The Prognosis is Very Good

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 51:42

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammasambuddhassa
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Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

And we had two escapees, Liam and Grace, decided it was too early. So that's why we're here, just in case you wondered why we're here.

So I thought we'd take a little journey around the Buddha's teachings, try to get a fulsome picture of it. And all his teaching really is contained in what we call these four noble truths, these four truths.

The first one is this core word of his, *dukkha*, which translates as hard to bear. And the question is: do we cause our own suffering or is that caused by the world, something out there? So we've already looked at that within ourselves. And what we're trying to discern very clearly is this distinction between the fact that life is hard to bear on an ordinary, daily basis and in a lifelong basis.

Every day we have to get up, we have to go to work, and if you haven't got work, you're anxious about getting work and it's like a daily grind. Very fortunate if you enjoy your work or if work is well paid and so on. But even that has its ups and downs. A job that we enter with great enthusiasm, in a couple of months becomes boring. And there's also a much deeper sort of pain about life, which is the process of falling ill, ageing and dying.

So it's not as though we're ever going to make this life form any easier through the process of liberation. That's not where the liberation lies. The Buddha himself grew old and died of quite a painful gastroenteritis. He didn't escape any of the ailments. I'm sure he had more illnesses than that. At one point he was healed, and somebody came and reminded him that just contemplating the seven factors of enlightenment would help. And he became better because of that.

So it's not as though the Buddha is saying that there is a liberation from the aches and pains and the process of living. On the other hand, he's not saying that life doesn't offer us pleasures, joys and happiness.

And when we think about happiness and our search for happiness, you can normally put it into three types of happiness. The first one is just the ordinary sensual pleasure of having a meal or chocolate. And then there's a more engrossed type of happiness where we enter into an absorption of what we're doing. And all these dangerous sports are really based on people who are getting that high buzz of losing themselves just for that dangerous moment in a perfect state of excited happiness. Every time we might

watch a DVD or something, the underlying attitude would be to lose yourself in the film. And then when you come out, of course, it's been a great film. So that type of happiness, which is a deeper level - of course you lose it as soon as you become aware of it. It's one of those paradoxes, that we're most happy at that level, and we don't know it.

But there is of course a much deeper level of happiness and that has to do with meaningfulness. And when it comes to deep meaningfulness, we're talking about some sort of deep connection with life. We're asking the question: why am I here?

At its most acute example, it would be these people who are quite prepared to undergo imprisonment, torture, etc. for political freedom. Just thinking of one case of Burma and the sufferings of Aung San Suu Kyi. Her willingness to bear all sorts of indignities, imprisonment, not to be able to be by the side of her husband when he was dying. She could leave Burma, but of course they wouldn't let her back in. And they wouldn't let him come. So it was a point of anguish for her, I'm sure. And even more anguish to know that her close supporters were actually being treated far worse than ever she was, because as an international figure they had to be slightly careful. Many were tortured, tortured to death, and so on and so forth. These people, the unknowns, the ones that are nameless, whom, in a sense, she symbolises, have found a sort of tremendous courage, a deep commitment which comes not from any attempt to find sensual pleasure or to be in one of these beautiful high states, but because of some deep meaningfulness within them.

And one of our problems, she would say, for a lot of people who've lost the connection with religion, is that there's that sense of loss, of a deep meaningfulness about their lives. Hence the huge new religion of consumerism everybody's into. And with the understanding that life is meaningless, so I may as well enjoy myself. But that layering of that deep sense of meaninglessness with pleasure, of course, eventually caves in because there comes a point where sickness, ageing, and the fact of death hits us. And I would have thought that underlying meaninglessness is actually a state of despair.

And I think that's what the Buddha felt when he first started his search. I think he felt that. The idea of constantly coming back to be reborn, just a constant flow of this energy, reborn, reborn, this human being or that animal or that god, whatever, with no end in sight, was meaningless. I think that we have it in our Western culture through the existentialists who saw the idea of being conscious for no reason, having lost any connection with religion. People like Jean-Paul Sartre or Camus would have said that it's completely meaningless. So they had this word, absurd - it was absurd.

And so this drive towards meaningfulness is really what we're doing. We're trying to find out why in the hell we're here. We might like to say to ourselves that we know, but the real test is when you face death, because death is the end of everything you know. And when we face that possibility, that there is an end point to this apparition, this person that I appear from moment to moment, day to day, and I give myself a name, I have a passport, and it all seems very real, comes to this point where everything that I have achieved - all the wealth and the power and the objects and all my clothes - are all left behind. It all just

disappears. It was like the solicitor was asked how much the old widow had left, and he said, "Everything."

