

MN 12 The Greater Discourse on the Lion's Roar
Mahāsīhanāda Sutta Part 2

Bhante Vimalaramsi 22-Aug-07

BV: OK. This is called the Bodhisatta's austerities. These austerities are real amazing.

MN:
(THE BODHISATTA'S AUSTERITIES)

44. "Sāriputta, I recall having lived a holy life possessing four factors. I have been an ascetic—a supreme ascetic; I have been coarse—supremely coarse; I have been scrupulous—supremely scrupulous; I have been secluded—supremely secluded.

45. "Such was my asceticism, Sāriputta, that I went naked, rejecting conventions, licking my hands,

BV: In India when they eat with their hands, they eat on a palm leaf. And when they get done they like to lick their hands. Well, this particular asceticism is licking your hands in order to clean them so you CAN eat.

MN:
not coming when asked, not stopping when asked; I did not accept food brought or food specially made or an invitation to a meal; I received 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 lying in the midst of men, from where food was advertised to be distributed,

BV: One of the things during the time of the Buddha was that, you know what the free kitchens are? Soup kitchens? They had basically the same kind of thing in a lot of the villages. And they would advertise it and let everyone know if you need something to eat, then there was food for you. But he wouldn't eat that kind of food either.

MN:

from where a dog was waiting, from where flies were buzzing; I accepted no fish or meat, I drank no liquor, wine, or fermented brew. I kept to one house, to one morsel; I kept to two houses, to two morsels;...I kept to seven houses, to seven morsels. I lived on one saucerful a day, on two saucerfuls a day...on seven saucerfuls a day; I took food once a day, once every two days...once every seven days; thus even up to once every fortnight,

BV: Now, this is a practice that came into being because, when you stop eating food on a regular basis, then lust will never arise in your mind. And that's the whole point of doing that. You get grumpy, but you don't have any lust come in.

MN:

I dwelt pursuing the practice of taking food at stated intervals. I was an eater of greens or millet or wild rice or hide-parings

BV: When they butcher an animal, they have pieces of the hide laying around, small pieces, and he would eat that. I'm glad he did that, so we don't have to try these kind of things.

MN:

or moss or ricebran or rice-scum or sesamum flour or grass or cowdung. I lived on forest roots and fruits; I fed on fallen fruits. I clothed myself in hemp, in hemp-mixed cloth, in shrouds, in refuse rags, in tree bark, in antelope hide, in strips of antelope hide, in kusa-grass fabric,

BV: Now, kusa grass is a kind of grass in Asia that, if you don't pick it up right, it will cut you. And it's like paper cut only deeper. Now making some kind of a garment out of something like that is NOT a desirable thing, and can be quite painful.

MN:

in bark fabric, in wood-shavings fabric, in head-hair wool, in animal wool, in owls' wings. I was one who pulled out hair and beard,

TT: 4:58

BV: They have all of these different practices [that] are a part of the ascetic practices that were being practiced during the time of the Buddha. And, even today, a lot of them are being practiced. And the pulling out of the hair means taking a pair of tweezers and pulling out every hair on the head. That means their eyebrows, nostril hairs, your ear hairs, EVERYTHING on your head. And actually, it's somewhat painful.

MN:

pursuing the practice of pulling out hair and beard. I was one who stood continuously, rejecting seats.

BV: Now, every ten years in India, all of the spiritual folk get together and they say "I've been doing this practice or that practice" and they get very good at it. There was one monk, I saw a movie about him. He was called the Somersault Monk. And he went fifteen hundred miles just doing somersaults. (laughter) That's how he got from one place to the other. And he would do this all day. When it got time to stop, he had to have two or three people hold him, so that he wouldn't do the somersaults, because he just got into this concentration of doing it. Now what he did was, he had a loin cloth, and he had a cloth over one shoulder that he did his somersault on that shoulder. And that's all. And then he would somersault from one village to the next. And then when he stopped, everybody thought that he was some kind of real special being, and they would come and ask him questions and talk with him. And the next day he would start up and do it again. Now the interesting thing was, he became so skillful at doing somersaults, when you looked closely, you couldn't tell whether he was touching the ground or not. I mean, he was really good at it. But, does that lead to Nibbana? That's the question. Now in the Newsweek about every ten years, they have pictures of these guys, and there's this one guy that was standing on one leg. And the other leg was crossed and it came into the fold in the other leg. And he stood like that all day, and all night. And I was showing that to one of my Burmese monk teachers, and I said, "What do you

