

MN # 105

To Sunakkhatta

*Sunakkhatta Sutta*

Dhamma talk by Bhante Vimalaramsi

Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center

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BV: This is a rather interesting sutta, because it talks about what can happen if you don't get the fruition, if you just have the experience of the path, without getting the fruition and being careful.

MN:

1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Vesāli in the Great Wood in the Hall with the Peaked Roof.

2. Now on that occasion a number of bhikkhus had declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One thus: "We understand: Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being."

3. Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, heard: "A number of bhikkhus, it seems, have declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One thus: 'We understand: Birth is destroyed ...there is no more coming to any state of being.'" Then Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said to the Blessed One:

BV: Now, this is after he had disrobed and had been criticizing the Buddha for not showing off any supernatural powers.

MN:

4. "I have heard, venerable sir, that a number of bhikkhus have declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One. Did they do so rightly or are there some bhikkhus here

who declare final knowledge because they overestimate themselves?"

5. "When those bhikkhus, Sunakkhatta, declared final knowledge in my presence, there were some bhikkhus who declared final knowledge rightly and there were some who declared final knowledge because they overestimated themselves. Therein, when bhikkhus declare final knowledge rightly, their declaration is true. But when bhikkhus declare final knowledge because they overestimate themselves, the Tathāgata thinks: 'I should teach them the Dhamma.' Thus it is in this case, Sunakkhatta, that the Tathāgata thinks: 'I should teach them the Dhamma.' But some misguided men here formulate a question, come to the Tathāgata, and ask it. In that case, Sunakkhatta, [253] though the Tathāgata has thought: 'I should teach them the Dhamma,' he changes his mind."

6. "This is the time, Blessed One, this is the time, Sublime One, for the Blessed One to teach the Dhamma. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the bhikkhus will remember it."

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

"Yes, venerable sir," Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

7. "There are, Sunakkhatta, these five cords of sensual pleasure. What are the five? Forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. Sounds cognizable by the ear...Odours cognizable by the nose...Flavours cognizable by the tongue...Tangibles cognizable by the body that are wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust. These are the five cords of sensual pleasure.

8. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on worldly material things. When a person is intent on worldly material things, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the imperturbable is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to

understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

9. "Suppose, Sunakkhatta, a man had left his own village or town a long time ago, and he were to see another man who had only recently left that village or town. He would ask that man whether the people of that village or town were safe, prosperous, and healthy, and that man would tell him whether the people of that village or town were safe, prosperous, [254] and healthy. What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Would that first man listen to him, give him ear, and exert his mind to understand?"—"Yes, venerable sir."—"So too, Sunakkhatta, it is possible that some person here may be intent on worldly material things. When a person is intent on worldly material things, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the imperturbable is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that. He should be understood as a person who is intent on worldly material things.

10. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the imperturbable. When a person is intent on the imperturbable, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about worldly material things is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

11. "Just as a yellow leaf that has fallen from its stalk is incapable of becoming green again, so too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is intent on the imperturbable he has shed the fetter of worldly material things. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of worldly material things who is intent on the imperturbable.

12. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the base of nothingness. When a person is intent on the base of nothingness, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. [255] But when talk about the

imperturbable is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it.

BV: The imperturbable is the first part of the fourth jhāna and it's also talking about the realm of infinite space and the realm of infinite consciousness. That's what he's lumping together as the imperturbable. As your mind gets more and more balanced, more and more calm, you start to see when your mind is doing this and you let it go right then and relax, and then you see what happens right before your mind had the bigger movements. As you go deeper and deeper into that you will eventually get to a state of nothingness, where mind is not looking outside of itself. The six sense doors don't come into being unless there's contact, but you still have the six sense doors at that time. When you get to neither-perception-nor-non-perception, there is no more sense doors.

MN:

He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

BV: So, once you start getting into the deeper realms you really feel like talking to other people that have the same kind of experience, and talking about other things just doesn't hold it for you so much, doesn't hold your attention.

MN:

13. "Just as a thick stone that has split in two cannot be joined together again, so too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is intent on the base of nothingness his fetter of the imperturbable has been split. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the imperturbable

BV: The fetters are the disturbances of the lower jhānas and the lower jhānas being infinite space, infinite consciousness.

