Importance of Resolution

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 45:47

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.

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

Just an opportunity really to revise our understanding of the Buddhadhamma according to a certain Bhikkhu Bodhidhamma. So, just trying to put it in the context also of New Year and a time for resolutions, things like that. An opportunity to look back and to have some way of reflecting upon our lives.

I suppose it's good just to remind ourselves of this basic psychology that the Buddha teaches us. We can start really by seeing that he gives us a sort of cross-section of every moment and also what happens in process, what happens over a period of time.

So that cross-section he called the five aggregates, and the one that's interesting specifically these days is cognition, which is the fifth one. As you all know, cognition is momentary. If we were to really see what was happening now, what we would experience as a sort of stroboscopic universe, it would be arising and passing away at tremendous speed. These are like little photographs that are caught by consciousness, an act of cognition. It's only because it's happening at this enormous speed that it gives us a sense of flow, a sense of continuity.

And of course, from a point of view of delusion, it's easy for us to identify with that. I am the one. I am that process of knowing because I always seem to be there. And whenever I'm knowing something, it's always me. Even if I lose myself in an absorption, I still come out and say, oh, that was me. So there's that problem of identity which we'll come to in terms of the flow of our psychology.

And what it catches, what this moment of cognition always catches, are these four other aggregates in a singular moment. So there's always the body, *rūpa*. I translate it as the body, but it's not at a subtle level, it's not the body itself. What we know of the body, what we can experience of the body, is quite minimal. I mean, what do you know about your big toenail? Very little. I mean, you can feel it, you can see the color of it. But you've never been it, have you? Have you ever been a toenail? It's not something you can absorb into. It's there. And of course, we're quite happy to cut it off when it gets a bit too long. But we don't think we're losing a bit of me. At least I don't. I don't go through a burial ceremony whenever I cut my toenail off. Or any nail, when I think about it.

So, when you investigate what this body is, I think it's quite surprising how little we're aware of what's going on at any given time. Whether it's an organ such as the liver or the blood flow, or the passage of red

corpuscles out of the marrow of the bone, through the bone, into the bloodstream. I haven't a clue what's going on. In fact, I would have been quite happy in ignorance. It's just reading these silly books. I've opened up this realization that I haven't a clue, generally speaking, what's going on in my body. I know when it goes wrong, of course. I mean, when it's okay, it feels all right. There's a general feeling of wellness. When it goes off, I get very worried.

So, when the Buddha talks about the body, yes, he's talking about the way we relate to the body. And we can see that there's three delusive ways of relating. One of them is through a sense of disgust with the body, not being happy with the way it smells and does things. And he gives us these exercises of looking at the disgusting nature of the body. That's not to make us more disgusted. That's to make us overcome disgust. That's to make us see the body as it really is. It's an animal, for heaven's sake. There's no difference between us and those sheep that you see out in the field. They've got everything we've got. Just different shapes.

And it's going beyond the sense of disgust, which is all about, really, the way we see ourselves, the way we perceive the world. So if something is smelly, for instance, we think it's bad. But it's not. It's just smelly. That's all right. And then there's this business of the way we look, which is, of course, a social construct, whether you're beautiful or not. And that can cause us all sorts of misery. It causes people terrible misery. Pimples on the end of your nose can be the cause of deep depression.

So it's a case of recognizing also that the body is just a body. It doesn't have to be beautiful at all to perform its tasks. It's just an organism. And the other thing is, of course, when we investigate our relationship with the body, is that we've invested a tremendous amount of our happiness in it. So that if we, for instance, start going blind or deaf, it's a horror story for us. Meaning we might know that from people who are disabled, that eventually makes no difference to our quality of life if we approach the situation with acceptance. But that doesn't undermine the fact that getting there is very painful.

Even this, I've got this pain in my tooth, it was right at the back of my mouth, nobody would ever know about it. But I'm very worried. I might have to have it taken out, then I've only got one gnasher on the top. Well, that's terrible, isn't it? I mean, if I lose that, I've had it, I'm going to have to wear one of those plastic things in my mouth. Terrible.