think about this kind of practice?" He says, "It doesn't lead to Nibbana." I said, "Yeah, but he sure has good balance." You know how HARD that would be? Now there's some practices that these guys will hold their hand up in the air. And they'll hold their hand up in the air all the time, and the muscles start atrophying, and all the blood starts leaving, and it gets to be very painful. And they think that this is one of the ascetic practices that will lead them to some kind of supernormal state. After a while, a couple years, they can't bring their hand down. Their hand is ALWAYS up, and it's stuck there. And it's like, even if you tried to revive that arm, the muscles wouldn't respond to that anymore. So there's all kinds of really strange practices that the Brahmins and the Hindus did to try to become enlightened. Now, he's talking about doing that here. He's talking about doing these kind of practices. There's other practices where they would climb up in a tree and they would hang by their leg, and hang upside down for huge long periods of time. Well, all the blood goes to your head, and before long you start passing out a little bit, and they think that that's some kind of supernormal state. So they keep doing it over and over. So there's all of these different peculiar kind of ideas that they would practice.

MN:

I was one who squatted continuously, devoted to maintaining the squatting position. I was one who used a mattress of spikes; {...}

BV: Now you've seen or heard about that sort of thing, laying on a bed of spikes. Sometimes they would have these--they have a lot of really thorny kind of plants, especially in India—and they would lay down on that. Why? Because anytime they moved, it would cause pain and that would make them stay still. And they thought that that would lead to some kind of a thing.

TT: 10:06

MN:

I dwelt pursuing the practice of bathing in water three times daily including the evening.

BV: Asians don't like to take showers or baths in the evening because they think it'll give them a cold.

MN:

Thus in such a variety of ways I dwelt pursuing the practice of tormenting and mortifying the body. Such was my asceticism.

BV: They did all of these things, they punished their bodies, so that their mind will become stronger. That's their idea.

MN:

46. "Such was my coarseness, Sāriputta, that just as the bole of a tinduka tree, accumulating over the years, cakes and flakes off, so too, dust and dirt, accumulating over the years, caked off my body and flaked off.

BV: A lot of the people that live in desert areas don't take baths. And they'll go for six months and eight months or a year, and then they'll go in and they peel all of the stuff off of their skin, and then they take a bath. But they get reasonably ripe. (laughter) So much so that people that do take baths can't stand being around them because they smell so very bad.

MN:

It never occurred to me: 'Oh, let me rub this dust and dirt off with my hand, or let another rub this dust and dirt off with his hand'—it never occurred to me thus. Such was my coarseness.

47. "Such was my scrupulousness, Sāriputta, that I was always mindful in stepping forwards and stepping backwards. I was full of pity even in regard to a drop of water thus: 'Let me not hurt the tiny creatures in the crevices of the ground.' Such was my scrupulousness.

BV: It's an interesting practice that when you change your posture, sitting right now, and then you get up to go do something, and then you stand and then you start walking, that you make that your key to remind yourself to do your meditation practice. And then when you

forget, stop when you remember, and go back to where you were, and sit down, and start doing it all over again. It's an interesting practice to do that. Every time I took a step for a period of time, I did this. I was radiating metta. And when I forgot, then I would come back and sit down and get up, and the first step, doing the metta, and then continuing on as long as I could remember. I also used the doorknob as one of my keys to remember. Anytime I reached for the doorknob, I tried to remember to do the loving-kindness. So there's all kinds of different little things that you can use as a key to help you remember to keep your practice going more continuously.

