

MN 135 The Shorter Exposition of Action - Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta
Talk by Bhante Vimalaramsi at the Seattle Retreat 31-Mar-07

BV: Ok, this is 'The Shorter Exposition on Action'; this is about karma.

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

2. Then the brahmin student Subha, Todeyya's son, went to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him.

BV: Now, Subha, he was only fifteen or sixteen years old when he went to the Buddha. And he would ask questions, but he had a very, very intelligent mind. So, he could ask questions directly to the Buddha and the Buddha would treat him like he was an elder.

MN: When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and asked the Blessed One:

3. "Master Gotama, what is the cause and condition why human beings are seen to be inferior and superior? For people are seen to be short-lived and long-lived, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, uninfluential and influential, poor and wealthy, low-born and high-born, stupid and wise. What is the cause and condition, Master Gotama, why human beings are seen to be inferior and superior?"

4. "Student, beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior."

"I do not understand in detail the meaning of Master Gotama's statement, which he spoke in brief without expounding the meaning in detail. It would be good if Master Gotama would teach me the Dhamma so that I might understand in detail the meaning of Master Gotama's statement."

"Then, student, listen and attend closely to what I shall say."

"Yes, sir," the brahmin student Subha replied. The Blessed One said this:

5. "Here, student, some man or woman kills living beings and is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if on the dissolution of the body, after death, he does not reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in

hell, but instead comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is short-lived. This is the way, student, that leads to short life, namely, one kills living beings and is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings.

BV: So, a person that practices being a butcher, they generally are not very healthy people, and they generally do not live very long. But it's kind of an interesting thing because sometimes women can have a baby, and the baby only lives for a very short time and then dies. And they wonder "Why, why, why?" It's not the woman's fault that the baby died very young. It's that being. In their past life they killed other beings, so they didn't live very long.

So, one of the things that I've taught people for a long time is that when you practice the meditation, it's good to practice your generosity. And when you practice your generosity there are different kinds of generosity that you can practice. One of the things that is very good to do is to go out and buy some animal that is going to be killed, like lobster or crab or fish or chickens, and they're still alive, and then you take them and you let them go free. When you let them go free, your mind becomes very happy. Now, giving life is a very, very important gift to give. I know people that are very sick and they practice giving, and giving life, and letting go of worrying about their sickness. When they let that animal go free they let go of the worry, their body becomes healthy again. So, when you practice giving life, it's one of the most powerful gifts that you can give.

Now, the animals, let's say the lobsters or crabs, they're in a restaurant and people go up and they say "I want that one" or "I want that one", and then somebody takes and kills them and prepares the meat. When you ask for this one or that one, you are taking part in that being's death, and that is bad karma for you. But if you say "I want this one, but I want you to keep him alive. I want to take him home" and then you let him go free. What is happening in that lobster's mind? The lobster knows that it's caught; the lobster knows that it's going to be killed. Why? Because he sees other lobsters being put in the same thing and they get taken away, and they're killed, and they know that. So, the lobster has a lot of fear and is very much afraid, and then somebody comes in and they grab them. Oh, they're very, very sad. And then they come out, if not killed right away, but he still has fear of death. Then you take that lobster out to the ocean and you let that lobster go back in the ocean. What have you done? That lobster has gone from the worst day in their life - they knew they were going to be killed, they had a lot of fear, they had a lot of anxiety - and now you let them go free. They went from the worst day in their life to the best day. Now, they can continue living.

All beings want to continue living. So, when you let them go free, in your mind you say: "I let go of worry, I let go of pain, I let go of whatever it is that you have an attachment to... fear of death." I know some people that have cancer

and they want to let go of the cancer. So, you want to be healthy, they don't want to die. So, they let these animals go and let go of the worry about the cancer. And the merit that they make for giving life comes back to them.

