Disenchantment and Dispassion (Retreat at Spirit Rock)

Andrea Fella · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Andrea Fella · 1:04:01

Over these days and weeks, we've been exploring our experience, getting to know our experience as human experience.

When we first start looking at our experience, noticing what's happening, most often we notice what might be called the specific characteristics of experience as we attune and attend to our human experience. We notice that body sensation is pressure and pulsing and tingling and vibration. We begin to drop underneath the ideas of experience and touch into what the experience actually feels like.

And then as we keep exploring, as mindfulness gains momentum, as there's a little more continuity, it seems that the wisdom that grows as we explore experience begins to get interested in what we've called the more general characteristics of experience. Bhante used this phrase the other day when he talked about anicca, dukkha, anatta. They're sometimes called the three general characteristics of experience—that all experience, whatever is happening, whether it's body sensations or emotions, moods, thoughts, sight, or sound, has these characteristics of impermanence, unreliability (not a reliable place for the mind to find lasting happiness), and not-self.

So our practice tends to head in this direction, towards curiosity about impermanent experience, and from that recognition we see it is unreliable. Also, the impermanent nature of experience—all experience, including what we think of as I, me, mine—we see that too comes and goes.

Impermanence, the seeing of impermanence, is pointed to over and over again in the suttas as how our mind begins to let go of its habits and patterns. The meeting of our direct experience, human body and mind, begins to point out to us that every single arising experience is impermanent. It will pass away, including this sense of self. And so the impermanent nature of experience is really highlighted as onward leading to the release of the mind from its craving, clinging, stress, and suffering.

There's a quote from the suttas. The Buddha says, in relation to the aggregates (sometimes the Buddha will point to impermanence through various aspects of experience, and in this case he's pointing to it through the five aggregates): "Form is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, perception is impermanent, volitional formations are impermanent, consciousness is impermanent. Seeing thus"—so actually experiencing form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness as impermanent, not just hearing about it and thinking about it, but actually seeing the impermanent nature of our experience—he says, "Seeing thus, one experiences disenchantment towards form, disenchantment towards feeling,

disenchantment towards perception, disenchantment towards volitional formations, disenchantment towards consciousness. Experiencing disenchantment, one becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, the mind is liberated. When it is liberated, there comes the knowledge: it is liberated. One understands: done is what had to be done, destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, done is what had to be done, and there is no more for this state of being."

It is liberated—the mind liberated from craving, liberated from clinging, liberated from greed, aversion, and delusion. And it points to the seeing of impermanence as the slanting, sloping, inclining towards—I think Diana used that phrase the other day—inclining towards freedom. Slanting, sloping, inclining towards freedom. As we see impermanence, our mind heads in that direction.

Here it says, "seeing thus"—seeing the impermanence of form, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness—one experiences disenchantment. So it's a kind of natural occurrence, a natural arising.

There's another sutta that talks about this place in practice. It actually connects with the teaching I spoke about last time at the end of my talk, the teaching on transcendent dependent origination. And these two qualities, disenchantment and dispassion, are found in that list. I did mention them in my talk, and I'd like to land with these two words a little more today, to explore them with you—how the path of practice may unfold in this terrain as the mind begins to let go.

In one sutta, the path of the movement towards freedom is described as a very natural unfolding. It says, "When one has faith, there's no need for an act of will: may joy arise." As there is this kind of confidence—oh, there's a way, there's a path, there's something I can do—a delight leaps up in the heart that there's a possibility for freedom. So it says there's no need for an act of will to try to make delight arise. And it goes on, saying that when there is delight in the mind, there's no need for an act of will: may joy arise. And it goes through these steps of the movement in the direction of freedom. There's no need for an act of will.

It's natural that in one with delight, happiness arises. In one with delight, tranquility arises. And then the sutta describes how happiness leads to concentration, concentration leads to seeing things as they are. This includes seeing the three characteristics—seeing the nature of experience, the very nature of every single thing that happens as impermanent, unreliable, not self. Concentration is a supportive condition for seeing that nature of experience.

Then it says, when one sees things as they are—sees things as impermanent, unreliable, not self—there's no need for an act of will: may disenchantment arise. It is natural that disenchantment will arise in one who sees things as they are. And it says the same about dispassion arising from disenchantment.