So that gives you an idea of the finality of death. And one way to really break through the illusion is the contemplation of death. It's a very strong contemplation. And it's there in a commentary - well, the Buddha has it. It's in a commentary where Buddhaghosa, so this would have been a practice that people would have had, and people do have now, of just keep repeating the word "death." He says that's enough.

But the Buddha makes it even more obvious, because we were talking about the discourse on how to establish mindfulness. We were talking about the body, that the first part is about the body, and it's split into various sections. First of all, there's the breath. There's one about actions, which I mentioned yesterday. But there's also one about the cemetery observations. In those days, bodies were laid out in a charnel ground, and they were left to rot, eaten by animals, etc. And those who really wanted to face the meaning of death would go and sit and observe the corruption of the body. And he has, I think it's eleven or thirteen stages where you can see the body slowly corrupting finally ending up as just dust. The commentary gives a very worthwhile comment or piece of advice saying that if you do this practice you shouldn't sit downwind. So when you find a dead body and have a look at it, make sure the wind is coming from behind.

Just as a little aside: there was a European monk, I don't know what nationality he was, who wanted to take that contemplation seriously. And he was able to get permission to take a convict's body that had died and carry it on his back to his cave. And in his cave, or the adjoining cave, he built a glass container which had a chimney going up. And when it became known that this was happening, the newspapers went gung-ho on it and said, "Finally, a real monk was located." And I don't know what happened during that time, but the end of the story is that he left the order and went to work for Mother Teresa in Calcutta. So that to me sounds as though something happened in that contemplation. Perhaps it reconnected him with life and preciousness of life. Who knows?

There is that about life. Its deep meaningfulness. What is the purpose of our lives? At that deep level of just being a human being. Why are we here?

And when the Buddha says this, it even gets even more subtle because once we begin to access the position within us of the observer, and we begin to recognise that the observer in that state, when we're there - you have to make it plain to yourself through the practice - that when you're in that state, there is no felt suffering. Everything that you're feeling is observed as an object. And therefore, the observer is no longer in a state of suffering. And it is said that such is the state of peace within that state that even a moment of consciousness is felt as a disturbance. So this feeling of unsatisfactoriness, it goes really very, very deep. And this is what the Buddha saw.

But in the second Noble Truth he points to at least the psychological reason as to why we're unhappy with this situation. And that is to do with desire. And when we look at desire, which we've been looking at through all our practices, we always find that there's an I in front of it. There's always I desire something.

Luckily, through our practice around eating, we can actually observe desire long enough to know that in fact the I doesn't have to attach itself. Our sense of identity really doesn't have to happen. We can just feel the desire and just allow it to peter out. That of course is the escape. That's the escape from the suffering that's caused through this desire.

But this desire, remember, is rooted in a very good reason. The very good reason is to enjoy life. That's all we want to do. I mean, when we get down to it, I just want to be happy. And the happiness is to be found in the world. That's the presumption. I'm living here, I've got this body and it gives me certain pleasures and I have friends, etc., and I just want to be happy.

But the happiness is based on a deep delusion as to who or what I am. And that's my sense of me, my I. Now, when you're in the state of the observer, there's still that sense of somebody observing. So right there, right when we've pulled out of the body because we're looking at sensations of feeling. Right when we've pulled out of emotions because we can feel emotions, see it and observe it. Right when we've pulled out of the mind - this may be a bit difficult over the weekend - but where you can actually observe just images passing in front of you. Or even a thought. When you've pulled out of all that physical, psychological stuff that's going on, and you've arrived at this observation post within yourself, still there's a sense of somebody watching.

And that's where it begins. It begins right there, with that awareness feeling itself as itself in the mind. It's like a mirror image. It's like when you look into a mirror, you see your face. And we always think that's the way people see us. Now, how many of you have done the two mirror trick? You're in for a big shock. The two-mirror trick is, you look into the mirror, you get a mirror which looks at your face in the mirror, and you're looking at this, at the way people actually see you, because the mirror turns your face around. And it can be a shock. You never thought your nose would be that big. It's like when you first hear your voice on a recording. Or worse, to see yourself on video - it's always a tremendous shock.

