

MN 29 The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood  
Mahāsāropama Sutta

And 2nd half (§§ 12 - 24) of

MN 30 The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood  
Cūlasāropama Sutta

Dhamma Talk presented by Bhante Vimalaramsi  
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ST:

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Majjhima Nikaya

The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood

Mahāsāropama Sutta Number 29

Bhante Vimalaramsi

BV: This is page 286. This is kind of an interesting sutta in that there's a lot of repetition in it. So, you have to have the accepting mind, not the mind that gets bored or wants some entertainment. This is a different kind of sutta.

**MN 29: Mahāsāropama Sutta**

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Rājagaha in the mountain Vulture Peak; it was soon after Devadatta had left.

BV: Devadatta was his cousin. And Devadatta, just about the whole time that the Bodhisatta was a Bodhisatta, he was always the challenge for the Bodhisatta. He was always doing things that would

get in his way and cause him all kinds of problems. In this last lifetime, Devadatta developed psychic ability and he wanted to take over the Sangha from the Buddha and the Buddha basically told him that he was lower than the worms and not even to think about doing something like that.

But, Devadatta came along and he said, "I'm going to ask for some rules from the Buddha that all the monks have to follow. One of the things he asked that the Buddha grant for the monks when the Buddha was no longer around was that he would appoint one person to run the Sangha. And the Buddha said, "No, I'm not going to do that."

So, we got no pope.

He said that all monks should live in the forest, and the Buddha said, "No, I'm not going to agree with that." All monks should only have three robes, meaning that that's all that they could have with them. And when you're in a city situation where people give robes all the time you have to be able to accept them. So, the Buddha said, "No, I'm not going to do that either." And, Devadatta pulled out his ace and said, "All monks should be vegetarians." And the Buddha said, "No." So, Devadatta went around Rājagaha starting to complain about the Buddha saying, "What I've said is very reasonable and this is the way monks should act when the Buddha is not around anymore and look at what mistakes he's making." And he started to draw monks away from him...from the Buddha.

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Now, this is a time when Buddha would give Dhamma talks and he would stop and say, "Ananda, take over. My back is hurting." But, he never went to sleep. He always listened to what was being said, he just relieved his back. So, Devadatta, he got a couple of hundred monks and he took them away from Rājagaha a little distance and he started giving a Dhamma talk and he said, "Oh, my back is sore!" And asked another monk to take over and he laid down and immediately went to sleep. Now, when the Buddha saw that

Devadatta had kind of charmed these other monks away he sent Sariputta and Mogallana to go get them back. So, they come around and they see that Devadatta is sleeping and they give a Dhamma talk and everybody got so inspired they all left. And, Devadatta was really upset by that and said that...that he was so angry that he started spitting out blood. Anytime somebody does that, that means they're not going to be living too much longer. And, because he caused a schism in the order he really got a lot of bad merit for that. And he was reborn in a hell realm that is really not very nice.

Remember I talked about the big bath of molten leather...molten lead, excuse me. He's doing what we fondly call, "Doing his rounds." It's takes 50,000 years to get to the bottom...now he's in hot molten lead so there's a lot of pain in every different part of his body. And it takes 50,000 years to get up. And he's up long enough to say one syllable before he goes back down. So, he's not in a happy existence. But, because he in fact did help the Bodhisatta to develop his good qualities, eventually when the bad karma of his actions wears off, it is said that he is going to become a Paccekabuddha. So, he was very helpful to the Buddha and he challenged him in all kinds of ways. He would do things...would break bones and break his back, and the Bodhisatta saw this as a challenge didn't hold any thoughts of ill will or dissatisfaction or that sort of thing.

Anyway...

MN 29:

2. "Monks, here some clansmen go forth out of faith from the home life into the homeless, considering: 'I am a victim of birth, ageing, and death, of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; I am a victim of suffering, a prey to suffering. Surely an ending of this whole mass of suffering can be known.' When he has gone forth thus, he acquires gain, honor, and renown. He is pleased with gain, honor, and renown, and his intention is fulfilled. On account of it he lauds himself and he disparages others thus: 'I have gain, honor and renown, but those other monks are unknown, of no account.' He becomes intoxicated with the gain, honor, and renown, grows

negligent, falls into negligence, and being negligent, he lives in suffering.

BV: This is what happened to Devadatta in his last life. He had all these psychic abilities and he would do things to some of the richer folks around, the kings and minor kings and that sort of thing, so that they would be impressed with him so they would support him. But he didn't continue on with the path and he got pretty much intoxicated and actually lost his psychic ability.

So...

