

MN 44 The Shorter Series of Questions and Answers -

Cūḷavedalla Sutta

22-Jul-08

Introduction: July 22, 2008 Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center,
Majjhima Nikaya The Shorter Series of Questions and Answers -
Culavedalla Sutta No 44 - Bhante Vimalaramsi.

BV: I am shocked because any other time that we talk about this sutta, she (gestures towards SK) always says "Oh wow, I love this sutta!" And you'll see why in a minute.

SK: Oh...

BV: It's because she's a sexist. (laughter)

SK: My contribution to the feminist movement here.

MN:

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:

BV: Before we go too far, Visākha was a very wealthy merchant; Dhammadinnā was his wife. Visākha got into the habit of going and listening to some Dhamma talks and then practicing for an hour or two hours with the Buddha. And one day he went to the Dhamma talk and he came back and Dhammadinnā saw him coming and she went out to greet him and he kind of pushed her away a little bit, which was unusual. And then when they got ready to go to bed, he laid down and she laid down beside him, and he got up and laid down on the floor. And she got up and laid down on the floor, and he got up and laid down on the bed. And she thought that that was a little bit strange and asked him why he was acting this way. And he

basically told her that when he went to see the Buddha and he practiced some meditation, he had become an Anagami and he didn't want any more sexual activity. And he told her that if she wanted to, she could have all of his possessions and take over the business and all of that, and that they could live like brother and sister, but not in the same bed anymore. Now, she was very spiritually advanced too, and she said "Well, if this is the situation, I would like to ordain and become a bhikkhuni." And he gave permission, because he was the husband, so she became a bhikkhuni. And she practiced meditation, and she became an arahat. And occasionally he would come and ask her questions. She became the foremost bhikkhuni in wisdom. She was a very bright lady and she was very good at explaining things. So, we'll let it go at that. So...

Repeats {he sat down at one side and asked her}

MN:

(IDENTITY)

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

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

TT: 4:34

BV: Now, when you stop and think about this for a minute, what is the thing that makes up the personality? The clinging causes the personality to come and be. What does that mean? That means your identification with each one of these aggregates, and taking them personally, and getting caught in your thoughts and your concepts and your opinions about what these are, and how they arise. It's the identification, that's the one. It's the taking this personally. Body,

"It's me, it's mine, it's who I am". Feelings, "Oh, they're mine. That's my feeling. I like that one. Oh yeah, I'm going to hold onto it. Oh, I don't like that one, I'm going to push it away". Perception: perception is the part of the mind that names things, and it has memory in it too. But this is also the startup of concepts because the naming of something is a concept. Right? Hmm? So, when we're talking about what makes up the personality, we really identify very strongly with the perceptions as being mine, "This is who I am. This is my idea. This is my story. These are my concepts. This is my opinion." Do you see how that leads into the personality belief - which is actually a false belief - of "All of my thoughts, of all of my opinions, and all of my ideas are mine." We take it all personally. That is the cause of suffering. Ok?

So "These five aggregates affected by clinging are called personality by the Blessed One." If they are not affected by clinging, then they're just the five aggregates by themselves. Right?

S: Hmm.

BV: You're not taking it personally. You're seeing the aggregate of feeling arise when it arises. You see the concept arise, the perception arise, without taking it personally. In other words, you're seeing everything very clearly, and your mind is very bright without distractions of thinking about, without holding on to.

ST: This is where you get that five-part of the cognizing, consciousness, cognizing, perception, and feeling being co-joined...

BV: Right.

ST: ... and as long as you don't let the craving kick the clinging on you, then you're ...

BV: Then you're seeing it the way it actually is.

ST: ... then you're beating the game so to speak.

BV: Yeah.

ST: ... yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I got it. I've been doing this stuff for thirty-five years ~

BV: Yeah, but you never understood it until the last couple of years.

ST: I will grant you that...

BV: (laughs)

ST: ... my understanding has gone much deeper in the last couple of years. There's no doubt.

MN:

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

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

"Friend Visākha, it is craving which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust,

BV: And in brackets we say "dislike and aversion." Same coin, different sides.

MN:

and delights in this and that; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being,

BV: "I like it. I want it."

MN:

and craving for non-being.

BV: "I don't like it. I don't want it."

MN:

This is called the origin of personality by the Blessed One."

BV: That's one step ahead of the clinging. It's the cause of clinging arising. When you see craving, and 6R the craving, there is no belief system, there is no concepts, there are no opinions. There's just seeing the essential as essential. When you get caught by the clinging, now you're seeing the essential as non-essential. That makes some of the things we say in the morning a little bit clearer?

