

## **MN 27 The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint** - Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta

14-Oct-05

BV: This particular sutta is the favorite sutta in Sri Lanka. This is the first sutta that was given by Mahinda when he came from India to Sri Lanka. This is very deep stuff.

MN: 1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvathī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.

2. Now on that occasion the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi was driving out of Sāvathī in the middle of the day in an all-white chariot drawn by white mares. He saw the wanderer Pilotika coming in the distance and asked him: "Now where is Master Vacchāyana coming from in the middle of the day?"

Sir, I am coming from the presence of the recluse Gotama."

"What does Master Vacchāyana think of the recluse Gotama's lucidity of wisdom? He is wise, is he not?"

"Sir, who am I to know the recluse Gotama's lucidity of wisdom? One would surely have to be his equal to know the recluse Gotama's lucidity of wisdom."

"Master Vacchāyana praises the recluse Gotama with high praise indeed."

"Sir, who am I to praise the recluse Gotama? The recluse Gotama is praised by the praised as best among gods and humans."

"What reasons does Master Vacchāyana see that he has such firm confidence in the recluse Gotama?"

3. "Sir, suppose a wise elephant woodsman were to enter an elephant wood and were to see in the elephant wood a big elephant's footprint, long in extent and broad across. He would come to the conclusion: 'Indeed, this is a big bull elephant.' So too, when I saw four footprints of the recluse Gotama, I came to the conclusion: 'The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practicing the good way.' What are the four?

4. "Sir, I have seen here certain learned nobles who were clever, knowledgeable about the doctrines of others, as sharp as hairsplitting marksmen; they wander about, as it were, demolishing the views of others with their sharp wits. When they hear: 'The recluse Gotama will visit such and such a village or town,' they formulate a question thus: 'We will go to the recluse Gotama and ask him this question. If he is asked like this, he will answer like this, and so we will refute his doctrine in this way; and if he is asked like that, he will answer like that, and so we will refute his doctrine in that way.'

"They hear: 'The recluse Gotama has come to visit such and such a village or town.' They go to the recluse Gotama, and the recluse Gotama instructs, urges, rouses, and gladdens them with a talk on the Dhamma. After they have been instructed, urged, roused, and gladdened by the recluse Gotama with a talk on the Dhamma, they do not so much as ask him the question, so how should they refute his doctrine? In actual fact, they become his disciples. When I saw this first footprint of the recluse Gotama, I came to the conclusion: 'The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practicing the good way.'

TT: 05:11

5. "Again, I have seen certain learned brahmins who were clever...In actual fact, they too become his disciples. When I saw this second footprint of the recluse Gotama, I came to the conclusion: The Blessed One is fully enlightened...'

6. "Again, I have seen certain learned householders who were clever... In actual fact, they too become his disciples. When I saw this third footprint of the recluse Gotama, I came to the conclusion: The Blessed One is fully enlightened...'

7. "Again, I have seen certain learned recluses who were clever... They do not so much as ask him the question, so how should they refute his doctrine? In actual fact, they ask the recluse Gotama to allow them to go forth from the home life into homelessness, and he gives them the going forth. Not long after they have gone forth, dwelling alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and resolute, by realising for themselves with direct knowledge they here and now enter upon and abide in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness. They say thus: 'We were very nearly lost, we very nearly perished, for formerly we claimed that we were recluses though we were not really recluses; we claimed that we were brahmins though we were not really brahmins; we claimed that we were arahants though we were not really arahants. But now we are recluses, now we are brahmins, now we are arahants.' When I saw this fourth footprint of the recluse Gotama, I came to the conclusion: "The Blessed One is fully enlightened...'

"When I saw these four footprints of the recluse Gotama, I came to the conclusion: The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practicing the good way."

8. When this was said, the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi got down from his all-white chariot drawn by white mares, and arranging his upper robe on one shoulder, he extended his hands in reverential salutation towards the Blessed One and uttered this exclamation three times: "Honour to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened! Honour to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened! Honour to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened! Perhaps some time or other we might meet Master Gotama and have some conversation with him."

