

MN 111 Anupada Sutta - One by One As They Occurred  
Presented by Ven Bhante Vimalaramsi on 4th March 2008  
At Dhamma Dena Vipassanā Center, Joshua Tree, California

BV: Tonight I'm going to give my favorite discourse. This sutta is by far and above the sutta that I like best because there is so much pertinent information that you need about the practice. I've been talking a lot about the practice. This particular sutta shows where the practice goes, and it shows it in a very precise way.

So...

MN 111:

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

BV: All of these different qualities that he's talking about for Sāriputta, who was his first chief disciple, he was second to the Buddha in wisdom. If you'll remember last night, I said anytime you hear about 'wisdom' in the suttas, it's talking about seeing, knowing, and understanding dependent origination, and you will be able to see that at the end of this sutta also.

MN:

... 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:

BV: So, just so some of you that are staying here for the whole retreat, you get to know that you have a chance. He did it in two weeks, you can do it in two weeks. Ok? I'm not kidding. Now, the insights into states one by one as they occurred is a very interesting state because an awful lot of people have the idea that when jhāna arises for them, that all of these things happen at the same time, and they don't. They happen one thing at a time, and you'll get to see that more clearly in just a moment.

MN:

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

BV: What does being secluded from sensual pleasures mean? When you're sitting in meditation, you close your eyes. The sensual pleasure of seeing does not arise; you're secluded from that. If you hear a sound, you hear the sound and you come back to your object of meditation; you're being secluded from the sensual pleasure of hearing. It's the same with smell, and taste, and physical touch, and thinking. Being secluded from sensual pleasures means letting go of thinking. Why? Thinking is part of the restless mind. You can't get into these states if you have a hindrance. The hindrance blocks you from getting into these states.

MN:

... secluded from unwholesome states, ...

BV: How are you secluded from unwholesome states? You don't have any hindrances arising. That's how you're secluded from unwholesome states.

MN:

... 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— ...

BV: Now jhāna, if you'll remember, means a stage of understanding. As you go deeper into your meditation, your understanding changes in how the process of dependent origination works. You'll start seeing this more and more clearly as you go deeper. Generally speaking, the first three jhānas, you don't really... you're not able to recognize in any kind of precise way how the dependent origination works. Once you get into the fourth jhāna and above, then it starts becoming much more clear, much more alert to how these different things arise. You hear me talk a lot about dependent origination because this is the key to the meditation, just like letting go of craving is a key to the meditation. The way you become awakened, and the only way you can become awakened, is by understanding how dependent origination works. It's that understanding that leads to the awakening mind that leads to Nibbāna.

Nibbāna has always been presented as some kind of mystical, magical state that everybody wants to try to get, and yeah, it's a real good one. Now, what is the

definition of Nibbāna? 'Ni' is a negative, just like 'du' in 'dukkha' is a negative; 'bāna' means 'fire'. So Nibbāna means 'no more fire'. Now, what does that mean? Craving is the source of the fire. So when you have no more fire, that means you have no more craving arising in your mind. When you don't have any craving in your mind, that's the third noble truth, that's the cessation of suffering, that's the cessation of craving. So you see how it's all kind of interconnected. And the only way you can get to that attainment is through your understanding. It becomes very, very clear after a period of time, and you'll find out more in a little bit.

MN:

4. {repeats: "And the states in the first jhāna—} the thinking and examining thought, the joy, the happiness, the unification of mind; ...

BV: Now, these are the beginning stages. This is what happens when you finally let go of a hindrance. You feel a strong relief. Right after the relief you feel joy arise. The joy is going to be there for a period of time. It will fade away, then you'll feel very strong tranquility, and you will feel very much at ease in your body and in your mind. And your mind is very unified, your mind just stays on your object of meditation very easily. Now, the thinking and examining thought, these can be some slight distractions. Your mindfulness isn't as good as it will be later. So you can have a distraction, you can have a thought, but you'll catch it very quickly. You're not going to get caught in this thought for five or ten minutes. It's going to be just one thought, and then you'll see it, you let it go, you relax, and you come back to your object of meditation. So this is what the experience of being in the first stage of understanding is like. Every time you let go of a hindrance, every time you see little things arise, because that hindrance pulls you away, when you see these little things, you are teaching yourself more and more about dependent origination. You might not recognize it at first, but you'll start hearing me talk about it more and more on the retreat, and you'll start to understand it a little bit.

Ok, now the other things that happen in the first jhāna are...

MN:

... the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; ...

BV: Now, this is the five aggregates: contact - with body; feeling - pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling, neither pleasant nor painful feeling; perception - part of the mind that puts names on things, you look at this, you say "this is a book", the part of your mind that says "book" is the perception mind, and this has

memory in it also; now the volition - quite often in the lower jhānas, I change the word 'volition' to 'thoughts' because that's most relevant at that time; and the consciousness or mind. Now, these five aggregates and the four foundations of mindfulness are one in the same thing, and we have a little chart that she's (SK) going to get right now that will show this. So basically what we're saying right here, right now, is that while you are in the jhāna, you are experiencing all of the foundations of mindfulness.

Ok, then we go on...

MN:

... the enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; ...

BV: They didn't all happen at the same time, they happen separately.

MN:

... 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.' ...

BV: Now, what are we talking about right here? We're talking about impermanence, we're talking about how all of these things will arise for a period of time and then they vanish, and you get to see this while you are in the jhāna. Now, what makes this really unique is that when you start practicing one-pointed concentration, you get a 'sign', or you get a 'countersign' and then you get the 'sign', I don't remember which way it goes first anymore, and the 'sign' is like a shiny disk that comes up in your mind, and you start paying attention to that. When you're paying attention to that, how can you pay attention to these other things when they arise?

Now this: 'the enthusiasm, the decision, the energy, the mindfulness, equanimity, and attention', plus the four foundations of mindfulness or the five aggregates, plus all the jhāna factors, these are happening one thing at a time as they occur. When you have a sign arise in your mind, you're not paying attention to these things, you're just keeping your mind on the sign. One-pointed concentration, when you get to a certain place, that's called in Pail... they call it 'upacāra samadhi'. It's called in English 'neighborhood' or 'access' concentration. It's the stage right before quote the 'one-pointed absorption jhāna' occurs. When you experience this with one-pointed concentration, this access concentration, it

suppresses the hindrances. It stops the hindrances from arising. It's not that you consciously suppress them, it's the force of the concentration itself that suppresses them.

