The Perfections Turned Inward

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 47:23

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sambhasambuddhassa namo tassa bhagavato arahato sambhasambuddhassa namo tassa bhagavato arahato sambhasambuddhassa

Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

Last week we talked about what's known as the distant epoch. This is the story of Gautama Buddha and it's in the collection of the Jātakas, and we talked about what he was doing before he was born as a bodhisattva. I was going to go on to the process of his life and what he did during his life, but then it occurred to me that this was a good time to look at the *pāramī*, because herein our Bodhisattva spent four asaṅkheyya, measureless times, and hundred thousand eons, making his resolutions under twenty-four Buddhas, commencing with Dīpaṅkara. No Buddha other than this perfectly enlightened one appeared after the Blessed One, Kassapa. And in this manner, the Buddha received his assurance under the 24 Buddhas, beginning with Dīpaṅkara.

So, what was he doing during that hell of a long time? My goodness, what was he playing at? That took him so long. So it was the development of these *pāramī*. And they're usually described as perfections, which is a little bit over the top, really. It's more virtues or those qualities that you need to get to the other shore, because that's what *pāramī* means, the other shore.

But he needs a little bit more than that, and I just want to read this out of interest to you. He actually needs, for it is said, the resolution which consists of a combination of eight conditions. You can't just become a Buddha because you've got the perfections right. Birth as a human being, the advantage of sex—we'll come to that in a minute. No throwing stones yet, please. The good fortune. The meeting with a teacher. Ordination. Endowment of inherent capabilities to higher knowledge. The dedication of one's life and resolute will.

So there's one or two things there. The idea that you have to be a human being to be a buddha. You can't do it in the other realms. So I think we know why. You know the hell realms are too painful and the heavenly realms are just too joyful. The wonderful thing about the human realm, it has this lovely mixture of joy and woe. And of course we have the intelligence to work our way out of it.

The advantage of sex, if you remember last time we were talking about conceptions of time and the idea of circular time. So obviously if you believe in circular time, time constantly repeating itself, then once you've got a Buddha who is a male, all the rest of them have to be males. That's what you call a *diṭṭhi*, that's what you call holding on to a belief, you see. And the Buddha rails about this. If he knew what was

being said about him now, I'm sure he'd turn over in his grave if he was still there. The whole idea of extending something present into the past to make a law of it is one of those things that we constantly do. Precedence. In our law-making we call it precedence. So that's how you end up with the idea that only men can become Buddhas.

The meeting with a teacher or a nation, endowment of inherent capabilities to higher knowledge. Hopefully we've all got that, but there's something perhaps special about somebody who's made that dedication to become fully self-enlightened. And a dedication of one's life and resolute will. Don't forget that. This endowment of inherent capabilities to the higher knowledge. So remember, we've all got that, but we talk about the self-enlightened Buddha.

So for a Westerner, this does conjure up the idea of the self-made man, the self-made woman. And of course, when you look into the history of anybody who is self-made in terms of their success in society, you find that they've been helped along by their workers, by the system, by their birth, by good fortune, and so on and so forth. So the idea of somebody being self-made is one of these lovely Western myths. And we deposit that on the Buddha, thinking that he did it all by himself. So, of course, he didn't. He started off by going to teachers, tried various methods, as you know, and eventually, in that despair, suddenly found a way out of the problem. But we'll come to that perhaps at another time.

So what I want to just talk around, really, just allow ourselves to contemplate a little, are these, but I want to do it specifically for a retreat situation. The first two I'll stick together are *dāna*, generosity, and *mettā*.

So, you know, we say that charity begins at home. So where's home, you see? It's here, isn't it? It's how I treat myself. If I can discover and develop a way of treating myself, which is virtuous and which does me good, then let's presume that I'm going to treat others in the same way.

So we have this, there's a teaching called the *āhāra* or nutriments. And they go like this. Food for the body, that's pretty straightforward. Sense impression for feeling. Volition for *saṅkhāra*, for mental formations or becoming, *kamma*. And consciousness for the body-mind. That one specifically has to do with the process of rebirth, so we didn't bother ourselves here so much. But it's this concept of nourishing, nourishing ourselves.