MN:

48. "Such was my seclusion, Sāriputta, that I would plunge into some forest and dwell there. And when I saw a cowherd or a shepherd or someone gathering grass or sticks, or a woodsman, I would flee from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hollow to hollow, from hillock to hillock. Why was that? So that they should not see me or I see them. Just as a forest-bred deer, on seeing human beings, flees from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hollow to hollow, from hillock to hillock, so too, when I saw a cowherd or a shepherd...Such was my seclusion.

49. "I would go on all fours to the cow-pens when the cattle had gone out and the cowherd had left them, and I would feed on the dung of the young suckling calves.

BV: See what I mean? Thank you Buddha so we didn't have to do this practice....

TT: 14:45

MN:

As long as my own excrement and urine lasted, I fed on my own excrement and urine. Such was my great distortion in feeding.

50. "I would plunge into some awe-inspiring grove and dwell there—a grove so awe-inspiring that normally it would make a man's hair stand up if he were not free from lust. When those cold wintry nights

came during the 'eight-days interval of frost,' I would dwell by night in the open and by day in the grove. In the last month of the hot season I would dwell by day in the open

BV: In the sun...

MN:

and by night in the grove. And there came to me spontaneously this stanza never heard before:

'Chilled by night and scorched by day,
Alone in awe-inspiring groves,
Naked, no fire to sit beside,
The sage yet pursues his quest.'

BV: That shows you how tough he was. And he was really, really dedicated.

MN:

51. "I would make my bed in a charnel ground

BV: A charnel ground is where they take bodies after somebody dies. And they will leave the body there and then the family, whenever they can, they come and they cremate the body or do whatever. Sometimes they buried it. Sometimes the family wouldn't come for a month. Sometimes they wouldn't come for six months. Sometimes they wouldn't come for a year. Sometimes they wouldn't come at all. So you go to a charnel ground, and you're seeing all of these different stages of decay of bodies. Heavy-duty smells. HEAVY-duty smells. And the Buddha thought that that was a good meditation for monks. And he actually recommends this kind of meditation.

Repeats {"I would make my bed in a charnel ground }

MN:

with the bones of the dead for a pillow. And cowherd boys came up and spat on me, urinated on me, threw dirt at me, and poked sticks into my ears. Yet I do not recall that I ever aroused an evil mind [of

hate] against them. Such was my abiding in equanimity.

52. "Sāriputta, there are certain recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'Purification comes about through food. They say: 'Let us live on kola-fruits,' and they eat kola-fruits, they eat kola-fruit powder, they drink kola-fruit water, and they make many kinds of kola-fruit concoctions. Now I recall having eaten a single kola-fruit a day. Sāriputta, you may think that the kola-fruit was bigger at that time, yet you should not regard it so: the kola-fruit was then at most the same size as now. Through feeding on a single kola-fruit a day, my body reached a state of extreme emaciation.

BV: Now you see a lot of Buddha images where he was the Bodhisatta and he looks like a skeleton. You see all of the ribs and the knots at all of the joints and all of this. VERY austere.

MN:

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 a 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 wanted to touch my belly skin I encountered my backbone, and if I wanted to touch my backbone I encountered my belly skin. Because of eating so little, if I wanted to defecate or urinate, I fell over on my face right 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.

53-55. "Sāriputta, there are certain recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'Purification comes about through food.' They say: 'Let us live on beans,'...'Let us live on sesamum,'...'Let us live on rice,' and they eat rice, they eat rice powder, they drink rice

water, and they make many kinds of rice concoctions. Now I recall having eaten a single rice grain a day. Sāriputta, you may think that the rice grain was bigger at that time, yet you should not regard it so: the rice grain was then at most the same size as now. Through feeding on a single rice grain a day, my body reached a state of extreme emaciation. Because of eating so little...the hair, rotted at its roots, fell from my body as I rubbed.

