

MN36 The Greater Discourse to Saccaka - Mahāsaccaka Sutta

Dhamma Talk by Bhante Vimalaramsi

Joshua Tree Retreat 2 2-Mar-07

BV: Reads from the Sutta

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Vesāli in the Great Wood in the Hall with the Peaked Roof.

2. Now on that occasion, when it was morning, the Blessed One had finished dressing and had taken his bowl and outer robe, desiring to go into Vesāli for alms.

3. Then, as Saccaka the Nigantha's son was walking and wandering for exercise, he came to the Hall with the Peaked Roof in the Great Wood. The venerable Ānanda saw him coming in the distance and said to the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, here comes Saccaka the Nigantha's son, a debater and a clever speaker regarded by many as a saint. He wants to discredit the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. It would be good if the Blessed One would sit down for a while out of compassion." The Blessed One sat down on the seat made ready. Then Saccaka the Nigantha's son went up 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:

4. "Master Gotama, there are some recluses and brahmins who abide pursuing development of body, but not development of mind. They are touched by bodily painful feeling. In the past, when one was touched by bodily painful feeling, one's thighs would become rigid, one's heart would burst, hot blood would gush from one's mouth, and one would go mad, go out of one's mind. So then the mind was subservient to the body, the body wielded mastery over it. Why is that? Because the mind was not developed. But there are some recluses and brahmins who abide pursuing development of mind, but not development of body. They are touched by mental painful feeling. In the past, when one was touched by mental painful feeling, one's thighs would become rigid, one's heart would burst, hot blood would gush from one's mouth, and one would go mad, go out of one's mind. So then the body was subservient to the mind, the mind wielded mastery over it. Why is that? Because the body was not developed. Master Gotama, it has occurred to me: 'Surely Master Gotama's disciples abide pursuing development of mind, but not development of body.'"

5. "But, Aggivessana, what have you learned about development of body?"

“Well, there are, for example, Nanda Vaccha, Kisa Sankicca, Makkhali Gosāla.

BV: And he goes through three different ascetic teachers.

MN:

They go naked, rejecting conventions, licking their hands, not coming when asked, not stopping when asked; they do not accept food brought or food specially made or an invitation to a meal; they receive nothing from a pot, from a bowl, across a threshold, across a stick, across a pestle, from two eating together, from a pregnant woman, from a woman giving suck, from a woman in the midst of men, from where food is advertised to be distributed, from where a dog is waiting, from where flies are buzzing; they accept no fish or meat, they drink no liquor, wine, or fermented brew. They keep to one house, to one morsel; they keep to two houses, to two morsels, they keep to seven houses, to seven morsels. They live on one saucerful a day, on two saucerfuls a day, on seven saucerfuls a day. They take food once a day, once every two days, once every seven days; thus even up to once every fortnight, they dwell pursuing the practice of taking food at stated intervals.”

6. “But do they subsist on so little, Aggivessana?” “No, Master Gotama, sometimes they consume excellent hard food, eat excellent soft food, taste excellent delicacies, drink excellent drinks. Thereby they again regain their strength, fortify themselves, and become fat.”

“What they earlier abandoned, Aggivessana, they later gather together again. That is how there is increase and decrease of this body. But what have you learned about development of mind?” When Saccaka the Nigantha’s son was asked by the Blessed One about development of mind, he was unable to answer.

7. Then the Blessed One told him: “What you have just spoken of as development of body, Aggivessana, is not development of body according to the Dhamma in the Noble One’s Discipline. Since you do not know what development of body is, how could you know what development of mind is? Nevertheless, Aggivessana, as to how one is undeveloped in body and undeveloped in mind, and developed in body and developed in mind, listen and attend closely to what I shall say.”—“Yes, sir,” Saccaka the Nigantha’s son replied. The Blessed One said this:

BV: Now, Saccaka was what is now called a Jain, and this is part of the Jain religion, what he was talking about.

MN: 8. "How, Aggivessana, is one undeveloped in body and undeveloped in mind? Here, Aggivessana, pleasant feeling arises in an untaught ordinary person. Touched by that pleasant feeling, he lusts after pleasure and continues to lust after pleasure. That pleasant feeling of his ceases. With the cessation of the pleasant feeling, painful feeling arises. Touched by that painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, and laments, he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. When that pleasant feeling has arisen in him, it invades his mind and remains because body is not developed. And when that painful feeling has arisen in him, it invades his mind and remains because mind is not developed. Anyone in whom, in this double manner, arisen pleasant feeling invades his mind and remains because body is not developed, and arisen painful feeling invades his mind and remains because mind is not developed, is thus undeveloped in body and undeveloped in mind.