So when we go for food, you see, that's a real opportunity to develop this nourishment. *Dāna*, this generosity, this nourishment towards ourselves. So you have to, as it were, get in contact with the body and you have to recognise that the feelings of hunger partly are coming from the body itself needing nourishment and partly from greed which also needs nourishment. So we have to be able to recognise that that's there whether we like it or not and it's a case of approaching the food with that consciousness of the body with that awareness of the feelings in the body and then reminding ourselves that we can always go for seconds we take what we feel we need and we place it in front of us you see and again to remind ourselves that this is nourishment for the body that it's just going to cause us the sufferings of greed if we indulge so we begin to eat.

Now, at this point, you see, especially with this teaching around *dukkha* and suffering and all that, and the dangers of pleasure, we often fall into the wrong thinking that pleasurable feelings are somehow evil. You have to be very careful with pleasant feelings. They're Māra in disguise, and they're going to drag you down to an eternal hell. In which case, you fall into the error of self-mortification, because now you don't let yourself enjoy anything. Because if you enjoy something, well, surely that's the same as greed. So, this distinction between enjoying what is given to us and indulging it is obviously very subtle. And we fall into the error of one or the other.

In the monastic life, which I've come to know a little bit about, the horror sometimes comes out in people's practice, the horror of any sort of sense pleasure. Monks will ride on buses and trains and keep their eyes constantly on their knees, daring not to look out in case they're distracted by whatever passes by.

And there was one lovely example I remember of a monk who, if you saw him, you would definitely feel that he was an ascetic of tremendous stature he had that gaunt look about him of somebody who had been through hell and survived and he was a couple of years older than me in the order so he would sit to my left you see and the food came by and it happened to be a very lovely meal it was somebody's birthday so it was one of these times when we got fruit salad with ice cream so this was there this was served to us.

We began eating it, the road monks, and I noticed that he was actually staring at this object on the table. And I could feel the energy of his stare, you see. Because right there in front of him was Māra, you see. And as we ate it and we got close to finishing our dessert, he very mindfully went towards it, picked it up very gently, raised it to his lips, and disappeared within a couple of seconds, just in case it touched the tongue, just in case there arose anywhere some sort of pleasurable feeling.

Now you can imagine that this sort of life is pretty dire if you can't enjoy what life gives us. We're very familiar with the genres and the idea that we can sail into *jhānas* and that the Buddha said that this was wonderful but there is a point in the scriptures where the Buddha coming back from alms round actually says to Ānanda why don't we find a beautiful shrine where we can eat this a park remember shrines in those days were really like parks and he names a couple of shrines the Cāpāla shrine is the one I remember.

The question arises, why should he be bothered about eating his food in a beautiful shrine? Why not on a dung heap? Or in a desert place, or just where he is? So there's something about beauty, there's something about the loveliness of life, which is not to be confused with indulgence and wrong relationship, which causes us problems.

Now, it seems to me that food is just one of these lovely places where we can develop this right attitude because we have to eat. And most of us do it two, three times a day and probably a lot more often as well with the cups of teas and coffees and what have you. So every time we approach something to nourish the body, there's an opportunity to make this distinction between enjoying what is lovely, what is beautiful, and indulging in it.

Now it seems to me that if we can crack this problem of enjoying something without indulgence, of experiencing essential pleasure, in a lovely way, without indulgence, then we have perhaps a way of translating that into every part of our lives. So there's of course all the joys of relationship. How can you enjoy the joys of relationship without becoming attached? There's got to be a way of doing it, surely. How can you enjoy all the aesthetic beauty of life and not depend upon it for personal happiness. That's what indulgence does, doesn't it? You depend upon. Your happiness depends upon something being there. And when it comes even to the spiritual joys, you see, one of the warnings that they always tell you about *jhāna* practice is that you get stuck with it. You become indulgent and you can't let it go. And it just becomes another path to hell.

So it seems to me that this *dāna*, this generosity that we can practice towards ourselves, this loving kindness, this caring towards ourselves, if we start just with the basic, the basic body, what does the body need and how can I give it to the body in a way which is lovely, which is beautiful.

