Starting a Retreat

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 4:43

I'm going to explain this little ceremony just to open us into the retreat. And then I'll do a standing meditation, a sitting meditation, a walking meditation, and a loving-kindness meditation, by which you should be thoroughly exhausted and ready to go to sleep.

Now, what we do is the three refuges and precepts. So for those of you who don't know, this is very regular practice in Buddhist countries. But there are special training rules. Let me go through that first.

The first five are pretty straightforward. So not to harm any living being—that's pretty straightforward. Not give up killing each other for the weekend. Not to take what is not freely given. Not to indulge in erotic and romantic delight—difficult. But we need all the energy we can muster to make spiritual progress. Not to use wrong speech. That's easy. We keep the silence. Not to take substances that cloud the mind. So even strong tea can make your mind race. So be careful.

Not to overeat. So we keep the rule of not having anything after lunch. Now, for those of you who've never done a fast or have never passed more than three hours without a biscuit or something, I can assure you, one does not die. One continues. If anybody has problems with that, diabetes or something like that, of course, it doesn't apply. For everybody else.

Not to oversleep. A bit difficult in the first three days, especially for those who are weekenders, because everybody comes with some sleeping imbalance of some sort—either they're not sleeping well or they're oversleeping. So it just takes a couple of days to get that sorted, and then after that it is definitely sloth and torpor. Don't kid yourselves.

Not to indulge in entertainment. So to observe ourselves, you have to stop the input if you want to observe the output. So you don't want to read. You don't want to write. I mean, to jot a few things down for a diary, that's not a problem. It's just when it gets into an autobiography. And for those of you staying long term, even to keep your eyes down, not to get involved in anything around, you see. Stop the inputs.

Not to indulge in self-beautification. Here we don't have to worry about how we look—it's a relief. To cherish the noble silence—very important.

Now these are called training rules. They are something that we take on to establish a sort of boundary for ourselves. The other thing is the schedule. So that's also your discipline. It's not a word we particularly enjoy these days, but that's really something which you devote yourself to so that you get a rhythm. See? Sitting, walking, sitting, walking. That's important to get that rhythm going. And if you can, to stay within the boundary of Gaia House. You think you're going berserk? By all means take a walk up the street, talk

to the cows. Very cool and calming, you know. Just watch them chew.

So we'll take those training rules now. When it comes to the *pūjā*... see *Buddham pūjemi, Dhammam pūjemi, Saṅgham pūjemi*. Bowing is a very strong physical language for surrender. And remember, the spiritual life always asks you to do exactly what you don't want.

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