Ud 1.10 — Bahiya Sutta: About Bahiya

English translation by John D. Ireland.

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Text

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Savatthi in the Jeta Wood at Anathapindika's monastery. At that time Bahiya of the Bark-cloth was living by the seashore at Supparaka. He was respected, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage, and was one who obtained the requisites of robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicines.

Now while he was in seclusion, this reflection arose in the mind of Bahiya of the Bark-cloth: "Am I one of those in the world who are arahats or who have entered the path to arahatship?"

Then a devata who was a former blood-relation of Bahiya of the Bark-cloth understood that reflection in his mind. Being compassionate and wishing to benefit him, he approached Bahiya and said: "You, Bahiya, are neither an arahant nor have you entered the path to arahatship. You do not follow that practice whereby you could be an arahant or

enter the path to arahatship."

"Then, in the world including the devas, who are arahats or have entered the path to arahatship?"

"There is, Bahiya, in a far country a town called Savatthi. There the Lord now lives who is the Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One. That Lord, Bahiya, is indeed an arahant and he teaches Dhamma for the realization of arahatship."

Then Bahiya of the Bark-cloth, profoundly stirred by the words of that devata, then and there departed from Supparaka. Stopping only for one night everywhere (along the way), he went to Savatthi where the Lord was staying in the Jeta Wood at Anathapindika's monastery. At that time a number of bhikkhus were walking up and down in the open air. Then Bahiya of the Bark-cloth approached those bhikkhus and said: "Where, revered sirs, is the Lord now living, the Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One? We wish to see that Lord who is the Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One."

"The Lord, Bahiya, has gone for almsfood among the houses."

Then Bahiya hurriedly left the Jeta Wood. Entering Savatthi, he saw the Lord walking for almsfood in Savatthi — pleasing, lovely to see, with calmed senses and tranquil mind, attained to perfect poise and calm, controlled, a perfected one, watchful with restrained senses. On seeing the Lord he approached, fell down with his head at the Lord's feet, and said: "Teach me Dhamma, Lord; teach me Dhamma, Sugata, so that it will be for my good and happiness for a long time."

Upon being spoken to thus, the Lord said to Bahiya of the Bark-cloth: "It is an unsuitable time, Bahiya, we have entered among the houses for almsfood."

A second time Bahiya said to the Lord: "It is difficult to know for certain, revered sir, how long the Lord will live or how long I will live. Teach me Dhamma, Lord; teach me Dhamma, Sugata, so that it will be for my good and happiness for a long time." A second time the Lord said to Bahiya: "It is an unsuitable time, Bahiya, we have entered among the houses for almsfood."

A third time Bahiya said to the Lord: "It is difficult to know for certain... Teach me Dhamma, Sugata, so that it will be for my good and happiness for a long time."

"Herein, Bahiya, you should train yourself thus: 'In the seen will be merely what is seen; in the heard will be merely what is heard; in the sensed will be merely what is sensed; in the cognized will be merely what is cognized.' In this way you should train yourself, Bahiya.

"When, Bahiya, for you in the seen is merely what is seen... in the cognized is merely what is cognized, then, Bahiya, you will not be 'with that.' When, Bahiya, you are not 'with that,' then, Bahiya, you will not be 'in that.' When, Bahiya, you are not 'in that,' then, Bahiya, you will be neither here nor beyond nor in between the two. Just this is the end of suffering."

Now through this brief Dhamma teaching of the Lord the mind of Bahiya of the Bark-cloth was immediately freed from the taints without grasping. Then the Lord, having instructed Bahiya with this brief instruction, went away.

Not long after the Lord's departure a cow with a young calf attacked Bahiya of the Bark-cloth and killed him. When the Lord, having walked for almsfood in Savatthi, was returning from the alms round with a number of bhikkhus, on departing from the town he saw that Bahiya of the Bark-cloth had died.

Seeing this he said to the bhikkhus: "Bhikkhus, take Bahiya's body, put it on a litter, carry it away and burn it, and make a stupa for it. Your companion in the holy life has died."

"Very well, revered sir," those bhikkhus replied to the Lord.

Taking Bahiya's body, they put it upon a litter, carried it away and burnt it, and made a stupa for it. Then they went to the Lord, prostrated themselves, and sat down to one side. Sitting there those bhikkhus said to the Lord: "Bahiya's body has been burnt revered sir, and a stupa has been made for it. What is his destiny, what is his future birth?"

"Bhikkhus, Bahiya of the Bark-cloth was a wise man. He practiced according to Dhamma and did not trouble me by disputing about Dhamma. Bhikkhus, Bahiya of the Bark-cloth has attained final Nibbana."

Then, on realizing its significance, the Lord uttered on that occasion this inspired utterance:

Where neither water nor yet earth Nor fire nor air gain a foothold, There gleam no stars, no sun sheds light, There shines no moon, yet there no darkness reigns. When a sage, a brahman, has come to know this For himself through his own wisdom, Then he is freed from form and formless. Freed from pleasure and from pain.

This inspired utterance was spoken by the Lord also, so I did hear.