So this awareness, this intuitive awareness that we access, purer and purer, through our meditation, feels its presence in the mind. And it even has an object, a very fine object of a sense of I. And that's where you get this feeling of somebody observing, somebody feeling. Then, of course, because it sees itself in the mirror - and this is Alice through the looking glass - sees itself in the mirror, or better still, like Narcissus. Narcissus who looked in the pool and saw his face and fell in love with himself. Went and aroused himself and fell into the water and drowned.

Do you know that is exactly what's happening? That's exactly what's happening. From moment to moment we look into the mind and heart and we embrace it entirely and fall into the waters of life. And we're constantly becoming this poor drowning object in a stream of life's consciousness. Because that's all it is. It's just a flow of these moments and moments of consciousness.

So that attraction, that attraction that draws us there is because this intuitive awareness simply wants to be happy. It has extraordinary innocence. It doesn't start from a place of hatred or aversion or anything. It

just starts from a very simple place of just wanting to be happy. That's all. And because of that, it identifies with what's actually happening through this primary identification.

And because of ageing and death, especially death, this sense of self feels so unsure. That's the problem. The self knows, we know - we, you, me - we know that come death, that's it. The body, everything will just drop away. So there's this underlying anxiety to life. And this underlying fear of death is driving us to make ourselves feel safe. And we feel safe when we've accumulated masses of wealth, hundreds of friends, racks of DVDs. I mean, anything that makes us feel comfortable and safe.

Having done that, of course, we have to guard this stuff because everybody else wants what I've got. And so there's always an aversion to anybody who looks like taking what I've got. So there's your three fundamental attitudes to life arising from this initial delusion, which is completely innocent. You have no ill will to it at all. Want to be happy, and we end up being anxious, averse, and greedy. And then of course because of those attitudes we start doing things. We start doing things which are unwholesome, unskillful. And when we do that we start having the secondary level of guilt and shame and remorse.

Now, the point of escape from that delusive action is not the I, because by the time you get to I, you're lost. It's catching the wanting, it's catching the desire. So here, every morning, we've been chanting Dependent Origination. And that's part of the teaching of the second noble truth, desire. It comes in there. And what the Buddha is pointing out is that at first there comes some sort of sense-based information. So we might walk into the dining room and we can see our eyes fall on a kettle and immediately this brings up the idea of tea. Now that happens quite naturally because of our past connection with kettles and tea. You can't stop that happening. It's just within the whole memory base that we've developed.

And then, of course, there comes the desire. See, that's what we've been looking at. We've been looking at this desire, want. Want. Sorry, I'll go back a step. First of all, there's just that initial information that comes in of the kettle. And through that, the memory of the tea. That's when we get down to our basic experience through the body or through the mind. So for instance, when I've said, first of all, we might use the word pain, but when we go into the pain, we don't find pain, we just find sensations. So it's the same with anything we look at. As soon as we see something or hear something, there's always that neutral base of information that comes in.

But then there is a description of it of either being pleasant or unpleasant. And that's the feeling, that's what we base our attraction on. If it's unpleasant, we want to get rid of it. And if it's pleasant, we want to get it. So that's the process in our psychology, that we see the kettle. The kettle is given a meaning. And then it's connected with tea.

And then the idea that, ooh, tea is nice. And then there comes want. And only then do you get the "I want."

Now this is really, really, really important to see, because if the I came first in the process, there could not be an escape. Because the I is a signal of delusion. It's only because the sense of I comes last that there is

an escape. And the escape is at that point of seeing the wanting. At that point you can discern, you can say to yourself, well, is this time for tea or am I being greedy?

Now, at that point you have a choice. And this is one of those little areas where we in the West get a little confused because we have this idea of free will. Free will is a construct which comes from Christianity and it's based on Saint Augustine — he was the one who defined it. And it's defined because God has created human beings to love him. But what sort of love is it if it's conditioned? So a human being has to have the freedom to love him or not. And when they choose to love God, then of course he feels loved. You can't create something to love him and then feel loved by him. There's something false about that. So the human being has this freedom.

And what you get from that is that this free will somehow stands apart from conditioning. And there's no other culture that I know — it's definitely not in the East — the idea that you have a free-floating free will. What you have in the East is discernment. You can see that something is right or wrong, and then you can choose, but your choice will be based upon your conditioning as to whether you're going to allow yourself to do something which is harmful to yourself or others, or good for yourself or others. And through the power of discernment, one tends to move towards what is beautiful, what is good for you.