Repeats (He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the imperturbable)

MN:

who is intent on the base of nothingness.

14. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. When a person is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But

when talk about the base of nothingness is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it.

BV: Because he already knows it.

MN:

He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

BV: When you get into the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception it's really tough to see what's happening in the present. There's still things that are happening. By the time that you get to this state, you should automatically have the relaxing every mind does anything at all. Anything that arises in the mind just relaxing into it, relax, relax, relax, relax... Now, there's still things that happen while you're in this realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, but the perception is so fine that you can't tell whether it's really there or not in the present moment. When you come out and you start reflecting about what happened while you were in that state, then you start remembering some of the things that were happening. There is still feeling in that state. I've had some students that have asked, you know they say "You know, I don't know whether I was asleep or not". And the way you tell whether there was any sloth and torpor is by reflecting what happened while you were in that state. So, if you get into that state, then when you come out you need to spend time reflecting on what happened. If you can remember what happened then you are experiencing that state. If you can't remember what was happening then you were dulling out, and that means that your energy was not balanced. There was too little energy you were putting in. So, what we need to do with something like that is walk a little bit more briskly so that your blood gets flowing a little bit more, but still staying with your meditation all of the time, developing that habit of continually relaxing. That's utmost important.

Repeats ("It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. When a person is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, only talk concerning that interests him,)

This is an incredibly fine state, but it's also a very interesting state because all kinds of wonderful things start happening.

Repeats (only talk concerning that interests him,)

MN:

and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the base of nothingness is going on, he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

15. "Suppose a person has eaten some delicious food and thrown it up. What do you think, Sunakkhatta? Could that man have any desire to eat that food again?"

"No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because that food is considered repulsive."

"So too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, his fetter of the base of nothingness has been rejected. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the base of nothingness who is intent on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

16. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some person here may be completely intent on Nibbāna. When a person is completely intent on Nibbāna, only talk concerning that interests him, and his thinking and pondering are in line with that, and he associates with that kind of person, and he finds satisfaction in that. But when talk about the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is going on, [256] he will not listen to it or give it ear or exert his mind to understand it. He does not associate with that kind of person, and he does not find satisfaction in that.

BV: So, we're talking right now about a person that has experienced the path knowledge. That's the first experience of Nibbāna where you see a very brief glimpse of Dependent Origination, but it is a very profound glimpse of Dependent Origination. (Laughs).

MN:

17. "Just as a palm tree with its top cut off is incapable of growing again, so too, Sunakkhatta, when a person is completely intent on Nibbāna, his fetter of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception has been cut off—cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that it is no longer subject to future arising. He should be understood as a person detached from the fetter of the base of neither-

perception-nor-non-perception who is completely intent on Nibbāna.

18. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some bhikkhu here might think thus: 'Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humour of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; the poisonous humour of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on Nibbāna.' Since he conceives himself thus, though it is contrary to fact, he might pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on Nibbāna.

BV: That means he has experienced the path, but he hasn't experienced the fruition. The fruition is where you have the experience and it really sets in deep and that's where the personality change occurs. People that experience the path without the fruition can still lose that experience if they're not careful, you'll see.

MN:

He might pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye, he might pursue unsuitable sounds with the ear, unsuitable odours with the nose, unsuitable flavours with the tongue, unsuitable tangibles with the body, or unsuitable mind-objects with the mind. When he pursues the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye... unsuitable mind-objects with the mind, lust invades his mind. With his mind invaded by lust, he would incur death or deadly suffering.

BV: So, if you're not really careful and you don't really keep your precepts very well and you don't keep your practice going, you can lose that experience. That's a little bit different than what most people have heard before. (Laughs)

S: ~

BV: It means if you don't gain the fruit of that experience there is no personality change, and if there's no personality change you still have a tendency to break the precepts, you still have a tendency to get caught up in your lust and hatred and delusion. This is a state where people will start puffing their chest up and saying I have this experience and I'm better than everybody else, and they think that they can do anything they want because "I've had this experience", but they're not being mindful, they're not watching. Yes they're close to the personality development of seeing the fruition of that, but they still have to keep going.

