

A talk offered by Philip Jones to the Silent Mind-Open Heart Sangha on 03-22-2016.

Tonight I want to continue exploring the brief teaching that the Buddha gave to the spiritual seeker Bāhiya of the Bark Cloth. So I'd like to begin by reading that once again:

"...Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In what is seen there must be only what is seen, in what is heard there must be only what is heard, in what is sensed there must be only what is sensed, in what is cognized there must be only what is cognized. This is the way, Bāhiya, you should train yourself.

"And since for you, Bāhiya, in what is seen there will be only what is seen, in what is heard there will be only what is heard, in what is sensed there will be only what is sensed, in what is cognized there will be only what is cognized, therefore, Bāhiya, you will not be with that; and since, Bāhiya, you will not be with that, therefore, Bāhiya, you will not be in that; and since, Bāhiya, you will not be in that, therefore, Bāhiya, you will not be here or hereafter or in between the two — just this is the end of suffering."¹

Last week I explored the first instructions — "In what is seen there must be only what is seen" and so forth. Tonight I'd like to turn to another sutta to offer a little more clarification of this first paragraph. Then I want to take a look at how Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu translates it and understands it.

The other sutta is found in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, the Connected Discourses of the Buddha. The main character of this sutta, besides the Buddha, is a monk named Maluṅkyaputta. He also appears receiving teachings from the Buddha in two suttas named for him in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Middle Length Discourses. But those teachings were given at a time when he was a younger and less diligent bhikkhu.

In the current sutta Maluṅkyaputta is an older bhikkhu who has become more serious about practice and asks the Buddha for a brief teaching, just as Bāhiya did. The Buddha offers an almost identical teaching to the one he offered Bāhiya. After listening to the Buddha's teaching, Maluṅkyaputta offered some verses to demonstrate his understanding. I'm going to share the first half, offer some commentary of my own and then share the second half.

Maluṅkyaputta is recorded as saying:

"I understand in detail, venerable sir, the meaning of what was stated by the Blessed One in brief:

"Having seen a form with mindfulness muddled,
Attending to the pleasing sign,
One experiences it with infatuated mind
And remains tightly holding to it.

"Many feelings flourish within,
Originating from the visible form,
Covetousness and annoyance as well
By which one's mind becomes disturbed.
For one who accumulates suffering thus
Nibbāna is said to be far away.

[And he repeats this for the other sense doors as well.]

So when mindfulness is not strong and continuous, our attention tends to be unwise or inappropriate (the Pāli is *ayoniso manasikāra*) and we attend to characteristics of the object that we take to be beautiful or attractive or pleasing in some way. Because of this we take *delight* in the object² which leads to craving for it. Then we cling to it either out of desire or annoyance. Our minds become agitated and caught in something that inevitably leads to a lack of satisfaction and a lack of peace, because anything that is conditioned is ultimately impermanent. So the coolness or peace of nibbāna is far away.

Maluṅkyaputta goes on to say:

"When, firmly mindful, one sees a form,
One is not inflamed by lust for forms;
One experiences it with dispassionate mind
And does not remain holding it tightly.

"One fares mindfully in such a way
That even as one sees the form,
And while one undergoes a feeling,

[Suffering] is exhausted, not built up.
For one dismantling suffering thus,
Nibbāna is said to be close by.

[And he repeats this for the other sense doors as well.]"

Then the Buddha confirms that Maluṅkyaputta has understood what the Buddha was saying. Maluṅkyaputta isn't immediately Awakened as happened with Bāhiya. Instead, he goes off, practices, and then is eventually fully Awakened.³

First Maluṅkyaputta offers a description of the process in our minds that leads to *dukkha* and then he describes the one that leads *towards* freedom.

Last week I mentioned that as mindfulness becomes more continuous and stronger and one practices "In the seen there will be only what is seen" the mind often becomes increasingly quiet, silent. This is a wholesome state of mind and it is important to recognize it and to appreciate it. But it can be a dangerous state of mind as well. One can assume that this is the mind free of greed, hate and delusion. It *is* temporarily free, but it may not be a mind that is completely free. so it is important to continue to look to see whether greed, hate or delusion do arise in the mind in any form.

So I'd like to return to the Bāhiya sutta and that second paragraph. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu offers a translation which I think may not be quite as literal as the one I used at the beginning, but I think it may convey the meaning more clearly.