So, it's like going for a walk. If you go for a walk, and you're going from here to Ennis, there's a path, and you follow the path, and then sometimes you get distracted, and you wander off somewhere, and you get lost. You have to put your compass out, and you think, well, I'm going to go back on the path, or I'm going to keep being lost. You come to a path, and the map isn't so clear, and the path seems to bifurcate, and you think, where am I going to go? So you think, well, I'm not sure. So you try one path, and you end up in a ditch, and you think, oh, this is not the path. And you come back to where you were, and you try the other one. And that's the process of liberation in Buddhist terms. There isn't actually any free will. What there is, is discernment. Through your practice you make a right decision one way or the other.

So, just to go back to that crucial point: if the I came first, and then you had wanting, and then you had nice ice cream, and then you had the information that there was ice cream in the fridge, there'd be no escape. Because you'd identify right from the beginning of the process. It's the fact that the identification comes at the end of the process that the escape is possible.

Now, there's nothing in Indian literature at the time that expresses that depth of understanding of human psychology. It's extraordinarily new and something which came out of the Buddha's own careful investigation of his suffering.

The path then — the Eightfold Path — is a way of him expressing how this has to become totally systemic. You can't — if you split the human being into different parts then all you get at worst is a schizophrenic person. So if one part of us knows that we shouldn't be eating all this ice cream and the other part says well we should be, then there's going to be this internal battle all the time.

Somehow, there has to be a purification of our intentions. And that's where the work is. So, knowing, for instance, that too much ice cream is not good for us is only the beginning of the process. Then we have to restrain and not buy so much ice cream. It's as simple as that. And keep away from the ice cream counter when we go to the supermarket. It has to come into your specific daily practice, so that everything we're doing has to be questioned. Is this good for me? Is it wholesome? Is it not wholesome?

And one little trick that you can try is to ask yourself, what would the Buddha do? Now that's not entirely reliable, but at least it gives us — it connects us to an archetype which is in us. You could do it with anybody. What would Christ do? What would Saint Francis do? Because we know these stories of people and they've created within us an idea, an archetype of what it is to be holy, to be saintly, to be good, to be liberated and all that. So often when you sit there and you think, well, should I be watching this TV program? Ask the Buddha. No. It doesn't mean to say that you won't, but at least there's a certain level of truth there about it. And of course, if you say, well, yeah, the Buddha wasn't where I am, then at least you acknowledge your weakness, and then you might make a determination that the next time the program's on, you'll find something else to do. Take a walk or something.

So that business of a systemic process begins with this discernment. And specifically the Buddha has pointed to this process of wrong desiring.

Now, when a desire comes, whatever it is, whatever negative desire comes, it becomes something real for us when we identify with it. So when I say "I hate that person," that feels pretty real. "I'm angry with that person. I'm angry with him." But what we're learning to say is "there is an aversion towards that person." There is. So already I'm pulling myself out of it. I'm not identifying with this thing. And therefore it loses its power over me in the sense of making me say something hateful or even think something hateful if it's good enough, and definitely stopping me from doing something hateful.

Now, this energy, if you look at it like the weather — little storms and then suddenly the sun comes out — if you just see the heart and the mind and even the body as just energy, forms of energy, then what we discover is that any negative energy we have will transform into its opposite. It will just happen. Because no energy is actually lost — whether that's a physical truth or not, it's definitely a mental truth. No energy is lost. It's transformed. And frankly, I much prefer the word — it's gone out of my head — which is to move chemically from a solid directly into a gas without going through the medium of a liquid.

So when we feel aversion towards somebody, if we just stay with it, stay with it, stay with it, as it melts, as it were, as it melts, you're able to put yourself in the other person's shoes. And immediately a sense of compassion and some form of connection, which we might call love, arises quite naturally. Because when anybody does anything hateful to us, they themselves will have their own internal problems, psychological problems.

