

MN 106 The Way to the Imperturbable – Ānenjasappāya Sutta
Dhamma Talk presented by Bhante Vimalaramsi
at Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center
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BV: This is a fun sutta.

MN: 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 monks thus: "Monks."—"Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Monks, 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.

3. "Therein, monks, a noble disciple considers thus: 'Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures 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. 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.'

BV: What are we talking about here?

S: ~

BV: Fourth jhāna

MN: 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, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on to rebirth in the imperturbable. {...}

BV: He's talking about having a mind that goes to the unconditioned.

MN: 4. "Again, monks, 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. It is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on to rebirth in the imperturbable. This, monks, is declared to be the second way directed to the imperturbable.

5. "Again, monks, 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 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

BV: Always, when you resolve on something with wisdom, you're seeing with the eyes of Dependent Origination, and the Four Noble Truths.

MN: on the dissolution of the body, after death, it is possible that the evolving consciousness may pass on to rebirth in the imperturbable. This, monks, is declared to be the third way directed to the imperturbable.

BV: What he's talking about with this last part is, all of the arupa jhanas, because you develop a mind that is imperturbable. It isn't bothered by anything. And when you die from that state, you are in that state, you will be reborn in a brahma loka for a hugely long period of time, thousands and thousands of mahakappas.

So, the second one was talking about the realm of infinite space, and this one was talking about the realm of infinite consciousness. Now we go to the base of nothingness

MN: 6. "Again, monks, 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. '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 nothingness now or else he resolves upon it with wisdom

BV: And that's what I'm teaching you, continually.

MN: on the dissolution of the body, after death. It is possible that the evolving consciousness

BV: Now you see, we're not talking about mind and body anymore; we're just talking about the consciousness itself.

MN: may pass on to rebirth in the base of nothingness.

BV: If you die and go to that realm, it lasts about sixty thousand mahakappas, a drop in the bucket.

S: ~

BV: Well, if you can attain that, at will, when you die you will be reborn in that Brahma loca. I had a chart at one time, and I really want to make up another one.

MN: This, monks, is declared to be the first way directed to the base of nothingness.

7. "Again, monks, 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.'"

BV: What are we saying? Everything is impersonal. Why is it impersonal?

S: ~

BV: Six R's. That's letting go of the tension and tightness, feeling your mind expand, and then become calm. That's the pleasant.

MN: 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 nothingness now or else he resolves upon it with wisdom

S ~

BV: I just repeated it three times. It means that you can sit in that base, and not see Dependent Origination, or you can.

MN: 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, monks, is declared to be the second way directed to the base of nothingness.

BV: So, one way is talking about impermanence, the other way is talking about the impersonal nature.

MN: 8. "Again, monks, a noble disciple considers thus: 'I am not anything belonging to anyone anywhere, nor is there anything belonging to me in anyone anywhere.'

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 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, monks, is declared to be the third way directed to the base of nothingness.

BV: This is just another form of seeing the impersonal nature.

Ok, now we go to the interesting stuff, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

MN: 9. "Again, monks, 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.'

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.

This, monks, is declared to be the way directed to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception."

BV: If you experience neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and have reasonable ability to go into that, then when you die you go to a brahma loka that is eighty four thousand mahakappas. Long time.

Now we'll start talking about nibbana.

MN: 10. When this was said, the venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, here a monk 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. Venerable sir, does such a monk attain Nibbāna?"

"One monk here, Ānanda, might attain Nibbāna, another monk here might not attain Nibbāna."

"What is the cause and reason, venerable sir, why one monk here might attain Nibbāna, while another monk here might not attain Nibbāna?"

"Here, Ānanda, a monk 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 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.

BV: The kind of clinging we're talking about here is you start developing views, and you want to explore every aspect of it, so you cling to it so you can see every aspect of it. This is why Sāriputta took all of two weeks to become an arahat, instead of just one, like Moggallāna, because he was really interested; he was really curious about all the different things, and every one of the jhanas. I mean you read about his experience of meditation, and he saw things that nobody else really paid that much attention to, because he explored it very deeply. But he wasn't able to attain nibbana because of that clinging. Now this kind of clinging doesn't have to do with thoughts, but it does have to do with holding on to views and trying to hold on so that you can see all of these different things. So if you delight in that, welcome it, and remain holding to it, "As he does so, his consciousness becomes dependent on it and clings to it."

MN: A monk with clinging, Ānanda, does not attain Nibbāna.

"But, venerable sir, when that monk clings, what does he cling to?"

"To the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, Ānanda."

"When that monk clings, venerable sir, it seems he clings to the best object of clinging."

"When that monk 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.

BV: So if you're going to cling to something, then that's the one to cling to, let all the other ones go. But you're not going to attain nibbana if you cling to it. It's just passing through stage.

MN: 12. "Here, Ānanda, a monk 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 monk without clinging, Ānanda, attains Nibbāna."

BV: Just that simple. And these are subtle little things; we're not talking about gross holding on. We're talking about subtle delights and that sort of thing, and being able to explore.

