

MN 141 The Exposition of the Truths - Saccavibhanga Sutta
A Dhamma talk by Bhante Vimalaramsi
Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center 02-Apr-06

BV: This is kind of an interesting sutta, because it's the exposition of the truths, and we should start talking about the Four Noble Truths.

MN:

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Benares in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There he addressed the monks thus: "Monks."—"Venerable sir." They replied. The Blessed one said this:

2. "At Benares, monks, in the Deer Park at Isipatana the Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened, set rolling the matchless Wheel of the Dhamma," which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or anyone in the world—that is, the announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of the Four Noble Truths. Of what four?

3. "The announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of the noble truth of suffering. The announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of the noble truth of the origin of suffering...of the noble truth of the cessation of suffering...of the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

4. "At Benares, monks, in the Deer Park at Isipatana the Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened, set rolling the matchless Wheel of the Dhamma, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or anyone in the world—that is, the

announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of these Four Noble Truths.

5. "Cultivate the friendship of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, monks; associate with Sāriputta and Moggallāna. They are wise and helpful to their companions in the holy life. Sāriputta is like a mother; Moggallāna is like a nurse. Sāriputta trains others for the fruit of stream-entry, Moggallāna for the supreme goal. Sāriputta, monks, is able to announce, teach, describe, establish, reveal, expound, and exhibit the Four Noble Truths."

BV: This has always been kind of an interesting thing, that the Buddha always referred to Sāriputta as being the one to start people on the fruit of stream-entry. This is the hardest part of the path, learning about the Noble Truths, and Dependent Origination and how it all intertwines, and how it all works. Once somebody has attained that wisdom, that knowledge, that, insight into the true nature of things, then it's quite a bit easier to get them to go from, ah, being a stream-enterer to becoming an arahant.

Now Moggallāna was very skillful at using psychic abilities, and during the time of the Buddha, there was a awful lot of monks that had that ah, that tend, that bend of mind that they had. They were much more sensitive to feeling. And you've heard me talk over and over again about the three kinds of people that there are.

There's a person that was like my teacher, U Silananda, that he was very highly intellectual. He was not sensitive to feeling at all. So it was only natural for him, when he became a monk, to tend towards scholarship, and he was quite good at it. He memorized ah, about eleven books this size. And then he took tests on them. He was number one in the country, that year that he took them.

Moggallāna, although he was an intelligent man, he was more sensitive to feelings, that he was intellect. He would be able to tell the finest feeling when it started to arise. When you get around some people, and they are ah, real sensitive to feelings, there's like they go

crazy, because they don't understand what's happening to them, and the feeling kind of dictates. They'll be happy one minute, and sad the next minute, and laughing out loud the next minute. It's hard to keep up with them. But that's just because they're so sensitive to feelings when it arises.

And then there's the kind of being that's like the Buddha where his intellect and feelings, were in balance.

Now, one of the reasons that made Moggallāna so good at being able to teach people how to become arahats was because of his psychic ability of being able to read other people's mind, ah, his psychic ability of being able to feel, before someone else noticed what was happening with them, and he would guide them to see it as an impersonal process. A real helpful skill. Wish I had it. (Laughs) But I guess we can't have everything. And of course, the appeal of the intellect, and wanting to know, how things work, that's the thing that that Moggallāna was very good at explaining, how everything worked, how your mind worked, he saw it in minute detail. He was very good at being able to tell people whether they were sensitive to their feeling or they were sensitive to their, their intellect, exactly what they were doing, what was happening in mind at the time.

There's a story of ah, Anuruddha. Now, Anuruddha was foremost among all of the Buddha's disciples in being able to see, ah, he had the divine eye; he was able to see other places very clearly, and he was having trouble going deeper into his practice, and he went to Sāriputta and said: "I'm able to see, ah, very bright colors, and I can see long distances, and I can see other worlds, and all of this kind of stuff, but I'm not able to, gain the deep insight into the nature of mind and I don't understand why." So, Sāriputta told him that he was suffering from his pride, in being able to do this, and he was getting involved in the story line of what he was seeing, instead of just seeing it, what, what was arising, letting it be, relaxing. He wasn't seeing how mind was actually working. He was getting caught in the concepts and opinions, and and basically papañca.

TT: 09:13

You know the word, papañca? (Sighs) Big word. Has to do with ah, your opinions, your thoughts, your ah, concepts, all of that sort of thing. When you get caught in your concepts of the way you think things should be, and they don't turn out to be that way, then it's a big cause of suffering. So, when anybody uses the word papañca, they're talking about getting caught in concepts, and ideas, and opinions, and then believing that these are, really the way things are, and holding on to those views. So, when somebody's caught with papañca, they are caught, with a mind that is not seeing clearly, how things arise, how they're there for a period of time, what's the cause and effect of things, and this will stop your spiritual practice, when you get caught in the story. What you want to be able to do, is just see things as they arise, and lovingly accept the fact that they're there, not pay a whole lot of attention to them and relax into that.

Ah, today I was talking to you a lot about, smiling and laughing, and, this is not, a typical thing that's taught in this country. When it comes to Buddhism, everybody is very serious. Everybody is really trying very hard. And what's needed is, to stop trying so hard, to do it with a light mind, because when your mind is uplifted, when your mind, has that sense of fun, mind is very alert. You can see things when they first start to arise, and it's very easy to let it go and relax instead of, having it come up and slap you in the face for a little while before you really, ah, notice it. But you can't do it with a serious mind. You have to do it with a light mind.

