# Week 10- The Cause of Suffering

#### **Suggested Meditative Practices**

\*During this week we are invited to practice bare awareness. During your sitting, while being aware of the ever changing sensations- pleasant, painful and neutral- notice what arises in your mind- and which of the three kinds of sensations is most apparent to you.

\*This week, develop a solid and enjoyable practice of eating meditation. Freshen up your practice with a different approach each meal. Some possibilities: you may like to observe which piece of food you wish to put in your mouth first, reflecting on why that is or you may focus on the taste or sensation of the food as you are chewing each mouthful at least thirty times and so on

# **Sutra Readings**

#### Snp 4.1

#### Kama Sutta: Sensual Pleasure

If one, longing for sensual pleasure, achieves it, yes, he's enraptured at heart. The ordinary person thinks they get what they want. But if for that person — longing, desiring — the pleasures diminish, She's shattered, as if shot with an arrow. Whoever avoids sensual desires — as he would, with his foot, the head of a snake — goes beyond, mindful, this attachment in the world. A person who is greedy for possessions and wealth, servants, employees, women, men, relatives, many sensual pleasures, is overpowered with weakness and trampled by trouble, for pain begins to invade them as water invades a cracked boat. So one, always mindful, should avoid being trapped by sensual desires. Letting them go, he'll cross over the flood like one who, having bailed out the boat, has reached the far shore.

#### Ud 1.10

#### Bahiya Sutta: About Bahiya

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi, in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Now at that time Bahiya of the Bark-cloth was living in Supparaka by the seashore. He was worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, given homage — a recipient of robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medical requisites for the sick. Then, when he was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking arose to his awareness: "Now, of those who in this world are Liberated or have entered the path of Liberation, am I one?"

Then a devata who had once been a blood relative of Bahiya of the Bark-cloth — compassionate, desiring his welfare, knowing with her own awareness the line of thinking that had arisen in his awareness — went to where he was staying and on arrival said to him: "You, Bahiya, are neither an liberated one nor have

you entered the path of liberation. You don't even have the practice whereby you would become liberated or enter the path."

"But who then, living in this world, is liberated or has entered the path to liberation?"

"Bahiya, there is a city in the northern country named Savatthi. The Blessed One — an arahant, rightly self-awakened — is living there now. He is truly an arahant and he teaches the Dhamma that leads to liberation."

Then Bahiya, deeply chastened by the devata, left Supparaka right then and, in the space of one day and night, went all the way to where the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi, in Anathapindika's monastery in Jeta's Grove,. At that time, a large number of monks were doing walking meditation in the open air. He went to them and, on arrival, said, "Where, venerable sirs, is the Blessed One staying — the arahant, right self-awakened? I want to see him."

"He has gone into the town on almsround."

Then Bahiya, hurriedly leaving Jeta's Grove and entering Savatthi, saw the Blessed One going for alms in Savatthi — calm, calming, his senses at peace, his mind at peace, tranquil and poised in the ultimate sense, accomplished, trained, guarded, his senses restrained, a Great One. Seeing him, he was deeply moved and approached the Blessed One and, prostrated with his head at the Blessed One's feet, and said, "Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One-Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term welfare and bliss."

When this was said, the Blessed One said to him: "This is not the time, Bahiya. We have entered the town for our almsround."

A second time, Bahiya said to the Blessed One: "But it is hard to know for sure what dangers there may be for the Blessed One's life, or what dangers there may be for mine. Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One-Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term welfare and bliss."

A second time, the Blessed One said to him: "This is not the time, Bahiya. We have entered the town for alms."

A third time, Bahiya said to the Blessed One: "But it is hard to know for sure what dangers there may be for the Blessed One's life, or what dangers there may be for mine. Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One-Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term welfare and bliss."

"Then, Bahiya, you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bahiya, there is no you in terms of that. When there is no you in terms of that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress."

Through hearing this brief explanation of the Dhamma from the Blessed One, the mind of Bahiya of the Bark-cloth right then and there was released from the effluents through lack of clinging/sustenance. Having exhorted Bahiya of the Bark-cloth with this brief explanation of the Dhamma, the Blessed One left.

Now, not long after the Blessed One's departure, Bahiya — attacked by a cow with a calf — lost his life. Then the Blessed One, having gone for alms in Savatthi, after the meal, returning from his alms round with a large number of monks, saw that Bahiya had died. On seeing him, he said to the monks, "Take Bahiya's body and, placing it on a litter and carrying it away, cremate it and build him a memorial. Your companion in the holy life has died."

"As you say, lord," the monks replied. After placing Bahiya's body on a litter, carrying it off, cremating it, and building him a memorial, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, "Bahiya's body has been cremated, lord, and his memorial has been built. What is his destination? What is his future state?"

