

MN 115 The Many Kinds of Elements - Bahudhātukka Sutta
Summer 2003

BV: Ok, this is the sutta one, one, five, the Bahudhatuka Sutta, The Many Kinds of Elements.

MN: 1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's Park. There he addressed the monks thus: "Monks." - "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Monks, whatever fears arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man; whatever troubles arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man; whatever calamities arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man. Just as a fire that starts in a shed made of rushes or grass burns down even a house with a peaked roof, with walls plastered inside and outside, shut off, secured by bars, with shuttered windows; so too, monks, whatever fears arise . . . all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man. Thus the fool brings fear, the wise man brings no fear; the fool brings trouble, the wise man brings no trouble; the fool brings calamity, the wise man brings no calamity. No fear comes from the wise man, no trouble comes from the wise man, no calamity comes from the wise man. Therefore, monks, you should train thus: 'We shall be wise men, we shall be inquirers.'"

3. When this was said, the venerable Ananda asked the Blessed One: "In what way, venerable sir, can a monk be called a wise man and an inquirer?"

"When, Ananda, a monk is skilled in the elements, skilled in the bases, skilled in dependent origination, skilled in what is possible and what is impossible, in that way he can be called a wise man and an inquirer."

(THE ELEMENTS)

4. "But, venerable sir, in what way can a monk be called skilled in the elements?"

“There are, Ananda, these eighteen elements: the eye element, the form element, the eye-consciousness element; the ear element, the sound element, the ear-consciousness element; the nose element, the odor element, the nose-consciousness element; the tongue element, the flavor element, the tongue-consciousness element; the body element, the tangible element, the body-consciousness element; the mind element, the mind-object element, the mind-consciousness element. When he knows and sees these eighteen elements, a monk can be called skilled in the elements.

5. “But venerable sir, might there be another way in which a monk can be called skilled in the elements?”

“There might be, Ananda. There are, Ananda, these six elements: the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the air element, the space element, and the consciousness element. When he knows and sees these six elements, a monk can be called skilled in the elements.

6. “But venerable sir, might there be another way in which a monk can be called skilled in the elements?”

“There might be, Ananda. There are, Ananda, these six elements: the pleasure element, the pain element, the joy element, the grief element, the equanimity element, and the ignorance element. When he knows and sees these six elements, a monk can be called skilled in the elements.

7. “But venerable sir, might there be another way in which a monk can be called skilled in the elements?”

“There might be, Ananda. There are, Ananda, these six elements: the sensual desire element, the renunciation element, the ill will element, the non-ill will element, the cruelty element, and the non-cruelty element. When he knows and sees these six elements, a monk can be called skilled in the elements.

8. "But venerable sir, might there be another way in which a monk can be called skilled in the elements?"

"There might be, Ananda. There are, Ananda, these three elements: the sense-sphere element, the fine-material element, and the immaterial element. When he knows and sees these three elements, a monk can be called skilled in the elements.

9. "But venerable sir, might there be another way in which a monk can be called skilled in the elements?"

"There might be, Ananda. There are, Ananda, these two elements: the conditioned element and the unconditioned element. When he knows and sees these two elements, a monk can be called skilled in the elements.

(THE BASES)

10. "But, venerable sir, in what way can a monk be called skilled in the bases?"

"There are, Ananda, these six internal and external bases: the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and flavors, the body and tangibles, the mind and mind-objects. When he knows and sees these six internal and external bases, a monk can be called skilled in the bases.

(DEPENDENT ORIGINATION)

11. "But, venerable sir, in what way can a monk be called skilled in dependent origination?"

"Here, Ananda, a monk knows thus: 'When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases. That is, with ignorance as condition, formations come to be; with formations as condition, consciousness comes to be; with consciousness as condition, mentality-materiality comes to be; with mentality-

materiality as condition, the sixfold base comes to be; with the sixfold base as condition, contact comes to be; with contact as condition, feeling comes to be; with feeling as condition, craving comes to be; with craving as condition, clinging comes to be; with clinging as condition, being comes to be; with being as condition, birth comes to be; with birth as condition, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

“ ‘But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of formations; with the cessation of formations, cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness, cessation of mentality-materiality; with the cessation of mentality-materiality, cessation of the sixfold base; with the cessation of the sixfold base, cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of being; with the cessation of being, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.’ In this way, Ananda, a monk can be called skilled in dependent origination.”

