

Udāna 1.10
Bāhiya Sutta
“Bāhiya”
Translated by Candana Bhikkhu

Copyright © Candana Bhikkhu 2021

I have personally heard this:

On one occasion, The Blessed One was staying at Anāthapindika’s monastery at Jeta’s Grove, in Sāvattthi. It was during that time that Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth was living in Suppāraka by the seashore. There, he found himself being revered, respected, venerated, worshipped, and given homage to — as he received the four requisites of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medicinal requisites, whenever he became sick. Then, while he was alone and in seclusion, he began reflecting to himself: “There are beings living in this world who are Arahants or who have entered onto the Path of Arahantship; now, I think it is fair to say that I should also be counted as one of them, a real Arahant!”

Then, a Deva who had once been a companion in the Holy Life of Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth — in being compassionate towards him, desiring his welfare, and knowing with his own mind the thought that had arisen in Bāhiya’s mind — appeared before him in his Divine radiant glory and immediately said this to him:

“You, Bāhiya, are neither an Arahant nor have you entered onto the path to becoming an Arahant. You are clueless when it comes to becoming an Arahant, nor are you engaged in the types of practices that could get you to become an Arahant!”

“Then, please tell me, who and where in this world, with its Devas and humans, are the True Arahants or who have entered onto the Path to Arahantship?”

“Bāhiya, there is a city in the northern country named Sāvattthī. It is there, where The Blessed One — The Arahant, the Perfectly Self-Awakened One — is living now in Jeta’s Grove. It is He who truly is an Arahant, and He teaches the Dhamma that inevitably and directly leads to Arahantship.”

Then Bāhiya, having just been deeply motivated by this Deva, left Suppāraka right then and headed straight to Sāvattthi, only resting to sleep wherever he stopped for the night. Thus, without losing his energy, he went all the way to where The Blessed One was staying at Anāthapindika’s monastery at Jeta’s Grove, in Sāvattthi. Once there, he saw how in the early morning hours, a large number of Bhikkhus were doing walking meditation in the open air, and by going straight to them, he said:

"Venerable Sirs, please tell me where The Blessed One — The Arahant, the Perfectly Self-Awakened One — is to be found? We want to see The Blessed One — The Arahant, the Perfectly Self-Awakened One!"

“The Blessed One has gone into town for his alms round.”

Then, Bāhiya immediately left Jeta's Grove and entered Sāvaththī, frantically looking for The Blessed One when he finally found Him. In witnessing the Great Teacher going for alms – he saw Him serenely contented, with inspiring, cool tranquility, majestic in His demeanor, exuding confidence, calming, with his senses restrained and at peace, his mind at peace, having attained the utmost equanimity & poise, tamed, guarded, a True *Nāga* Indeed. Approaching The Blessed One with trepidation, Bāhiya finally reached Him, as he threw himself to the ground, with his head at The Blessed One's feet, and exclaimed: “Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, *O Sugata* (Well-Gone), so that it will be for my long-lasting benefit and peace.”

When this was said, The Blessed One replied:

“This is not the time, Bāhiya. We have now entered the town for alms.”

A second time, Bāhiya said to The Blessed One:

“But it is so hard to know for sure what dangers may lie ahead for The Blessed One's own life, or what dangers there may be for mine. Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, *O Sugata*, so that it will be for my long-lasting benefit and peace.”

A second time, The Blessed One said to him:

“This is not the time, Bāhiya. We have now entered the town for alms.”

And a third time, Bāhiya said to The Blessed One:

“But it is so hard to know for sure what dangers may lie ahead for The Blessed One's own life, or what dangers there may be for mine. Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, *O Sugata*, so that it will be for my long-lasting benefit and peace.”

“Then, Bāhiya, you must train yourself thus:

When seeing something, there will just be...the seeing.

When hearing something, there will only be...the hearing.

When feeling something, there will only be...the feeling.

When knowing something, there will only be...the knowing.

This is how you must train yourself.

And when Bāhiya, there will only be the seeing, when you see something,

When there will only be the hearing, when you hear something,

When there will only be the feeling, when you feel something,

When there will only be the knowing, when you know something,

Then, Bāhiya, there will no longer be any identification with anything.

When there is no identification with anything, then there will no longer be a ‘you’ in reference to it.

When there is no longer any ‘you’ in reference to any object, then there will no longer be a ‘you’ to be found here, there, nor anywhere in between.

This in itself, Bāhiya, is the end of all suffering!”

Meanwhile, as he carefully listened to this brief explanation of the Dhamma given by The Blessed One, suddenly, the mind of Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth was liberated from the contaminants, right then and there, through non-grasping. And having instructed Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth with this brief explanation on the Dhamma, The Blessed One continued on his alms round.

Not long after The Blessed One had left, Bāhiya was attacked and killed by a cow with a young calf.

Later, having gone for alms in Sāvattthī and eaten his meal, The Blessed One, on returning from his alms round with a large number of Bhikkhus, saw that Bāhiya had died.

At this, The Blessed One instructed the monks:

“Bhikkhus, take Bāhiya’s body and place it on a litter and carry it away; cremate it and build him a stupa. Your companion in the Holy Life has died.”

By responding, “As you say, Lord,” to The Blessed One, the Bhikkhus placed Bāhiya's body on a litter, and by carrying it away, cremated it, and then built him a stupa and went back to The Blessed One.

In approaching The Blessed One, the Bhikkhus paid homage to him and then sat down to one side, as they reported to The Blessed One:

“Bāhiya’s body has been cremated, Lord, and a stupa has been erected for him. What is his destination, Bhante? Where is he now reborn?”

“Bhikkhus, Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth was wise. He practiced in accordance with the Dhamma, and he did not pester me with issues related to the Dhamma by asking too many questions. Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth, Bhikkhus, attained final Nibbāna.”

Then, to commemorate the significance of this event, The Blessed One exclaimed:

*“Where water, earth, fire, and wind have no footing:
Where the stars do not shine, nor the sun is seen.
Where the moon does not glow, and darkness is nowhere to be found.
And when a sage, a Holy Person with true wisdom, realizes this for himself,
Then, one is finally liberated from both the form & the formless, from pleasure and pain.”*

Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu