The Body - Kāyagatāsati Sutta (MN 119)

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 47:34

So in our last talk, we covered the whole business of how the mind experiences the body. We looked especially at those four great elements and so forth.

But of course there is the body as an organism, and the first thing that always strikes me about this little book called *Human Body* is that whenever I pick it up and read a bit, I'm absolutely gobsmacked. For instance, the brain contains 12 billion neurons and 50 billion supportive glial cells. That's 12 billion neurons. The mind boggles. You can fit all that inside your skull. Twelve billion. It's an amazing figure.

And then there's another fact here that's even slightly more interesting in a way. Every second, two million oxygen-bearing red blood cells die. Every second, two million. I mean, I'm not aware of that—are you? But they are replaced at the same rate by new ones generated in the process of erythropoiesis, something like that anyway. This begins in the kidney cells, which are stimulated by low oxygen levels to release a hormone. The hormone travels to the body's red bone marrow, which stimulates increased production, raising the blood oxygen levels. And these cells have to make their way through the bone into the blood. Well, that's remarkable, isn't it?

When you read books like this and you realise all this stuff is going on and you haven't a clue—absolutely haven't a clue—you do feel a bit like a body snatcher, like you're in this body and somehow you're not really connected. So that's our first contemplation, really: that the mind simply doesn't know this stuff.

There's nothing in the Buddha's teaching about this. I mean, if he'd known, for instance, that malaria was carried by mosquitoes, I think he'd have told us. But he didn't. You probably know that the word malaria comes from the Italian *mal'aria*, bad air, because the Romans thought it was the bad air off the swamp that was giving them the illness. So it's only in very recent times, over the past hundred or fifty years, that we've got these sorts of facts.

What comes across to me is that every one of these little cells produces its own energy and a bit more for us. And each has its own little intelligence. It knows what it's supposed to do—it's supposed to go and pick up oxygen, deposit it, and then die. It's just remarkable.

So we're contemplating the fact that we have this connection with the body which is absolutely intimate. Our identity lies with the body. How do you know that? You know it when serious illness comes along, when death looms you in the face—the fear, the anxiety that comes. Even though everybody, all this science, is telling you that you can't be the body. The body is made up of billions and billions of cells, and they're all dying. They're all dying all the time. The cornea in your eye is changed every week. Every week

you've got a new cornea, a new eye. Amazing. And supposedly, the body changes all its cells within a period of seven years. So I mean, I've had ten bodies. Ten completely renovated bodies. It's amazing. I shall leave you with that.

The Buddha knows this, of course. He knows that the body is not him. And there's a whole discourse devoted to the body.

It's called the Kāyagatāsati Sutta. So *kāya* means body, *gati* means "towards the body" or "going" or "about the body," *sati* means awareness of it, and *sutta* means discourse.

I must put you onto this website—it's absolutely wonderful. It's run by a monk called Ānandajoti, who's an English fellow who was with me in the monastery I was at in Burma. He's ended up being quite a good scholar, a very good scholar, and he lives now in Thailand. What he's done with various discourses is put the translation underneath the Pāli, so you can actually see how the words all connect. It's really quite interesting for those of you who want to know a bit of Pāli.

So anyway, the discourse starts off with the monks being in this hall and they're saying, "Wonderful friends, marvelous friends, how it is said that the Gracious One who knows, who sees, the Worthy One, the Perfect Sambuddha—mindfulness related to the body, when it has been developed and made much of, yields great fruit and brings great advantages."

Just then, the Buddha has gotten up from his seat and interrupted them. He says, "What were you talking about before I came in?" So they tell him that they've been talking about this contemplation of the body. He takes the opportunity to go into it in greater detail.

The first thing, of course, he goes into is the breath. He sits cross-legged, setting his body up straight. He goes to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, to an empty place. And that normally means: the wilderness is for the cold season, the root of a tree is for the hot season, and the hut is for the rainy season. That's what it's referring to. So this is the life of those ascetics at the time.

He sits with his legs cross-legged and all that, establishes his mind in front of him, breathes in, breathes out. And while breathing in a long breath, he knows, "I am breathing in a long breath."

Now, the Pāli, you see, is *dīghaṃ assasāmi*. The verb in Pāli is like Italian—it includes the pronoun. So *-mi* means "I," *-ti* means "you," and so on. You can't really say... it's the same in Italian. You can't say—let me think of a word—*amo, ami, ama*. So it's "I love," "you love," and so on. The way you get over it in Italian is by using the pronoun explicitly.