The more you can develop your smiling, and sense of fun with the meditation, the faster you'll be able to recognize when your mind gets pulled down, when your mind becomes hard, when your mind becomes heavy. So, keeping your practice going with a light mind, is something that's very much needed, especially, in the West, because we're very goal oriented the way we want to, we want what we want when we want it, and we're, we're willing to work very hard to get it, but that desire in itself is the thing that's going to stop you from expressing. It's much better to lightly play with how crazy your mind is. Welcome to the human race, we all are.

And even the Buddha said that. He said that everybody that isn't an arahat is crazy. (Laughs) Reminds me of, I was in ah, Malaysia. I was at the biggest ah, Sri Lankan temple in Malaysia. And there was a monk that came through that he was really off the wall. And he, he never washed his robes, so he smelled pretty, pretty rank. And he would do things like he would say: "I'm going for the walk now." And he would get as far as the gate, and he would stop and just stand there, for an hour, hour and a half, and then he'd turn around and come back. This was how: "How was your walk?"—"Well, I got to the gate." And then he decided he wanted to travel somewhere. So he asked the head monk if, someone could help him get a ticket. And they did. And he went to the bus station, and he stood in front of the bus, with his ticket, and watched the bus pull off. He didn't take the bus. And he came back. And the Chief Reverend, he said: "Where, where, wha, why are you here?" And the guy said: "Well, I, stood in front of the bus, but it took off before I was ready to get off."

And this is odd behavior. But he would also, he would... Ah, he had a lot of anger in him, and if somebody said something, his anger would come up really strong. So somebody was talking about him to Chief Reverend, the chief monk said: "This guy's a little bit crazy." And they went and told this monk. And the monk came to the Chief Reverend, and he was really, really mad, that, anybody would consider him being crazy, and he asked the chief monk if in fact he did say that, and the chief monk said: "Yes, I said it." And he started throwing his anger at the chief monk, and the chief monk said: "Stop! The Buddha said, that everybody is crazy, that's not an arahat." And that made him laugh, which got over his anger.

But he, ah, decided he wanted to go somewhere else, and Chief Monk said: "I will help you get a ticket this time. If you don't get on the bus, don't come back." And we never saw him again. But there's all kinds of strange practices that happen out there. Everybody thinks that: "Well, if you're a Buddhist monk, then you're supposed to be this way or that way." It doesn't happen like that. (Laughs)

Anyway -

MN:

6. So the Blessed One said. Having said this, the Sublime One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling.

BV: Now this happens a lot, that, the Buddha will come out, and there'll be a bunch of monks sitting around, and he'll ask what they're talking about, and then he'll give ah, a discourse, but it's just a few words. And if nobody said: "Well, what's the deeper meaning of this?" the Buddha would get up and, go away.

So -

MN:

7. Then, soon after the Blessed One had gone, the venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks thus: "Friends, monks."— "Friend," the monks replied to the venerable Sāriputta. The venerable Sāriputta said this:

8. "At Benares, friends, in the Deer Park at Isipatana the Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened, set rolling the matchless Wheel of the Dhamma...and exhibiting of the Four Noble Truths. Of what four?"

9. "The announcing...and exhibiting of the noble truth of suffering...of the noble truth of the origin of suffering...of the noble truth of the cessation of suffering...of the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering."

10. "And what, friends, is the noble truth of suffering? Birth is suffering; ageing is suffering;

BV: Is that right? Is aging suffering?

S: ~

BV: (Laughs) Ok.

MN:

death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering; not to obtain what one wants is suffering;

BV: Now that's the biggest part of the First Noble Truth, because we all have these desires that things be in a particular way. We want them to be like that. And when it doesn't happen, look at how upset mind becomes. Look at how much suffering we cause ourselves. Look at the senselessness of that suffering. It's all because: "I want. I like. I don't want. I don't like.", and getting involved in all of the different aspects of clinging. Clinging, by definition, is all of your thoughts, your opinions, your concepts, and the strong belief that these are yours personally: "This is who I am." That's the cause of immeasurable amounts of suffering. Having that that desire and the clinging, all of the thoughts leading to why you like or dislike. Why is it suffering? Because it pulls you out of the present moment. So you can't see how things, arise. You can't see, the process of and patterns, of, what happens when Dependent Origination arises. Why can't you see it? Because you're so caught up in thinking about, and your concepts, and your ideas, and your opinions, and your wants.

TT: 20:54

MN:

in short, the five aggregates affected by clinging are suffering.

BV: What are the five aggregates?

S: ~

BV: (Sighs) And are they always affected by clinging?

S: ~

BV: Why?

S: ~

BV: Ah.

S: ~

BV: When you're able to see Dependent Origination, you see that there's sense doors. Right after a sense door arises, there's contact. With contact as condition, feeling arises. Feeling is, pleasant, painful, neither-pleasant-nor-painful. With feeling as condition, now this doesn't matter, er, feeling doesn't matter whether it's, painful mental feeling, or painful physical feeling. Feeling is feeling. With feeling as condition, craving arises. What is craving?

S: ~

BV: Craving always manifests as tension and tightness in your mind and in your body. That's how you can recognize it. This is why this is the weak link, in Dependent Origination, because you can actually see it when it happens, but you have to look closer. What happens before the wobble?

Craving is the "I like it. I don't like it mind." If it's a pleasant feeling, your mind grabs on to it, says: "Yeah, this is a good one." If it's a painful feeling, your mind's trying to push it away.

