be practiced enough. It is the key to the cessation of suffering. And of course, you're practicing all of the Eightfold Path while you're doing this. So, you're really starting to see very clearly that the Four Noble Truths are something that's very real, and you're starting to come to realize that, realization becomes faster and faster.

When he practises in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the base of nothingness now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the base of nothingness.

Even then, you can still see, you can still attain *Nibbāna*, even though you've left the body.

This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the second way directed to the base of nothingness.

8. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘I am not anything belonging to anyone anywhere, nor is there anything belonging to me in anyone anywhere.’

That is a very, very strong statement of the impersonal nature of everything. Ok, this is a major insight, to really see that things arise, just arise, because the conditions are right for them to arise and there’s nothing personal about it at all, it’s just part of a process.

When he practises in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence,

Now that’s an interesting statement, “full confidence.” You really, really know and realize, and nobody can tell you anything to change your mind, that’s what full confidence is all about.

he either attains to the base of nothingness now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the base of nothingness. This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the third way directed to the base of nothingness.

Now we get into the even more interesting state, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

9. “Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come, material forms here and now and material forms in lives to come, perceptions of forms here and now and perceptions of forms in lives to come, perceptions of the imperturbable, and perceptions of the base of nothingness — all are perceptions.

They're just names.

Where these perceptions cease without remainder, that is the peaceful, that is the sublime,

Neither-perception-nor-non-perception. See, one of the things that happens with a lot of the different religions is they get caught up in a concept of God, and they will go to a certain level in their meditations, and they'll only go to the realm of nothingness because that's where they can confirm that there is a God. But when you get into the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, your body is still alive, but you can't tell, the consciousness and your perception is so slight, that you can't say it's there or not, and this kind of shoots the idea of a God, because you can't tell, right?

You still have perceptions, and you can still say those perceptions are from an outside source, but now you're going to something that's beyond an outside source. But you're still alive, and there's still awareness, but this is such a subtle state, that while you're experiencing that state, you don't know what it is.

You come out of that state, and then you start reflecting on what you saw while you were in that state, and that changes your perspective entirely. You no longer ever rely on an exterior source. You don't give any energy to an exterior source, because you see that it's not there.

This is why, when the Buddha was still a bodhisatta and he was practicing meditation with Rāmaputta. Rāmaputta only got to the realm of nothingness, and he didn't want to go any further. His father had gone further. But the reason that Rāmaputta didn't want to go any further was because he wanted to keep his belief in a God, and he was afraid that he would lose that if he went into a higher realm. But he did have the teaching from his

father, and he told the Buddha, well I'm willing to teach you this if you want to go there, but I don't want to go there. So the Buddha went there.

But the Buddha saw that there was still some slight hanging on, there's still some slight attachment even in that realm. That's why he went off and started practicing on his own. He started seeing on his own, when he started adding that little tiny step of continually relaxing, that there was no attachment to anywhere, to any thing. There was only this pure, clear awareness, and that's why he could go deeper into the state that's beyond neither-perception-nor-non-perception; that's why he could go into the state of the cessation of perception and feeling. That's just the turning off of the consciousness completely. Because even when you're in the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, there is still some consciousness there, and when you get out of that state, you reflect on that. When you get to the cessation of perception and feeling, and you come back out and you try to reflect on what you saw, you saw there's nothing there; there was no consciousness there at all. And your mind becomes so clear from seeing the cessation of perception and feeling, that when perception and feeling start up again, you can see exactly how it arises — the perception and feeling, and that is seeing Dependent Origination exactly the way it is. It's not a philosophy, it's the reality of the way it works.

perceptions of the imperturbable, and perceptions of the base of nothingness — all are perceptions. Where these perceptions cease without remainder, that is the peaceful, that is the sublime, namely, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.' When he practices in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the

base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception now or else he resolves [upon it] with wisdom. On the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on [to rebirth] in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Eighty four thousand *mahakappas*.

This, bhikkhus, is declared to be the way directed to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.”

Now we get into an interesting thing, and it’s called *Nibbāna*.