So you've got to be careful about this "I" business. In our noting, we just say "rising" and "falling," but you can't actually say that in Pāli unless you use the infinitive. You have to be a little careful when you read this stuff simply because it seems as though he's noting, but it could also just be a reflection. Then you observe the breath. Remember, the noting technique is specific to the Mahasi Sayadaw, though I also

found out it was used by a Zen teacher, Maezumi Roshi, in America. So it's not completely unknown in other traditions.

Now, the word he uses here is *pajānāti*. That *ñā*—"to know"—comes right through to our language as *gn*, so it's "knowledge," *kn*. And the *pa* means to really know, and we translate it as insight—to actually really feel, to realise, *pajānāti*—to actually experience it. He uses that for knowing there's a short breath and a long breath and so on.

Then he says "trains himself." He uses a different word, *sikkhati*—to train himself, experiencing the whole body. "I will breathe in the whole body. I will breathe out. Making the bodily process calm, I will breathe in. Making the bodily process calm, I will breathe out."

So there's your samatha quality. That's the beginning of any of our meditation—just trying to settle the mind on the breath a little bit. And then when you're settled, you open up.

What he doesn't say here, which it says of course in the Satipaṭṭhāna discourse—the discourse on how to establish awareness—is that you train to such a point where the *sati* and the *paññā*, the awareness and the intuitive intelligence, are at such a pitch that insight arises. For some reason, that's not included here.

Okay, so that's the breath. And then there's always this little verse at the end of things. "For one who is living heedful"—it's translated as "heedful" here; this is *appamādo*, one of his last words, which we normally translate as "diligent." *Ātāpino*, which means *ātāpi*—that's very devoted effort. And *pahitatta*, which is "resolute."

So these are the three qualities that he expects us to have: to be diligent with the noting, with the feeling, with the seeing; to put real ardent energy into it. Remember, this is not the energy of trying to gain something. It's just the energy of trying to be aware of what it is.

So it's just enough energy, remember, just to keep the attention steady on the object, and resolute.

I think I've told one or two of you, I had a meditator who I asked how he could stay on the breath for so long. And he says, "Well, I do what they do when they're pumping iron." So: rising, falling, just one more. Rising, falling, just one more. And that way he keeps himself resolute on observing the breath.

And then the Buddha says, "with whatever rushing thoughts that are dependent on the household life." This is normally translated as regrets and planning and all that sort of stuff. But I think I agree with him that translates it as memories and intentions and other things like that, even Bhikkhu Bodhi. But it depends how you look at the word. And it seems to me that it makes much more sense to call them rushing thoughts, which is what we experience, isn't it? Thoughts constantly coming. So it's putting those aside.

And when it says "dependent on the household life," it means dependent on the sense pleasures. That's what it means by the household life. So it doesn't mean to say that a householder, or in our terms, a lay

person, can't also have spiritual aims. It's just that when you see in the scriptures this "household life," he's referring to those who are entirely devoted to sense pleasures.

And these rushing thoughts are given up. With the giving up of these, the mind becomes internally stable, settles down, becomes well-pointed and concentrated. And like this does a monk develop mindfulness related to the body. When you're reading the scriptures, "monk" the commentary always says means whoever's meditating. It's just a part standing for the whole.

So then he goes on to postures. You've got your four postures. And again, he says, the monk while going knows "I am going"—going and coming—so there's your walking meditation. He knows when he's standing. When he's sitting, he knows. When he's lying down, and whatever way his body is disposed, he knows it just that way. So again, it's just this business of being with what you're doing—being what you're doing, actually. And then there's the verse again, which we've just read.

And then there's full awareness. He translates full awareness as sampajāna kārī. Kārī means doing. Pajāna means to really experience it. And sam means with. So basically, it's doing something really mindfully—doing really mindfully what we're doing. Sampajānakārī.

And so here he's got a whole list. Of course it's related to the monastic life, but it's easy to translate it to ordinary daily life. "When looking ahead or looking around, he is one who practices full awareness." Now in the dining hall, I often see people picking up their plate mindfully, looking around and then keeping their eye on the food in the distance, while their legs slowly take them to the counter. And of course, when you get there, you have to watch yourself. You see, you're going to watch these thoughts, let them go.

So when he's looking around, he practices full awareness. When he's bending and stretching, he practices full awareness. When he's bearing his robe and bowl—so for us, when we're clothing ourselves and so forth—he practices full awareness of what he's actually doing. Eating, drinking, chewing and tasting—see, the accent is on the whole process of eating. And then passing stool and urine, which is nicely put, he practices full awareness.

