

Bāhiya of the Bark-Cloth

The Bāhiya Sutta is number 10.1 in the Udāna. I compiled this version from translations by John Ireland and Thanissaro Bhikkhu and notes from Leigh Brasington, John Peacock, and other scholars:

Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi in Jeta's Grove at Anathapindika's park.

At that time Bāhiya of the bark-cloth was living by the seashore at Supparaka.

He [Bāhiya] was respected, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage, and was one who obtained the requisites of robes, alms food, lodging, and medicines.

Now while he was in seclusion, this reflection arose in the mind of Bāhiya: "Am I one of those in the world who is an arahant or [on] the path to arahantship?"

Then a devatā who was a former blood-relation of Bāhiya of the Bark-Cloth understood that reflection in his mind. Being compassionate and wishing to benefit him, he approached Bāhiya and said: "You, Bāhiya, are neither an arahant or on the path to arahantship. You do not follow a practice whereby you could be an arahant."

"In the world, where are arahants who know the path?"

"Bāhiya, in a far country is a town called Savatthi. There lives a Blessed One who is Fully Enlightened. He is indeed an arahant and he teaches Dhamma leading to arahantship."

Bāhiya was profoundly stirred. Then and there he departed from Supparaka. Stopping only for one night everywhere (along the way), he went to Savatthi and Anathapindika's park.

At that time a number of monks were walking up and down in the open air. Bāhiya of the Bark-Cloth approached those monks and said: "Where, revered sirs, is the Blessed One living? We wish to see that Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One."

"The Blessed One, Bāhiya, has gone for alms food among the houses."

Then Bāhiya hurried out of the Jeta's Grove. Entering Savatthi, he saw the Blessed One walking for alms food — 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 he approached, fell down with his head at the Blessed One's feet, and said: "Teach me Dhamma, Blessed One; teach me Dhamma, One-Well-Gone, so that it will be for my good and happiness for a long time."

Upon being spoken to thus, the Blessed One said: "It is an unsuitable time, Bāhiya, we have entered among the houses for alms food."

A second time Bāhiya said to the Blessed One: "It is difficult to know for certain, revered sir, how long the Blessed One will live or how long I will live. Teach me Dhamma... so that it will be for my good and happiness for a long time."

A second time the Blessed One said: "It is an unsuitable time, Bāhiya, we have entered among the houses for alms food."

A third time Bāhiya said to the Buddha: "It is difficult to know for certain how long

any of us will live. Teach me Dhamma for my good and happiness for a long time."

The Buddha said, "Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus:

*"In seeing there is merely seeing.
In hearing there is merely hearing.
In sensing there is merely sensing.
In cognizing there is merely cognizing.
In this way you should train yourself.*

*"Bāhiya, when there is only seeing in seeing,
hearing in hearing,
sensing in sensing,
cognizing in cognizing,
then you will not be 'with that.'
When you are not 'with that,'
you will not be 'in that.'
When you are not 'in that,'
you will be neither here nor beyond nor in
between the two.
Just this is the end of suffering."*

Through hearing this brief explanation of the Dhamma from the Blessed One, the mind of Bāhiya of the Bark-Cloth right

then and there was freed from taints through lack of grasping.

Having instructed Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth with these words of the Dhamma, the Blessed One left.

Not long after the Buddha's departure, a cow with a young calf attacked Bāhiya of the Bark-Cloth and killed him.

<The sutta winds down from here with a description of Bāhiya's funeral. It closes with the following words:>

*Where neither water nor 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.*

I heard this inspired utterance spoken aloud by the Buddha.