When it comes to meditation, you know, keeping the mind calm, keeping the mind still. Remember that you have to nourish that. You have to nourish that by giving it those things to absorb into, as it were. So just the softness of the breath. So instead of looking at it as some sort of painful exercise that one has to do, to watch the breath in order to make insight feel the actual gentle feelings of the breath feel that lovely quality of the breath and just those calm gentle feelings around it and just begin to sense that as something which is worthy of appreciation the body does have lovely feelings.

Going always with this idea of giving oneself something is, of course, the opposite, which is to renounce. You've got to renounce something. And that's where you get these two particular *pāramīs*. They come together, the idea of generosity, the idea of giving, and the idea of renunciation. So in ordinary daily life, when we give something to somebody with no hope of return, it means we have to give something up, which we would have normally used for our own personal enjoyment. If you make a donation, shall we say, to these terrible things that happen in nature, and you make a donation to help people, then you've obviously given something up, which you might have had before. You might have gone on holiday somewhere, but you've decided to give that up for the benefit of others.

So the idea of renunciation and generosity and care always balance each other. They come together. So when we nourish the mind, when we want to nourish our calmness within us, remember that it also means that we have to renounce sense pleasure. Now it's up to you how far you want to take that. Reading can excite the mind. Writing can excite the mind. Phone calls and definitely getting onto the web. So all these things have to be renounced for the benefit of spiritual development.

You can even get more refined and, of course, not look around, not look around at nature, which is around us here, and just keep the eyes, as it were, still. So this feels like a sort of sensory deprivation. But the purpose, of course, is to completely calm the mind. And the more we stop that sense impression, you see, the more the mind will calm. It's just a fact. These sense impressions, remember, are what feelings are

made out of. So as soon as a sense impression comes in, we immediately perceive it as either being pleasant or unpleasant. And as soon as that happens, you get your reaction, wanting, not wanting. So to keep the mind very calm, you see, and to restrict your sense perception at all the doors, hearing, whatever, is going to help us to just calm the mind. It's sort of feeding the calmness, nourishing the calmness. And calmness, remember, *passaddhi*, is one of the seven facts of enlightenment. So it's all linked. Everything's linked.

This lovely word, attention. It has this double meaning, doesn't it? To attend to somebody, to look after them, to tend to something. And by paying attention to the object, by giving it a feeling of care towards what you're looking at, giving a flavor of loving kindness to your practice, looking down upon something with compassion. So we have this Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, from the Mahāyāna tradition, to look down upon, to look down upon with compassion.

So when these great pains arise in the body, which, remember, are only trying to express themselves, one looks down upon them with great compassion. As it were, one embraces them, opens up to them, but rather than always this very sharp investigation, which is fine, I mean, there's nothing wrong with that, but sometimes just to, as it were, flavour the investigation with just that little bit of kindness. And what that tends to do is it just softens a bit. It just softens the process, that's all. Of course, the danger there is that you try and zap what it is that's hurting you with enormous compassion and try and do a bit of New Age healing. And of course, that can be a disaster, especially if it fails.

So it's a case of also recognising that the attention that we pay, the attention can be an attending, an attending to. And if we think of the body with its pains coming either from the physical base, from the posture, say from the knees and things like that, or from the turbulences that are caught up, these mental turbulences that are caught up in the body that come out as neck ache, back ache, stomach ache, the whole load of aches. And to, as it were, look down upon them with that sort of gentleness, you know. So this is a generosity, this is a kindness, isn't it? This is a kindness towards ourselves.

There's also to nourish that sense of enthusiasm. It doesn't come, I mean, sometimes it just arises of itself, but enthusiasm sounds vaguer, a sense of urgency. You have to feed it, you have to. Sometimes when you find yourself not putting in the practice, it's sometimes because we haven't lifted that enthusiasm. If you think of people in the business world or the political world, how they're constantly telling themselves to get on with it. These sports people that shout at themselves to make the game, you say, well, I'm not suggesting that you do that. But one has to, as it were, bring up what were the reasons that we came to meditation for in the first place. You have to keep reminding yourself. You have to cajole yourself sometimes to build up that dedication.