10. When this was said, the venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, here a bhikkhu is practising thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine; it will not be, and it will not be mine. What exists, what has come to be, that I am abandoning.’ Thus he obtains equanimity. Venerable sir, does such a bhikkhu attain *Nibbāna*?”

Interesting question.

“One bhikkhu here, Ānanda, might attain *Nibbāna*, another bhikkhu here might not attain *Nibbāna*.”

“What is the cause and reason, venerable sir, why one bhikkhu here might attain *Nibbāna*, while another bhikkhu here might not attain *Nibbāna*?”

“Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu is practising thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine; it will not be, and it will not be mine. What exists, what has come to be, that I am abandoning.’ Thus he obtains equanimity. He delights in that equanimity, welcomes it, and remains holding to it. As he does so, his consciousness becomes dependent on it and clings to it.

Just that slight little “like” of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, just the slightest little, “Ah! This is good, I like this.”

A bhikkhu with clinging, Ānanda, does not attain *Nibbāna*.

And also clinging here means the clinging to views, not only clinging to the idea of a self, but clinging to a view that this is good.

11. “But, venerable sir, when that bhikkhu clings, what does he cling to?”

“To the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, Ānanda.”

“When that bhikkhu clings, venerable sir, it seems he clings to the best [object of] clinging.”

“When that bhikkhu clings, Ānanda, he clings to the best [object of] clinging; for this is the best [object of] clinging, namely, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

So, if you’re going to cling to something, cling to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception! Ha Ha!

12. “Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu is practicing thus: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine; it will not be, and it will not be mine. What exists, what has come to be, that I am abandoning.’ Thus he obtains equanimity. He does not delight in that equanimity, welcome it, or remain holding to it. Since he does not do so, his consciousness does not become dependent on it and does not cling to it. A bhikkhu without clinging, Ānanda, attains *Nibbāna*.”

13. “It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvelous! The Blessed One, indeed, has explained to us the crossing of the flood in dependence upon one support or another. But, venerable sir, what is noble liberation?”

“Here, Ānanda, a noble disciple considers thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to

come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come, material forms here and now and material forms in lives to come, perceptions of forms here and now and perceptions of forms in lives to come, perceptions of the imperturbable, perceptions of the base of nothingness, and perceptions of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception — this is identity as far as identity extends. This is the Deathless, namely, the liberation of the mind through non-clinging.

14. “Thus, Ānanda, I have taught the way directed to the imperturbable, I have taught the way directed to the base of nothingness, I have taught the way directed to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I have taught the crossing of the flood in dependence upon one support or another, I have taught noble liberation.

15. “What should be done for his disciples out of compassion by a teacher who seeks their welfare and has compassion for them, that I have done for you, Ānanda. There are these roots of trees, these empty huts. Meditate, Ānanda, do not delay, or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ānanda was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

So, what’s your job?

ST: Meditate.

BV: Meditate now or you will regret it later.

That’s a very interesting sutta, because it doesn’t start at a beginner level, it start’s right up at the start of the fourth *jhāna* and going through the fourth *jhāna* entirely.

Now, there's another sutta that I think is very interesting, and that's in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, and this is "The Two Ways of Teaching." This is from the Saṃyutta Nikāya, The Book of Causation, Nidānasamyutta, number three, brackets number three. "The Two Ways" — the two ways of teaching.

At Sāvattī. "Bhikkhus, I will teach you the wrong way and the right way. Listen to that and attend closely, I will speak."

"Yes, venerable sir," those bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

"And what, bhikkhus, is the wrong way? With ignorance as condition, volitional formations [come to be]; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness [comes to be]; with consciousness as condition, mentality-materiality [comes to be]; with mentality-materiality as condition, the six sense bases [come to be]; with the six sense bases as condition, contact [comes to be]; with contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving [comes to be]; with craving as condition, clinging [comes to be]; with clinging as condition, being [comes to be]; with being as condition, birth [comes to be]; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This, bhikkhus, is called the wrong way.

Interesting, isn't it? He just said this is Dependent Origination, and it's the wrong way to teach.