So when you look at the body, Buddha is saying all that, but that actually is, in a sense, the more obvious part of our relationship to the body. But when we really investigate what is it we know, what are the building blocks upon which we know the body and you actually go into your meditation. I mean, the obvious one that I normally talk about is pain, isn't it? Because when you go into pain, there's no pain there at all. What you've got is tightness or pressure, burning, prickling, all sorts of sensations, but there's no pain as such. And then you realize that actually all we can know of the body is its sensation, the sensations that are coming from the body. And from that we build up these concepts, emotional concepts too, like pain. Pain is not just a simple medical description, it's actually something you feel.

So, when we go into that first heap, that first aggregate of the body, the Buddha is actually pointing to the fact that it's the point where the mind is touching the body. The mind is against the body. What it can actually cognize that we have to begin to see that that is actually only these momentary sensations. And these momentary sensations are only momentary because that's the way cognition behaves. It just catches every moment like that. Like the old films, like the old film reels.

And then from that, we create our *saññā*, which is our perception. So these perceptions are memories. That's our memory, perceptions. And at first, they're very simple, red, blue, box, and all that. But they eventually build up into concepts. They're ways in which then we start looking at the world through the history that we've had with it.

These saññā, you can see them as basic perceptions which lie at the back of the slow growth of concepts. But as you get a concept, it becomes a saññā because that's the way you perceive the world. You're perceiving the world through a particular concept. And again, in our meditation, we're trying to go beyond that by the process of getting back down to the initial sensations that we have in the body, grounding ourselves in the body.

So, feelings, sensations, they're not made up by the mind, they're actually a direct experience of it. So, when you're walking around the meadow there and you can feel your boots sinking into the mud, it's a case of actually feeling what the sensation is of sinking into mud. And that's not made up. That's not some conceptual idea. That's a direct experience of sinking in the mud. And while I remember, there's all those moles out there. And I'm walking around thinking I shall sink my boot into a molehill. Stop Morris reappearing. We've got a rationale, haven't we?

So those are those sensations, saññā, perceptions. And then on top of that we have a whole, a second layer of experience that we call feelings, *vedanā*. And this is what we feel in the body. These vedanā are made up of these basic sensations that we have, but they're being described as either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. And as soon as we do that, in any given moment, we're living in a dualistic world in terms of feeling. It's either pleasant, unpleasant, or some shade in between. Even neutral sensations, when you really investigate them, will have a shade of being pleasant or unpleasant. So that's the mind. I mean, that's a given, you might say, the vedanā.

And remember that these sensations are both physical, coming from the body itself, like pain, like pleasure, but it's also a mental thing. It's also what we call the feeling level of an emotion, the feeling basis.

And then we have these *saṅkhāras*. Now, the Buddha has created these five aggregates really to point to a certain process, these saṅkhāras. Because that's where our problems lie. The other stuff is just a given. And the problems lie within these saṅkhāras.

So, you get lots of models of a human being from Freudian and so on. But the Buddha's model is really to keep pointing us to where the suffering arises, because that's all he's concerned with, isn't it? Just this

problem of suffering, human suffering.

Now when these five aggregates start moving in time, then we see much more this process. So the five aggregates are always there, but we see that there are some things that are with us, as it were, all the time as a way of looking at the world and that's our saṅkhāras. So these saṅkhāras, these habits mental habits which express themselves through our body language are all generated by an act of will.

And that's really where we come to this point where the Buddha is pointing to what it is that actually creates something. It's a very mystical thing. The Buddha doesn't describe will. I mean, it's a force. It's a force which manifests something into the world and it arises after an intention. I mean, that moment when intention becomes a flow of thought, or an intention becomes an action of speech or an action of the body, is a split second. Normally speaking, we don't even notice it, we just do, we just carry on. But that distinction is crucial, because at the point of the arising of an intention which is only a thought flavoured with desire at that point nothing has actually happened that's a really crucial understanding because we would then think that every time an intention arises we've already behaved either wholesomely or unwholesomely. But that's not so. It's the arising of that intention.