56. "Yet, Sāriputta, by such conduct, by such practice, by such performance of austerities, I did not attain any superhuman states, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones. Why was that? Because I did not attain that noble wisdom which when attained is noble and emancipating and leads the one who practices in accordance with it to the complete destruction of suffering.

57. "Sāriputta, there are certain recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'Purification comes about through the round of rebirths.' But it is not easy to find a realm in the round that I have not already [82] passed through in this long journey,

TT: 22:13

BV: That means the lowest hells, the highest Brahma locas.

MN:

except for the gods of the Pure Abodes; and had I passed through the round as a god in the Pure Abodes, I would never have returned to this world.

58. "There are certain recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'Purification comes about through [some particular kind of] rebirth.' But it is not easy to find a kind of rebirth that I have not been reborn in already in this long journey, { ...}

59. "There are certain recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'Purification comes about through [some particular] abode.' But it is not easy to find a kind of abode that I have not

already dwelt in { ...}

60. "There are certain recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'Purification comes about through sacrifice.' But it is not easy to find a kind of sacrifice that has not already been offered up by me in this long journey,

BV: You know, like fire sacrifices, water sacrifices, sacrificing different kinds of animals, all of those kind of things.

MN:

when I was either a head-anointed noble king or a well-to-do brahmin.

BV: So when his merit was such that he was reasonably wealthy, there was a lot of sacrifices and things like that, that they talk about.

TT: 24:03

MN:

61. "There are certain recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'Purification comes through fire-worship.' But it is not easy to find a kind of fire that has not already been worshipped by me in this long journey, when I was either a head-anointed noble king or a well-to-do brahmin.

62. "Sāriputta, there are certain recluses and brahmins whose doctrine and view is this: 'As long as this good man is still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, so long is he perfect in his lucid wisdom. But when this good man is old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, and come to the last stage, being eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old, then the lucidity of his wisdom is lost.' But it should not be regarded so. I am now old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, and come to the last stage: my years have turned eighty. Now suppose that I had four disciples with a hundred years' lifespan, perfect in mindfulness, retentiveness, memory, and lucidity of wisdom. Just as a skilled archer, trained, practised, and tested, could easily shoot a

light arrow across the shadow of a palm tree, suppose that they were even to that extent perfect in mindfulness, retentiveness, memory, and lucidity of wisdom. Suppose that they continuously asked me about the four foundations of mindfulness and that I answered them when asked and that they remembered each answer of mine and never asked a subsidiary question or paused except to eat, drink, consume food, taste, urinate, defecate, and rest in order to remove sleepiness and tiredness. Still the Tathāgata's exposition of the Dhamma, his explanations of factors of the Dhamma, and his replies to questions would not yet come to an end, but meanwhile those four disciples of mine with their hundred years' lifespan would have died at the end of those hundred years. Sāriputta, even if you have to carry me about on a bed, still there will be no change in the lucidity of the Tathāgata's wisdom.

63. "Rightly speaking, were it to be said of anyone: 'A being not subject to delusion has appeared in the world for the welfare and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans.' it is of me indeed that rightly speaking this should be said."

64. Now on that occasion the venerable Nāgasamāla was standing behind the Blessed One fanning him. Then he said to the Blessed One: "It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous! As I listened to this discourse on the Dhamma, the hairs of my body stood up. Venerable sir, what is the name of this discourse on the Dhamma?"