Now, for some people like Sāriputta, as soon as he had the path knowledge all of a sudden his mind just trotted right into the fruition, and that happened a lot more during the time of the Buddha than it does now. The fruition might take a week, it might take a month, it might take five years, but you have to keep your mindfulness going. You have to develop the habit of not getting caught by lust or hatred. You don't have the emotional upsets. You don't have the mind that grabs onto things with dissatisfaction anymore because you're being mindful when it starts to arise. It can still arise at any time and if you get into your old habitual tendency of somebody said something I don't like and I explode at them, you're going to lose that whole experience and you're going to have to start over again.

See, the whole thing with this practice is learning how to develop equanimity all of time, not just while you're sitting, not just while you're doing your retreat, but in your daily life, and having the balance in your daily life. Like your mate says something and normally that would set your mind off, but when your mindfulness is good, you see that as part of a process and you start relaxing into that and letting it go without reacting like you always acted before. Now you start responding with letting go of the craving, you don't have to protect yourself because when you let go of the craving there's nothing to protect. There's just seeing what arises, and letting it go. And it takes a great deal of balance to do that. It takes remembering not to get into the old habitual tendency, not to continue on doing the same way you've always done it. There has to be some change in perspective. There has to be some change in "I always would control a situation by acting in this way", now you have to let go of the control. And now you have to start seeing it for what it really is instead of getting caught up in it, letting it go and relaxing.

MN:

19. "Suppose, Sunakkhatta, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon. The surgeon would cut around the opening of the wound with a knife, then he would probe for the arrow with a probe, [257] then he would pull out the arrow and would expel the poisonous humour, leaving a trace of it behind. Thinking that no trace was left behind,...

BV: Thinking that the wound is completely clean when it's not. Now, this is referring back to what happens when you might have a very deep spiritual experience, but you fall back into your old habitual tendency of giving into the lust and the hatred and the delusion, but thinking that you're beyond that.

MN:

he would say: 'Good man, the arrow has been pulled out from you; the poisonous humour has been expelled with no trace left behind,

BV: Now, this is talking about here is also talking about a teacher that doesn't really understand when the poisons of lust hatred and delusion are gone.

MN:

and it is incapable of harming you. Eat only suitable food; do not eat unsuitable food or else the wound may suppurate. From time to time wash the wound and from time to time anoint its opening, so that pus and blood do not cover the opening of the wound. Do not walk around in the wind and sun or else dust and dirt may infect the opening of the wound. Take care of your wound, good man, and see to it that the wound heals.'

20. "The man would think: 'The arrow has been pulled out from me; the poisonous humour has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming me.' He would eat unsuitable food, and the wound would suppurate. He would not wash the wound from time to time nor would he anoint its opening from time to time, and pus and blood would cover the opening of the wound. He would walk around in the wind and sun, and dust and dirt would infect the opening of the wound. He would not take care of his wound, nor would he see to it that the wound heals. Then, both because he does what is unsuitable and because a trace was left behind when the foul poisonous humour was expelled, the wound would swell, and with its swelling he would incur death or deadly suffering.

BV: So he's really saying you got to be careful of the three poisons of lust, hatred and delusion, and not get caught in that. Take care of that, watch how mind grabs onto dissatisfaction when it doesn't meet an expectation and let go of the expectation and let go of the tightness caused by that craving and clinging.

MN:

21. "So too, Sunakkhatta, it is possible that some bhikkhu here might think thus: 'Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humour of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; [258] the poisonous humour of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent upon Nibbāna.' Because he conceives himself thus, though it is contrary to fact, he might pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on Nibbāna. He might pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye,

BV: And this is where the pride really comes in and the thinking that it's ok for me to do this because I've had this experience..

MN:

he might pursue unsuitable sounds with the ear, unsuitable odours with the nose, unsuitable flavours with the tongue, unsuitable tangibles with the body, or unsuitable mind-objects with the mind. When he pursues the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye...unsuitable mind-objects with the mind, lust invades his mind. With his mind invaded by lust, he would incur death or deadly suffering

BV: So, until there is the experience of fruition, you still are walking a very fine line. When you have the experience of fruition, of either becoming an anāgāmi or an arahat, when you have the fruition, lust and hatred will not arise in your mind ever again. So, it doesn't matter if these other things, these unsuitable things, arise it won't pull your mind to it at all. You won't even want to do them. You'll just say "No, I'm going to go over here and do this. I don't need to be around that kind of energy, I don't want that kind of thing coming into my consciousness", and you'll do it automatically. You'll be repulsed by things that you used to find, the worldly things that you used to find very compelling, but your mind becomes so pure because there's no lust and there's no hatred in your mind ever again. Everything becomes more clear, more bright, more easily recognized, and your mindfulness is so sharp, that you see Dependent Origination in everything. So, you see it as being part of an impersonal process, everything that arises, and there is the letting go, continually, and that is so automatic that you don't even notice it anymore. That's how automatic it becomes.