Now, there was one lady in Malaysia that... she came to me and she told me that she was going to die in about one month. The doctors said that there was nothing they could do. The cancer was so bad that she was going to die. And she asked what she could do so that she could be happy for that one month. So, I told her to buy an animal, let it go free, and focus on happiness coming into her mind. She went out to the fishing boats and they have little fish that they use as bait. She bought one hundred fish, and then she would take it out and let it go free in the ocean, and she became very happy. She did this every day. After about six weeks, she went to the doctor because she felt good; she didn't feel sick. And the doctor examined her and the doctor said "What have you been doing? What kind of medicine are you taking? I want to know about this". And she said "I quit taking medicine. I went down and I bought fish, and I let them go free, every day. That's all I've done different.". She didn't have any cancer; the cancer went away.

The gift of life is very, very powerful. Anything that you're very much worried about, you buy some animals that are going to be killed; let them go free and let go of that worry. And then everything starts working so that you don't have that worry come up any more. So, this is a very good thing to do.

S: I have a question.

BV: Yes.

S: Animals at the pound, where can you let them go? Like dogs and cats.

BV: Well, you don't get those kind of animals unless you take them home take care of them yourself.

Now, there's one lady that- I give retreat at Joshua Tree in California every year - and she goes to the pound and she finds animals that they're going to be killed, and she brings them home with her. And she loves them and she gives them food, and then they die naturally. So, that's one way of doing it. Or you get lobster, you get crabs, you know you have to buy them alive, and then you take them out to the ocean, let them go. And you can take the mice and you can let them go in the forest, but not close to your house.

S: You have little black and white mice running around the house. Ha Ha!

S: I want to buy birds, but sometimes I think, you know, some of these birds have never been out in the wild and I'm afraid they won't make it.

BV: Buy birds? But what you do is you keep them in the cage and you show them where you're putting food. And then you feed them and you put some in this place, and then you let the bird go free and you keep putting food there. And they're smart, they'll stay around. So, you can do it that way. Or if you want to buy a snake, you can buy a snake, but let the snake go a long way into the forest where there's not a lot of people. They know how to take care of themselves.

In Burma, there was a monk that... he walked around every day in the morning to get food and this one water buffalo saw him. And the farmer that owned the water buffalo was going to have that water buffalo butchered. Now, the water buffalo was pregnant. The night before the water buffalo was going to be killed, it sent a very, very strong thought to this monk, and said: "I am very much afraid that I'm going to be killed. When I'm killed, my baby will die too. I don't want my baby to die." So, the next morning the monk went around and he found out who was going to kill the water buffalo and said: "Please wait". And he went around to all the villagers and he collected money, however much money this farmer was going to sell the cow for, and gave it to the farmer, and then he let the water buffalo go into the forest and go live. And the water buffalo was so thankful that she came up to the monk and she got down on her knees and bowed to the monk; and there's pictures of it. So, that monk, he saved two lives that day. A wonderful gift!

MN: 6. "But here, student, some man or woman, abandoning the killing of living beings, abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if on the dissolution of the body, after death, he does not reappear in a happy destination, in the heavenly world, but instead comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is long-lived. This is the way, student, that leads to long life, namely, abandoning the killing of living beings, one abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, one abides compassionate to all living beings.

BV: So, if you want to have long life, practice giving life, not taking life.

MN: 7. "Here, student, some man or woman is given to injuring beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is sickly. This is the way, student, that leads to sickness, namely, one is given to injuring beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife.

BV: So, quite often you'll see that butchers, they do not live very long. And as odd as it sounds, there's a lot of doctors that do not live very long because they cut people. Ok, they're doing it with good intention, hopefully, but still you don't see many doctors that are eighty, ninety, a hundred years old. They die when they're fifty, sixty, seventy years old.

MN: 8. "But here, student, some man or woman is not given to injuring beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is healthy. This is the way, student, that leads to health, namely, one is not given to injuring beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife.

BV: So, you don't cause pain to other beings, and you stay more healthy. So, as you practice being more and more compassionate and kind, not only to human beings or big animals, but also small beings: insects, mosquitoes. What do you do when a mosquito bites you? And you don't even think about it. But that leads to a body that is not very healthy. So, you don't kill the mosquitoes. A mosquito lands on you, you blow it away.