9. "And how, Aggivessana, is one developed in body and developed in mind? Here, Aggivessana, pleasant feeling arises in a well-taught noble disciple. Touched by that pleasant feeling, he does not lust after pleasure or continue to lust after pleasure. That pleasant feeling of his ceases. With the cessation of the pleasant feeling, painful feeling arises. Touched by that painful feeling, he does not sorrow, grieve, and lament, he does not weep beating his breast and become distraught. When that pleasant feeling has arisen in him, it does not invade his mind and remain because body is developed. And when that painful feeling has arisen in him, it does not invade his mind and remain because mind is developed. Anyone in whom, in this double manner, arisen pleasant feeling does not invade his mind and remain because body is developed, and arisen painful feeling does not invade his mind and remain because mind is developed, is thus developed in body and developed in mind."

10. "I have confidence in Master Gotama thus: 'Master Gotama is developed in body and developed in mind.'"

"Surely, Aggivessana, your words are offensive and discourteous, but still I will answer you. Since I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness, it has not been possible for arisen pleasant feeling to invade my mind and remain or for arisen painful feeling to invade my mind and remain."

11. "Has there never arisen in Master Gotama a feeling so pleasant that it could invade his mind and remain? Has there never arisen in Master Gotama a feeling so painful that it could invade his mind and remain?"

12. "Why not, Aggivessana? Here, Aggivessana, before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I thought: 'Household life is crowded and dusty; life gone forth is wide open. It is not easy, while living in a home, to lead the holy life utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair

and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness.'

13 "Later, while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness.

(This Sutta copies below section 14-17 from Sutta 26)

14. "Having gone forth, monks, in search of what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to Ālāra Kālāma and said to him: 'Friend Kālāma, I want to lead the holy life in this Dhamma and Discipline.' Ālāra Kālāma replied: 'The venerable one may stay here. This Dhamma is such that a wise man can soon enter upon and abide in it, realising for himself through direct knowledge his own teacher's doctrine.' I soon quickly learned that Dhamma. As far as mere lip-reciting and rehearsal of his teaching went, I could speak with knowledge and assurance, and I claimed, I know and see'—and there were others who did likewise.

"I considered: 'It is not through mere faith alone that Ālāra Kālāma declares: "By realising for myself with direct knowledge, I enter upon and abide in this Dhamma." Certainly Ālāra Kālāma abides knowing and seeing this Dhamma.' Then I went to Ālāra Kālāma and asked him: 'Friend Kālāma, in what way do you declare that by realising for yourself with direct knowledge you enter upon and abide in this Dhamma?' In reply he declared the base of nothingness. "I considered: 'Not only Ālāra Kālāma has faith, energy, mindfulness, collectedness, and wisdom.

BV: The five faculties.

MN: I too have faith, energy, mindfulness, collectedness, and wisdom. Suppose I endeavour to realise the Dhamma that Ālāra Kālāma declares he enters upon and abides in by realising for himself with direct knowledge?'

"I soon quickly entered upon and abided in that Dhamma by realising for myself with direct knowledge. Then I went to Ālāra Kālāma and asked him: 'Friend Kālāma, is it in this way that you declare that you enter upon and abide in this Dhamma by realising for yourself with direct knowledge?'—That is the way, friend.'—'It is in this way, friend, that I also enter upon and abide in this Dhamma by realising for myself with direct knowledge.'—'It is a gain for us, friend, it is a great gain for us that we have such a venerable one for our companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma that I declare I enter upon and abide in by realising for myself with direct knowledge is the Dhamma that you enter upon and abide in by realising for yourself with direct knowledge. And the Dhamma that you enter upon and abide in by realising for yourself with direct knowledge is the Dhamma that I declare I enter upon and abide

in by realising for myself with direct knowledge. So you know the Dhamma that I know and I know the Dhamma that you know. As I am, so are you; as you are, so am I. Come, friend, let us now lead this community together.'

BV: That was a real big offer.

MN: "Thus Ālāra Kālāma, my teacher, placed me, his pupil, on an equal footing with himself and awarded me the highest honour. But it occurred to me: This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna, but only to reappearance in the base of nothingness.' Not being satisfied with that Dhamma, disappointed with it, I left.

BV: Now if he would have died at that time, he would have been reborn in a brahma-loka, that lasts for, sixty-thousand mahakappas, that's expansions and contractions of the universe, that's a long time. And it is in a happy state that he would have lived, but he wasn't satisfied with that.

MN: 15. "Still in search, monks, of what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta

BV: Uddaka Rāmaputta means that he was the son of Rāma, that's what his last name means.