So this is all to do with not being hard upon ourselves, but just to develop this sense of generosity towards ourselves. It's the same with concentration, you see. When you don't have concentration, then you can get very down and you start blaming yourself and you think, oh dear, this is terrible and all this. And it's a

case of just resting and just asking yourself, well, why isn't it coming, you see? So then if you put too much energy into it, of course, then it corrupts it even further.

So it has to be a gentle energy, a cajoling. Have some sort of image, like training a puppy dog to sit. If you give it a kick, it just runs away. So you've got to pat it down and give it something to suck. And very slowly, it'll sit down for you. So that sense of being kind to oneself, being generous to oneself. In all the forms of our practice, we can find a little way of bringing that generosity towards it.

Of course, there is always going to be the danger of indulgence, but sometimes give yourself the benefit of the doubt. You are actually being caring and not indulging. I think the trick is to really look at your attitude. Why am I doing it? And be very clear about that.

And that brings us really to this whole business of honesty. Honesty is, I mean, nobody would say, you know, I'm telling lies or anything. It's not a case of that. It's a case more of exaggeration or not really facing up to why you're doing something. So you feel a bit sleepy and, you know, a little power nap, take a bit of time out, all this sort of stuff. You know, I'm being kind to myself. But actually, when you really quiz yourself, and you recognize that you've actually had a very good night's sleep, and really there's no reason at all to fall asleep at this present time, then one has to be kind to oneself by not going to sleep. Or else one simply begins to develop that idea of little naps all over the place. And if you've ever tried that, it does undermine your meditation. It begins to actually sap your energy. So you have to be slightly careful about that.

And that truthfulness, you know, even small things like, what we want to do is to build up the power of our meditation. We want to maintain a constant effort, a constant effort. And I personally like to think in three hour blocks, I can handle that. If it gets longer than that, I get headaches and stuff like that. So a three-hour block. So if I've been sitting, say, for one hour, and then I get up, well, there's that little idea comes, you know, have a cup of tea. And off I go, and half an hour goes having this cup of tea which I never needed anyway, and of course it ruins that little special effort. It ruins the building up of that energy that we need to really make some good insight.

So when you get these feelings to have a little drink or take a little break or go for a little walk, you have to be really truthful. You have to sit there and say, now come on, you know. And then you go to the walking place and do your walking meditation. Very slowly, you see, by renouncing those, they're all nicely interwoven, these things. By renouncing those desires, one is being kind to oneself and one is building up this other *pāramī*, this other virtue of determination, *adhiṭṭhāna*. Goodwill, strong will.

One of those things is when you feel restless and you think, oh well, I'll go for a walk. The mind is not still. And off you go, you go into the forest or something. And really, you're just escaping. We're just wandering off to get away from restlessness for a little bit. And of course, if you do feel restless and we walk fast up and down, it does give us a sense of relief. But it's not dealing with the mental factor of restlessness at all. And often we can use that to suppress. So you have to be careful.

So it's the same with sloth and torpor. I prefer the words dullness and lethargy, frankly. Dullness and lethargy. You can make the mistake of thinking, right, well I'll go for a run and really shake this off. And of course what you're doing is you're suppressing those feelings which are an energy force, which is drawing us down. There's energy, remember, which bursts us out like stars, and there's energy which draws us down like black holes. So it's all within us, and if we think that we're going to overcome feelings of sloth, dullness and lethargy by giving ourselves a kick and running about, that's just another way of actually suppressing it and building over it this energy. But actually we're not dealing with this energy which is experienced as a dullness in the mind or a heaviness in the body.

So how do we do that? Well again you have to let go of the idea of trying to do something about it. And as it were, be gentle to these things. Be generous to these things. Be open to these things. And allow them to express themselves. So you have to find a way of allowing dullness and lethargy to express itself. And usually the best way is to walk up and down gently. But you keep your mind, you keep your attention on those feelings. And in that way, these mental states are given the space and the time just to exhaust themselves.

