The Hindrances: The Psychotherapy of Vipassanā

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 53:54

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa.

Homage to the Buddha, the Blessed, Noble and Fully Self-Enlightened One.

This evening we have to revise our hindrances—that's the normal thing. So for some it is a revision and for others it might be just an introduction.

The Buddha categorises all our suffering into five different types: all that to do with pleasure desire, all the problems we have with pleasure desire, attachment, indulgence; all those problems we have with hate, aversion, fear; all those problems that we have—what my teacher used to call our two very good friends—dullness and lethargy; all those problems we have with restlessness, which is a bit of a catch-all really, but it also includes remorse or guilt, guilt, shame, that sort of area; and sceptical doubt. So those are your five areas.

We have to know how to deal with them when they come up, because in the discourse on how to establish this awareness which leads to liberation, we have to know how they arise, how to undermine them, and how to stop them ever arising again. This is the hard work. This is the work of our meditation. If we had no hindrances, well, you'd be there really—just a couple of weeks meditation and you'd made it.

It's the hindrances that prevent us from making insights. And they are also hindrances to concentration because, as you know, they just take us away from the object, take us away from meditation. They set us up into a dream place or a sleepy place.

So we have to know what to do, and this is part of the skills of meditation. The other part we do tomorrow, which is developing the seven factors of enlightenment—that's the beautiful side. Best to leave the best wine till last. And those also demand a certain skillfulness, but for most of us it's this hard grind of dealing with our defilements.

Defilements is another word that the Buddha uses—*kilesa*, defilements of the mind. That's how it's translated, defilements. And he also has another word, *anusaya*, which means latent tendencies. So this comes close to our understanding of having things that are buried in our psyche and which we don't know how much is down there until somebody presses the right button. And then we realise just how angry we are.

So we have this underlying base of unresolved problems, and then they arise every so often, dependent on circumstance, whichever makes them come out in ordinary life. But in meditation we're just letting the heart speak for itself. We're just sitting back. And whatever comes up, that's what we've got to deal with. We don't choose to deal with any of these hindrances. They just come up by themselves—the *nīvaraṇa*, the hindrances.

As I'm sure many of you know, one retreat, you're falling asleep all over the place. And the next week, you're a jumping bean. You can't keep still. The mind—one day, you're like that. The mind, one day, is that. One sitting you fall asleep, next sitting you can't stop still. So there's no logic, there's no rationality of that sort in the heart. It has its own internal logic which is completely illogical from the rational point of view, because you're sitting here and—why am I feeling depressed? Why does this anxiety come up now when I'm trying to be peaceful and fully liberated?

In a sense, once we step out of the system, once we put ourselves in a position where we just want to let the heart manifest its turbulences, then of course it does all sorts, and we've got to be ready. We've got to know what to do. So if we go through these, then hopefully we'll remind ourselves of these skills or pick up some new ones, pick up some new ideas.

Now, what I've been saying all weekend is the power of the mind—the thinking mind, the imaginative mind—because it's through the imaginative mind, the thinking mind, that these mental states develop in meditation. They do it also in daily life. Everything that we've seen, everything that human beings have created, from jet planes to vaccines, it all began in the mind. All the horrors that we've committed, as humanity against humanity and dumb beasts and all that sort of stuff—that's all begun in the mind.

So it's really beginning to realise the importance of understanding what the mind does. By mind here I mean this imagination, this thinking capacity, this rationality. Through our Enlightenment—the 18th century Enlightenment—we put a lot of faith in rationality, in reason, in being able to sit and reason things out. And what was misunderstood was that reason always depends on a premise. If the premise is wrong, then your reasoning will lead you into trouble. So that's why we ended up with Nazism, Communism, and all the rest of it. And it's undermined a lot of our faith in rationalism, what it should have done. That's why we have a postmodern idea of—my reality is my own and to hell with yours.

So once we understand the power of the mind—the thinking mind, the imaginative mind—to create a world for us and how it develops and produces these mental states, then we're very wary of it. And one of the things that we have to do in meditation is to keep coming off the thinking mind and plunge into—as Sayadaw U Pandita's way of putting it—plunge into, to get into, to really feel what's motivating it, which is coming from the heart.

