

MN # 30  
The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood  
Cūlasāropama Sutta  
Dhamma Talk by  
Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi  
Early, Unknown Date

BV: Ok, the discourse tonight is another one of my favorite suttas, it's called "The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood", sutta number thirty in the Middle Length Sayings.

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

2. Then the brahmin

BV: I love these names.

MN: Pingalakoccha 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 said to the Blessed One: "Master Gotama, there are these recluses and brahmins, each the head of an order, the head of a group, the teacher of a group, a well-known and famous founder of a sect regarded by many as a saint ...

BV: And he runs through five or six names.

MN: Have they all had direct knowledge as they claim, or have none of them had direct knowledge, or have some of them had direct knowledge and some not?"

"Enough, brahmin! Let this be!—

BV: He wasn't into that kind of talk about other people's attainment.

MN: 'Have they all had direct knowledge as they claim, or have none of them had direct knowledge, or have some of them had direct knowledge and some not?' I shall teach you the Dhamma, brahmin. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say.

BV: Now this statement here is real important, and it doesn't get used well enough, so that people can understand. When the Buddha would give a discourse, if you listen very attentively and don't have... be thinking about getting a drink of water or what you're going to be doing when the talk is over, but listen very, very attentively, you can become enlightened. You can become a sotāpanna, just by listening to this discourse. It will tell you things that you didn't necessarily know before, and that can be the balancing factor for becoming a saint, that kind of understanding, so to listen and attend closely to what he says is an important aspect of the Dhamma.

Now when I was at this retreat a little while back, people were getting up and walking around, they were shifting their posture continually, they were not being attentive at all. And I've since written to Leigh and told him some of my observations, of which I'm sure he's not going to be happy with them, but it's very necessary to have that kind of respect for the teacher and what he's teaching, that you don't shift your body around and cross your legs and uncross your legs and kind of look around and look at this person and look at that person, you pay attention to what's being said.

Now during the time that I first became a monk in Asia, they had a fan that they would put in front of the speaker's face, so you couldn't see the speaker, and you just listened to what was said. And in some ways, I think that that's really desirable thing

MN: "Yes, sir," the brahmin Pingalakoccha replied. The Blessed One said this:

TT: 4:43

3. "Suppose, brahmin, a man needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, came to a great tree

standing possessed of heartwood. Passing over its heart-wood, its sapwood, its inner bark, and its outer bark, he would cut off its twigs and leaves and take them away thinking 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, and passing over its heartwood, its sap wood, its inner bark, and its outer bark, he cut off its 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.'

4. "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 sap wood and its inner bark, he would cut off its 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.... Thus, while needing heartwood...he cut off its 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.'

5. "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 and its sap wood, he would cut off its inner 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....Thus, while needing heartwood...he cut off its inner bark and took it away thinking it was heartwood. What ever it was this good man had to make with heartwood, his purpose will not be served.'

6. "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 him, might say: This good man did not

know the heartwood....Thus, while needing heartwood...he cut off its sapwood 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.'

7. "Suppose a man needing heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood, came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, and cutting off only its heartwood, he would take it away knowing it was 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, wandering in search of heartwood, he came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, and cutting off only its heartwood, he took it away knowing it was heartwood. Whatever it was this good man had to make with heartwood, his purpose will be served.'

TT: 9:33

8. "So too, brahmin, here some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into 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 pleased with that gain, honor, and renown, and his intention is fulfilled. On account of it he lauds himself and disparages others thus: 'I have gain, honor, and renown, but these other bhikkhus are unknown, of no account.' So he arouses no desire to act, he makes no effort for the realization of those other states that are higher and more sublime than gain, honor, and renown; he hangs back and slackens. I say that this person is like the man needing heartwood, who came to a great tree standing possessed of heartwood, and passing over its heart-wood, its sapwood, its inner bark, and its outer bark, cut off its twigs and leaves and took them away thinking they were heartwood; and so whatever it was he had to make with heartwood, his purpose will not have been served.

