

MN111 Anupada Sutta - One by One As They Occurred

Dhamma Talk presented by Bhante Vimalaramsi
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BV: This particular sutta is my favourite sutta in the Middle Length sayings. You've probably heard me give it... if you went to the website, you've heard me give it a few times. But the thing that makes the Dhamma talks interesting is, it depends on the audience. It's what is said, but it's not ever the same although it has the same text.

Anyway...

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

BV: By the way, that's what this place is called, you know.

MN: ... Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There he addressed the monks thus: "Monks."—"Venerable, sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Monks, Sāriputta is wise; Sāriputta has great wisdom; Sāriputta has wide wisdom; Sāriputta has joyous wisdom; Sāriputta has quick wisdom; Sāriputta has keen wisdom; Sāriputta has penetrative wisdom. During half a month, monks, Sāriputta gained insight into states one by one as they occurred. Now Sāriputta's insight into states one by one as they occurred was this:

3. "Here, monks, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, ...

BV: You remember what being secluded from sensual pleasures is?

ST: ~

BV: Do you know what being secluded from sensual pleasures is?

ST: No.

BV: Ok. When you're sitting in meditation, you close your eyes. The sensual pleasure of seeing is not there. If you hear a sound, and it pulls your attention to it, then let that sound be, relax, come back to your object of meditation, after you smile. So there's the sensual pleasure derived from hearing things doesn't arise. Now, what's the danger in having these things arise, the sensual pleasures? Is, if you hear a sound, say it's somebody singing and it's pleasant to your ear, then you start thinking about how you like it, and you have a little story made up, and that story changes into another story ... into another story ... and then you're a thousand miles away. You don't even know whether you're hearing anything or not because you get so caught up in your thinking and all of these different stories.

Now, this is where the clinging and your habitual tendency has the nature of making your mind distracted away from the present moment. Now, you heard the sound in the present moment, you let it be there, but you don't pay attention to the particulars. You relax, smile, and then come back to your object of meditation. And you do that with all of the sense doors. Being ...

MN: ... {repeats: secluded from unwholesome states,}

BV: Being secluded from unwholesome states means that you have let go of the hindrances: lust - "I like it. I want it."; hatred - "I don't like it. I don't want it."; sleepiness - dullness; restlessness - anxiety; doubt. Any time these hindrances arise, they will take you away from your meditation. That's why they're called hindrances. You will stop meditating at that time, and you'll be caught up in whatever that hindrance happens to be. Now, the thing with the hindrances is, they don't arise only one at a time. They like to kind of gang up on you and kind of kick you around. So you have restlessness arise, and either like or dislike of it. So you have restlessness and the hatred, or restlessness and the lust: "I want it". So the whole thing with the hindrances is that the hindrance is not your enemy to fight with. A hindrance when it arises is going to pull you away from your object of meditation for a period of time, couple of minutes, five minutes, but as soon as you notice that you're not on your object of meditation, then let that hindrance be. Even if you're in mid-sentence, let it be, don't pay attention to it, relax, smile, come back to your object of meditation. The nature of hindrances is they don't go away right away, so your mind bounces back to it.

The whole point of the meditation is to see how mind's attention moves from one thing to another. You're not on your object of meditation then all of a sudden you're caught by a hindrance. There is a process that happens. Ok? What the hindrance is showing you is: 1) where your attachment is, and your attachment is always: "I am that." And it's going to keep coming up as long as you keep that attachment going. Now, this is where the step of relaxing really shines, that relaxing of the tension and tightness. Every time you relax the tension and tightness, right after that there's no thoughts, there's a feeling of openness and calmness. Now, you bring that mind back to your object of meditation. So you're bringing this pure mind, that doesn't have any craving in it, back to your object of meditation, and that improves your awareness of how the process works.

As you start looking a little bit more closely at how your attention went from being on the object of meditation, and sometimes it's only part of one wish before your mind gets distracted; it doesn't really matter. But you start paying attention to how that process works, and you start seeing, before you get really carried away, that there is some other thing that happened first, or right before that. So you let it go, you relax, you come back, and when you see this other thing then you relax right then. What you're starting to do is, you're starting to recognize how the process of dependent origination does work, and with practice, what happens is, that hindrance keeps coming up ... keeps coming up ... and you keep treating it in the same way, but you're doing it with clearer and clearer observation of how the distraction came up, and you let it go, and you relax, come back to your object of meditation. Eventually that hindrance will get so weak that it will just go away by itself. Why did it go away? Because you let go of the personal belief that that distraction was you, it was yours. So every time you let go of the craving, you're letting go of the "I like it", "I don't like it" mind. This is the start of the personal belief that whatever arises is who we are. Every time you let go and relax, you're letting go of that attachment, and your mind is pure. Now, getting into these different states of understanding - that's what jhāna means - you go from one jhāna to the next by letting go of the hindrances whenever they arise.