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"Suppose a man needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood. Passing over its heartwood, its sapwood, its inner bark, and its outer bark, he would cut off the twigs and take them away thinking that they were heartwood. Then a man with good sight, seeing him, might say: 'This good man did not know the heartwood, the sapwood, the inner bark, the outer bark, or the twigs and leaves. Thus, while needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, he came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, passing over its heartwood, its sapwood, inner and outer bark, he cut off the twigs and leaves and took them away thinking they were heartwood. Whatever it was this good man had to make with heartwood, his purpose will not be served.' So too, monks, here some clansman goes forth out of faith...

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BV: And then it goes through this whole thing again about how he gets caught up in his gain, honor and renown and becomes negligent, and he then...

MN 29:

...he lives in suffering. This monk is called one who has taken the twigs and leaves of the holy life and stopped short with that.

3. "Here monks, some clansmen go forth out of faith from the home life into the homeless, considering: 'I am a victim of birth, ageing, and death, of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; I am a victim of suffering, a prey to suffering. Surely an ending of this whole mass of suffering can be known.' When he was gone forth thus, he acquires gain, honor, and renown. He is not pleased with gain, honor, and renown, and his intention is not fulfilled. He does not, on account of it, laud himself and disparage others. He does not become intoxicated with gain, honor, and renown; he does not grow negligent and fall into negligence. Being diligent, he achieves the attainment of virtue. He is pleased with the attainment of virtue and his intention is fulfilled. On account of this he lauds himself and disparages others thus: I am virtuous, of good character, but these other monks are immoral, of evil character.' He becomes intoxicated with the attainment of virtue, grows negligent, falls into negligence, and being negligent, he lives in suffering.

"Suppose a man needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood. Passing over the heartwood, its sapwood, and its inner bark, he would cut off the outer bark and take it away thinking it was heartwood. Then a man with good sight, seeing him, might say: 'This good man did not know the heartwood...

BV: And it goes through the whole list again.

MN 29:

Thus, while needing heartwood...he cut off the outer bark and took it away thinking it was heartwood. Whatever it was this good man had to make with heartwood, his purpose will not be served.' So too, monks, here some clansman go forth out of faith and attains to virtue but is negligent and he lives in suffering. This monk is called one who has taken the outer bark of the holy life and stopped short with that.

BV: So, virtue is...this is one of the things when you take on the robes that you start to learn about; the rules of the Patimokkha and that sort of thing. I have them around somewhere but I think we're gonna have to get another copy of the Patimokkha...

ST: Well, the Access to Insight put the Patimokkha up...

BV: I know.

ST: We can take that one down.

BV: Yeah.

ST: Alright.

BV: But I want to have a copy so I can give it to Drew? so he can read it.

ST: So we'll make a notebook with it.

BV: Yeah...and then we can go over ~~.

Actually, you only took ten precepts but there's another 100 rules that you have to follow. [laughs] They're pretty easy. They're pretty easy ~. And we'll go over them. But that's so that you can keep your ~.

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4. "Here, monks, some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into the homelessness, considering: 'I am a victim of birth, ageing, and death, of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; I am a victim of suffering, a prey to suffering. Surely an ending of this whole mass of suffering can be known.' When he has gone forth thus, he acquires gain, honor, and renown. He is not pleased with gain, honor, and renown and his intention is not fulfilled... Being diligent, he achieves the attainment of virtue. He is pleased with the

attainment of virtue, but his intention is not fulfilled. He does not, on account of it, laud himself and disparage others. He does not become intoxicated with that attainment of virtue; he does not grow negligent and fall into negligence. Being diligent, he achieves the attainment of concentration.

{16:42}

BV: Now, this kind of concentration means the kind of concentration that you use while you're listening to the Dhamma talk. While you're giving ear you don't let your mind become distracted. You listen very deeply to what is being said and this can be a major...can cause a major change in your perspective. The more attentive you become with what is being said, it sinks in and, boy, it can really be great!

I was telling you before, in Germany when I had the guy reading in German The Six Sets of Six, it affected him but it also affected about half of the other people. And they were very, very peaceful and calm and I said, "I'm not gonna talk any more than this. All I want you to do is do your practice right now. You've got this benefit of having this super calm mind that's really alert, so use that." And it was amazing to see the progress that was being made.

So, this kind of collectedness of mind is the one that you use for listening to Dhamma talks or reading the suttas yourself.

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MN 29:

He is pleased with the attainment of collectedness and his intention is fulfilled. On account of it he lauds himself and he disparages others: 'I am collected, my mind is unified, but these other monks are uncollected, with their minds astray.' He becomes intoxicated with that attainment, grows negligent, falls into negligence, and being negligent, he lives in suffering.