MN: and said to him: 'Friend, I want to lead the holy life in this Dhamma and Discipline.' Uddaka Rāmaputta replied: The venerable one may stay here. This Dhamma is such that a wise man can soon enter upon and abide in it, himself realising through direct knowledge his own teacher's doctrine.' I soon quickly learned that Dhamma. As far as mere lip-reciting and rehearsal of his teaching went, I could speak with knowledge and assurance, and I claimed, 'I know and see'—and there were others who did likewise.

"I considered: 'It was not through mere faith alone that Rāma

BV: Rāmaputta's father.

MN: declared: "By realising for myself with direct knowledge, I enter upon and abide in this Dhamma." Certainly Rāma abided knowing and seeing this Dhamma.' Then I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta and asked him: 'Friend, in what way did Rāma declare that by realising for himself with direct knowledge he entered upon and abided in this Dhamma?' In reply Uddaka Rāmaputta declared the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

"I considered: 'Not only Rāma had faith, energy, mindfulness, collectedness, and wisdom. I too have faith, energy, mindfulness, collectedness, and wisdom. Suppose I endeavour to realise the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and abided in by realising for himself with direct knowledge.'

"I soon quickly entered upon and abided in that Dhamma by realising for myself with direct knowledge. Then I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta and asked him: 'Friend, was it in this way that Rāma declared that he entered upon and abided in this Dhamma by realising for himself with direct knowledge?'— 'That is the way, friend.'—'It is in this way, friend, that I also enter upon and abide in this Dhamma by realising for myself with direct knowledge.'—'It is a gain for us, friend, it is a great gain for us that we have such a venerable one for our companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and abided in by realising for himself with direct knowledge is the Dhamma that you enter upon and abide in by realising for yourself with direct knowledge. And the Dhamma that you enter upon and abide in by realising for yourself with direct knowledge is the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and abided in by realising for himself with direct knowledge. So you know the Dhamma that Rāma knew and Rāma knew the Dhamma that you know. As Rāma was, so are you; as you are, so was Rāma. Come, friend, now lead this community.'

BV: Rama had already died, and his son took over. But his son was a little bit afraid of following all the way through neither-perception-nor-non-perception. He was comfortable being in the realm of nothingness, but he knew the way to get to that other state. The reason that he was very comfortable with that, is that the belief in God is still available in the realm of nothingness, but when you get to neither-perception-nor-non-perception, that belief disappears, and he didn't like that idea. So, this is why he said: "Now, you come and lead the community" He didn't say: "Sit beside me and lead the community", because he didn't know that by direct knowledge, that state. So he was offering that: "You just take over, and we'll follow you."

MN: "Thus Uddaka Rāmaputta, my companion in the holy life, placed me in the position of a teacher and accorded me the highest honour. But it occurred to me: This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna, but only to reappearance in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.' Not being satisfied with that Dhamma, disappointed with it, I left.

BV: Now, if he would have died at **that** time, he would have been reborn in a brahma-loka that lasts eighty-four thousand mahakappas. And at that time, that was the highest anybody could ever attain. Nibbana was **not** a reality, at that time, it was only a thought in the Bodhisatta's mind.

MN: 16. "Still in search, monks, of what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I wandered by stages through the Magadhan country until eventually I arrived at Senānigama near Uruvelā. There I saw an agreeable piece of ground, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. I considered: This is an agreeable piece of ground, this is a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. This will serve for the striving of a clansman intent on striving.' And I sat down there thinking: This will serve for striving.'

(Back to Sutta 36)

17. "Now these three similes occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. Suppose there were a wet sappy piece of wood lying in water, and a man came with an upper fire-stick, thinking: 'I shall light a fire, I shall produce heat.' What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by taking the upper fire-stick and rubbing it against the wet sappy piece of wood lying in the water?"

"No, Master Gotama. Why not? Because it is a wet sappy piece of wood, and it is lying in water. Eventually the man would reap only weariness and disappointment."

"So too, Aggivessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who still do not live bodily withdrawn from sensual pleasures, and whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has not been fully abandoned and suppressed internally, even if those good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment; and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and

vision and supreme enlightenment. This was the first simile that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.

18. "Again, Aggivessana, a second simile occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. Suppose there were a wet sappy piece of wood lying on dry land far from water, and a man came with an upper fire-stick, thinking: 'I shall light a fire, I shall produce heat.' What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by taking the upper fire-stick and rubbing it against the wet sappy piece of wood lying on dry land far from water?"

"No, Master Gotama. Why not? Because it is a wet sappy piece of wood, even though it is lying on dry land far from water. Eventually the man would reap only weariness and disappointment."

"So too, Aggivessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who live bodily withdrawn from sensual pleasures, but whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has not been fully abandoned and suppressed internally, even if those good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment; and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment. This was the second simile that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.