TT: 10:00

MN:

4. "Lady, 'cessation of personality, cessation of personality' is said. What is called the cessation of personality 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.

BV: How do you do that?

S: 6Rs.

BV: 6Rs: Recognize, Release, Relax, Resmile - bring up that wholesome, come back to your object of meditation (Return), keep you object of meditation going (Repeat).

ST: What was the 'Lady' comment there... (pause)

BV: Ah, "It is the remainderless fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go, and rejecting of that same craving."

MN:

This is called the cessation of personality by the Blessed One.”

BV: Now, what have I been telling you when you let go of the craving, what happens in your mind? There's no thoughts after that. All you have is this clear, pure mind, and you bring that mind back to your object of meditation. What are you doing when you do that? You are purifying your mind. You're correcting the wrong belief that everything is personal, because you're seeing the brief moment where there is nothing other than pure observation. That is called the Third Noble Truth, and it is also called nibbana. Now think about this for a minute. What is the definition of nibbana? 'ni' means no, 'bana' means fire. There was a sutta, it's in the Mahavagga, that the Buddha gave this talk to twelve hundred monks that had just become monks and when he gave this talk, they all became arahats. Very powerful sutta. In this sutta he said "Everything is burning." The eye is burning, eye consciousness is burning, eye contact is burning, eye feeling is burning. Burning with what? Craving. Craving is the cause of the fire.

Now, when you let go and you 6R something, you've let go of the fire haven't you? That's nibbana; it's the mundane nibbana. Ok, it's just a temporary kind of nibbana. You will have to experience the mundane nibbana many hundreds, many thousands, many of hundreds of thousands of times before your mind finally catches on, "Oh!", and let's go and you experience nibbana, the super-mundane nibbana, the one that really causes a personality change.

You have no idea how many times I've gotten in arguments with people on the internet about the experience of letting go of craving is a form of nibbana, but it's mundane nibbana. People tell me I'm crazy. Ok, I can be crazy. That's fine (laughter) Ok. So "This is called the cessation of personality by the Blessed One.”

Cessation of personality means not seeing this as being yours, but seeing everything as being a part of a process. Letting go of the craving; coming back to your object of meditation is the purification of your view, of your perspective.

MN:

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

TT: 15:00

BV: Now, you might not have noticed this, but we are going through the Four Noble Truths.

- 1) What is personality? First Noble Truth.
- 2) What is the origin of personality? Second Noble Truth.
- 3) What is the cessation of personality? Third Noble Truth.
- 4) What is the way leading to the cessation of personality? Fourth Noble Truth.

ST: Does an anagami still have personality view?

BV: That's a tricky question. They still have some things that still arise. They still have five fetters that are there. In that way, yes they still have some. They have pride; they still have restlessness; they still have some torpor; they have the desire to experience other realms still; and they still have a little bit of ignorance. Ok? So in that way, yes they still have some personality, but it's very, very subtle. It's not big, gross stuff like we got. (laughs)
Ok...

MN:

"Friend Visākha, it is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, Harmonious Perspective, Harmonious Imaging, Harmonious Communication, Harmonious Movement, Harmonious Life Style, Harmonious Practice, Harmonious Observation, and Harmonious Collectedness.."

BV: What is harmonious perspective mean?

ST: Four Noble Truths.

BV: No.

ST: Do not take things personally.

BV: Right. It's a change of your perspective. Say you have a feeling arise: anxiety, sadness, fear, whatever the catch of the day is; What your mind generally does is it grabs onto that and says "This is who I am", and your mind starts going "But I don't like this feeling. I want it to be different than it is." Now you try to change your view by thinking about it. It doesn't work. The more thoughts you have about this feeling when it arises, the bigger and more intense that feeling becomes. So, enter Harmonious Perspective. Harmonious perspective means seeing this as an impersonal process. What is the fastest way to change your perspective on anything that arises in your mind?

ST: The fastest way to change the perspective on anything that arises in your mind is to let it be without...

BV: No, not quite.

ST: ... is to smile... (laughter)

BV: And laugh. Laughing is the key for this, it really is. When you laugh you go from "I'm mad and I don't like it" to "It's only this anger." And then it's easy to let go because sshhhht (gestures) "It's only anger, it's not mine. I didn't sit here and ask it to come up. It came up by itself." When you change your view, when you change your perspective of this going from "Mine and I don't like it" to "It's only that", you change your perspective from the personal belief that this is who I am to the impersonal belief, or impersonal view, that "It's only this part of a process", that's all. It's not mine. I certainly don't tell myself "You know, I haven't been sad for a long time. I haven't been anxious for a long time." It comes up because the conditions are right for it to come up. Ok? Past actions, past things that have happened to us - it might be this lifetime, it might be another lifetime - it doesn't even really matter. Why it comes up is not the problem.