MN:

22. "For it is death in the Discipline of the Noble One, Sunakkhatta, when one abandons the training and reverts to the low life;

BV: Now he's talking about Sunakkhatta, who was a monk, and then he disrobed.

MN:

and it is deadly suffering when one commits some defiled offence.

23. "It is possible, Sunakkhatta, that some bhikkhu here might think thus: 'Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; the poisonous humour of ignorance

BV: What's ignorance? Ignorance is not seeing how the Four Noble Truths work, in Dependent Origination.

MN:

Repeats (the poisonous humour of ignorance) is spread about by desire, lust, and ill will. That arrow of craving has been removed from me; the poisonous humour of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on Nibbāna.' Being one who really is completely intent on Nibbāna, he would not pursue those things that are unsuitable for one completely intent on Nibbāna. He would not pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye, he would not pursue unsuitable sounds with the ear, unsuitable odours with the nose, unsuitable flavours with the tongue, unsuitable tangibles with the body, or unsuitable mind-objects with the mind. Because he does not pursue the sight of unsuitable forms with the eye...unsuitable mind-objects with the mind, lust does not invade his mind. [259] Because his mind is not invaded by lust, he would not incur death or deadly suffering.

24. "Suppose, Sunakkhatta, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon. The surgeon would cut around the opening of the wound with a knife, then he would probe for the arrow with a probe, then he would pull out the arrow and would expel the poisonous humour without leaving a trace of it behind. Knowing that no trace was left behind, he would say: 'Good man, the arrow has been pulled out from you; the poisonous humour has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming you. Eat only suitable food; do not eat unsuitable food or else the

wound may suppurate. From time to time wash the wound and from time to time anoint its opening, so that pus and blood do not cover the opening of the wound. Do not walk around in the wind and sun or else dust and dirt may infect the opening of the wound. Take care of your wound, good man, and see to it that the wound heals.'

25. "The man would think: 'The arrow has been pulled out from me; the poisonous humour has been expelled with no trace left behind, and it is incapable of harming me.' He would eat only suitable food, and the wound would not suppurate. From time to time he would wash the wound and from time to time he would anoint its opening, and pus and blood would not cover the opening of the wound. He would not walk around in the wind and sun, and dust and dirt would not infect the opening of the wound. He would take care of his wound and would see to it that the wound heals. Then, both because he does what is suitable and because no trace was left behind when the foul poisonous humour was expelled, the wound would heal, and because it had healed and was covered with skin, he would not incur death or deadly suffering.

26. "So too, Sunakkhatta, it is possible that some bhikkhus here might think thus: 'Craving has been called an arrow by the Recluse; [260] the poisonous humour of ignorance is spread about by desire, lust, and ill will. That arrow of craving has been pulled out from me; the poisonous humour of ignorance has been expelled. I am one who is completely intent on Nibbāna. 'Being one who really is completely intent on Nibbāna, he would not pursue those things unsuitable for one completely intent on Nibbāna...(as above)...Because his mind is not invaded by lust, he would not incur death or deadly suffering.

27. "Sunakkhatta, I have given this simile in order to convey a meaning. This is the meaning here: 'Wound' is a term for the six internal bases. 'Poisonous humour' is a term for ignorance.

BV: Not seeing, the four Noble Truths.

MN:

'Arrow' is a term for craving. 'Probe' is a term for mindfulness. 'Knife' is a term for noble wisdom. 'Surgeon' is a term for the Tathāgata, the Accomplished One, the Fully Enlightened One.

28. "That bhikkhu, Sunakkhatta, is one who practises restraint in the six bases of contact. Having understood that acquisition is the root of suffering, being acquisitionless, liberated in the

destruction of the acquisitions, it is not possible that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any acquisition.