Now, the intention in the process is called *taṇhā*. That's what he's referring to, that point of intention. If it's something which is unwholesome then we have this special word, taṇhā, for it. But if it's something wholesome, then we can use the word *chanda*, which also has both an unwholesome or wholesome desire, but at least here we can talk about desires that are wholesome.

And the Buddha also goes through this process. I mean, you don't get this written up, of course. But I mean, it's not as though he was an automaton. He was aware of what he was doing, and when he got up, when his body signaled that he was hungry, he made the intention to go out and get some alms round. So that wasn't something that happened automatically. He must have seen the intention arise, and he must have thought to himself, right, this is time to get some food. And he gets his bowl and his robe, and he does all the things that anybody else, that any other of his monks would do, and his nuns, and out he goes. But there's something missing. There's something missing from that process which does not cause him any problems. For us, there's something in there which is causing the problems.

So this taṇhā, now this taṇhā, once it's arisen, we have this next thing, this *upādāna*, this grasping. So what happens at that point? What happens at that point? The point is a point of identity. The wanting becomes I want. And at that moment of identity, where the I comes in, the sense of me, into an action, into that flow, is the point of suffering. There's no suffering as long as it stays at taṇhā.

So now, we can know this, for instance, in our practice, when we are aware of some desire coming up, which we're not going to fulfill, say, when we're eating, so there's hunger there, which is not a pleasant feeling in itself. It's pleasant in the sense that if a thirsty person sees a water tap somewhere, then that thirst doesn't become so painful as it was if there was no water around, if you were stuck on the sea or something. But it's still not a pleasant sensation as such. Hunger is not a pleasant sensation, feeling

hungry.

So when we sit at the table and we're in contact with that hunger, and we're not reacting, we're not identifying with it, and we're not reacting to it, it is just a sensation. But we can describe it at that point as being unpleasant, but there's no suffering. There is no suffering. Now, if we were to carry on this fast for sixty-odd days, it would get very, very, very painful, and then the sense of hunger would become something that grasps, and we would enter into that suffering as an I, as a me, and that's the point of suffering. The point of suffering begins with the upādāna.

And of course, once we're in that suffering, we want to escape from it. So the escape is the commitment, the empowerment of that desire. And what that creates is an action. And the Buddha, in this particular stream of actions, calls that *bhāva*, which means becoming. So becoming, becoming moment after moment, driven by, in this case, an unwholesome desire, driven by this force, so it's a force, it's the will that the Buddha talks about, *cetanā*. These are all included in that one moment.

So we've got the becoming, meaning the I becomes, reinvents itself as I want, I scream, I want, I scream, I, it keeps on going, it keeps flipping around itself. And every time it does that, it empowers it, so it's got this force going into that desire. And as it's doing that, it's creating this habit, this saṅkhāra, it's whirling around itself and it's beginning to see that process and to see that the original problem lies in that identity that's why the Buddha is always pointing to this quality of self it's the self, you see, the point of identity which is the core problem.

And this core problem is deep within us because it's buried in this fundamental delusion which runs right underneath all our daily lives. It's just there as a given. I am a human being. Terrible delusion. So, committing ourselves to the human form, we're obviously committed to finding happiness in the human form.

And that's why a lot of this mindfulness stuff, you see how it veers off towards finding happiness. Not that this mindfulness movement isn't a good thing, but it takes it away from the core problem. Mindfulness and stress relief, mindfulness and eating problems, mindfulness and good business, and all that. It's in big business now. All that mindfulness is about really, making the world a more pleasant place. But it's a goose chase because eventually it will corrupt, eventually it won't satisfy because the person keeps looking for happiness in the world.