This is understood at a certain point as being like water running downstream, water running down hills and rivers. The nature of water is to run downhill. At a certain point in practice, instead of the hindrances and our habits of mind having the upper hand—where it feels like when we relax and don't do anything,

we get swept away in thought—there develops a kind of momentum in the direction of freedom. Gil Fronsdal sometimes says there's a biological movement in that direction, a biological imperative towards freedom when we begin to touch into experience as it actually is. That biological or natural inclination of mind towards freedom begins to lead, instead of our hindrances leading.

Let me explore these two words: disenchantment and dispassion.

Disenchantment is Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation of the Pali word *nibbidā*. I particularly appreciate this translation because it does feel like what happens at this point in practice. When we begin to really see things as deeply impermanent at a very moment-to-moment level, our system begins to understand and feel that it does not make any sense to cling to something that is slipping away. The habits, the patterns of greed, of wanting to hold on to something, of wanting to get rid of something—those habits and patterns are seen as relying on the delusion, or the enchantment, that things are permanent, that there is something reliable out there.

These are very deeply conditioned habits, though. It's not like seeing impermanence even at a really deep level once or twice completely uproots that tendency. It begins to wear away at it. This seeing of the impermanent nature—even as it is wearing away in this gradual way—this seeing of the impermanent, unreliable nature of experience begins to show us that we have been confused. Those *vipallāsa*: taking what is impermanent to be permanent, taking what is unreliable to be reliable, taking what is not self to be self. The habits and patterns of mind have enchanted us to believe that they're helping us.

It's amazing to me sometimes when I look at what's happening in the mind. When I was really caught by self-hatred, it was hard to understand why my mind would choose to do this. But just watching it over and over again, I began to see the kind of security it found in a familiar pattern. There was something in there, something that it thought it was doing for me. Enchanted—we can be enchanted by self-hatred. It's not typically what we would think of being enchanted by, but whatever habits and patterns we have, there's some part of the momentum of that habit or pattern that thinks it is making us safe somehow, making us feel grounded or loved in some fashion, making us feel like things are a little less vulnerable.

As we begin to really see the impermanent nature of experience, looking at what's happening in our minds, looking at clinging, looking at craving, looking at suffering—whatever's coming up—we don't have to wait for the hindrances to go away in order to see the impermanent, unreliable nature of even those things.

At one point on a retreat, I had this amazing recognition around some of these patterns and habits. The mind was really reaching out to try to find some place to land, to hold on. The first recognition was that this craving and clinging was a habit of mind, and that sometimes when something was going on, the mind would go for that habit and it would suffer. When we see the clinging, when we see the craving with mindfulness, we feel the suffering of it. That's not a mistake. It's actually how the mind begins to get an education, how it begins to educate itself: "Oh, this is not so helpful." We begin to see, too, that it's optional.

It's not like the thing is making us crave it—our mind is constructing the craving.

Seeing that, seeing "the mind is doing this, the mind is constructing this idea that it needs this thing"—the mind is making stuff up there. There's a bit of enchantment: the craving, the clinging thinks it needs to get something.

Then I began to see, looking more at the experience, that what the mind was craving—I thought it was craving something out there, whether a good meal, pleasant sense experience, or getting rid of unpleasant sense experience, which tended to be my go-to thing. I felt like if I could get rid of the unpleasant experience, then I'd be okay. The mind thought it was trying to reach out and do something with something out there. But as I looked at this, I began to see: what the mind is craving is also something in the mind.

It's an idea. It was an idea that there was something unpleasant that was actually there, lasting and permanent. And so not only is the craving and the clinging a product of our mental activity, our mental creation, but the thing we think we're craving and clinging to is also a creation of our minds. We cannot actually cling to something that is impermanent. And so our mind makes up an idea and clings to an idea.

Check it out for yourself. What is it that you are actually craving? What are you actually craving when the mind is reaching out? So not only is that a construction of mind, it's also an impermanent, unreliable phenomenon. And then the "me" that I think needs to do this—that's also something made up by the mind.

Seeing all of this construction in the mind is another way that we become disenchanted. We begin to see that this whole project is like the mind just looking at itself and doing stuff inside. It's kind of crazy. And yet it is a craziness that we all share. We are not alone in this habit and pattern of wanting to get something, wanting to get rid of something. This is very deeply conditioned enchantment—an enchantment we share as human beings. It's the rare person that can see through this on their own, as the Buddha is said to have done. The rest of us need some help.

Bhikkhu Bodhi pointed out in an article he wrote about this topic that the word *nibbidā*, which he translates as disenchantment, literally means "finding out." Essentially, seeing the impermanent nature of experience helps us find out that we've been going about our project of finding happiness in a completely mistaken way.