In our sitting practice, it's normally beginning from the heart, normally beginning from the heart, and then it moves into these higher faculties of imagination and thought, and then it begins to churn itself. In daily life, of course, it can come the other way. So you're watching television or something, which is some

usual stuff about murder and divorce and argument. It's all going in. And, of course, you're responding to it. You're resonating with what's happening on the television screen. Every time you listen to the news and its usual horror stuff, then you resonate with that. So, in effect, that's coming the other way. It's coming from the mind into the heart.

But our problem in the meditation, in the sitting, is usually coming from inside, from memories, from unresolved turbulences in the mind. I much prefer the word turbulence. We have this word about blocks. A block gives you the impression that that's it. It's blocked. There's no way you can get out of this. It's stuck. It's like something in your throat. But if you look at the mind as an energy system, just as we experience the weather—sometimes it blows hot, it blows cold, it storms, sometimes it's beautiful and peaceful, and so on.

So the first thing is all this stuff with desire. And remember that deep down, our aim is just to be happy. That's all we want. Just to be peaceful and happy. And whenever we see something which is making us happy, then we hold on to it. We try to aggrandise it. And we might come to this, a deeper understanding later on in the week.

Of course, we associate happiness, real happiness, with a mental state, with an emotional state. So when you say, "I'm happy," what you're saying is, emotionally, I feel happy. My heart feels happy. I'm filled inside with a happy feeling. Now, that's the first thing we have to, in a sense, begin to disconnect from.

So that when happiness arises, and it's trying to look for an object to increase its happiness—so there you are, happiness arises, and suddenly there you are with the person you've been looking for all your life on a dreamy island beneath coconut trees. Love abounds, and you're walking down the aisle, oh my goodness—or it's just raw sex, wonderful. And you wake up: oh my god.

So these feelings, coming from old desires of wanting this lovely relationship and so on—that's just arising. And now what's happening is that this is latching on to that and you're dreaming it. So within the dream, it's real. When you're dreaming, it's real. This is the problem. When you wake up out of it, suddenly you realise you've been fooled. It's only a dream. God, it's only a dream. And then you get this depression and this feeling of, I'll never find the person I can really love.

And so it's being able to recognise that we have to stop that, and you go back into just the feeling of excitement or that desire and you're pulling out of it, you're pulling out of it to make it an object.

Just to go back to childhood: when we're born, so they tell us, we experience the world without any depth. It's just a blank screen or a screen full of colour and shape and movement and all that. And that's why they say that babies, they're always reaching out for those rattles and stuff in their pram. And what they're doing is they're creating distance. They're creating a third dimension. You've got to believe these people. And slowly, that young child, the world begins to separate out. Before it was them. They were in that bath of sensations. And this slowly pushing out to the world, so that sometime—I don't know when it

happens, maybe two or three years old—they're quite clear the world is out there and this is me, and they're pretty clear that I'm a boy or a girl.

Now all we're doing is taking that process inward. The world inside now has to be externalised. So you're pushing it away from yourself and you're looking at it. So whereas before, "I am happy," "I am in a state of excitement," "I love this and I love that"—come off the mind. Come off the mind. And you're pulling away from this emotion. So that's your first state: making it an object.

So it's just like this room. The room is outside us. This is now outside this consciousness. You've made it an object. Yeah? You're all nodding vigorously, so I presume—yeah, you feel it's there.

Now that distance, that distance is allowing us to actually create that knowledge that this is not me, not mine. It's not me, not mine. And when that's steadied, when I know that, then I can re-enter into it and begin to investigate it more closely. But I have to first of all establish that position of objectivity within myself, and what I'm doing is I'm breaking a connection with it. I'm breaking an identity with it. This identity is telling me that this happiness is me. That's the problem. So long as I think that this emotional happiness is me, I'm going to be seeking what makes me happy in this emotional way.

So at first you think you're losing something. So how the hell am I going to be ever happy in life now that I know this happiness is not me? So you pull yourself out. So this is an awful place to be because it's an identity crisis. How am I ever going to be happy if I can't be this happiness that I feel?