With craving as condition, clinging arises. And the clinging are all the thoughts, the stories, the opinions, the concepts, about why you like or dislike this feeling. See, when feeling arises, all of a sudden, you're pulled a long ways away from seeing what's happening right here, right now. Now when you're sitting in meditation, your mind is going to be thinking this and thinking that. That means it's clinging.

Now you don't, use your Loving-Kindness, or your meditation as a stick to stop this from happening, and beating your thoughts away. The way you let it go is, by recognizing that your mind is doing this, letting those thoughts be, don't continue thinking even if you're in mid sentence. Just simply let the thought be there, by itself, but don't keep your attention on it. After you do that, then you will see

that tension and tightness, that's in your mind, and in your body. You see it, on the grosser level, in your lower body. You see it in the subtler level, in your head. So, you relax. Now when you relax, you feel your mind open up, and expand, and takes a little step down and becomes very calm, clear. Your mind becomes very bright, and alert. And you bring, that mind that doesn't have any thoughts in it, back to your object of meditation. Ok?

Right after clinging, the Pāli word is "bhava", and that's where your habitual tendencies are. When this kind of feeling arises, I always treat it in this way. So it just keeps pulling you further and further and further away, from what's happening in the present moment.

Ok -

MN:

11. "And what, friends, is birth? The birth of beings into the various orders of beings, their coming to birth, precipitation in a womb, generation, the manifestation of the aggregates, obtaining the bases for contact—this is called birth.

BV: It's also, depending on your habitual tendency and whether you let go of that, it's either birth of the same old thing over and over again, or it's, the birth of, a new way of looking at things, letting things be. Not taking these things personally, seeing them as just part of a pattern, that arises and passes away continually, and the pattern happens in the same way, all the time.

It's one of the things that's really kind of funny, when you get talking especially to Westerners, about, ah, the difference between the Easterners and the, and the Westerners, and there is no difference, really. Everybody's mind works in exactly, the same way. It's just a matter of degree of, when Easterners, they grow up being around monks, they think they have, a lot of time to do what ever the monks tell them to do, and they like to play, and they like to enjoy, and they

like to do all kind of things, but they never really get serious with their practice.

But, when they go to a meditation center, they run across people, the teachers are very severe. They're very strict. They have to be, so that their mind, the, the people that come, they get put in balance better, because they're so heavy on the enjoying, and the indulging, and all of this sort of thing. They have joy coming up all the time, because they're practicing their generosity, and they, they really get in to ah, eating their food and all of this kind of stuff. So when they come to the meditation center, the, the teacher has to say: "No. Don't do that. I don't want you talking. I don't want you, ah, sitting around just talking about this nonsense that. I want you to be very serious with your practice." So what the teacher's trying to do is to pull them so they're in balance.

But when a Westerner comes, we're already serious. We don't think we have a lot of time. So we go to a teacher that's very serious, and he's pushing in the same way that he's pushing in the same way that he pushes the, the Easterners, and what happens is, the Westerners quite often will get burned out, because they're with a teacher, that's, teaching them in the wrong way. When I came back to this country, I started realizing more and more and more, we don't need that kind of strict, noble silence. We don't need to be told to eat less and sleep less. We need to get put in balance the other way. We need to have more joy arising. We need to have more balance in our life. That's one of the reasons that I was talking about smiling and laughing more, because that helps put your mind in balance. We're already serious, right? We're already goal oriented. You're ready to work! Right?

TT: 30:26

S: ~

BV: Well, but, that's putting the energy in the wrong way. Be lighter with it. Get that sense of balance. With the enlightenment factors, the middle enlightenment factor is joy. That's your balancing factor. Between the mindfulness, your investigation and your energy on one

side, and your tranquility, and your, your ah, collectedness, and your equanimity on the other side. You can't be too heavy with your energy.

An interesting thing with meditation is, you can get into the habit of always putting the same amount of energy into your practice. But it's not always appropriate. There are times, when you have to put a little bit less energy, and when you do, your mind stays in balance. But when you, your mind stays in balance. But when you put the same amount of energy you always put in, then you have restlessness arising. You, try to back off, then you have dullness arising. So, it's, it's learning the balance of the energy, that really is the tricky part, of the meditation. Sometimes your mind can be very peaceful and calm and very nice, and, you start putting in the energy that, you normally do and all, your mind is running all over the place. There's all kinds of, restlessness and dissatisfactions and dislikes and attachments of one thing or another, that are coming up, why? Because you're not putting in, exactly the right kind of, energy that's needed at that time. So you have to back off with your energy a little bit, and you have to start playing with it. And I literally mean playing with it, smiling and seeing how you're doing it, and, learning that balance for yourself, and in this respect, everybody's a little bit different, because not everybody needs to put in exactly the same kind of energy all the time, because of our past experiences, of many, many lifetimes, sometimes we have to, adjust a little bit with our energy. So, kind of watch that, and, and kind of recognize that, when you're putting the energy in sometimes, you can play with it, and sometimes you really, really have to be very close, and other times, you can be a little bit further away and it's much easier to watch, so, judge those times.

MN:

{12. ...}

13. "And what, friends, is death? The passing of beings out of the various orders of beings, their passing away, dissolution, disappearance, dying, completion of time, dissolution of aggregates, laying down of the body—this is called death.

BV: But it's also, the letting go, the, the disappearance, of, old habits, old ways of thinking, old ways of being.

MN:

14. "And what, friends, is sorrow? The sorrow, sorrowing,

BV: I love this. Let's give you a definition, that's really precise.

Repeats (what, friends, is sorrow? The sorrow, sorrowing,)

MN:

sorrowfulness, inner sorrow, inner sorriness,

BV: (Laughs) That's a great definition, isn't it? And what, what does sorrow mean?