Now, we've been around long, long, long time and we've developed a lot of bad habits and personality belief that everything that happens to us: "These are my thoughts. These are my feelings." So it takes some while to let go of them, and we have a lot of attachment. Doesn't mean that you have to let go of every attachment, that every one that arises you treat in the same way.

You don't have to go looking for a hindrance, it'll come up all by itself. So the whole thing with getting into these states that the Buddha is talking about for Sāriputta, each one of the jhānas is a different level of understanding of how mind's attention works. Goes deeper and deeper, get's incredibly interesting, and gets to be real fun.

Now, when you get into the first jhāna, you might only be there for a short period of time, and the joy will arise, and the happiness, and the unification of mind; all of these different things that I'll tell you about from the sutta.

There's always a sense of relief when you have let go of a hindrance. It's like you're carrying around a bucket full of rocks on your shoulders that you didn't even know was there, but when you let it go all of a sudden: "Hey ... now I've ... yeah ... this is good stuff!" The reason that you got to experience that relief is because of the insight that this is an impersonal process to be watched, not to be involved with, not to be controlled.

Ok...

MN: ... {repeats: quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states,} Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of seclusion.

4. "And the states in the first jhāna—the thinking, the examining thought, the joy, the happiness, the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; ...

BV: These are called the five aggregates. The five aggregates and the four foundations of mindfulness are exactly the same thing. It's just a different way of talking about it. Now, generally when you start talking about the five aggregates you say body, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness, but here it's contact. The reason that they use the word 'contact' instead of 'body' here, is because when you go into the deeper jhānas, you will lose feeling in your body unless there is contact.

Now, once you get into a jhāna, and you feel like it's time to get up and start walking, don't let your mind 'ho hum' around at all. Stay with your object of meditation and you can carry that jhāna with you through the walking meditation, and through working, and through taking a shower, or going to the toilet, or whatever. This is why we have the work period. It is a very, very valuable part of the meditation because then you start learning that you can carry your meditation with you wherever you go, and you start noticing unwholesome thoughts when they arise. What do you do with the unwholesome thought? Release it, relax, smile. When you're smiling, what are you doing? Bringing up a wholesome object, and bringing that wholesome object to your object of meditation.

So the 6Rs are in what most people call 'right effort'. I call it 'harmonious practice'. There's many, many books written about right effort. I came... I wrote a book about right effort. A lot of times people don't understand, you can't take just one thing and focus on that to the exclusion of the other things around it. When you're practicing right effort, you're practicing all of the eightfold path at that time. Every time you relax, you're practicing the eightfold path at that time. Every time you smile, you're practicing the eightfold path at that time. See how it's interconnected. It's not just take a look at this one thing because you can't just pull out this one thing and expect it to work. It's just like your body; let's pull out an organ, and examine that organ and see how it works. Well, it affects all the other organs too. All the other organs are interconnected with it. Eightfold path is the same way, the four noble truths are the same way, dependent origination is the same way; it's all interconnected. Now, there are times that you can focus on one thing, but you can't focus on it exclusively, forgetting everything else that you know.

Now, when you hear me give a Dhamma talk, I'm giving you... every time I give you a Dhamma talk, I'm giving you the four noble truths, I'm giving you dependent origination, I'm telling you about how the five aggregates work, which means I'm teaching you about the four foundations of mindfulness. I've been to many, many Dhamma talks, not only by some of the early teachers, but also by very famous teachers, and they'll take one part of one word and give an entire discourse on that, and I always walked away with a question in my mind. It didn't seem like it was relevant to the practice that I was doing. There

was one very famous teacher that I practiced with, and he was real big on the four foundations of mindfulness, as most people are, and he took the word 'satipaṭṭhāna' and gave a whole discourse on 'p', 'a'; "pa". And what does that have to do with my remembering to stay in the present moment, and walking really slowly, and watching... it didn't really have much to do with it, but he gave a whole discourse on it. And it was... intellectually it was very satisfying, but I didn't really learn much from it. I mean, I learned intellectual knowledge, but intellectual knowledge is so slow, and it's so coarse compared to direct experience that there's no comparison. So it was a real interesting experience.