TT: 19:46

What we do with what comes up, now we have some degree of choice in what we do with this. We can make the conscious decision to fight it, and wrestle with it, and try to make it go away or not. What we do with what arises in the present moment dictates what happens in the future. If you fight with the present moment and you try to control the present moment with your thoughts, you can look forward to more suffering arise in the future. Or you can make the conscious decision to laugh, and allow the space for that feeling to be there; it's ok for it to be there; it's alright for this feeling of sadness or anxiety or fear - whatever it is - it's ok for it to be there. It has to be ok because when it arises, it's there. It has to be ok for it to be there. What we need to do is change our perspective, and when we change our view from "This is me. This is mine. This is who I am." to "It's only this", there is relief. Now that doesn't mean that it won't come up again, and again, and again, and again. It can come up quite often, but every time if you treat it in the same way without taking it personally and trying to control it, when you start allowing the space for that feeling to be there without getting involved in any form of control of it, and you develop your sense of humor and laugh along with it, it will get weaker, and weaker, as time goes by, until finally it fades away. When it fades away, a real sense of relief. "Whew!" You feel all these heavy weights you been carrying around on your shoulders - you didn't even know were there - they go away, and you start having a lot of joy and happiness and these kind of things arising. Every time you do this it helps you mind to get more and more in balance. This is what harmonious perspective is all about. Ok?

Now the next part of the Eightfold Path is called Harmonious Imaging. What kind of image do you hold in your mind, about what it is that you're thinking about? You have the image "I don't like it. I don't want it. I want it to stop.", that means that you're pulling up the image of dislike, of dissatisfaction, and you're creating more dislike and more dissatisfaction. Pulling up an image of acceptance, of peace and calm, and bringing that feeling into your heart, that means that the image that you're holding is in harmony with the present moment. How many people do you know have this idea "I'm

always broke, I never have enough"? And the universe says ok, you're broke, you never have enough. And it makes sure that's what happens for you because that's the kind of image you're holding.

If you start holding the image of prosperity and happiness, then the universe will come rushing into you, and you'll be prosperous and happy. What kind of image do you hold? When this kind of feeling arises, I always do this with it and I always make myself suffer. Ok? The universe wants to give you what you hold, what you hold onto and what you believe.

With the Eightfold Path you have the choice that you can change that image from one of lack, dislike, dissatisfaction to one of prosperity, happiness and calmness and balance in your mind - Harmonious Imaging.

Harmonious Communication, they call it Right Speech Who do you spend most of your time thinking with? Yourself. Who do you beat up most of the time, with your thoughts? Yourself. We all have this weird idea - and it is truly weird, it's a very peculiar thing - that we're supposed to be perfect. We all have that idea. And when we don't meet our expectation, what happens? Then we get to pull out the boxing glove and beat ourselves up, be critical of ourselves, "I'm not supposed to do that. I did something that was bad and that's no good. So, I'm going to keep hating myself because of that."

TT: 25:09

What the meditation is all about, is learning how to let go of that communication with yourself and other people, so that you have uplifted communication, kindness, gentleness, to yourself especially. And when you have it in yourself, guess what you get to give away? You can't give it away if you don't have it. That's a fundamental truth of the universe: if you don't have it, you can't give it away. Learning how to practice kindness to yourself is an essential part of the Eightfold Path. One of the things that the Buddha said was: "Anyone who truly loves themselves will never harm another being." But if you're harming yourself all the time, you have the tendency to harm other

beings too. What you think and ponder on, that's the inclination of your mind. So, learning to be kinder and gentler to yourself is what harmonious communication is all about. Not demanding that something in the past be different than it was. What happened in the past, the truth is you can't change it, but you can change your perspective of it; you can change your view, and make it impersonal. When you don't make it impersonal, what happens? Craving and clinging, habitual tendency and all of the other things that cause sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, (all say) and despair. Whoa! Why do you want to do that to yourself? You don't need to. You can be forgiving to yourself.

ST: When you look at the past as basically just...

BV: Something...

ST: ... occur because the conditions at that time were...

BV: ... but the trick is not to hold the past into the present.

ST: Right, yeah. Like I say, I'm just catching a different level of it.

