

MN 18

The Honeyball

Madhupiṇḍika Sutta

Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center

A Dhamma talk by Bhante Vimalaramsi

18-Aug-07

MN:

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Sakyan country at Kapilavatthu in Nigrodha's Park.

2. Then, when it was morning, the Blessed One dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went into Kapilavatthu for alms. When he had wandered for alms in Kapilavatthu and had returned from his almsround, after his meal he went to the Great Wood for the day's abiding, and entering the Great Wood, sat down at the root of a bilva sapling for the day's abiding.

3. Daṇḍapāṇi the Sakyan, while walking and wandering for exercise, also went to the Great Wood, and when he had entered the Great Wood, he went to the bilva sapling where the Blessed One was and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he stood at one side leaning on his stick and asked the Blessed One:

"What does the recluse assert, what does he proclaim?"

4. "Friend, I assert and proclaim [my teaching] in such a way that one does not quarrel with anyone in the world with its gods, its Maras, and its Brahmas, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its princes and its people; in such a way that perceptions no more underlie that brahmin who abides detached from sensual pleasures, without perplexity, shorn of worry, free from craving for any kind of being."

5. When this was said, Daṇḍapāṇi the Sakyan shook his head, wagged his tongue, and raised his eyebrows until his forehead was puckered in three lines. Then he departed, leaning on his stick.

6. Then, when it was evening, the Blessed One rose from meditation and went to Nigrodha's Park, where he sat down on a seat made ready for him and told the bhikkhus what had taken place. Then a certain bhikkhu asked the Blessed One:

7. "But, venerable sir, how does the Blessed One assert and proclaim [his teaching] in such a way that he does not quarrel with anyone in the world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmas, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its princes and its people? And, venerable sir, how is it that perceptions no more underlie the Blessed One, that brahmin who abides detached from sensual pleasures, without perplexity, shorn of worry, free from craving for any kind of being?"

8. "Bhikkhu, as to the source through which perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation

BV: What is mental proliferation? You should have that one right on the tip of your tongue, because, guess what? You have a lot of it.

Ah, let's do that again: Monks so as to the source through which perceptions and notions born of mental proliferation

MN:

beset a man: if nothing is found there to delight in,

BV: Listen closely.

MN:

welcome and hold to, this is the end of the underlying tendency to lust, of the underlying tendency to aversion, of the underlying tendency to views,

BV: Opinions, concepts, stories.

MN:

of the underlying tendency to doubt, of the underlying tendency to conceit, of the underlying tendency to desire for being, of the underlying tendency to ignorance; this is the end of resorting to rods and weapons, of quarrels, brawls, disputes, recrimination, malicious words, and false speech; here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder."

BV: How do you do that?

S: ~energy rises ~

BV: But it's also letting go of your views, and concepts of what you think the meditation is

supposed to be. Ok, Because you've got an idea, and you'll attach to that idea, and anything other than that will seem like it's not right. Ergo, you always have many questions and you say: "Well, I'm not doing it right." That's because of your preconceived ideas, and want to make it happen because of those preconceived ideas, in that way.

Do you know what's going to happen in five minutes? Then why try to plan it? Let go of the idea that you're supposed to know. When you have that beginner's mind, you haven't got a clue what's going to be happening next. It's all an adventure. So you let go of the concepts. You let go of the opinions. You let go of the desires because this is the way I think it's supposed to be.

That's why you have so much trouble with restlessness, because of, there is a longing, and this is a subtle kind of desire, that things happen the way you think they should. Ok? So, you have to start searching a little bit, and forgive yourself for doing that. See what I mean? That will make your meditation even more and more calm. And, you have a habit of something new and exciting happen, and you have a habit of questioning: "Well, I've never seen this before, what am I supposed to do with it?" But that's part of your preconceived ideas always to get involved in thinking about, rather than just accepting it and say: "Ok, this is a new one. Fine. Let's see how this one felt." Ok? So you got to forgive yourself for doing that. By the way, the forgiveness meditation is by far the strongest meditation that I've ever run across. It cuts right through.

Ok, when you're actually able to do this and do it well, there's no need for weapons, for quarrels, for brawling, for disputes, recriminations, malicious

words, false speech; here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder, when you see how it works, and you let it be, without getting involved with it. You're still a little bit too tight; you need to relax a little bit more. But when I'm saying relax, I'm saying relax your opinions, of the way you think, it's going to happen. Ok?