9. "Here, brahmin, some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into 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 that gain, honor, and renown, and 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 gain, honor, and renown; he does not hang back and slacken. He achieves the attainment of virtue. He is pleased with that attainment of virtue and his intention is fulfilled. On account of it he lauds himself and disparages others thus: 'I am virtuous, of good character, but these other bhikkhus are immoral, of evil character. So he arouses no desire to act, he makes no effort for the realization of those other states that are higher and more sublime than the attainment of virtue; he hangs back and slackens. I say that this person is like the man needing heartwood...who passing over its heartwood, its sapwood, and its inner bark, cut off its outer bark and took it away thinking it was heartwood; and so whatever it was he had to make with heartwood, his purpose will not have been served. .

BV: Ok, developing virtue, that means keeping your precepts. And it doesn't mean just keeping your precepts while you're on retreat. It means keeping your precepts all the time..

Now this is something that is not stressed very highly in this country, because people hear the word "morality", and they freak out, they don't like that word. But the morality serves a definite purpose. If you break a precept, your mind becomes agitated. And when your mind is agitated, then you do all sorts of weird things. Your thinking is clouded because of breaking a precept. Now, I use this example a lot, because it's very precise on how breaking a precept can affect your meditation, right here, right now. I had a student in Malaysia, she could sit for four hours. Didn't move a muscle, great focus of her mind, she was relaxed, she had a lot of equanimity.

TT: 15:03

I had to go to Indonesia to teach, and I was away for two months. When I came back, the day I got back, she called me up on the telephone, and she said: "I'm not going to meditate anymore." Whoa, where did that come from? So I said: "No, I'm not going to allow that, you have to meditate." And she said: "Well I can only sit for about a half an hour, then I get so restless I have to get up." And I said: "Which precept did you break?"- "Well, I didn't break any precepts."- "Ok, you have to sit, you have to sit for at least an hour a day, at one time." Called me up the next day: "I'm going to quit meditating." I said: "No, I'm not going to allow it." I said: "You broke a precept, and you have to tell me what happened." And she said: "Yeah, I did." She said: "I like to keep my kitchen very clean." Now Asia, there's an awful lot of insects. I mean there's a lot of insects here, but they're not even close. And she just got through cleaning her kitchen, and there's a row of ants walking along the counter, and she didn't want them there. So she took a little brush and she gently brushed them all away. And she came back a half an hour later and there they were again. So she got some insect repellent and sprayed them all and killed them. Right after that she couldn't sit anymore. So I said: "Ok, now we know what the problem is. You feel guilty for killing living beings, and that is a reason to feel guilty, it causes all kind of fears and anxieties to arise, causes all kinds of restlessness to arise. So what you have to do now to remedy the situation, is you have to give life. So I want you to go down to the store. And in Asia they have live animal markets, where they'll kill the animal right in front of you and dress it and then give it to you, so they know they're getting fresh meat. So, I said: "I want you to go down and buy a live animal that's going to be killed, and then let it go free." So she went down and she bought two chickens. Now you have to understand what's happening to these chickens. They see that they're going to be killed. And they're full of fear and they're full of hatred. They don't like being treated like that. So, when she bought these two chickens, she didn't have them killed, but they were still caught in their fear, and they're caught in their anxiety and hatred. So she took them out to the forest, And they had some string around their feet to stop them from moving around, and she cut the string and she let them

go free, and I told her: "When you let these animals go free, you let them go with the thought that you're letting go of your guilty feeling for having done bad actions in the past, for having killed in the past. And you're letting go of all of that when you let them go." And she said that it was real amazing, because one of them, she took it to the forest, took off immediately, started running, went into the forest and hid. The other one went about five feet and turned around and looked her straight in the eye. Now what happened in the chicken's mind? This was going from the worst day in their life, they knew they were going to be killed, to the best day in their life.

20:05

So they went from this extreme fear, and anxiety and restlessness and dislike, to being free. And their mind went from this hatred to happiness.