"And what bhikkhus, is the right way? With the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations comes cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness comes cessation of mentality-

materiality; with the cessation of mentality-materiality comes cessation of six sense bases; with the cessation of the six sense bases comes cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact comes cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling comes cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving comes cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging comes the cessation of being; with the cessation of being comes cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth comes cessation of aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This, bhikkhus, is called the right way.”

Now why is it the right way? It's teaching the cessation, but when you have a hindrance arise, and I keep on asking you, "Well, how did that happen? What happened first? What happened after that? What happened after that?" It's teaching you the cessation of Dependent Origination. Because instead of getting caught in the story, and your habitual tendency, then you start seeing the thoughts, and then you let go of those and then you see, "Ah, there's the craving." And you let go of that, and you get to a place where your mind becomes completely still — the cessation of perception and feeling. That's why this is the right way, because it's teaching you the cessation directly and practically. This is how this works.

The more keenly interested you become in how everything works, the more clear your mindfulness will become. It all starts with interest. I've had some conversations with people about the seven enlightenment factors should actually be a few more. Curiosity, that's what kicks it off, and your sharp observation powers, and persistence. But you have to be persistent with it, because it's going to keep happening over and over again. But the whole point, even when you're talking about the five faculties, they should have curiosity first. Because you have to

want to know how all of these things work, and you have to be persistent with it, with that curiosity before you're really going to see and have confidence, and energy, and mindfulness and collectedness and wisdom, and the wisdom is always defined as seeing Dependent Origination. You can't have wisdom, true wisdom, if you're not looking at how the process works in minute detail. So I keep on trying to encourage you over and over again to... These things come up, fine, they come up, so what? How do you see them come up? What happens first? There's something that happens as the feeling fades away and craving starts to arise. It's very subtle; it's a kind of feeling. Look at the kind of feeling, and I'm not talking about whether it's pleasant or unpleasant or neutral now, I'm talking about it's almost like a mental sensation. You can see it; I know you can see it. It's just being able to recognize it when you see it, that's the kicker for it, and I'm not going to tell you what it is. {Laughs} "Oh, he's a dirty rat, but what can I say?"

This was a rather deep talk tonight, it wasn't a beginner's talk, that's for sure.

Ok, let's share some merit then:

MN-55: To Jīvaka (Jīvaka Sutta)

Famous throughout Jambudipa (as India was known in the Buddha time) was the name of Jīvaka Komārabhacca, a very skilful doctor and surgeon. He was an adept with herbal remedies, but also is recorded as removing brain tumours, which shows his excellence as a surgeon. Jīvaka was a wise man: he did not hurry to accuse the Buddha of something he had heard about, but instead stated what he had heard and then questioned whether it was true or not. In ancient India, the invading Aryans were meat-eaters — there is plenty of evidence for this in the Vedas. But the pre-Aryan civilization (of the Indus valley people, for instance) included yogis and rishis who may have been vegetarian — they lived off the fruits and roots of the forest. The Buddha and his bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, however, while sometimes living some way into the forest, neither lived off the wilds nor cultivated their own food. From the time of the Buddha's Enlightenment down to the present day, the practice has been in Theravāda countries to walk on alms-round collecting whatever food people are pleased to give. This is done silently. A bhikkhu cannot ask for special food (unless sick) and quietly accepts lay peoples' offerings. They give him whatever they have for themselves, often selecting the best to give away. This means that the Buddha and members of the two Saṅghas were not vegetarians, or at least not all the time. The Buddha is recorded as eating meat and allowed it (and fish) to bhikkhus and bhikkhunis (apart from some kinds which would be dangerous). But the Buddha would not eat and did not allow bhikkhus to eat meat or fish which was "seen, heard or suspected" to have been killed on purpose. If non-vegetarian food just happened to be available, then it could be used. The bhikkhu's ideal is contentment with whatever comes. He should not give trouble to others saying "I must have this, not that." As he is supported by others' work, he should be easy to

support. Now people in this world are apt to be attached, and to views about food. Being attached to food means that one is prepared to expend time and money in order to obtain a certain kind of food — just as lay people do. Attachment to views on food is more subtle than this but still very widespread, and to illustrate it these days there are no end of “food trips” and diets, besides such views being upheld as religious virtues. In this connection it is interesting to note the “enlightenment-by-food” practices that Gotama the Bodhisatta tried out and abandoned. (See sutta MN-12:52-55, Mahāsīhanāda Sutta.)