"Suppose a man needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, came to a great tree standing possessed of

heartwood. Standing over its heartwood, its sapwood, he would cut off its inner bark and take it away thinking this was heartwood. When a man with good sight, seeing him, might say: 'This good man did not know the heartwood...Thus, while needing heartwood...he cut off its inner bark and took it away thinking it was heartwood. Whatever it was this good man had to make with heartwood, his purpose will not be served.' So too, monks, here some clansmen go forth out of faith from the home life into the homeless and they get caught by negligence and they suffer. This monk is called one who has taken the inner bark of the holy life and stopped short with that.

5. "Here, monks, some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into the homelessness, considering: 'I am a victim of birth, ageing, and death, of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; I am a victim of suffering, a prey to suffering. Surely an ending of this whole mass of suffering can be known.' When he has gone forth thus, he acquires gain, honor, and renown. He is not pleased with gain, honor, and renown, and his intention is not fulfilled...Being diligent, he achieves the attainment of virtue. He is pleased with the attainment of virtue, but his intention is not fulfilled...Being diligent he achieves the attainment of collectedness. He is pleased with the attainment of collectedness, but his intention is not fulfilled. He does not, on account of it, laud himself and disparage others. He does not become intoxicated with that attainment of collectedness; he does not grow negligent or fall into negligence. Being diligent, he achieves knowledge and vision.

BV: Now, we're starting to talk about being able to see how mind is actually working as you're gaining and teaching yourself how mind's attention moves. You're becoming more alert to that.

MN 29:

He is pleased with knowledge and vision and his intention is fulfilled. On account of it he lauds himself and disparages others thus: 'I live knowing and seeing, but these other monks live unknowing and unseeing.' He becomes intoxicated with that knowledge and vision grows negligent, falls into negligence, and being negligent, he lives in



suffering.

BV: So, what we're talking about here is just because you have some experience don't start thinking you're hot stuff! There's lots deeper states to go to, but starting to understand and then continuing on with the practice and your curiosity makes everything unfold.

MN 29:

"Suppose a man needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood. Passing over its heartwood, he would cut off its sapwood and take it away thinking it was heartwood. Then a man with good sight, seeing it, might say: 'This good man did not know the heartwood. Thus, while needing heartwood...he cut off the sapwood and took it away thinking it was heartwood. Whatever it was this good man had to make with the heartwood, his purpose will not be served.' So too, monks, here some clansman gone forth out of faith still has suffering. This monk is called one who has taken the sapwood of the holy life and stopped short with that.

6. "Here, monks, some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into the homeless, considering: 'I am a victim of birth, ageing, and death, of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; I am a victim of suffering, a prey to suffering. Surely an ending in this whole mass of suffering can be known.' When he had gone forth thus, he acquires gain, honor, and renown. He is not pleased with gain, honor, and renown, and his intention is not fulfilled. When he is diligent, he achieves the attainment of virtue. He is pleased with that attainment of virtue, but his intention is not fulfilled. When he is diligent, he achieves the attainment of collectedness. He is pleased with the attainment of collectedness, but his intention is not fulfilled. When he is diligent, he achieves knowledge and vision. He is pleased with knowledge and vision, but his intention is not fulfilled. He does not, on account of it, laud himself and disparage others. He does not become intoxicated with that knowledge and vision; he does not grow negligent and fall into negligence. Being diligent, he attains

perpetual liberation. And it is impossible for that monk to fall away from the perpetual deliverance.

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BV: He attains Nibbana. He sees Dependent Origination.

MN 29:

“Suppose a man needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, cutting away only its heartwood, he would take it away knowing the heartwood. Then a man with good sight, seeing him, might say: ‘This good man knew the heartwood, the sapwood, the inner bark, the outer bark, and the twigs and leaves. Thus, while needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, in search of heartwood, he came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, cutting off its heartwood, he took it away knowing it was heartwood. Whatever it was this good man had to make with heartwood, his purpose is served.’ So too, monks, here some clansman goes forth out of faith. Then he is diligent, and attains perpetual liberation. And it is impossible for that monk to fall away from that perpetual deliverance.

7. “So this holy life, monks, does not have gain, honor, and renown for its benefit, or the attainment of virtue for its benefit, or the attainment of concentration for its benefit, or knowledge and vision for its benefit. But it is this unshakeable deliverance of mind that is the goal of the holy life, its heartwood, and its end.”

{...}

BV: Okay, I’m going to the shorter discourse now.

ST: It looks longer.

BV: Yeah, I know. I’m going to page 295.