She happened to have two daughters, and they were with her, and the daughters liked doing that so much that about once a week they had to go let some chickens go free for a little while. She went home, sat in meditation, had a four hour sit, had that equanimity again. Doesn't matter which one of the precepts you break. You know you shouldn't have done it. And there's nobody that needs to point any fingers at you and get angry at you for breaking the precept, you do that to yourself, because you know you shouldn't have done it. You know you're causing pain to someone else by breaking the precepts, all except the last precept. The last precept is: Don't take any ah, let's call it recreational drugs, or alcohol. Why is that a precept? Because when you do that you have the inclination to break the other precepts, because it makes your mind unclear. You say things you wish you hadn't of said, you do things you wish you hadn't of done, you can blame it on the drugs or alcohol. Ok, Let me give you an example of how something that we don't consider to be any big deal at all. When I was in Asia, had a cold, big headache. Went to the doctor's office, they gave me an aspirin. One aspirin, I cut it in half. I took the aspirin, that whole day my meditation was messed up because of it. When you get into sensitive places, your past actions will come back and haunt you, and taking alcohol is one of them. I

have a friend that, she was starting to get very deep into her meditation. She was always taking one or two glasses of wine with her evening meal. She got to a place where her mind was so incredibly dull, and that's what alcohol does, it dulls you out, it dulls out your awareness, that it affected her meditation negatively for four days before she finally could let it go and start to get a bright mind again. And she said: "I have been breaking that precept." And I said: "Well, ok, what can I do? You know, you can drink alcohol or not, it's up to you, I strongly recommend that you don't do it." And she said: "I see the effect of that." And I said: "Well, what are you going to do about it?" She said: "I'm not going to drink any alcohol again." Now, you know a doctor will tell people when they're getting older, that they should take a little bit of wine or alcohol, right before they go to bed, because it helps with the body circulation and things like that, especially wine. If you take it and you mix it half and half with water right before you go to bed, and use it as a medicine, then that's not breaking the precept. But to be drinking it with a meal so you can relax, that's always the... seems like that's always the excuse: "I drink alcohol so I can relax." So the importance of keeping your precepts without a break is unbelievably important.

TT: 25:00

I had a student in Malaysia, She'd never done any meditation, she never broke a precept, she wouldn't even consider breaking a precept. She was always helping other people and putting her energy into the Sunday School and whatever else that was happening there. She came to me one day and she said: "I've heard a lot about how you teach meditation and I want you to teach me." I said: "Fine, you come this weekend." I was going to be giving a retreat. "You come for the weekend, you'll get a good a good start on your meditation." So she came and I gave the instructions, and every day I would see them, to see how they were doing with their meditation, and when I came to her, I said: "Well, how's your meditation?" She said: "Ah, it's pretty good."—"Do you have much wandering mind?"—"No, no"—"How long are you sitting?"—"Only for forty-five minutes." The key is "only." So I said: "Why don't you sit longer?" And she said: "Well, you know, I'm sitting on the floor and there's so much pain in my

legs that I just can't stand it after forty five minutes, so I get up and I start walking." So I said: "Well, because you're not used to sitting on the floor, why don't you sit in a chair?" Her next sitting was four hours. She got into the first jhāna, the second day that she'd ever meditated? Now this is pretty amazing stuff. And why did that happen for her? - Because she was so good at keeping her precepts. Mind naturally tends to become calm. Now there's another advantage for keeping your precepts very well, when you get into a stressful kind of situation, you will know the right thing to do at the right time. But a person that breaks their precepts, what happens with them is they start running around, and they do exactly the wrong thing, at the wrong time. I fell off a roof while I was a carpenter, and when I fell off I put my arm down like that, dumbest thing I could do, and I broke my wrist. Now this really caused a lot of people a lot of concern and they're all gathering around me, this one guy, I never really much like him because he was always so hyper, but he wasn't a high paid worker so it was ok. He comes up to me, and I'm holding my wrist like this, and he says: "Are you hurt?" And I said: "I think I broke my wrist." He takes my hand away from my wrist, and grabs my wrist and starts moving it around, at which point I let him know in no uncertain terms that he has to go away from me and leave me alone, I know I didn't want to be around him at all at that point. But this happens because people's mind becomes agitated very easily because of the guilty feeling they have when they break a precept. Ok, so, let's say for one reason or another you break a precept in your daily life, what are you supposed to do? You don't need to beat yourself up, you need to forgive yourself for making a mistake, and then take the precepts again, right then:

**1. I undertake to keep the precept to abstain from killing or harming living beings, on purpose.**

**2. I undertake to keep the precept to abstain from taking what is not given.**

**3. I undertake to keep the precept to abstain from wrong sexual activity.**

TT: 29:53

Wrong sexual activity here means: sexual activity with a person that's not your mate; sexual activity with someone that's too young, still under the care of their parents; sexual activity with prostitutes. It basically comes down to any kind of sexual activity that you have that causes harm or upset to yourself or any one else, don't do it. The cause of great problems in relationships.

So -

**4. I undertake to keep the precept to abstain from telling lies and harsh speech.**

That means cursing

**5. I undertake to keep the precept to abstain from taking drugs and alcohol.**

You take those right then, and then with the determination that you're not going to break the precepts again. Now one of the things that I used to teach in Malaysia, we'd take the precepts every morning, I think it's a good practice to do when you get home, not as some kind of rite and ritual, but as a reminder for yourself, that you want to keep these precepts without breaking them. As you do this over a period of time, your mind becomes more and more calm, your meditation starts progressing more quickly. Now it's pretty easy, You've got five precepts, I've got two hundred and twenty seven of them. You can do a lot of stuff that I can't. Ok-

MN: 10. "Here, brahmin, some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into 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 that gain, honor, and renown, and his intention is not fulfilled. He

achieves the attainment of virtue. He is pleased with that attainment of virtue, 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 the attainment of virtue; he does not hang back and slacken. He achieves the attainment of ...

BV: The word here is: "concentration"; and what they're talking about with this particular kind of concentration is: memorizing and chanting. That's a particular kind of concentration that you need for chanting something like the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. To chant the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta takes about two hours, and you can't falter, you have to have your concentration there all the time while you're doing it.

MN: He is pleased with that attainment of concentration and his intention is fulfilled. On account of it he lauds himself and disparages others thus: 'I am concentrated, my mind is unified, but these other bhikkhus are unconcentrated, with their minds astray.' So he arouses no desire to act, he makes no effort for the realization of those other states that are higher and more sublime than the attainment of concentration; he hangs back and slackens. I say that this person is like the man needing heart-wood...who passing over its heartwood and its sapwood, cut off its inner bark and took it away thinking it was heartwood; and so whatever it was he had to make with heartwood, his purpose will not have been served.

TT: 35:03

11. "Here, brahmin, some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into 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 that gain, honor, and renown, and his intention is not fulfilled...He achieves the attainment of virtue. He is pleased with that attainment of virtue, but his intention is not fulfilled...He achieves the attainment

of concentration. He is pleased with that attainment of concentration, 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 the attainment of concentration; he does not hang back and slacken. He achieves knowledge and vision.

BV: Knowledge and vision here means study, studying the suttas. It can also mean memorizing the suttas, but it is study and going to different teachers and finding out what they have to say about this sutta or that sutta, that's how you gain knowledge and vision.

MN: He is pleased with that knowledge and vision and his intention is fulfilled. On account of it he lauds himself and disparages others thus: 'I live knowing and seeing,

BV: Just like in the sutta last night, when the Buddha was with these other meditation teachers and he said: "I know and I see", because that's what he memorized, same thing.

