# Impulsive or Spontaneous

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 47:02

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa* — Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

So I just thought this evening we might approach daily life a bit in terms of our practice. I looked up two words here in the great Oxford dictionary — the contrast between impulsive and spontaneous. It's interesting how close the definitions come. It says impulsive is an action done without thought, and spontaneous, spontaneity, is performed or occurring as a result of a sudden impulse, inclination without premeditation of one's... Not much difference there, is there?

It's interesting that the word impulse comes from the Latin, which means driven on. But spontaneous comes from the Latin, which means of one's own accord. It gives it a slightly different flavour. But definitely in our use of these two words, impulsive is seen as something not very good, and spontaneous is exactly how we want to be. To live a spontaneous life. Everybody wants to be spontaneous. And I think the added understanding of spontaneous is that you're very happy. You're spontaneous and happy, impulsive and wicked and silly, reckless.

So these two words are very close together and it's... We've just got to look at these *parami*. So *parami* means the other shore. It's translated as perfection, but it just means really those virtues that take you to the other shore. And that's the Buddha's image for *Nibbāna* — it's the other shore. And the sea he uses often as a metaphor for the journey. He talks about those who've not achieved Sotapanna, the first instance, as swimming under the water. Don't know where they're going. And the stream entrant, their head is bobbing up and down. So they sort of generally know where they're going. Oh, no, that's right. No, the stream entrant, his head's above water. So at least he sees or she sees where they're going. The Sakudagami, the one who is a once-returner, is swimming vigorously towards the shore. And the Anagami, the non-returner, is actually standing on the shore. So they've actually in some sense reached the end of the path. And then of course there's the path towards the middle of the island, and that's the attainment of full liberation.

So the idea of the other shore is one way of the Buddha pointing that these virtues are needed. And if we take that trilogy of generosity, well, gratitude actually isn't one of these, pardon me, but generosity is, and renunciation.

When we're generous impulsively, when we give impulsively or even recklessly, or when we help somebody — somebody says, can you help me decorate? — and when you say yes in that impulsive way, there's always that aftermath of, oh, God, do I really want to do that? And then you're trying to work out

some way of getting out of it. And at the time when they expect you to come, you've mysteriously fallen ill, disappeared down to the beach or something.

So that impulsive action — if we stop, if we can just stop that, and it's very difficult, of course, when you're in action, when somebody comes and says, can you help me? Can you do this? It's very difficult to just stop and say, no, I won't. But I think we can give ourselves a bit of time by saying, oh, well, I'll have to look at my diary or I'll think about it or whatever. Just give me a moment. So you have to give yourself a bit of space to not fall into that impulsive way of doing things.

And of course when you... If you do something like that, if you decide to do something impulsively, and then you sit with those feelings, rather than letting them take you over, the feeling of self-annoyance and annoyance with the person for asking you and all that, if you sit with those feelings and you let them pass, then perhaps the underlying motivations come up, the ones that are impulsive and driving you on. I mean, that's where the impulse is coming from. It's coming from some underlying conditioning. It may be that you're afraid to lose friendship. It may be that it's one way of not feeling lonely that you go and help somebody occasionally. I mean there might be all sorts of reasons, murky reasons underneath which is making us act in these impulsive ways. This is something that people like Freud understood very well.

But it comes out if you give it time. This is the point. It comes out if you allow the negativity that comes up to just pass away and then just see what comes up. I mean, if nothing comes up, nothing comes up. But something may just come up which manifests to you what's actually making you make these impulsive decisions.

So how do we become spontaneous? I mean, how do we undermine that and become spontaneous? Well, the underlying understanding of spontaneity is that it is virtuous. So absolute spontaneity won't arise until, in a sense, we're fully liberated in that total way, because there'll always be some murky little nasty reason for doing something which is driving us on, even unknowingly. But even so, even if that's there, we can still develop that virtuous habit, that virtuous conditioning, which allows us to act spontaneously in that virtuous way, and it brings more happiness than a feeling of compulsion, of being compelled to do something.

And that's where we get a bit confused because I think we think that spontaneity ought to arise spontaneously. Like you wake up one morning and, yeah, everything's spontaneous. I just woke up and had an egg and everything happened spontaneously. But spontaneity only comes with practice, with actual training. And I think I mentioned this one of the days.