Now, a lot of people that are practicing different kinds of meditation, they seem to think that this is really good because you have a very pure mind at that time. You have a pure mind at that time, that's true, but when your concentration wavers, your mindfulness wavers a little bit, guess what comes to visit? The hindrances come, and they come big-time, and then the teacher will tell you: "Well, you have this big hindrance and you can't let it go, so you push your tongue against the roof of your mouth and grit your teeth and crush mind with mind." Well actually, that does not lead to peace, calm and harmony. So what we have to understand, and this is a major point, is that there are two different kinds of jhāna, and they lead to different end results. What I'm teaching you right now is the samatha-vipassanā jhāna. It's not absorption jhāna, this is an aware jhāna. You have to be aware to be able to see all of these different things when they arise. Right? You can't have your mind so focused just on one thing that you don't see anything else. If you do that, then you're not following what the sutta says.

Ok...

MN:

... Regarding those states, he abided unattracted, ...

BV: He didn't try hold onto them.

MN:

... unrepelled, ...

BV: He didn't try to push anything away.

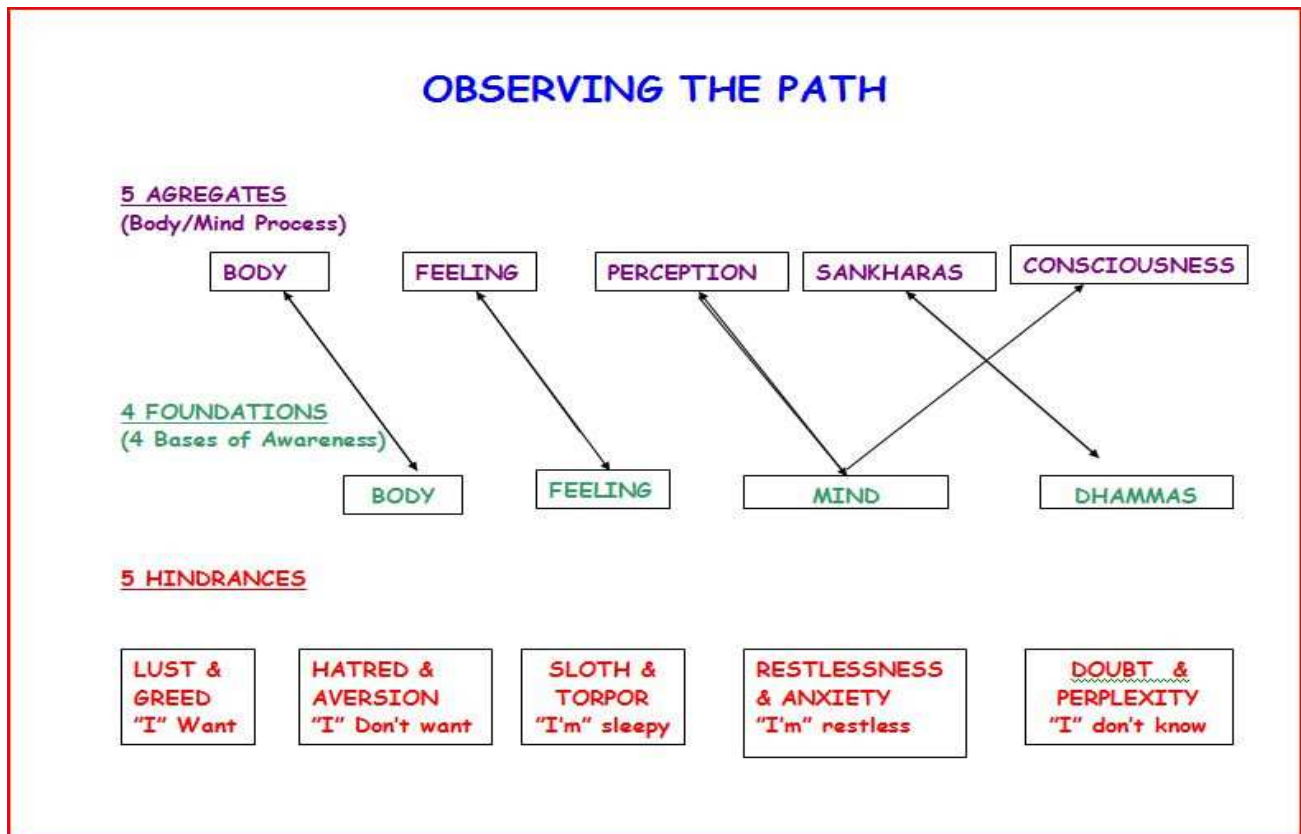
MN:

... independent, detached, free, dissociated, ...

BV: This is all talking about how you see these things as an impersonal process. You're not taking anything personally: "It's not 'me'. It's not 'mine'. It's not 'I'." It's just *this* that's happening right now, and that's ok, and you lovingly accept what is happening in the present moment, even when there is a very strong liking of the joy and the happiness and all of those kind of things. If you try to hold onto them

and you start identifying with: "I like this. This great. I want more of it." Fastest way to make it disappear. You're experiencing it.

Ok. Now, these charts that are being passed out right now, I think the top one is the five aggregates, and the next one down is the four foundations of mindfulness.



Now, you see when you get to perception, how the arrow goes to consciousness. So you have the consciousness or mind going to the four foundations of mindfulness, consciousness or mind. The volition or thoughts are the dhammas, and you'll get to experience that when I give the Satipatthāna Sutta. Now, every time your mindfulness weakens, guess who comes to dinner? The hindrances. That's why I put the hindrances down at the bottom. So every time you have a hindrance arise, don't treat the hindrance like it's an enemy to fight with. The hindrance is there to help you to let go of an attachment, and as you let go of an attachment, that's how you go from one jhāna to a deeper stage, that letting go of the hindrance when it comes up. The hindrances will keep coming up in between each of the jhānas, and they're helping you to get deeper, and they're helping your understanding to become more clear. So this shows you how the five

aggregates and the four foundations of mindfulness are actually one and the same thing, and that's important to realize in this particular sutta.

Ok...

MN:

... {repeats: Regarding those states, he abided unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated,} with a mind rid of barriers.

BV: What is a barrier? A hindrance.

MN:

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

BV: So he got into the first jhāna and he said: "Ok. This is all good and well, but there's still more to do."

And...