19. "Again, Aggivessana, a third simile occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. Suppose there were a dry sapless piece of wood lying on dry land far from water, and a man came with an upper fire-stick, thinking: 'I shall light a fire, I shall produce heat.' What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by rubbing it against the dry sapless piece of wood lying on dry land far from water?"

"Yes, Master Gotama. Why so? Because it is a dry sapless piece of wood, and it is lying on dry land far from water."

"So too, Aggivessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who live bodily withdrawn from sensual pleasures, and whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has been fully abandoned and suppressed internally, even if those good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are capable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment; and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are capable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment. This was the third simile that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. These are the three similes that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.

BV: Now, we get to a very interesting part.

20: "I thought: 'Suppose, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrain, and crush mind with mind.' So, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrained, and crushed mind with mind. While I did so, sweat ran from my armpits. Just as a strong man might seize a weaker man by the head or shoulders and beat him down, constrain him, and crush him, so too, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrained, and crushed mind with mind, and sweat ran from my armpits. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

BV: Now, I want to go to another sutta, number twenty (MN20), and this is called; "The Removal of Distracting Thoughts." And you just heard that the Buddha said that this doesn't work, but in this particular sutta, it says:

MN20:

7. (v) "If, while he is giving attention to stilling the thought-formation of those thoughts, there still arise in him evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion, then, with his teeth clenched and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, he should beat down, constrain, and crush mind with mind. When, with his teeth clenched and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, he beats down, constrains, and crushes mind with mind, then any evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion are abandoned in him and subside.

BV: Doesn't sound quite right, does it? Now, this particular sutta, is very much liked in Burma, and it is very much suggested that you do, when you have some very strong hindrances arising, that you clench your teeth, and push your tongue against the roof of your mouth, and crush mind with mind, and they suggest that fairly often. Now that doesn't get rid of a hindrance. It doesn't stop the hindrance from coming back and causing the same kind of problem over and over again. It just causes your body to be painful, and unlike what the Buddha was saying, it didn't

disturb his mind, this does disturb your mind if you haven't got the same kind of powers that the Buddha had, the same kind of concentration. So, this was added at another time, into this sutta.

S: Which Sutta is this again?

BV: Twenty. It's called The Removal of Distracting Thoughts, section number seven. And I kind of attribute this to the brahmins coming in and starting to change things around a little bit, or people that are practicing one pointed concentration, they thought that this was a good thing to add into this particular sutta, so they just went ahead and put it in. But they got it from sutta number thirty-six (MN36), where it decidedly says this is not a good practice to do.

MN36.

21. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise the breathingless meditation.' So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth and nose. While I did so, there was a loud sound of winds coming out from my ear holes. Just as there is a loud sound when a smith's bellows are blown, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my nose and ears,

BV: It's supposed to read "nose and mouth".

MN: there was a loud sound of winds coming out from my ear holes. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

22. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.' So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, violent winds cut through my head. Just as if a strong man were splitting my head open with a sharp sword, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, violent winds cut through my head. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

23. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.' So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I

did so,

BV: This particular practice is a brahmin practice by the way, and what they do is, they cut that little partition underneath your tongue, and they can swallow their tongue, and that stops the wind from coming out their mouth. And they plug up their ears real heavily with like cotton balls and that sort of stuff. And you can develop holding your breath for quite a long period of time, but the pains that come in the body are definitely not worth it.

MN: While I did so, there were violent pains in my head. Just as if a strong man were tightening a tough leather strap around my head as a headband, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, there were violent pains in my head. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

24. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.' So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, violent winds carved up my belly. Just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up an ox's belly with a sharp butcher's knife, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, violent winds carved up my belly. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

25. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise further the breathingless meditation.' So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, there was a violent burning in my body. Just as if two strong men were to seize a weaker man by both arms and roast him over a pit of hot coals, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, there was a violent burning in my body. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

26. "Now when deities saw me, some said: 'The recluse Gotama is dead.' Other deities said: 'The recluse Gotama is not dead, he is dying.' And other deities said: 'The recluse Gotama is not dead nor dying; he is an arahant, for such is the way arahants abide.'

27. "I thought: 'Suppose I practise entirely cutting off food.' Then deities came to me and said: 'Good sir, do not practise entirely cutting off food. If you do so, we shall infuse heavenly food into the pores of your skin and you will live on that.' I considered: 'If I claim to be completely fasting while these deities infuse heavenly food into the pores of my skin and I live on that, then I shall be lying.' So I dismissed those deities, saying: 'There is no need.'