Now, the Buddha is actually pointing us to a different sort of happiness which is what he calls *Nibbāna*. So, in our meditation, where do we find this, where do we begin to experience this nirvanic type of happiness? Because it's not as though we invent it. I remember my old teacher always saying, when you get on a train to London, London is not being manufactured as you take a journey there. London's already there, and you arrive. So it's the same with Nibbāna. It's not as though we're manufacturing Nibbāna. Nibbāna's already there. It's staring us in the face. But for some reason, we can't see it. We can't get a handle on it.

So I always mention this, usually in the evening when I'm doing that Mahāsi course—this verse from the Dhammapada: those who are mindful in the presence of *Nibbāna*. I mean, he's actually saying that in the vicinity of, you're in the presence of Nibbāna. So there must be something about our meditation, especially the specific Vipassanā practice, which is taking us very close to that level of, for want of a better word, consciousness. It's definitely a place where there's no suffering.

So when you're sitting there in your practice and all sorts of things are coming up and things begin to subside a bit, and there is just that one little occasional moment of peace and stillness, and there is just this inner I, just this thing that keeps looking, and a sense of me looking—the observer, the observer, the observer, the knower. And in that particular state, after you've come out of it, or even as you hold it, just ask yourself: what is the inner state, what's the inscape of the observer?

So this lovely word inscape, which was coined by Gerald Manley Hopkins—like you get landscape and seascape. Inscape. What is... we know through our meditation, we know the inscape of the body. I mean, we know what we feel, we can see our images. I mean, that's what the meditation makes us very alive to. But when you're just the knower, when you're just the feeler, what's the inscape of the knower? What's the inscape of the feeler?

So there's something about that which is pointing to a level of consciousness—you've got to be careful with these words, consciousness—a level of knowing which is somehow radically different from everything else that we experience. And it's different in the sense that inwardly, in that inner space, nothing's arising. Nothing's arising. And if nothing's arising, nothing's passing away. So already, when we begin to experience that, we're actually touching upon something which is transcendent.

Now, I only begin to talk about this in a way because a lot of the stuff that you get these days with certain types of people in the Dharma is the accent on the immanent, on what's actually present, and the movement away from something which is transcendental, which is—to quote the words of Jesus, actually, Jesus Christ—to be in the world, but not of it. And what it does is, it stops you having this... if all you're interested in is immanence, like now, in this present moment, it stops you having a vision of where you're going, of where the future is. I mean, one can argue, well, you're on the path and the future will arise, etc., etc. But to take away the transcendent is to bring the immanent back into this world as it is. And because we know the world is transient, it's very difficult to see what is immanent as not being transient.

So that's just an aside. So our practice is both to see that there is only this present moment, but this present moment belongs only to the world of apparition. To the world of the transcendent there are no moments. It doesn't belong there. Moments are only something that's manufactured, something whereby we are able to measure what is happening. Now it's a time thing which is completely constructed. It's not as though you don't have to have these things in the world, but there's something else, and it's just leaving that as a possibility, that's all.

Remember, we're not into belief as such, but we are definitely into an openness, that there is that

possibility of something in us which is completely transcendent of the phenomenal world. It just isn't part of it at all. And that the phenomenal world is within its scope, but it's not part of it.

Now, you know, the basic quotations that support that would be things like—there is, I mean the Buddha uses a word there which means exists, it doesn't mean like, you know, this is a book—is there exists that which is not born, doesn't die, is not conditioned, not created. I mean, you can't get more obvious than that.

He talks about an *āyātana*. Āyātana is a sphere, and he talks about the sixth āyātana. This is another way in which he made us look at the human experience by way of consciousness. So these acts of cognition are limited by their sense base. So the eye cannot hear, and the ear can't smell, and so on and so forth. And all those cognitions, those acts of cognitions, based on a sense base, is an actual way of experiencing the universe. It's a sphere, and it's a sphere which is separate from the other spheres. The mind is very clever in getting all these things to happen altogether. So you can be watching a film and hearing what's being said and chewing your popcorn and it all seems all one fantastic moment. But in terms of Buddhist psychology, these are all really stroboscopic, minute little acts of cognition which come onto a screen which is happening so fast that it gives us the impression of it all happening together and all in a flow.