I remember — and this happened to me very, very clearly on one occasion — when I got into quite an adverse state with my teacher, who was a lovely Burmese monk. And I was very upset with him, for

various reasons. It wasn't completely wrong, but definitely I got into a very strong aversion. And it's quite remarkable, because I was doing a personal retreat in Wales a long time ago now, but I remember sitting there and doing exactly that — just not indulging through storylines, my reasons for hating and wanting to hang him, but to sit just with the feeling of this very raw frustration and anger and everything else down there. And then to my surprise — I'm just watching this, I'm just feeling it, I'm not extending any hateful thoughts towards it, but staying entirely with the emotional content — I actually saw it just completely transform into compassion. And it just happened in front of my eyes. And when that happens to you, then you know that's what's happening all the time, even if it's not so obvious or distinct.

Over the period of time, if you don't just react with anger, but stay with it, if you sit in your anxiety and just sit with that anxiety as it is, without it developing storylines of horror for us — and remember that something like 99% of all we're anxious about never actually happens — once we drive that home, what you see is that it transforms to its opposite.

One of the things that everybody suffers from on occasion, at different depths, is of course loneliness — feeling of loneliness. And loneliness can be very painful, a feeling of not being loved. "I'm no good and everybody hates me, and rightly so," and all that stuff. Now, if you keep that train of thought going, of course, then you're reinforcing that feeling of isolation, of being alone in that bad sense, in that unwholesome sense. But if you sit with it, if you just stay with it, then very slowly, as it decreases, when it ends, when it comes to an end, what you end up with is a transformation of that loneliness into a sense of solitude. Just pure solitude. Which is to be completely happy just being with yourself.

And these things you can practice at any time. And what this does is if you do that and take it to that point — even if it takes days to get to that point, take it to that point — then it builds up in you a real confidence to stay with what is so painful at times within us. And you know that it will pass. And the real insight is that the heart heals itself.

And that's the amazing thing, that you don't have to do anything. It's just like water — if you keep swirling it around with a whisk and it keeps moving, if you take the whisk out, the water naturally settles to a stasis, to appeasement. And that's the natural state of the heart.

So when we say that this awareness, this intuitive awareness, begins from a point of innocence, it begins from that point where nothing is ruffling it. But then it has this delusive moment. Every moment of our lives has this delusive moment. The idea of the self is always a substrate in everything we do. All we can do is notice how it's drawing us into suffering and pull back from that. If I see I'm getting anxious about something, I just stay in the anxiety. Often when the anxiety passes, you find there was nothing to be anxious about.

So our practice is to be aware as best as we can all the day. From the time we wake up to the time we fall asleep is to be aware of how the mind is moving. Not to get anxious about it if we miss it, but just to make us more and more keenly aware of what we're doing. And this idea of going slow — obviously we can't go

as slow as this in daily life — but really just to keep stopping and to take our time, to stop and take our time.

And often we think that, especially in certain work situations, that's going to make us inefficient. We may find, actually, that by doing that, we're actually more efficient. Because a lot of our inefficiency is done because of rushing. Forgetting your keys. We create so much bother for ourselves just being in this constant state of rushing.

We've come to a point now where, by the way, the Buddha never offers any solution to the question as to why this should happen in the first place — why we're here in the first place, why we've entered into this life form right at the beginning, because there's no seeable beginning to *kamma*. The Buddha says it's always been here. The idea of cause and effect, cause and effect, is endless. Although in some religions they might talk about the first cause, that is essentially illogical. There is no first cause. It just is. This is the way it is all the time.

And if you think of it in terms of a stretch of time, it seems unimaginable — going this way forever and then going that way forever. But if you take it moment to moment, that things are just arising and passing away, there's no reason to think that ever started or ever stops. Time, remember, is a mental construct. We build up some idea of history. But actually, all that's happening is this, and this, and this.

So we can presume that the Buddha was very anxious before his liberation about this whole problem. And in investigating this process, he discovers something which is quite miraculous, because up until then there had been some hints about it — and the Upanishads that were being written were definitely moving in the same direction — but he came across this state which was outside the whole process of manifestation. Outside it. And yet, within it.

So when he became enlightened he didn't disappear in a puff of smoke. It wasn't as though he went somewhere else. He still stayed in the body and he still got up and he still ate and he probably still peed. I'm sure he peed. And he did all the things that a human being did. And he began to speak about his understandings. And yet he was saying to people that there is an end to suffering and he didn't suffer.

Now, I don't know of any Western psychoanalytic or psychological school which makes that statement. All Western schools talk about an accommodation — that you can get better, you can be at ease with it, get to a certain place, but you'll never get rid of anxiety. You'll never get rid of fear. I mean, I've read this quite clearly in books on psychotherapy and psychology. And, like in that lovely book, "Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway." You could say that about anything. Feel the depression and do it anyway. It doesn't just work for fear.