So one has to—if there's some fear come up, some anxiety around that—you go to that, you feel that. Don't let the anxiety throw you back into this happiness and back onto the beach. Maintain your position of objectivity.

And then as you become clear about that, then you re-enter the happiness to investigate it. And slowly becoming convinced that in fact this is just a form of energy. It's just like a light or just like a nice feeling, just as you might have an itch. It's just a feeling. That's all there is. That's all there is in the body, a feeling.

So the Buddha's word for this is *vedanā*. Vedanā covers virtually everything we mean by a feeling. Both a sensation, when I say "I'm not feeling well," or "I'm feeling really good," meaning physically good, and sometimes when you say "I'm feeling unhappy," "I'm feeling sad"—that's a mental state. So this word feeling comes very close to the Buddha's understanding. And what it does is it tells us that everything we associate with in the body is just feeling, whether it's a raw sensation or some great form of delight.

So when it comes to things that are around this area of happiness, we begin to realise that having identified with happiness as the purpose of my life, seeking happiness in the sensual world—and remember when the Buddha means the sensual world he means everything you're experiencing—having sought that happiness in the sensual world, of course all my energy goes to make it real. So if I know that I'm going to be really happy if I find the right person, off I go clubbing, doing all sorts, looking for this right person, especially in my dream world.

So I come back and I recognise the power of this desire, whatever it might be—a good job, money, fame, whatever's driving me. By doing that, this begins—I'm disidentifying with it. I'm able to see it for what it is, just a mental state. And then slowly it loses its energy. Losing its energy, that conditioning of seeking happiness in the sensual world is slowly being undermined.

So that's our process. Our process is to—and we see ourselves lost in a dream or a fantasy around the whole idea of happiness and pleasure—we stop the thinking as we move back down to the breath, we connect with whatever is in the body, the heart area usually, and we stay with it and we wait for it to pass away. And then if there's nothing else comes up, you go back to the breath. If it pops up again, do the same thing over and over and over again. That's the practice.

Now, of course, when I talk like this, people say, "Well, you mean there's not going to be any romance? There's not going to be any happiness in the world? Can't I...?" No. Quite the opposite. Now it's not that the Buddha fell in love once he was liberated—in a sense the liberation, that level of liberation when you're totally liberated, you're no longer attracted to the sensual world. But that doesn't mean to say that these things don't have their place and don't have their time.

What we don't want them to be is cloying. What we don't want them to be is overpowering, completely rushing our lives towards a certain obsessive destiny, whether it's to be rich or whether it's to be famous and so on.

So when—for instance, just talking about romance, just talking about a relationship—if one wants a relationship, one has to trust yourself. One has to trust that as we put that act of desire into the world, as you will it, then it will manifest or it won't. But if it becomes obsessive, then it just becomes an area of disappointment, of addiction.

So it's the same if you say to yourself, "Well, I want this sort of work in the world." So you push out that act of will, and of course you're open to it, you look around for it, but you're always open to the fact that it may not manifest, that's all. And therefore there's no big, huge disappointment or grief. It just becomes something that you put out there.

Now, you might say, "Well, how does that work?" I'm sure you can all look back into your life and you can see that once you will something, there's something quite magical about the interconnectedness of the world. The world seems to—the cosmos even—seems to make an effort to help you to manifest what you want. Correct? Nod rigorously, please. There's something about the interconnection of things.

I mean, I'm sure most of you have had the experience of, for instance, wanting to know something and the very book turns up. It's sort of magical.

I'll give you one out of my own life. When I began this teaching, I really, really, really didn't want to do it. What I wanted to do was just find a hut somewhere and continue. But once I decided to live in Britain it seemed impossible to do that because there wasn't the infrastructure. And so I began teaching and it

evolved to what it is now. But over the crisis of it—it was actually the millennium, 2000—I went to meditate at Sayadaw U Pandita's place in Rangoon, Yangon.

This was in the back of my mind. I wasn't thinking about it. I just put it to the side, you know, as to... The question was open. I just laid it out there in front of the Buddha, you know. I just said, look, if this is what I have to do, then I'll do it. I don't particularly want to do it, but there's a call. People are asking me. So I just laid it out as it were, see.