MN:

5. "Again, monks, with the stilling of thinking and examining thought, Sāriputta entered and abided in the second jhāna which has self-confidence ...

BV: Now, the self confidence comes when you start... you start really having the feeling that you're on the right path. It just feels right and you start to gain confidence that you know how to handle the hindrances when they arise; you know what to do with these kind of distractions; you don't get some for such a long period of time; and you start to get more confident. Now, the confidence not only happens while you're sitting in meditation, but you start to have more and more self-confidence in your daily life. You start recognizing more clearly the hindrances when they come up, and that's when you have a good chuckle and let it go.

MN:

... the stillness of mind without the thinking and examining thought, with joy and happiness born of collectedness.

BV: Now, what happens in the second jhāna is that you are going along and everything is going very well, and you verbalize the wish, and all of a sudden you

start feeling tension and tightness in your head, and you think: "Ah, something's not right here. I don't know what." So you try to verbalize the wish and then you start to get tension and tightness in your head. The second jhāna is where noble silence actually begins. You're always told that noble silence means: "Don't talk during the retreat", but everybody is talking. Right? They're talking in their mind. Now is the time to start letting go of that. Now you just feel the wish, and bring that feeling into your heart, and surround your friend with that feeling, and radiate that feeling to them. So this is where you start gaining more and more confidence that: "Ah, this is what the Buddha is talking about. It really happens this way." And it starts to get to be real fun.

MN:

6. "And the states in the second jhāna—the self-confidence, the joy, the happiness, the unification of mind; ...

BV: The joy you experience in the second jhāna is stronger than the joy you experienced in the first jhāna. You start feeling - well, let's go back, start, that's the start - there's five different kinds of joy. Three kinds of joy can be experienced by anyone at any time when the conditions are right. Two kinds of joy are only experienced through mental development.

The first kind of joy is like goose bumps, and it's there for just a moment and then it passes away. You can get goose bumps when somebody says something you really like, you can get goose bumps from seeing a beautiful sunset, whatever.

The next kind of joy is like a flash of lightening. It's there, it's real intense, and then it fades away fairly quickly. Now, one of the advantages of having joy arise is always after the joy, you feel a sense of tranquility. You feel very peaceful and calm, and you feel this with this kind of joy. Sometimes you can get this flash-of-lightening joy when you make up your mind about something, and you know it's right, and you feel real happy about it, and it's real intense, and then you feel real calm. Ok?

The next kind of joy is like standing in the ocean, and you feel this wave of joy come over you and: "Ah! That's great stuff." And then another wave of joy comes over you. When that joy fades away, you feel very tranquil for a period of time, fifteen, twenty minutes. It's real nice. Now, the next two kinds of joy only happen through meditation.



The next kind of joy is called 'uplifting joy', and this is where you feel very light in your mind and very light in your body. It's a real happy feeling, and there's excitement in it: "Ah, this is great stuff! This is what I came to meditation for. I like this. This is good." When that joy fades away, you feel very peaceful and calm, and right after that you feel very much at ease in your mind and in your body.

Now, the feeling 'at ease' is what the Buddha called happiness, he called it 'sukha'. The difference between joy and sukha is, the joy is... it has more excitement in it. Now, in one of the commentaries it says: "Imagine yourself walking in the desert and you haven't had any water for a long time, and you see an oasis." Just seeing that oasis, your mind starts to get real joyful and happy, and the closer you get, the happier you get. And then you get to this pool of water, and you jump in the water, and the water is exactly the right temperature, and your mind goes: "Ah!" And your body goes: "Ah!" That's happiness. So the joy has excitement in it. The happiness is more balance, more at ease. It doesn't have the jumpy, ecstatic high that the joy has.

The last kind of joy is called 'all pervading joy'. That's when the joy kind of bubbles out of everywhere - your toes, your fingers, your knee, your back, your head - everywhere. Now, this is not quite... doesn't have quite the strong excitement in it. This is the 'enlightenment factor' of joy.

Now, when you see the Buddha images, and you see [them] with their half-closed eyes. There's a lot of stories about why the Buddha has half-closed eyes, but that is the artist trying to tell you that the Buddha was experiencing this all pervading joy at that time. It's weird when it happens. You're sitting and you have this joy, and it's kind of a peaceful, nice, happy feeling. Now all of a sudden your eyes open up, then you go: "Why did that happen?" So you close your eyes, and then your eyes open up: "Wow! Why did that happen?" So you close your eyes, and they open up again. Then you say: "Huh, if you want to be open, stay open. I don't care. [I'm] not going to fight with it." That is because of this kind of joy. It happens that way.

Generally speaking, I don't recommend for people to sit with their eyes open because if there's any movement that happens, your eye goes to it, and where your eye goes there goes your mind, and all of a sudden you're flying off a thousand miles away. When this kind of joy happens, you have enough balance in your mind that it doesn't really affect you too much if there is movement. Ok. Now, your mind stays on your object of meditation for longer period of time, and

it's no effort at all for your mind to stay on your object of meditation. It just wants to be there, it wants to be still, and at ease, and radiating the loving kindness. When you get into the second jhāna, you start to get into a flow. You start feeling the flow more and more easily. Sometimes it flows to you, sometimes it flows away. Most of the time it flows out.

MN:

... the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; ...

BV: Now, again we have the five aggregates, which is the four foundations of mindfulness, in the jhāna while you're experiencing the jhāna.

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. ... and with the cultivation of that attainment, he confirmed that there still is more to do.

7. "Again, monks, with the fading away as well of joy, Sāriputta abided in equanimity, mindful and fully aware, still feeling happiness with the body, he entered upon and abided in the third jhāna, on account of which noble ones announce 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.'

BV: Now, what happens in the third jhāna is the joy doesn't arise anymore, but you feel really comfortable, you feel at ease, and you feel this balance of mind. And this is always kind of a comical thing because a lot of students when they first start experiencing getting into the jhānas, they come and [I'll] say: "Well, how's your meditation doing?" You say: "Ah, it's doing good." "You still experiencing joy?" "No. I don't have any joy." I say: "Ok. Do you feel balance in your mind?" "Yeah, but I don't have any joy." "Do you feel very clear and alert?" "Yeah, but I don't have any joy." "Do you feel really comfortable?" "Yeah." Ok, continue. Everything is going fine."