BV: Yeah. As we allow the space for past experiences to be there in the past, and we stop identifying with that pain, that concept, then we allow the space for the next moment to be happy. Why? Nature abhors a vacuum. If you're carrying around this pain all the time, it's going to make sure that your next moment has that pain with it. If you allow the space for that pain to be there, and relax into it, you're giving the universe the opportunity to bring happiness into your mind. It's simple, but we sure don't like things that are simple for some reason. We like to fight, we like to kick, and yell, and scream, and do all kinds of things - especially to ourselves - because "Well, I'm supposed to be perfect you know." Yeah?

ST: So in a sense, there is a way to unity and control, if you understand the laws,

BV: Right.

ST: and how it operates.

BV: Right.

ST: So...

ST2: It's a type of control.

BV: It's, it's...

ST: The secret to the control... the se, the se... no it's not... but it, the secret to the control is letting go of all the control we've attempted to have in the past, and understanding the universal law clearly enough. It's new information for mind.

BV: The universe wants to give you the highest and best, always. What you think and ponder on, that's what you mind is going to direct the universe to do. You think and ponder on "That no good so-and-so beat me up when I was in kindergarten, and I hate him to this day." Well, you can do that if you want. Does that lead to your happiness? Does that lead to the happiness of other people around you? If it doesn't, then you ought to take a look at that and say "Well, I don't need to carry that baggage with me anymore. I can let that go." Yeah, it happened in the past. Ok. There's not one thing in the world that you can do to make that any different than it already is. It happened, and that's the truth, you don't have to carry the pain around with you now.

TT: 30:08

ST: And the other part of it is, you don't have to accept it, it's just a thought; you can test it.

BV: Well, I don't want anybody to believe anything that I say. I really don't.

ST: It's very testable. It's one of the neatest parts of the Dhamma.

BV: As you learn to communicate with yourself about yourself, in kind and gentle ways whole new world starts to open up around you, and there's real healing in that. Everybody has pain in their past. Not everybody carries that pain around with them day-to-day-to-day-to-day. Some people learn to let it go.

You remember what I told you about that lady Her daughter got eaten by a shark? Now, there was a lot of pain. It was a horrible experience. She had to go and identify her sweet Hibbie And it hurt. and what I told her was "It's ok to hurt." It has to be ok because that pain is there and it's real when it arises. If she would have tried to fight that pain, if she would have tried to push that pain away, the grief would have probably killed her. She allowed the space for that pain to be there; ripped her heart out. And that's ok, your heart can take it.

She learned a lot of very valuable lessons about how resilient heart can be. How the loving acceptance of the present moment - even when it hurts so incredibly bad it's unbelievable - as she allowed the space for that to be, without fighting it, without pushing it away, without trying to control it at all, just letting that pain to be there by itself, and not taking it personally, not grabbing onto it, not wishing it away - as she allowed the space for that to happen, she gained all kinds of insight into how mind works.

And she has since turned into a very brilliant teacher. That's part of becoming a teacher; recognizing your own pain, and allowing the space for that pain to be there so that eventually - and it doesn't happen right away - eventually there is some balance. And you can still have the memories, but the pain isn't in the memory anymore, because you've accepted the fact that it was like that, and it's ok for it to be like that. No resistance, don't resist or push. Now, at that time, smile was an impossibility, but she could soften. DROPS, don't resist or push. Soften your mind; allow the space for that to be. Even the most horrible thing can be acceptable.

And there's stories about the Buddha when he was a Bodhisatta: he

was a snake in one lifetime, and he was very big snake - you know one of those boa constrictors, one of those kinds from South America that are that big around (gestures) and twenty-five feet long - and these village boys came around, and they took sticks and they shoved it through his body, and they started carrying him away. Now, he could have retaliated. That was very painful, and he saw that this was an opportunity to learn how to accept what is happening in the present moment without resistance, without fighting.

There's another instance: he was about a year and a half old, he was a prince, his mother was the queen, his father was the king. The king walked into the room, the mother is playing with the son, really loves the son. King said something to the wife, she didn't hear him. He got jealous, he got angry, and the more he thought about it, the more he thought "You know, when this prince gets to be a certain age, he's going to take the crown away from me, and I don't want that to happen."