But when we're talking about the contact, feeling, perception, volition and mind, quite often I change the word 'volition' to 'thoughts'. And this is part of the volition, don't get me wrong, this is still volition, but this is the part of the clinging where there is the want to control, and the strong identification with those concepts and desires. So when I'm saying 'thoughts', and I talk about the five aggregates - you got body, feeling, perception, thoughts, consciousness - when a feeling arises, our natural habit is to try to control the feeling with the thought, but feelings are one thing and thoughts are something else, and they don't... they're separate, they're not interconnected so much. So the more you try to think the feeling, the bigger and more intense the feeling becomes. Now, we don't try to think pleasant feelings away, we try to think them so that they'll stay, but where it really becomes apparent is when there is a painful feeling that arises. You start thinking about how you don't like it and how you wish it would stop. Every thought about the feeling makes the feeling bigger and more intense. So that's part of your observation, that this is an old habitual tendency that you're doing right there in the present moment, and you need to let go of that because it just causes more suffering. So you let go of the thoughts about it, and you relax. Now, you see the feeling for what it is, and you see the craving wrapped around that feeling. It's a painful feeling and "I don't like it." Any time you try to control a feeling, any time you clamp down around the feeling, the feeling gets bigger and more intense.

So what to do? Allow the feeling to be there. It's only a feeling, it's not even your feeling. You didn't ask it to come up. You didn't ask that cough to arise and see all of those tight muscles around your neck. So you relax, relax those muscles, relax the tightness in your head, in your mind, around your brain. Let it be, relax, now come back to your object of meditation. As you let go of the want to control, you start letting go of the thoughts about the feelings, and you relax into the feeling. Now, the feeling is not as big and intense as it was, but the feeling is going to do one of two things, either it's going to go away or it's not. Either way is fine. If it doesn't go away, your mind gets to such a state of balance that your attention doesn't even get pulled to the feeling anymore; then you just let it be. Ok? Every time you relax and let go of the craving, you are developing more and more equanimity, balance of mind.

Now, we'll go through this part again...

4. {repeats: "And the states in the first jhāna—the thinking and examining thought, the joy, the happiness, the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind;} the enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention— these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: 'So indeed, these states, not having been, come into being; having been, they vanish.' Regarding those states, he abided unattracted, unrepelled, ...

BV: What does that mean, 'unattracted'?

ST: ~

BV: He didn't try to hold onto anything. 'Unrepelled', he didn't try to push anything away. 'Independent', what does that mean?

ST: ~

BV: Independent means, seeing it as impersonal. 'Detached', what's detached?

ST: ~

BV: How would you be connected to it?

ST: By holding onto it.

BV: Whose holding onto it?

ST: Well, you're talking about a distraction or a thought.

BV: I don't care what it is.

ST: ~

BV: Well, it's getting close.

ST: Very close.

BV: Detached means seeing it as being an impersonal process, not attached to the process at all. You're seeing it the way it truly is. 'Free', what's that mean? Free from?

ST: Suffering.

BV: What's the cause of suffering?

ST: Craving ~~

BV: And free from the belief that this is a personal process. 'Dissociated', what's that mean?

ST: ~

BV: That's right, it's seeing it as impersonal. You're not associating with it as being yours at all.

MN: ... 'with a mind rid of barriers'. ...

BV: How is your mind rid of barriers? You're staying on your object of meditation. You don't have any hindrances arise, so there's no barriers to overcome.

MN: ... He understood: 'There is an escape beyond this,' and with the cultivation of that attainment, he confirmed that there is. ...

BV: So after you get through the first jhāna, you know you still got lots of work to do, but it's starting to get interesting.

MN: 5. "Again, monks, with the stilling of thinking and examining thought, Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the second jhāna which has self-confidence, stillness of mind without thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of collectedness.

BV: When you get into the second jhāna, making a wish, verbalizing the wish in your head, causes tension to arise, and it's pretty big. This is where you let go of the tension, and you let go of the verbalizing of the wish. This is 'noble silence'. This is the kind of noble silence that the Buddha was talking about, not the noble silence that people that give retreats are talking about. Because everybody: "Yeah, yeah noble silence. We're not talking to anybody, but we whisper a lot." You know what I mean? If you've gone to any retreats you know that people... they pretty much, when somebody else is around they don't talk, but if they can get somebody by themselves, they'll start talking. And that happens with everybody on retreat. So I don't put a whole lot of restrictions on your talking. I would like that you talk mostly about Dhamma. Let the other chitchat go, let go of the stories, talk about Dhamma. You will teach each other a huge amount because you go through an experience, and you know that one of the other people has gone through an experience that you've heard about, that may be similar. And you start talking with them, and they can teach you a lot, and you can teach them a lot by your observation of that experience. That's what I learned when I did the two-year retreat in Burma. We were teaching each other as much as the Sayadaw was teaching. So as long as you're talking about Dhamma, it's no problem. When you start talking about: "Well, you remember that last time we went and did..." Yeah, let that kind of talk go. Talk about your direct experience, or if you're having a problem that you don't really understand what's happening, you can discuss it with each other or come and talk with me about it.