Often, generally speaking, when it comes to that sort of activity in the lavatory, we try to keep the mind somewhere else—Timbuktu or something. But it's a good practice to actually be with the whole process of evacuation. There's a nice word. We'll keep it Latin. Evacuation, although I do like Anglo-Saxon words for it.

I suppose just as a little aside, you do know where the word "crap" comes from? Well, the nineteenth century was full of wonderful inventions. And there was an invention of the U-pipe, which filled up with water and stopped the smell of the sewer coming up into the room. And the person who did that was called Mr. Crapper. And he's not only left us with this lovely invention, but with a noun, a verb, an adverb, and an adjective. So he's left us quite a legacy. Poor old Mr. Crapper.

Anyway, that's by the by. So this urine business—for a very long time, maybe about five years actually,

because I started in that practice quite early on.

Every morning, diligently, I drank a third of my urine according to the yoga practice. You let a third go, you keep the middle third, and you let the rest go, and then you drink it. The great teaching is that it's okay—it's actually fine. It has vitamins, it has antibodies, you've got all sorts of things in there, you see. And I never felt better.

Unfortunately, there was this other monk, an American, and you can read this book called *The Waters of Life*, which is all about maintaining your urine. He was drinking all of it, all day. And he was coming out with great big boils out of his skin. We said to him, you know, your skin is the biggest excretory organ we've got, actually—through the skin. It's all coming out through the skin, you see. And he said, "No, no. I've read this book." I don't know what happened to him. He probably disappeared in one great big sore. Poor man. Well, let's hope somebody told him.

Anyway, that's something you might consider doing yourselves, right? The early morning pee—give a quarter away, keep the middle third in a glass, and the last third you throw away. See if you can get over your disgust. We'll come to that in a minute, of course.

So again, the sutta says: when standing, sitting, in sleeping, in walking, in talking, and in maintaining silence. Now, "in sleeping" is a bit difficult. I think you can either understand that to be from the moment you lie in bed until you fall asleep. But some of you may find that as your concentration grows, you actually wake up in sleep—you know you're asleep and you're just awake in it.

I often talk about this student I had. I haven't seen her for a very long time now, but she did lots of practice on visualizing Chinese deities or Buddhas, I can't remember which. But such was her concentration that she told me she went to bed and she'd wake up in sleep and be awake all night. But the body would be completely asleep, the brain would be asleep, everything's asleep—and she woke up perfectly refreshed. So that tells you something. That's not an aim in order to become fully liberated; I'm just saying that's a consequence.

And in maintaining silence. So he practices full awareness—full awareness. It's just a way of reinforcing the idea that you're actually attending to what you're doing.

Let's have a look now. The next section is actually where I should have talked about my healthy drink, because this is about the repulsiveness of the body. So I'll just give you the background story.

It seems as though the Buddha gave a very detailed talk about this. He talked to the bhikkhus in many ways on the subject of impurity. He spoke in praise of what is impure. He spoke in praise of the contemplation of what is impure. And he spoke again and again in praise of the stage of meditation on what is impure—because you can get to access jhāna, I think, with this.

And they dwelt upon the practice of contemplating what is impure in different ways. They were troubled

by their own bodies, ashamed of them, loathing them. It is as if a woman or man when young or delicate and fond of dressing up, having washed their hair, would be troubled, ashamed, and full of loathing because they had the corpse of a snake or of a dog or of a man hung around their neck. So these bhikkhus, being troubled by their own bodies, ashamed of them and loathing them, by themselves deprived themselves of life and deprived each other of life.

Now, when the Buddha hears this, he states: "Bhikkhus, this is not suitable for these bhikkhus. It is not fit. It is not proper. It is not worthy of a disciple. It is not good. It should not be done."

So they obviously got very enthused—he'd obviously given this great talk about the repulsiveness of the body, and they just got into the repulsiveness of it and drove themselves to suicide. It's a bit odd, isn't it?

So then, of course, he makes a rule. This comes out of the Vinaya.

There are four Parājikas, and if you break any of these, you are actually no longer a monk or nun. There is no ceremony for disrobing a monastic. Basically, if a monastic community decides that somebody has committed one of these offenses, they can ask him to leave the monastery. But so long as he can get laypeople to feed him and provide him a place to stay, there is very little to force him out. He has to do it from his own conscience, really.