"As to that, Nāgasamāla, you may remember this discourse on the Dhamma as 'The Hair-Raising Discourse.'" (Lomahaṃsanapariyāya) That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

TT: 28:28

BV: But, the whole point of this is, he went through every kind of practice that was being done at the time, to find the way to get off of the wheel of samsara. It doesn't talk about it here but he did the holding of the breath meditation. Now, in the years before, he had

developed his mind so he was one of the best, most advanced meditators in the entire world. He got to the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. So he wasn't doing these things lightly. He had good control of how mind's attention actually works. And he would hold his breath for a long period of time. And he would hear a lot of wind coming in and out of his ears. Now, one of the things that the Hindu culture, they do with their meditation when they try to do the breathingless meditation, is they cut the partition underneath your tongue, and then they can swallow their tongue, and stop the air from coming out of their nose and mouth. But, he would have a lot of wind coming out of his ears, so he stuffed his ears! And then he would do it again. And he started noticing some very, very intense racking pain. Like two men would take a leather thong and just start twisting it and twisting it and twisting it, and kept twisting it. And that was really, really severe head pain. But it didn't make his mind shake, even these kind of severe pains. So he would stop doing that for a little while, and catch his breath, and then he thought, "Well maybe I'll try it again, see what happens." And he did it again, and he said it was like two men grabbing him under the arms and holding him over a fire, there was so much fire that was happening. And he did that for a little while, but it didn't make his mind shake. And then he stopped for a little while and he caught his breath, and then he thought, "Well, maybe I'll try it again." And this time he said it was like somebody taking a knife and carving up his intestines, the winds in his intestines became so intense. It didn't make his mind shake.

TT: 31:27

Now, with the food meditation and the breathingless meditation, he came to a point where he realized, "I have gone as far as anybody could possibly go by doing this." Other people could match it, but they couldn't go any further than that, or they would die. So, he let these practices go. Now, when he started taking more food, the ascetics that were taking care of him, he had five ascetics that were attending to his needs, they started seeing him eat, and they started going, "Oh, he's given up his striving. He's not going to do that any more. He's becoming LUXURIOUS because he's taking so much food

and he starting to put meat back on his bones." And they got disgusted and said "We're outta here."

So, after he had started to gain his strength from eating, then he went to a place that he says is very pleasing to the eye. It was right by a river, and there was enough shade and there was a place underneath this tree that was reasonably level, and if he put some grasses down it was soft enough. And he did a lot of meditation. And one day, there was a woman in the town that wasn't very far away, that she saw him sitting in meditation and she thought he was a tree spirit. And she wanted to become pregnant. So she got a gold bowl and filled it with this sumptuous food, and came and offered it while he was sitting, with the idea that now I will get pregnant. And the Buddha opened up his eyes, and there's this gold bowl with all this wonderful food. So he ate that and then he took the bowl and he went to the river and he threw the bowl in the river. But instead of going with the flow of the river, this bowl started going upstream. And it made him realize that what he was doing was going against the flow of all of these other practices. He'd done all of them as far as he could take them. And he had to go in a different way. This was the night of his enlightenment. He knew that he was going to be enlightened that night. And after he had eaten, somebody came along and they had a few bunches of grass, and they gave him grass to sit on. He sat down with the determination that all of the blood in his veins would dry up into dust before he would get up. He would just stay there until he died. Strong determination. And then, he started doing meditation.

TT: 34:54

And it occurred to him that once while he was just a young boy of about a year and a half, something like that, his father, the King, was out in the fields blessing the fields for crops to be good that year. They called it the plowing ceremony and they had a whole ceremony. And it's a time for a lot of fun for everybody. And, the attendants to the young boy, they wanted to go have some fun, so they left him alone. And he was sitting underneath what is called a rose apple tree. Rose apple trees are fairly big trees--they put out a lot of shade.

So, he was sitting in his crib, for want of a better word, and he crossed his legs and he started doing the meditation. And, the reason he started doing meditation was because he had done meditation so many times in so many of his past lifetimes, that he had developed this habit. And as he was doing the meditation, he started recognizing this little tension and tightness in the head, and he started relaxing. Now, as he did that, he got into the first jhāna. And he was sitting with very pleasant abiding, very comfortable. And his attendants came back and they went, "Woah, look at that! He's sitting in meditation! He's really something, this boy!" And they ran and got the King and showed it to the King. And the King bowed to his son. Now this is highly unusual. It is not done in India, especially a King, to one of his children.