9. Then the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi went to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and related to the Blessed One his entire conversation with the wanderer Pilotika. Thereupon the Blessed One told him: "At this point, brahmin, the simile of the elephant's footprint has not yet been completed in detail. As to how it is completed in detail, listen and attend carefully to what I shall say."—"Yes, sir," the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi replied. The Blessed One said this:

TT: 09:20

10. "Brahmin, suppose an elephant woodsman were to enter an elephant wood and were to see in the elephant wood a big elephant's footprint, long in extent and broad across. A wise elephant woodsman would not yet come to the conclusion: 'Indeed, this is a big bull elephant.' Why is that? In an elephant wood there are small she-elephants that leave a big footprint, and this might be one of their footprints. He follows it and sees in the elephant wood a big elephant's footprint, long in extent and broad across, and some scrapings high up. A wise elephant woodsman would not yet come to the conclusion: 'Indeed, this is a big bull elephant.' Why is that? In an elephant wood there are tall she-elephants that have prominent teeth and leave a big footprint, and this might be one of their footprints. He follows it further and sees in the elephant wood a big elephant's footprint, long in extent and broad across, and some scrapings high up, and marks made by tusks. A wise elephant woodsman would not yet come to the conclusion: 'Indeed, this is a big bull elephant.' Why is that? In an elephant wood there are tall she-elephants that have tusks and leave a big footprint, and this might be one of their footprints. He follows it further and sees in the elephant wood a big elephant's footprint, long in extent and broad across, and some scrapings high up, and marks made by tusks, and broken-off branches. And he sees that bull elephant at the root of a tree or in the open, walking about, sitting, or lying down. He comes to the conclusion: This is that big bull elephant.'

11. "So too, brahmin, here a Tathagata appears in the world, accomplished, fully enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, enlightened, blessed. He declares this world with its gods, its Maras, and its Brahmas, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its princes and its people, which he has himself realized with direct knowledge. He teaches the Dhamma good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, with the right meaning and phrasing, and he reveals a holy life that is utterly perfect and pure.

12. "A householder or householder's son or one born in some other clan hears that Dhamma. On hearing the Dhamma he acquires faith in the Tathagata. Possessing that faith, he considers thus: 'Household life is crowded and dusty; life gone forth is wide open. It is not easy, while living in a home, to lead the holy life utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness.' On a later occasion, abandoning a small or a large fortune, abandoning a small or a large circle of relatives, he shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the yellow robe, and goes forth from the home life into homelessness.

13. "Having thus gone forth and possessing the monk's training and way of life, abandoning the killing of living beings, he abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given; taking only what is given, expecting only what is given, by not stealing he abides in purity. Abandoning incelibacy, he observes celibacy, living apart, abstaining from the vulgar practice of sexual intercourse.

TT: 14:33

"Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech; he speaks truth, adheres to truth, is trustworthy and reliable, one who is no deceiver of the world. Abandoning malicious speech, he abstains

from malicious speech; he does not repeat elsewhere what he has heard here in order to divide [those people] from these, nor does he repeat to these people what he has heard elsewhere in order to divide [these people] from those; thus he is one who reunites those who are divided, a promoter of friendships, who enjoys concord, rejoices in concord, delights in concord, a speaker of words that promote concord. Abandoning harsh speech, he abstains from harsh speech; he speaks such words as are gentle, pleasing to the ear, and loveable, as go to the heart, are courteous, desired by many and agreeable to many. Abandoning gossip, he abstains from gossip; he speaks at the right time, speaks what is fact, speaks on what is good, speaks on the Dhamma and the Discipline; at the right time he speaks such words as are worth recording, reasonable, moderate, and beneficial.

“He abstains from injuring seeds and plants. He practices eating only one meal a day, abstaining from eating at night and outside the proper time. He abstains from dancing, singing, music, and theatrical shows. He abstains from wearing garlands, smartening himself with scent, and embellishing himself with unguents. He abstains from high and large couches. He abstains from accepting gold and silver. He abstains from accepting raw grain. He abstains from accepting raw meat. He abstains from accepting women and girls. He abstains from accepting men and women slaves. He abstains from accepting goats and sheep. He abstains from accepting fowl and pigs. He abstains from accepting elephants, cattle, horses, and mares. He abstains from accepting fields and land. He abstains from going on errands and running messages. He abstains from buying and selling. He abstains from false weights, false metals, and false measures. He abstains from cheating, deceiving, defrauding, and trickery. He abstains from wounding, murdering, binding, brigandage, plunder, and violence.