"Monks, Bahiya of the Bark-cloth was wise. He practiced the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma and did not pester me with issues related to the Dhamma. Bahiya of the Bark-cloth, monks, is totally unbound."

### **Attadanda Sutta: Arming Oneself**

(excerpt)

translated from the Pali by

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Translator's note:

The Sutta Nipata is probably one of the most diverse collections of discourses to be found in the Pali Tipitaka, and the chapter from which this sutta is taken, the Atthaka-vagga, may well be the oldest portion of the entire canon. It is composed mostly in verse, and includes some lovely poetry.

There is something particularly moving for me about this poem, perhaps because it is composed in the first person and appears to reveal the process through which the Buddha himself came to understanding; perhaps because of the vulnerability expressed in the opening stanzas, where he admits his fear and sense of dread over the nature of the human condition. Or maybe it is just the utter simplicity of first, the problem (people hurting each other), and then its cause (basic human selfishness, driven by desire), and finally, its solution (letting go of the ego's attachments). How easy he can so often make it all sound!

The first line alone is a counter-intuitive show-stopper. Conventional wisdom suggests that arming oneself is a prudent response to fear of self-injury. Yet the Buddha's wisdom goes deeper to observe how this actually contributes to the generation of more fear. Do we really feel more safe when we lash out at our critics and adversaries? Our culture certainly assumes so; but the Buddha is offering an alternative response, emerging from his own experience.

The phrase translated here as "arming oneself," which serves as the title of the sutta, is elsewhere rendered "embracing violence" (Norman) or "violent conduct" (Saddhatissa). The basic image is of a person taking up a stick, (danda); the stick being a common symbol in Indian literature for both violence and punishment.

The reader can hardly help feeling swept up in the emotional turmoil of the author. The tension mounts as the fear and despair builds, and then breaks suddenly with the insight that, like an animal driven to madness by an injury, mankind is not evil by nature but is only driven to violence by the relentless pressure of desire.

The latter half of the poem describes how to cultivate a state of mind — a stance within unfolding experience — that avoids the dysfunctional move of creating and projecting oneself on every situation.

These few verses embrace the whole of the four noble truths: the suffering manifest as violence, its cause by the thorn in the heart, the "unbinding" or crossing over this, and the way to cultivate the selflessness that constitutes real freedom.

... Fear is born from arming oneself. Just see how many people fight!

I'll tell you about the dreadful fear that caused me to shake all over: Seeing creatures flopping around,

Like fish in water too shallow, So hostile to one another! —

Seeing this, I became afraid. This world completely lacks essence;

It trembles in all directions. I longed to find myself a place Unscathed —

but I could not see it. Seeing people locked in conflict, I became completely distraught. But then I discerned here a thorn — Hard to see — lodged deep in the heart.

It's only when pierced by this thorn That one runs in all directions.

So if that thorn is taken out — one does not run, and settles down. ... Who here has crossed over desires, the world's bond, so hard to get past, he does not grieve, she does not mourn.

His stream is cut, she's all unbound. What went before — let go of that! All that's to come — have none of it! Don't hold on to what's in between,

And you'll wander fully at peace. For whom there is no "I-making" All throughout the body and mind, And who grieves not for what is not is undefeated in the world. For whom there is no "this is mine" Nor anything like "that is theirs" Not even finding "self-ness," he does not grieve at "I have nothing." ...

# Upadana Sutta: Clinging translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu © 1998–2012

Dwelling at Savatthi. There the Blessed One said to the monks: "In one who keeps focusing on the allure of clingable phenomena (or: phenomena that offer sustenance = the five aggregates), craving develops. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origin of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

"Just as if a great mass of fire of ten... twenty... thirty or forty cartloads of timber were burning, and into it a man would time & again throw dried grass, dried cow dung, & dried timber, so that the great mass of fire — thus nourished, thus sustained — would burn for a long, long time. In the same way, in one who

keeps focusing on the allure of clingable phenomena, craving develops. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origin of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

"Now, in one who keeps focusing on the drawbacks of clingable phenomena, craving ceases. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging, illness & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

"Just as if a great mass of fire of ten... twenty... thirty or forty cartloads of timber were burning, into which a man simply would *not* time & again throw dried grass, dried cow dung, or dried timber, so that the great mass of fire — its original sustenance being consumed, and no other being offered — would, without nutriment, go out. In the same way, in one who keeps focusing on the drawbacks of clingable phenomena, craving ceases. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging, illness & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress."

## **Reflection Questions**

In my daily life, do I operate from a sense of lack, or from a sense of abundance?

What are the conditions of happiness that I am experiencing right now?

Looking over the whole week, am I able to notice a tendency towards seeking certain kinds of things? Possessions, people, comfort, love? Am I able to begin to discover why that might be?

When I am attracted to or repulsed by something, what "stories" or interpretations underlie this response?