S: ~

BV: (Laughs) ~

S: ~

BV: It's the unhappiness. It's the not doing what you want. It's the pain that arises because of that unhappiness. Being sorrowful. (Laughs) This is one of the things that happens in Buddhism a lot. You know, you say: "Develop your wisdom.", and that's a great statement. What does it mean? "Well, it means to be wise." (Laughs) Or: "Be mindful." Ok, what does that mean? "Well, just be mindful when you're doing this." You can't use the same word in the definition. It don't work. (Laughs) Oh, I love the inner sorriness. What's the difference, between inner sorrow, and inner sorriness?

S: ~

BV: Well. Isn't that inner sorrow? (Laughs)

S: ~

BV: Well, I, I, I would say more, to me it seems more that sorriness means ah, ah, remorse, guilty feeling, for having done something, some thing like that.

Ok –

Repeats (The sorrow, sorrowing, sorrowfulness, inner sorrow, inner sorriness,)

MN:

of one who has encountered some misfortune or is affected by some painful state—this is called sorrow.

15. "And what, friends, is lamentation? The wail and lament, wailing and lamenting, bewailing and lamentation, of one who has encountered some misfortune or is affected by some painful state—this is called lamentation.

BV: We're going to have to get the thesaurus out, and check this out a little bit closer, I have a feeling.

MN:

16. "And what, friends, is pain? Bodily pain, bodily discomfort, painful, uncomfortable feeling born of bodily contact—this is called pain.

17. "And what, friends, is grief? Mental pain, mental discomfort, painful, uncomfortable feeling born of mental contact—this is called grief.

18. "And what, friends, is despair? The trouble and despair, the tribulation and desperation, of one who has encountered some misfortune or is affected by some painful state—this is called despair.

19. "And what, friends, is 'not to obtain what one wants is suffering'? To beings subject to birth there comes the wish: 'Oh, that we were not subject to birth! That birth would not come to us!' But this is not to be obtained by wishing, and not to obtain what one wants is suffering. To beings subject to ageing...subject to sickness...subject to death...subject to sorrow,

BV: Oh, we didn't have the definition of sickness, did we? To be sick.
(Laughs)

Ahhh, Repeats (..to be subject to sorrow)

TT: 40:00

MN:

lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, there comes the wish: 'Oh, that we were not subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair! That sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair would not come to us!' But this is not to be obtained by wishing, and not to obtain what one wants is suffering.

20. "And what, friends, are the five aggregates affected by clinging that, in short, are suffering? They are: the material form aggregate affected by clinging, the feeling aggregate affected by clinging, the perception aggregate affected by clinging, the formations aggregate affected by clinging, and the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging. These are the five aggregates affected by clinging that, in short, are suffering. This is called the noble truth of suffering.

21. "And what, friends, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering? It is craving,

BV: The cause of suffering is craving. So what are the Noble Truths really all about? Craving. Wanting things, "I like this, I don't like that.", and clinging, and your habitual tendencies, all of these things, arise because craving arose. See, being able to recognize that subtle tension and tightness that arises in your mind and in your body, is very important, because that's how the craving manifests. So when

you see, at first you don't see, ah, the craving so easily, you just relax because that's what the instructions say. But before long, you see that when you relax, there's this, kind of openness, this feeling of ease, this feeling of, ah, tranquility and calmness, and there is no craving at that moment, just release. Then you start recognizing that that more and more as your meditation deepens, and, craving being the way that it is, does manifest in vary, very subtle, different ways. You were talking about seeing the vibration, and I was talking about what happens before that, because I want you to see, the craving before the wobbling.

S: ~

BV: The craving before.

Now the thing with the, with the five aggregates, that, we really get caught up in with, ah, the meditation is, we have these five things, we have a physical body, we have feeling. Perception is the mind that puts the name on things. You see this and your mind says: "This is a book." That's the perception, that recognizes that this is a book, and it also has memory involved with that. And you have your ah, volitional formations, which I call thoughts. And then you have your consciousness. Now what happens is, you'll be sitting in meditation, and a bug comes along and bites you. You know that your physical body is there, and feeling arises, and that's an unpleasant feeling. It's a painful feeling. And immediately, our habitual tendency is to begin to think about, the feeling, and try to control the feeling, with the thoughts. Now this happens with emotional feelings, especially. Ah, depression, that's always a favorite, Ah, dislike, dissatisfaction, what ever it is that arises, it's a painful feeling when it arises. And immediately our mind tries to think the feeling away. The more you think, the feeling, the bigger and more intense the feeling becomes, the more suffering you cause yourself because you're trying to think the feeling away.

Now the instructions in the meditation, and you read them, it said that when you're sitting in meditation, and a sensation arises, you'll notice, by first, there's a lot of thoughts about why you like or don't like that sensation, and the first thing you have to do, is you have to

let go, of the thought, and relax. Next you'll know, notice that there's a tight mental fist wrapped around the feeling, and that tight mental fist is aversion. So what you have to do is, allow the feeling to be there. It's all right for that feeling to be there because that's the truth. When it arises, it's there. You can't fight with the truth. You can't push the truth around. You can't make the truth be the way you want it to be. The only thing we can do, is just accept the fact that that feeling is there, and it's ok for it to be there. Now, you've let go of, that, your opinions and your concepts, about the feeling, and now the feeling is there, and it's all right for it to be there, it has to be, because it's there. Now, you relax, the tension and tightness, smile, come back to your object of meditation. But because, there is some attachment, the mind is going to go back to it. Every time you do this, you treat it in the same way. You let go of the thoughts, relax, you allow the feeling to be there, relax, come back to your object of meditation.