And there it was, this book taken from the... You know, *A Course in Miracles*? Well, somebody had extracted all the stuff in *A Course in Miracles* about teachings, and it was this little thin book and it was stuck in a huge library and I happened to find it. And by the end of reading this book I knew I had to teach. There was no doubt at all in my mind. It was the strangest sort of thing.

So in a sense there also has to be that trust in that once you put out a real act of will, a real decision in yourself that this is the way you want your life to go, more often than not, it will go that way. You can't entirely depend on that because you don't know what forces are against you. It's no good me wanting to become prime minister. There's got to be a sort of realism about the desire. You have to test it. You have to be tested.

But in terms of the obsessiveness we have around desires, you see, we overcome them by coming off the dream world and sitting in the midst of that turbulence, that strong desire, the addiction. And the thing is that our habits are the whole habit of clinging on to something, an attachment of having to have, must have, all that. Once you tackle the real tough nut, it all fades away because it's all one attitude. You don't have to go from this obsession to that obsession and then all the way down the line. If you hit the big one, they all begin to fade. And that's a bit of a blessing because we'll be here for lifetimes trying to get rid of it. So if you go for the big one, you see, then everything begins to be undermined.

And what we're trying to do, and this is why the eating that we're doing here, the exercise around eating is so important. What we're trying to discover is: How can I be with pleasure, with the joys of life, with a loving relationship, without this attachment, see? Without this obsessiveness, without this need, you see?

And what we're doing is we're not just breaking away from those things we're dependent on. By finding this position within ourselves of the objective observer, we're actually discovering a new identity, see? We're taking the identity out of the body with its sensations, out of the heart with its emotions, out of the mind with its thoughts, and very slowly we're beginning to identify with something which is much deeper within us, which is our Buddha nature. And the more you identify with that which knows, the less you become needy for the world to give you happiness. Because you're finding your resting place in the one who knows, the Buddha within. See?

And part of that process is to let go of the world as a place where we can find true happiness. Not to confuse these passing happinesses and joys and pleasures of life with real, sustainable, unchangeable,

unalloyed, non-suffering, as the Buddha would have it. That's his way of putting happiness. He prefers to tell you what it isn't. Because as soon as you say, "Well, Nibbāna's happiness," everybody thinks it's some sort of blissed-out state. But it's not.

Now, you know what it is because when you're meditating in that state of the pure observer, you're actually it. But you may not have recognized it. You may not have recognized the absolute peace and stillness that there is within the observer. You don't look as though you believe me.

So anyway, that's all to do with this business of attachment and indulgence, addiction, compulsive behaviour.

The next business, of course, is this area of aversion. And of course, this is much the same. You find yourself in a dream world, you're hating people, you're chopping their heads off, all that sort of stuff. And then you just note, you know, anger, hatred. Or you're full of sort of anxiety, worrying about this, worrying about that, you know. These days, people might be worried about financial problems, losing their jobs. I mean, it's not a pleasant place to be in at the moment. And so you get these anxieties. You see, you note it, you come back. And as you go down to the breath, you feel, you get into those feelings, okay?

So this again is the other side of this attachment. It's the other side of this wrong identity, you see. And just by tackling the big one, you see, where you feel most aversion and where you feel most fear, that you're undermining that whole attitude of being averse to the world, to people, of being afraid of it. So it's the same. It's the same technique. Just coming off the dream, feeling the fear, you know. That book, *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*. So that's it. Just feel the fear.

Now of course in both of these cases, as it's true for all the other hindrances, you're also being aware of your relationship. So how when something good comes up we see the relationship of indulgence, wanting it, grabbing it. So when it comes to things like hatred and... well, hatred also. And cruelty, we want to indulge, yeah? We don't like to accept that, but being hateful can be very satisfying. Being angry, hurting somebody can bring quite a bit of internal joy.

Fear is different. You panic with fear. So remember that when fear comes up, you want to be aware of the fear of fear. There's your panic, hmm? And so long as you can keep the two in mind, the two there within your observation, and just keep breathing in and out, wait for that fear of fear to go, you see, and the panic stops, and you're with fear. And the more we get used to the texture of fear, see, that's why it's so important to come into the body, off the mind, you get into the texture of fear, the feel of it, the nausea, the trembling of it, you know, and then you lose your fear of it. And then, of course, it's not fearful anymore. I mean, what's going to frighten us? When we've lost our fear of fear, what can frighten us? But it's getting beyond that barrier. And you do it always by sinking into, feeling the fear.