Bhikkhu Bodhi describes the experience of disenchantment like this: "*Nibbidā* signifies the serene, dignified withdrawal from phenomena which supervenes when the illusion of their permanence, pleasure, and selfhood has been shattered by the light of correct knowledge and vision of things as they are."

With disenchantment, there's this recognition that there's no point in clinging or craving to something. There's a kind of natural withdrawal from wanting to crave, wanting to cling, from that whole pattern.

And yet, in my experience of this process, this time in practice of seeing the impermanent nature and beginning to recognize that the mind has been confused, that it has been enchanted and is no longer quite able to hold up its ideas and beliefs as strongly—it is a bumpy place in practice. It is a hard place in practice to begin to really deeply see that what we relied on for our whole way of being and living and finding happiness is completely mistaken.

Our minds don't just go, "Oh yeah, I'll serenely withdraw from that." They kick and scream and fight and say, "No, there's got to be someplace. Maybe that thing isn't worth clinging to, but there's got to be something. There's got to be." So deeply conditioned is this habit of trying to find something to land on, to hold on to, to permanently find a place to find happiness.

The experience at this point, when we're really seeing into the impermanent nature of experience—particularly seeing how things fall away—can be difficult. When we're seeing the arising of things, the arising side of impermanence, it can be quite delightful. Even seeing the arising and passing of things can be quite delightful. But when we start to see that things are just always vanishing, slipping away, it feels really unstable. It feels like really shaky ground.

There are some emotional responses to this time in practice. I think these are like resistance—different flavors of resistance to becoming disenchanted.

Nibbidā is sometimes translated as disgust or revulsion. I don't usually like to use that as the translation, but I have experienced at times that quality in really seeing the impermanent nature of experience, seeing things just slipping away—just kind of like, "Oh, enough." Or feeling like I'm being impinged on by sense experience incessantly, like, "Enough already, enough. Give me a break." There can be that place of revulsion or disgust, like, "Won't this ever stop?"

One of the reasons for naming some of these relationships—I'm going to name several different flavors—is because the way through this bumpy time of practice is not by trying to force yourself to be with that impermanent, slipping-away experience when there's so much resistance to it. Sometimes it feels like fear and terror, even. It can get that strong—like there's nowhere to land, nothing to hold on to. The mind just does not like these truths. At a very deep level, it doesn't like these truths. And so it relates to them in these ways: with disgust, with revulsion, with fear, with terror.

And the way through this is not by trying to force yourself to stay with the impermanent experience, but to notice the relationship. The path deepens at this time of practice by recognizing the fear, the terror, and noticing the relationship to this truth of impermanence. Because basically what's happening is that the system is sending up its flares: "No, it can't be this way." It's just an arising experience of "No, it can't be this way." And sometimes that comes out as fear or terror.

Sometimes the flavor of the relationship is—one of my teachers in Burma, Sayadaw U Janaka, used this description—homesickness. At times the feeling can be that, and I related to it. It's like the feeling of losing

our familiar ways of landing in this world to find some comfort. Those are gone. It feels like you've lost a home, lost some place to snuggle in and say, "I'll be safe here." Sometimes it can have that quality of homesickness.

Sometimes it can have the flavor of just a kind of disinterest. At one point I was watching this incessant nature of experience, and at first it was like, "Enough already! Can't you stop?" So noticing that, noticing the fear, noticing all of that, watching the fear dissipate—there's this incessant nature of experience and the mind just sort of goes, "Oh, it's just not interesting."

So disinterest then. The mind isn't interested. This is an interesting place to recognize. And I think that the knowing of disinterest can be useful at many places in practice. Even if it's at a time when you're not actually seeing the depth of impermanence, sometimes we get bored or disinterested. That's a time when the mind will tend to wander if you don't notice it.

In this particular situation, noticing the impermanent nature, disinterest was happening. And I did notice that the mind would kind of slip out with the disinterest. It got so disinterested that it's like, "Yeah, let's just not pay attention." And I would wake up a second later, lost in some thought. "Wow, how did that happen? I was right there." Okay, there's disinterest. Disinterest slipped out. Just keep noticing that relationship.

To explore the quality of disinterest in general: earlier in my practice, I noticed a kind of state of mind of boredom. "Done with this, I don't want to practice anymore." That would arise in my mind. Not wanting to practice would arise. And at first when this was happening, I felt betrayed by my mind. I was telling myself, "I do want to practice," trying to shut down that belief. "I do want to practice. Not wanting to practice, not wanting to practice." I felt like either I had to believe that thought and stop practicing, or I had to get rid of the thought. It was not okay for that thought to simply be an arising. I didn't see it as just an arising.