29. "Suppose, Sunakkhatta, there were a bronze cup of beverage possessing a good colour, smell, and taste, but it was mixed with poison, and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure and recoiled from pain. What do you think, Sunakkhatta, would that man drink that cup of beverage, knowing: 'If I drink this I will incur death or deadly suffering'?"—"No, venerable sir." [261]—"So too, that bhikkhu is one who practises restraint in the six bases of contact. Having understood that acquisition is the root of suffering, being acquisitionless, liberated in the destruction of acquisitions, it is not possible that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any acquisition.

30. "Suppose, Sunakkhatta, there were a deadly poisonous snake, and a man came who wanted to live, not to die, who wanted pleasure and recoiled from pain. What do you think, Sunakkhatta, would that man give that deadly poisonous snake his hand or his thumb, knowing: 'If I am bitten by him I will incur death or deadly suffering'?"—"No, venerable sir."—"So too, when a bhikkhu practises restraint in the six bases of contact, and having understood that attachment is the root of suffering, is without attachment, liberated by the destruction of attachment, it is not possible that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any object of attachment."

That is what the Blessed One said. Sunakkhatta, son of the Licchavis, was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

BV:

Now, this is a real interesting thing because this is what I was starting to write about with this particular sutta, that had to do with fruition. Fruition occurs at any time when mind is developed enough. So, you can still have the experience of Nibbāna, but you haven't got a firm hold on it. It's a tenuous hold. If you keep getting involved with the six sense doors and identifying with it then you soon forget and you don't look deep at "this is part of an impersonal process". This is the most important aspect of the Buddha's teachings is the impersonal nature of everything. The craving, when it arises, that's the start of the 'I am', 'I like this', 'I don't like that'. So, when you start to see everything as being part on an impersonal process, it doesn't hold your attention, it doesn't make your mind go to it. You don't seek out material things,

and because your mind doesn't tend towards that, you start looking more at how the impersonal process of Dependent Origination works in everything. And that doesn't mean that you still won't have some emotional things come up. You still can when you've just had the path knowledge, but you start recognizing it really quickly, and you start letting it go of it very quickly. And with that, doing that enough, then you'll have the fruition experience.

When you have the path experience, you have what I said was a brief glimpse of Dependent Origination. You had the cessation of perception and feeling, when the perception and feeling come back, you saw one time, Dependent Origination, you saw all of the links and how each link has the cessation to it. When you have the experience of fruition, you will see that happen either three times or four times depending on whether you become an anāgāmi or an arahat. When you see it happen three times you'll go through the whole process, and then you'll go through the whole process, and then you'll go through the whole process again, and you really got it. But there's still some attachment, there's still some slight desires that you have, that this experience didn't burn away. This experience will burn away the lust and the greed, but you still have some little tiny fetters, if you're an anāgāmi. You still have a little bit of pride. You still have some restlessness, some dullness. You still have a desire to experience another realm. You still have some ignorance. Now, when you become an arahat, the fruition experience is seeing it four times in a row. And when you see that, that last time of seeing it burns away all of these other fetters and you see clearly Dependent Origination and the Four Noble Truths, and this is a deep realization. It's such a deep realization that it changes everything, and there is no more becoming because of that.

ST: ~

BV: Magga is the path, and phala is the fruition. Let's say you have the experience and it's a very light experience, not necessarily to do with meditation. Like Visākhā was a chief supporter for the Buddha, female supporter. When she was eight years old, she heard the Dhamma and her mind was so intelligent that she understood what was being said and she became a sotāpanna right then and right there. Now, this is a "oh wow" experience, and she could have had the fruition of that experience, and the fruition of that experience is just seeing that one time again. Anāthapiṇḍika's daughter, she