TT: 34:41

So he called the executioner and the executioner came and he said "I want you to cut off this boy's hands. The executioner said "Ok", so he cut off the boy's hands. The Bodhisatta saw that this was an opportunity to practice breaking down the barriers. Remember this is what I teach you. He saw himself, who he loved a lot, he saw his mother and he loved her a lot, he saw the executioner as the neutral person, and he sent love to the executioner, and he saw his enemy - his father - and he started practicing loving kindness, and he didn't cry. And that really upset the king. So the king said "Ah, just cut his feet off." So, here's more opportunity. Now, this is a lot of pain we're talking about. I mean, think about it, get your hands and your feet cut off. It's not one of your better days. (laughs) So, executioner cut his feet off, and the Bodhisatta didn't cry. So, the king really got disgusted and he just said "Ah, just cut his head off, so he did."

Now, he didn't hold one thought of dislike; he didn't hold any thoughts of aversion towards his father; he only held loving kindness for all of these different kinds of beings. He kept his mind focused on

that loving kindness.

As soon as he died, he was reborn in the devaloka, he was reborn in a heavenly realm. His mother, died of a broken heart. His father died of a heart attack. The only one in that story that didn't die was the executioner. And to him that was part of his job, and it was impersonal. So, the mother was reborn in the same devaloka as his son; the father was reborn in a hell realm.

But the most amazing part of that, is the Bodhisatta did not cry, he did not hold a grudge, he just saw "This is what's happening, now is the time for me to learn how mind works.

This kind of harmonious communication is the kind of thing that we need to cultivate in ourselves. The more we can communicate with ourselves kindly, without the criticisms, without the "should be's", and we start actually, truly appreciating our own good qualities then we get in harmony with the present moment.

I used to teach people a kind of loving kindness meditation, it had to do with writing things down. I said "I want you to sit down with a piece of paper every day, and write ten good qualities that you like about yourself. Can't be the same list day after day after day. Has to be different, with what you feel. After you write it down then I want you to reflect on the times when you're like that, and appreciate yourself for being like that, and then the rest of the day I want you to see those same good qualities in other people that you have contact with." It's amazing how much resistance mind can have to doing something like this. But, if you really do it, it'll change your perspective of yourself, and it'll change your perspective of other people. You can try doing this on your own if you want. It's up to you. But when you look at those qualities in yourself and appreciate yourself for that, you start softening towards yourself, and you stop being so incredibly demanding that you be perfect. I don't know of anybody that's perfect unless they become an arahat. Even then, depends on your definition of perfect, I think.

So, the next part of the Eightfold Path is Harmonious Movement.

Now, harmonious movement means you don't be jerking your mind around trying to run away from this feeling or these thoughts. You know be jerking your mind "clunk pssst" (laughter) or dropping books. But you do things in harmony; you do things that lead to having a mind that's at ease and has balance in it.

TT: 39:55

The next part of the Eightfold Path is Harmonious Lifestyle. How do you live? Do you live criticizing yourself? Do you live making yourself uncomfortable or unhappy? What are the things that you're continually putting into your mind? Now this is a story I've been telling a lot of people for an awful lot of years actually. But there was a girl that she came to me, and she was really distraught. She said "I'm having these terrible dreams. They're really frightening dreams. What can I do about that?" And I said "Why are you having these dreams?" She said "I don't know, but they always seem to happen after I go see horror flicks." She was going to see scary movies, and she had bad dreams. So what did I tell her? "Don't do that anymore." And what did she tell me? "But I like them." And what did I tell her? "Then don't come complaining to me about bad dreams." (laughs) Be careful what you put in front of your mind.

The next part is a Harmonious Practice. What is harmonious practice? The 6Rs. There's four parts to the harmonious practice: 1) Recognizing an unwholesome state; 2) Releasing that unwholesome state and Relaxing; 3) Re-Smiling; and 4) Coming back to your object of meditation (Return), and keeping your object of meditation going (Repeat); 6Rs, right there.

The next part of your Eightfold Path is your Harmonious Observation, being in harmony with what you observe while you observe it; not trying to control things; not trying to make things any different than they are. It's just observation, just seeing what is. As you see more closely how things arise, you'll recognize that there is a process that happens; and that process is dependent origination, and you'll see it as different links arising, passing away; you'll see that.

And the last part of the Eightfold Path is Harmonious Collectness, and that basically means experiencing the jhanas, experiencing the mind that has that pleasant abiding here and now. So, that's the Eightfold Path.

And... Ah, let's see,

MN:

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."