And then I had the great fortune one day in Burma—we all listened to everybody else's interviews, everybody else's meetings. We all got in there at the same time, and the first person who described their experience got to report and then leave, but the rest of us heard everybody else's descriptions. I got to follow one person who was so clearly in a really continuous state of mindfulness. I thought, "Wow, she's really right in there." And she reported very matter-of-factly, "Not wanting to practice arose. And I noted: not wanting to practice."

I was like, "You can do that?" It was a revelation to me. When the mind is not interested, disinterest is arising. Boredom is arising. And it can be a flavor at this particular point in practice—the seeing of the impermanent nature of experience. And the practice deepens. The mind begins to let go of those wishes that it weren't so, that it weren't impermanent.

You know, we have this deep wish—so deep—that it weren't so, that things weren't impermanent. But the

letting go of that wish happens through the seeing of these relationships. Wishing it weren't so, wishing it were otherwise—that's what's happening. Fear that there's no place to land—that's what's happening.

As the mind begins to align with the truths instead of resisting them, it more naturally moves in this direction of dispassion, of a deeper letting go. The mind begins to deeply understand that holding on to something that is slipping away just does not make sense. And so the movement toward clinging begins to release.

The word for this in Pali is *virāga*, often translated as dispassion. I mentioned the other day that the word dispassion can potentially have a negative feeling for us. We want to have some passion—like compassion. We like compassion. *With* passion. Com-passion. Dispassion sounds dry, sounds like not caring, sounds disconnected. That's part of the reason I want to explore this word and this terrain a little bit, just to perhaps reorient the mind to what happens at this point in practice.

The word itself—*virāga*—the *rāga* part literally translates as a dye, a hue, a color, a deep color. And *virāga* means the fading of a dye, the fading of that intensity. Sometimes the analogy for sense desire among the hindrances is the colors, the swirl of colors in a bowl of water, how we just get enchanted by that swirl of colors, the *rāga* there. And so *virāga* is the fading of interest in the colors of experience.

This term—fading, the dye fading—when we think about how that happens, you might put a cloth in the sun for a long time and gradually it will fade. It will begin to bleach out as a natural process. And so the word itself possibly indicates a gradual process of letting go.

There are some descriptions of how this gradual letting go might happen. The Buddha describes in one place how the attachment to sensual pleasures faded for him. He said, "I abandoned the craving for sensual pleasures, removed the fever for sensual pleasures, and I abide without thirst, with the mind inwardly at peace. I see other beings who are not free from the lust for sensual pleasures, being devoured by craving for sensual pleasures, burning with fever for sensual pleasures, indulging in sensual pleasures, and I do not envy them, nor do I delight therein. Why is that? Because there is a delight apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, which surpasses even divine bliss. Since I take delight in that, I do not envy what is inferior, nor do I delight therein."

This points to different levels of what can fade, different levels of attachment that can release. The craving for sensual pleasures is a first level that might fade. At first as we meditate, we might begin to taste some of the ease and peace of wholesome states—perhaps a little bit of concentration that arises. These wholesome states give us a contrast to the pleasure of sensual experience. We begin to see that the mind, by relying on these wholesome states, can begin to abandon and let go of its reliance on sense pleasure.

And yet the Buddha says there is a delight apart from even unwholesome states. In another place he says that we should not even cling to wholesome states. He talks about the simile of the raft, where he says that if you've crossed over a flood—and in this case, the flood is a simile for greed, aversion, and

delusion—you've used a raft to cross over. While crossing the flood, you probably had to hold on to the raft. The raft is an analogy for the Eightfold Path. You have to make effort. You need to hold on to the raft while you're in the midst of the flood. So there is some sense of using the wholesome states of the Eightfold Path while crossing over. They allow you to abandon, to let go of, to transcend the flood.

And yet he says, once you get to the other side, would you pick up the raft and carry it around on your head saying, "This has been useful to me to cross the flood, so I'll take it with me"? You wouldn't do that because it's no longer useful. And so, he says, we should abandon even wholesome states. How much more so should we abandon unwholesome states? By relying on wholesome states we can begin to abandon unwholesome states.

And then by relying on understanding the impermanent nature of wholesome states, we can begin to abandon wholesome states—by seeing that they too are just phenomena.