MN: ('I live knowing and seeing,) but these other bhikkhus live unknowing and unseeing.' So he arouses no desire to act, he makes no effort for the realization of those other states that are higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision; he hangs back and slackens. I say that this person is like the man needing heartwood...who passing over its heartwood, cut off its sapwood and took it away thinking it was heartwood; and so whatever it was he had to make with heartwood, his purpose will not have been served.

12. "Here, brahmin, some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into homelessness,

BV: In other suttas, the home life is considered dusty and dirty, and when you become a monk you're free, and it really is like that.

MN: 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 that gain, honor, and renown, and his intention is not fulfilled...He achieves the attainment of virtue. He is pleased with that attainment of virtue, but his intention is not fulfilled...He achieves the attainment of concentration. He is pleased with that attainment of concentration, but his intention is not fulfilled...He achieves knowledge and vision. He is pleased with that 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?

TT: 39:55

13. "Here, brahmin, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu 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.

14. "Again, with the stilling of thinking and examining thought, a bhikkhu 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. This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

BV: Ok, again, when you go from the first jhāna to the second jhāna, the way you tell you're getting into the second jhāna is, if you try to make a wish right like you did from the very beginning, you wind up with a headache, and the reason is, you're putting too much effort and energy into making that wish, so you have to let go of the wish. Now, you still bring up the feeling of the wish, whatever your wish happens to be, if it's happiness or joy or clarity or mindfulness or whatever your wish happens to be, peace and calm, you still bring that feeling up and put it in your heart, but now you don't need to

verbalize it. Because you're using the internal verbalization, and you don't need it anymore. From the second jhāna on, you are practicing noble silence, and the noble silence is, you don't need to verbalize, except for very short sentences where you're noticing: "Back is very straight right now. There's a lot of joy right now." But you don't get involved in the story of it, it's just a one sentence observation. Ok, you have self confidence, you start to realize that this stuff really works and it really works nicely, and you start losing your doubt as to whether you're doing this practice correctly or not. Now the joy you experience is stronger, and more uplifting. You feel very much lighter in your mind and lighter in your body. I've had a lot of people come to me and tell me: "I had such joy, I thought I was floating, and I couldn't stand it, I thought I was going to hit the ceiling so I opened up my eyes to look." Because that's the feeling you have, very, very light. There's some excitement in it, and you have a tendency to smile a lot, because it is such a pleasurable state. When the joy fades away, you feel a lot more comfortable than you felt before. You feel comfortable in your mind, you feel comfortable in your body. That is what the Buddha called happiness. And your mind is very calm and collected, stays on the object of meditation, no problem at all, until your mindfulness slips a little bit, dulls out, then you have all kinds of troubles, so called troubles, I call them friends, and you have a lot of friends come to visit, and you have to deal with that.

OK-

MN: (Repeats-This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.)

TT: 44:59

15. "Again, with the fading away as well of joy, a bhikkhu 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.' This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

BV: Now the joy just fades away and you feel more comfortable than you've ever felt before, both in your mind and your body. As you start losing tension in your mind, you start losing feeling in different places in your body, If someone were to come up and touch you, you would feel that, but if there's no tension in the mind, there's not going to be any tension in the body and that's what we feel. This is the stage where your blood becomes very pure. The platelets become bright red. Before they were kind of brown red and they had black rings around them. I know this because I did some experimenting with some students, and had them draw blood when they first started meditating and then we compared when they got into the third jhāna. There is a lot of healing that occurs in your body when you get to the third jhāna, and higher. You have strong equanimity, you feel really comfortable, and you feel that very nice balance of mind. So a noise comes around, you hear it but it doesn't make your mind shake or even pull your mind to it, so just let go and relax and allow it to be. Sounds go through you now, they don't stop and go boinnng.

When people are practicing one-pointed concentration, absorption concentration, they'll get into the third jhāna, they don't even know they have a body. There is no feeling in their body, and I can come along with a two by four and rap you all over, and you would never feel it, because your mind is so strongly focused on one point; you're absorbed into that point. So now you can see a little bit of the difference between the absorption concentration and the tranquility jhāna, because it says here you have full awareness. Now if you're practicing absorption concentration and somebody comes along and raps you with a stick and you don't feel it, is that called being fully aware? Now, there is a definition of full awareness in one of the suttas, and one of these days I'll pull it out and you can understand what full awareness really means.