So one of the things that happens when you get into the second jhāna, outside of the letting go of the verbalization is, you start to gain a real confidence in your ability to see the distractions, and letting go. And that's important to start getting confidence that: "Yeah, this feels like it's the right path". Now, your mind is going to be more still for longer periods of time. When the joy arises, it's going to be stronger and you will actually feel like you're floating in the air, and in fact it can happen, you can float. It's only happened with one student in fifteen-hundred or so, but it can happen, I've seen it happen. I've had a lot of students, especially in Asia, that they would say: "You know, I got into this state, I felt like I was so light that I was going to hit the ceiling, so I opened up my eyes.", and they were sitting on the floor. But that's how light your body feels, and that's how light your mind feels; really feels good.

This kind of joy is called uplifting joy, and it only is experienced by people who practice mental development. The comfort that you feel in your mind and in your body is quite a bit more; feel really comfortable, very much at ease. In one of the commentaries it talks about the difference between the feeling of joy and the feeling of happiness. The feeling of joy is like being in the desert without any water, and in the distance you see an oasis, then joy arises. Now, this joy has excitement in it; really feels good, really nice. But then you go to the oasis and there's a pool of water there, and you jump in the water, and the water is exactly the perfect temperature, and your body goes: "Oh!", and your mind goes: "Oh, that's right!" That's happiness, very comfortable, without the excitement in it. Now, every time joy arises, right after that joy arises there is always tranquility that arises right after that, and after the tranquility, then that comfortable feeling comes over your body and your mind.

Yeah?

ST: ~

BV: You're not noticing is what it boils down to.

ST: ~

BV: Well, that's what we would call 'preliminary joy'. It's starting to come on, but it'll come on stronger as your mind settles down. As you let go of the hindrance and relax into that, the joy will get stronger,

and it'll last for longer. Now, joy can sometimes last for fifteen or twenty minutes, but that doesn't mean you keep your attention on it. It means that you treat it just like any other feeling that arises, and allow it to be, and relax, and come back. But this is a wholesome state, it's not a distracted state. It's only distracted when you start liking it and start grabbing onto it. Then that's an unwholesome state.

MN: 6. "And the states in the second jhāna—the self-confidence, the joy, the happiness, the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; ...

BV: Five Aggregates are still there. The 'enthusiasm': as you start experiencing this more and more, you start getting enthusiastic about your practice because you really do feel like you're starting to get it, and you start feeling more and more confident in your ability to recognize these things and let go, even though you're not in deep states yet.

The 'decision': the decision is what do you keep your attention on, and what is that? Go home, stay in your home base.

The 'energy': now, energy is an amazing thing because if you don't have balanced energy, if you put a little bit too much in, you're going to get restless. If you don't put enough in, you're going to get dull, and that turns into sleepiness in these lower stages. So all the way through all of these levels of understanding, you still need to learn how to adjust the amount of energy that you're putting in, and you don't put the same amount of energy in every time because it's always changing, it's always different. So you need to learn how to little-by-little put a little bit more in if you're starting to dull out, put a little bit less in if you're starting to get anxious and restless.

Now, one of the definitions of sloth and torpor is called 'contraction of mind', and when sloth and torpor happens, your mind just kind of closes in on itself and you start to get dreamy, and then you get full-on day dreams, and as you go then you start: "Why is that happening?" You're not taking enough... you're not using enough energy to stay on your object of meditation. Now, one of the problems with sloth and torpor is, you don't notice that it's a painful feeling. It's kind of pleasurable, and you take it that way. So you start indulging in it a little bit. It's old habit, that's all it is.

Now, when you get sloth and torpor, and you sat at least thirty minutes, then I would suggest getting up, going to your walking space, walk in a straight line, go to the end of your walking space, don't turn around, walk backwards - while you're staying on your object of meditation - and you get to the end of that walk, then walk forwards, and then walk backwards. When you do this, it picks up your energy so that your next sitting, you'll have more balanced energy. That's one of the easiest ways of doing the sitting meditation with the sloth and torpor. Another thing you do if you're really caught by sloth and torpor is, you sit with your back a little bit straighter than normal. Normally it's like this (gesture), straighten it up a little bit more, so it almost causes tightness in your back, but it doesn't; but it's close to it, you notice it. And when your back starts doing this (gesture), you'll be able to see that more easily and you can let go right then instead of getting all the way into the dreamy states and all this other stuff. Ok, so there's two things that you can do for sloth and torpor.