heard some discourses by the Buddha and she became a sakadāgāmi. Now, this is just from hearing, it's not from practice, and it can happen through practice, or not, depending on your understanding. The only way you can become an anāgāmi or an arahat is through practice. Now, you know there's a lot of the monks that became enlightened and became full-on arahats listening to a discourse, but they had had so much practice all they needed was a tweak in their understanding of what they were seeing, and that was enough to make them become (arahats), but they'd done lots and lots of practice before that. This is one of the things, there's no such a thing as bad meditation, there's just different end results of the meditation. And somebody that can be doing meditation, it doesn't matter whether it's straight vipassanā or samatha meditation, whatever. When their understanding gets tweaked so that they change their perspective a little bit, they're opening themselves up to some really wonderful experiences. Now, the thing with the vipassanā is, never does it go deep enough to experience the cessation of perception and feeling. That only happens through jhāna. Now, it can happen in any one of the jhānas. It can be in the first jhāna, it can arise, it doesn't matter. So, that's a prerequisite; jhāna is a necessary part of the practice, to have that experience, so that you can get to the cessation of perception and feeling. And sometimes people they can have this experience to start off with; they have the path knowledge, and when you're talking about the good qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, when you're talking about the Saṅgha one of the things it says these eight kind of individuals, these four pairs of beings... now what it's talking about is somebody that has a path, somebody that has a path and fruit of the first step, and it goes through all of the steps that way. So, you can become an arahat, but without the fruition you can lose that attainment if you let your mind slip and not get the fruition. So, you have to really be careful of what mind is doing in the present moment, and this is all the time and this is what the practice really is.

ST: ~

BV: He hadn't, or Bhikkhu Bodhi. Bhikkhu Bodhi is talked about never having that experience. He might have by now, but when I heard about it, he hadn't.

ST: ~

BV: And U Silananda, I suspect very strongly that he didn't have jhana either, but there are other monks that did have (and it was really kind of nice. U Sobina he sits in jhana, or he used to I don't know if he still does anymore because his energy is going down quite rapidly and he's had a lot of physical problems, so his energy isn't very good. He still sits but he doesn't sit like he used to.

ST: ~

BV: Yeah, of course he does, but he doesn't sit like he used to. When he used to sit there, it was nice to sit in the same room with him, hahaha, he was really good. So, it all depends on the kind of practice that they're doing, but, see Mahasi Sayadaw came up with this method because there was the idea that getting jhāna took too long and he was looking for a more direct path, and to be quite honest you know for a fact jhāna doesn't take that long when you're doing the practice in the right way. If you're not doing it in the right way it can take a long time.

ST: ~

BV: Well, and the reason it takes nine or fifteen years for the monks to experience that is because they sit for half an hour or forty-five minutes a day. You know, and then they're off doing whatever they do, and they don't... see, during the time of the Buddha there was no such a thing as doing a retreat. You had your own time and you could do whatever you wanted with it and a lot of the monks chose to do the meditation, but it wasn't a group meditation so much as it was individual.

ST: ~

BV: Personal responsibility. The idea of a quote 'retreat' is really fairly new.

ST: ~

BV: Yeah, and I'm not saying it's good, bad or indifferent. I'm just saying that it's just a different way of doing things. And the Japanese have been doing this for a long time. I mean they've been doing it for hundreds of years, that they all get up and they walk their little circle and then they sit and they do their meditation, they get up and they walk in their little circle...

ST: ~

BV: Yeah, and that's the big discussion about whether to have a fan on because the noise disturb my meditation is just a classic way of understanding that they were doing one-pointed concentration rather than tranquillity vipassanā.

ST: ~

BV: That's because Sayadaw U Jotika, he used to always say that noise is a thorn in the side of a meditator. So, if you're going to get up and move around, do it quietly.

But the practice of lessening the involvement with the sense doors means that there is the practice of recognizing when that sense door arises and starting to relax into that as soon as you possibly can remember because the danger of it is, at first you start thinking about that sense door, and then you're thinking about this, and then you're thinking about that, and then you're thinking about that, and you go a long ways away with the thinking, and this is with your daily activities. If you want to become super-efficient at whatever you want to do you have to be able to recognize the craving and the clinging and let it go right then and then you're just staying with what you're doing with that super-clear mind that's quiet. And that doesn't mean to say that you don't have thoughts arise, but the thoughts that arise are what is happening in the present moment. That's the kind of clear thinking that has intuition in it. If it's thoughts of the past, it's thoughts of the future, those are the thoughts that have the craving and the clinging in it, and I can't stress enough the importance of smiling into everything that you're doing. The more you can smile, the more clear your mind becomes, the more alert your mind becomes, and that's really the best mindfulness builder that I can think of.

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