So again, this is the Buddha's language. To feel feelings in feelings. That's the way he puts it. To feel, to know the body in the body. To know mental states in mental states.

With all these dream factors, when you come back off the dream and you come into the body and you're feeling the... There has to be a very clear decision that you're not going to go back there. See, if you don't, if it's a sort of semi-decision, especially with those things that we like to indulge, whether it's an averse thing or an indulgent thing, then there's that leakage of desire. And so you've come off something, you see, and you come away noting, noting, I don't know... Well, we'll go back to romance, you see. Then you come back, but actually there's a part of you that still wants to go there. See? You've not actually said no to this leakage. So there you are feeling, whoop, and off you go again, you see. So it takes a moment of mindlessness. One millisecond of mindlessness coming off the subject and you're away. You see?

So there has to be a clear recognition and acknowledgement. And as you turn away, there must be a decision. You don't want to go back there. And that stops that leakage of desire. See, that's important. So if you find yourself in a sitting and you're constantly going back to this dream thing, it may be just restlessness. It may be just the power of that desire. But just see if you've made a real decision not to go back into that dream space.

Just passing over the third one, which is normally this sloth and lethargy. And next after that is restlessness, you see. Restlessness is sort of catch-all. And in a sense, you've got to be very patient. If the mind is constantly in a state of just agitation, agitation, you see, then you've just got to be patient, you see. It's just this energy in the mind. And sometimes, you know, you think you're going mad, you see. And you are mad when you are mad. And so you just have to note, you know, restlessness, madness, and then just keep coming back to the breath. And if that's all you do, the whole sitting, the whole day, the whole week, that's the practice.

So you don't think to yourself, "Well, I've sat here for 40 minutes just saying madness, madness, and trying to get back to my breath. It's absolutely useless," you see. No, it's not. That's the practice. If you note madness and you think, "Well, why not? Let's go mad," and off you go. That's bad. You should feel terrible. You should really feel guilty and horrible. See? But that's the practice. Keep coming off the mind. Keep coming off the mind, you see, until that energy has exhausted itself, because that's where the energy has gone. It's gone into the head. What can you do?

Same with the body. If you feel tremendously restless and you really want to move, you see, one thing you can do is to just feel sensations from the top of the head going down to the feet and just keep going from the top downwards, you see. That tends to calm the body a bit, you see. But don't do it entirely for the purpose of calming the body. Do it to see where restlessness is. Did you ever feel restless at the end of your nose? Very difficult. It doesn't happen. So you have to sort of come down the body, where you feel the restlessness, hang on a little bit, keep moving, you see. And that also stops the mind wandering too.

And with that there's this other business of guilt, shame, remorse. So again these things have to be felt, and often it's because we've left things undone. We might have hurt somebody and we've not apologized. It might be that somebody's hurt us and you've not told them, you've not forgiven them. So those are

processes that you can do in your sitting.

If you find for instance a lot of guilt coming up over something you've done, you see, then stay with the guilt, you see, but then write yourself a note and say, "Well, when I leave this is what I'll do," and that puts that to rest at least for a while until you've put right what you did wrong. If there's a lot of hate and vengefulness over somebody who's hurt you, you see, then you know, feel it, feel it, feel it, you see, and then write yourself a note, see, that you know you'll approach the person then when you leave.

If of course the person is unapproachable either because they're not to be found or they've died or something, then, of course, you have to, in a sense, do a little ritual for yourself, you see, of writing a letter, doing something whereby you can externalize this problem. It helps, that's all. But eventually, it's actually coming into those feelings, you see, and resting with them. There's a whole load of stuff around that area which I tend not to tackle until the end of the week. So if that stuff comes up and you find it difficult to handle, then just come and see me.