BV: We all want things; we desire them to be in a particular way, and that clouds our perception of things, it clouds our observation of things. An example, I see a rose and I cut it off, and I come and you're in a happy mood. And I give you that rose and you look at that, and you smell it, and you go "Oh, this is really great; it's really a pretty color; it's a perfect shape; it smells so good; I really like this rose." Now, I can take that rose away and wait until you're in a grumpy mood, and I'll come to you with the rose and I say "Look at this, I'm giving this to you." And you look at it and your mind says "Ah, thorns, I hate these kind of flowers." Now, what's different? The rose is still the same, still the same flower. Your perspective is different because that desire colors the world around you. And what we have to learn how to do is to observe that this kind of desire is making the unhappiness, making the pain more intense, the desire for this to be any thing other than it is. And desire is really, really tricky because a little tiny desire can start you leaning out of the present moment into the next one and cause that restlessness to arise. And if you lean back a little bit, and you desire for that then your mind dulls out a little bit. So, you have to be careful with your

desires. The way you're in the present moment completely and totally is to let go of the desire to be in the present moment. (laughs)

TT: 45:25

ST1: Say that one more time.

BV: (laughs) I'm not sure I can. Say it (gestures)

ST2: The way to be in the present moment is to totally let go of your desire to be in the present moment. Just be.

ST3: I'm trying.

ST2: Not trying.

BV: There is no try; there's do or don't do.

ST2: You release the past, you release the future...

ST3: ... and watch the day go by... (laughter)

ST2: ... and keep laughing.

BV: Ok, now we're going to talk a little bit about personality view. You know, (laughs) I've only done about a page of this sutta. We're going to have to move a long a little bit quicker, I have a feeling.

MN:

(IDENTITY VIEW)

7. "Lady, how does personality 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 personality view comes to be.”

BV: Taking it all personally in all of its different ways that you can take it personally.

MN:

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

BV: What does that mean? (humorous swatting gesture) (laughter)

ST: ... everything that, that personality...

BV: Everything that...

ST: ... things that it attaches itself to, you’ve identified as not self, so you have no...

BV: Right.

ST: ... person, there's no person.

BV: Right. So there's no thoughts that are yours. They're just thoughts.

ST2: So, if.. if.. if there's no consc..

BV: When you let go of craving, you have this pure mind without craving there is pure observation.

ST: But that's also part of the process. Like there's um or er it's self...

BV: There is no self, there is only wisdom's eye observing how things arise.

TT: 50:08

ST: It's like a third eye.

BV: Wisdom's eye is always impersonal observation of how things rise.

ST: That's still consciousness, like that just consciousness detached of craving, so it's still in the present. Like it's just a process observing itself.

BV: Now, didn't I read a sutta to you not too long ago about a monk by the name of Sati, son of a fisherman who said that consciousness goes here and there and does this and that good deed, and it's the same consciousness that runs from one existence to the next? That means that is a personal self belief. Consciousness is dependent on something else to arise, and it is all impersonal. You see? Ok? Keep going...

ST: Now, that you can't even call it consciousness, it's just...

BV: No, it is consciousness, but there are six kinds of consciousness.

Eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and mind consciousness. None of that is personal. They are just different forms of consciousness.

ST: And the observation, is it a mind consciousness?

BV: It's mind consciousness, yes. Ok. Now you can. (gestures)

ST: What you just said is essentially basically what Ray said,

BV: Yes.

ST: it's not me; this is not mine; this is not myself. That's what it requires

BV: Right

ST: for body, feeling, perception, ~

BV: But her question, which is a good one, is it seems like there's a self in there somewhere, but it is all part of a process that we have always taken to be a self.

ST: But that mentioned personality. ~ which is to me like one step away from ~

BV: Well, it's all dependent on your perspective. When you see it as impersonal then it is just the arising and passing away of phenomena, but there's nobody home.

Ok, now we have

MN:
(THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH)

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 Life Style, Harmonious Practice, Harmonious Observation, and Harmonious Collectedness.”

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

BV: What do you think?

ST: Conditioned.

MN:

“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. Harmonious Communication, Harmonious Movement, and Harmonious Life Style —these states are included in the aggregate of virtue. Harmonious Practice, Harmonious Observation, Harmonious Collectedness —these states are included in the aggregate of concentration. Harmonious Perspective and Harmonious Imaging —these states are included in the aggregate of wisdom.”

TT: 54:25

BV: And this is where I’ve gotten into a lot of fights because there’s a awful lot of people that are teaching the Noble Eightfold Path in meditation, and they say: “Well you don’t have to pay attention to Harmonious Communication, Harmonious Movement, and Harmonious Life Style, because your virtue is already very pure.” So

what they're saying is: "Forget the Noble Eightfold path, and practice the Noble Fivefold path." And then if you practice straight vipassana, they say: "Well, the last of the Eightfold Path, the Harmonious Collectedness," which is always defined as the experience of the jhānas, "well you don't have to worry about that because when you practice moment to moment concentration, that's the same thing as getting into the jhānas", it's not. So now, they're not practicing the Eightfold Path, they're not practicing the Fivefold Path, they're practicing the Fourfold Path. How do you experience nibāna by practicing a Fourfold path? Difficult.