Often, when we do that we can feel that transformation. So remember that there's nothing lost in this process. Everything is simply transformed. So we might just suddenly feel, having worked with these feelings of dullness and lethargy, a sudden very gentle energy. Sometimes it flips because it's just the other side of the coin of restlessness. So it's a case of being careful to really be truthful with ourselves, not to kid ourselves.

Of course, the opposite is, or the danger, of course, is you get into self-criticism, self-judgment, this business of I'm no good, everybody else can do it but not me, I'm special that way. And it's a case of recognising that you have to make a separation between the action and the person. The person is a figment of the imagination. We can say that this action was unskillful. Lying down in the afternoon was unskillful. I didn't wake up till seven o'clock and it broke my sleep pattern. We can say that was unskillful. But if I then say to myself, well, you're an absolutely useless person. This is obvious. What the hell are you doing here? Then I get into this awful negativity about myself, which is a fiction anyway. So it's a case of recognizing that the act can be unskillful, but the person need not be criticized.

If those things come up, of course, you can't deny them there. You can't, just like in feelings of heaviness and these dullness, you can't say, oh, the self's not there, go away. No, you have to pay attention to that and let it go. You have to pay attention to it, but you don't indulge it by identifying with it. You recognize it now, that's the self. And remember that to keep off thought, to come into the body, to stay with the body, because there we're actually experiencing the mind in its rawness as emotion, what we call emotion, feeling, *vedanā*.

So every time the mind wanders, remember, it's indulging itself, whether we like it or not. Whether we made a decision to do so or not, there's still an impulsion there. So that's why even though we don't mean

to get angry, because we let the mind wander, we get more angry and more angry and more angry. You end up with Prozac.

So it's a case of recognizing that, coming back, coming to the feelings of guilt, feelings of shame, and just staying there with them. Just allowing them to rise and pass away. Because you'll never satisfy self-criticism. I mean, if you hear that voice saying, you really are the most unselfish of people. I don't know how anybody could love you. And then you say, well, I'll make up, I'll give something to somebody. And I'll practice generosity. And so you do this wonderful gift and give it to somebody. And then the little voice says, yes, that was a very wonderful thing. You did a really wonderful thing. But you are still horrible. See, you can't get out of that definition of being horrible by doing something about it because it's there as a conditioning. So all we can do is allow that statement to come, note it as self-criticism, and go into the feel of it, go into the feel of it, and give it time to dissipate, give it time to dissipate.

So, when it comes to coming back to this renunciation, just one or two things that you might like to try. The idea of renunciation, of course, is not to create suffering for ourselves, you know, as if we didn't have enough. The idea of renunciation is to see where the attachment is. So one stops doing something to feel that attachment towards what you would normally indulge in. So, you know, just try missing a meal as an experiment, seeing what happens. And just stay with the feelings of fear. The body may disappear if I don't eat. Things like that. And just stay with it and just feel the fear of it. That's what you're trying to do. You're trying to feel the fear. Remember that underlying all attachment is this anxiety, this fear.

One of the things is to find out what we feel about time. That can be interesting. Just to find a clock which has a finger going round, and just watch it. Watch it for an hour, two hours, and just see what happens in your mind. It can be quite something to listen to yourself, just watching time passing. Because all this business about trying to achieve something, trying to do something, and I'm wasting my time, that all comes up in great gollops. So just watching the clock go round, or watching a watch, just tick, tick, tick, going round.

When it comes to this intuitive intelligence, so I'll only say a little bit about that because I'll go into that more deeply later, this intelligence we have, the Buddha nature within us, this something in us wants to know, where's that come from? And it's a case of developing that as an intuition, knowing the difference between thought. See, thought is not intuition. Intuition has to use thought to express itself. Intuition doesn't know what it knows until it says it to itself. That's why in your meditation sometimes you might hear these little phrases come up. Oh, everything's arising and passing away or something like that. And that's this intuition talking to itself. And it's one of these peculiarities that it doesn't know what it knows until it tells itself. And the only way it can tell itself is through words. Or one way it can tell itself is through words.