But the Buddha's use of the word āyātana is telling us that actually it's not. It's not like that at the base of perception. This is a trick that the mind can produce and a happy one it is, for heaven's sake.

And another phrase that he comes to is he talks about... Well, he's questioned. Somebody asks him a question. Where is it that the four Mahābhūtas come to an end, destroy? Now, the Mahābhūtas, of course, are your four great elements, which is how the mind experiences the body, in other words, this world. Where does this world come to an end? That's another way of saying it. And the Buddha says the question is wrongly put. It's where do these four Mahābhūtas not find a footing, not find a footing. Where do you not find these four Mahābhūtas? There's not a destruction of them. So nothing, remember, is destroyed in the process of liberation. The Buddha is clear about that too. He says the only thing that's destroyed, annihilated, are greed, hatred and delusion.

He says, where is it? He says there is a consciousness which is not touched by any of the senses, not coloured. The word can be translated as not coloured by any of the senses, which includes all the inner senses of emotions and thoughts and all that, and it is boundaryless. There's no boundary to it. What does that tell us? It tells us that there's no phenomena there. I mean, the only reason why we're in this room is because it's bounded by these walls. If there was no walls you'd have an infinite room. So this consciousness doesn't have a boundary, doesn't have limitations, and in all directions full of light. And just this, he says, is the end of suffering.

So again, he's pointing to something in us which simply doesn't belong to this phenomenal world.

So now this brings us to our new year, which is to do with making these intentions. So here, every year we

have this opportunity of reflecting upon the life we've just been living and how we would like to progress. And this moment of resolution, you see—so *adhiṭṭhāna*, it's one of the great perfections, one of these things that take us to the other shore—an adhiṭṭhāna, a resolution.

Now, a resolution or a vow or a specific undertaking of this nature, whether it's even on a social level, like a marriage vow, we tend to think that once you've made the resolution, that's it, like it's done for life, you don't have to do it again. But the whole point about resolutions is that they die out, they die out very quickly. So the resolution, for instance, not to snack in between meals lasts probably half a day. So it's like you've got to make this special effort.

So what a resolution is, is a point in time when you are directing yourself in life, like you're turning the ship to the north, you're directing yourself. But then it has to be reinforced, constantly reinforced. Not just every day, it's just every time it comes to mind. You have to remind yourself that you've made this commitment. Abandon all biscuits. You've made that commitment. So when you walk into a supermarket, you steer yourself away from the biscuits. And of course, the more this resolution takes on strength, the more the resolution gathers energy, the less the old temptations can hijack you. It's only when the resolution drops for a moment, then the old habits begin to take over.

So this resolution is a point in time where we decide to behave in a certain manner. It might be resolving the same thing, it doesn't really matter. But the point is, the power of resolution, the power of determination, is right there within the psychology, it's right there within the grasping, the *upādāna*. But here, this grasping which normally is seen as something which is deluded because it's coming from the I, when it's not coming from that sense of delusion, then at least the sense of self is working towards Nibbāna.

So the Buddha talks about inclining to Nibbāna. So when we talk about no-self, the point where all identity with this psychophysical organism has stopped, that's the point of liberation. But until that point, we have to keep, shall we say, amending the self. How do you incline towards Nibbāna? You incline towards Nibbāna by sorting out our ethics.

So eventually, what we find is that the path is the path of relationships. It's how do we relate to the world, to things, to objects, how do we close the fridge door. See, that's important. And then how you relate to individuals, to people, to the earth, ecology, etc. So it's all to do with our relationships and what is our motivation in those relationships. And that's where you'll find resolutions are normally based.

And so when we realise that this inclined towards Nibbāna is about ethics, what we're actually doing is making this sense of self more and more happy. We're not trying to get rid of the self. If you try and get rid of the self, then you're in conflict immediately. What you're trying to do is make ourselves a happier self. And a happier self comes about through our ethical relationships. And then when we're really, really happy, then all the stuff that makes us unhappy doesn't disturb our meditations. These hindrances begin to slough away because we're not feeding them. And it's when the more that we create a happy self, the

more we're closer to getting rid of it. See?