MN 30: The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood -  
Cūḷasāropama Sutta (Second Half)

12. "Here, brahmin, some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into the homeless, considering: 'I am a victim of birth, ageing, and death, of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; I am a victim of suffering, a prey to suffering. Surely an ending of this whole mass of suffering can be known.' When he has gone forth thus, he acquires gain, honor, and renown. He is not pleased with gain, honor, and renown, and his intention is not fulfilled...He achieves the attainment of virtue. He is pleased with the attainment of virtue, but his intention is not fulfilled...He achieves the attainment of collectedness. He is pleased with that attainment of collectedness, but his intention is not fulfilled. He achieves the knowledge and vision. He is pleased with knowledge and vision, but his intention is not fulfilled. He does not, on account of it, laud himself and disparage others. He arouses desire to act and he makes an effort for the realization of those other states that are higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision; he does not hang back and slacken. "But what, brahmin, are the states that are higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision?

13. "Here, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters upon and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of seclusion. This is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

BV: And your knowledge and vision keep growing as you go into these different states.

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MN 30:

14. "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 pleasure and happiness born of collectedness. This too is a state higher and more sublime than ordinary knowledge and vision.

BV: When you get into the second jhāna you let go of your verbalization. The verbalization...when you let go of the verbalization this is the start of Noble Silence. You don't have to make the wishes, you don't have so many distracting thoughts staying on your object of meditation. You're starting to gain confidence that you know what you're doing. You know what you're doing when a hindrance arises, you know how to handle the hindrance. It might not go away any faster than it did before but you have more confidence that, "Yeah, I know I can get through this." The joy that you experience in the second jhana is much lighter in your mind and your body. The tranquility you experience is stronger and you feel very at ease. The pains in your body just kind of disappear and it's very easy to stay with this unified mind. Your mind just stays on your object of meditation without effort. It's nice! But the self-confidence also is something that you take with you into your daily life. Once you learn the 6Rs and you understand the 6Rs you carry them with you just as close as you carry your skin. 6R every time your mind gets distracted when you can remember. When you don't remember and then all of a sudden you do remember you can't criticize yourself because you forgot. Just start again. That's all.

I challenged some people in...I was teaching them loving-kindness meditation in Malaysia. There was fifteen or twenty people and I said, "I want you to write down every time you practice loving-kindness during the day. I want you to write down how long you practiced." A school teacher came in really upset, "I only got eight minutes today!" And I said, "Wow, that's not bad! Eight minutes, that's pretty good!" "Oh, really?!" I said, "Yeah, because you kept on coming back. So, you forgot for periods of time, it takes practice! Continue doing it. It'll get easier as you start understanding how to

radiate loving-kindness with your daily activities.” It does get easier. But she was really upset because all day she’d been trying and had only had eight minutes! But she probably remembered and practiced the loving-kindness thirty or forty times but it was just for a short period, and that’s fine. Just remember to do it again, and keep it going as much as you can.

MN 30:

15. “Again, with the fading away of joy, a monk abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling happiness 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.’ This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

{35:02}

BV: When you get to the third jhāna you don’t have joy arising anymore but you start feeling more balance in your mind. You don’t have the emotional rollercoaster so much and you start feeling very comfortable in your body and as you lose tension in your mind, you lose tension in your body and then you don’t notice your body so much. Now this particular state is where, when I was in Malaysia, I asked for some blood samples before we started this, before they did any meditation at all, and we kept them in the freezer. And then we got some blood samples after they got to the third jhāna to see what was happening with the blood and it was markedly different. Before they started meditating, the blood was kind of a brownish-red and when you looked under the telescope and you looked at the platelets they had dark rings around them, almost like it was black. And when they got into the third jhāna and we took that blood, we looked underneath, and the blood was cherry red. It was amazing, it was really, really, nice red. And you looked at the platelets underneath it, and they...it was red circle around it and the dot in the middle was just the most brilliant color red you’d ever want to see. I mean, it was just...it was really impressive.

Now, when you get into the third jhāna, as you start letting go of tension in your mind and you let go of tension in your body, the places that you're holding onto, your tensions and tightnesses, they start relaxing. And then you start having more and more good circulation throughout your body. And you can start healing yourself with this.

Yes?

ST: Were you teaching Metta?

BV: Yes. I refused to teach Vipassana after I got back from Burma and there a lot of people wanted me to teach it because they know I'd been there for two years and I did ~~. And I didn't want to teach any kind of mindfulness of breathing because it was just going to be too difficult. So, I started teaching Metta and it so happens that there was a group of...what did they call themselves...Buddhist Graduate Fellowship. And it was all of these people that had gone to college together and it was a group of fifty or sixty people and they asked me to come and give them a weekend retreat. And, they became so excited and when they started doing the practice they actually saw that this was real important that they started telling everybody in Malaysia that they knew and all of a sudden I was so busy I could hardly turn around; every night I was giving a Dhamma talk to another group.