Intuition is not feeling. Don't confuse what people would normally talk about as I have a feeling or intuition with feeling. Feelings can also be just as delusive as thoughts can be. But again, this intuitive

intelligence expresses itself through feeling. So just take a very simple thing. Intuitively, in terms of the intellect, expressing through the intellect, we may understand this idea of interconnection, interdependency. But when it expresses itself through the heart, how does that express itself? Through love, isn't it? Compassion. So compassion, love, sympathetic joy, these are all expressions of interdependency from the heart's point of view.

And, of course, it's not the body, but it expresses itself through the body. You've only got to see sports people and see how they react to things to see how the intuitive, just that intuitive intelligence expressing itself. Same with people who perform, you know, actors and musicians. So the body, heart, mind, all that are avenues in which this intuition expresses itself.

So somehow, we have to abstract it. We have to find a way of lifting it out of that embeddedness, that confusion with the psychophysical organism. And that really is what our meditation is about. That's why we turn everything into an object. That's why we look at it. That's why we look at something. As soon as you look at it, you can't be it. If you got into a car and said, well, this is me, they'd take you away. But here we are in this body and we say, this is me. So it's the same sort of idea of detachment. That's what the detachment is. Lifting this awareness, this intuitive intelligence, this *paññā*, out of its embeddedness to look at what's going on inside us.

And to do that, I always find anyway, personally, that the best motivation is curiosity. What Zen calls the great doubt, or wanting to know, to excite that interest in our psychology and our bodies, and to see these three characteristics, see how it works. So this is the sort of thing the Bodhisattva was doing, for eons, for lifetimes. Trying to get it right.

The other thing is, the other quality is *sīla*, right conduct. Normally speaking, of course, when we talk about sīla or right conduct, it's usually referred to as just what we say and what we do. But also, you know, for our purposes, we can extend it into the mind because every time we think it's an action, it's an act of *k amma*. It is a form of sīla, you might say. And, you know, you can look at just not to harm oneself, you know. Through our thinking. Not to harm oneself by overeating. Not to harm the body. Oversleeping.

All these wonderful researches into sleep. And people who sleep five hours are better off than people who sleep nine hours. It's better for you. There's a sort of good period between five and seven hours which is good for sleep. Anything over that is doing harm to the body. They did these exercises with rats, these poor animals, in which they half-starved one set and overfed the other. Not surprisingly, the ones who were half-starved lived the longest. The ones who overfed died of overweight.

One of the things that often troubles us in our meditation is erotic, romantic desires. It's a very strong pull within us. So be careful of that. Because as I say, once the mind trips, you're off. You've created enormously wonderful good films. If you'd only written them down, you'd have probably made a fortune by now. So it's a case of as soon as you see the mind beginning to indulge, be very quick.

And I can set you a little exercise if you haven't heard of it or done it before, but to look to the disgusting nature of the body. I have to be careful here because you don't want to end up being equally disgusted as you were lusted. But the idea is that as the figure towards which you feel either erotic or romantic feelings come towards, you either see the body in its more unpleasant parts and positions and see the process of aging in that person, and this undermines it. And the idea is that we train the mind to actually turn the image for us so it'll do it naturally. Once you've done it a few times it'll just do it naturally for you, and as the lust arises and presents its image it'll change in your mind just like that. It'll do it, you see.

This is only while, for most of you, you're undertaking the *brahmacāriya*, you understand. I wouldn't want to suggest that there isn't a place for the erotic and the romantic in our lives. I remember it somewhere in my life. Somewhere in the past. And that, of course, is a renunciation. That's part of renunciation. Renouncing that sense pleasure. And we have to speak to ourselves properly, you know. We have to understand why we're doing it, or else you get into a battle with yourself. And if you do things unwillingly, it creates a wrong attitude within us.

So it's the same with drugs and drink, even at the level of just relying on tea, you know. That's also, you can look at that as, you know, conduct.

Of course with all this you have to just be careful of not getting too tight a conscience. One of the great mistakes of the monastic life is presuming that if you keep the rule absolutely perfect then you're bound to move forward. Or worse, if you're practicing very hard and you don't move forward it means that you're not really keeping the rule properly. And

I shall end this little discourse with a tale of a particular monk just to show you the error of our ways. And of course it easily translates into lay life where you get the feeling that everything you're doing is wrong and that just because you're doing something wrong you can't move forward. You're always slipping into old habits, old negative habits.