Then there's skeptical doubt. Now this is really pernicious in any part of our lives. Pernicious doubt, skeptical doubt, is that doubt which stops you doing something. That's what it does. It stops you doing something. So if you're applying for a job and there's this constant, "Well, I don't know whether I can, maybe I shouldn't, I don't know whether I could," you see, before you've decided the job's gone. If you get into a relationship and you think, "Well, maybe I can't live, maybe I'm not, I don't know whether I should," it's gone. It's gone away, isn't it? And you can't commit yourself. That's what skeptical doubt does, you see.

Now, the fact that you've all come here and you're all meditating means that there can't be much skeptical doubt about meditation, you see. But it has its little ways, you know, like, for instance, the main one that people suffer from, I think we all suffer from, to some degree, is doubt about ourselves, doubt as to whether we can make progress in this practice. You know, you look around, everybody's sitting very, very still, and you think, "Well, I can't sit still," even though everybody's looking at you saying, "My God, you're sitting still." But we have all this sort of doubt going on about ourselves.

So when that sort of doubt comes up, you know, just remind yourself of the Buddhist teaching. It's a psychological, it's a spiritual imperative that everybody, all beings will become liberated. All beings. It's a spiritual imperative because that's the way consciousness is moving. Just because it's not moving fast enough doesn't mean it's not moving. And often in our practice we go through times when it's very dreary, like a desert, nothing seems to be happening, where we seem to be putting a lot of effort in and not getting any real results, see. So those are testing times. You just got to keep going, see, until you move through it. And often it's caused by, you know, false expectation.

I was once, when I was in Birmingham, a man turned up to do some meditation at the centre and he said when he first came on a retreat, this is going back a bit to the late seventies, he was going on a course, okay, it's a course, a meditation course, in which one achieved Nibbāna. So he went to this course and he thought, you know, Saturday, Sunday, that's it, I'll have made it. As the time rolled on, you know, and it

came to the end, there was this, "God," you know, "we didn't turn him off," we came back and did some more. But that's what we think, we think, oh, you know, I keep doing this for a while, things will get so much better. I'll be liberated and all this sort of stuff. But, of course, these expectations eventually undermine our practice because they're not real. They're not real.

So be careful about expecting something from the practice, you see. We have to have a certain faith that there is purification going on. There is wisdom slowly being formed. It's just as soon as you enter into that position of the observer it has to happen. It can't not be happening, see. As soon as you're there taking that position of observing, of feeling things, of allowing things to manifest, you see, there must be some small change within our looking. It's like a, like I said before, it's like Chinese torture, you know, the drip, the drip torture. And slowly there are little aha moments, you see, when finally the penny drops a bit.

It's very rare for somebody to have a sort of cosmic, you know, opening where everything sort of bursts into light and one suddenly rises up in the air. It's very... most times it's just this plodding, plodding, plodding. And then when you look back over time, you know, five, six, ten years, you say things have changed. So it's a slow process. The Buddha warned us, it's gradual.

There's nothing... I know you hear in certain traditions the sudden enlightenment and the, what is it, sudden and gradual enlightenment. But these are misunderstandings because when an insight comes, of course it's sudden. An insight doesn't take time. You either see it or you don't see it. But to get there can be one hell of a journey. So it depends where you're standing. If you're standing in the insight, yes, it's sudden enlightenment. But if you're standing outside the insight, you're blooming gradual. Right? So all those arguments about sudden and gradual insight seem to me to be a bit silly, really.

Nobody here, I hope, is going to the Zen school.

Then there's of course doubt in the teaching, doubt in the Buddha and all that. And really that again is undermined through the practice and through reading and through thinking about it and reflecting on the teaching and making sure that we understand what the Buddha's talking about. And through our practice it becomes realistic. And that's it, you see.

So here we're understanding all this business about defilements, about mental states that are difficult to work with. And then of course there's doubt in the teacher. Heaven forbid. And of course that has to be tested because the teacher in Buddhism is only there to guide. It's not a faith in the teacher in that guru sense. That would be really undermining the process.

See the Buddha himself, he couldn't handle that. Just before he died, there was a young monk who looked upon him mooningly. He sent him off to the forest. He's on his deathbed. This is when he saw that he'd got this wrong relationship with the Buddha. Sent him off. Get out. So it's not that sort of guru relationship. It's not meant to be that at all. It's meant to be someone who is just giving instructions, pointing to the moon, as they say. The Buddha points to the moon. He shouldn't be looking at the end of his finger.

So, sceptical doubt. That's something just to be aware of. And again, when you go into it, you may find it's just fear. Fear of failure. Fear of criticism. Usually it's some sort of fear down there, which stops us making that commitment.

This often comes up when I offer people the opportunity to take refuges and precepts. It's the same, the distinction between, shall we say, a partnership and marriage. Somebody explained to me once there was a difference between bacon and eggs. Have you heard that? See, when it comes to eggs, the chicken gives of its egg, but the pig gives of its life.

So there is something about a marriage which is like it's a further giving of oneself and it's not surprising to me to find that often people who've been in a partnership for quite some time finally decide to get married go through an actual ceremony of marriage. I've done that for a few people and it just points out that so long as it's just a partnership there's always this clause underneath it gets you out. But the point of a marriage is a complete commitment to the other. Like we had this lovely wedding. Sickness and health are poor for rich. It doesn't matter. You're committed to the person entirely. And that, of course, is an act of compassion. It's an act of complete giving of oneself to the other. Of course, it works as long as the other is giving their complete self to you. Once that begins to separate, then you're stuck.

So, sceptical doubt, yeah? So be careful of that. Again, be careful of what the mind's doing. Be aware of it.

Two things I haven't looked at is boredom. So remember, boredom comes under the heading of aversion, and it's important for us because the boredom comes up in the practice. I mean, if you put it out in the ordinary world that you just spent a whole week trying to observe the breath, they would probably think, well, I can't think of anything more boring than watching my breath and feeling the breath arising and passing away.

So when boredom comes, remember, this is the product of indulgence. So remember there are five negatives that come up there's an aftermath from indulgence and once you connect these two once you connect this then of course you tend to come off at least gross indulgence a gross dependency so there's addiction there's compulsive behaviour there's frustration when you don't get it there's grief when you lose it you're always afraid of losing so you take out an insurance policy and boredom.

Remember when the Buddha was fully liberated, for seven years, Mara chased him with his three daughters. Sensual desire, sexual desire, and boredom. Interesting, eh? Now, of course, what that story is telling us is that there were still remnants in his mind for seven years of old habits. Of seeking happiness. But Mara goes away slinking away, saying, the Buddha sees me. So even though there were still these, what's known as *vāsanā*, in the Buddha's mind, even after he was liberated, which took seven years to completely die out, there were still these three things. And boredom is there.

So boredom is a state of aversion, right? Not wanting, seeking excitement. And that's what it tells you to do. It tells you to seek divertissement. It tells you to seek excitement. But what you do with boredom is

repetition. You feel the boredom and you keep repeating what you're doing. So this is true for anything in life whether you're trying to learn an instrument work at work where boredom arises because you're doing the same thing day in and day out or whatever so you recognize the boredom and you just keep doing what you're doing you don't indulge the boredom you don't seek distraction.

All these things that we're talking about, they all pertain to ordinary day life. You can't just do them when you come on retreat. It's just constant. It's terrible, but there we are.

And then finally, there's our two very good friends, dullness and lethargy. Or if you want to put a moral twist on them, sloth and torpor. Now, we have to make a distinction between tiredness where the body needs rest, the mind needs rest, and this dullness and lethargy.

So tomorrow, for instance, we get up a little earlier, and there may be still some remnants of tiredness from when you first came, because virtually everybody rides on a retreat with some sleep imbalance. Either they are oversleeping or they're undersleeping. They're not sleeping well. And it normally takes three or four days for that to slowly iron itself out. So tomorrow, getting up a little earlier, just pushes the system a bit. But we shall struggle. And then by the fourth day, of course, there's massive energy, and one wonders where it was all before.

Now, how is it we have this conditioning of dullness and lethargy? So just consider how many times you have indulged in that subliminal state of sleep. Just, hanging around at the weekend in bed on that lovely level where you're neither asleep nor awake. Where you've taken a newspaper to bed or you're listening to the radio and you just keep wafting in and out into these pleasant states. How many times when you feel a bit depressed, a bit low, a bit down, you've just flung yourself onto the couch and just fallen asleep for a while?