Ok –

MN: 16. "Again, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the fourth jhāna, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure

and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

BV: When you get into the fourth jhāna, when your doing the Loving-Kindness meditation, the whole time up to the fourth jhāna you've been feeling the radiation in your heart, and it's really great. When you get to the fourth jhāna, that disappears, and it becomes a mental radiation. Your equanimity is very strong, there is no tension in your mind, so you lose feeling in your body, it's really gone by the time you get to the fourth jhāna. The only thing that is really left is your head, you feel that. And you still need to keep opening and relaxing, opening and relaxing, all of the time, I don't care what you are doing.

TT: 49:55

Your taking a bath, I want you to see where your mind is going, let go, relax, come back to your metta, and then relax again. I don't care how many times you have to do that. Every time that you notice that your mind[']s attention] has gone away from the loving kindness, that is the feeling in your heart and the wish that you're making, every time you notice your mind is not on that, that is a distraction. Every distraction has craving and clinging attached to it. Craving is the tightness, that subtle tightness in your head, in your mind, in your body, and the clinging is the thinking about, thinking about this or that, whatever. So letting go of those thoughts, they aren't important, relax, redirect your attention back to your Loving-Kindness, your feeling of being happy, and the wish for happiness, joy, peace and calm, clarity, whatever wish you want to make. You have to feel that wish now.

A lot of times, people only want to talk about how good their meditation is, how neat their meditation is, and that's the candy. When people come and they start complaining how tough it is, it makes me smile, because that's when you're developing your mindfulness the most. When your mind[']s attention] is on your object of meditation and it stays there and doesn't move, and you have this strong equanimity and stillness and all of these other states that you

can get into, that's your candy meditation. When your mindfulness slips and you have to work with the hindrance and let it go and relax, and let go of the feeling and relax, and bring that calm mind back to your object of meditation, and it's there for a nano second before it goes back, that is good meditation. It's active meditation. But you should never get involved in criticizing yourself because your mind is active. It's active because the conditions are right for it to be active, and what you do with what arises in the present moment dictates what happens in the future. You want to fight with that active mind, and get angry at it and push it and shove it and cause yourself all kinds of suffering – sure, you can do that or you can allow those thoughts to be, let them go, relax. Allow the feeling of the distraction to be there by itself. Relax, feel your mind open up and become calm. Bring that mind back to your object of meditation. As you do that over and over again, the hindrance starts to be more clear. You're able to see little things that happen before you're completely taken away. And when you start recognizing that a little bit sooner: "Oh, when this arises," (let's say your sloth and torpor), when your back starts to slump a little bit, you notice that, so you let it be and relax and then you're not caught for fifteen or twenty minutes bobbing up and down. So check your posture, make sure your posture is nicely straight, not over rigid. Over rigid causes backache. But we don't want to do that, but nicely straight. Check your posture and make sure that your chest is up and open.

TT: 55:00

The radiation you feel will be much stronger that way. If you start slumping down, that closes down your heart. You start noticing these and then you let it go then and relax, so you're not caught for quite as long. But you can also notice some other things that happen along the way before that. As you become more and more familiar with how these things arise, you start catching them a little bit quicker and relax and let go and you come back a little bit more easily. Now these hindrances are your best teacher because they're showing you where your attachment is, and they will last as long as they want. They'll last as long as they last. It's ok that they last that long. What is important is what you do in the present moment when that arises.