If we look at people like concert performers, pianists, violinists, people like that, and sports people, I think these two manifest what we mean by spontaneity. And we know that an awesome amount of practice goes in to be able to play a piece of Beethoven or something or even to move with that amazing alacrity of a tennis player. I mean, the ball's moving at 100 miles an hour. They're not thinking about, well, should I go over there? Or should I hit it back strong? Should I spin round? What should I do? It's gone.

And this, of course, takes you into things like Zen, which is really high on that spontaneity. And it's interesting that one of the masters of Zen, Takuan, I think his name was called... he talked about stopping but not stopping in my sense. What he meant was the mind sticking. As soon as the mind sticks on something it loses that spontaneity — that's sticking. So if a sportsman just stops even for that moment of doubt of wondering what to do, that's it, they've lost it. There's only a moment. If a performer just for one moment loses confidence or feels they've lost some concentration, that's it, the music is lost. They hit the wrong note and everybody boos. Get out of it.

So spontaneity also demands that concentration and that giving to the moment, but also that sense of complete looseness, where the mind doesn't hold onto something. Well, this takes practice.

So if we're looking at virtues, our virtuous life, then it's a case of recognizing that every time there's an opportunity to practice a virtue, then that also is leading us towards this beautiful spontaneity, where there's a clarity, where there's a wisdom that comes, so that the action is a response through wisdom, not through some murky impulse. And with it, with wisdom of course, there's a natural happiness comes, a natural feeling of fulfillment.

I'm thinking of one incident there in the scriptures where there's a monk who's ill, but ill in that very difficult way — smelly, the bowels are loose, and he's probably quite nasty, and the monks don't take care of him. And when the Buddha hears that this poor man is squirming around in his own juice, he goes with Ananda to look after him. And there's no doubt in the Buddha's mind as to what has to be done. And then he turns to the monks and he says, who's going to look after you? You've no mother, you've no father, you've nobody to help. If you don't look after yourselves, who's going to look after you? So he's saying to them that there's a very good reason for tending the sick. But in his mind, there was no confusion. Somebody's sick, so you're going to help. And I think that's one of the meanings of compassion.

In something like compassion we often get confused with grief. Not only is there a feeling of obligation. Take for instance somebody who has a poorly parent. Now, you've got a situation there where somebody's life might be having to change to look after this poorly parent. And there's a natural feeling of not wanting to do it, a feeling that, why don't they die quickly and get on with it while they destroy my life and all that. And there's a feeling of compulsiveness, of having to do it.

Now, that means that we're feeling a duty being imposed upon us. Now, whenever a duty is imposed upon us, we're always trying to shrug it off. We always feel it's unfair, it's unjust, and, why me, and all that. And that idea that the beauties that we have towards other people are an imposition by them upon us turns that compassionate act into something which is quite horrible for the person. They're chewed up inside. They don't want to do it really. And it comes out in little angers and not really taking care and moving them towards the window hoping they might jump. Things like that. Murder. All sorts of, I'm fed up. All I want is the money.

But as soon as you take on the duty as a personal responsibility, the whole thing changes completely. As

soon as you take it on as a personal responsibility, it becomes a source of training, it becomes a source of generosity, a source of compassion. And it's not anymore a source of personal happiness, a feeling that one's life is being destroyed, because if you take it on as your personal duty, you see it as your personal training. You're using it for your spiritual benefit.

And in that care, I'm thinking of somebody specific, really, who has to look after his mother, and himself is quite sick. And it's amazing. I've known him for years. I've never heard him complain. And he's been looking after his mother for years now. And he seems to just have that very natural generosity. Just, well, this is my mother, and I'll look after her. And there's no... I don't think, never heard him being bitter or backbiting or talking about the pain and all that. And he seems to be in himself quite happy with the whole situation. And that can only come about because he's taken on that task, that duty as something very personal to him.

So in all these virtues, if we see them as a path of training, then we understand that the negativity will arise, but just like, I mean, this is what the vipassanā is for, it makes us more globally aware of what's happening within us. So when we practice a virtue and we can see the negativity come up, then we're not hijacked by it, we actually see it. Even if it's there, and even if it's putting a certain nasty feeling into the equation, the point is, we can distance from it, know it's there, and not act according to those suggestions, to those negative suggestions. And then we put the positive suggestion in our mind and we act from that. And at first it feels difficult, at first it feels hard. But eventually, as it were, the heart's being reconditioned.