Ok, now you have...

MN: ... mindfulness, equanimity, and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; ...

BV: So all of these different states, you're able to be... you can be able to see all of these different things. They all look different, they all act different. At first you won't be able to see it very clearly. It'll look like one thing just kind of goes into the other ... kind of goes into the other ... and you don't really

recognize it very well, but as you start to get more skilled at observing, then you'll start distinguishing how these different things do arise and pass away.

MN: ... known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood that there is still more to do...and with the cultivation of that attainment, he confirmed that there is.

BV: So you know even when you get into the second jhāna, you want to keep going, you still got more that you need to do.

MN: 7. "Again, monks, with the fading away of joy, Sāriputta abided in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he entered upon and abided in the third jhāna, on account of which noble ones announce: ...

BV: What was it you told me the other day?

MN: ... 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.'

ST: ~~~

BV: Yeah, yeah. Ok. I should write that. You got a pencil?

SK: I Haven't.

BV: Oh, never mind, never mind, never mind.

ST: ~

BV: Abiding pleasure.

ST: ~

BV: This... all of the jhānas are called pleasant abidings here and now because your mind is very pure. You don't have any hindrances, you don't have any craving at that time.

Oh, by the way, the person that I was writing the e-mail to that thought they were an arahat? They just crashed and burned, found out that they still have all of these attachments that are coming up at them, and he apologized for thinking that he was a lot more advanced than he actually was.

ST: ~~~

It's really amazing how mind can grab onto an idea, and you swear up and down that: "This is it! This is it!" And then the pride becomes so strong that anything anybody else says, and it's an obvious mistake that they're making, then they say: "Well, that's just a traditional belief. That doesn't have anything to do with the actual practice." "No friend, it is the practice, this is how it works".

Now, when you get to the third jhāna, the joy is way too coarse a feeling and it won't come up. And it's always kind of comical for me because the joy has been coming up a lot for people, and now it doesn't come up at all. And they come and they start complaining: "I don't have any joy." "Well, you're supposed to have joy all the time?" "But you don't understand, I'm sitting and I don't have any joy." And I say: "Yeah, ok." She (SK) laughs every time because she was one of the people that did that. And

I say: "Well, do you feel really strong balance in your mind?" "Well yeah, I feel really strong balance."
"Do you feel comfortable in your body?" "Oh yeah, it feels just great, but I don't have any joy." "Oh, it's good. Continue. Everything's fine."

Because I don't talk about what jhāna you're in, it doesn't matter. That's only... these descriptions are more for the teacher than they are for the student. Because students are continually thinking that they're a lot better than they really are. So to tell somebody: "Well, you're only experiencing this jhāna", I can wind up with a fight on my hands. "No, no, I'm much deeper than that. I really know this stuff". "Yeah, right". So I don't talk about it.

As you start losing tension in your mind, you start losing feeling in your body, and you'll be sitting and all of a sudden your hands disappear, your shoulder disappears, your leg disappears, and this is good. As you go deeper into the third jhāna, you will start becoming more and more relaxed, and you start understanding very much more about how this whole process works. And you start seeing the individual pieces of dependent origination, not as a concept, but as a reality. You might not see them all in a row every time, but you'll catch glimpses of it more and more, and how they actually work. And this takes it out of the realm of concept and puts it into the realm of direct experience, and it's always nice to see that happen.

Ok...

MN: 8. "And the states in the third jhāna—the equanimity, the happiness, the mindfulness, the full awareness, and the unification of mind; ...

BV: Now, this is one of the stages that you can tell that whether a person is practicing one-pointed concentration or they're practicing tranquility. This is one of the reasons that I'd like to have a motorcycle; come up right beside them and go: "Vroom, vroom!" "Did you hear that?" If they heard it, they're not practicing one-pointed concentration because when people practice one-pointed concentration, their mind becomes so involved in the sign of that - which is basically a white light - that they lose all feeling in their body. Now, this is real interesting because...

MN: 8 {repeats: "And the states in the third jhāna—the equanimity, the happiness, the mindfulness, the full awareness, and the unification of mind;} the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; ...

BV: You have contact here, you have body still, even though you don't feel it because it's starting to disappear. If I come up and I touch you, you would feel that because there's contact right there. Ok? Now, this comes from that letting go of the tension and tightness, always. Always, it comes from the relaxing.