As you become more familiar with how this pattern works, then you're not going to be caught for quite such a long time with the thought. You're going to see this: "Ah, this is just this again, ok." Let it be, relax, let the feeling be, relax, come back to your object of meditation. Every time you relax, you're letting go of the craving, and when you let go of that craving, your mind becomes pure. As you see this pattern, arising and passing away, more and more clearly, you stop identifying with it as: "This is my pain, and I don't like it." You start seeing it as: "This is just this pattern, and it's ok for that pattern to be there." Letting it be, relaxing, coming back. Eventually, one of two things will happen: either that sensation will go away, or, it won't. I always like that. (Laughs) But if it doesn't go away, your mind is going to have such balance in it, that it doesn't even get distracted by it. It's just there. It's nothing. So, you just let it be there. You don't, direct your mind back to the sensation, only when your mind gets pulled to the sensation, and it becomes a true distraction, that's when you work with it. If it doesn't pull your attention to it anymore, just let it be.

Now this watching this whole process, you begin to understand more and more clearly, how mind's attention, moves from one thing to

another, and you start to see a lot of similarities: it doesn't matter whether it's a sensation here, or a sensation here, or it's a sound, or it's a, a thought; they all work in the same way. Doesn't matter whether it's a mental feeling. It all works in the same way. As you start to gain more and more of a sense of balance, and stop identifying with that as being yours personally, and you start to see this as all of these different little things that come together to make this up, you start developing your wisdom.

TT: 50:23

I'm giving you the definition of wisdom now. The definition of wisdom is: seeing how mind's attention moves, through the process, of Dependent Origination. Now, I've already described Dependent Origination, four or five different times already. It will become more familiar, because you're going to hear me say it, more than a few times. (Laughs) That's the, the thing about being a teacher, is learning how to say the same thing over and over again. (Laughs) But do it in a way that's somewhat interesting.

Ok, so that,

Repeats (the noble truth of the origin of suffering)

MN:

which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this and that;

BV: Now I've always kind of disagreed with this, because it only talks about delight. Craving is part of: "This is a pleasant feeling and I really like it." They never talk about, the aversion. It's the same coin, different side. You treat aversion in the same way that you treat lust. You treat desire in the same way that you treat pushing away. That's how you develop your equanimity. That's how you develop your balance of mind.

MN:

that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being, and craving for non-being. This is called the noble truth of the origin of suffering.

BV: So, actually, the noble truth, is all about suffering, but it's also, all about craving. You can say the second noble truth is: the cause of the suffering is craving. The third noble truth is: the cessation of suffering, is the cessation of craving. The way leading to the cessation of suffering, is the way leading to the cessation of craving. That's how big, craving is. Now craving is not particularly strong, but it is particularly persistent, because of our old habit, of lifetimes, and lifetimes, and lifetimes, of thinking that all of the things that ever happened to us, all of the thoughts we had, all of the things that we ever did was: "This is me personally." In fact, this is part of an impersonal process, and you see that through Dependent Origination.

MN:

22. "And what, friends, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering?"

BV: This has always been kind of a funny thing, because monks, generally realize that there's two kinds of nibbāna. One is a mundane nibbāna; one is a super mundane nibbāna. But they never teach it that way, and, when laymen especially if they've been practicing meditation for awhile, they hear that nibbāna is, the third noble truth is about nibbāna; it's about the cessation of suffering; it's about the cessation of craving. Every time, you relax, and come back to your object of meditation, that's the cessation of suffering. That's the cessation of craving, for a brief moment. You have to have these, moments, stuck together, a lot, before you have a longer period of time, where there is no craving, where there is, just the cessation. But these are all, part of your everyday life. These are all part of your mundane existence.

When you, let go of the craving enough, when you have the third noble truth happen enough, and I'm saying enough – fifty million times, or a few billion times, or a few quadrillion times, depending on situations, eventually, your mind will very much understand. Ahhh,

that's your ah ha moment. All of the stuff that's happening is part of an impersonal process. It's not me, it's not mine, and I can let go of that craving, and not identify with any of this stuff. And that's how the realization of the cessation of suffering occurs, but you have to have many, many moments, of, letting it be, relaxing, smiling, coming back. We're still learners. Least I am. I don't know about anybody else. It's, it takes a long time to realize, and you really, deeply, truly, understand, that letting go of the craving, is the key, to being able to see all of the links of Dependent Origination, and letting them be, and experiencing nibbāna.

Now, I, I've had some students that, are very, intelligent. I mean very intelligent, and in just a short period of time, they are able to see this, but they've had many, other meditation experiences, they've had many lifetimes of doing meditation, and then when they come and they hear the Buddha's teaching, bingo, that's all they need. They understand that, right straight away. I mean it's disgusting how fast they do it sometimes.

The idea that there's no sense in working for nibbāna now because you're not going to get to it in this lifetime, is not true. We're only in the middle of the Buddha sāsaṇa, the Buddha's teaching. It's going to last for another twenty five hundred years. This period of time, from the time that he started teaching the Dhamma, until five thousand years after that, when it fades away, this is called the age of saints, because, when you become a stream-enterer, when you become a sakadāgāmi, when you become an anāgāmi, when you become an arahat, you are considered a saint. It's not a group of people deciding that you're a saint. It's your own deep understanding of how Dependent Origination works. And that's looking at it from a macroscopic view, a very big view, and, a microscopic view, understanding that this Dependent Origination is arising and passing away all the time. Fast. Each thought moment.

