

General Talk Including a Few Short Excerpts From
MN 62 The Greater Discourse of Advice to Rāhula - Mahārāhulovāda
Sutta

BV: The importance of smiling into what ever arises, can't be understated. When you smile into something, if it's an unhappy feeling, or a happy feeling, either one, it helps to change your perspective so that you don't take all these things personally. This sutta that the Buddha gave to his son, Rāhula, is quite an amazing sutta. I'm not going to read the whole thing because he goes into the elements very deeply. But one of the things he said was:

MN:

13. "Rāhula, develop meditation that is like the earth; for when you develop meditation that is like the earth, arisen agreeable and disagreeable contacts will not invade your mind and remain. Just as people throw clean things and dirty things, excrement, urine, spittle, pus, and blood on the earth, and the earth is not horrified, humiliated, and disgusted because of that, so too, Rāhula, develop meditation that is like the earth; for when you develop meditation that is like the earth, arisen agreeable and disagreeable contacts will not invade your mind and remain.

BV: What does that mean? It means when you're sitting in meditation and a hindrance arises, you have a lot of restlessness, your mind is real active. It's thinking about this and that, and then you start feeling that restless feeling which is an uncomfortable feeling arise. Now this is a disagreeable thing. You want to keep your mind on your object of meditation, but it's not doing what you want. And it's all right. It's ok for that to occur. As soon as you notice that your mind is racing all over and doing a thousand things at one time, that's the time to allow those thoughts to be there. Never mind. It's all right for those to be there. It's just active mind. And then you notice that tight mental hold around the uncomfortable feeling of restlessness, a feeling that makes you want to jump out of your skin, and that's a disagreeable feeling and you open up and allow that feeling to be. Now you softly redirect your attention back to your

object of meditation. Oops! There it goes again. It's ok. No problem. It's not good. It's not bad. It's what's happening in the present moment, and it has to be all right because the truth is, it's happening.

Now, when you let go of the restlessness and relax that tightness in your head and come back to your object of meditation, sometimes you might get a whole wish in, sometimes only half a wish before your mind gets pulled away again, and that's all right. But what you want to try to do is see how that process works. What happened first? Clinging came up. What happened after that? Thoughts came up. What happened after that? Feeling got bigger. The thoughts started being more active, and then: "Whish!" gone. So what you're doing is you're starting to see this as an impersonal process. It's not you. It's just mind is being crazy right now for a little while, and that's ok. You're learning how to let go of the emotional re – action, every time that occurs. Little by little, you're learning to let it go.

As you observe how this process works more closely, then when it starts to arise you'll see it a little bit more quickly, and you'll be able to let go a little bit more easily. Always relaxing the tightness in your head before coming back to your object of meditation. It's not your restlessness. It's only restlessness arising. Why did it arise? Because of past actions. It might be that today was just one of them kind of days, where everything you tried to do was wrong. Everybody you talked to was grumpy. Now you sit in meditation, you say: "Well, I'm going to let all of this stuff go." And what happens? Everything that happened during the day comes back and you start reliving all of this stuff. Why did it come back? Because you took all of it personally and you didn't like it and you tightened the mind around it. See, this is not just about sitting in meditation; this is about being aware of how things arise in your mind all the time.

TT 5:47

Now we go back to that statement that I made last week: "What you think and ponder on, that's the inclination of your mind." When you have restlessness, dissatisfaction in your mind, and you indulge in it,

and try to control it, and you take it personally, and you try to fight with it and make it stop, what are you thinking and pondering about? What is the inclination of your mind at that time? The inclination of your mind is towards aversion. It's towards hatred. I don't like this stuff that's happening, and it's all happening to me. And I want it to stop, and I want it to go away. But when you see those kind of things happen, you'll notice that they don't happen just once, it's like it's on a tape recorder, playing the same feelings, the same thoughts, the same order. They come up again. When you start to notice repeat thoughts, that's your mind telling you: "Hey, I'm attached to it." And if you don't catch it the second time around, it'll come 'round again, just be patient. You don't catch it the third time, then wait, it'll come around again. But eventually, your mindfulness gets sharp enough that you're able to see that pain, the dissatisfaction, the dislike that's making your mind so tight. And you'll be able to let it go, and relax.

So what I'm telling you over and over again to practice loving-kindness through out the day, smile into things, what I'm really telling you is change your perspective about what's happening. Change your view of it. It's not yours. You don't have to get involved with it; you don't have to control it. Your job is just to allow it to be and relax into it, smile, wish somebody well, as many times during the day as you can remember. This picks up your awareness. And your mindfulness gets stronger and stronger, then when you come and you sit, you start having better and better quality meditation. You'll sit for periods of time, the restlessness just fades away. Right after that your mind says: "Ok, here's some candy." You'll be nice and quite; there's a sense of relief. Joy arises, real happy feeling, because of that sense of relief. After the joy fades away, you feel very comfortable in your body, very comfortable in your mind, and this is what the Buddha called happiness. Now the whole reason this occurred is because you developed a sense of equanimity and allowed what arose in the present moment to be there.