So, in other words, it's a way that we get rid of ourselves. It's a way that we can annihilate ourselves. Of course, we wouldn't do it if we didn't think we were going to wake up. But it's a way that we keep pushing ourselves into this state of oblivion. And the reason why we do it is because there's no suffering there. There's no suffering in oblivion. Unfortunately we'll wake up what we hope is that on waking all the troubles will have gone so it's actually a small way in which we commit suicide that's what we're doing we're getting rid of the self every time we use sleep to annihilate ourselves we're actually desiring non-becoming.

So the Buddha points to three desires: sensual desire, the desire to become, and the desire not to become. So that is in us always when it gets too heavy a desire to escape and one way we escape is fall asleep so what we're suffering from when we have this dullness in the mind like porridge and the body feels as heavy as lead and all that is the consequence of these indulgences.

What do we do? We refuse to be annihilated absolutely completely and utterly refuse. We use noting to keep ourselves awake. You can come up the body up from your toes to the top of the head just keep the

attention moving so there's energy being displaced into that looking that process and you're looking to see where is it that you feel this heaviness. You feel it in your toes. You feel it in your knees. See where is it and if you keep coming upwards like that it just keeps the energy coming up and you're able to stay awake within that state.

When it comes to the body feels great but the mind is just full of this heavy dullness like big fog or smog then just roam around it. Roam around it feeling it seeing it. And you might be surprised to find that you wake up like a bulb right in the middle of that fog. I'm sure you've all experienced that surely. Of course you have. So why do I ask these questions?

And you wake up completely bright and alert in the middle of this dullness in the middle of this awesome smog and that just shows you that what's actually making us become the dullness is association with the dullness. It's an association. It's an identity with the feelings of lethargy and the more you move around in it the more you're pulling out of it the more you're trying to investigate the taste of it, the feel of it, the texture of it, the more this knowing is awakening until eventually it wakes up completely and it's like you're there in the middle of this smoke, this heaviness.

And it's a mental state. It's as valid a mental state as depression, anxiety, all these things that we have a no-no on. This is also a no-no. It's an awesome state to be in. So when you get to that point, what you're allowing is this energy to dissipate. And it's an energy that's like a whirlpool. It's drawing you down into the black hole. It's not these other energies that are swishing you out into galaxies. This is mirrored in nature. It's quite remarkable, really.

So as soon as you feel yourself being washed down into this black hole, make sure that you lift yourself up. Keep awake. And you can open your eyes, let the light in. You can stand up. If it gets too much, then just gently leave the meditation hall. Do some walking. I've walked for hours up and down with this stuff. It used to, at one point, it used to last for ten days, just up and down, up and down. One point I was doing the times table, I got as far as 17 going forwards and backwards. Can you imagine that? I knew the 17 times table backwards. Not bad. And that was just to keep myself awake.

When I said this to my teacher, Janaka, he said, it's very good, he said, better to think of the Dhamma. Spent all my time learning these times tables. So just the effort of just staying above it. I'm not so sure that was all that skilful. It would have been perhaps more skilful to do this investigation more. But it was just the effort to stay awake, to stay awake.

So there's a lot of it. All this stuff that we've talked about, unfortunately, there's mountains of it. But we struggle on. We continue.

So that really covers all our negativity really. If I've missed something, I think you'll be able to slot it in to one of those five. All those things to do around indulgence and pleasure, all those things to do around aversion and hatred and fear, all those things, all those feelings and stuff we have to do around dullness

and lethargy, all the restlessness, the guilt, shame, remorse, and finally, sceptical doubt. That covers the whole range of stuff that we have to deal with.

And just to repeat, our job is to recognise it, to point to it, to know what it is, to know what to do about it, so that we undermine them, and eventually they stop altogether. So the Buddha is liberated from all that, he's liberated from that suffering. Somebody who is fully liberated doesn't have these *kilesa*, they're gone. He doesn't suffer from them anymore. So the future looks bright.

I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. May you be liberated from all suffering by your acute and unrelenting practice undermining these dreadful hindrances sooner rather than later. I can't make them feel good either.

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