And it's also, in this grosser form that they're talking about here, with birth, and of the coming in to being, and the death, and all of that; it's in the grosser form too, when you really begin to understand that. That's when you start letting go of the craving more and more

easily, you start seeing more and more subtle things about the craving when it arises, and you're able to let it go, much more easily that way.

Now there's a lot of talk, especially with laymen, but ah, also a lot of monks that they talk about jhānas, and they say: "Well, the Buddha was talking about jhānas a lot, and he was talking about a pleasant abiding here and now." But what's the definition of a jhāna? My definition of a jhāna is, that is your level of understanding, of how the process of Dependent Origination works. See, as you deeper into the jhāna, as you start seeing more and more finely how all of these things really do work, and it's just a level of your understanding, that's what a jhāna is, but over the years, it's been made into some kind of mystical magical state, and there's a lot of talk about gaining psychic powers by doing jhānas and these kind of things, and yeah, that can happen, but that's not the point of the jhāna.

TT: 1:00:42

The point of the jhāna is to truly understand how mind's attention moves from one thing to another, and seeing that through the eyes of the four noble truths, and Dependent Origination. So this is a real important aspect that an awful lot of people, ah, they don't understand. Jhāna to them is some kind of mystical magical experience, bingo. And: "Look at how good I am. I can get into this jhāna or that jhāna." I don't tell people what jhāna they're in. Doesn't matter. Ah, my knowing about the jhāna, and you're telling me what your experience is, that helps me to be able to speak to you at the level that you're at, so you'll understand what I'm saying. Whether you know you're in this jhāna or that jhāna doesn't really matter. It's your level of understanding, that's the thing that's most important. And that is the thing that directly leads, to the cessation of suffering. That directs, that directly leads to the super mundane understanding, without ever a doubt arising in you mind again: "Yeah, this is the way it really works." Nobody can shake that from you. Nobody can, can say: "Well you say you, you have this experience and you're, you're at this level of enlightenment, but I don't believe you. Nobody you, they can't make you have doubt arise, because you've seen this is

how this process and these patterns work, and you've seen it so many times, that there's no doubt that it'll ever arise again.

Repeats ("And what, friends, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering?")

MN:

It is the remainderless fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go, and rejecting of that same craving. This is called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

23. "And what, friends, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is,

BV: Now, you've probably heard this, many times being a monk, and it's always: right this and right that. But I don't, like that, so much, because it doesn't give you the true meaning of what the noble truth is all about. When I start talking about the noble truths, I start talking about the harmonious path. Harmonious perspective, right view. When your perspective is in harmony, that means you're not seeing, taking anything as being yours, personally. You're seeing it with a perspective of, this is part of an impersonal process.

Now, when I was telling you that today that I want you to laugh at how crazy your mind is, why? Because it changes your perfect your, your perspective, from: "I am these thoughts. I am this feeling." To: "It's only these thoughts. It's only these feelings." See how powerful that really is. Developing that wider mind, means that it helps you to see where your attachments are more easily, and attachment is always: "I am that. I am these thoughts. Eh, I am this opinion. I am these concepts. This is who I am." When you laugh at that, all of a sudden your mind becomes light. And with that lightness, you see the absurdity of, being caught with all this other stuff.

So, the next part of the eight fold path is, they call it right intention here, they call it right thought in a lot of places. I don't like either one of those. I call it harmonious imaging. Now the harmonious imaging, is bringing that image up into your mind, of peace or calm

or whatever joy or clarity, whatever it happens to be, bringing that image up and putting that image in your heart. We have the habit of bringing up a lot of images, ahhh, criticalness of ourselves, and these kind of things. We bring up a lot of negative images in our, in our existence. But this is being able to recognize that and the pain we cause ourselves by getting involved with that, and letting that go and bringing up a more positive image.

Now the word next part is called right speech, and I don't like that, of course. So I call it harmonious communication. Now the thing with, the way the eight fold path is being taught these days, especially in retreat, is the teacher will talk about the first two aspects of the eight fold path, and then he'll say: "Right speech, right action, right livelihood, that's only morality, you're being moral by being here, that, ah, so we won't talk about that." So they only teach you a five fold path. But, when I started looking at, the Buddha, when he gave his first discourse, he was talking directly to the monks, about their practice, right then, right there. He wasn't saying: "Well, be moral." He was saying: You have to learn how to communicate, with yourself, in a harmonious way, to have a good practice. You have to learn how to communicate, softly, gently, not, throwing your mind around, not trying to block some things from happening and, and wrestling with things. Learn to communicate with, to yourself, with yourself, very gently, very nicely. Then you're following the eight fold path.

Now right action, I call that harmonious movement. You don't want jerky movements in your mind, when there is a distraction. You want it to be as slow. You want it to be like a dance. Very lightly, Don't, try to force anything from not happening, or to happen, but just be in with flow, letting it be, relax, smiling, coming back. Then you get to see, how mind's movements, when your mind gets pulled away from your object of meditation again, you'll get to see how these movements arose. Start becoming more familiar with that movement. And being in harmony with the movement, means not fighting with any kind of movement.

Now the next one, I've always loved this one, they call it right livelihood and they always talk about right livelihood as, not selling any guns, not selling any poisons. And, and what has that have to do with your practice, right here, right now? So I've changed that a little bit, and I've said: "harmonious lifestyle." Develop the habit, of having a balanced mind. Develop the habit of, helping other people when it's appropriate, leaving them alone when it's not appropriate. It's developing in yourself a lifestyle where your mind will tend towards positive things, that tends towards your own happiness.