As you get into the third jhāna and as you begin to relax more, you start losing tensions in your mind. As you lose tension in your mind, you lose tension in your body, and you stop being able to feel your body very much. [You'll] be sitting and all of a sudden you notice: "I don't have any legs. My arm has disappeared." I... one student I... she was great, she came to me complaining about it. She said: "You know, it feels like my head is not on my body anymore. It's just sitting on the floor." And I said: "Great!" Now, then this is... gets to be real interesting.

MN:

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

BV: Contact is still there, body is still there, but if I walk up and I would to touch you, you would feel it, but your mind doesn't shake so much, your mind has equanimity in it. Now, when people experience the third jhāna with absorption concentration, they don't have a body, they don't feel anything, and it's so radical that I can come up with a stick and hit you really hard on top of the head, and you wouldn't even know that that happened. I could come up to you and I could take a gun right by your ear and you wouldn't hear it. You don't know that these things are happening. Where is the full awareness when you're in absorption concentration. I can take your limbs, I can take your arms and put them over your head, and they'll stay there for a little while, and then they'll just kind of fade down by themselves until they touch something, and then they'll just stay there.

Now, that's what happens when you're in absorption concentration, but when you're in the samatha-vipassanā jhāna, you have full awareness. You know when somebody touches you. If I walk up to you and I say something, you would hear it, and then you can choose whether to react or not. So this is another major difference between the absorption concentration and the samatha-vipassanā jhāna. I won't call it concentration because the word 'concentration' is so misunderstood. I call it 'collectedness' or I call it 'jhāna', but I won't call it 'concentration'. Concentration is a four letter word. Well, you got to add a few letters I guess, but you get the idea of what I'm saying.

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. ... and with the cultivation of that attainment [sic], he understood that there is still more to do.

BV: And with the getting of the third jhāna, he confirmed that there is still more. You know when you're in the third jhāna. You know that there's still more going on, there's still more that you have to do.

MN:

9. "Again, monks, 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: When you get to the fourth jhāna, the feeling of loving kindness disappears at your heart. You will start radiating loving kindness from your head. When you get to the fourth jhāna is when I will start giving you different meditation. Now, all this time you stayed with the same spiritual friend. When you get to the fourth jhāna, then I'll say: "Ok. Now I want you to change to another spiritual friend. When you see that spiritual friend smiling and happy, then change to another spiritual friend. After you see them smiling and happy then ...

... I want you to choose a family member or a real close friend, and pick three or four of these people, and when you see them smiling and happy, go to the next. After you do all of the family members then ...

... we go to the neutral persons, and a neutral person is, it's a clerk at a store that you go to. You know them, you might say a few words to them, but you don't know them very well. Say you ride the same bus to work every day, you see the same people on the bus, that they would be considered neutral persons. So you pick three or four neutral persons. When you see them smiling and happy then you go to the next then the next. After you go to the neutral person then ...

... we go to the tough stuff; the enemies, the people that you don't like, the people that have caused you problems in the past. And you start sending loving kindness to them, and before long you're thinking about all the things they did that you don't like and how you really wished them not-happiness. So you go to the neutral person and you see them smiling and happy. You get the loving kindness really going strong again, then you go back to the enemy. And you keep bouncing back and forth until you see that enemy smiling and happy, and you don't have any more animosity towards them. And you do this with as many enemies as you have.

This is as high as loving kindness will take you. It will take you to the fourth jhāna. Now, I'm kind of a crafty monk, and I don't generally tell people when they're practicing loving kindness meditation that what I'm actually teaching is not just loving kindness meditation. I'm teaching you the Brahma Vihāras.

Ok. Now we go to more about the fourth jhāna.

MN:

10. "And the states in the fourth jhāna—the equanimity, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling,

BV: The neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling doesn't mean you won't have painful feeling arise. It means that it won't make your mind shake. You just have this balance, this balance of mind. When it gets strong and you have this balance of mind all of the time, the first few times that it happens, you walk around going: "Oh, what relief." There's just so much relief in having this balanced mind. You don't have emotional upsets. You don't have some of your old habitual tendencies of doing things. Now you have this equanimity and it's just nice.

MN:

... the mental unconcern due to tranquility, ...

BV: You have very strong tranquility at this point and it's nice. Now, one thing that I haven't told you is that you can be in any one of these jhānas while you're walking, while you're taking a shower, while you're sitting, while you're eating, doing your daily activities. You can be in any one of these jhānas, but it takes strong mindfulness, takes practice to be able to do that. When you get to the fourth jhāna, because you have lost pretty much all of the feeling in your body unless there is contact, you get up and you start doing your walking meditation: it's a little bit strange at first because you feel the bottom of your feet touching the ground and you feel your head, but you don't feel anything in between. Kind of weird, unless a breeze comes up and it blows your clothes a little bit, you would feel the contact of that. Unless there's contact, you won't have any feeling arise in your body, and you can take this meditation with you all of the time. One of the reasons that we have the work period is so that you can keep your meditation going, and that can help you when you get back into your daily life, so that you have more balance in your life all of the time.

MN:

... the purity of mindfulness, and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; ...

BV: Now, there's an awful lot of talk with people that are doing mindfulness of breathing that when you get to the fourth jhāna, you don't feel your breath any more, and that's not true when you're doing this kind of meditation. When you're doing absorption concentration, the breath doesn't go through your nostrils and

through your lungs any more, it goes through your ears. So you don't feel that so much. I've been wrestling and talking and fighting with an awful lot of people that tell me that the fourth jhāna: you just completely lose your body, and that way you don't feel anything that happens in your body from there on out, but does that agree with what I just got through reading? You have contact, feeling, volition... perception, volition, and mind. That means you have a body, and when there is contact there is feeling, and when there's feeling there is perception.

So when people are teaching absorption concentration, what they're actually teaching is what the Buddha practiced when he first [sic] left the home life, and he started practicing meditation with meditation teachers. He was practicing absorption concentration because that's the only kind of concentration that was practiced... meditation practice that was being done. So when he came up with the revelation of relaxing, that changed the end result of the meditation. Your understanding... your concentration didn't go so deep, you didn't get absorbed in anything. You started developing this aware jhāna where you can see the four foundations of mindfulness when they arise, when you can see the enthusiasm, and energy, and mindfulness, and equanimity, and your attention. You can see all of these things when they arise. When you have absorption concentration, you do not. It's just that simple because your mind is glued to one thing and one thing only. Now, I don't have anything against absorption concentration. People that practice absorption concentration can gain great benefit from their practice. It's just that there is a difference between the end results of the practice, and one leads to one thing and one leads to another.

And I'm what you might call a very... a super ordai.. or a super... ah...

ST: Mundane?

BV: Hmmm?

ST: Mundane?

BV: No, no , no...

SK: It was something. I remember that from the books.

BV: I'm a super-orthodox monk because I'm going by what it says here. I'm not adding anything. I'm not subtracting anything.

ST: ~~~

BV: And almost all of the other monks that are teaching meditation are going by what it says in commentaries, and commentaries... I write commentary. I'm giving you commentary right now, and it's what my opinion is of what I think the Buddha was talking about, but I'm reading to you what the Buddha was talking about, and then giving you the commentary. Most monks don't do that. They won't give you the sutta and then tell you of the commentary what it means because it won't agree with what they're teaching. So they just give the commentary without giving the sutta first. That makes me an outlaw monk because I am so orthodox.

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 is more:...and with the cultivation of that attainment, he confirmed that there is.

BV: Now, this particular part of the suttas... something that I had, a fairly long and engrossing conversation with the translator of this book because the way that it's worded right now is very, very misleading, and I'll read it to you now so you get an idea.

MN:

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

BV: Now, that's saying right there that now you don't have any perception of form at all.

MN:

... with the disappearance of perceptions of sensory impact, ...

BV: It's saying that there is no sensory impact, but when you get down here and it starts talking about what you experience in this state, it says that there's contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind. Now, how do we justify that? In a sub-commentary it says - and the sub-commentary quite often goes back to the original teaching of the Buddha, it doesn't necessarily agree with the commentary - it says: "With the complete surmounting of perception of gross form." Which means that you still have form; you don't feel it unless there's contact. And "The disappearance of gross perceptions of sensory impact." Somebody can come along and they can slap you, and you would feel it, but you won't react to it because of

the equanimity and the depth of your practice, but you'd know it happened. Somebody would come right by with a motorcycle that doesn't have a muffler on it. You would hear that, but it won't make your mind react because the equanimity is so strong. So when I talked to him about that, he kept on quoting to me in the Pāli and saying: "This is what the Pāli says." And I kept on saying: "I don't care what the Pāli says. This is misleading." Because that goes back to the fourth jhāna when people are talking about: "There is no more breath at the fourth jhāna." See, with the contact, that proves that there still is... there still is contact with the breath coming through the nose. There's still contact of the abdomen going up and down. There's still contact of the lungs still working. You know that you're breathing. So what we came up with was, he was going to leave it like this, but I told him he really needed to make a very strong footnote saying that: "This does not mean the obliteration of all perceptions of form or sensory impact. It means the letting go of the gross perceptions of form and sensory impact."

MN:

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

Now, what happens after you get to the fourth jhāna is you keep going along, and your mindfulness slips for some reason, and then you have a hindrance arise, but it doesn't... it's not earth shattering any more. It's just another thing to watch, and let go of, and relax. And then there is a deepening of the practice when you let go of that hindrance, and you start experiencing an expansion in all directions at the same time. It's just feeling of getting more and more spacious, and it just keeps moving out and out, but there's no center-point, and the feeling of the loving kindness changes. You have to tell me how it changes, I'm not going to tell you, but it's different.

Now, this is where the Buddha, he practiced every morning getting into what a lot of the Mahāyāna Buddhists say was 'infinite compassion', he practiced infinite compassion every morning. Actually, what he was practicing was infinite space and compassion. So the feeling changes, and that expansion feeling all over, and it's really quite nice. Now, you have gone from what is called the rūpa or material jhānas and you are starting to experience what is called the arūpa jhānas, the immaterial jhānas.

Yes?



ST: Does this happen as well if you practice mindfulness of breathing? Is that like the same experience as if you...

BV: The experience is a little bit different, but... see, the mindfulness of breathing, if you're doing that, the experience of infinite space doesn't have that feeling of compassion with it. So it's a little bit different that way, but you will still experience expansion, and you'll experience all of the jhānas the way that it says here, but it won't have the Brahma Vihāras in it, which means it's going to be a little bit different, and it doesn't have that feeling in it as much.

Ok?

ST: Yes.

MN:

12. "And the states in the base of infinite space—the perception of the base of infinite space and 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. And he understood: with the cultivation of that attainment, there's still more to go.

BV: So even though you're getting into these very high and subtle states, you still understand there's more, there's more to do, you know that. Now, what happens is you're going to be in that jhāna for a period of time, and it's very nice and it's very pleasant, and then for whatever reason, one reason or another, your mindfulness slips and guess who comes to dinner? The hindrance comes again, so you get to work with that. Now, the hindrances when they start coming, when you're in the arūpa jhānas, they're not near as big and gross and hard to work with because you're understanding of how this process works more and more. You start seeing that there's a feeling that arises, and right after the feeling there's this tension and tightness, and right after that there's some thoughts about it, and right after that your habitual tendency, and you start seeing this, you start seeing this as a process. This is dependent origination. Ok? So you're starting to see more and more clearly when you get into these states.

MN:

13. "Again, monks, 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: Infinite consciousness is a real interesting state. Now, when you get in the arūpa jhānas, you start seeing impermanence, suffering, and the impersonal nature of things very clearly. They are not the end result of the practice, but you will see these characteristics very clearly. When you get to the space... get to the state of infinite consciousness, what happens is you're going to, at all of the sense doors, you're going to see individual consciousnesses arise and pass away. (Finger snap) that was a million arising and passing away of consciousness. Your mind gets so sharp you're going to see individual consciousnesses, and it's a little bit strange because as you deeper into your meditation, it's like watching a movie that the film is going too slow and you see individual pictures, but there's a black spot in between, a blank spot, and you see that. And it happens with contact, it happens with hearing, it happens with sight, it happens with smells, it happens with tastes, and it starts to get tiresome. You see, there's this constant change happening all the time, and there's nothing you can do about it. There's nobody home. You didn't ask this to happen, it just happened all by itself. You're seeing the impersonal nature of this very, very clearly. Real interesting, real fun. And like I said, after a while it gets tiresome seeing that, so what you do is you start looking at the blank spots in between the consciousnesses, and as you focus on that, then other things start happening.

MN:

14. "And the states in the base of infinite consciousness—the perception of the base of infinite consciousness and unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; ...