Though the content of one’s diet is of some importance and should be balanced and nutritious, attachment to views about food is just attachment to views (diṭṭhi pādāna), one of the types of clinging which has to be dropped before Enlightenment. It is good to be a vegetarian, as when a bhikkhu has vegetarian supporters, but it is not healthy to be attached to one type of food or repelled by another. Attachment is Greed, repulsion is Hatred and these are two of the Roots of Evil (akusala māla) which are always backed up by the third one, Delusion (taking things personally).

Presented by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi in December 2005

BV: In order to kill, there has to be five things that happen. There has to be a living being. You have to have the intention to kill. You need a weapon. You use the weapon. The being dies. Now, you walk into the grocery store, and there’s some meat sitting there in the package. Do you have intention to kill? Is that being alive? No, you don’t have intention to kill. You have intention to put food into your stomach so that you can continue on, because food equals energy. Ok. So, it’s not alive. You don’t have the

intention to kill. You're not taking a weapon and using it. And you're not causing that death.

I know what you're going to say! From time immemorial people have been eating meat. By not eating meat, it's not going to stop beings from being killed. Just because you have a body, there's eighty different beings that die every day because you have a physical body. Can you stop that from happening? That's why the Buddha said you need to work to get off the wheel of *samsāra*, then you don't have to do this anymore. But it all comes down to intention. It all comes down to intention. You can be walking around and an ant scurries right underneath your foot just as you're putting your foot down. Did you intend to kill that being? No, you didn't intend to. But that being died. There's no wrong doing if there's not the intention to have it happen.

ST: Well, if I go into the store and buy meat, that meat's going to be part of a chain...

BV: Ok, and you go to the store and you buy vegetables, are you reinforcing people that are killing the bugs that are on the plants? That are using pesticide to eliminate them. That is the same thing; they're being killed. They're being killed for the food that you're putting into your body. You can't live without that happening, honestly.

So what happens if someone offers you food to eat that has meat in it. They spend time preparing it and offer out of a wholesome place in their mind. What you wind up doing when you say, "Oh, I'm a vegetarian," it's just like somebody comes up and slaps you really hard on the face. How dare you do something like that? They're going out of their way to do something nice and share

with you, and you turn that gift into something that is not good. No. Don't do that.

ST: But...

BV: Hold on! Let me tell you what the Buddha said about this. This is called the "Jīvaka Sutta."

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Rajāgaha in the Mango Grove of Jīvaka Komārabhacca.

Jīvaka was the Buddha's doctor. He tended to him all the time.

2. Then Jīvaka Komārabhacca went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said to the Blessed One:

3. "Venerable sir, I have heard this: 'They slaughter living beings for the recluse Gotama; the recluse Gotama knowingly eats meat prepared for him from animals killed for his sake.' Venerable sir, do those who speak thus say what has been said by the Blessed One, and not misrepresented by him with what is contrary to fact? Do they explain in accordance with the Dhamma in such a way that nothing which provides a ground for censure can be legitimately deduced from their assertions?"

4. "Jīvaka, those who speak thus do not say what has been said by me, but misrepresent me with what is untrue and contrary to fact.

5. "Jīvaka, I say that there are three instances in which meat should not be eaten: when it is seen,

Being killed.

heard,

Hearing the animal die.

or suspected [that the living being has been slaughtered for oneself].

If I go to a restaurant and somebody gives me lobster, I know that they killed that lobster for me. I can't eat it. Ok. These are the rules for the monks, too.

I say that meat should not be eaten in these three instances. I say that there are three instances in which meat may be eaten: when it is not seen,

Being killed.

not heard,

Being killed.

and not suspected [that the living being has been slaughtered for oneself]. I say that meat may be eaten in these three instances.

Going to the store and getting meat, that's an allowable thing. It's not slaughtered for me. It's slaughtered for somebody else. It's not killed for me personally.