Now, here, when we were talking yesterday about the will, you can see that the will is something separate from emotions, is something separate from thoughts. The will is something which empowers, and the practice is leading us to a point of wisdom.

So every time a situation comes up which we are uncomfortable with, that we don't want, that we're fighting against, struggling against, you have to be quite clear to yourself that that's the negativity coming from some sort of delusive thought, from some sort of misunderstanding. And it's allowing that misunderstanding and allowing the emotions that that misunderstanding is producing to come up into consciousness and for them to be recognized. As soon as you did that, you're doing vipassanā. You've separated out. You see it as some negative conditioning within us.

And then sometimes one has to wait for that to dissolve a little bit. But even so, even if it's there in a very strong way, you can always bring the right intention to mind and you do it with right intention. Even though within yourself you might feel horrible. This is the point. In yourself you might feel down, you might feel depressed, etc., etc. But there's this intention which you empower and you keep working that way.

Now, with the action, with the good intention and with the action, it's bound to begin to develop the right attitude. The right attitude has always been there, it's just begun to develop. And when you have right attitude, in time, it has a systemic effect, so the heart begins to respond. And all those negative feelings

that we have begin to dissolve and this more positive feeling begins to arise.

I mean, I'll just give you a personal example. I've never, until maybe five or six years ago, ever wanted to teach. I don't know what I'm doing here. It was the most... I remember when I was sitting on a beach in Alicante, down in Spain somewhere, with a bottle of sangria. And I went down to the post office to get this telegram from my father, who said, you know, you've got your BA and your teacher's certificate, and he said, congratulations. And I went and sat on this rock overlooking the sea, the Mediterranean, isn't it? And I remember distinctly saying, there is no way I want to teach. That was it. And I didn't for about two or three years.

But then, of course, you need money. And when I came back to Britain, and I realized that I didn't want to go back east again, and that I wanted to stay here, I also realized that there's no way I can exist in a country which doesn't have an infrastructure to support the monastic life, unless you've got ethnic groups supporting you, like the Thais or the Burmese or something, which I didn't have. There's no way you can exist as a monastic unless you give something to lay people. They won't give you money. Westerners don't give you money for nothing.

So I realized that I had to teach. I felt it was a bit of a... It was a necessary contract. And I took on what's known as the Dhammadutta, which is the duty of teaching the Dhamma. So in this country, you'll hear certain monks, or you'll hear in the conversation, especially amongst Sri Lankans, that they're a Dhammadutta monk, which means that they're missionaries. That's what it is — mission. Come to a foreign land to convert the heathen.

So I made that decision. But even so, there was a long, long time I just felt this negativity, which I only shared with close students, that this was something that was really against the grain because I didn't want to do it. And then, of course, that negativity builds up, and you think, well, what's happening here? I've got to look at this.

And so this was 98, between 98 and 99. And I went to Upandita's center. It's named after him, of course, Upandita Rama. And when I was there, I came across, I'm sure you've all heard of that book, A Course in Miracles. And I came across a little book. It's really strange because I was struggling with this business of teaching. I mean, the alternative was to basically return to the East and return to my little hut, which tended to gain a certain glow after my hut. What happened to my hut?

And I came across this little book, which is one of these serendipity things, which you can't really explain. And here I am wondering about what to do. And this little book was a collection out of the Course in Miracles on teaching and the purpose of teaching and that. Now, I can't remember it, but by the end of that book, I was convinced that this was actually a good path to be on. So I have the Course in Miracles to thank.

And then once that attitude changed, the negativity didn't go. See, the negativity is still there. And even

now, occasionally, I'll get this, God, I don't want to go in there and give a talk.

I want to sit in there and go, tea. See? But it's no longer that awful mental state that was coming up for about a year when I just felt I was wasting time. I mean, that's what comes, you see. My inclination is to be a recluse. So I'm wasting time. I mean, that's the big thing, you see. I should be in there, you know, knocking my head against the wall. I shouldn't be out here teaching.

So that sort of negativity, even though it comes up occasionally, it actually is just a dying conditioning, you might say. And the more I gave myself to the teaching, especially when I went to Gaia House, the more I gave to it, the more, to my surprise, there came this lovely feeling of joy. I didn't say to myself, right, I've got to feel joy when I go in there. I didn't. And the more I began to give talks, the more they became sort of spontaneous in the sense that even now I've not prepared it. You just come in and you speak and hope for the best. And that's it. Just make sure I haven't got any bricks.