Now the thing with neither-perception-nor-non-perception is, that when you come out, that's when you start reflecting on what happened while you were in that stage. So you hold on to that pretty tight while you're reflecting, and then you have questions about, what happens if, maybe I didn't see that right, I need to see it again. All of those little thoughts, are a form of clinging. That's the desire to want to know. And at some point, you have to let go of curiosity, and just observe.

Now, when you get into this state, this is when the six R's are really, really important. But this is also when the six R's need to be automatic. So six R's, they need to be there, and they need to be functioning, but even a little desire of wanting to see, is going to stop, and that desire, you're not seeing, as a hindrance, and, that means that you're not going to go any deeper. Just the little tiny things now. See, you've gone from real gross things, more and more to the smaller, and smaller, and subtler things. And that's why I keep talking to you about seeing more, what happens before the wobble happens, that sort of thing. And I don't want you to talk with each other about it. You come and talk to me about the wobble, and what happens before the wobble.

MN: 13. "It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous! 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 personality as far as personality extends. This is the Deathless, namely, the liberation of the mind through not 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.

BV: So it’s real important.

This particular sutta is very self explanatory in a lot of ways. And, right now, you’re beginning to work more and more with subtler and subtler, little tensions and tightnesses, and when you keep working and sitting, try sitting for longer periods of time, two hours, three hours, four hours, like that. Make sure you always walk afterwards, get your energy up. You’ll start to get much more familiar with each one of these states. See if you’re sitting for an hour, hour and a half, hour and forty minutes, you’re still on the surface of it, and it takes a while to be able to go deeper. So, once you get into the realm of

nothingness, then just stay with your equanimity radiating to all directions at the same time, radiating that feeling of equanimity, and see the subtle tiny things that arise. Now's the time to roll up the sleeves, and go to work. (Laughs)

I've always liked the idea of, if you're ever going to be attached to anything, be attached to neither-perception-nor-non-perception. (Laughs)

Now, there are people that have the idea that they have attained nibbana when they get to that state, because mind is so subtle at that time, but it's just not it. There is a definite difference between neither perception-nor-non-perception, and the cessation of perception and feeling all together. There is a difference. You will feel the difference.

And, when you see Dependent Origination and have the experience, and a lot of joy coming up and all of that sort of thing, it's best not to move. You don't need to run and tell me that it happened. Just sit there and watch, and reflect on the differences between one state and another, and reflect on how Dependent Origination, how you saw it work. Ok? And I'll tell you right now, that's the last thing you're going to feel like doing. You'll feel like jumping up and: "Yeah! This is great stuff!" Stay with your meditation. There's lots and lots of lessons in there, just in that time right after you come out of the unconditioned. Every cell in your body is going to be going "Whoopie" at you. Because it is such a relief, that it's remarkable. I mean you can't describe it any other way; it's just strong, strong relief, like every time you let go of a hindrance, that's a relief, but those are little guys compared to this. So sit and reflect with that, and see how, and you will learn a lot.

Now, there is in the Mahasi method, they say that you have this experience, and then you go back, and right after you come out, you start reviewing all of the insights that you had. This is commentary. Doesn't have anything to do with the actual experience. And they really don't teach how Dependent Origination works, so they don't stress being able to see it, they want you to see impermanence,

suffering and not self. Now you hear me talk about Dependent Origination a lot, because that is the most important aspect of the Buddha's teaching. It's the thing that helps you to investigate and go deeper, more quickly, than with any other kind of meditation.

So, what, you're meditating here five or six hours a day, maybe a little bit more, but not much. When I was a Mahasi Center, I was doing it eighteen, and I didn't have near the progress. Because of the method of teaching, and having to go through a translator.

It was always real fun to go through translators, because you'd spend time describing something to a T: "This is what my experience is." And the translator goes: "Ok. Dibblebleblebla." And the teacher listens to that, and he can spend a long time, and then the translation comes back: " Well just continue; everything's fine." And it's like: "I'm missing something here. We're not quite getting it, not quite." That's one of the true advantages of having somebody speaking your own language in doing the teaching, especially if they're following the prescribed method in the suttas.

Being more and more familiar with the equanimity and radiating it out in all directions. When you start your sitting, you can radiate in the six directions, and then just take it up and do it, or if you want, you can just do all directions at the same time. Try to develop that, so that you can do daily activities with that kind of mind. First you have to develop it, and keep it going while you're walking. Look at the restless mind that comes up, that knocks you out. Don't be satisfied with that; stop; get that state back, and then start again. But if you can't get it, don't push at it. Then just stay with your lighter kind of equanimity and get your circulation going.

Now, if you feel like you need to walk longer, then you can walk up to forty five minutes, ok? Whatever you feel like. And I definitely do not recommend ever walking longer than an hour, because you start tiring your body out, especially if you're walking in a brisk way, And the meditation is not about making you tired, it's about giving you energy. So.

Ok, this is a short Dhamma talk tonight.

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