TT: 9:15

I was talking with somebody the other day and they said: "Well, I

feel sad." I said: "Ok, feel sad. That's all right. You can be happy while you're sad." Sounds odd, doesn't it? (laughs) The more you develop your sense of humor about getting caught by sadness, by depression, by anxiety, by restlessness, by what ever grabs a hold of you, the more you can laugh at having this occur, the less you're caught by it. It changes from my major problem that's this mountain right in front of me to this little bump: "Oh, it's only this. No big deal." Develop your sense of humor. That one chuckle in your mind changes your view of the whole situation, the whole thing. Now what happens when you do that? You're letting go of the identification with what ever has arisen. When you identify with something, your mind grabs onto it and says: "This is me. This is who I am. This is a major problem." And you start thinking: "I don't know how to solve it. I don't know what to do with it." And your mind just takes you a thousand mile away. Notice how tight that feeling is. Notice how painful that feeling is. And there's nothing out there that's causing your pain. It's your re – action to a feeling or a thought or a memory, the way you always acted when it came up before. When you develop your sense of humor about it, you're changing your re – action into response. And you're responding in a new way, and this new way is not taking it personally because it's an impersonal process. There's nobody in their right mind that's going to say: "Well, it's time for me to be depressed. I haven't been depressed for a long time, so I really need to be depressed now." Nobody's going to do that to themselves. But sometimes conditions arise for this depression to arise. Now if you take it personally, and you try to control it, and you try to push it around, and you try to make it be the way you want it to be, that feeling of depression is going to be major, really big. And the more you resist it, the stronger it gets. The more you try to control it, the stronger it gets. This is the way the world has taught us to act. Everybody else in the world is like that. This is how we learn growing up that we're supposed to be resisting these kind of things, and it makes growing up real hard. But now you can learn a new way, and the new way is being happy, smile, laugh into what ever arises; make it a game. Make it a fun game, and then you're not caught by it anymore, and then you see these things for what they truly are. Well it's only this feeling of dissatisfaction, or dislike, or heaviness or hardness in your heart; it's only this memory

of something that happened in the past when fear came up. It's all right for it to be there. It really is all right. Your job is to change your view of it, and make it all right to be there.

MN:

14. "Rāhula, develop meditation that is like water; for when you develop meditation that is like water, arisen agreeable and disagreeable contacts will not invade your mind and remain.

TT: 14:16

BV: That's a key word there - and remain. It doesn't mean that agreeable things and disagreeable things aren't going to occur. If you treat everything like the earth, it accepts everything. There's disagreeable things that happen. There's agreeable things that happen. Ok, open up and relax, and then watch it change. See everything in life is impermanent. It's so impermanent, that when you really get deep in your meditation it's boring. You see everything coming up, and going away, and coming up, and going away so fast, but it's everything is in a state of flux; it's in a state of change. Your mind wants to grab on to things and make believe that everything is permanent, especially with any of the hindrances. It really likes to grab on to that restless and make you suffer. And you go through restlessness and... Somebody just did a retreat with me last week. And they went through a period of restlessness that was really driving them crazy. And I talked with him about it and I said: "Well, don't get involved with it, it's just a feeling. It's just some thoughts running through. No big deal." And he said: "But it seems like it's never going to go away." So I started laughing a little bit, and then he started lightening up, and all of a sudden it wasn't there any more. Amazing, isn't it?

That's the thing with the false belief that all of these thoughts and feelings that arise: "That's me. That's who I am." And it takes something that naturally is in a state of flux and tries to make it freeze, like it's in ice, and hold there for a little bit. But as you learn how to recognize when these things arise, the more easily you can see these things, the more you see that you're causing your own

pain, and you can let go of that pain. But just because things are always changing there's always some unsatisfactoriness that's around. There's some dissatisfaction always because your mind wants to make things permanent, and the truth is, nothing's permanent. So it's always a little bit of dissatisfaction floating around about these things. And none of these things that arise are mine, or yours, or anybody's. They arise because conditions are right for them to come up.

Whether you react in the same way you always act with when these things come up or not is your choice. A lot of people especially when you start talking about abhidhamma they say: "Well, where is free will?" I just told you where free will is. Your choice. You want to suffer or not?