So it was that sort of passage. Now, I think if you look in your own lives, I'm sure you'll find something which gets you down or whatever and it's a case of looking at that and accepting the motivation there, looking at that motivation and seeing what is it you're doing to make a job which previously you might have been happy with suddenly miserable. What is it you're doing to make something which you can see quite clearly could be very beautiful, could be a real growth area for you, something that you see as a sort of hell realm.

A lot of people do that with their jobs. At first they walk in and they're sort of pretty excited by it, most times. And they're looking forward to it and then they get into it and they like it. A few months down the line, a couple of years down the line, it's, I've got to get out of here. It takes on a board and it takes on all those sorts of things. And it's interesting because even in the most menial tasks, there's spiritual training. Even in something so repetitive of being on a production line can be a process whereby you grow in concentration just by putting your mind on exactly the same action.

I mean, what are we doing here? We do walking meditation. It's exactly the same thing. We're lifting, moving, lowering, placing, up and down, up and down. We do it for 40 minutes, an hour, four or five times a day. By the end of the week, you've walked hours going up and down. But you've never thought to yourself, well, this is really boring. I should be paid more for this. This is ridiculous. I'm being abused. I have to write a nasty letter to Bodhidhamma.

So it's even in something so repetitive or so menial, which we all do at some point just in our household chores, just cleaning the toilet. I mean, that's considered a menial task. But to actually bring a joy to it, to actually see it as purposeful, to actually see that it's something that you can develop a certain care, cleaning the toilet bowl, we can do it with care and attention. You know what I mean?

And it's these, like you walk into these public toilets, you see, and there's either a man or a woman sitting there, and sometimes I go and I think, I wonder what sort of life it is down here in the Jakes, living in this

subterranean world with the smell of urine. And I think, God, this must be a hell realm. And some of them do give you that impression. I mean, they really are, they don't want to know.

But the other day I was in some station or other, and there was a woman at the main kiosk. And she was having the time of her life. She was having a chat with people and drawing their attention and shouting out about toilet paper and all sorts of stuff. And she was okay. You could feel she was okay. And everybody was okay with it. It was a completely different sort of toilet I've ever been in.

So it's like as soon as you see every situation you're in as something to train in, then that sort of joy arises. And with the joy comes the spontaneity. So you've got these two lines. You've got both the trying to undermine old attitudes, bringing up a good reason for doing things. And by doing that, the heart responds. It's just as simple as that. And we may surprise ourselves occasionally by doing something quite spontaneously, which on reflection we realize has actually come from pure wisdom, that we've actually done it out of that really good heart, one way or the other.

So if we just look at one or two of these, well, I've not got much time now. One or two of these, that trilogy is interesting. Well, take, I mean, the ten perfections are, we haven't got time to go through them all, is giving and morality, which morality is good conduct, slightly better. Renunciation, wisdom itself, energy, patience, truthfulness, resolution, loving-kindness, and equanimity. But just to take patience, for instance.

Patience, that patient forbearance, that feels like an imposition, with a naughty child or with somebody who's messing you about, or that great nuisance, the thumping bass beat through the wall while he's trying to sit there, trying to do some reading or meditating, murderous thoughts arise. And that patience, that ability to bear with the uncomfortable, to bear with that which one does not want.

Now, normally speaking, when something arises that we don't want, you get that negativity, you get the aversion, you get the anger. But to be able to allow that to come, it's always the same process. You allow that negativity to arise. If you push it away, if you bat it away, then it just remains there as a conditioning. And the power of your suppression is in a sense like pushing a spring down. And that's how these rages happen, you see. People don't realize how much anger they've built up in themselves. And then suddenly they do something which is quite awful.

So one actually feels that negativity, you see. And then you have to recognize it. You have to label it as unwholesome. And then, as it were, you change your attitude. And the great phrase for patience is, this is the way it is. As soon as you say, this is the way it should not be, you're into conflict. This is how it... It shouldn't be like this.

Did you ever see that film, Unforgiven? Clint Eastwood. Classic sort of silly western. And at the end, of course, he shoots everybody. And everybody's dead. And there's, I can't remember the name of the actor. He's very, very good. But his dying words are, this shouldn't have happened. This shouldn't have happened. I mean, that's it, isn't it? That's where we are. It shouldn't be like this. It should be other. Why

am I suffering this? All that sort of stuff.