I used to live in Thailand; I lived by a wasp nest. And this kind of wasp is very, very deadly. If you get stung by six or seven of these at the same time you die, and I lived right beside it, and I had to walk by every day. I go out, get food, I have to walk by the nest. The wasps come down, they start hovering around me. The first day I saw the wasp and I thought: "Ah, this is my test." So, I said "Hello friend, how are you? I hope you're having a nice day", and they left me alone. People that came to visit me, they would run into my hut because a wasp would be after them and try to sting them. I never got stung because I wasn't afraid of the wasp. I didn't try to run away, but I practiced loving-kindness. I wished that wasp a good day, a happy day, and he would be there for a little while and then he would fly away. And I'd go out and then I'd come back, I have all this food and then he would come back again. So, I say "Well, this has been a good day. I hope it's a good day for you." And then he'd fly away again. I never got stung. Many people that came to see me did because they didn't like the wasp, they tried to hit him and make him go away. That made them angry.

S: What did you advise us... last Sunday, I remember last summer we have a green nest in front of our house, right in the door, the entrance. So, I can't suddenly not go and then tell them "You have a good day. Yes come into the house and fly in the house" So, but...

BV: Well, you can do a couple of things. Ah, you can hire someone that takes care of bees, and they will come with a big box and put over it, and they will take it away. But there are people that... they raise bees. And they like it because they get the honey. And they know how to handle without harming. So, that's

what you do. Now, if you have cockroaches, so many people: "Oh, I hate cockroaches", and kill. If you want cockroaches to leave you then you take cucumber, cut up very small, put in a dish where the cockroaches are, they leave. They don't like the smell. You don't have to kill.

S: What about mice?

BV: Well, you can have an understanding with mice. You can tell them that you don't want them to come around. Speak to them. What you can do if your friend has a cat, you take some of the fur and put it around, and they go away. But they're smart enough to understand and they know that the scent of a cat, they need to stay away from it, and they will go away.

With rats, as odd as it sounds, is you write them a letter. Yeah, they read; they do. I've done this more than one time. I write them a letter telling them that it's not good that they are here and if they stay here I'm going to have to hurt them. Please move away, and I put it on the floor. One day they leave. See it does work, it really does.

If you have ants around your house, you want to get rid of the ants - you take water, cayenne pepper, put in the water, spray; ants go away.

Well, if you put cayenne pepper around your plants, just sprinkle it around so you can see the red pepper, they will leave that alone. They don't like that. You know how you take red peppers and if you don't have rubber gloves how it hurts? Well, it hurts them too. It doesn't kill them. Huh?

S: Chilli powder.

BV: Chilli powder works.

S: But the rain washes it away.

BV: Well, you have to keep doing it. But it will start to get into the soil a little bit and then they'll stay away.

One of the things that we used to do, so that the dogs would not come onto the lawn, was we'd take a plastic bottle that's clear, fill it with water and put it on the lawn. Why that works I don't know, but they left, they never came in our yard. I don't know if that will work. We did it one time, it did work, but I don't know if it works every time or not. So, but it's worth a try.

So, if you want to stay healthy, you don't kill animals, on purpose. Now, there are times when you're walking and you don't see and you step on an ant. That is not intentional, so there's no harm. **In order to kill, there has to be five things: 1) There has to be a living being; 2) You have to have the intention to kill; 3) You need a weapon; 4) You use the weapon; and**

5) The being dies. Ok? If one of those five things isn't present, then there is no bad karma, there's no wrongdoing. So, you're walking and you don't notice a line of ants and you step on the ants. You didn't do that with intention to kill, so there is no wrongdoing.

S: What about when people, kill an animal that is suffering out of compassion for that animal?

BV: No.

S: No killing in that way?

BV: No. Why would you kill an animal if it were suffering?

S: I just think of like the cow that's wrapped up in the barbed wire, there's no chance of him to get out, and just in so much pain, and people see that, and that seems like a nicer thing to do than to let it die slowly.

BV: That's that being's karma, and now you're interfering with the karma and creating bad karma for yourself. I really do not go along with taking: "Oh, my little cat or my dog is so sick. I'm going to take it to the veterinarian and they're going to "kill" it for me." I don't go along with that. Every being wants to live as long as it possibly can, even when it's suffering. Human beings are like that, right?

S: Let's talk about living wills, you know when you create a Health directive that says "Do Not Resuscitate". Is that suicidal in intention?