So then the Buddha made up this rule: "Should any bhikkhu purposefully deprive a human being of life, or provide him with a life-taking knife, or recommend advantages in death, or encourage him to kill himself—who should in fact recommend advantages in death or encourage him to kill himself in various ways, with such thoughts in mind and such intentions in mind as 'Good man, what good is this miserable life to you? Death is better for you than life'—that bhikkhu is defeated and no more in communion."

So he did not like that at all—that they had encouraged each other to kill each other or in fact kill themselves. This business of the repulsion of the body, you have to be careful. I don't want to hear somebody's committed suicide having drunk their morning pee! So let's take it easier.

Anyway, when he goes through the practice, the idea is that you are not purposefully building up disgust. You are actually trying to find out what your relationship is to these parts of the body. As the images come to mind—hairs on the head—well, that rarely brings up any sense of disgust for people. It's the same with body hairs, or it might do with certain body hairs. Nails, teeth. Some people I know, just looking at a tooth in your mind might bring up a certain feeling. Skin, unless it's old and wrinkled and horrible. Flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys.

So when you go through the list for yourself, you are actually just trying to catch your relationship to it. Heart, liver, spleen, lungs. I don't even know what my spleen looks like. Intestines, undigested food, excrement, bile—now this is more like it—bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, and fat.

When you get in contact with your image, or when you get in contact with that even in ordinary daily

life—as we were talking about, going to the toilet—just catch your relationship to it. Because you ask yourself: is it necessary?

Disgust is a natural response of the body to something which it perceives as unhealthy. So if you put rotting food in your mouth, you ought to feel disgusted. But the emotion of disgust, like when we say we are morally disgusted, you've just got to ask yourself: is that necessary? Even though it might be a spontaneous reaction.

So it is with all these parts of the body. We have learnt this, we have been taught that this stuff is to be disgusted. But actually, when you question whether you should feel disgusted or not, as the disgust disappears—well, it's just parts of the body. And of course, people who work in surgery, nurses, those in mortuaries—you get over that.

In the East, if you are a monastic or you go with a monastic, if you are a layperson, you can get easy entrance into the mortuary to see bodies being cut open and have a look. For somebody going into such a place for the first time, there is just a dead body on the table. The doctor, in this case it was a woman, was cutting it. The thing that strikes you about a dead body is that it is actually dead. It is completely lifeless. It really is quite something to stay with. In fact, my companion who had come with me, this other monk, he had to leave. I think mainly because of the smell of substances that they use to keep it antiseptic.

And then when the body is cut and they are investigating what actually caused the death, you see it is all bits and pieces. It is quite remarkable, really, how it all fits together. And then you are supposed to say, "Like this body is, so is mine."

So it really is, if you are going to do this exercise—and these exercises are best done just as a little bit every day, just as a little reminder. You don't have to go through this whole list, but just a little bit every day before your morning meditation or afterwards. You run through the body and just remind yourself that this is the body. This is how it is. And the disgust is not necessary.

The one thing the list misses out, but which was added later, was the brain, the matalunga. I have asked a few people about that. Nobody knows why it was left out in the first place. It became the thirty-second part, I think—isn't it thirty-one? I can only think that they didn't know what it was.

Just to go back to what we were saying before about the senses, about the five senses and the basis of the senses—happily, both in the discourses and in the later work of the Abhidhamma, the mind itself, the mind door, the manodvāra, is not given a sense base. It is not actually given a sense base. But the commentaries then began to think about this and thought, well, it should have one. So they decided that there was a phial of blood in the heart which was the base for the mental, as a mental door—the hadaya vatthu, the base of the heart. And they put it actually in the heart.

I've often wondered whether, in fact, it was misplaced—that what they were connecting was this chakra, the heart chakra, which is in the middle of your chest here, and which, as you might say, is the exchange

box for your emotions. You might feel, shall we say, a certain tension in your abdomen, which you intuit as anxiety or something. But it's only when it rises into consciousness that you feel it in the chest, don't you? You don't feel anxious so much in your abdomen. It comes here and it becomes anxiety—an emotion that you can recognize. Anger, fear—it's all at this level, you see. And I'm wondering whether they mistook it, or whether they were thinking about this, because at the same time, of course, yoga was being developed.

Anyway, this phial of blood. There was one teacher who was asked, "Well, if you have a heart transplant and the blood goes into the machine—your heart's dead, it's stopped, and the blood's being pumped by the machine—where's this phial of blood?" The answer was: it was in the machine. So any excuse, you know!