There's one lovely example that you might have heard me say before, but in the Mahāsi centre in Rangoon, so the story goes, a woman arrived and said to the teacher that her life was utterly and profoundly miserable and that she wanted to meditate and get out of this suffering. And as he asked her to explain this, he agreed that her life was absolutely awfully miserable. But he didn't say, now you've got to do Vipassanā, because if she'd have done Vipassanā, she'd probably have committed suicide, because she'd have had to go into this misery at that raw, raw meat level.

Instead, he gets her to do this *mettā* practice. And through the practice of mettā, she actually begins to experience these beautiful ecstatic states and realises that happiness is possible. Nibbāna is something beyond that, but happiness is possible. So with that basis of confidence she begins to practice Vipassanā and in no length of time, as the scriptures say, she was able to make a breakthrough. See?

So our practice, our actual practice, is about making the self happier. And we ask ourselves, well, what makes me happy? When do I actually feel happy?

Well, the study of happiness is now a big thing in psychology, positive psychology, for heaven's sake. And I think we can split it up into three types, three types of happinesses. There are those types which are pretty immediate and they pass away. Ordinary sensual pleasures, the meeting of a friend in a street and then going for a quick coffee with them and all those little fleeting moments where we experience little moments of happiness.

And then there's those happinesses that we have where we absorb into something that really interests us. So it might be a DVD, it might be some hobby, gardening, it might be something where in that absorption we lose a sense of self and we lose a sense of time. That's always a good sign. And then you come out of that and you say to yourself, that was really lovely, it's a great time. But of course, as soon as you come out of it, you've lost it. The whole point of that sort of happiness is the absorption and the loss of self. And so they say that's why people do these dangerous sports, because at that point they've got to concentrate so much into the moment that there's no time for that reflection of me flying through the air with the greatest of ease. And as I understand it, that's what Aristotle talked about with his Eudaimonia.

But the deeper happiness that gives life its propulsion, you might say, is a sense of meaning. And this has also been investigated by positive psychologists, that it's only when your life has an aim beyond itself that suddenly there is a very deep fundamental meaningfulness, which is the base of happiness. So long as we're working just for our little selves, we might produce these little moments, but there'll always be this underlying meaninglessness to our lives. It's a funny thing, but that's the way it is. But as soon as your life is for the purpose of somebody else, for the purpose of some other great aim, for the purpose of some other ideal, suddenly it takes on a deeper meaning and there you get your deep satisfaction. And that's why we find that people will undergo a lot of suffering for this. And afterwards, they would say that, you know, it was meaningful, looking back they wouldn't have done anything else.

You know, talk about people like people who've been imprisoned—Nelson Mandela. But these are the people that we know like Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi and all that, but there are hundreds of people who undergo torture and all sorts of things for something bigger than themselves and in that they get this real deep sense of meaningfulness and with it there is that happiness.

So we see that in the Buddha's own story when he... At that moment when there's a great doubt, see? So he sat under the tree and, as it's put mythically, but it's his own mind, of course, he's saying, well, what's all this? I've been through all these teachers. I've got all this far. Nobody's discovered the end of suffering. Who the hell am I to try and discover it anyway? And how can I do it? How can I do it? And there are all these great teachers and people I've worked with and they've not been able to do it. See, who am I?

So you get this sense of the great doubt about me, see, about can I do it? And then he touches the earth goddess, and the earth goddess arrives. And he remembers that he's not doing it just for himself, because in his past life he's perfected this idea of generosity. So it suddenly comes to his mind that this is what I'm going through, it's not just for me, it's for my family, it's for my wife, my child, for all these people and all these beautiful people I've met, and all the ugly ones too. And so it's that which gives him, I think, that little extra power to sit under that tree and go through that process, which couldn't have been pleasant, until finally he cracks it.

So this new year is just an opportunity for us to go over these things and to see the importance of a resolution in our lives, the importance of really making these resolutions.