I always contend that you need the all of the Eightfold Path while you're practicing meditation. And you have that idea of that because of the way I talk about the communication and the movement, and the lifestyle. But all three, you need to have those in your practice while you're sitting and the reason that I say that is because the first discourse that the Buddha gave was on the Eightfold Path. Now these monks were very virtuous, they'd been practicing the whole time while they were the Buddha's attendants, they didn't have problems with their virtue, why would he bring virtue up? Because of the way you look at the Eightfold Path with what I just showed you in relationship to the meditation.

See, Right Livelihood is always talked about as: "Well, you don't kill living beings, you don't sell weapons, you don't sell poisons..." What does that have to do with your meditation?

ST: ~

BV: While you're sitting in meditation?

ST: ~ comes up with bad deeds comes back to haunt you while you're trying to...

BV: But that's not the same thing.

ST: Right

BV: It's talking about right here, right now practicing Right Livelihood. Are you going to go out and get some poison and sell it to somebody else? Are you going to sell weapons? Are you going to harm other beings? No. So the Right Livelihood or Harmonious Lifestyle has to be something other than what they give as their definition, so it's being careful with what you put in front of you, and what you're practicing in your daily activities.

SK: ~

BV: It's always between the scholars who want to make it the Fivefold Path and the practicers who want to keep it the Eightfold Path.

SK: That's been going on for...

BV: The way I still think that that's misunderstanding on the scholar's part. I really do.

Ok, Now we go to concentration, and I don't like that word. It's like a four letter word. You don't say those kind of words. You call it collectedness. It has a degree of concentration in it. Yes it does. But any time you talk about concentration in this country, it means one-pointed absorption kind of concentration. It always means that. Reading a book, you're really into that book, somebody comes up and they say: "Hey! I want to do this." You don't hear because you're so absorbed in what you're reading. You don't pay attention to any external distractions. That's the wrong kind of concentration. The right kind of concentration is a mind that is very collected, at ease, still, but alert. That's what we're talking about with concentration.

The word for concentration in Pali is samādhi. This word was never used before the Buddha started using it. He made up this word to describe something other than one-pointed concentration. So that gives you an idea again the difference between the absorption concentration and the samatha vipassanā that the Buddha taught. A different kind of meditation entirely than absorption concentration.

Ohhhh-

TT: 1:00:12

MN:
(CONCENTRATION)

12. "Lady, what is 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;

BV: It doesn't say deep absorption; it says unification of mind.

MN:
the four foundations of mindfulness are the basis of collectedness;
the four right kinds of striving are the equipment of collectedness;
the repetition, development, and cultivation of these same states is
the development of collectedness therein."

BV: Now we come to formations.

MN:
(FORMATIONS)

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?"

BV: This is the formations that we talk about in dependent origination. Right after ignorance, formations arise.

MN:

"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 thinks and then examines thoughts, and subsequently one breaks out into internal dialogue, speech; that is why thinking and examining thought are the verbal formation. Perception and feeling are mental, these are states bound up with the mind; that is why perception and feeling are the mental formation."

(THE ATTAINMENT OF CESSATION)

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."

BV: So it's saying that when you experience the cessation of perception and feeling, you don't plan on it. It's just going to happen when it happens. You don't notice while it's happening, why? Because there's no perception and there's no feeling. And you're not

in that state realizing that you're in that state. It just happens.

MN:

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."

TT: 1:05:32

BV: The first time the cessation of perception and feeling occurs, it will just be for a short period of time. You don't plan on it happening. When your mind has the perception and feeling arise again, you don't plan on it being able to have the perception and feeling arise. It does it by itself. And this is when you would see the links of dependent origination.

MN:

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.”

BV: That mental formation is where you see the links of dependent origination. There is no body; there is no verbalization. There is just seeing this and it happens fast: blib, blib (gestures with thumb and index finger opening and closing quickly) That’s it. It happens very quickly.

MN:

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,

BV: And you remember what I was talking about voidness a while back? Ok.

MN:

signless contact, desireless contact.”

BV: Signless contact means there is no sign. If there’s no perception and feeling, there is no sign that arises, and there is no desire that will arise. There is a voidness, but there’s still something. Just because you don’t have perception and feeling, if there wasn’t something, your body would die at that time; and body is still there.