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So, they really took off with the loving-kindness because they'd been doing this austere straight Vipassana practice where you don't smile and you don't...where you have this tension and tightness and you don't really pay attention to it but it's there. So, I'm coming along and I'm saying, "Well, you smile a little bit and you've gotta relax a little bit more. And you have to focus on being happy." Well, this was brand new thoughts to them and because of that they asked me to do a one week retreat and I didn't want any more than 25 but there was 25 people and I talked to everybody individually and all of that sort of thing everyday. And seven or eight people actually got into

the jhāna the first week and all of a sudden I was Mister Famous.

But, it was an amazing to watch because they'd been practicing meditation for so long and not really getting any benefits and then all of a sudden I come along and say, "Try this meditation!" And, they're starting to feel this happiness come in and they were so use to being austere that I'm coming along saying, "You gotta lighten up, guys! Let's be happy all the time! Just develop this." It was big revelations for them. And, I had quite a following for two or three years that I was there after I practiced. And, many of the people got into the advance stages of meditation, into the Arupa Jhānas. And there were some that got even deeper. Not many, but there were some.

Anyway, I don't know why I got off on that. But, the whole thing is once you get into the third jhāna you're really starting to understand how your mind works. And, you're starting to understand that the hindrances when they come up are not a problem. And, you'll get caught in the mud for a little while but, okay. But, you start having this balance of mind that says, "It's okay to be caught in the mud for a little while. I'm getting the chance to learn how to do this." So, as you go deeper you start having more and more profound insights into how your mind's attention moves and this leads to having more and more equanimity in your mind so that what used to be your real heavy duty rollercoaster rides start coming into like little waves. You're still going to have some ups and downs but they're not gonna be near as radical as they were. That's the advantage of doing this.

MN 30:

16. "Again, by abandoning the pleasure and pain, 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: Once you get into the fourth jhāna you don't feel your body at all. You don't...you're not able to radiate anything from your heart. This is where you start radiating from your head...and then I have

other instructions I'll give you when that happens.

MN 30:

This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

17. "Again, with the complete surmounting of perceptions of gross form, with the disappearance of perceptions of gross sensory impact,

BV: And I really don't like this next one. It says the...

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...non-attention to perceptions of diversity,

BV: That means...that really implies one-pointed concentration and I just object to it. So, most of the time I don't read that part of that anymore. [laughs]

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...aware that 'space is infinite', a monk enters upon and abides in the base of infinite space.

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ST: Well, it contradicts itself if you continue the sentence.

BV: Yes.

ST: "Aware". [laughs]

BV: Anyway, once you get to this state, the feeling of loving-kindness changes...

Don't sit like that, please.



...the feeling of loving-kindness changes and you start to feel compassion and you start to feel expansion in all directions at the same time. Now, you still do the directions even though you feel this expansion, but you don't do them for as long. Just a couple minutes here, a couple minutes there, go all the way around and then stay with radiating in all directions at the same time and you'll feel an expansion going out. But, you're not going to feel any center point. It's no "starting right here," it's just the feeling of expansion. And the feeling of compassion is different than the feeling of loving-kindness.

MN 30:

18. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite space, aware that 'consciousness is infinite.' a monk enters upon and abides in the base of infinite consciousness. This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

BV: When you get to the infinite consciousness, ...[snaps fingers]...that was about a million arising and passing away consciousnesses. You will see the individual ones arise and pass away. You'll see it at all of the sense doors but the one that you see mostly is with your eyes. And it's like there's that camera there...that movie camera that's going a little bit too slow and you're seeing the individual frames, and you're seeing a blank spot in between.

ST: Pixels?

BV: I guess you could...it's kinda like that, I guess. Pixels?

ST: More like flashlight?

BV: Yeah, that's...

ST: What is it?

BV: Anyway, what you do after you do this for a little while, you start

to feel...it's tiresome seeing all these consciousnesses arise and pass away. And, you start realizing up close and personal that everything is changing and you haven't got one lick of control over it. There's nobody home to control, there's only this arising and passing away of consciousness. And, because it starts to get tiresome, that's a form of suffering. So, you're seeing Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta, really closely...up close and personal. You're seeing impermanence, dissatisfaction, and the impersonal nature of everything because there is no controlling it. It's just when eye hits color and form, consciousness arises and it's doing that, it's arising and passing away.

After a little while, then you start to focus on those blank spots in between and then you'll go deeper into your meditation.

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19. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite consciousness, aware that 'there is nothing' a monk enters upon and abides in the base of nothingness. This too is a state higher and more sublime than that knowledge and vision.

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BV: When you get to the base of infinite consciousness the feeling of compassion will change again and you'll start to feel joy. As you start seeing those spaces in between the consciousnesses then you will start to notice the feeling of joy goes away and the feeling of very, very strong equanimity arises.