You improve your awareness so you stop getting caught, and you start allowing and relaxing and seeing this just as a game and watch how your mind acts with that. It takes this huge mountain of a problem, and it's only about that high. It's just a little bump in the road. But the more you think and ponder about it, the bigger that mountain gets, the more difficult it gets. Now this doesn't mean that you take on five hundred jobs to do all at the same time. But it means that you do what you can in the present moment, and be happy while you're doing it. Real easy. See the water doesn't care whether it's got agreeable or disagreeable content.

MN:

Just as people wash clean things and dirty things, excrement, urine, spittle, pus, and blood in water, and the water is not horrified, humiliated, and disgusted because of that,

BV: The water says: "Ok, it's going to be dirty for a little while. Oh, you're going to be clean for a little while. All right." It has to be all right. It has to be because the truth is when those things are thrown in the water, they're really there. What you do in the present moment dictates what happens in the future. As you learn how to relax into everything that's occurring and smile into it and send some love into it, that should change.

TT: 19:38

I just talked with somebody today that they were going through some marital problem, major problem. "He's always this way." — "She's always this way." Wow. What a terrible thing to do to somebody else. Think that somebody else is always like that. But nobody's always like anything. So after I talked with each one of them for a little while and I got them kind of giggling and kind of happy again, they forgot what the fight was about. See what happened is one person became dissatisfied, there was aversion in their mind, and they had an emotional response to that dissatisfaction, and they took that emotional response and they threw it at the other person, and the other person caught that emotional response and got angry at it, and took their own emotional response and threw it back, and then there was a full blown war that they were going through, and you know, it was ridiculous. It was such a dumb little thing that got blown out of proportion because of all of these emotional reactions to feelings that arise in them and trying to blame the world for having those feelings. But, as you're able to see these old patterns and recognize when this feeling comes up, the feeling of dissatisfaction because that man's talking to my girlfriend and I don't like it; the feeling of jealousy comes up, and she comes back, you give her a dislike. You give her a jealousy and an anger and throw it at her, and she could just as easily been asking directions on how to go someplace as not, but your mind builds it up and you started thinking and pondering about unwholesome things, and your mind inclined towards that and you didn't like it, so then, you start resisting it. You don't like this thing; you want it to stop. How to make the feeling bigger more intense.

You see the instructions in the meditation, I've been giving the same instructions for about nine years, and the final instructions say that the instructions are not just about sitting in meditation. The instructions about what do you do in life when something arises. Smile into it. Be happy. Radiate loving-kindness as many times during the day as you can remember to, and don't criticize yourself when you forget, because that's a form of dislike too. So what do you do

every day when you brush your teeth? Gotta smile any way. May as well put a smile on your mind.

Again I want to remind you, right before you go to sleep every night, you're almost dropping off, make a wish that you wake up with a happy smiling face in the morning. And when you wake up with a happy smiling face, let that be the reminder, continue, don't stop now; you just got it going. What are you doing when you make your breakfast? What's your mind doing? Thinking about this a little bit. Thinking about this. Thinking about that. Ho, hum. Take that time to put love and smiles into what you're making. And monks tend to get very sensitive when it comes to food. I can tell you with one bite if the person that made that food was happy or not, and if I feel that there was unhappiness there, I won't eat any more because it will make my stomach upset. So what do you do with your thoughts? Go to a fast food store? McDonald's? You eat this stuff that gets into the stomach as just like a rock, because you know what the person was thinking when they made that stuff. You know that they weren't particularly happy: "I'm only working here so I can get my money and do the things I want to do and I hate this job."

TT: 24:35

When I was in Malaysia there was different women that wanted to make robes for me, and one lady was angry the whole time she was making that robe. When I put the robe on and it didn't fit... Now a robe is a big sheet, for crying out loud. How can a robe not fit? But, every time I put that robe on...I didn't know who made it; it didn't matter to me, and the colors were all the same, but every time I put that robe on, I was uncomfortable. There was another lady that made a robe, and gee, as soon as I put it on it felt good, really wonderful. Turned into my favorite robe. What's the difference? The difference is the mental energy that was put into it. And what we have to try to learn how to do is put positive mental energy into everything that we're doing. How do you do that? You remember occasionally to smile and get that feeling of loving-kindness going much as you can remember. Be happy. Easy, hun? And what are you doing? What you're thinking and pondering on then, what's the

inclination of your mind? It inclines towards happiness. You're doing something for a friend? Do it with love. You're doing something for an enemy? Do it with love. You want to affect the world around you in a positive way? Do it with love.