It reads:

"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, Bāhiya, there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with 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."⁴

Now in an essay called "Food for Awakening: The Role of Appropriate Attention"⁵, Ṭhānissaro points out that in the practice of "in the seen only the seen" there is still an active *intention* to limit *attention* to the sense data. So there is still a process of forming or

fabricating or constructing our reality going on, even though this is a wholesome action. He describes that even the subtlest states of equanimity are still conditioned like this. There is still a desire to make something happen, to experience what is wholesome, to fulfill the path and reach its end.

This is a necessary step, we cannot get to the end of the path without this intention. But it still creates a disturbance in the mind. There is still a quality of "passion" that can lead to craving.

So there is a final step before one is truly open to knowing the Unconditioned, nibbāna. It is seeing and knowing that even this most subtle state is conditioned and can lead to *dukkha*, and so there is one further letting go, a letting go of even this most subtle intention. In the Pāli what comes with this letting go is called *attammayatā*.⁶ It is literally translated as "not-made-of-that" or "not-made-of-that-ness". Ajahn Amaro points out that *attammayatā* is what Thānissaro Bhikkhu refers to as "non-fashioning" or non-fabricating, while Bhikkhu's Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi translate it as "non-identification". Non-fashioning emphasizes the lack of an object and non-identification emphasizes the lack of a subject.⁷

When fabricating and identifying stops, there is no I, no me, no you. Or, as the Buddha said

"... there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two."⁸

This non-fashioning sets the stage for cessation, for the possibility of experiencing and knowing the Unconditioned.

Gil Fronsdal has commented:

"Experiencing nibbana is like taking a dip in a refreshing pond. A quick dip and we are slightly refreshed. With a long soak we are thoroughly refreshed. Even the first, brief dip into nibbana is a powerful lesson in the possibility of great happiness, freedom, and peace not dependent on the conditions of the world."⁹

If we do experience that dip, or blink, our lives don't stop there, even if we are fully awakened, an arahant. The Venerable Sāriputta commented:

"... a bhikkhu who is an arahant should carefully attend to [that is, bring wise or appropriate attention to] these five aggregates subject to clinging as impermanent, as suffering, ... as empty, as nonself. For an arahant, friend, there is nothing further that has to be done and no repetition of what he has already done. However, when these things are developed and cultivated, they lead to a pleasant dwelling in this very life and to mindfulness and clear comprehension."¹⁰

This is what is possible in a human life. We simply have to begin by being mindful of the breath, and then continue to expand the sphere of mindfulness and of letting go, so that eventually "In what is seen there must be only what is seen, in what is heard there must be only what is heard, in what is sensed there must be only what is sensed, in what is cognized there must be only what is cognized."¹¹

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Notes

1. Ānandajoti Bhikkhu. *Udāna: Exalted Utterances*. revised version 2.2, Feb. 2008, epub format, downloaded from <http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Udana/index.htm> and from <https://suttacentral.net/en/ud1.10>, 2016-03-09 ~ 9:00 a.m., pp. 97-100.
2. Bhikkhu Bodhi, "Introduction," *The Discourse on the Root of Existence: The Mūlapariyāyasutta and Its Commentaries*, Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980/2006, pp. 13-14.
3. SN 35.95, Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2000, pp. 1176-1177.
4. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu. *Udāna*, Valley Center, CA: Mettā Forest Monastery, 2012, p. 37. (A 1994 version of Ud 1.10 is also available at <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.1.10.than.html>).
5. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, "Food for Awakening: The Role of Appropriate Attention," *Head and Heart Together*, Valley Center, CA: Mettā Forest Monastery, 2010, pp. 71-74, also available at <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/foodforawakening.html>.
6. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, *ibid.*, p. 71.
7. Ajahn Passano and Ajahn Amaro, *The Island*, Redwood Valley, CA: Abhayagiri Monastic Foundation, 2009, p. 110, also available in electronic form at <http://www.abhayagiri.org/books/the-island>.
Also see Santikaro, "Atammayata: The Rebirth of a Lost Word," <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/B%20-%20Theravada/Teachers/Santikaro%20Bhikkhu/Atammayata%20Rebirth%20of%20a%20Lost%20Word/Atammayata%20Rebirth%20of%20a%20Lost%20Word.htm>
8. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, *op cit.*, 2012, p. 37.
9. Fronsdal, Gil, "The Good News," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Fall 2006, p. 78.
10. SN 22.122, Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, p. 971. Text in brackets [] is my own.
11. Ānandajoti Bhikkhu, *op cit.*