But I was very relieved to read that in fact the Buddha doesn't say this either in the discourses, and the people who put the Abhidhamma together don't say it either. And I think the reason is that the base of the mind is the whole body. The mind—any information that comes in from the five senses—it's this secondary door, which must be all over the body as it were, sensitive to any of the five sense bases. So that's the only way I can personally understand it.

So yes, those are the impurities. In the monastic life, where of course you take a vow of celibacy, this practice can be quite helpful. When a beautiful image comes to you which is erotic, you then actually just image it doing something which is not very pleasant, and immediately that desire does fade away.

Now, what you don't want to do is make the mistake of growing in disgust completely, so that as soon as a beautiful image arises, you get disgust. Rather, they should cancel each other out, and then you're left with a state of equanimity. But if you keep on with this business of disgust, then you end up, instead of having erotic desires, with just a load of disgusting desires. So it's not—you see what I mean? It's a sort of balance really. That's a skillful way of using the asubha, the unlovely parts of the body.

Now then, it goes into the elements. We went through all the elements and how you can visualize them inside yourself—the four elements. I think there was also the fifth, the space element. Did we do that? Maybe another time.

So there's fire, earth, water, and air, which symbolize density, weight, heat, elasticity, and cohesiveness. You can sometimes feel that in the breath, can't you? A sort of stretching of things. And movement, of course. And there's also space, emptiness—like in the mouth, or in the stomach, or in the ear. The body is also full of spaces. Anyway, we can leave that because I think I covered it last time.

Then we finally come to, on the body side, the charnel grounds. Remember, in those days the bodies were just laid out and the animals ate them. They were wrapped in white cloth and simply left out there. And it was this white cloth that the mendicants—not just the ones of the Buddha—would take to make robes out of.

One day, when the Buddha saw a group of his monks with these ragged robes just joined together as they

came, bits and pieces, he thought that didn't look so nice. So he asked them to cut the pieces of cloth in a way that when the cloth was laid out, it looked like a paddy field. If you ever see monastic robes, they've got squares with sort of passageways around them. Then he asked them to boil the cloth with the areca nut, which gives it a light brown color. And on top of that, he asked them to shave their heads. With this, they became quite distinguished from the long-haired ascetics and those wearing other robes—because the Jains, of course, dress in white. If you see a Jain monk, they're dressed in white.

So he goes through this. We don't have to hang around here too much. It's just that he describes the various stages through which a body completely decomposes—dead after one or two days, then the next stage, after being eaten by vultures, eaten by hawks, eaten by crows. All in bits and pieces.

And then the next stage shows a skeleton with flesh and blood, still bound together by tendons. And the next one is a skeleton without flesh, smeared with blood, bound together by tendons. And the next shows a skeleton no longer having flesh or blood, bound together only with tendons. The tendons and the bones are the last to go.

And then the bones become scattered in all directions—a hand bone here, a foot bone there, a knee bone there. They're no longer connected, as in that great song. And then the white bones, bleached by the sun like a conch shell. And then just a heap of bones, a year old—so they're still hanging about. And finally they become like powder. Rotten bones become like powder.

And of course, with all of these stages, with all of those processes, the meditator compares what they observe to their own very body, thinking: this body is also of such a nature, of such a constitution, has not gone beyond this. Remember our evening contemplations? That's the idea—you always connect with the rotting body.

This is very difficult for us in modern times. We could do it with pictures, but unfortunately these days they just burn you up and give you a casket. I was very fortunate when my first teacher died. She was cremated, and the ceremony was led by a nun from Throssel Hole, a Zen Buddhist monastery. We had permission to go down to where the coffins are—there's a man there who manages things, with two ovens. He opens one oven which is empty, takes half an hour, and shovels the coffin in. But unfortunately, you never get to see the body burning. So you have to go to India for that, to the burning ghats. And that's always something to watch if you're practicing, saying to yourself: just as this body is, mine will also be. That's if you intend to be cremated.

So the idea here, of course, is to really begin to sense the connection we have with the body, which goes deeper, goes real deep. I am the body.

Now, just on that point, there's a whole chapter in the Visuddhimagga on how to contemplate death and the body. Buddhaghosa starts off by saying there are types of death—there's timely death—and the development can be very simple. You can just sit very quietly and keep repeating to yourself: death will

take place, the life faculty will be interrupted. Or you can just keep saying the word "death," because the word itself will lead you into your feeling about death. Maybe images come up, maybe fear comes up, and so on.