BV: No that's not. That's letting nature take its course.

S: But if a machine is keeping me alive and I tell someone else to unplug that machine so I can die won't that be bad karma for me and them?

BV: Well, then if your karma is not ended when they turn off the machine, you will not die. Right? But the way the machines are right now, they make money for the hospital and the doctors, and that's about all the good that comes from that. I do not agree with extending life in an artificial way. It's only natural. We're here for a period of time and we're going to die. Why extend it for two weeks because a machine is keeping my organs going? That means I can't carry on; I can't get on with what's coming next.

S: My father-in-law is in coma right now and my husband is there with him, and I know tomorrow I have to go and see him ...

BV: Well, you let him know that there is no bad karma for anyone if they take him off of that machine, that's keeping him alive, and letting your father die naturally is the most humane thing you can do.

I spent a lot of time in hospitals, I spent a lot of time in nursing homes, and I was always trying to encourage people to let nature be nature. It's ok for people to die. The only reason you put them on a machine is because: "I want them to live longer", but they don't have any quality of life. So, it's better just to let them go.

S: So, if we do that, that means we're not killing?

BV: No, you're not killing.

S: Because we just honour their wish?

BV: Yes.

See, one of the things that's happened, especially in this country, is an awful lot of people, they are in the city so much that they don't see the real way life is. And everybody thinks that they're young and they're going to stay young forever, and they're going to last forever. And when you don't see the natural process of animals living and then dying, and you don't accept that, then you cause yourself a lot more pain that is necessary. So, it's really better to let nature be nature. I mean if you were in Vietnam, they don't have those kind of machines there. People live, they die all of the time, and that's the natural way of things. And you honour that person until they die. You make them comfortable as you can. You spend time wishing them happiness, but you allow nature to be nature.

S: Is the person eating the meat have the same karma as the butcher?

BV: No. In order to kill there's these five things; 1. it has to be a living being. Now, if you go to the store and you buy meat, is it alive? 2. Did you intend to kill it? No, you didn't intend to kill it. What you intend to do is take that meat, cook it, put it in your body so that you have energy, so you can continue. 3. Did you have a weapon? 4. Did you use the weapon? 5. Did the being die? No. So, all five of these things that make up killing don't occur when you go to the store and you buy the meat - for you. The butcher has not got very good karma because it is a living being, they intend to kill it, they take a weapon, they use the weapon, and the being dies, but you don't get any of that karma.

S: So, if I want to help the butcher and I don't eat meat, then he has no reason to kill?

BV: Do you think that eating vegetables means that beings don't die? Weren't you just talking about slugs in your vegetable garden?

S: They still die, but I, you know...

BV: Ah well, but they still die. How do they die? Even if it's just their hand, that is the weapon, and they use that weapon, and the being died. You can't live in this world without beings dying because you are alive. There's eighty different kind of beings in your body that are living and dying continually.

There's a story about one monk, he became an arahat, and he was walking and he saw that he was killing living beings because he was walking. So, he stood in one spot and then he noticed that by his breathing he was killing living beings, so he stopped breathing. And the Buddha came along and said "Monk, what are you doing?" And he told the Buddha, and the Buddha said: "That is why you work to get off of the wheel of samsara. That's why you want to attain Nibbāna. So, after this lifetime there will be no more beings dying because of you having a body".

So, even though you say: "Well, I'm a vegetarian" there are beings that die. Just digging in the soil kills beings. I can be at the beach and I have a knife, and a man just catches a fish, and he wants to use the knife to kill the fish and cut it open so he can cook it. I give him the knife, he can do whatever he wants with it. I get no bad karma from that, right? Because I didn't intend to kill and I didn't kill, so I'd have no bad karma from that. Believe me, I have been around a lot of vegetarians that argue with me a lot. But the whole thing comes down to: "What are you doing with your mind in the present moment?" Now, if I take a piece of meat, it's just a piece of meat, now this turns into energy for my body. I can continue living and then somebody says "Well, you paid the butcher for the meat, so if you didn't pay the butcher for the meat, then that being would still be alive", but that's not true. That being is already dead. I didn't have anything to do with it. I get no bad karma from that.

Yes...