14. “He becomes content with robes to protect his body and with almsfood to maintain his stomach, and wherever he goes, he sets out taking only these with him. Just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden, so too the monk becomes content with robes to protect his body and with alms food to maintain his

stomach, and wherever he goes, he sets out taking only these with him. Possessing this aggregate of noble virtue, he experiences within himself a bliss that is blameless.

15. "On seeing a form with the eye, he does not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if he left the eye faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the eye faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the eye faculty. On hearing a sound with the ear, he does not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if he left the ear faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the ear faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the ear faculty. On smelling an odour with the nose, he does not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if he left the nose faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the nose faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the nose faculty. On tasting a flavour with the tongue, he does not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if he left the tongue faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the tongue faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the tongue faculty...On touching a tangible with the body, he does not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if he left the body faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the body faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the body faculty...On cognizing a mind-object with the mind, he does not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if he left the mind faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade him, he practices the way of its restraint, he guards the mind faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the mind faculty. Possessing this noble restraint of the faculties, he experiences within himself a bliss that is unsullied.

TT: 21:38



16. "He becomes one who acts in full awareness when going forward and returning; who acts in full awareness when looking ahead and looking away; who acts in full awareness when flexing and extending his limbs; who acts in full awareness when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl; who acts in full awareness when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting; who acts in full awareness when defecating and urinating; who acts in full awareness when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent.

17. "Possessing this aggregate of noble virtue, and this noble restraint of the faculties, and possessing this noble mindfulness and full awareness, he resorts to a secluded resting place: the forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a ravine, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, an open space, a heap of straw.

BV: When I was in Burma, I went up to Maymyo. And I was staying in a small monastery, there was only three other monks there, just outside of Maymyo, and about a mile away, was the biggest bodhi tree I've ever seen. From a mile away, you would look at that tree and you'd say: "Boy, that's a big tree." So I went to explore it, and it was a hallowed out tree. It was huge, I mean it was this big. And it had a hallowed out spot so I put a platform in there, and I would sit in the bodhi tree, and I had some wonderful meditation. It had a quietness in it that couldn't be matched, and it was just unbelievable. Finding that space was really good. I left, I went back to Rangoon, the next year I went back. While I had gone another monk found out about this, and he had started developing some abhiññā powers, and occasionally the villagers would see him actually flying in the air. And because of that, they considered him to be an arahat. Now he'd go out on almsround and he had to have a truck with him every day, and this was a poor village, I mean that they barely had enough food for themselves. When I went the first year, sometimes they would just give me something like three potato chips because that's all they had, and they would rather give the food to me, or to the monk and go hungry, so that the monk could continue on with the work. I was very impressed with how pious these people were. Well this monk, he'd spent the rain's retreat there and I'd spent the rain's retreat in



Rangoon, and he left right after that. They had a Katina ceremony and he got something like four hundred robes, Aw, I mean, everybody thought he was an arahat because they could see that he was flying in the air. I later met him, and he was an American monk, and I asked him about this and he said: "I'm no arahat, I'm not even a sotāpanna. I just happened to be in this tree, it was so quiet, my mind quieted down and these other things started happening. Anyway, when I went back to this small village, it was during the new year, whis is the hottest time of the year in Burma, and Maymyo is up in the mountains where it's reasonably cool, I went back to this tree, not knowing that anybody had found it or anything, and when I went back to the tree, there was a bathroom there, there was a table over here, there was a chair over there, I mean it was really high luxury. Hey really fixed it up nice for him, and I got the benefit from that. But it was a real interesting experience being in the tree, and that's when I started being able to understand that trees do have their own language, and they do speak, and if you quiet your mind down enough, you can hear the tree speak. Now it might be a deva in the tree, I don't know. But, sometimes I can hear the trees here singing. Sometimes I can go to a certain place and they're sad. And you can feel this sort of thing. Interesting. That's just a side bar, it doesn't have any meaning or anything to it, I just thought it would be a fun thing to say.