And the reason, of course, why they can't go beyond that is because they've not seen the core problem, which is the problem of identity. Once the Buddha had broken through the illusion of identity, he discovered a different state. And in the actual formulation of the Noble Truth, it just says there is an end to

suffering. All gone. Later, it's given this word, *Nibbāna*.

Nibbāna is a state which is transcendent of the phenomenal world. In other words, in *Nibbāna* you don't find anything of this phenomenal world. What do we mean by that? There's no thinking. There's no images. Interestingly enough, even though we talk about the bliss of *Nibbāna*, the peace of *Nibbāna*, there's no mental state. There's no emotions. There's definitely no body. There's no sensations and feelings. The whole thing disappears within that state of *Nibbāna*.

Now, there's a kernel experience of that state, but then that state re-enters into this psychophysical organism and begins to express its wisdom. So the Buddha, having achieved this understanding, this experience of what is transcendental, re-enters into this form and begins his ministry.

Now, in early Theravada Buddhism, this state of *Nibbāna* is tended to be expressed quite negatively, because it's describing what's not there. And there are some very collected sayings of the Buddha, where he talks about, for instance, that which is unborn doesn't die. There's one where he talks about the sphere of experience — so spheres, in the Buddha's understanding, are to do with your sense bases. So there's a visual sphere, which cannot be connected with the audio sphere. They're two different sense bases. They're two different ways of experiencing life. There's the mental sphere, but he says there is a sphere where there's no sun, no moon, no coming, no going, and so forth. So he's pointing to something which is quite transcendent of this particular manifestation called world. He talks about it as an island of unconditioned consciousness.

So the Buddha, like anybody who has a new idea or new discovery, is always lost for words because the present vocabulary doesn't include the understanding. So in the verse, in the victory verse that we chant, he actually uses the word *citta*, *asantaka*, the unconditioned consciousness, for want of a better word. So he's using *citta*, which for those of you who know, in the Abhidhamma, refers to the mind. But obviously, the mind can't be unconditioned. The mind is conditioned. So he's pointing to something which knows—*cit ta* means that which knows—which is not conditioned.

And then he talks about it as a consciousness and uses the word *viññāna*. For those of you who know, that's the *viññāna*, the consciousness of the five aggregates. Now, it can't be that *viññāna* because he talks about it as not touched by any of these senses. It doesn't belong to the sphere of the sense bases, which includes the mind and heart. And it's without boundary. It's phenomena that creates boundaries. It's the walls that create the boundary of this room. But there's a consciousness that doesn't have that boundary. And in all directions, full of light, just this is the end of suffering.

Now the reason I'm pointing to that is because in later Buddhism, the accent moved away from the experience to what was—what was it that knew the experience? What was it that experienced the experience? And that's when you get words like the big mind, the Buddha nature, the Buddha within. Both of these ways of looking at this transcendent state is one from the point of view of experience and one from the point of view of that which the experience is known by. Buddha is the one who knows.

Now, where is it? Where is this experience we've found? Whenever we meditate and we take the position of the observer within us, we meditate. Because when you're the observer, you have pulled yourself out of that identity with what's going on within you, whether it be a sensation or a feeling coming from the body, an emotion or a mood that you can sense within you, a thought which you might see, but definitely images. So you've found a place which is transcendent of the body, and yet directly within it.

So that's why I keep saying to people, when the sense of the observer is very, very clear to you, after you finish the meditation, just ask yourself, what was it like being there? Now, if you say to yourself, that's all right, that's good, yeah, but I'd rather be out there having a good time, in Buddhist terms, that's the level of delusion. The more you seek that inner peace, that inner silence, the more it's telling you that you are finding a different relationship with the world.

That different relationship with the world is not to negate the world. We try to make a distinction between indulging something and enjoying something. That relationship now is one of connection. And connection means love. It draws you into a loving connection with the world. And depending on the situation, it's either the love that we associate with friendship, or the love that we associate with suffering, which expresses as compassion, or the love that expresses itself as rejoicing in somebody else's happiness, sympathetic joy.

And all the rest of it, all the virtues that you can think of, are the expressions of that wisdom into the world. So, the prognosis is very good. May these words be of some assistance. May you by your joyful and committed practice soon arrive at that place of pure joy, sooner rather than later.

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