6. "Here, Jivaka, some bhikkhu lives in dependence upon a certain village or town. He abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued

with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill-will. Then a householder or a householder's son comes to him and invites him for the next day's meal. The bhikkhu accepts, if he likes. When the night is ended, in the morning he dresses, and taking his bowl and outer robe, goes to the house of that householder or householder's son and sits down on a seat made ready. Then the householder or householder's son serves him with good almsfood. He does not think: 'How good that the householder or householder's son serves me with good alms-food! If only a householder or householder's son might serve me with such good almsfood in the future!' He does not think thus. He eats that almsfood without being tied to it, infatuated with it, and utterly committed to it, seeing the danger in it and understanding the escape from it. What do you think, Jivaka? Would that bhikkhu on such an occasion choose for his own affliction, or for another's affliction, or for the affliction of both?" — "No, venerable sir." — "Does not that bhikkhu sustain himself with blameless food on that occasion?"

You see it didn't say whether it was meat or not. It doesn't matter whether it's meat or not. It matters what the monk is doing with his mind at that time. And he is using that food to give his body energy and keep his mind alert so that he can practice meditation and get off the wheel. That's the whole point of food; you have to have food in your system. There are beings that die when food is raised. It doesn't matter whether it's a big being or a little being, they're still beings. But it comes down to the intention.

7. “Yes, venerable sir. I have heard this, venerable sir: ‘Brahmā abides in loving-kindness.’ Venerable sir, the Blessed One is my visible witness to that; for the Blessed One abides in loving-kindness.”

“Jīvaka, any lust, any hate, any delusion whereby ill-will might arise have been abandoned by the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that they are no longer subject to future arising. If what you said referred to that, then I allow it to you.”

“Venerable sir, what I said referred to precisely that.”

8-10. “Here, Jīvaka, a bhikkhu lives in dependence upon a certain village or town. He abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with compassion... altruistic joy... equanimity, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill-will. Then a householder or a householder’s son comes to him and invites him for the next day’s meal. The bhikkhu accepts, if he likes... What do you think, Jīvaka? Would that bhikkhu on such an occasion choose for his own affliction, or for another’s affliction, or for the affliction of both?” — “No, venerable sir.” — “Does not that bhikkhu sustain himself with blameless food on that occasion?”

11. “Yes, venerable sir

Do you understand what that means? He’s just accepting a meal. I lived in a Theravāda country. They are not vegetarians. I could not be a vegetarian and live there without offending people. I had to accept whatever they gave me. And some of the stuff is very hard to eat, but I ate it anyway...

I have heard this, venerable sir: ‘Brahmā abides in equanimity.’ Venerable sir, the Blessed One is my visible witness to that; for the Blessed One abides in equanimity.”

“Jīvaka, any lust, any hate, any delusion whereby cruelty or discontent or aversion might arise have been abandoned by the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that they are no longer subject to future arising. If what you said referred to that, then I allow it to you.”

“Venerable sir, what I said referred to precisely that.”

12. “If anyone slaughters a living being for the Tathāgata or his disciple, he lays up much demerit in five instances. When he says: ‘Go and fetch that living being,’ this is the first instance in which he lays up much demerit. When that living being experiences pain and grief on being led along with a neck-halter, this is the second instance in which he lays up much demerit. When he says: ‘Go and slaughter that living being,’ this is the third instance in which he lays up much demerit. When that living being experiences pain and grief on being slaughtered, this is the fourth instance in which he lays up much demerit. When he provides the Tathāgata or his disciple with food that is not permissible, this is the fifth instance in which he lays up much demerit. Anyone who slaughters a living being for the Tathāgata or his disciple lays up much demerit in these five instances.”

And because I depend on what other people give to me, I have to eat what they give. But if I suspect that they’ve killed that being directly for me, then I won’t eat it. I’ll go hungry that day. If I see

them being killed, or I suspect that the being is killed specifically for me, I won't eat it. But the Buddha ate meat. He did it.

ST: So it comes back to attitude.

BV: Yes, In the Bible it says something about it's more important what comes out of your mouth than what goes into it. And it's really true. It's really true.