28. "I thought: 'Suppose I take very little food, a handful each time, whether of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch soup or pea soup.' So I took very little food, a handful each time, whether of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch soup or pea soup. While I did so, my body reached a state of extreme emaciation. Because of eating so little my limbs became like the jointed segments of vine stems or bamboo stems. Because of eating so little my backside became like a camel's hoof. Because of eating so little the projections on my spine stood forth like corded beads. Because of eating so little my ribs jutted out as gaunt as the crazy rafters of an old roofless barn. Because of eating so little the gleam of my eyes sank far down in their sockets, looking like the gleam of water that has sunk far down in a deep well. Because of eating so little my scalp shrivelled and withered as a green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun. Because of eating so little my belly skin adhered to my backbone; thus if I touched my belly skin I encountered my backbone and if I touched my backbone I encountered my belly skin. Because of eating so little, if I defecated or urinated, I fell over on my face there. Because of eating so little, if I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair, rotted at its roots, fell from my body as I rubbed.

29. "Now when people saw me, some said: 'The recluse Gotama is black.' Other people said: 'The recluse Gotama is not black, he is brown.' Other people said: 'The recluse Gotama is neither black nor brown, he is golden-skinned.' So much had the clear, bright colour of my skin deteriorated through eating so little.

30. "I thought: 'Whatever recluses or brahmins in the past have experienced painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost, there is none beyond this. And whatever recluses and brahmins in the future will experience painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost, there is none beyond this. And whatever recluses and brahmins at present experience painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost, there is none beyond this. But by this racking practice of austerities I have not attained any superhuman states, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones. Could there be another path to enlightenment?'

BV: At the time, it was thought that if you just eat one kind of food, and didn't eat very much, that that food would cause you to become enlightened. So he tried it with all kinds of different foods, and as you can see it didn't work.

Now these kind of austerities is pretty much ignoring all of the painful feelings and that sort of thing. And it was thought that when you have these painful feelings, then you won't have any sensual desire arise in you. That's why they indulged in these kind of painful practices.

MN: 31. "I considered: 'I recall that when my father the Sakyan was occupied, while I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of seclusion. Could that be the path to enlightenment?' Then, following on that memory, came the realisation: That is the path to enlightenment.'

32. "I thought: 'Why am I afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states?' I thought: 'I am not afraid of that pleasure since it has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states.'

33. "I considered: 'It is not easy to attain that pleasure with a body so excessively emaciated. Suppose I ate some solid food— some boiled rice and bread.' And I ate some solid food—some boiled rice and bread. Now at that time five monks were waiting upon me, thinking: 'If our recluse Gotama achieves some higher state, he will inform us.' But when I ate the boiled rice and bread, the five monks were disgusted and left me, thinking: The recluse Gotama now lives luxuriously; he has given up his striving and reverted to luxury.'

34. "Now when I had eaten solid food and regained my strength, then quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of seclusion. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

35-37. "With the stilling of thinking and examining thought, I entered upon and abided in the second jhāna...With the fading away as well of joy...I entered upon and abided in the third jhāna...With the abandoning of pleasure and pain...I entered upon and abided in the fourth jhāna...But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

BV: What does that mean: "Did not invade my mind and remain?" He wasn't attached to it; he just saw it as part of a process.

MN: 38. "When my collected mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability,

BV: Now this is the description he gives any time someone gains, that is gets to the fourth jhāna. This is why you're considered a beginner meditator until you get to the fourth jhāna. Once you get to the fourth jhāna, now you're considered an advanced student.

MN: I directed it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives. I recollected my manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many aeons of world-contraction, many aeons of world-expansion, many aeons of world-contraction and expansion: There I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I reappeared elsewhere; and there too I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I reappeared here.' Thus with their aspects and particulars I recollected my manifold past lives.

39. "This was the first true knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute. But such happy feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

BV: So what he was really doing here, when he was seeing his past lifetimes, he was developing his memory; and a lot of people talk about being able to be hypnotized so they can remember a few past lifetimes, and they think that's really neat. I've heard people talk say, "Yeah, I can remember a hundred and twenty three past lifetimes." You know, and everybody hears that and they go: "Oooo, aaah, that's really something." But when you start doing this specific practice, after you've gotten into the fourth jhāna, its possible that you can remember thousands, and thousands, and thousands, of them.

Not everyone does, however, each time one of those past lifetimes arises, you can see the kind of clothes you were wearing, what clan you were in, what other people

around you looked like, what kind of food you ate, what kind of actions you did. And you can see yourself die from that past lifetime, and get reborn in another lifetime, and you can see sometimes that you're reborn as an animal, depending, or you can be reborn in a deva loka, or you can be reborn in a hell realm, it just depends on your past actions.