So there was a particular monk I knew who was an excellent meditator. Very fierce, up at four o'clock in the morning, all that sort of stuff. And seemingly after some period, not getting anywhere, began to lose confidence. So he presumed that it must be the Vinaya. So he began to study the Vinaya and he found, to his horror, that all monks weren't keeping the Vinaya at all. On two counts specifically. The upper robe was far too big. According to the original measurements, it was at least half the size. It was a little cape that you threw over yourself when you went into the village. And the bowl was definitely not the depth of, I think it's called a cubit.

So, at a particular ceremony, the Kaṭhina, which is the time when you have a feast after the rainy season retreat, where people come to make offerings for the Saṅgha, he turned up with a very natty little cape tied around his neck. And then began doing little alms round with a proper sized bowl, which was actually a biscuit tin. And the general feeling was that he'd gone mad.

Now, as far as he was concerned, he was following the Vinaya strictly. Unfortunately, he then began to decide that, in fact, Buddha never taught Vipassanā. He only taught Samatha. And he went to Thailand, and he got shifted from one monastery to the next. That's what happens. You just get shifted. They just tell you to leave. And he eventually ended up in Australia, where I think he finally disrobed. And it's a sort of bit of a sadness, really, because he was very keen and very devoted to the practice. And then just this wrong thought around *sīla*, around conduct, and making that distinction between moral law and rules and regulations.

So remember that even when two people, well, even by yourself, but especially when two people live in the same place, you have a veneer. You have your own little rules and regulations, like you leave your shoes in a certain place and you don't leave them anywhere else and you have to close the door and you don't pull the chain of the toilet at certain times during the night and things like that. So all these little rules and regulations begin to build up whenever two people live together. And of course, even when you live on your own, you end up having little rules and regulations which you're not aware of until somebody comes and lives with you. And then you realise that you don't want them to wash the pots like that. You do it like this. And it causes enormous anger and all sorts of silly stuff.

So, again, this business of right conduct. We can look at our actions from the point of view of not doing harm to ourselves. That's the main point.

There are two other things that I want to say. The *upekkhā* principle. It is a total receptivity. Upekkhā, you'll hear it used in various ways. One of them is neutral feelings. But here, we're really talking about an attitude of complete openness, complete receptivity. It's a bit like a judge in a way. We expect a judge not to get caught up in the arguments of these clever lawyers and not to get caught up in the emotion of the crowd. So, as it were, it's an attitude of being completely open to whatever your heart and mind have to offer you. A real openness. Hold nothing back, you see. Of course, when you find yourself getting tight, then investigate that. What is it? Fear? Aversion? You see?

And finally, *muditā*, joy. I really do feel that at the end of the day, we ought to rejoice. I mean, for heaven's sake, we've been sat here for I don't know how many hours, walking around and restraining ourselves, and at the end of the day, all we can think about is what a horrible day we had. So it's good at the end of the day to reflect on the fact that we've been training, and we've been moving forward. And even though it might feel sometimes a spiritual life as one well-known Hindu saint in Sri Lanka used to say, the spiritual life sometimes feels it's one step forward, two steps back. The fact is that every evening I really feel that it's a good practice to rejoice about one's spiritual life and to feel happiness around it, that we are actually doing what is good for us and good for others.

So that quality of muditā, that quality of rejoicing in oneself, because it's often translated as just sympathetic joy, that you can only be joyful when somebody else is joyful, you see. But we can be joyful in ourselves. And I have found that the more I practise these virtues towards myself, the more it's easier for

me to practise towards the others. So that goes back to our *mettā* practice, which always begins classically with offering ourselves mettā before we offer it to others. We tend to find that difficult because of our negativities towards ourselves, so we have to come round it another way. But even so, we can see that if we can think of these virtues as something we can develop towards ourselves, then I think they become more immediately important to us.

So that's what the Buddha was doing for all these countless ages and lifetime after lifetime. The Bodhisattva in his vow to become fully self-enlightened.

Transcriptions produced locally using Swiss low-carbon electricity. Corrections and rewriting by cloud-hosted AI.