MN:

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.”

(FEELING)

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.

TT: 1:10:09

BV: Makes sense, doesn't it?

MN:

Painful feeling is painful when it persists and pleasant when it changes.

BV: Hmm.

MN:

Neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is pleasant when there is knowledge [of it] and painful when there is no knowledge [of it]."

BV: What does that mean? Knowledge of a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling means you are experiencing equanimity. No knowledge of it means that you are indifferent to it; you're not paying attention to it, and that is painful because of the lack of mindfulness at that time. You're not seeing it as it truly is.

MN:

(UNDERLYING TENDENCIES)

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

"Friend Visākhā, the underlying tendency to lust underlies pleasant feeling.

BV: Ok? You have a pleasant feeling: "I want to keep that one."
Hum? You know that one? (laughs)

MN:

The underlying tendency to aversion underlies painful feeling.

BV: Painful feeling arises, it's only natural that we want to push it away; we want to stop it from happening.

MN:

The underlying tendency to ignorance underlies neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling ."

BV: When you're indifferent to that, then you're not seeing it as it actually is and you're not seeing the Four Noble Truths. That's why it's painful, because it leads to more suffering in the future.

MN:

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?"

BV: I already gave you the answer.

MN:

"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."

BV: What kind of feeling would it be that is pleasant that doesn't have lust as its underlying tendency?

ST: Jhāna?

BV: That's it. There's no lust in your mind because your mind is very pure at that time, and it is definitely pleasant abiding here and now. That's one of the major insights that the bodhisattha had on the night of his enlightenment, because he was into such heavy duty austerity and punishing the body, he was afraid of all pleasant feeling, and then he got into the jhāna, and he went: "Wait, why have I been afraid of this? There is no lust involved in this." This is a pleasant feeling without lust.

Ok: "The underlying tendency to aversion does not underlie all painful feeling." What is the underlying tendency to aversion? With a painful feeling? "The underlying tendency to aversion does not underlie all painful feeling." — How does that come to be?

ST: A painful feeling that didn't have craving attached to it didn't

have the underlying tendency to aversion.

BV: That's right.

Now what is the underlying tendency to ignorance? "The underlying tendency to ignorance does not underlie all neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling." What is that?

ST: Equanimity.

BV: Equanimity. Ok? Make sense?

TT: 1:15:02

MN:

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.

BV: Why?

ST: Because there are some that do not have that.

BV: Right

MN:

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

BV: Why?

ST: Because there are some that do not have aversion in them, as the underlying tendency.

BV: That's right. When you 6R in the right way, when you're learning how to lovingly accept the feeling that it is a painful feeling without resisting it.

ST: Is the same true for pleasant feelings, that are 6Red that are not lust?

BV: If it's done soon enough, yeah. (laughs) If you see the feeling arise and you 6r right then of course there would be no lust, but the pleasant feeling would still be there. Ok?

Ok,

MN:

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

BV: Right.

MN:

"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.

BV: Why? Because there’s attachment to it. Ok? “Oh I want to get to nibbāna.” You can want it all you want, but that doesn’t mean you’re going to get it.

MN:

With that he abandons aversion, and the underlying tendency to aversion {...}

BV: And what she was saying about letting go of the craving is the finer degree of that. The longing still has the “I want” in it. When you take the craving out, there is no: “I want.” There is no I. There is no want. There’s only pure mind.

MN:

“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.”

BV: So he’s talking about equanimity and the stronger aspect of the equanimity is getting into the fourth jhāna where that is the feeling.

T: 1:20:00

MN:

(COUNTERPARTS)

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.”

BV: Ignorance is its counterpart because neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is subtle and difficult to recognise.

MN:

“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 were not able to grasp the limit to questions. For the holy life, friend Visākha, marches in 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.”

(CONCLUSION)

30. Then the lay follower Visākha, having delighted and rejoiced in the bhikkhuni Dhammadinā'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 Dhammadinā. When he finished speaking, the Blessed One told him:

31. "The bhikkhuni Dhammadinā is wise, Visākha, the bhikkhuni Dhammadinā 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 Dhammadinā 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.

BV: Gave you a lot, didn't he? (laughs)

So let's share some merit.

May suffering ones, be suffering free
And the fear struck, fearless be
May the grieving shed all grief
And may all beings find relief.

May all beings share this merit that we have thus acquired
For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.

May beings inhabiting space and earth
Devas and nagas of mighty power
Share this merit of ours.

May they long protect the Buddha's dispensation.

Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . .

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