Now a lot of people have questions like: "What's the big deal about seeing the past lifetimes? Why is this important?" But when you start seeing them over and over again, it starts answering questions about the way you are and the way you act in this lifetime. And you start seeing that you had some problems with relationships, and you could see in your past lifetimes how the problems you have in your relationship this lifetime, you did the same thing to somebody else in a previous lifetime, and it's just coming back.

So you learn to develop your equanimity; you learn to develop your understanding of how your mind is working in this lifetime, and it's very helpful. Another thing that happens, is that you really, really begin to believe that karma is real because you see, I got thrown off a cliff, in whatever past lifetime, and it might have happened a few times, now you're deathly afraid of heights. Or you're very afraid of drowning in water, because you have drowned in water during a few of your lifetimes. You really lose doubt and come to see that karma is a REAL thing, and that's quite a useful insight!

MN: 40. "When my collected mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings.

BV: One of the reasons you need to be in the fourth jhāna before you start working with your past lifetimes, is you need that equanimity to see some of the things that happened to you in past lifetimes. Some of it is really not very pleasant. Some of the things that you've done in the past lifetimes are just not very nice, quite often. Some of them can be very wonderful, but somebody can come along and torture you in one way or another in that lifetime and cause a lot of pain, so you need to have this balance of mind before you start looking at past lifetimes.

MN: With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate. I understood how beings pass on according to their actions thus: These worthy beings who were ill conducted in body, speech, and mind, revilers of noble ones, wrong in their views, giving effect to wrong view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a state of deprivation, in a

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

41. "This was the second true knowledge attained by me in the middle watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

BV: And now we get to the interesting part of this.

MN: 42. "When my collected mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I directly knew as it actually is: This is suffering';...This is the origin of suffering';...This is the cessation of suffering';...This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering';...These are the taints';...This is the origin of the taints';...This is the cessation of the taints';...This is the way leading to the cessation of the Taints.'

BV: Now, what we're talking about here is, how he saw each of the links of Dependent Origination through the Four Noble Truths. When he's talking about the taints, he's directly talking about each one of those links.

With ignorance as condition, formations arise; with formations as condition, consciousness arises; with consciousness as condition, mentality-materiality arises; with mentality-materiality as condition, six sense bases arise; with six sense bases as condition, contact arises; with contact as condition, feeling arises; with feeling as condition, craving arises; with craving as condition, clinging arises; with clinging as condition, habitual tendency arises; with habitual tendency as condition, birth arises; with birth as condition, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair arise. That is this whole mass of suffering.

With the cessation of ignorance, comes the cessation of formations; with the cessation of formation, comes the cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness, comes the cessation of mentality-materiality; with the cessation of

mentality-materiality, comes the cessation of the six sense bases; with the cessation of the six sense bases, comes the cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, comes the cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, comes the cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, comes the cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, comes the cessation of habitual tendency; with the cessation of habitual tendency, comes the cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, comes the cessation of ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, and pain, grief, and despair. This is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

And if you'll notice, it is, first, the cessation of ignorance. And what is ignorance?

S: Ignorance of the four noble truths.

BV: So now you know the Four Noble Truths completely, very well.

Now, it doesn't matter where on this wheel you start; you can start at craving, and then go to ignorance, and then go back up, it doesn't really matter. But craving is the weakest link in the Dependent Origination. And craving always manifests as tension and tightness in your mind and in your body. So, when you are able to recognize feeling, it doesn't matter what kind of feeling it is, pleasant, painful, or neither one of those. When that feeling arises and you relax, immediately, then the craving, the clinging, the habitual tendency, the birth, the ageing and death, the ignorance, the formations, the consciousness, mentality-materiality, six sense doors, and contact.

BV: When you let go of that final craving, all of the rest will follow suit. And that is, seeing the taints, seeing the cause of the taints, seeing the ceasing of the taints, and seeing the way to the ceasing of the taints.

Then what happens?

MN: 43. "When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated there came the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' I directly knew: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'

44. "This was the third true knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

45. "Aggivessana, I recall teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of many hundreds. Perhaps each person thinks: The recluse Gotama is teaching the Dhamma especially for me.' But it should not be so regarded; the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma to others only to give them knowledge. When the talk is finished, Aggivessana, then I steady my mind internally, quieten it, bringing it to stillness, and collected it on that same sign of collectedness as before, in which I constantly abide."

"This can be believed of Master Gotama, since he is accomplished and fully enlightened. But does Master Gotama recall sleeping during the day? "

46. "I recall, Aggivessana, in the last month of the hot season, on returning from my almsround, after my meal I lay out my outer robe folded in four, and lying down on my right side, I fall asleep mindful and fully aware."

"Some recluses and brahmins call that abiding in delusion, Master Gotama."