You allow it to be, relax. Allow the feeling to be, relax. Come back to your object of meditation, oops, there you go again. Fine! That is good meditation. Bad meditation – see that distraction, let it go, relax, let it go, relax, let it go, relax, and never come back to your object of meditation. That's bad meditation. That leads to more suffering. Always have to come back to your home base. Always have to come back to your home base. **Always** you have to come back to your home base. Got it? If you don't, I'm going to get Lou's gun and I'm going to shoot you in the foot. (Laughs)

MN: 17. "Again, with the complete surmounting of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of sensory impact, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, aware that 'space is infinite', a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the base of infinite space. This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

BV: Ok, when you're practicing your Loving-Kindness Meditation, this is when it starts changing a little bit, and it goes into what is called the Brahma Vihāra, the heavenly home, and the Brahma Vihāras are infinite, there is no boundary, they're boundaryless. The feeling of Loving-Kindness that moved from your heart and went into your mind, into your head, now that feeling changes, becomes different. I'm not going to tell you how different it is. It just is different. You have to come and explain to me how it's different. Now this particular state is what the Buddha got into every morning for an hour. He got into the state of infinite compassion. And with that there is a feeling of expansion in all directions at the same time, but there's no center place. There's only this feeling of compassion going out in all directions at one time, and there's no boundaries.

MN: 18. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite space, aware that 'consciousness is infinite.' a bhikkhu 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 into this state, you start noticing consciousnesses arising and passing away quickly. You also notice that the feeling of

compassion has changed again, and now it's a finer kind of feeling, and this feeling is a feeling of joy.

TT: 1:00:00

This is the feeling that is the all pervading joy, the enlightenment factor kind of joy. And it's kind of amazing because you've seen a lot of Buddha images with the eyes open looking down, and everybody in Asia, they think that you're supposed to sit with your eyes open looking down, because that's the way the Buddha's image is projected. But what happens is the joy arises, it's very intense, very nice, not the excited joy of the lower jhānas. It's a light feeling, but lightly light, not heavily light, When this arises and it's very strong, it can make your eyes pop open. You'll be sitting there and your eyes are closed, and all of a sudden your eyes are open, you go: "Whoa, what happened there? How did that happen?" So you close your eyes, and they pop open again. "Strange stuff here." And you just close your eyes, they open again. And you don't have any intention of having them open, they just open by themselves. So, you let them stay open, so what? When you get to this state of seeing infinite consciousness, mind is very, very, still, calm, and tranquil. But you're seeing consciousnesses arise and pass away, arise and pass away, arise and pass away, birth, death, birth, death, birth, death, that's rebirth. And you're seeing rebirth the way it truly is. And, this is always one of the more comical times because people come to me and kind of complain about this state. It's very fine, there's joy in it, but it's tiresome, always seeing this arise and pass away. Birth, death, birth, death, birth, death, birth, death, and you start to see that this truly is a form of suffering. It's unsatisfactory, it's always movement, there's always change that's happening, no matter what. And you're seeing that you're not in control of it, even the slightest little bit. It happens by itself, all you are is the observer, that's all. So people come to me and they say: "This is a great stage, very nice, got that joy in it, really good stuff, but boy I wish it would hurry up and go away." Because it is so tiresome.

MN: 19. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite consciousness, aware that 'there is nothing/ a bhikkhu enters upon

and abides in the base of nothingness. This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

BV: Now mind is not looking outside of itself. There's nothing there. You still have very strong equanimity; the feeling of joy has changed again to this feeling, and it's quite strong, of balance, equanimity. You still have the five aggregates. You still have the hindrances arise when your mindfulness gets weak. You still have the seven factors of enlightenment. You still have all of this stuff, but these are factors in the mind now. And this is by far, one of the most interesting states that you can get into. It's real fun to watch and you'll be able to sit quite well for long periods of time, because this is so interesting.

TT: 1:04:54

You know, you have this feeling, you drank a little too much water and you have a feeling – “I have to go relieve myself, but I don't want to leave, this is too neat. This stuff is so great!” Watching these different factors arise and pass away. Watching the amount of energy that you're putting into the watching. Now we're talking about very, very subtle stuff, and, too much energy, restlessness, and dislike of that feeling. Not enough energy, dullness, and it can be like or dislike of that feeling. But, you've learned by now that the hindrances when they arise, they're part of a process, and it's very easy to see it as process and not take the hindrances personally anymore. So you see the distraction, let go, relax, come back again to the feeling of equanimity.

