

KN 3.10 Bāhiya Sutta

The Discourse to Bāhiya

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvatti, at Jeta's Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's park. On this occasion Bāhiya Dārucīriya was living at Suppāraka, on the shore of the ocean. He was honored, respected, revered, worshiped, and esteemed, and he received robes, almsfood, dwellings, medicine, and medical supplies. Then when Bāhiya was alone in retreat, this thought arose in his mind: "There are beings in this world who are Arahants or are on the way to becoming Arahants; I am one of them."

A deva who used to be one of the Bāhiya's relatives knew what Bāhiya was thinking, and out of compassion and well-wishing for Bāhiya he approached Bāhiya and said to him, "Bāhiya, you are certainly not an Arahant, and you are not on the way to becoming an Arahant. You aren't even doing the practices by means of which you could be an Arahant or be on the way to becoming an Arahant."

"Then who in this world of devas is currently an Arahant or on the way to becoming an Arahant?"

"Bāhiya, in the northern country there is a city named Sāvatti. That is where the Blessed One lives now, the Arahant, the Fully Self-Awakened One. Bāhiya, that Blessed One is an Arahant and teaches the way to become an Arahant."

Motivated by that deva, Bāhiya left Suppāraka. On his way to Sāvatti, he only stayed one night in each place he passed through. When he arrived, he went to Jeta's Grove and entered Anāthapiṇḍika's park. On this occasion several monks were doing walking meditation in the open air. Bāhiya approached those monks and said to them, "Bhante, where does the Blessed One currently live - the Arahant, the Fully Self-Awakened One? We wish to see the Blessed One, the Arahant, the Fully Self-Awakened One."

"Bāhiya, he has entered the residential area for alms."

Then Bāhiya went through Jeta's Grove, leaving it behind and entering Sāvatti. There he saw the Blessed One going for alms in Sāvatti - inspiring, inspirational, his appearance peaceful, his mind peaceful, with the utmost self-mastery and tranquility, trained, restrained, self-controlled, and majestic¹. Having seen the Blessed One, he approached him and lowered himself to the ground with his head at the Blessed One's feet, saying "Teach me the Dhamma, Bhante, Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, Sublime One, for the sake of my long-term benefit and happiness."

When this was said, the Blessed One said to Bāhiya, "This is not the time, Bāhiya. I have entered a residential area for alms."

A second time Bāhiya said to the Blessed One, "Bhante, it is hard to know how long the Blessed One's life will last, or how long my life will last. Teach me the Dhamma, Bhante, Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, Sublime One, for the sake of my long-term benefit and happiness."

A second time the Blessed One said to Bāhiya, "This is not the time, Bāhiya. I have entered a residential area for alms."

1 *Nāga*. The literal meaning of this is "elephant" or "dragon." It is sometimes used to refer to any exceptionally majestic, dignified, and lordly being - such as Arahants.

A third time Bāhiya said to the Blessed One, “Bhante, it is hard to know how long the Blessed One’s life will last, or how long my life will last. Teach me the Dhamma, Bhante, Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, Sublime One, for the sake of my long-term benefit and happiness.”

“Therefore, Bāhiya, this is how you are to train yourself:

“In the seen, there will be just the seen.
In the heard, there will be just the heard.
In the sensed², there will be just the sensed.
In the cognized, there will be just the cognized.
This, Bāhiya, is how you are to train yourself.
Bāhiya, when it is like this for you -
In the seen, there is just the seen,
In the heard, there is just the heard,
In the sensed, there is just the sensed,
In the cognized, there is just the cognized -
Then, Bāhiya, there will be no ‘you’ in terms of this.
When there is no ‘you’ in terms of this,
Then there is no ‘you’ there;
When there is no ‘you’ there,
There is no ‘you’ here, or beyond, or in between.
Just this is the end of suffering.”

Then while the Blessed One was teaching this brief Dhamma teaching to Bāhiya, Bāhiya’s mind was liberated from the corruptions by means of non-attachment. After the Blessed One had instructed Bāhiya with this brief instruction, he left. And not long after the Blessed One left, a young cow encountered Bāhiya and killed him.

Then after the Blessed One had gone for alms in Sāvatti, had eaten his meal, and was returning from alms-round accompanied by several monks, when he left the city he saw that Bāhiya had died. When he saw this he said to the monks, “Monks, take Bāhiya’s corpse, put it on a pallet, take it out, and burn it; then build a monument³. Monks, one of your fellow spiritual practitioners has died.”

“Yes, Bhante,” those monks replied to the Blessed One. They took Bāhiya’s corpse, put it on a pallet, took it out, burned it, and built a monument. Then they approached the Blessed One, paid respects to him, and sat to one side. When they were seated to one side, they said to the Blessed One, “Bhante, Bāhiya’s corpse has been burned and a monument has been built. What is his destination? What is his next life?”

“Monks, Bāhiya was wise. He practiced Dhamma in accordance with Dhamma; he did not concern me on account of the Dhamma. Monks, Bāhiya has attained final Nibbāna.”

Then the Blessed One, having understand this matter, made this proclamation at that time:

“Where water, earth, fire, and wind have no hold,
Where stars do not shine, and the sun has no radiance,
Where the moon does not glow, and darkness cannot be found,
When one personally knows this - a sage, a holy person of true wisdom,
Then from form, formlessness, pleasure, and pain they are freed.”

2 *Muta*. This includes the senses of smell, taste, and touch.

3 *Thūpa* (Skt. *stūpa*). A monument commonly erected over the remains of a deceased saint.