TT: 1:10:20

Now the next part, ah, they call this right effort, and I think this is extremely misunderstood. But, ah, I call it harmonious practice, because now we're getting right down to the nitty-gritty of the practice. What is harmonious practice? Harmonious practice is seeing when your mind is, dwelling on something unwholesome. Anything that pulls your mind away from your object of meditation is unwholesome. Why? Because you're identifying with it, with taking these thoughts and feelings personally. So you let go, of that distraction, and relax. You bring your attention, and you smile, back to your object of meditation, and you stay with your object of meditation.

The first part of the practice is recognizing that your mind is distracted. Then the next part of the practice is releasing, then relaxing, then re-smiling, then re-directing your attention back to your object of meditation, and repeating. That's six Rs. He, he, he, wasn't I sneaky? Oops I'm not supposed to use that word any more at all, being sneaky? (Laughs) What, oh clever. Aren't I clever? That was it. (Laughs) Now that's, that's the correct kind of practice. It's not doing it too fast. It's not doing it too slow. But it's recognizing, releasing, relaxing, re-smiling, returning, repeating, just staying with your object of meditation. Keep smiling and staying with your object of meditation.

Now the next is called right mindfulness, and I always had a kick out of, the definitions of mindful: "Well, just be mindful, that's all." Mindfulness is, observing, the movements of mind, moment to

moment. Seeing what mind is doing. How is it doing it? Seeing this as being part of an impersonal process. Seeing the patterns of the movements of mind. Observing it. Not trying to control it. Just observing it. Letting it be, relaxing, and then coming back.

Now the next part of the eight fold path is called right concentration and it's always defined as: first jhāna, second jhāna, third jhāna, fourth jhāna. But there's not, same kind of jhāna that the Buddha's teaching, as what almost everybody else in the Buddhist world is teaching. Most people are practicing a form of absorption concentration, where your mind, goes on to your object of meditation, and it stays glued there. Doesn't move. But that doesn't go along with the rest of the eight fold path. The, eight fold path is about watching the movements of mind, not, sticking your mind on one thing to the exclusion of everything else. So, instead of concentration, I call it collectedness. So it's a harmonious collectedness. And a collected mind is a mind that's alert. It's a mind that's still. But not so still that it doesn't allow movement to occur. It's a mind that, is very calm, very tranquil, very alert. And as you go deeper in your jhānas, you start seeing that alertness, in finer and finer detail.

MN:

{...}

24. "And what, friends, is, harmonious perspective? Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering—this is called harmonious perspective.

BV: Basically that's what I was saying, but I said it in different words.

MN:

25. "And what, friends, is harmonious imagining? Imagining of renunciation, imagining of non-ill will, and imagining of non-cruelty—this is called harmonious imagining.

BV: So this is talking about directly, practicing your compassion, and your Loving-Kindness.

MN:

26. "And what, friends, is harmonious communication? Abstaining from harsh and false speech, abstain, abstaining from malicious speech, abstaining from, ah, false speech, malicious speech, and abstaining from idle chatter—this is called right speech.

BV: But, My definition's a little bit deeper, and it has more to do with the eight fold path, and what you're doing in the, in the present moment which is, any time, you, are critical of yourself, there is aversion in your mind, and, we have a tendency to come down on ourselves, be critical of ourselves, not like our selves because of this or that, and that's part of, the, ah, harsh speech. So you have to learn how to communicate with, more love, more acceptance, more, lightness in your mind.

MN:

27. "And what, friends, is harmonious movement? Abstaining from killing living beings, abstaining from taking what is not given, and abstaining from misconduct in sensual pleasures— {...}

BV: It is being able to watch movements, and how they arise.

MN:

28. "And what, friends, is harmonious life style? Here a noble disciple, having understood wrong livelihood, earns his living by right livelihood— {...}

BV: Isn't that absurd? What does that have to do with your practice, right here, right now? And I've already explained that.

MN:

29. "And what, friends, is harmonious practice or right effort? Here a monk awakens enthusiasm for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states,

BV: He has enthusiasm, for the non-arising of unarisen evil states. How do you do that?

S: Wisdom?

BV: (Laughs) ~ You stay on your object of meditation. You have enthusiasm in staying on your object of meditation.

S: ~

BV: Well, how, so how do you the non-arising of unarisen evil states? You make effort. You arouse energy. You exert your mind, and you strive. Now all of these words are about pushing, of trying really hard. Don't do it. Just simply observe. Just lightly, lightly.

MN:

{...} He awakens enthusiasm for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens enthusiasm for the arising of unarisen wholesome states,

TT: 1:20:10

BV: Coming back to your object of meditation.

MN:

{...}

He awakens enthusiasm for the continuance, non-disappearance, strengthening, increase, and fulfill up, flup, fulfillment by development of arisen wholesome states,

{...}

BV: Stay on your object of meditation as much as you can. That's basically all that it said.

MN:

30. "And what, friends, is right mindfulness? Here a monk abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, {...} He abides contemplating mind as mind, {...} He abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, {...}

31. "And what, friends, is, harmonious collectedness? Here, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states,

BV: How are you secluded from sensual pleasures?

S: Who, me?

BV: No, I know you know it. When you're sitting in meditation, you close your eyes. The sensual pleasure of seeing is not there. You hear a sound, as soon as you notice your mind went to that sound, you let the sound be, you relax, you smile, you come back to your object of meditation. It's the same, with, your smell, with your tongue, with your body, and with your thoughts. In other words, as soon as you see that your mind has been distracted at any one of the sense doors, you let that sense door be. You relax, you come back to your object of meditation. That's how you're secluded from sensual pleasures.