So on the night of his enlightenment, he started thinking about the ways of doing the meditation. And he remembered this, when he was young. And he started meditating and relaxing. And he got attacked by all of the hindrances, BIG TIME, really attacked, over and over and over again. And, he kept letting it be and relaxing into it, keeping his mind on a wholesome object. Until finally the hindrances, they just stopped. He got a sense of relief, and then he got into the first jhāna.

And he realized that all of the ascetic practices that he had done in the past, the torturing of the body, the fear of experiencing pleasant things, he realized that there are some kind of pleasant things that arise that are not unwholesome. Like this kind of joy and the calmness that happened after that, and the tranquility and the comfort in his mind and body. He realized that these weren't bad things. And, there is a connection between mind and body. And you can't just be austere and try to cut off your body and purify your mind, it doesn't work. It has to be interconnected. So, as he was sitting and he went deeper and he got into the second jhāna and he went deeper and he got into the third jhāna, and then he got into the fourth jhāna. Now this is in the first watch of the night. First watch of the night is from seven o'clock until eleven o'clock. The second watch of the night is from eleven o'clock until three o'clock. The third watch of the night is from three o'clock until seven o'clock in the morning.

TT: 39:29

So, he got into the fourth jhāna, and he thought, "Ah, this is quite interesting, all this equanimity, all of this balance of mind is excellent, very good. Suppose I were to remember my past lifetimes." So he started developing his memory, going back and back and back and back and back. And he started going back into his past lifetimes, and he remembered what his name was, what kind of clothes he wore, what kind of actions he had, what kind of food he ate, all of these different things were pretty specific. And he started going faster and faster. There was two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, and then he started seeing the expansions and contractions of the universe with his memory. He knew that this is how that worked. And this is what he did in the second watch of the night. As he kept doing this, his equanimity kept getting stronger and stronger. And his mind began to get very much more peaceful and calm. And then it naturally started going and his mind started going to heavenly realms, hell realms, ghost realms, seeing all of these different realms. And he saw the arising or passing away of a person and then their arising in another realm. And he understood how all of this happened because of their past actions. Then, his mind started letting go more and more, and he went deeper into his meditation until he experienced the cessation of perception and feeling.

Now, some of the practices that the Bodhisatta did before he became enlightened, or awakened, was figuring out Dependent Origination. He already knew about Dependent Origination and how it worked. I WILL show you another book at another time. But he had done this as a Bodhisatta, so he was familiar with how Dependent Origination arose and how it ceased. But he hadn't fully come to that realization, until when the cessation of perception and feeling let go, and he saw all of the links of Dependent Origination, how they arose, and how they cease. And he saw, up close and personal, how everything is part of an impersonal process. When he saw THAT, he was completely awake. That's how he experienced going from a Bodhisatta—a Bodhisatta means a future Buddha, one striving for

Buddhahood. There's an awful lot of different definitions of Bodhisatta and taking a Bodhisatta vow. And people go around and they say "I'm a Buddha" and all of this, and it's not working with reality. When you experience seeing the cessation of perception and feeling and truly see Dependent Origination, there IS no more I, me or mine involved in it at all. There IS no more pride. There IS no more belief in a personal self. Lust and hatred will NEVER arise in your mind again. Now this depends on the degree of the attainment that happens for you. Nobody can tell you except a Buddha, "You're going to be an arahat in three days." No, it doesn't work that way. I certainly can't tell you when something is going to happen, or what the end result is going to be. You might be a sotāpanna, you might be at the second stage, the sakadāgāmī, you might be an anāgāmī you might be come an arahat—I don't know. It all depends on your past perfections, your paramī, your true understanding of this process. But it is DEFINITELY a whoopee. (laughter) And worth working for. Because your understanding becomes so clear.

TT: 45:10

The Buddha, right after he became fully enlightened, he decided he was going to continue sitting, and sat for seven days, thinking about Dependent Origination and observing Dependent Origination and how it works, EVERY time in EVERY situation. He spent a few days looking at it forward, he spent a few days looking at it backwards. In other words, he looked at the cause and effect forward, and then he saw the cessation. And he did this for seven days.