Occasionally I listen to the radio and so many times I hear the people on the radio complaining about how bad things are now. They're no worse now than they were five years ago. You want to make them better? Start sending loving and kind thoughts. Somebody comes up to you and they're angry? You don't have to take their anger. You can radiate loving and kind thoughts to them. You know what it feels like to be angry. It hurts. The blood flows to your head; heart starts beating, and a terrible feeling comes over your whole body. So you know that this person real angry, now is the time to practice your compassion. Compassion is seeing another person's pain and loving them anyway. You don't pay attention to their emotion that's coming out of them. Radiate metta to them over and over again. Don't even really pay much attention to what they're saying. They leave the fight. Takes two to tango; takes two to fight. Then you can have a discussion about what is happening, and how can you solve this problem, and you can do it from the space of an open heart and open mind.

Now hindrances are going to come at you all the time, during the day, while you're sitting there's no difference. So you treat everything just like it was water.

I'm going to jump down here because there's one more that he talks about that I really like. And he says:

MN:

17. "Rāhula, develop meditation that is like space; for when you develop meditation that is like space, arisen agreeable and disagreeable contacts will not invade your mind and remain. Just as space is not established anywhere, so too, Rāhula, develop meditation that is like space;

BV: You can radiate loving-kindness to all beings. Doesn't have to be

to one person, but it can be, doesn't matter. In the description in the Karaniya Sutta, and one of the things it says is you protect another like a mother protects her only child. You love another like a mother loves her only child. And it doesn't matter who gets that love. What matters is that you're practicing your generosity, and you're giving that love as much as you can remember.

Ok, I've been talking for a long time. Does anybody have any questions?

S: ~

BV: What's personal is what arises in your mind, but it's not yours. It just arises because of past actions. And the way you direct your mind dictates whether you're going to suffer with it or not. It's not yours personally, but it's just learning how to direct mind so that mind becomes more uplifted. It's not yours personally, because if it's yours personally, your mind grabs on to it and causes tension.

TT: 30:11

Where is a person? Is it their skin? Is it your nails? Is it your hair? Is it your bladder Is it your intestines? Is it your heart? Where is a person?

The Buddha himself no longer has any aggregates all together. In order for this to be, there has to be physical body, there has to be feeling, there has to be perception, there has to be thoughts, there has to be consciousness. None of these things are held together anymore. What's holding them together for us is that urge, that Bhante Punnaji talks about – craving. We want these things to be, so they are. But that's a wrong view; it's not seeing them the way they truly are. And when you let go of that, there is no more glue holding these five things together. And talking about Nibbāna is incredibly difficult because every idea, every thought, every perception that you have about Nibbāna is conditioned. And that's an unconditioned state. A lot of times people would come and they would ask all of these heavy philosophical questions. Is there an earth? Is there not

an earth? Is the Buddha alive or is he dead? Or is he neither? And the Buddha would continually tell people: "Don't think about that stuff." So it's not any of that. Concepts and reality. You get caught on concepts and you don't see reality. Reality is: everything is impermanent; everything is suffering; and that is not self. That's reality. So where's the personality? Where's a person? In that? So you're talking about concepts and it's real fun to think about these kind of things, but the truth is, when you develop your mind so it goes deeply enough you will see more and more clearly how this is just a process occurring, and there's no person there; there's no I there; there's no self there. There's arising and passing away phenomena, that's all. So if you become an arahat you don't have any taints, but, don't hold your breath for that one. (snort). There is a way to experience it. And if you get out of thinking about this stuff and in to more closely how the process works, you will be able to experience this in this life time. You can. You can. There's no personal. But the Lord Buddha said.. That's all concepts. I'm sorry, it's nothing is personal. It's all concepts.

S: ~

TT: 33:49

Where is a person? Is the person anything physical? Ok, it's not the body. What is it? Is it consciousness? No! He never says that. I'm sorry. He would never say that person is a spirit, because everything is arising and passing away continually, and it happens so fast that you can't believe it. So there's birth, death, birth, death, birth, death, birth, death, birth, death. You're trying to grasp things that you need to experience, ok? And you have to get out of the thinking mind. When you get to the second jhāna, no longer are you having discursive thinking. Now it's just clear observation of your meditation object. It's not about trying to think yourself into Nibbāna; it's about trying to observe how this whole process works and keep opening and relaxing and letting it go. Now, as you do this, you go to the third jhāna, you go to the fourth jhāna where your mind has this perfect equanimity. You continue on. You're not doing loving-kindness anymore, I'll change your meditation. But you will be able to

see space as infinite. You will be able to see consciousness as infinite. You'll be able to see nothingness, well that's a really interesting state by the way, it's real interesting. We'll talk about that
s –

Tape ends.

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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Material enclosed by angle brackets in the sutta text is where Bhante Vimalaramsi has substituted his preferred translation.

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