BV: You still have these things even in this subtle state. You still have the five aggregates.

MN:

... the enthusiasm, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; ...

BV: What a brilliant mind Sāriputta had to see this.

MN:

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

BV: So he still knew that there's still more, but now it's starting to get fairly subtle.

MN:

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

BV: Now, what happens is, you still lose your mindfulness after a period of time, you get the hindrance, you start using the hindra... you letting go of the hindrance. When you let it go, you get into a space where mind is not looking outside of itself anymore, and you say: "Well, I feel kind of dumb." You come talk to me about: "You know, there's nothing to watch. There's nothing." "Well, there's actually a lot to watch, but there's nothing outside of mind anymore." After you've let go of seeing all of those consciousnesses arise and pass away, now we're going to the subtler state. Now, in the state of infinite consciousness, the feeling of compassion changes to a feeling of joy. It's a real happy feeling without the excitement in it. This is the enlightenment factor of joy again, the all pervading joy.

As you start looking at those spots in between the consciousnesses, and you experience the realm of nothingness, the feeling of joy fades away and you feel real, real strong equanimity, and it gets so strong that people come in and I say: "Well, how's your meditation going?" "Everything is fine." "How's your mind?" "Oh, it's balanced. Everything is fine. Good." No excitement at all. The mind is so balanced. "Ah, did you know that you have a snake biting you on your leg?" "Oh, no. I didn't know. Fine, just fine. Everything is good." It's not quite like that, if it gets you the idea.

Now, this particular state of the meditation is really, really fun and interesting because even though there's nothing there, you still have the five aggregates that can arise. You still have some other things. You still have the enlightenment factors that you can work with, and you're learning how to balance your attention so that you can see very easily and clearly how things arise and pass away. The aggregates arise and pass away, you still will hear sounds, you still can have feeling, contact, and you start learning the more subtleties of learning how to tweak the energy that you need to put into watching, and it really gets to be kind of a fun experiment, and if you put too much in, you start to get restless, and if you don't put enough in, you start to get dull. You won't get sleepy now, but you'll get dull.

When you get to this state, like I said before, your mind starts to wobble. You'll see that very, very clearly and you'll start to notice things that happen before your mind starts wobbling, and when you're able to see those things then you're starting to progress very nicely. So even in the realm of nothingness, you have contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind. You have the five aggregates.

Now, this is as far as the Brahma Vihāras can take you because when you start getting into the next stage of the meditation, it gets difficult to tell whether there's anything there or not. You won't have the five aggregates arise and be able to recognize them, and I'll show you in just a moment.

MN:

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

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

BV: So what we're talking about here is before there was an expansion feeling of mind, now it gets so small and so subtle that you can't really tell whether it's there or not, and this is a state that sometimes people will come and tell me that: "You know, it felt like I was asleep, but I wasn't sleeping." And what I generally tell people to do is after you come out of that state, because you're only going to be in it for a period of time, especially at first, to reflect on what happened while you were in that state. You can still see changes that happened in that state. Sometimes you'll see flashes of light, sometimes you'll see other things. It's really kind of fun, but you're talking about super-subtle states of mind.

Now, this is the way that it's described in one of the commentaries: Suppose there's two monks walking down a path in the forest, and the senior monk is walking in front, that's the way monks do it, and he stepped over this little, tiny trickle of water coming down, and the junior monk asked the senior monk to stop and wait for a moment. He wanted to get some water to drink. And the senior monk said: "Ah, there's water. Then please go get my towel. I want to take a bath." But the junior monk said: "There's water, but there's not enough for that." And that's what it is with mind. It's there, it's real hard to see, sometimes you perceive it, sometimes you don't. There's still some fine things that are happening.

Now, when you're doing your meditation, at first your mind is flip-flopping like this (gesture), and as you start going deeper and deeper into your meditation, and

you get to the fourth jhāna, your mind isn't moving so much as it starts vibrating. And as you go from one state to the next, and you keep relaxing, the vibration becomes less, and less, and less until you can't really tell whether it's vibrating or not. And then the exciting starts to happen.

MN:

19. "Again, monks, 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 happens now is your 6R's are very much automatic. Even while you're in the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, your mind goes to something, there's the 6R's right there, and there's more and more relaxing until finally there is no more vibration, there is no more movement of mind at all. It's just like turning the lights out; there's nothing. You can't see anything, you can't feel anything, there is no perception, there is no feeling that arises in that state. You'll be in that state for a short period of time. When you come out of that state is when you will see the dependent origination arising, and then you will see dependent origination ceasing, and when you get to the final letting go of the ignorance, Nibbāna occurs. Now, that's what this basically says.

MN:

... And his taints were destroyed by his seeing with wisdom.

BV: His taints: all of the distractions of mind were destroyed by his seeing with wisdom. Seeing with wisdom always means seeing dependent origination. Now, he experienced Nibbāna. What is Nibbāna? I don't know. I gave you definition a little while ago so you had some kind of an idea, but it's an unconditioned state. How can you talk about an unconditioned state with conditioned concepts and ideas and words? It doesn't work; apples and oranges very much. So the more relaxing you do, the more you're leading to the cessation of perception and feeling.

Now, there's suttas in the Middle Length Sayings that will tell you that you can experience the first jhāna, and then the cessation of perception and feeling, and then experience Nibbāna, and you can. It depends on you. You see, my job is to get you to point in the right direction, and anybody that experiences jhāna, they have the potential in this lifetime to experience Nibbāna. It just depends on you, and your understanding, and your willingness to work. Can it happen soon? Yes. For some people it can happen very quickly. For other people it seems like it takes

forever. But it depends a lot on the amount of practice you do with your daily activities, not only with your... when you're doing the meditation when you're in a retreat, but when you're home seeing the tightnesses that arise from mind's attention moving from one thing to another, seeing the old habitual tendencies arise when somebody says something or does something, and every time they do, it's like pushing a button on you, and you just react in the same way you've always acted.

Now, with this practice you can start changing those old habitual tendencies. And as you start developing the new habitual tendency of being aware of what's happening in the present moment, and radiating loving kindness and compassion or whatever, and smiling, and laughing, and having fun, as you do that and practice that more and more, you are leading to the cessation of perception and feeling. Why? Because you're letting go of your attachment to the craving. Every time you relax into whatever you're doing, you're getting one step closer. Might be a teeny tiny step, but it all leads to the same end result if you're doing it this way.