(THE POSSIBLE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE)

12. “But, venerable sir, in what way can a monk be called skilled in what is possible and what is impossible?”

“Here, Ananda, a monk understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could treat any formation as permanent - there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that an ordinary person might treat some formation as permanent - there is such a possibility.’ He understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could treat any formation as pleasurable - there is no such possibility.’ And he understands: ‘It is possible that an ordinary person might treat some formation as pleasurable - there is such a possibility.’ He understands: ‘It is impossible, it cannot happen that a

person possessing right view could treat anything as self - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that an ordinary person might treat something as self - there is such a possibility.'

13. "He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could deprive his mother of life - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that an ordinary person might deprive his mother of life - there is such a possibility.' He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could deprive his father of life . . . could deprive an arahat of life - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that an ordinary person might deprive his father of life . . . might deprive an arahat of life - there is such a possibility.' He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could, with a mind of hate, shed a Tathagata's blood - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that an ordinary person might with a mind of hate, shed a Tathagata's blood - there is such a possibility.' He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person possessing right view could cause a schism in the Sangha . . . could acknowledge another teacher - there is no such possibility. And he understands: 'It is possible that an ordinary person might cause a schism in the Sangha . . . might acknowledge another teacher - there is such a possibility.'

14. "He understands : 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that two Accomplished Ones, Fully Enlightened Ones, could arise contemporaneously in one world-system - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that one Accomplished One, a Fully Enlightened One, might arise in one world-system - there is such a possibility.

BV: So there's no such a thing as two Buddhas in the same Buddha era. Ok, now.

S: ~

BV: Yeah. He's waiting around for conditions to be right for the next Buddha era.

If a person kills their mother, or kills their father, or kills an arahat, if he causes blood to flow, from injuring a Buddha, or causing a schism in the order, of monks, a division, these are called the most heinous actions that anyone can ever do. No matter what you do in the rest of your life, you can never attain Nibbana, and when you die, you are going to be reborn in a hell realm. Devadatta broke a couple of those. He tried to kill the Buddha on a number of occasions. He got an elephant, he got him drunk, and started enraging the elephant, and scared him with fire, and went down this road, and the Buddha with a bunch of arahats behind him were walking down the road, and they got to this one place that there was no way to get off the road, and the other monks saw that this was happening and they wanted to stand in front of the Buddha so that he wouldn't get hurt, and he said: "No. No problem." And he told everybody to back off, to get out of the way. And he started radiating loving kindness. And this elephant was running full on, came to a screeching halt and knelt in front of the Buddha. That's one of the times that Devadatta tried to kill the Buddha. Another time he would hire different warriors, and tell them that Buddha really was a bad person and he should be killed, and they would go to kill him. And the Buddha would convert them into monks. And he would send one, and then he send five, and then he sent fifteen, and then he sent twenty-five. And they all were ready to kill him, but when they got in the Buddha's presence, they all became monks. So Devadatta was getting very concerned about this. He wanted to take over the order of monks. Wanted to be the head of the Sangha. So, he got up on this hill, and he got a big rock, that was moveable, and the Buddha was walking down a path. Devadatta threw the rock out, and right before it came to hit the Buddha, and definitely would have killed him, it hit another rock, and then veered off to the side. But what happened was, a splinter from that rock came and stuck in the Buddha's foot, and caused blood. After that, Devadatta decided he couldn't kill the Buddha, so he went to the Buddha, and he tried to convince the Buddha that the order, . he should, . that Devadatta should take, head the order when the Buddha died, they were about the same age, and the Buddha wouldn't do it. He said that the Sangha was not going to be run by any other one monk, it was going to be run by my ~. So Devadatta