Now, the downside of it is that whenever you make a resolution and you don't fulfil it, you always get this little voice saying, well, you're useless anyway. You couldn't keep a sausage. So it's a case of recognising that that judgmental self, that self which is always trying to undermine us, has to be seen for what it is. It's just another mental state. As soon as you identify with it, then you're stuck in self-hatred. But as soon as you see, well yes, you see that as judging, judging, and you separate from it, you distance from it, you see. And you see it for what it is and perhaps you feel it. You feel this sense of lack of self-worth and nobody loves me and all that. And you keep that and you see it and you wait for it to pass away.

And then you regenerate your self-worth. You regenerate your worthiness and your inner dignity. Dignity, remember, comes from the Latin, which means worthy — *dignus*, worthiness.

So it doesn't matter how many times we stumble and fall and crack our heads. What's important is that we get up, dust ourselves off and start all over again. That's why, I'm sure you've heard me say, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers are my heroes. Because that's what he did every time he slipped on the dance floor. He got up, dusted himself off, and started all over again.

So tomorrow, when we do this contemplation, just thinking about our lives, just take the opportunity to look past, to look back, not simply over the past year, but a whole life, to see certain trends, certain *saṅkhā ras*, certain habits, certain formulations. And see the ones that are good. We tend to have a downer on

ourselves, how horrible we are and the dreadful things that can happen to us. But it's also really reinforcing the fact that we have lots of goodness in us.

And that's why I began to institute this evening chant on joy. I began to realise that you're stuck on compassion, all this suffering of people, and love and all that, but you've got to generate joy as well. It's one of the four illimitables. And you generate joy by being joyful, for heaven's sake. And if you remember a point of joy in the day, even if it was something very simple, and you recall that and you rejoice in it, you say, "That was wonderful, I really enjoyed that. How fortunate I am, how lucky I am to have that moment of joy." That in itself is cranking up the amount of joy in us.

And when we see other people who are happy and are joyful, and our joy rises on their behalf, rejoicing in their joy, that also increases our potential for inner joy. So that could even be a real positive resolution, or one of them for the day, that from now on I shall develop joyfulness and abandon all misery.

So remember, all we're working with is habits. All we're working with is these *saṅkhāras*. They're just habits for God's sake. And it's a case of when a habit arises that we perceive, we can see it's not doing us any harm, you simply don't indulge it. Not to indulge it doesn't mean you don't feel it. I mean, there's a real distinction to be made there. To feel a depression, to feel an anxiety, to feel an anger, to feel hatred, let's say, or jealousy, all these things have to be felt, have to be recognised, acknowledged, but you don't have to reinforce them by putting the "I" in there.

And how do these things reinforce? It's through the mind, it's through this thinking, thinking, thinking. So as soon as you see your thought patterns running in a way which is negative, as soon as you catch it, and see in ordinary daily life, not just here in meditation, and you actually name it for what it is, what's actually driving it — misery or hatred or whatever — immediately you've disengaged. You've disengaged. It cannot make things worse when it's disengaged.

And so long as you remain at the feeling level of an emotional state, of a mental state, it's not going anywhere. I mean, that's a real insight that has to be understood. A mental state, an emotional state cannot be released except through consciousness. But when it's released as a feeling, it's actually exhausting itself. As soon as it catches into a thought pattern, it's immediately regenerating itself and generating itself more.

So, seeing that in our meditation, in daily life, our practice is this constant effort to be awake to what the mind is leading us to. And as soon as you see you're caught up in a dream, a fantasy, to actually name it for what it is. And then if there's time, there's possibility, you stay with it and wait for that feeling to die out.

If there's a strong desire for something and you know it's not wholesome, you stay with it, you stay in the body. You stay in the body as a force. You can feel the energy of it. And every time it releases that energy, it's losing its power. It's losing its power.

So tomorrow I'll hand out these little sheets and I might give you a template to work on. Very good. Enough of that.

I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. May you buy your fierce resolutions. A struggle always towards the end of suffering sooner rather than later.

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