Then he got up and stretched a little bit, and he thought, "You know, this tree that I've been sitting under, has really done me a good thing." So he walked off a few feet from the tree, so he could have a view of the tree enough. Bodhi trees, you talk about a big tree, we're talking BIG. When I was in Burma, I went to this one place where there was a Bodhi tree, and I was maybe a mile and a half away from it, and I looked at this tree and I went, "Wow, THAT'S a BIG tree." And when I got close to it, it was REALLY, REALLY big. Wonderful tree. So he stepped back from the Bodhi tree, and he just gazed at the Bodhi tree with a mind that was very thankful and

respectful.

And then he went to different places and sat for a week here and a week there under this tree and that tree. And after seven weeks, then he started thinking about whether he really wanted to go to all the trouble of telling other people about this. Because he knew that it was really hard to explain this to other people so that they would listen and actually gain benefit. Now there was a Brahma, there was somebody in the Brahma realms, that read his mind. And he thought, "Oh my, he's considering not doing the teaching." And he immediately came down to the human realm and started talking to the Buddha and pleaded with him, basically. And he said, "You know, there are people with little dust in their eyes. There are people with a lot of dust in their eyes. But the people with little dust in their eyes, if you just say a few things to them, they will GET IT!" So, the Buddha, because he had all of these psychic powers by now, he surveyed the world and he saw, "Yeah, this is true. There are these beings that have a little dust in their eyes. So it won't be too tiring for me to teach them."

And then he thought, "Well, who should I teach first?" And he thought, "Well, my first teacher, who taught me how to get into the realm of nothingness. He has a little dust in his eye. Maybe I'll go and teach him." And the Brahmin that had come from the Brahma loca, he said, "Actually he died about a week ago." And the Buddha looked with his psychic ability and saw, "Yes, that's true." Now, he had died and he had gone into the realm of nothingness where there's no body, so there's no way for the Buddha to be able to teach him. You have to have a body to be able to be taught this kind of thing.

So then the Buddha started thinking, "Well, OK, he's dead and gone. Then maybe I will teach my second teacher, Rāmaputta. He has a very little bit of dust in his eyes. Suppose I teach him." And the Brahmin said, "Actually, he just died last night." And the Buddha looked and he said, "Yeah, that's true. So these guys are really missing something great here."

So then he started thinking, who else could he teach? And he realized that these ascetics that had been with him from the start of his being a monk, or an ascetic, they were actually pretty wise people, and they would understand reasonably fast. So he decided that he would go and teach these five monks. And they were some distance away.

TT: 50:21

Now, when the Brahmin started looking around and he saw that there was some merchants that were coming through with their goods. And he went to these Brahmins and said, "Do you guys really want to make some amazing merit? Come and offer food to this ascetic. It will be to your benefit for a very, very long period of time." So they did that. But the Buddha didn't know how to accept the food because he didn't have any bowl. Remember he threw his gold bowl in the river. It sank, not around anymore. And the devas, Saccaka was one of them, I can't remember the names of the others, but they read the Buddha's mind and they said, "Oh, he doesn't have a bowl." So they took all of their bowls and made it into one--there was four of them—and created a crystal bowl. And they brought it down and it appeared right in front of the Buddha so he could accept the food. And he used that same bowl for the whole time that he was a monk, or that he was alive. So the Buddha used a crystal bowl to eat out of.