MN:

9. That is what the Blessed One said. Having said this, the Sublime One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling.

10. Then, soon after the Blessed One had gone, the bhikkhus considered: "Now, friends, the Blessed One has risen from his seat and gone into his dwelling after giving a summary in brief without expounding the detailed meaning. Now who will expound this in detail?" Then they considered: "The venerable Mahā Kaccāna is praised by the Teacher and esteemed by his wise companions in the holy life. He is capable of expounding the detailed meaning. Suppose we went to him and asked him the meaning of this."

BV: Kaccāna, he liked to sit in meditation. He didn't like to be disturbed. You'll see, in a minute.

MN:

11. Then the bhikkhus went to the venerable Mahā Kaccāna and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, they sat down to one side and told him what had taken place, adding: "Let the venerable Mahā Kaccāna expound it to us."

12. [The venerable Mahā Kaccāna replied:] "Friends, it is as though a man needing heartwood, seeking

heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood,
thought that heartwood should be sought for among
the branches and leaves of a great tree standing
possessed of heartwood, after he had passed over
the root

and the trunk. And so it is with you, venerable sirs,
that you think that I should be asked about the
meaning of this, after you passed the Blessed One by
when you were face to face with the Teacher. For
knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees; he
is vision, he is knowledge, he is the Dhamma, he is
the holy one; he is the sayer, the proclaimer, the
elucidator of meaning, the giver of the Deathless, the
lord of the Dhamma, the Tathagata. That was the
time when you should have asked the Blessed One
the meaning. As he told you, so you should have
remembered it."

13. "Surely, friend Kaccāna, knowing, the Blessed
One knows; seeing, he sees; he is vision...the
Tathagata. That was the time when we should have
asked the Blessed One the meaning. As he told us, so
we should have remembered it. Yet the venerable
Mahā Kaccāna is praised by the Teacher and
esteemed by his wise companions in the holy life.
The venerable Mahā Kaccāna is capable of
expounding the detailed meaning of this summary
given in brief by the Blessed One without expounding
the detailed meaning. Let the venerable Mahā
Kaccāna expound it without finding it troublesome."

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

BV: Now this is a really, really important statement.
You can obtain nibbāna, listening to this. And if your
mind starts wandering, and you start dulling out, and
you start thinking about this or that, then you're not

really paying close attention, and then, it ain't gonna happen. Any time a Dhamma talk is given, it's really important, to pay as close attention as you possibly can.

MN:

"—"Yes, friend," the bhikkhus replied. The venerable Mahā Kaccāna said this:

15. "Friends, when the Blessed One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling after giving a summary in brief without expounding the detailed meaning, that is: 'Bhikkhu, as to the source through which perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation beset a man: if nothing is found there to delight in, welcome, and hold to, this is the end of the underlying tendency to lust...this is the end of resorting to rods and weapons...here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder,' I understand the detailed meaning of it to be as follows:

16. "Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about.

BV: Why? Because when you perceive something, it gives us the name, and then your mind just kind of takes off and starts thinking.

MN:

What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates. With what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past,

future, and present forms cognizable through the eye.

BV: But it's always thinking about. Not actually being in the present moment. That's why the relax step is so amazing, because all the mental proliferation, ceases. Now, you're just able to see, what's there.

MN:

"Dependent on the ear and sounds...Dependent on the nose and odours...Dependent on the tongue and flavours...Dependent on the body and tangibles...Dependent on the mind and mind-objects, mind-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates. With what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present mind-objects cognizable through the mind.

BV: So every time you six R, you're getting your brief moment, of release from the craving, and the more you bring that mind back to your object of meditation, the more pure your mind becomes. The more pure your mind becomes, the more easily you're able to see how mind's attention goes from one thing to another, so you start letting go a little bit more quickly and more easily. You start noticing more and more, teeny, tiny, subtle things.