Then it says...

MN:

20. "Sāriputta 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: Even Nibbāna was just there for a little while and changed and disappeared, but it's such a strong experience of your deep understanding of the process of dependent origination. That understanding gets so deep, that's what the realization is all about, that's what completely and thoroughly understanding the four noble truths and how they work with dependent origination. It's completely understanding and realizing that everything is part of impermanence, suffering, and not-self or the impersonal nature.

So...

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 one,' and with the cultivation of that attainment, he confirmed that there is not.

BV: He knew that what happened, that's the end result. He knew that he had become completely enlightened, although I hate the word 'enlightened' because I can tell you something and I can enlighten you to the definition of something. But the Buddha became awake, and he taught other people how to be completely awake because most of us are walking around in the dream world of our own concepts, and opinions, and all of the stories, and all of that kind of thing.

MN:

21. "Monks, rightly speaking, were it to be said of anyone: 'He has attained mastery and perfection in noble virtue, 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 a 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 and 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: That gives you a very strong idea of what you're doing with the meditation and why. It also gives you a good, strong indication of the differences between the jhānas of absorption concentration and the jhāna of the samatha-vipassanā.

So does anybody have any questions? Yes?

ST: So is it so that in every jhāna there's still some dukkha?

BV: Yes, of course.

ST: So that is why you want to realize that you want to go further.

BV: Yes.

ST: So once you get to the final one, you... there's no dukkha in that, so you realize you've done that.

BV: Well, it's... that's a tricky question because if you have a body, there is dukkha. You have to wash it, you have to feed it, you have to take care of it when it's sick, so there is some dissatisfaction in having a body. Even the Buddha experienced dukkha after he became fully awake. There's... in the sutta that says that there were times that he had real strong pain in his back, and he had to tell other monks: "You carry on with the Dhamma talk. I'm going to lay down and rest my back." He had dukkha, but it didn't make his mind shake. He didn't have any aversion to it. You don't completely let go of dukkha until you let go of the body too, and then there is no more becoming, and that's what the final Nibbāna, the parinibbāna that the Buddha experienced, that's what he's talking about.

Ok? Anybody else got a question?

ST: Can you will to become again?

BV: No. In a word. No, it's not a choice. When you have this realization, this is what will happen. And I know that there's a awful lot of Tibetans that talk about: "We have the reincarnation of Ānanda here to do this or that, but that's just some wrong understanding that's happening about what a bodhisatta vow is and what it does. They kind of made up their own definitions that don't necessarily agree with the original texts. The word 'bodhisatta' means, literally it means the 'future Buddha', and there's an awful lot of people that take a bodhisatta vow: "I want to become a future Buddha. I think this would be great to be a future Buddha." Well, to take that vow without a Buddha around to confirm that you in fact are going to become a future Buddha, makes life a little bit difficult for you because if you've read any of the Jātaka Tales, he was continually running across problems that there's a lot of stories about the bodhisatta. He... one time he was as a snake and some village kids came along, started poking sticks through him, and he was a big snake, and he had to bear that without even one thought-moment of dissatisfaction or dislike.

There's another Jātaka Tale about he was reborn as a young prince. He was about a year and a half old, and the queen, his mother who loved him very dearly, and she was playing with him, and the king walked in the room, and said something to the queen, and she didn't hear him. And he started getting jealous because he started thinking: "She loves that prince too much, and when he gets old enough they're going to come, and they're going to take the throne away from me, and



they're going to cause me all kinds of pain, and probably kill me. So I don't want that to happen." So he called for his executioner and the executioner came, and they came, took the bodhisatta, held his hands up, and he said: "I want you to cut off his hands." And the bodhisatta thought: "Ah, here is a real opportunity for me to practice my equanimity and my loving kindness. Now, there's four different kinds of beings here. There's me. There's my mother, I love her very dearly. There's the executioner, I'm kind of neutral to him. There's the enemy, my father. I get a chance to practice loving kindness to all these four different kinds of beings." And the executioner cut off his hands, and he didn't cry, and his mind was very balanced. And the king started to get real upset by this, and he said: "Ah, this is disgusting. Cut off his feet." Now, the queen took the hands and they put in... she was crying and all of these kind of things. So the executioner cut off his feet, and he just looked at that as more of an opportunity just to keep practicing his equanimity and his loving kindness, and practice not holding even one thought of dissatisfaction while this major dissatisfaction was happening. So they cut off his feet and gave them to the queen. She's holding them, crying. Oh! Really heartbroken. The Bodhisatta didn't cry, and the king became real disgusted by that, and he said: "I'm going to throw this baby up in the air, and I just want you to stab him and kill him." So he did. Now, the bodhisatta didn't hold one thought, he didn't entertain any thought of dislike, dissatisfaction, or wishing that things were different than they were, and he was immediately reborn in a devaloka. His mother died of a broken heart, and it says in the Jātaka Tale that the father died of a heart attack right there.

Now, are you ready to take a bodhisatta vow, and put up with not just one or two lifetimes of these kind of challenges, but many, maybe thousands? Being a bodhisatta is not a piece of cake. It's really hard, and there's called the... they're called asañkeyyas. They're long periods of time where the universe expands for one asañkeyya, it stops for one asañkeyya, it contracts for one asañkeyya, and it stops for one asañkeyya. That's called a mahākappa, those four things. In the commentaries they put numbers to the how many years it takes for one asañkeyya to occur, and that is ten with a hundred and forty zeros behind it. That's how many years the universe expands. And one mahākappa is four of those, so you multiply the hundred and forty by four and you get five hundred and sixty zeros behind a one (1). That's how many years a mahākappa lasts.

There are actually three kinds of Buddha. There's called the energetic Buddha which was Gotama. No, excuse me there's the intelligent Buddha which was Gotama, the energetic Buddha, and the moral Buddha. To become an intelligent Buddha takes four mahākappas and a hundred thousand lifetimes. To become an

energetic Buddha, takes eight mahākappas and a hundred thousand lifetimes. To become a moral Buddha, takes sixteen mahākappas and hundred thousand lifetimes. Now, we're talking of millions, and millions, and millions of lifetimes that you have to go through, and there are major challenges in those lifetimes.