MN: 18. "On returning from his almsround, after his meal he sits down, folding his legs crosswise, setting his body erect, and establishing mindfulness before him. Abandoning covetousness for the world,

BV: What does that mean? It's letting go of thoughts for the world, you're letting go of your attachments, letting go of everything so that you can just be.

MN: {...} he purifies his mind from covetousness. Abandoning ill will and hatred, he abides with a mind free from ill will, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings; he purifies his mind from ill will and hatred. Abandoning sloth and torpor, he abides free from sloth and torpor, {...} mindful and fully aware;

BV: Sloth and torpor is a real interesting hindrance when it arises. When you get up into the arupa jhānas, you don't have sloth any more really, you get torpor, and torpor is dullness. And when, especially when you get up into the realm of nothingness, it turns into a very fine balancing act between sloth and torpor and restlessness, not enough energy, too much energy. And you have to figure this out for yourself where you have the perfect amount of energy at the time. And that changes. Hehehe. It's not always the same amount of energy all the time. When your mind starts to become very still, when you get into the realm of nothingness, you need to stay very, very alert for the slightest change that occurs. It can be a change in your energy; it can be a change from some kind of contact. It can be any kind of change. But it's the change you see that occurs in mind. Now when you get caught by torpor, or you get caught by some restlessness, you can start taking a closer look at the factors of enlightenment. The first four factors of enlightenment: mindfulness; investigation of your experience; energy; joy. When your mind starts to dull out, that's when you want to take more interest in your experience and how that dullness arises. When you start taking more interest in watching that, your energy naturally comes up, it's not like a big wave of energy and then fades away, this is more just: "Oh, how does that work?" And because you're watching that, you're putting in the right amount of energy. When your mind gets in balance, joy arises, and this is not the giddy kind of joy, or the kind of joy that arises from the lower jhānas. This is a happiness of relief. Feel happy because you're starting to understand this is how it really works. And your mind is very bright and very clear, but it doesn't have the agitation of the lower kinds of joy. And this is the kind of joy that can arise and you can be sitting very peacefully, very calm, and all of a sudden, your eyes open. And you say: "Hm, that was interesting." And you close your eyes. And then joy comes up again, and your eyes open. "Hm." Close your eyes. And joy. Your eyes open. So then you say: "Ok, you want to be open, you be open, I don't care." And you allow your eyes to be open, but not focused on anything. When restlessness arises, now all the hindrances, when they arise they don't arise just one at a time, there's sloth and torpor and like of the sloth and torpor, or dislike of

the sloth and torpor. So you have a couple of hindrances that kind of come up and they gang up on you all at the same time. And, it's the same that happens with restlessness. There are certain kinds of restlessness that even though it's a painful feeling, you kind of like it, like planning something, indulging in planning, it's kind of nice. It's a nice pleasant way to distract yourself ~~ Or it can be a very painful feeling, and then there can be the dislike of it. When restlessness arises, then you use the last three factors of the enlightenment factors: tranquility; stillness; and balance. Whatever is there, it's ok for it to be there. Don't purposefully move your body at all. See it for what it is; it's a restless feeling; it's painful; I don't like it; let it be. "It's ok for you to be here; it has to be ok, because that's the truth." That's the Dhamma. That's the Dhamma of the present moment. What ever arises, the truth is, it arises, so it has to be alright for it to be there, because it's there. Your liking it, your disliking it, your want to control, your want to push it away, all of these kind of different things just simply cause more suffering. Now you know that I'm real big on seeing the humor in things. When you see that your mind is getting serious, that's the time to laugh with yourself. But you can't use it as a stick to stop something from happening; you use it as an observation that goes from: "This is me, I don't like it, I want it to be different than it is." To: "Oh, it's the restlessness, it's not even mine, it's just restlessness, it can be there. Ok." And that's where your equanimity is. All of the subtle tiny little ways that your mind comes up with to distract you, I mean you could write reams of books about these kind of things. It's fascinating to watch. And your mind is so sneaky, it knows everyplace to distract, and it will try to do that as much as possible. As you continue on seeing and relaxing, more and more, you'll see it more quickly, you'll relax more easily, and that hindrance will fade away by itself, or not. But if it doesn't, you'll gain such equanimity to it, that it doesn't matter whether it's there, it's not even going to pull your mind to it anymore, it's just something else, it just . . .

Ok –

MN: {...} Abandoning restlessness and [anxiety], he abides unagitated with a mind inwardly peaceful; he purifies his mind from

restlessness and [anxiety]. Abandoning doubt, he abides having gone beyond doubt, unperplexed about wholesome states;

BV: That's what the doubt is always about: "Am I doing this right?" And if you have a light mind that's not turning everything into an emergency, and you have a mind that is very alert and relaxes continually, then you're doing it right. That is the highest wholesome state that you can get to. By letting go of the tension and seeing for that brief moment of clarity, without any disturbance in it at all. And you do this many times, many, many, many, many, many, many times.

MN: {...}

19. "Having thus abandoned these five hindrances, imperfections of the mind that weaken wisdom, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, he enters upon and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with joy]and happiness born of seclusion. This, brahmin, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, something scraped by the Tathagata, something marked by the Tathagata, but a noble disciple does not yet come to the conclusion: The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practicing the good way.'

20. "Again, with the stilling of thinking and examining thought, a monk enters upon and abides in the second jhāna, which has self-confidence and stillness of mind without thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of collectedness.

BV: So you know what all of these states are, so I'm not going to go into it too much, outside of to say that once you get into the second jhāna, your confidence level really starts to take off. You really start to understand and trust yourself to see how these things are working because you've had the experience of going into the jhāna and now you really do understand.

MN: {...}

21. "Again, with the fading away as well of joy, a monk abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he enters upon and abides in the third jhāna, on account of which noble ones announce: 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.'

BV: And this is where you start losing tensions in the mind and tensions in the body. But the happy feeling, the pleasure in your body is also in your mind. And it's just a very, very comfortable feeling. It's just a: "ahaaaa" kind of feeling.

MN: This too, brahmin, is called a footprint of the Tathagata...but a noble disciple does not yet come to the conclusion: 'The Blessed One is fully enlightened...'

22. "Again, 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.

BV: This: "has neither-pain-nor-pleasure" doesn't mean you don't have a painful feeling arise or a pleasant feeling arise, it means that it doesn't make your mind shake, doesn't make your mind move; you don't get caught in the clinging of it.

MN: {...}

23. "When his collected mind is thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives. He recollects his manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many aeons of world-contraction, many aeons of world-expansion, many aeons of world-contraction and expansion: There I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I

reappeared elsewhere; and there too I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I reappeared here.' Thus with their aspects and particulars I recollected my manifold past lives.

{...}

24. "When his collected mind is thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs it to knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings.

BV: This means going into the different realms. The hell realms, the heavenly realms, the Brahma realms, being able to visit, talk with beings in those realms, find out what they did in their past so they got where they are, what did they do, that sort of thing.

There's a story about this one man that, he was reasonably pious man during the time of the Buddha and he went off to work, and everybody in his family decided they were going to take the eight precepts for the day, and he didn't know about that. And he worked all day and he was famished when he came home. He wanted to eat, but he found out that everybody had taken the eight precepts and he wanted to do that too, so he didn't eat. Because he didn't eat, he wound up dying that night, and he was reborn as an elemental. He became a deva of a tree, it's like a tree spirit. Moggallāna was kind of boogieing around in all these different realms and he saw that this deva was in this tree and he went to that realm and he started talking that deva and he said: "What did you do so that you could be reborn here? This is a pleasant abiding, you're in a deva realm, you'll last for a long period of time, you have a lot of sensual pleasures and this sort of thing, what did you do?" And the deva was very reluctant to talk to Moggallāna, and finally he told Moggallāna that: "I tried to lead a good life, I didn't lead a particularly good life, I broke a lot of precepts and that sort of thing, but on the night that I died, I took the eight precepts even though I was very hungry, and I didn't eat. And because of that I died, and the merit of that caused me to be

reborn as a deva. These are the kind of stories that you can wind up having. When you visit the different realms you can find out why people are in hell realms. You can talk to them about that sort of thing, and then you see that some of the hell realms are really nasty places. You don't want to be caught up in them. It's like the Greek stories about some of guys that got the gods mad at them, like the one guy that was chained up and a vulture came and ate his liver out every day, and then it grew back and then the vulture would come the next day and eat his liver out, those kind of things happen. And there's places where the smell is exceptionally bad; there's one hell realm where it's the cold realm, and you don't have anything to keep you warm. And you're reborn in this hell realm and you freeze continually, and I think that probably happened to me because I get cold so easily. (Laughs) But it is extremely interesting.

I had you remembering your past lifetimes for a period of time. If you would have had that bent of mind to continue on with that, what happens is, you'll get to a certain place that your equanimity gets very strong with all of your past lifetimes, that you remember, and with that additional strength of equanimity, then you start visiting these other realms, it happens in a very natural progression. And as you gain more and more equanimity doing that, then other things can arise.

OK –

MN: With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, he sees beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate. He understands how beings pass on according to their actions {...}

BV: One of the real advantages of being able to remember your own past life-times and seeing the passing away and arising of other beings, is that your belief in karma becomes unshakable. You see that this is really, really the way it works.

MN: (repeats . . He understands how beings pass on according to their actions {...}) These worthy beings who were ill conducted in



body, speech, and mind, revilers of noble ones, wrong in their views, giving effect to wrong view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in perdition, even in hell;

BV: Somebody like Devadatta, there's a hell realm, that this big cauldron of molten lead, and he's in that. Devadatta, he's the one that tried to kill the Buddha. Now it takes thirty thousand years to go from the top of this thing down to the bottom of the cauldron, and it takes another thirty thousand years to go from the bottom back up to the top. When you get up to the top, you're there long enough to utter one syllable. "Mak." "Dak." Then you start back down again.

That turned into one of our favorite stories when I was in Burma, we called it "Doing rounds." – "Swimming laps." Things like that. But you know what it feels like to burn your finger, think about that with your entire body. It can be pretty nasty, some of the hell realms, like the frozen realm. I mean you don't have anything, and you're cold, frozen, no warmth, ever. That's a nasty feeling right in itself, to my way of thinking anyway.

MN: but these worthy beings who were well conducted in body, speech, and mind, not revilers of noble ones, right in their views, giving effect to right view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a good destination, even in the heavenly world. Thus with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, he sees beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and he understands how beings pass on according to their actions.

This too, brahmin, is called a footprint of the Tathagata...but a noble disciple does not yet come to the conclusion: The Blessed One is fully enlightened...

BV: You get a lot of confidence, still not there.

MN: 25. "When his collected mind is thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and

attained to imperturbability, he directs it to knowledge of the destruction of the taints.

BV: So you see that remembering past life-times, seeing the arising and passing away of beings, you gain true insight into the nature of karma. But along with that, you develop more and more true balance of mind. So seeing ... some people can get into their past-lifetimes and they can see how truly nasty they were. That can knock their mind off balance. Like I know one lady, she came to me, she started remembering past life-times, and she remembered a past life-time that she had four children, and she was very poor, and she couldn't afford to feed her children, so she killed them, and she had immeasurable amounts of guilt, because of that, and that was affecting the way she was seeing things in this world. So as she started seeing that and letting it be and relaxing and not beating herself up because she was in a past bad situation, and she did past unwholesome actions, by her gaining balance with that it changed her whole perspective in her life, right now. And it gained a true understanding of karma, and it's real. It really does work. And with that comes more and more equanimity. Now as she continues on, she gains stronger and stronger equanimity, and with that, she'll go deeper into the meditation seeing the passing away and arising of beings, and gaining even more and more stillness and acceptance of whatever arises is ok. That's how a person starts to really realize the cessation of suffering. That's the third noble truth. And it goes very deep, and then you start seeing more with more and more still mind how Dependent Origination arises and passes away, both, But that's how you see the destruction of taints.