"It is not in such a way that one is deluded or undeluded, Aggivessana. As to how one is deluded or undeluded, listen and attend closely to what I shall say."—"Yes, sir," Saccaka the Nigantha's son replied. The Blessed One said this:

47. "Him I call deluded, Aggivessana, who has not abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; for it is with the non-abandoning of the taints that one is deluded. Him I call undeluded who has abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; for it is with the abandoning of the taints that one is undeluded. The Tathāgata, Aggivessana, has abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; he has cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Just as a palm tree whose crown is cut off is incapable of further growth, so too, the Tathāgata has abandoned the taints that defile...done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising."

BV: It's like getting rid of the ignorance. When you get rid of the ignorance, then, everything starts to change.

MN: 48. When this was said, Saccaka the Nigantha's son said: "It is wonderful, Master Gotama, it is marvellous how when Master Gotama is spoken to offensively again and again, assailed by discourteous courses of speech, the colour of his skin brightens and the colour of his face clears, as is to be expected of one who is accomplished and fully enlightened. I recall, Master Gotama, engaging Pūrana Kassapa in debate, and then he prevaricated, led the talk aside, and showed anger,

hate, and bitterness. But when Master Gotama is spoken to offensively again and again, assaulted by discourteous courses of speech, the colour of his skin brightens and the colour of his face clears, as is to be expected of one who is accomplished and fully enlightened. I recall, Master Gotama, engaging Makkhali Gosāla...Ajita Kesakambalin...Pakudha Kaccāyana...Sañjaya Belatthiputta... the

BV: And then he goes through all of the different teachers, even his own.

MN:

Nigantha Nataputta in debate, and then he prevaricated, led the talk aside, and showed anger, hate, and bitterness. But when Master Gotama is spoken to offensively again and again, assailed by discourteous courses of speech, the colour of his skin brightens and the colour of his face clears, as is to be expected of one who is accomplished and fully enlightened. And now, Master Gotama, we depart. We are busy and have much to do." "Now is the time, Aggivessana, to do as you think fit." Then Saccaka the Nigantha's son, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and departed.

BV: And what that actually means is he thought it was a great talk, but he wasn't convinced, but he did learn quite a bit from that.

Now, when the Buddha was doing all of his fasting, his golden skin turned black. And quite often, especially in Thailand, you'll see Buddha images sitting, and they're black images, and the body is a skeleton, and it always makes you think of, how nice it was that he had the patience to go through something like that so we didn't have to.

There's other suttas that, it really gets disgusting with some of the things, some of his practices that he did while he was an ascetic, you know, like lying on nails and things like that. But it wasn't only that, it was he was eating his own, feces, and drinking his own urine until it disappeared. And then he was following a calf around that was still suckling on the mother, and when the calf would go to the bathroom, he would catch it and eat that. I mean, he was doing all of the weirdest things, and went as far as you possibly can, to prove that this is not the way.

He was hoping to get enlightenment because they said that that's the way to get enlightenment, but he went as far as anyone could possibly go with that practice, and proved that it didn't work, just like he did with the meditation of one-pointed concentration. And that's why he came up with the middle path: these extremes

don't work; these lapses and getting into your sensual pleasures don't work; there's a way in the middle that does work.

An awful lot of people that I met in Asia, they were deathly afraid of pleasurable things because they were afraid they'd become attached, so they became attached to being attached, and they suffered greatly because of it.

I've been to too many retreats where the stress was very, very strong on having painful feeling arise, and then putting your attention in the middle of it, so you can see the elements. And one of the things I noticed when I was doing it was how tight my mind was when a painful feeling arose.

Now, finally I got to a place where my mind was in a state of balance, kind of..., but it's not the same kind of balance that we have with what we're practicing here. And then if a pain arose, my mind wasn't shaken by it, and I could put my attention in the middle of it. And then I got to a place where the pain wouldn't arise, no matter how weirdly I sat.

I tried to make pain come up, and I actually went to my teacher and complained because I didn't have any pain. Now, if that's not weird I don't know what is!

And you have to back up just a little bit because not all of sutta twenty (MN20) is incorrect. The first two parts of it are quite correct, but you have to know and understand what he was talking about to really grasp it. But this practice, the way that the Buddha was teaching and if we practice the way the Buddha's teaching, it is immediately effective. And it doesn't take three or four or five years to figure out exactly how to do it; you can do it in one retreat. And this can be taken into your life and practiced, and I encourage you very strongly to do that as much as you possibly can.