Many people that take the bodhisatta vow right now, they don't have the determination to carry on for the next four, eight, or sixteen mahākappas, and because of that, after five thousand ... ten thousand ... twenty thousand lifetimes, they start going: "Whoa, this is really hard. I don't want to do this." And then they renounce the bodhisatta vow, but what's the problem with that? Right now they're in a Buddha era. Right now you can still experience Nibbāna. In twenty thousand lifetimes is that going to happen for you or not. It's a crap shoot, who knows? You know you might have to go for a huge long period of time before you're born in a Buddha era again. It depends on your karma. So the encouragement of a lot of Mahāyāna and then... and Tibetan monks for taking the bodhisatta vow, to me, I don't want to do that. They say: "Well, if you take the bodhisatta vow then you're going to help all beings become enlightened, but the Buddha couldn't enlighten all beings. If he could, we wouldn't be here. Right? And if he can't do it, who am I to think I could do it? But that's what they tell people, and they kind of look down on Theravada monks saying: "Well, they only want to get enlightened in this lifetime." Like that's something bad. But: "We're better because we're going to be bodhisattas and we're going to help beings all the time, everywhere we are."

When you start developing this practice, you naturally start to help people. You start to do things for other people and it gets to be real fun. As you go more and more into your practice, your generosity starts to get bigger in a lot of different ways, and you act like a bodhisatta. Whether you really are or not doesn't matter, but if you take a bodhisatta vow, that vow is so strong that it will stop you from attaining Nibbāna.

ST: I mean like, let's say in the zeal of a new experience someone takes that vow, and couldn't they perhaps in the course of some nice icon, you know meditation, become more elusive and see the error of that?

BV: They could see the error of it. They can renounce it.

ST: Then what would that do, be awful consequences?

BV: No. No bad consequences for it. Cayman did a Zen retreat where they were giving her something to recite in Korean, and I recognized some of the things that

they were saying in that, and I realized that that was... they were telling people to take... they were giving people the bodhisatta vow without telling them what it was or anything about it. And as soon as she got done with the retreat, I told her: "Did you realize that you became a bodhisatta on this retreat?" "Oh no, what do I have to do?" Well, it's fairly easy to renounce a bodhisatta vow, and that is, sit in front of the Buddha, and with a very sincere mind, three times you say: "I now renounce being a bodhisatta." and then it's done. But she's zealous, so she did it six times.

SK: It's good to be sure.

ST: ~~ making a mistake for, you know, someone first falling in love ~~

BV: Taking a vow is not a light thing. It's a real serious thing, and it's not treated that way.

ST: But how can you take a vow in a language you don't understand?

BV: You're still taking the vow because those are the words that you're using.

ST: Oh, but it's not in your heart.

BV: It's not in your heart, but you're taking the vow, and the vow is very powerful unless you renounce it. Ok?

ST: Can I ask a question?

BV: Yeah.

I was wondering about, you know, idols of Buddhas that they...

BV: They're images of the Buddha.

ST: Yeah, but...

BV: I don't know what an idol is.

ST: Oh, there's a very simple attachment to symbols?

BV: No. You know, in the Christian religion, they have all of these idols and images, and they try to say that anybody else that has an image then they're: "That's an idol and you're an idol worshiper." But how many... I mean I just was in Germany, and I went to two churches and I saw Jesus on the cross, suffering like anything else. Now, isn't that an idol? Isn't there attachment to that? You see what I'm saying? There doesn't have to be attachment to it. There can certainly be appreciation for the person that did that, but that's not an attachment.

SK: Isn't it a matter of being clear about what you're doing when you prostrate to a Buddha, and then this understanding that people have about that? You know?

BV: Well, it's the same, we're taking the refuges. Some people take refuges haven't got a clue what it means.

SK: No, but I mean you bump into an evangelist, and he'll say you're an idol worshiper because when you prostrate to the Buddha, you're worshiping the statue and you want something from it, but that's not at all what it's about, and you have to be very precise in understanding what you're doing when you prostrate to the Buddha. You know? When you open your hands, you open your mind and you're... it's a bowing of respect to the man that succeeded in this practice, and that's all it is. But there are people who go in the other traditions of Buddhism, you know, there are people who go to church who put more into it than that, who grew up with religions before the Buddhism was put into it, with deities and all kinds of things, and it becomes like a deity, it's true, but the actual meaning of it in Buddhism is a homage of respect to the person, the human being that succeeded. He didn't want any images left. This all happened because of Alexander the Great, let's bear that in mind. It happened because of Alexander the Great's sculptures conquering that area and then deciding there'll be these images. This wasn't Buddhist, the Buddhist part came from the inverted bowl, was all he said: "Turn my bowl upside down."

BV: No, no, no, no!

SK: You talk about that part. What did he say?

BV: He said: "If I'm not around, use the Bodhi tree as something to pay respect to" because that gave him shelter when he became the Buddha, and it's just a reminder of respect. One of the reasons we have the logo that we have, which is a bodhi leaf with the eightfold path wheel in it, is because that is what the Buddha wanted us to use as a show of respect.

SK: It's neutral to all of the traditions. It doesn't affront anybody to use that symbol. ~~~

ST: Involves the stupa?

BV: The stupa is the bowl upside down...

SK: It's a bowl upside down.

BV: ... and that's, that's even turned in some strange rites and rituals to be quite honest. I had a friend in Sri Lanka, and I went to go visit him and I said: "Well...", his son was there, and I said: "What's your father doing?" and he said: "My father is making Buddha relics." In Thailand and sometimes in Burma, when a monk that is very advanced is cremated, then they scoop up all of the relics, and they're like little white balls, little white rocks, and the supposedly that's what happened with the Buddha, and what my friend was doing was taking chicken bones and boiling them, and they made these little white, little things like rocks. And there were people, when I first became a monk, they were giving me these things, and: "Oh boy, are you lucky. You get this." And I started going around looking for little, tiny white rocks, and then I picked up half a dozen of them and I gave them to a monk that's very advanced, and he held them up and he says: "Oh, these are so strong!" I said: "Well, you can have them then." It's just rocks I picked up off the ground. But there's all kinds of strange beliefs about that sort of thing. It doesn't have anything to do with the Buddha's actual teachings.

Ok, let's share some merit then.

May suffering ones, be suffering free  
And the fear struck, fearless be  
May the grieving shed all grief  
And may all beings find relief.

May all beings share this merit that we have thus acquired  
For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.

May beings inhabiting space and earth  
Devas and nagas of mighty power  
Share this merit of ours.

May they long protect the Buddha's dispensation.

Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . . Sadhu

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