But there are also contemplations—eight ways, he says, in which we can recollect death, the death of our bodies. The first one is the appearance of a murderer. Just as a murderer appears with a sword saying, "I shall cut this man's head off," so too, as soon as you're born, at some point your life will be cut off. Death is lurking behind us.

You know that medieval tale? I was trying to find it, but I couldn't. Someone meets death and then runs from it. He says, "I won't meet you," and runs off to the market. And when he gets there, death is waiting for him.

So you can't escape it.

The next contemplation is on ruin of success. This is the old teaching about whatever you've achieved, you've simply got to leave behind. All your money, all your great attainments, all your gold medals—they've all got to be left behind. I remember somebody asking a solicitor what the very rich elderly lady had left behind, and he said, "Everything."

Then there's the contemplation that all health ends in sickness. And there's comparing oneself to others—all these people who died. David Bowie, that's a shock, isn't it? You've got all these people who were perhaps icons in our lives, people we knew, and they're all dead. Recently, there was a very good footballer who was taking a plane across the Channel, and unfortunately the plane dropped into the water. He drowned, only about twenty-six or so. A great tragedy.

Then there's the contemplation of sharing the body with many. I thought this was rather good because they must have known this—the body is shared by many, inhabited by the eighty families of worms. Creatures live in dependence on the outer skin, feeding on the outer skin. Creatures live in dependence on the inner skin, feeding on the inner skin. In dependence on flesh, feeding on the flesh. It goes right the way through. All these beings are born, grow, die, evacuate and make water. Even these little creatures that we know live in our bowels, helping us to digest things—they also are born, grow old, die, evacuate and make water. So there's this contemplation of the fact that our body is home to a lot of other little creatures. Not really ours, is it?

Then there's signless death—as Jesus said, we know not the hour nor the day. We just don't know our destiny. We just don't know. And then contemplating the limited extent of human life, how short it is. One who lives long lives a hundred years, more or less, that's all. The life of humankind is short. A wise man holds it in contempt and acts as one whose head is burning. Death will never fail to come. A bit gloomy though, isn't it?

And then to contemplate the shortness of the moment. This brings that momentariness to our minds—that

in fact I'm one breath away, one half breath away from death. I breathe in and that's the end of it.

I always like to tell this rather sad tale. Unfortunately, I can't help but think of it as humorous, but for the people involved it was obviously very tragic. There was a woman I knew who met an old love from her early life. They fell in love—they were quite elderly—and they determined to marry and live together. They moved into a beautiful cottage. And one morning, he was just on the way to get the toast and had a heart attack and died. I always think, if I had a piece of toast with marmalade on it, holding it here in front of my very nose, and I was like that—that is suffering, is it not?

So, bringing the talk to an end, this contemplation of death is very powerful. The Buddha says of all the contemplations, this is the most powerful—contemplation on death.

Just a lot of material really to recall. When you call up the body, contemplating that we don't actually experience the body directly—we don't experience these cells, we don't experience what the liver is doing now. I think you might have to have some sort of extraordinary ability to be able to know that. When we're actually looking at the body, much of our contemplation is in the body: the breathing, the posture, the full awareness of what we're doing all the time. And then there's that whole business of relationship to the body. We've talked about repulsiveness, but as you know, I suggest that in the morning with the very first beverage that you have, you take the opportunity to thank the body.

And that sort of thankfulness forms a relationship to the body. See how wonderful it is—and it makes you want to care for it, not put it in danger, not put it where it's going to fall ill, where you're going to fall over, and all that sort of stuff. A sense of gratitude.

And of course, the posture, the full awareness, and then the repulsiveness—to use that in order to find this equanimity with the body. Equanimity.

And then finally, this very strong, powerful contemplation of death. It really is quite something if you just bring it up. And as I say, these exercises, like mettā, are done best every day, just for a little while, just as little reminders. And then it sort of gets through to you. It begins to change your attitude. It begins to actually have an effect on you. It's no good doing it once every year, you see. It's the constant effort to do it. Just a little reminder, that's all.

It does change you. Just the mettā changes you over a period of time. It has to. Because every time you reflect on something, you're developing a certain attitude. And old attitudes that you have, which may be contrary to this, are not being developed. So they atrophy. If you don't use your muscles, they just die away.

So it's the same with these attitudes that we have, which we see as unwholesome. If you just let them come up, feel the desire to act that way, and let it go—they're slowly dying. They're burning out. But you have to replace it with something positive.

I can only hope my words have been of some assistance, that they have not caused even greater confusion. May you, by your contemplation of the body, arrive at that place of perfect peace and happiness sooner rather than later.

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