And the whole thing that, I know it sounds really odd, but the more you smile, and the less you take things seriously when they arise, the more balance you have in your mind, so you can see when your mind starts to get serious and get heavy, and you can recognize very clearly that "I am that, I am this" whatever seriousness it is; this sadness, this dissatisfaction, this hatred, this anger, whatever it is. And when you recognize how much pain you're causing yourself because of that tight mind, and identifying with it, when you laugh with your mind for being so crazy, then "It's only this", and it's very easy to let it go. It's very easy to let it be, and it doesn't take up any more of your energy.

When somebody walks up to you, and they're angry, and they start giving you anger, you have a choice right then – either you take that anger, make it your own, and then throw your anger back at them, or not. Now when you're very much aware, you see somebody that has anger, you allow them the space to have their

anger, this is compassion, and then you start loving them. In your mind you start radiating loving-kindness to them. Their anger will do one of two things; either it will dissipate completely, and then you can find out what the real problem is, and talk very nicely to each other, or they will walk away mumbling to themselves. It takes two to tango.

But if you take their anger and make it yours, and then you get done with your war with each other, because that's what it really is, what do you think about when they walk away? What I said, and what they said, and what I should have said, and I'm right, and they're wrong, there's no question about it. And then, just like it was on a tape deck, comes up again, same order, same words. Any time you see repeat thoughts, that means that there's an attachment, and there's identification with those thoughts and those feelings as being mine personally. So if you don't catch it the first time, catch it the second time, and laugh with it and let it go because it's nothing. It really isn't important.

What is important is being happy. Not discouraged, not upset because somebody said this or that. Who cares what they said? If they said it when they were angry, they probably didn't mean it in the first place. So you have to be able to let that go. And that leads directly to your own happiness and well being. What you put out into the world, will come back at you. If you put anger out into the world, there's more anger that will come back.

If you put happiness out in the world, you're going to see a lot more people smiling; you're going to see how people have a light mind, and how much easier life is. Then life turns into a real fun game, and it's ok for life to be a game. It's preferable for life to be fun and interesting, and happiness to just come through you all the time. The more we can do that, the more contented we become. The more contented we become, the more spiritually advanced we become. That's the way it works. And it's our choice, every time, it's our choice, either to bite into somebody else's anger, or bite into your own anger, or your own dissatisfaction, and start spreading that, or not, it's your choice.

When you're practicing harmonious communication, that means you stop beating yourself up for not being perfect, for making mistakes, for not having things be the way you want them to be, and you start loving yourself, and accepting yourself, and start having more fun in the present moment.

Then you become incredibly dynamic in whatever you're doing. You become very efficient with whatever you're doing because you don't have all of these thoughts pulling you away. You don't have that restlessness making you think about something else while you're trying to do this, and making mistakes while you're doing this because you're thinking of that.

The more we can keep with smiling and having fun, and not taking things seriously, the easier it is to sit with your meditation, the easier it is to have insights into the true nature of things, because you're not blocking it with the negative energy that you create for yourself. There's nobody out there that causes your pain. You have the choice either to accept that pain or not, and you don't need to.

The more you smile, the more you have fun with what you're doing in the present moment, the easier it is to see how mind's attention moves from one thing to another. And with that comes knowledge and vision, and then wisdom. That's the whole point of doing the meditation. It's not to gain some supernatural powers, it's not to gain deep concentration, it's to gain understanding in how we cause our own suffering and "don't do that anymore"! And what was it?

What you don't think and don't ponder on **doesn't** come up. We have to be the example so other people can learn from that. So that means we have to learn how to smile all the time.

Ok, any other comments or questions?

S: The mundane Nibbāna you talk about that comes right after releasing the craving?

BV: Yes?

S: By releasing the craving, there's release?

BV: Yes.

S: ~ And a feeling of...

BV: Well, clarity. There's no thoughts interfering with what you're observing any more, no doubts.

S: Then there is joy that arises?

BV: Not every time, but it can after you've let go of some kind of attachment. Then that relief and the different kinds of joy can arise, and then the tranquillity.

S: But not every time...

BV: There is a sense of relief every time you let go of the craving. But to me, when I see my mind letting go of the craving, I see that there's a little bit of relief, and that turns into more, kind of a peaceful observation.

In the Mahavagga there is a statement, and it says "A person can see one or all of the three characteristics without ever seeing Dependent Origination. But, when one sees Dependent Origination they always see the three characteristics." It's like, seeing the three characteristics just by themselves, but when you see Dependent Origination with the three characteristics, it's a deeper looking, it's a deeper seeing.

When Buddhadasa would give a talk, and he did this all the time, he talked about suffering, he talked about the cause of suffering, he talked about the way to get out of the cause of suffering, and the cessation of the suffering. He did the Four Noble Truths, but he changed the last two around. And every time you let go of craving, you're practicing the entire Eightfold Path at that time. So, when you let go of the craving and you relax, and there's no tension and tightness, that is the cessation.

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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