S: But it is true if everybody would keep their precepts there wouldn't be a lot of meat eating.

BV: There's still going to be vegetable eating and there's still going to be beings that die.

BV: See, that's the thing. Having a human body means beings die. That's just the way it is. Actually there are a lot more beings that die when you pull it out of the dirt than if there's one cow. It's just one being. But when you disturb the soil like that, many different kinds of being die because of that. So, actually there's more beings that die from eating vegetables than from eating meat.

S: The Buddha ate vegetables.

BV: The Buddha ate meat.

S: But, that was before he became the Buddha?

BV: No, no. He ate meat. He ate whatever was offered to him. See, right before the Buddha died, Devadatta came to the Buddha and he wanted to take over the sangha, and the Buddha said: "No". So, Devadatta said: "Well, I want you to make the rules for the monks, so that they would always have to live in the forest - they could not live in the city", and the Buddha said: "No". He said: "I want you to make sure that all monks are vegetarian", and the Buddha said: "No. I will not make those kind of rules".

S: That's why the Tibetan monks, I understand they eat meat?

BV: Yeah, you know why they eat meat? Because they can't grow anything: "We're up so high in the mountain." They have to eat meat in order live.

S: There's no dirt, a lot of rock.

S: So, who killed the meat for them?

S: Do they go to market?

BV: No, they don't buy it, but it's given to them. It's offered to them.

S: The Theravada monks eat meat too?

BV: All Theravada monks eat meat, and Tibetan monks eat meat. Now, I've known a lot of Vietnamese monks that eat meat. I have, I've known a lot of them that do eat meat. And Korean monks will eat meat, but Chinese monks, no. And let me also say I've been around a lot of vegetarian Vietnamese monks too. I've been around both.

SK: Well, when you come to the Center, if you're vegetarian, we don't make you eat meat.

BV: No. Whatever kind of food you're most comfortable with, that's what we want to make for you when you come to visit. If you're used to eating meat then we'll fix a meat dish. If you're not used to eating meat then we'll fix vegetarian for you.

S: Do you eat meat?

BV: Yes, I eat everything but only some seafood. Some seafood I have an allergy to. I have allergy to crab; I have allergy to lobster; I have allergy to shrimp. I still accept whatever anybody gives me, but I don't eat it.

S: Like the Theravada monks, like they do not eat after twelve?

BV: Yes. That's one of the rules that the Buddha said was very good. It's good for the health. I only eat one time per day and it's good for my health. I don't get colds very often. I don't get sickness because I eat one time per day. The rest of the time, fast.

S: Do you drink water or tea after lunch?

BV: Yeah. Yeah. There are some things that I can take after the meal, but it's more like sweets, which is not good for us anymore, really. But I can take ghee; I can take honey; I can take sugar; I can take salt.

S: Can you drink wine?

BV: No, no alcohol. That's against the rules. And I know that some Tibetan monks they drink their butter beer, and that is not a good thing. Somebody asked if I wanted to taste it, so I tasted - I took one sip - oh, I would never consider drinking anything like that. It smells bad and it tastes bad.

Ok, let's see...

MN: 9. "Here, student, some man or woman is of an angry and irritable character; even when criticized a little, he is offended, becomes angry, hostile, and resentful, and displays anger, hate, and bitterness. Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a state of deprivation ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is ugly. This is the way, student, that leads to ugliness, namely, one is of an angry and irritable character ... and displays anger, hate, and bitterness.

BV: Have you ever seen somebody that's very angry, and seen their face, and their face gets black? Eh, they look very ugly. They're displaying what's in their mind at that time. So, that's another reason that I want people to carry a mirror around with them; to look at your face when you become angry, and see if you want to continue on looking like that. It's the fastest way to say: "No, no, no, no, no. I don't want to do that; I want to smile; I have a beautiful face when I smile."

MN: 10. "But here, student, some man or woman is not of an angry and irritable character; even when criticised a lot, he is not offended, does not become angry, hostile, and resentful, and does not display anger, hate, and bitterness. Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a happy destination

... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is beautiful. This is the way, student, that leads to being beautiful, namely, one is not of an angry and irritable character ... and does not display anger, hate, and bitterness.