MN: ... these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood there's still more to see...and with the cultivation of that attainment, he confirmed that there is.

BV: So you know you still got more, but now it's starting to get so interesting that you're starting to sit for longer and longer periods of time. And you're sitting for longer periods of time without distractions coming up. Now, while you're sitting in the jhāna, your mindfulness is really sharp. When that starts to fade a little bit, guess who's coming to dinner? You have a hindrance coming up, but now you really start to understand: "Ok, we got a hindrance. Let's work with this one." And it's not a dread, and it's not something that you're trying to control. It's something that's helping you to learn how to go deeper in your meditation. And you're not caught for nearly as long a period of time, and you stay on your object of meditation for longer periods of time. So what happens now is you completely lose all the feeling that

you normally would feel in your body. The only places you have feeling, if you're sitting you would feel bottom of your feet, you generally just feel your head, and there's like nothing else in between.

ST: Can you be in that jhāna and work, walking?

BV: Of course.

ST: ~

BV: Of course.

ST: But, you of course.

BV: OK, the meditation is not about sitting. Meditation is about how your mind's movement occurs. As you calm down, and this is why I was trying to tell you when we were talking about the first jhāna, don't break your sitting and let your mind 'ho hum'. Stay with your object of meditation and you can carry that jhāna right in with you, all the way to the realm of nothingness.

Ok...

MN: 9. "Again, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the fourth jhāna, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

BV: Now, it has no pain nor pleasure. The happy feeling, the comfortable feeling, disappears and the feeling of equanimity takes over. Equanimity is the highest, purest feeling that you have, that you can experience. And what does that mean? It means mental balance. It's really comical to watch people when they're getting into this and they come in to lunch, and all you do is look at them, and go: "How's it going?" "Everything is fine, peaceful, calm." Their mind is such a state of balance that nothing would shake them up. "Oh, your kutī just burned down". "Ok, I need to go to town and get some more clothes then".

MN: 10. "And the states in the fourth jhāna—the equanimity, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, the mental unconcern due to tranquility, ...

BV: Now, what happens when you get into the fourth jhāna is, you really don't feel your body at all, unless there is contact. Now, you've been radiating loving kindness this whole time through your heart. When you get into the fourth jhāna, that disappears; you don't feel your body anymore. Now, what you do is you start radiating loving kindness from your head, and you'll get into a good flow by doing that.

Now, this is where we practice what I call 'breaking down the barriers'. Actually, I don't call it that, it's called that. And what you do is, you go to another spiritual friend, and as soon as you see them in your mind's eye smiling and happy, then you let them go and go to another spiritual friend. You do this for three or four spiritual friends. Then you go to your family members or your really close friends, and with three or four of them, you see them smiling and happy. You go to the next, and you go to the next, like that. Then you start radiating loving kindness towards neutral persons. Some people that you see every now and then. You don't really know them, you don't care much about them one way or the other; they're neutral persons. And when you see them smiling and happy, then you go to the next, then the next, then the next. Then the enemies.

Now, practicing when you were sending loving kindness to the enemy means that you will probably lose your mindfulness, and start thinking about all of the reasons why you don't really want to be doing this, and what a turkey that person is for doing whatever they did. When you see that that's what your mind is doing, then you go back to the neutral person, and you get the loving kindness going very strong, and then you go back to the enemy. And you keep going back until you see the enemy smiling and happy, and you don't feel any animosity towards them anymore, and you do that with as many enemies as you have. Then you come to me and say you've done that.

Then I will change your meditation from a personal kind of meditation, to an impersonal kind of meditation where you start radiating towards all beings. And you do it in the six directions: in front, in back, to the right, to the left, above, below, and then all the directions at the same time. And you feel that love towards yourself, and all beings, at the same time. That gets to be fun, really does, and at first you'll start radiating loving kindness, and you could only feel like you can fill up half the room with the radiation. And then as you go deeper, then the radiation starts getting bigger; and then it fills up the whole room; and then it fills up this piece of property; and then it fills up all of the neighbors around; and then it fills up the whole county; and then it's the whole state; and then the whole country; and then the whole world; and beyond. There is no boundary to the loving kindness. Once you get good at radiating, it will keep going out, and out, and out. And you'll feel it, you'll feel that radiation, and it's good fun.

Ok, go back to...

MN: 11. "Again, monks, with the complete surmounting of perceptions of form, ...

BV: You don't feel your body.

MN: ... with the non-attention to perceptions of diversity, ...

BV: Of change. You don't pay attention to change anymore, except in your meditation.

MN: ... aware that 'space is infinite,' Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the base of infinite space.