decided he was going to ask for certain demands. I don't remember all of the demands, but some of them were like this. He tried to get the Buddha to say that: all the monks should just be three robe wearers, or, no, ahh refuge, charnel ground material, they should only get the material for their robes from charnel grounds; that all of the monks should be forest monks, they should never live in the city; that all of the monks should be vegetarians. Now he made these demands, and they seemed reasonable, but the Buddha said "No, I'm not going to do that. There are times in the future when monks will live in the city, and they'll do a lot of good in the city, and there's not enough cloth at a charnel ground, and it takes the honor and privilege of someone else making a robe and donating it to the Buddha, or to the Sangha member." And he definitely said no to the monks becoming vegetarians, because he said: "Monks should eat whatever is offered." So Devadatta left the Buddha, he knew that the Buddha was going to refuse all of these. He went to a bunch of brand new monks, about two hundred monks, and he said "How can the Buddha say that? How can he not follow these simple guidelines? He is not truly enlightened. You should follow me." And they did. So he caused a schism in the order, he caused a separation. At this time the Buddha was getting rather old and started having pain in his back. So he would talk for a little while and then he would say I have to lay down and rest my back. But he didn't go to sleep. He would listen to whoever took over the Dhamma talk. Devadatta started copying him. And he would give discourse for a little while, and then he would say "My back is hurting right now" and he would ask one of the other monks to continue on with the Dhamma talk, and he would lay down and go to sleep. And the Buddha saw that this was happening. And he said to Sariputta and Moggallana: "Devadatta has caused a schism in the order, and I want you to go, get the other monks and give them the Dhamma and then bring them back." So they waited until, what happened was, Devadatta saw that Moggallana and Sariputta were coming, and he invited them to sit on either side of him while he was giving the Dhamma talk. And he said: "My back is hurting, and he asked Sariputta to continue, and he laid down and he went to sleep. And Sariputta gave a Dhamma talk that was so good that all the monks followed him. They left him there, asleep. And when he woke up, he was really furious. He was really

angry. He was so angry, that he started spitting blood. And when anybody spits blood, that means that they're going to be dying fairly soon. And he realized that he was going to be dying very soon, and he wanted to see the Buddha one more time before he died, so he could ask forgiveness. But his karma was such that he didn't make it. And he was reborn in a hell realm. Where it's like a big vat of boiling oil. And it takes thirty thousand years to go from the top down to the bottom. And thirty thousand years to go from the bottom back up to the top. He's at the top long enough to say one syllable. And then he starts back down. And he's going to be in that state for quite a while. But eventually, because of his good merit, because he, in many lifetimes, he was the Buddha's nemesis, he was the Buddha's . . he was a trouble maker for the Buddha. He did all kinds of things,

. . . don't close your eyes, . . .

He did all kind of things that caused trouble for the Buddha. But, he was helping him to overcome his hindrances, and because of that, he developed his perfection to such a fine degree that he could become a Buddha. He had to have someone that was pushing him all the time. Because of the good karma of doing that, at some point in the future, he will be reborn as a pecheckabuddha, which is called a silent Buddha. A silent Buddha is someone that becomes enlightened, but they can't tell anybody else how to do it. They're called a silent Buddha. So even though he caused so many troubles, he was helping along the way, so that Gotama could become the Buddha and have all of these perfections and not be troubled.

S: Small price.

BV: Small price.

So what happened with King Bimbisara was his son, . . Ajatasattu, I think, I can't remember, he usurped his father, threw him in jail, and took over the kingship. And his father eventually died because of the actions that his son had done. On the day that the king died, his son, had had a baby born to one of his wives. A baby boy. And it brought him such joy that it was just unbelievable. So he went to his mother,

and he asked if his father had felt that kind of joy when he was born, and she said: " Oh, yes, absolutely. When you were growing up and you had a boil on your finger, your father would sit sucking on it, and it would burst into his mouth and he would swallow it, because of the joy he had of being near you." And she gave other examples of this. So he went running to King Bimbisara , to tell him how much he loved him. And King Bimbisara had just died. So the action that he had caused the death of his father. The action that he had performed. Even though he was born during the time of the Buddha, and he went and listened to many Dhamma talks that the Buddha gave, he could never become enlightened in that lifetime. Because of that action. And the Buddha said on a few occasions that he would be reborn in a hell realm because of that. And it's really not very nice. A hell realm a lot of really really horrid things.

S: How long did he ~~?

BV: For one lifetime. But he did a lot of good things. And that karma will eventually come back. So . . . If he had not killed his father, he would have become an arahat. Because his understanding was very deep.

S: ~~

BV: Only to a point. Because of his past actions, he couldn't go beyond that. Ok? So these five things are called heinous crimes, you don't want to do them. You don't want to kill your mother. You don't want to kill your father. You don't want to kill an arahat. You don't want to harm a Buddha, so that the blood flows, and you don't want to cause a schism in the order.

S: Even accidentally ~?

BV: It's all intention, isn't it? It all has to do with intention.

S: ~

BV: With that one.

S: ~ schism ~

BV: There's nothing we can do about it.

MN: He understands : 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that two Wheel-turning Monarchs could arise contemporaneously in one world-system. . .