BV: That's one of the advantages of practicing loving-kindness. Now, the Buddha talked about eleven advantages for practicing loving-kindness and one of them is that your progress in the meditation is faster with loving-kindness than any other kind of meditation. And another advantage is, your face becomes very beautiful, your face becomes radiant. So, the more you can smile, the more beautiful you become. And you will notice that other people will notice that, and they will mention it to you. So, that's one of the advantages of practicing loving-kindness.

MN: 11. "Here, student, some man or woman is envious, one who envies, resents, and begrudges the gains, honour, respect, reverence, salutations, and veneration received by others. Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a state of deprivation ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is uninfluential. This is the way, student, that leads to being uninfluential, namely, one is envious ... towards the gains, honour, respect, reverence, salutations, and veneration received by others.

12. "But here, student, some man or woman is not envious, one who does not envy, resent, and begrudge the gains, honour, respect, reverence, salutations, and veneration received by others. Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a happy destination ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is influential.

BV: Haven't you ever wondered why some people... they can say something and everybody agrees with them right away. And some people can say the same thing, in the same way, and nobody pays attention. It's because in the past they didn't like to see other people prosper. They didn't like to see other people get respect. So, they held that hard mind. So, when they're in this lifetime, they don't have much influence. Even the best idea, they can't convince anyone that this is a good thing. Now, you want to change that in this lifetime, then you start giving respect to everyone, and you become happy when you see they have gain, and they get a job promotion, you become happy for them: "Ah, this is wonderful. You're going to be great at this." And eventually after doing that for a period of time, then you start to gain more influence. Other people start paying attention to what you say.

S: Does it have to be sincere?

BV: It has to be sincere; it cannot be fake.

MN: This is the way, student, that leads to being influential, namely, one is not envious ... towards the gains, honour, respect, reverence, salutations, and veneration received by others.

BV: So, the more you cultivate the mind that is happy when you see other people doing well, the more positive your influence will become over time.

MN: 13. "Here, student, some man or woman does not give food, drink, clothing, carriages, garlands, scents, unguents, beds, dwelling, and lamps to recluses or brahmins. Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a state of deprivation ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is poor. This is the way, student, that leads to poverty, namely, one does not give food ... and lamps to recluses or brahmins or the requisites for monks.

14. "But here, student, some man or woman gives food ... and lamps the requisites to recluses or brahmins. Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a happy destination ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is wealthy. This is the way, student, that leads to wealth, namely, one gives food ... and lamps and other requisites to recluses or brahmins.

S: Bill Gates must have done that.

BV: Ah, he was generous, very generous. And you can be generous in a lot of different ways. One of the things that the Buddha said was that if you saw the benefit of giving food, you would never eat alone. You would always share your food with someone around you.

Now, giving food to monks, there's a way of doing this. When you're preparing the food, you prepare with a lot of metta, with a lot of love, with a lot of kindness in your heart, and happiness. And then while you're giving the food, you give the food with a lot of metta, with a lot of love. After you have given the food and you go away, you remember giving the food with a happy mind: "I really did something good. I feel happy."

Being a monk, I am very used to eating food that is prepared by someone that has a happy mind. I can eat a little and it lasts all day. Occasionally someone will fix food and they don't really want to. I can hardly eat that food.

S: How do you know?

BV: You can feel the difference. If the food does not have love in it, one bite and it's like: "Oh no, eat something else this time, I don't want that." It can make your stomach hurt.

Whenever someone wants to give something, I cannot refuse; I have to accept. And that was a hard lesson for me. It's very easy to give; it's very difficult to receive. But as a monk I had to learn that I take everything. I might not use it, but I will accept it because I want to make you happy.

When I was in Burma, I was staying for a period of time in a very small village. But because I was big and American monk, everybody wanted to give me food. I always had enough food for five people. So, when I got back to the monastery, I would take everything and then put in what I could eat or what I wanted, but I kept all of the other food on a tray. And then I would go to the poorest family in the village, and I would give that to them, so that they could have food to eat. And I asked them to share the food with anyone that came to visit them.