MN:

17. "When there is the eye, a form, and eye-consciousness, it is possible to point out the manifestation of contact. When there is the

manifestation of contact, it is possible to point out the manifestation of feeling. When there is the manifestation of feeling, it is possible to point out the manifestation of perception. When there is the manifestation of perception, it is possible to point out the manifestation of thinking. When there is the manifestation of thinking, it is possible to point out the manifestation of besetment by perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation.

BV: Got it?

S: ~

BV: Well, hang on just a minute. You'll get it.

MN:

"When there is the ear, a sound, and ear-consciousness... When there is the nose, an odour, and nose-consciousness...When there is the tongue, a flavour, and tongue-consciousness...When there is the body, a tangible, and body-consciousness...When there is the mind, a mind-object, and mind-consciousness...

BV: Not all thinking is bad. Because sometimes you need to have a little bit of thought that describes what's happening in the present moment, but it just happens one time and you let it go. You don't try to delve into it, because if you delve into it, then you're thinking about this, you're thinking about that, and then you're, bye bye. The observation thoughts, are part of the necessary practice, and you're not going to have them all the time, but they'll pop up, and it'll be like: "Oh! Things just happened.", and then you continue on. That's not a distracting thought.

Distracting thought is: "Well, I remember the last time that happened." So you have to let that kind of

thing go, because you're thinking about the past. See, your observation thought is just about what's happening in the present moment. That's it. Or, just has happened in the present moment.

"When there is the manifestation of thinking,"

MN:

it is possible to point out the manifestation of besetment by perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation.

18. "When there is no eye, no form, and no eye-consciousness, it is impossible to point out the manifestation of contact. When there is no manifestation of contact, it is impossible to point out the manifestation of feeling. When there is no manifestation of feeling, it is impossible to point out the manifestation of perception. When there is no manifestation of perception, it is impossible to point out the manifestation of thinking. When there is no manifestation of thinking, it is impossible to point out the manifestation of besetment by perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation.

BV: Why? Dukkha, dukkha.

S:~

BV: If you don't have any eye, and there is no color and form, how can eye-consciousness arise? And if there's no eye-consciousness, there certainly can't be any contact, because there's no meeting of these three things. So none of the other stuff can arise.

S: All conditioned.

BV: It's all conditioned. Hmph.

MN:

"When there is no ear, no sound, and no ear-consciousness...When there is no nose, no odour, and no nose-consciousness...When there is no tongue, no flavour, and no tongue-consciousness...When there is no body, no tangible, and no body-consciousness...When there is no mind, no mind-object, and no mind-consciousness...it is impossible to point out the manifestation of besetment by perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation.

BV: Only makes sense.

MN:

19. "Friends, when the Blessed One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling after giving a summary in brief without expounding the detailed meaning, that is: 'Bhikkhu, as to the source through which perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation beset a man: if nothing is found there to delight in, welcome, and hold to, this is the end of the underlying tendency to lust, of the underlying tendency to aversion, of the underlying tendency to views, of the underlying tendency to doubt, of the underlying tendency to conceit, of the underlying tendency to desire for being, of the underlying tendency to ignorance; this is the end of resorting to rods and weapons, of quarrels, brawls, disputes, recrimination, malicious words, and false speech; here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder,' I understand the detailed meaning of this summary to be thus. Now, friends, if you wish, go to the Blessed One and ask him about the meaning of this. As the Blessed One explains it to you, so you should remember it."

20. Then the bhikkhus, having delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Mahā Kaccāna's words, rose from their seats and went to the Blessed One. After paying homage to him, they sat down at one side and told the Blessed One all that had taken place after he had left, adding: "Then, venerable sir, we went to the venerable Mahā Kaccāna and asked him about the meaning. The venerable Mahā Kaccāna expounded the meaning to us with these terms, statements, and phrases."

21. "Mahā Kaccāna is wise, bhikkhus, Mahā Kaccāna has great wisdom. If you had asked me the meaning of this, I would have explained it to you in the same way that Mahā Kaccāna has explained it. Such is the meaning of this, and so you should remember it."

22. When this was said, the venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, just as if a man exhausted by hunger and weakness came upon a honeyball, wherever he would taste it he would find a sweet delectable flavour; so too, venerable sir, any able-minded bhikkhu, wherever he might scrutinize with wisdom the meaning of this discourse on the Dhamma, would find satisfaction and confidence of mind. Venerable sir, what is the name of this discourse on the Dhamma?"