Now, the story goes, that the Buddha wanted to make these merchants very happy. And he told them that he was fully enlightened. And he said, "Because you've done this, what I'm going to do is I'm going to pluck out some of my hairs and give them to you. And you can use these as remembering me and making your mind happy and all of that sort of stuff." Now, depending on the country that you visit, if you're in Burma, they say that it was Burmese merchants. And when they left the Buddha, they came back to Burma, and they took these hairs and they made a pagoda and put them in the pagoda. I have some real troubles with this because I have visited many pagodas in Burma and all of them have his hair relic in them! He would have been more than bald, I'll tell ya! (laughs) But, whether this is really true or not, I don't know. But the

story is that he gave three or seven hairs—two hairs, OK—for these other merchants so that they could remember him and be happy. Now there's an interesting thing that happens with a lot of monks that are advanced in meditation. And that is, when they shave their head, laymen want their hair because every wholesome thought the monk has, if they have his hair in a little vial and it's around their neck, then they would get happy too--that's the belief. And I've seen this happen with quite a few advanced meditator monks. Anyway. The Buddha went and he taught these five ascetics and his first discourse was on the Eightfold Path, and the Four Noble Truths, and Dependent Origination. And that's how all of this came to be.

54:51

But it's real interesting that he was really considering very seriously how troublesome it would be to teach other people whose minds are just really out there. They got a lot of dust in their eyes and they would want to argue with him and all of this kind of thing. But he had the knack and purity draw people to him that were ready to hear what he had to say. And a LOT of people became arahats during his lifetime.

TT: 55:28

OK, so I'm done telling stories. Anybody else have one? (laughs) But this sutta gives you an idea of how truly dedicated the Buddha was to finding freedom. I mean, he went through some really disgusting things! Because that was the belief at the time. And he proved that it didn't lead to the getting off of the wheel of samsara, so he had to go out and look for himself, because all these other beliefs didn't work. So he let go of all of those other practices, thankfully. And now we have a more balanced approach to the meditation.

The important thing to remember is that any tension in your mind and in your body is from CRAVING. There's a feeling that arises, then it's the "I like it, I don't like it" mind that arises right after that. And right after that, then your concepts, opinions, all of these different mind wanderings come up and give you the reason why you don't

like and why you want it to be different and how you get involved in it and then you start thinking about something else and then your mind just kind of blows around and thinks about this and that. But when you recognize that there is tension and tightness, even if you're caught for a period of time, when you recognize that tension and tightness, and allow the feeling to be there by itself and relax into that, that gives you a brief moment of NO CRAVING. Now if you can bring that mind back to your object of meditation, that's perfect. If your mind still starts thinking more and more, don't relax, relax, relax, relax, relax. Even though there still has some distraction, you still come back to your object of meditation. When your mind gets pulled back, you Recognize, Release, Relax, Smile. Smile. SMILE! Look at that, he's not smiling at all. (laughter)

That's the key! And I have never found an instance that it didn't work. It might not work as well as you think it should at the time, but that's because of the strength of the attachment. And the identification. But letting go of that tension and tightness, just for a brief moment, is like putting a coin in your piggy bank. You're not going to fill your piggy bank up with one or two coins, it's going to take a LOT before you get it filled up. But, as you start doing that, you have longer periods of that clear mind that's pure! And coming back to that wholesome object of your meditation. So eventually, that hindrance starts fading and will eventually not come up. But the hindrance is your best friend because it's teaching you where your attachment is. And, as you use the 6Rs, you're teaching yourself how to become more wholesome and uplifted. And that's the whole point to the Buddha's teaching, isn't it? To have this uplifted mind that doesn't have distractions in it. Even hatred, even lust doesn't even come up at a certain point. WHEW! That's worth it. It's worth working for.

TT: 1:00:15

There's a different kind of definition of dukkha. "Kha" is a form of khanti. Khanti means patience. "Du" means no patience. (laughs) "Su" means MUCH patience. Sukha and dukkha! Patience leads to Nibbana. You have no idea how many times I've heard that

statement given to me. U Silinanda was continually telling me that patience leads to Nibbana, "Just develop your patience, that's all!" ... "Well I'll develop my patience as long as I can get it now!" (laughs) But now you get to find out what patience really IS. OK, so I've been talking for a long time. Anybody got any questions, comment, statements, anything? Let's share some merit then.

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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Transcription: Uma Sarason

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