I know that in some countries, monks when they're done eating they just throw the food away. I can't do that, especially in a poor country like Burma. In Burma, some people, they thought that it was a very special thing to give me one potato chip or one peanut. That was a big gift to them. How can I say no? Of course, I accept, but if I didn't happen to see that and eat it myself, I made sure someone else got to eat it.

S: Yeah, but if the food went bad, you would...

BV: Well, if the food goes bad, but every morning they make it fresh. And in Burma I would go out for alms round not real early in the morning. I would go out around eight o'clock because that gave them time to prepare the food, and then when I was done eating, which was right around ten o'clock, I would immediately take that food and go give it back to them.

MN: 15. "Here, student, some man or woman is obstinate and arrogant; he does not pay homage to one who should receive homage, does not rise up for one in whose presence he should rise up, does not offer a seat to one who deserves a seat, does not make way for one for whom he should make way, and does not honour, respect, revere, and venerate one who should be honoured, respected, revered, and venerated. Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a state of deprivation ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is low-born. This is the way, student, that leads to low birth, namely, one is obstinate and arrogant ... and does not honour, respect, revere, and venerate one who should be honoured, respected, revered, and venerated.

16. "But here, student, some man or woman is not obstinate and arrogant; he pays homage to one who should receive homage, rises up for one in whose presence he should rise up, offers a seat to one who deserves a seat, makes way for one for whom he should make way, and honours, respects, reveres, and venerates one who should be honoured, respected, revered, and venerated. Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a happy

destination ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is high-born. This is the way, student, that leads to high birth, namely, one is not obstinate and arrogant ... and honours, respects, reveres, and venerates one who should be honoured, respected, revered, and venerated.

BV: Born into a wealthy family, an influential family, a family that is a Buddhist family. A low-born is someone that's born in a very poor situation and they always stay in that poor situation, and their family doesn't have any influence with other people, things like that.

MN: 17. "Here, student, some man or woman does not visit a recluse or a brahmin and ask: 'Venerable sir, what is wholesome? What is unwholesome? What is blameable? What is blameless? What should be cultivated? What should not be cultivated? What kind of action will lead to my harm and suffering for a long time? What kind of action will lead to my welfare and happiness for a long time? Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a state of deprivation ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is stupid. This is the way, student, that leads to stupidity, namely, one does not visit a recluse or brahmin and ask such questions.

BV: Now, when I was in Asia, the Chinese will not ask questions. They have many questions, but they will never ask a question. So, I told them that if you do not ask me questions when I ask you to ask me questions, then you will be reborn stupid. And all of a sudden hands started coming up. Nobody wants to be reborn stupid.

S: Is that because of their culture?

BV: Yeah. Yeah, their culture is such that the teacher, whatever he says is always right, and you never ask a question because the teacher might not know the answer. But I am not Chinese, and I asked many, many, many questions when I first became a Buddhist. So much so, I lived with a monk, very, very scholar-monk, very intelligent, always asking questions, questions, questions, questions. And he said: "When you die from this world and you're reborn, you are going to be reborn smarter than Einstein", because I asked so many questions.

But I also encourage everyone to ask me questions, and if I do not know the answer, I will tell you I don't know the answer, but I will try to find out the answer. So, that way we can both gain benefit because certainly I do not know everything.

BV: Well, you know the thing with the Buddha's teaching that is so different is it does not fight with other religion. In Christianity you have belief, you have to believe in Jesus Christ and all of this other thing, but with Buddhism it's not about

belief, it's about how mind works. So, it's a little bit different and it does not fight with Christianity.

S: Well, I keep praying every night and I pray that maybe...

BV: Well, when you're practicing loving-kindness, what do you think you're doing?

BV: Well, but that's ok for right now. As your mind goes deeper into your meditation, you will get to a place where I will come and tell you: "Now I want you to do family members", and then you can start sending loving-kindness to your husband and your sons and all of that. But this doesn't mean that you can't, during the day, think loving and kind thoughts to them. You can! It's just when you sit, when you're doing your quiet meditation, you use your spiritual friend. But during the day, if you have a thought of them, then smile and send that smile to them, feel that in your heart.

S: I do, I do. I thought about that, but I just kind of have to get my thought back into my spiritual friend that the...

BV:

Well, that's just for sitting. The rest of the day you can do it to whomever you want. Ok?