Secluded from unwholesome states means that you let go of the hindrances when they arise. There's five of them. Lust: "I like it." Hatred: "I don't like it." Sleepiness, dullness: "I'm sleepy. I'm tired. I'm dull." Restlessness, anxiety: "I feel like jumping out of my skin." Doubt: "I don't know." Now the one thing that, see all of these have in common, is that when they arise, we identify very strongly with the hindrance. And the reason that it's a hindrance is because, it takes your mind's attention and it just, keeps it on that thing, for

however long. So, when you're secluded from unwholesome states, now one of the things with the hindrances, which I'm going to talk about tomorrow, is, that the hindrances are by far, your best friend. When they arise, they are saying: "Guess where I'm attached?" Guess where I have these thoughts and these opinions and these concepts, and I think they're all me and they're mine." So, when ever a hindrance arises, treat it like an old friend: "Come on in. Let's see how you arise." What happens first? What happens after that? What happens after that? How does this pattern and process work? And you'll see it backwards, because what'll happen is the hindrance will come up – you won't even notice it until you float away. And then, first, you let go of the clinging, relax, then you see the feeling, and the tight mental fist around the feeling, and you relax, and then you come back to your object of meditation. As you do this over and over again, you start seeing, little things arise more and more clearly. And as you recognize, this is how that works, then you start letting go more quickly. And this is how you overcome the hindrances, because as you keep letting go of the hindrance, there's no try to control. There's only, just seeing this as a process, and when that happens, the attachment becomes less, and less, and less, until finally it just fades away. That is how you get to experience jhānas.

And every time a hindrance arises, it is your teacher. It is your best friend because it's showing you where your attachment is, and it's teaching you, how you hold on to that attachment, and, it's teaching you how to let go of attachment, if you treat it in the right way. So, when a hindrance finally fades away, there's a real sense of relief, and when that happens, right after that, there's a sense of joy, very strong, very nice. It's, uplifting, your, your mind is very light, your body is very light. Don't be attached. What's that mean? Ok, that's a pleasant feeling. Let it be there, relax. Come back to your object of meditation.

When the joy fades away, and it will, then you will experience very strong feeling of comfort in your mind and in your body. And that feeling of comfort, the Buddha called, in Pāli, he called it sukha, in English, we call it happiness. And as you feel more and more comfortable, your mind becomes more and more tranquil, and more

and more peaceful. What I just described to you is the first jhāna, and how you get into the first jhāna. You become secluded from, sensual pleasures, and you become secluded from unwholesome states. And letting go of those unwholesome states, the joy arises, and the happiness arises, and the tranquility. And there's different degrees of this, and that's what this book is talking about.

You don't need to know any more about that, right now. Just realize that, there is no such a thing as a bad meditation, if, you use the six Rs. Recognize a distraction, let go of the distraction, release. Relax. Let go of the tension caused by the distraction. Re-smile. Keep your mind light. Re-direct your attention back to your object of meditation, and, continue. Repeat. Stay with your object of meditation. Keep repeating when the, the feeling of Loving-Kindness starts to go away, then you make another wish and help it get stronger again.

Ok? Easy, right? Sometimes. (Laughs) Other times, not so easy. A bad meditation would be, that you notice that you're thinking about something, and you really want to stay involved in it.

S: ~

BV: Ok, now you're not meditating at all. You're just caught by your craving and your clinging and your all of habitual habits and that sort of thing. You that that what you're thinking about is more important than being with your object of meditation, and it's not true. So the only time there is bad meditation, is when you neglect, doing the meditation. A lot of people have these ideas that, ah, my mind is very active right now, it's lousy meditation, And it's not. It means you have to work. It means that you have to keep stay with it, and keep trying to see its true nature of how this stuff arises, but it's good meditation, because every time you let it go, obs... relax and you smile and you come back to your object of meditation, you're building your observation power a little bit at a time. So the more that happens, the faster your mindfulness improves. And with that, the meditation improves, and your understanding of, why you're meditating and how you're meditating improves, and that's what the Buddha was real big on teaching. How, the meditation, works. How, your mind works. As you go deeper into your meditation, it gets more

interesting. It gets real fun. And you can look forward to that. Don't push for it to happen, but, you can look forward to that.

TT: 1:31:00

MN:

{...}

"This is called the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

32. "At Benares, friends, in the Deer Park at Isipatana the Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened, set rolling the matchless Wheel of the Dhamma, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or anyone in the world—that is, the announcing, teaching, describing, establishing, revealing, expounding, and exhibiting of these Four Noble Truths."

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

BV: So. Now, is the time to maybe do some walking meditation to get, get you body, ah, blood circulating a little bit, and then sit. Ok? I gave you a lot tonight. Of course I give you a lot every night. (Laughs) But if, if there's some things that your mind questions or begins to think about, don't worry, you'll get to hear it again in a different way. You'll start to understand. At first, it can be very foreign, and, and very ah, almost like it's disjointed, but it's not. And as we go thru the, the different suttas, you'll, you'll start to grasp it more and more easily and more quickly. Ok?

So let's share some merit now.

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 . . .

Sutta text translation: (C) Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995, 2001. Reprinted from
The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the
Majjhima Nikaya with permission of Wisdom Publications, 199 Elm
Street, Somerville, MA 02144 U.S.A, www.wisdompubs.org

Text last edited: 01-Feb-08