MN: He understands as it actually is: This is suffering';...This is the origin of suffering';...This is the cessation of suffering';...This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering';...These are the taints';...This is the origin of the taints';

BV: Craving.

MN: ...This is the cessation of the taints';

BV: Letting go of craving.

MN: ...This is the way leading to the cessation of the taints.'

BV: The eight-fold path.

MN: "This too, brahmin, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, something scraped by the Tathagata, something marked by the Tathagata, but a noble disciple still has not yet come to the conclusion: The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practicing the good way.' Rather, he is in the process of coming to this conclusion.

BV: So seeing Dependent Origination is not nibbāna, yet.

MN: 26. "When he knows and sees thus,

BV: Means that you really do understand this is an impersonal process.

MN: his mind is liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When it is liberated there comes the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' He understands: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'

"This too, brahmin, is called a footprint of the Tathagata, something scraped by the Tathagata, something marked by the Tathagata. It is at this point that a noble disciple has come to the conclusion: The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practicing the good way. And it is at this point, brahmin, that the simile of the elephant's footprint has been completed in detail."

27. When this was said, the brahmin Jāṇussoṇi said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! Master Gotama has made the Dhamma clear in many ways, as though he were turning upright what had been overthrown, revealing

what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see forms. I go to Master Gotama for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of monks. From today let Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life.”

BV: Anytime you hear that statement, that means that that person had become a sotāpanna, and he became a sotāpanna not by practicing meditation, but by having his understanding. It opened up his mind so he had the experience of nibbāna, brief though it was, which is somewhat different than a lot of people seem to think: “You got to meditate to become a sotāpanna.” You have to clear your view to become a sotāpanna, or a sakadāgāmī. The only way you can become an anāgāmī or an arahat, is by practicing the meditation and seeing Dependent Origination clearly. So the first two stages of sainthood are about straightening your view of the way everything works. And you completely lose doubt. You know that this is exactly correct from your own experience. The Buddha can set up the condition for people to become enlightened, but they have to become enlightened themselves. The closer you pay attention to the actual words of the Buddha, and deeply understand what is said, the more likely it is to be able to attain nibbāna. This is why Dhamma talks are really important to help clear up understanding. One of the reasons that I wind up reading the suttas, is because I want you to understand that this is not coming from me, this is coming from the Buddha. And all of these different suttas, when you start thinking about the suttas themselves, you see that there’s no contradictions, there’s no fighting, there’s only this blending together and it always points in the same direction. One of the things that’s happened in this country is, everybody wants to be a teacher, and they want to freelance with their own quote system. But it’s better to go back to the original teachings because they’re very systematic and it is a gradual teaching. Each sutta starts out beginning stuff and then gets deeper and deeper and deeper, and depending on your own level of understanding through your practice you gain the potential to become stronger and stronger than when you hear some of these things, you can become enlightened right then. And it can happen, it can not happen. It might be that you need to meditate a little bit

more so that you can see more clearly how the Dependent Origination is working, what happens right before this? What happens before that? And that clearing away of the old belief system and seeing the impersonal process can open you up so that when you hear a Dhamma talk, that is of the Buddha's words, you can become enlightened. You can become very, very strongly enlightened. There were people that had their clearing, they had done a lot of meditation before they ran across the Buddha. And they could get into the realm of nothingness with one-pointed concentration. They come to the Buddha, and he straightens out their view, and he teaches that everything that everything is impersonal. While they're listening to him, they're starting to practice what he's teaching in their mind, and their understanding is such that they become arahats just by listening to what the Buddha said, by getting their clear view. They've already done their major meditation before that, and there are a lot of people that have to do their major meditation before they can become arahats, and they become arahats through their own efforts of following what the Buddha said, but keeping doing the meditation, going to more and more subtle states, and then seeing for themselves. Mind is liberated, it happens.

When restlessness arises, focus on tranquility, peacefulness, calmness, bring that feeling up in your mind, in your body, not as a stick to try to push away the feeling of restlessness, just gives you the space to feel that and watch your mind go back to that restless feeling. Then you'll be able to see more and more clearly how that process works. Ok?

Ok, 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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