"As to that, Ānanda, you may remember this discourse on the Dhamma as The Honeyball Discourse."

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

BV: So, when your mind starts to become more and more calm, and you're starting to see more and more clearly how all of these things arise, you will get to a

state, where you start seeing your mind just starting to do this, a little bit, and you relax. But there's stuff that happens before, you see these grosser kind of movements of mind's attention. Now at first, you're not going to see this at all. When you start meditating, you're going to see that your mind's flown away. That was it. But as you become more alert, as you become more awake, to how mind's attention moves, then you let it go and you relax and you come back, then you start seeing more and more little subtle movements, and as you see those and you start relaxing, then you stay on your object of meditation without any distractions at all. Your mind at that time is very pure. Your mind at that time has no unwholesome things in it at all, and you're staying with your object of meditation.

Now there's some advantages of doing this particular kind of meditation, and that is your mind kind of takes to the Loving-Kindness all by itself more easily, and it will start to do this more during your daily activities, and you start to see how you cause yourself pain by, letting mind go, and you start seeing more and more clearly with your daily activities, too. When it becomes automatic, every time mind's attention starts a little blip, now you're starting to get it, and, that, is the cessation of suffering. Nice, Hun?

This particular sutta is very clear in a lot of ways, because it shows you in detail more of how your mind actually works, like when you're talking about: when there is no eye, no form, no eye-consciousness, it is impossible to point out the manifestation of contact, of course, that's true. But, when you see the slight disturbance of mentality and materiality beginning to arise, then there will not be any eye-contact, because there won't be any eye.

And the consciousness by itself, is the potential for consciousness to arise, potential for that awareness. So, even these slightest, tiniest, little movements of mind, are necessary to see and let go of. But you can't do it too fast, and you can't do it too slow. It's got to be done with the right amount of energy, and this is why I've been telling you, that you have to tweak, little bit. If you put too much energy in, mind will go off in one direction, get restless. If you put not enough, it'll dull out. So it's a constant, recognizing how mind's attention is, what it's doing, and how it's doing it, with the right amount of energy. It's simpler than it sounds. It's not that difficult, but it is something that you need to be aware of. Aware of how to, adjust the energy at the right time.

And that's part of mindfulness. The function of mindfulness is to remember. To remember what? Remember to observe how mind's attention moves, remembering to observe. It's not, trying to make something happen. It's just the observation. As you get more interested in how mind's attention moves, then you start seeing it more and more clearly. It only makes sense. It's like when the hindrances arose when you first came here, they were really big and took you away a long time. Now hey don't so much, although they can seem like they're bigger, but because you're looking at them more clearly, and more closely, they're actually smaller, but they look bigger.

And what happened for you yesterday, having being attacked by the hindrances, that's what happened to the Buddha on the night of his enlightenment. He got attacked by the hindrances, big time. But it didn't make his mind shake. It didn't make his mind wobble. He just said: "Ok, there it is, let it be, relax,

come back. That's how the hindrances help you. Because it sharpens your awareness. It sharpens your mindfulness, so your observation power, is more and more clear.

That's why it's so necessary to always go back to your object of meditation. Because if you just release and relax, and release and relax, you're not, developing that observation of how mind went from your object of meditation back to that. See ever time a hindrance arises and you let it go, you come back to your object of meditation, and the hindrance comes up again, it's not the same hindrance. You let that one go. And that gives you an idea of how attachment really works. As you begin to make this a game, as you begin to play with it, instead of get serious with it, that play mode, keeps your mind elevated, so it's real easy to see when it starts to dip down. That's the whole point of having the joy. Not being attached to the joy. But having the joy so that your awareness is sharp, whether it's strong, or nor so strong. Doesn't really matter. But, you can't grab onto it. As soon as you do that, you're lost. So what we have to do is just say: "Well, this is just another feeling. Ok, so what?" Developing your equanimity to that feeling, is the way to let it go, and the way to go deeper in your meditation.

So it's really a necessary, sutta, that we went through, today, even though it's a short sutta, there's a lot, in it. So this is kind of a fun sutta because it brings out some things that you don't normally think about. About how the thinking arises, and the mental proliferation occurring and all of that other stuff.

**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: 06-Feb-08