BV: A World-turning Monarch is somebody that can conquer all the countries around them, but not very fortunate.

S: ~

BV: ~ Ajatasattu at first was pretty bloody.

S: ~

BV: But then later he came just so good, treating everybody well, that they naturally started to respect him, and giving him more and more power to do whatever he wanted to do, because ~ he was doing good. But, an interesting thing about Ajatasattu, is he started charging people taxes, which had never been do like that before. But anytime he got money from the taxes, he would put up another pillar or he would put up another rock carving of some of the sayings of the Buddha, or something like that. So that's what he was using all of that for. And he really got into his generosity very heavily. But the people were starting to grumble. So he said: "Ok you won't have to pay the taxes anymore, but I want to keep giving." And he wound up giving away everything that he owned. And finally the people of the country said: "We don't want you as our king anymore." And he died a pauper. So he gave everything that he possibly could to the Sangha.

S: Did he become an Arahat?

BV: No. But he's not doing too bad.

S: ~

BV: Except in his mind he was exceptionally healthy. He just didn't have any more material things. He . . . On his death bed he gave away food that would have kept him alive. He gave it to a monk.

MN: . . .It is possible that one Wheel-turning Monarch might arise in one world system - there is such a possibility.'

15. "He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a woman could be an Accomplished One, a {...} Enlightened One - there is no such possibility.'

S: Say it again.

BV: A woman cannot become a Buddha.

S: Cannot become a Buddha.

BV: And there's very practical reasons for that. Because most of the time the Buddha is born in a place and at a time like Gotama was, where women were not very highly thought of, they couldn't go out on their own, they were very sheltered, they had very little freedom. And all of the Buddhas, some of them take a long time to become enlightened, some of them don't. All they do is make a determination for it to happen and they become enlightened.

S: ~ Arahat ~

BV: Yes, of course. Correct, of course. It's just that . . . it takes a male to be a Buddha

S: You could be reborn as a Buddha

BV: Of course

S: But if I achieve Nibbana I won't be reborn.

S: ~

S: ~

MN: {...} He understands: 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a woman could be a Wheel-turning Monarch . . . that a woman could occupy the position of Sakka . . .

BV: ruler of the gods of the heaven of the Thirty-three.

MN: . . . that a woman could occupy the position of Mara . . .

BV: So there's some good and some bad perks.

S: ~~~

S: ~~~

MN: . . . that a woman could occupy the position of Brahma - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that a man might be a Wheel-turning Monarch . . . that a man might occupy the position of Sakka . . . that a man might occupy the position of Mara . . . that a man might occupy the position of Brahma - there is such a possibility.'

16. "He understands : 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a wished for, desired, agreeable result could be produced from bodily misconduct . . .from verbal misconduct . . . from mental misconduct - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that an unwished for, undesired, disagreeable result might be produced from bodily misconduct . . .from verbal misconduct . . . from mental misconduct - there is such a possibility.'

17. "He understands : 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that an unwished for, undesired, disagreeable result might be produced from good bodily conduct . . . from good verbal conduct . . . from good mental conduct - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that a wished for, desired, agreeable result might be

produced from good bodily conduct . . . from good verbal conduct . . .
. from good mental conduct - there is such a possibility.'

18. "He understands : 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person engaging in bodily misconduct . . . engaging in verbal misconduct . . . engaging in mental misconduct could on that account, for that reason, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that a person engaging in bodily misconduct . . . engaging in verbal misconduct . . . engaging in mental misconduct might on that account, for that reason, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell - there is such a possibility.'

19. "He understands : 'It is impossible, it cannot happen that a person engaging in good bodily conduct . . . engaging in good verbal conduct . . . engaging in good mental conduct . . . could on that account, for that reason, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, {...} even in hell - there is no such possibility.' And he understands: 'It is possible that a person engaging in good bodily conduct . . . engaging in good verbal conduct . . . engaging good mental conduct . . . might on that account, for that reason, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world - there is such a possibility.'

"In this way, Ananda, a monk can be called skilled in what is possible and what is impossible."

(CONCLUSION)

20. When this was said, the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One: "It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous! What is the name of this discourse on the Dhamma?"

"You may remember this discourse on the Dhamma, Ananda, as 'The Many Kinds of Elements' and as 'The Four Cycles' and as 'The Mirror

of the Dhamma' and as 'The Drum of the Deathless' and as 'The Supreme Victory in Battle.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ananda was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Tape ends.

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