But as soon as you start using the phrase, start grounding yourself in the present moment as it really is, this is the way it is, then the patience comes as a sort of acceptance, an acceptance of this is the way it is. Now, when we do that, we sometimes get confused. We think, oh, well, that's some form of resignation. But the distinction between these two is that when somebody resigns themselves to something in that sort of bad sense, they disempower themselves. This is it, I can't do anything, I'm miserable, and that's the way life is, it's horrible, and whinge, and all that sort of stuff. And that, of course, is really harmful spiritually, because at that point, you're conquered, you're destroyed by what it is you've resigned to.

But acceptance is a completely different attitude. Acceptance is that beginning with the ground of, this is the way it is, and then with that sort of patience, with that ability to accept the way it is, then there arises what can be done. See? When one sees a situation, there's always something can be done. I mean, if it's music, you can always go for a walk. Or buy a gun or something. Yeah. There's always something can be done to alleviate it. Earplugs. That's an alleviation.

There was a lovely... I used to know this fellow. I wonder how he is now. I often wonder about him. He was a big man. Strong, toughy. I mean, when you saw him, you didn't want to say the wrong word. And he was the head of the Communist Party. This was before it disbanded. This is going back a while. And he was with his partner, and they had a room right at the top of the house, or the flat at the top of the house.

And these students came in, or I'm not sure who the students, young kids came in next door, and started playing rock music, the practicing, drums and everything, 12 o'clock at night. Okay, so he goes down, knocks on the door, and they come, and he says, knock, noise, this time of night. They say, yeah, all right, all right. And they stop, you see. Either next night or a couple of nights on. So down he goes again, knocks on the door. The guy comes out and says, a bit more angry. And they say, okay, okay, we'll stop, we'll stop. So they stop.

So the third time, there's music, he goes down, goes out the door, and he just went, whop, right on his nose. That was it, end of music. Sometimes a hard lesson is needed. And I used to just laugh when I heard of that. He was a lovely man, you see. He was very patient. He'd been woken up. He has to get his clothes on. He has to go down, knock on the door. Can you please stop? He goes down a second time, third time. Enough. Clunk. And that's the end of that. And they don't play music again. It's like... Now, I'm not suggesting.

But it's that ability to accept the way things are, wherever we are, especially, of course, those times when we feel uncomfortable or in a situation which we find hard to bear. Just accepting it. It's like you're accepting the load. Instead of trying to shrug it off, it's like carrying a haversack or a rucksack. If you're carrying a rucksack and you don't want it in your back, it really is painful. But if you accept that you need this rucksack in order to wander over the world, then you're quite happy having this huge weight on your back. You don't complain about it. You carry your house, your washing machine, they're all on the back.

And you're quite happy carrying this huge weight. It's amazing when you think about it.

And campers, you see, they want to go camping. They don't mind carrying these huge weights on their back in order to go out and camp in the wilderness. But as soon as somebody says to you, would you carry this for me? You say, oh, yeah. And they go, ooh. So it's that lovely way that we can train ourselves this is the point about our spiritual life we can actually train ourselves to be like this so this is the way it is and the anger goes as soon as you accept the situation as it is and then always at least to my amazement there's always a way of dealing with the situation there's always a way of alleviating the situation in some way or other.

And it's just through that practice of patience that, in a sense, it just becomes part and parcel. Now, I've been here now for three years, and I haven't run a centre before. I mean, this is a new experience for me, running a centre. And thank goodness it's small. And people do things which get up my nose. If people come here and they do things, I think, what the hell are they... They go, I just want to pick the flowers. Pick the flowers. Put them up there. It's very nice. But like, it's always, and you get people putting carpets. You have a carpet, they come back and it's put over here. Like, why? Why are they doing that? They've come to change me.

So, and it's been, and having to work with managers, you can't use it. And you just get, and after a while, you see these irritations, you see these irritations, and you keep saying to yourself, what am I getting, why am I getting irritated? This is really silly. I mean, to actually have these little Bernie things going on in me, for what? And actually silly things anyway.

And slowly, because you see, one of the dangers of living as a recluse or living by yourself in a hut or living by yourself in society, living in your own flat, is that you forget how to live with people. It's like, I mean, I was brought up with brothers and sisters, so we always shared a bedroom. These days kids have a room of their own. Sharing is like a pain, it becomes a war.