I've seen more people be completely offensive that are vegetarians than people that eat meat. Because: "I'm vegan! I don't eat this, or this, or this, even though other vegetarians do. I'm more pure than that." Look at the pride that's in there. Are they really helping themselves by doing that? And when they go to a friend's house, how much do they offend that friend by not eating what's prepared for them, with love?

When I was a layman, I had a girlfriend that she not only was very much a vegetarian, but it had to be prepared by somebody that put a "lot of energy" into the food. And I saw her get an upset stomach and throw up because "the food wasn't prepared the way she thought it should be." Well that's ridiculous, to make yourself so over-sensitive that one meal causes you to get sick; one way or the other, it doesn't really matter whether you eat meat or not. But the whole thing with being a vegetarian or not being a vegetarian, to be quite honest, I love vegetarian food. There's nothing wrong with it. You can do what you want, but please don't be confused with what the Buddha taught about eating meat.

13. "When this was said, Jīvaka Komārabhacca said to the Blessed One: 'It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvelous! The monks sustain themselves with blameless food.'

Magnificent, venerable sir! Magnificent, venerable sir! From today let the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life.”

This is a short sutta but one that really creates a lot of controversy.

Let's share some merit then.

About the Author



Most Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi Mahāthera was born in New York and grew up in Chicago and California. He did his first Insight meditation retreat in California at the age of 28, and subsequently became a Buddhist monk in 1986 because of his keen interest in meditation. He went on to Burma in 1988 to practice intensive meditation at the famous meditation center Mahasi Yeiktha in Rangoon. Bhante then traveled to Malaysia and practiced Loving-Kindness Meditation extensively for 6 months.

In 1990, Bhante went back to Burma for more *Vipassanā* meditation, for 14 to 16 hours a day, at Chanmyay Yeiktha in Rangoon. He practiced for 2 years, sometimes sitting in meditation for as long as 7 to 8 hours a sitting. After two years of intensive

meditation and experiencing what was said to be the final result, he became very disillusioned with the straight *Vipassanā* method and left Burma to continue his search.

He went to Malaysia again and began teaching Loving-Kindness Meditation. In 1995, Bhante was invited to live and teach at Brickfields, the largest Theravādan monastery in Malaysia directed by K. Sri Dhammanada. There, K. Sri was so impressed by Bhante's knowledge that he had him take over some of his talk and teaching schedule at the temple.

Bhante subsequently met with a venerable Sri Lankan monk who told him that he was teaching meditation correctly, but to stop referencing the Vissudhi Magga and just use the suttas.

Thus, Bhante then began to study the sutta texts more thoroughly and to practice meditation according to these texts. After a three month self-retreat, he came back to Malaysia and wrote a book on the Mindfulness of Breathing called *The Ānāpānasati Sutta: A Practical Guide to Mindfulness of Breathing and Tranquil Wisdom Meditation*. This book has been revised and has now been published as *The Breath of Love*.

Bhante Vimalaramsi came back to the USA in 1998, and he has been teaching meditation throughout the country since then. In 2003 he co-founded the United International Buddha-Dhamma Society, UIBDS. UIBDS supports the Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center located near Annapolis, Missouri, USA, where he teaches meditation from May through October each year. The balance of the year is spent traveling around the world giving retreats and talks. He is the USA representative to the World Buddhist Council of Kobe Japan and was installed in 2007.

If you would like to, you can go to Bhante's website for more information and listen to more of his talks. You may see videos of his talks on youtube.com as well as at dhammasukha.org.

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Glossary

As Bhante reads through the text he substitutes some terms with what he believes to be a better representation of the Pāli, and closer to the original meaning intended by the Buddha.

1. “Applied and sustained thought” is translated as *“Thinking and examining thought”*
2. “Bhikkhu” is translated as *“Monk”* or *“Student”*
3. “Concentration” is translated as *“Collectedness”*
4. “Contemplate” is translated as *“Observe”*
5. “Eightfold Path” is translated as *“Harmonious Path”*
6. “Enlightenment” is translated as *“Awakening”*
7. “Pleasure” is translated as *“Happiness”*
8. “Rapture” is translated as *“Joy”*
9. “Volition” is translated as *“Formation”*
10. “Zeal” is translated as *“Enthusiasm”*