BV: Now, when you get to this stage, the feeling of loving kindness changes. Don't tell you what it's going to change to, you tell me. But another thing that happens is, you'll start feeling an expansion. There's no centre-point, but in all directions at the same time, you feel this expansion going out, and out, and it goes on; infinite. Now, this is the state that we call compassion, and this feeling is decidedly different from the feeling of loving kindness. This is the state that the Buddha sat in every morning after he got up from his taking rest. The Mahāyānas, they call it: "He experienced infinite compassion." That's what they say about the Buddha, but actually he was experiencing infinite space while he was practicing compassion. So that's a little bit different. It takes it more out of the realm of concept and puts it into more of the realm of reality when you're talking like that.

Ok...

MN: 12. "And the states in the base of infinite space—the perception of the base of infinite space, the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; the enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. ...

BV: Now, when you get into the arūpa jhāna of infinite space, you're starting to see the impermanent nature of everything, and it's up close and personal. You're really seeing everything changing all the time because the feeling just keeps expanding out and out.

13. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite space, aware that 'consciousness is infinite' Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the base of infinite consciousness.

BV: Now, what happens is, you start seeing, at all of the sense doors, the arising and passing away of each consciousness as it arises. It's like... with your eyes, it's like looking at a movie that's going a little bit too slow and you have that little blip, a little blank spot, and this happens at all of the sense doors. Now, there's no doubting at all that everything is impermanent. You have the idea right now that you're seeing me and you're hearing me at the same time, when in fact it's the seeing consciousness arising and passing away, then the hearing consciousness arising and passing away. But when you get to this state, you see the separateness of all of that, and you see the arising and passing away, and it is like a little blank spot in between each one of these consciousnesses. And this is a time that it gets to be rather tiresome, seeing all of the consciousnesses arise and pass away. This is a form of dukkha isn't it? And you see very, very plainly that there is no controller. You don't ask this stuff to arise, you don't ask to see it in this way, but you are, you are seeing it in this way. So it's a real interesting state.

Now, the feeling of compassion changes again, and it goes from the feeling of compassion to the feeling of joy, very deep kind of joy. It's a different kind of joy than you've ever experienced before. Now, if you come and tell me that you're seeing the individual consciousnesses, then one of the things I will tell you to do is, start looking at the blank spot in between the consciousnesses. Now, all of this stuff is happening fast. (finger snap) That was a hundred thousand consciousnesses arising and passing away. It's a hundred thousand processes of dependent origination arising and passing away, and now you're seeing them individually. As you calm your mind down by letting go and relaxing more and more, you're able to pick up more and more detail of how things arise on their own. This is really fun stuff, but you'd be surprised at the number of people that come and start complaining about it because it is always happening, and it does get tiresome. But as you start focusing on those blank spots in between each consciousness, it starts to last a little bit longer and you start to see more clearly.

And...

15. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite consciousness, aware that 'there is nothing' Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the base of nothingness.

BV: Now mind is not looking outside of itself any more. You see factors arising and passing away still because you still have the five aggregates and all of that sort of thing. This is probably the most interesting state of meditation. It's not the highest and best, but it's the most interesting state that you can get into because before, within each one of these different levels of your understanding, you've been working with energy, and you've been learning how to adjust little bits at a time. Now, this is like walking a tightrope that's made out of spider web, and the slightest little 'uh' and you get restless, and the slightest little lax you get dull, and at that time you're knocked out of the jhāna. Now you have to work with the restlessness and work with the sloth and torpor, actually it's torpor now - it's not sloth anymore - you don't feel sleepy. But you learn to adjust your energy in how you're looking at your object of meditation because you still have an object of meditation.

When you get into the realm of compassion, then you are using compassion, a feeling of compassion, as your object of meditation, and radiating that feeling out. Now, you're doing this all from your mind. Then the joy. Now, the feeling of joy changes to equanimity, and this is stronger equanimity than you've ever felt before. It's really, really good balance. Now, this is when somebody can walk in and I say: "Well,

how's it going?" and "Everything's fine. Just fine." "Want me to cut your arm off?" "Oh, that's fine". Mind is just really, really balanced. Now, when you've been doing your meditation, your mind goes from this (gesture) to once you get into the arūpa jhānas, it starts doing this (gesture), it starts vibrating, and as you continue relaxing, the vibration becomes less, and less, and less.

Now, as you go deeper into your meditation, eventually you get to a state of nothingness.

MN: 16. "And the states in the base of nothingness—the perception of the base of nothingness and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; ...