S: Thank you.

BV: Ok...

MN: 18. "But here, student, some man or woman visits a recluse or a brahmin and asks: 'Venerable sir, what is wholesome? ... What kind of action will lead to my welfare and happiness for a long time? Because of performing and undertaking such action ... he reappears in a happy destination ... But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is wise. This is the way, student, that leads to wisdom, namely, one visits a recluse or brahmin and asks such questions.

BV: See, that's what my teacher was telling me. I'm going to be the wisest man in the world because I ask so many questions. And I have students that are going to be very, very, very wise. As a matter of fact one student, I told them that on their gravestone after they die I'm going to put: "I have a question. Can I ask you?"

MN: 19. "Thus, student, the way that leads to short life makes people short-lived, the way that leads to long life makes people long-lived; the way that leads to sickness makes people sickly, the way that leads to health makes people healthy; the way that leads to ugliness makes people ugly, the way that leads to beauty makes people beautiful; the way that leads to being uninfluential makes

people uninfluential, the way that leads to being influential makes people influential; the way that leads to poverty makes people poor, the way that leads to wealth makes people wealthy; the way that leads to low birth makes people low-born, the way that leads to high birth makes people high-born; the way that leads to stupidity makes people stupid, the way that leads to wisdom makes people wise.

20. "Beings are owners of their actions, student, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior."

21. When this was said, the brahmin student Subha, Todeyya's son, said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! Master Gotama has made the Dhamma clear in many ways, as though he were turning upright what had been overturned, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see forms. I go to Master Gotama for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. Let Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life."

BV: Now, this was a very big statement, because Subha was very much a scholar Brahmin. He had memorized all of the Vedas, and because of this clear explanation, he stopped being a Brahmin, and became a Buddhist.

BV: Ok, any other questions?

S: What difference between the Brahmin and the Buddha?

BV: The Brahmins follow the Vedas. Basically they teach one-pointed concentration, and they teach reincarnation. They have permanent self, permanent soul, going from one lifetime to the next, to the next, to the next. But in Buddhism, we believe in rebirth. But rebirth is... do you remember what happened yesterday? It's gone, it's not here now. What happened yesterday is dead. What happens right now is in the present moment, but that will die, and then a new present moment will be reborn.

Everything that arises is part of an impersonal process. With the meditation you'll be able to see that more and more clearly as you go deeper into the meditation. You'll see it much better. You're sitting and all of a sudden pain arises. Whose pain is that? Who said: "I haven't felt pain for a long time. I want pain to arise, right here." No. That doesn't work that way. You can't control the pain. The pain arises because conditions are right for pain to be there. As you let go and relax, that pain will either go away or it won't. But if it doesn't go away after you keep allowing it to be, your mind will become so balanced that it doesn't even go to that. And you will see that this is an impersonal process; it's not a personal

process. And that's the one of the main differences between the Brahmins and the Buddhists.

Right now it will sound like a lot of words. But as you practice the meditation more, it will become clearer, and you will understand it. So, just be patient.

S: Buddhism is not based on reincarnation?

BV: Reincarnation means that there's a permanent self or a soul that goes from one lifetime, to the next lifetime, to the next lifetime, and it doesn't work like that. And you will be able to see that when you get deep enough in your meditation. It goes out of the realm of philosophy and it comes into the realm of reality. You see things arise and pass away, arise and pass away. There's a continuum that happens, but it's not a personal continuum.

S: I want to share an experience with you about with my mom. A long time ago, she doesn't do it anymore, she did meditation, and she went really deep. She was able to see her past family in a past life, and she told us about it. Is that possible?

BV: Yes. Do you remember what happened yesterday?

S: I went to work.

BV: Ok, that's a past life isn't it?

S: Yes.

BV: Learning how to develop your memory, you can go deeper and deeper and you can get into past life.

S: And then she got scared because she saw herself, she saw her spirit lift off of her body when she was sitting.

BV: That's why she needed to be around a teacher. She didn't need to be scared of something like that. These kind of things are very easy to explain. I know what she was experiencing and it's nothing to be afraid of. See, that's the advantage of being around a teacher instead of just doing the practice on your own.

Ok, let's 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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