Cat: [jumping on Bhante's lap] Meow

BV: You gain equanimity when you were in the fourth jhana, but it's kind of coarse compared to this one. This is real strong and real nice.

[To cat] You gonna give the Dhamma talk? Huh?

Cat: Meow

ST: [laughs] It's her debut!

BV: This is probably one of the more interesting states of meditation to get into because all along you've been learning about your energy and how you have to adjust your energy so that you don't get caught by the sloth and torpor, or you don't get caught by the restlessness. It becomes very much more subtle once you get into the realm of nothingness, and it really turns out to be quite fun. But just a taste too much energy and you're gonna get restless. Now you have to let go of the restlessness, get your balance back, then you don't put quite enough in...you don't get sleepy anymore but you will get dull. So, you have to learn how to adjust and that's one of the things that makes this a very interesting state because there's always being clear and observing very deeply how these little tweaks need to be happening. Because during a whole sitting you might have ten or twenty or thirty or a hundred little adjustments that you have to make so that you can keep going deeper and you keep seeing more and more clearly how that works.

There are a lot of other things that happen in that state I'm not going to tell you about. You've gotta tell me. But it is real interesting.

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20. "...by completely surmounting the base of nothingness, a monk enters upon and abides in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

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BV: When you get to neither-perception-nor-non-perception it's like you'll be sitting and then all of a sudden it's like you went to sleep but it didn't feel like you're sleeping. And you'll be sitting that way for a little while and you'll come out and then you start reflecting on what happened while you were in that state and you'll see that there were some things. Now, you have to be using your 6Rs. Use your 6Rs a lot. They should be automatic by now. When there is nothing left to 6R you'll find that your mind is very, very alert. It's like super-awareness and you'll see things coming from a long ways away and

you can 6R them very quickly.

{54:07}

MN 30:

21. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, a monk enters upon and abides in the cessation of perception and feeling. And his taints are destroyed by his seeing with wisdom.

BV: That means when you come out of the perception and feeling you see the Dependent Origination and with the final letting go of ignorance you've let go of all concepts. And with the letting go of all concepts, that means that there's an unconditioned state that arises. There's no conditions, no concepts, no opinions, no thoughts; it is beyond all of that. And from all that I've talked to about this, it's a rather pleasant state to be in.

{55:15}

MN 30:

This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision. These are the states that are higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

22. "I say that this person, brahmin, is like a man needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, who came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, cutting away its heartwood, he took it away knowing it was heartwood; and so whatever it was he had to make with heartwood, his purpose will be served.

23. "So this holy life, brahmin, does not have gain, honor, and renown for its benefit, or the attainment of virtue for its benefit, or the attainment of collectedness for its benefit, or the attainment of knowledge and vision for its benefit. But it is this unshakeable

deliverance of mind that is the goal of the holy life, its heartwood, and its end.”

24. When this was said, a brahmin said to the Blessed One:  
“Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Master Gotama has made the Dhamma clear in many ways, as though he were turning upright what had been turned over, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with good eyesight to see forms. I go to Master Gotama for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha. From today let Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life.”

{57:20}

BV: So, I’ve always liked that sutta. I like the heartwood. I’m a woodsy kind of guy anyway, I guess. [laughs] I love to look at wood grains and that sort of thing. It’s always been fascinating to me.

So, the whole point of the meditation is to learn how your attention actually does occur. And as you see everything as being part of an impersonal process you start seeing the individual links that occur. The ones that you’re going to see most are Feeling, Craving, Clinging, Habitual Tendency, Birth of Action, Sorrow(lamentation, pain, grief AND despair).

Those are the ones you’re gonna get to see, but, as you become more familiar with it, it gets easier and easier not to get caught up in all of those concepts and ideas and opinions and likes and dislikes and all of that sort of thing. You start purifying your mind and it does get easier as time goes by. The worst part about meditation is when you first start, that’s when it’s the hardest. You know, it really is hard to get going, and once you get going it gets easier and easier and easier and easier as time goes by because it starts to be fun. Because you start feeling like, “Ah, there is some relief around!”

Yes?

ST: I think you have to practice that but, you know, that if that's really true as long as you're practicing with a guide that's explaining to you what the meditation is and what the mindfulness precisely is. Because you could be doing a meditation and not have the...really understand what you're really supposed to be doing.

BV: But there still is some degrees of relief even with other kinds of meditation.

ST: Oh sure! And you can just ~

BV: It's just that it's not quite the same as this, and this seems to work much faster. So, you start noticing the things a little bit more easily and more quickly.