There's one sutta [1] that the Buddha started out at the fourth jhāna, and just talked about the arūpa jhānas, the immaterial jhānas, infinite space, consciousness, nothingness, neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and he was talking with Ānanda, and he was talking about the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. And Ānanda said: “Venerable sir, if you had to be attached, being attached to the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is the highest and best attachment you can have.” And the Buddha said: “Ānanda, you're right.” There's more beyond that, being attached doesn't help you, but that's the highest and best attachment that you

can have. You remember last night, I was talking about your rebirth is eighty four thousand mahakappas if you don't go any further than neither-perception-nor-non-perception. So, to say the least, you have a very, very pure mind at that time.

Ok –

MN: 20. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of nothingness, a bhikkhu 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.

BV: Now what happens, when before with infinite space, you were feeling your mind expand, now it becomes so slight and so tiny, that you can't tell whether it's really there or not. And this is a very interesting state to be in too. And it's kind of fun. So I can see what Ānanda was talking about: "You know, this is ok." This state is really kind of fun, because there's all kind of things that happen. But you don't really know that it happened as it's happening, it's when you get out of that state and reflect on that. Then you see: "Well this is what happened then." And there are no five aggregates anymore, it's too subtle.

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

BV: What did that last sentence mean? Seeing Dependent Origination. There is still feeling, and with some mind[\'s attention] movement, that feeling arises and you see it and you let it go and relax right then. I'm not going to talk about the states that happen in this jhāna, you have to tell me, and I'm going to ask you some real difficult questions when you get into that state. You remember what I was talking last night about the little tiny stream and the two monks? [2]

S: Yes.

BV: Ok, there still is some consciousness there and by the time you get to neither-perception-nor-non-perception, you've got to have it.

TT: 1:09:59

The cessation of perception and feeling, will, the first time it occurs, will not last for a very long period of time, although you don't have any idea. It lasts for three minutes, four minutes, five minutes, like that, and then when you see Dependent Origination, you will see it fairly quickly, arising and passing away, because this arises, that arises because of that, this arises. And then you'll see that when this doesn't arise, that won't arise, and you'll see that fairly quickly. And then, major candy comes. But always, I want to stress that **seeing with wisdom, always, not once in awhile, not sometimes, always means seeing, and understanding, and realizing Dependent Origination.**

Ok?

Ok-

MN: ... 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 heart-wood, who came to a great tree standing possessed of heart-wood, and cutting off its heartwood, took it away knowing it was heartwood; and so whatever it was he had to make with heartwood, his purpose will have been 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 concentration for its benefit, or knowledge and vision for its benefit. But it is this unshakeable deliverance of mind that is the goal of this holy life, its heartwood, and its end."

24. When this was said, the brahmin Pingalakoccha 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 bhikkhus. From today let Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life."

BV: And there we go again.  
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 . . .*

Footnotes:

1. MN # 106 The Way to the Imperturbable (Dhamma talks on this sutta are posted on the Dhammasukha.org web site)

2. Excerpt from Dhamma Talk MN-026-U:

BV: Neither-perception-nor-non-perception. It's described like this: There's two monks that are walking in a forest. The senior monk is walking in front. And they step over this little tiny stream, and the junior monk that's following, goes up to the senior monk and says: "Please wait for one moment, I want to go get a drink." And the senior monk says: "Ah, there's water. Then why don't you go back and get my towel, I want to take a bath?" But the junior monk says: "There's water, but there's not enough for that." Ok. Now that's what neither-perception-nor-non-perception is. There's still feeling, but the perception is so fine it's hard to tell if it's there or not. And when you come out of that state, and you start reflecting on what happened while you were in that state, then you understand what neither-perception-nor-non-perception is about.

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