BV: So you're sitting in the state of nothingness, and I come up and I say: "I need to talk with you." You will hear that. You'll have great balance, but you'll know what I said. It won't necessarily make your mind wobble. Now, you can do your walking meditation while you're in this state. Kind of weird because you feel the contact on the bottom of your feet, and you don't feel anything in between, nothing. Really interesting.

Ok...

MN: ... the enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood there is still more to do:...and with the cultivation of that attainment, he confirmed that there is.

17. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of nothingness, Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

18. "He emerged mindful from that attainment. Having done so, he contemplated the states that had passed, ceased, and changed, ...

BV: Now, what happened when you were in the realm of infinite space, you felt your mind going out like this (gesture). It wasn't your mind, you just had the feeling of expansion. Now what happens is, mind gets so small that you can't really perceive whether it's there or not. Now, this is a state that you would sit in, you would be alert, but because the perception is so slight, it's not there and it's not-not there. That... it seems like you're in a state of dreaming, like you're sleeping, but you're alert, and when you come out of that, then you start reflecting on the things that happened while you were in that state. Things that arose, they were there for a little while, they changed, and they went away. Now, when you get to this state, you are practicing your 6Rs, and they are so automatic you don't even consider them anymore. And even in the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, there's a little bit of movement, a little bit of vibration. As you continue on with your practice, eventually you will get to a place where it stops, everything stops. No more vibration, no more movement at all.

MN: ... 'So indeed, these states, not having been, come into being; having been, they vanish.' Regarding those states, he abided unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated, with a mind rid of barriers. He understood: There is an escape beyond this and with the cultivation of that attainment, he confirmed that there is.

BV: So you still know because there's stuff coming up, but there's more to do.

MN: 19. "Again, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, Sāriputta entered upon and abided in the cessation of perception and feeling. And his taints were destroyed by his seeing with wisdom.

BV: So what are we saying? He got to this state, 'click' - there is no perception, there is no feeling. He'll be in that state for a period of time. When he comes back out of that state, then he has a clean blackboard to see how dependent origination actually arises, and how it actually ceases. He has seen and realized the four noble truths and dependent origination; then he attained Nibbāna. The only way you can attain Nibbāna is through the deep, direct experience of the four noble truths and dependent origination.

MN: 20. "He emerged mindful from that attainment. Having done so, he recalled the states that had passed, ceased, and changed, thus: 'So indeed, these states, not having been, come into being; having been, they vanish.' ...

BV: They're talking about all of the links of dependent origination now.

MN: ... Regarding those states, he abided unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated, with a mind rid of barriers. He understood: 'There is no escape beyond this,' and with the cultivation of that attainment, he confirmed that there is not.

BV: It's such a big "Oh, wow!" to see dependent origination, that it makes your mind go from a conditioned state to an unconditioned state for a period of time. How do you talk about unconditioned states? Every thing, every idea, every word that we use is part of the condition. How do you talk about an unconditioned? I don't know. So I don't... I don't try to figure it out, I don't try to think about it because it's just beyond comprehension.

MN: 21. "Monks, rightly speaking, were it to be said of anyone: 'He has attained mastery and perfection in noble virtue, ...

BV: How did he attain mastery and perfection in noble virtue? Because he let go of craving, and he let go of ignorance, and that's as virtuous as you can get.

MN: ... attained mastery and perfection in noble collectedness, attained mastery and perfection in noble wisdom, attained mastery and perfection in noble deliverance,' it is of Sāriputta indeed that rightly speaking this should be said.

22. "Monks, rightly speaking, were it to be said of anyone: 'He is the son of the Blessed One, born of his breast, born of his mouth, born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma, an heir in the Dhamma, not an heir in material things,' it is of Sāriputta indeed that rightly speaking this should be said.

23. "Monks, the matchless Wheel of Dhamma set rolling by the Tathāgata is kept rolling rightly by Sāriputta."

That is what the Blessed One said. The monks were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

BV: One of these times, I'm going to get a recording of the Hallelujah Chorus, and I'm going to find some way that I can really be sneaky and turn it on.

So this gives you more and more an idea of what the practice actually entails, and the importance of being able to see how the process is working. And as you become more alert and calm, then you'll start seeing more and more, and it gets to be more and more fun. It's oh so much better doing a practice where you let go of painful feeling instead of: "Go right into the middle of it and try to see it's true nature." You can do that. You can have a feeling arise, you can go right in the middle of that, and you can see it's true nature with a mind that's just like a rock; not helpful. You don't really learn anything when you do it that way. The way you see it is by letting go of the identification with it and getting equanimity. That's how you let go of the suffering.

Any questions?

Why don't we share some merit.

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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