ST: Well, I just know for me it really struck me as an adventure because you would read the suttas and when we were on the ridge you would read the suttas and talk about it and then we would go out and we would see that stuff. And we'd all come back and we weren't really comparing notes a lot at first so we didn't know each other or see these things until later on, like probably the second year, I guess. That's when we really started to figuring out that each of us, each of the four or five of us, were actually having this same thing happening. And we really started to compare stuff, you know?

You never really said, "Don't talk to each other!", but you never really said, "Talk to each other!" Back then you never really even said, "Talk to each other" so we didn't do it and we didn't really know what...

BV: There were a lot of things I didn't say back then. I didn't tell you what the meditation was about.

{1:01:20}

ST: No, not really.

BV: [laughs] When I told them I was a Vipassana teacher they

almost fell off their chairs! [laughs]

ST: [laughs] I still remember that. It was very funny! Yeah!

BV: "Wait a minute!"

ST: We're all in the kitchen and he comes prancing in and he says, "I have something to tell you." And we're there like, "So, what?" And he says, "I am a Vipassana teacher." And, of course Erwin and Kelly, "No! You're not a Vipassana teacher! You don't even like Vipassana teachers! You're not a Vipass...."

He says, "Well, let me ask you this. Have you ever had any insights in your meditation?" And so he started, "Have you ever seen this? And this? And this?" And he's going over the 37 Requisites of Enlightenment. And we're going, "Well, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah!" I mean, we're checking us out on all this stuff. And it's like he took you into a college course and taught you a curriculum and didn't tell you what the curriculum was gonna be. And at the end he asked you if you knew all this stuff on this particular curriculum he was looking at. And you knew that you knew it all. And so, then he turns around and says, "Well, see, Vipassana means 'insight'." And he really, I guess it never...he probably had said it but we really didn't pick up on it the fact that the word Vipassana meant 'insight'. So, we didn't catch that the question was, "Did you have any insights in your..., you know, did you find out anything new? Did you realize anything you didn't know before?" And, "Aw, Gee, Yeah!" And that's what happened.

So, it was very funny because here was this insight teacher and he'd been saying that, you know, but he wasn't teaching but what he meant was he wasn't teaching it like the other Vipassana teachers were teaching it, is what he meant. And we all took it to assume that it meant he was not a Vipassana teacher, but he was. He was a Samatha Vipassana teacher. [laughs] A Serenity and Insight teacher yoked together and he was just doing that before we were talking about it this way. And it was kinda fun. [laughs]

BV: ~~

ST: And that really was...

BV: So, do you have any questions?

{1:03:48}

ST: Are the hindrances like the snake going in one direction and your expansion of loving-kindness needs to go faster in the same direction?

BV: Well...

ST: So you're outrunning it, kinda.

BV: ...that's a little...yeah, that's a little bit different than that.

ST: More like stand still, you can let it go by.

BV: Yeah. Don't be afraid because if you're afraid that snake will come bite you. If you can let it slide by...

When I was living with that cobra in the cave, I'd come a little bit too close to him sometimes and he'd let me know. It always let me know. ~~. And it was always, "I'm sorry. I wasn't paying attention. I'll try to do better. Then I found something to give him to eat. So, he thought that that was a pretty good thing. And we could be on the path going up to the cave, it was not a steep walk but it wasn't a wide walk either. And we could both be going in different directions and I could come within two feet of him and it didn't shake him up at all, because I wasn't afraid of him because he and I were pals. And I could...

ST: Roommates.

ST: Essentially, they were roommates.

{1:05:26}



BV: Yeah, we were. It was great because he kept all the mice and all the crows away. Because the mice and crows get into your stuff and then really wreak havoc. They put holes in your robes and all kinds of stuff. The crows like to come and take anything shiny away.

ST: Where was the cave?

BV: It was in Thailand, the south of Thailand. Well, I say it was the south of Thailand, and that's what they call it but it was...from Malaysia it's probably an eight hour train ride.

ST: So, that was something for them to decide to come and get you!

BV: Well...

ST: From where did they come?

BV: Kuala Lumpur.

ST: [laughs]

BV: It's an overnight trip. It wasn't a big deal.

ST: ~ Please, you know, Brother Mike, please just go get the monk. Bring him back from the cave. It's only ten hours away. [laughs] Sure, yes, that's what I'll do tomorrow.

BV: No, it was longer than that. Kuala Lumpur was six hours to...six or seven hours to Thailand by train and then it was another eight hours. That's only 15 hours on a train ride, no biggie. [laughs]

ST: Just a little chore.

{1:07:13}

BV: Monks get to ride on the train half-price and if you ride third class, to go from Penang to Bangkok was 90 baht for regular people.

I got to do it for ฿45, which was about two dollars or something like that. I really wasn't much money. But, it was sitting on wooden seats that didn't give and what I wound up doing is just I'd take a book with me and read all night because you couldn't get comfortable enough to sleep. And, it was always crowded in the third class. But, I got to travel all over the world cheap that way.