So there are different levels of attachment. We may get attached to the practice. I certainly have, and still am at times. And then I see, "Oh right, clinging to investigation—that's what's happening right now." So there may be different levels of fading away: by relying on this, abandon that. We can begin to let go. I mean, if I had tried to let go of the wholesome states while self-hatred was running amok, it would not have been very pretty.

So the relying on, the kind of holding to—"Yes, I need to be mindful of this, I need to direct my attention, I need to know what's happening here"—that began to allow the mind to let go, for that attachment to fade. And then the whole attachment to those ideas and beliefs of "I'm no good"—those don't have much traction in the mind anymore. The habits and patterns fade. But then there are still others. It's not like one big searing insight that transforms everything. There's a gradual unfolding, a gradual nature to this. And the Buddha talked about that over and over again—the gradual path.

So there is this fading aspect of dispassion, the fading away of our attachment to things. The Dalai Lama has famously said, "Look at the trajectory of your practice over the course of five or ten years. Look at what's changed." You will notice that things are no longer quite so sticky over a long course of practice. There may still be some sticky things, but you can take some appreciation, some delight and joy, in what has been released.

And there are times in our practice, especially on a long retreat, where we see into something so clearly that the mind lets go of a clinging. We feel like it's so obvious why picking anything up is not a good idea. It's so obvious that craving causes suffering, that craving and suffering arise together. It's so obvious that the mind just stops doing it. And it seems so natural, so clear. Like, "How can I not see this?"

And then, ten minutes later, the mind is caught again wanting something, feeling like it's got to have that thing.

Seeing that multiple times, I began to recognize, "Well, I guess it is actually not that obvious." Yes, it seems

so obvious when greed, aversion, and delusion are not active in the mind. The clarity of non-clinging and the value of non-clinging is really obvious. But as soon as greed re-arises, the belief of greed that "I need something"—it just obscures that understanding.

And yet, having seen something so clearly, I did begin to recognize over time: that experience wasn't me fooling myself. For the first few times looking back, I thought, "I must not have really seen that. If it was so clear then, it would still be clear now." I thought I had deluded myself into thinking I was seeing clearly. But that was delusion talking.

So this understanding, insight itself, is impermanent. It comes and goes too. And yet once we've seen through something, once we've understood something, then when the delusion comes back, the understanding isn't completely gone. It may not be active—the wisdom may not be shattering that delusion in the moment—but we can know in that moment, "Oh, the mind is confused. The mind is deluded. The mind has been enchanted again."

We can know that because we've seen it without that enchantment. This is how we can actually start to see delusion working in the mind. It's not a problem, actually, that the delusion comes back. It's just the momentum of that habit re-arising. And yet now we can see, "Oh, there's that habit re-arising." We can see, "This is the mind caught by thinking it's useful to cling again." And seeing that, there can be a little more space to hold it just as another arising, not to get all caught in it again. We can know delusion.

There's an aspect of dispassion that's also connected to letting go. There's a passage about freedom, about nibbāna, that basically equates dispassion and nibbāna—this quality of mind that is just not moving to pick up craving, not moving to pick up anything. This is the definition of freedom. This is peaceful.

This is the sublime. That is the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all attachments, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nibbāna. The relinquishment of all attachments. Dispassion.

Another definition for nibbāna, for freedom, is the absence of greed, aversion, and delusion. We could also say the non-arising of greed, aversion, and delusion. This came up in response to a question Bhante responded to the other day. Somebody asked if the Buddha, after his awakening, experienced any stressful qualities in the mind. His description of that state—I'll read the whole paragraph, which describes the opposite of freedom:

"Enraptured with lust, enraged with anger, blinded by delusion, overwhelmed with mind ensnared, one aims at one's own ruin, at the ruin of others, at the ruin of both, and experiences mental pain and grief. But if lust, anger, and delusion are given up"—and the word translated as "lust" here is *rāga*, that same word that *virāga* is the opposite of—"if lust, anger, and delusion are given up, one aims neither at one's own ruin, at the ruin of others, nor at the ruin of both, and experiences no mental pain and grief. This is nibbāna, immediate, visible in this life, inviting, attractive, and comprehensible to the wise."

No mental pain or grief, experienceable in this life. The absence of greed, the non-arising of greed,

aversion, and delusion. So dispassion, *virāga*, is the absence of the arising of that *rāga*, that movement, that craving, that wanting.

Another way to understand dispassion is the not picking up of something. Typically greed, aversion, and delusion will pick up and try to hold onto something. So let me offer two ways to feel into this.