And then somebody did something to me. They said, "Oh, I don't want you to go third class! Why don't you go second class air-con with the sleeper?" Oh man, I hit the big time! Oooo, that was so nice I couldn't believe it! I could lay down! I couldn't lay down all the way because they were short. But I could lay down enough and I could actually sleep and it was cool! No humidity, oh boy! Ruined me after that! [laughs] Going back to third class was a hard one. [laughs]

But I learned all kinds of tricks. I took extra water with me and if you wash your face in your hands a few times while you're traveling like that it really does make a difference. So, I carried the extra water with me and would just keep my head real nice and wet and get all that sweat off of it. It was good! Anyway, my time in Thailand was really amazing. They have all kinds of neat places.

Over by Ajahn Buddhadasa's place, they have sulfur hot springs. Monks were always going there hanging out on the sulfur springs. When I was there he was still alive and he'd be giving a Dhamma talk and this rooster would come up and just go on his knee and he wouldn't even break stride, he'd just reach over while he's giving the Dhamma talk and open up the thing and pull out some grain and give it to the chicken while he's giving the Dhamma talk. It's great stuff! [laughs]

ST: Yeah, there's a picture of that...I saw a picture of that.

ST: Oh yeah. [laughs]

{1:10:50}

ST: Did you ever visit Ajahn Mahā Boowa?

BV: Yes. I spent one day, one night. That was it.

ST: You spent what? One...

BV: One night at his place. I didn't want anymore. He had some very peculiar ideas that I wasn't really wild about partaking in. One of the things he did to any visiting monk, it didn't matter whether it was a senior monk or not. They had to go into his kuti, clean his kuti, and get his robes ready to wear in the morning without making any noise. And he had a wood floor and it squeaked and you had no idea where the squeak was coming from. And he'd start yelling, I mean he got irate. And I decided I don't need to be around this.

ST: And you're so big and, you know, the poor floor! [laughs] There was no way you could get across the floor and be quiet! [laughs]

BV: I weighed considerably less than I do now.

ST: That's true. [laughs]

BV: But, visiting him [Ajahn Buddhadasa?] was great fun because he had this kuti that was small but he had a lot of stuff! And he had this...he was always sitting outside in his chair and he had so much stuff that you couldn't bow to him. [laughs]

ST: He didn't want people to bow to him. [laughs]

BV: And it upset the Thais no end that they couldn't bow to him! Some of them would get off and get and go into the dirt and bow, you know, things like that. And he'd laugh! He thought that was great fun! [laughs] I practiced with him about six weeks or so.

{1:13:00}

He would take the Noble Truths and he talk about suffering and he would talk about cause of suffering and he would talk about the way to get out of the suffering and then he would talk about the cessation

of suffering. And, because he changed it like that, there'd been monks that had been sitting with him for years and they didn't realize that he was talking about the Four Noble Truths. And, I'm going there after the first Dhamma talk, I'm walking away with these other monks and I'm saying, "You can't fool me! I know the Four Noble Truths when I hear them." And they're going, "What!" I said, "He just talked about the Four Noble Truths, he just changed the order." "Really!" "Yeah!" [laughs]

He didn't speak much English, but what English he spoke, he called it "Baby English". But he was very good at mind to mind communication. So, if you had a real question all you had to do is think it and he'd answer. It was good. A lot of monks are like that. Oh, I'm not like that! I don't know I'm like that anyway. I've got no idea when I do that sort of stuff, if I do it.

ST: You just do it in a sense that you just know what a person needs before they really...when they come in usually to discuss it you really basically know what the person needs and what they're going to talk about and have the solution already. [laughs] That's all! [laughs]

BV: As I said, I don't know I'm doing it.

ST: You teach it.

BV: I guess. I don't know. It was funny...

ST: It is a kind of magic...

BV: Yeah. When that one lady she came and she practiced Metta one time and saw her a few weeks later and she said, "Are you teaching magic?" I said, "Well, if what I am teaching you helps you to have an uplifted mind so you don't have so much suffering then I guess that I do teach magic." She'd never come again.

ST: Awww...

BV: She never came. She was deathly afraid because the Christians

had done that to her.

ST: Well, that's sort of a lot less magic cure than there is with laying on of hands.

BV: They do their magic. You can't...

ST: So, you know, it's...

BV: They don't call it that. That's what...

ST: No, it's an alignment of thought, you know. The power of the alignment of thought...the gathering together of energy. It's great stuff. It is. [laughs]

BV: Anyway, do you have anything else? Anybody? Thoughts? Let share some merit then.

[to cat] You gonna share some merit with me?

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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