One is to think back to something that you loved as a child, some toy. What was your favorite toy when you were five years old? Have you even thought about that recently? What was that toy? And remembering perhaps your relationship to that toy over time. There might have been a period where you just loved that toy and it went with you everywhere. You would not put it down. And then as you aged, as you grew, that toy began to lose some of its interest for you. Very naturally. Just the aging process, the maturation process—that particular toy began to lose some of its appeal. And yet you might go back to it every now and then, find some pleasure in it, some comfort in it, and then lose interest again. And now, here as an adult, where is that toy? Is there any attachment or interest in it at all?

In that process of thinking about losing interest in a toy, disenchantment is the process of realizing it's not so interesting anymore. Perhaps going back to it occasionally—is there anything still there? And then losing interest again. So there's that back and forth. Until one finally lets go at a certain point. That's the letting go, the experience of just not being interested anymore. That perhaps is the beginning of dispassion.

But at a certain point, even interest and disinterest become irrelevant. Thinking back on that toy now, is there any sense of interest or disinterest? It's just like, "Yeah, it's a thing." We don't even think of picking it up. It's not relevant to pick it up. It has no value in our lives to pick up that toy and play with it as an adult. That's kind of what dispassion is like. Not picking it up. It's just not relevant. It's not that we hate it—there's no aversion. The relationship simply isn't relevant anymore. It's just an old relationship that no longer makes sense. And that's what dispassion is like.

As I was preparing for this talk today, one thing I do is read through the suttas. I was looking for where the word *virāga* appears, and I found one that I hadn't remembered in a while. It's an interesting sutta.

It's very similar to the Bahiya Sutta. There's a portion of the sutta that gives that same teaching the Buddha offers to Bahiya—about how in the seen there is only the seen, in the heard only the heard, in the sensed only the sensed. That's how you should train yourself, he says.

But to this person, Malunkyaputta, he starts from a little different place before giving that teaching. He says, "What do you think? The forms cognizable via the eye that are unseen by you, that have never before been seen, that you don't see, that are not there to be seen by you—do you have any desire or passion for those?" And Malunkyaputta says, "No."

Just let this in. Sounds cognizable by the ear that have never been heard, that you don't hear, that are not to be heard by you—do you have any desire or passion for those?

For me, as I reflected on this, it gave me a taste. I felt into that. Sights not seen. There is that quality of dispassion that can be tasted in the reflection on how there are many things I know nothing about. No passion one way or the other. No interest or disinterest about things unseen. A little taste of that quality of dispassion.

Smells cognizable by the nose that are not smelled by you, that have never before been smelled, that you don't smell, and that are not there to be smelled by you—is there any desire or passion in that?

And then the Buddha goes on to offer the teaching for things that are heard, seen, sensed, cognized. In reference to the seen, let there be only the seen.

I think he gave Malunkyaputta this kind of pointing, almost a pointing-out instruction for what dispassion might feel like. And then it's like, okay, for things that are seen, that's also possible. In the seen is only the seen. In the heard is only the heard. In the sensed is only the sensed. In the cognized is only the cognized. That's how you should train yourself.

When for you in the seen there will be only the seen, in the heard only the heard, in the sensed only the sensed, in the cognized only the cognized, then there is no "you" in connection with that. Just seeing, just smelling, just sensing, just cognizing. A thought arising being known, no "you" in terms of that. When there is no "you" in terms of that, there is no "you" there. When there is no "you" there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This is the end of suffering.

I'll end with another quote from Bhikkhu Bodhi about this process of moving in the direction of freedom, of disenchantment, of dispassion, of realizing nibbana, of realizing the unconditioned as it is sometimes called.

Bhikkhu Bodhi says, "Though the realization of the unconditioned requires a turning away from the conditioned—we could say the withdrawal from, the dispassion from, requires the dispassion for the conditioned—it must be emphasized that this realization is achieved precisely through the understanding of the conditioned. Nibbana cannot be reached by backing off from a direct confrontation with samsara, with suffering, to lose oneself in a blissful oblivion to the world. The path to liberation is a path of understanding, of comprehension and transcendence, not of escapism or emotional self-indulgence. Nibbana can only be attained by turning one's gaze towards samsara, towards the conditioned, towards suffering, and scrutinizing it in all its darkness. The understanding of the conditioned is the way to the unconditioned."

Let's sit for a moment.

Thank you for your attention and for your commitment to meeting your experience in all its darkness.

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