And just to be able to allow these irritations to actually see them for what they are, just silly places where the mind grabs, places where the mind is *upādāna*, is grasping, you see. And then you just recognize this is not doing you any good, it's just absolutely silly. And you begin to relax, you begin to relax. And you never approach the person in that state of anger, because if you approach that state of anger, for sure, you express it in some way. It might be just the trembling of your hands as you're talking, but something will leak out. And in that way, unwittingly, you're engineering this anger. So you have to sit with it, wait, wait, wait.

And I found, for instance, at the beginning, it would take three days for these little angers to disappear. It would take them for three days. I'd be sat here thinking, this is ridiculous. And very slowly, just by accepting this is the way it is, it's quite surprising how quickly those old habits begin to be disempowered and just a more natural ability just to be with the way it is, to be with people as they are.

I mean, I'm very lucky here because most people come here with good intent. It's not as though they ripped the flowers up to ruin the garden. I mean, I'm surrounded by people with good intents. I mean, that makes it much easier. But at work, you might find yourself with people who have their knives out for you. I'm thinking of one person who was terribly bullied. And in those sorts of situations, yes, you accept the way things are. This is the way it is, but you definitely don't allow that to go on. You find ways of undermining that sort of really bad behavior. But if you don't accept the situation as it is, then either you're deluding yourself, such as, this person really isn't bullying me, and this is the way it ought to be, or you're just getting yourself into huge fits of anger, frustration, and a final sort of giving in to the situation, of a sort of resignation. And that's really bad spiritually. Really bad spiritually. Both ways are bad spiritually.

So, slowly, through this process of seeing where anger arises, see, that's your sign of impatience. That's the sign there's no patience. Wherever anger or irritation arises, you can say, this is the lack of patience, right? And you're holding on to something, right? If you have children and they do something which makes you angry, then you're holding on to something. There's no need for the anger. Even with children, there's no actual need for the anger. You might manifest anger to get your own way. But to actually feel it in your heart is not actually necessary.

That's something we are putting into the situation by saying, this is not the way it should be. This should be other. I'm not accepting the situation completely as it is.

And with that patience, there always comes a natural wisdom. It arises naturally. You don't have to work at it. And I think the more you find yourself becoming patient, the more this wise response to situations arises spontaneously, arises without having to work at it so much.

And you can take all the other virtues. Giving, you see, giving... Our moral life. You find yourself over-exaggerating in your speech. It's a form of wrong speech. It's a form of not speaking the truth. And just by recognising that, you accept it, you see, and you come back and you correct yourself. You're slightly more clear. You're slightly more careful about what you say.

Renunciation, you see? Renunciation is, if you're doing it as a sort of self-hate thing, or for any other reason apart from seeing where your attachment is, there's probably some wrong intention there. The whole point of renunciation is to see the attachment. So if you decide to have a look at your eating habits and you decide to fast or to do without a meal, you're doing it in order to see the habit. You're not doing it for any other reason. If you do it for some other reason, then maybe some aversion come into it. Maybe some trying to control come into it.

But remember, if you try to control habits, you're into a battle with them. What we're learning here is to allow the feelings to arise, but then always make sure they're not translated into an action, an action of thought, word or deed. But if you're in the habit of controlling it, which means you're pushing away, you're trying to hold it, there's always some negativity there. And that isn't right renunciation.

Energy, you see. Here we're learning how to be calm. There's no need to get over-energetic in things, to put your energy in things which sort of pump up the energy. What we're learning here is that if you do things calmly, the energy necessary for a particular task arises naturally. You don't have to go over the top with it.

And then there's patience. We've had truthfulness, which we've talked a little bit about, especially in terms of exaggeration. Resolution, you see. Every day we have that moment after chanting to make a resolution. If it's done with a good heart, if it's done with real resolve, you'd be surprised. It does work its way through. It does actually come through. Eventually.

Of course, every time, if you're resolving not to do something because it's negative, every time that negativity comes up, you have to bring that resolution to mind. Even if you indulge. So you say to yourself, I will not drink any more coffee. And you're walking down the street and Costa Coffee grabs your nose. And you think, ah, and then you hear yourself, I will not drink, and hmm, and then you go, and you're drinking coffee. Then you say to yourself, okay. I drank coffee. And you drink your coffee and you say, then you make a resolution. Next time, no. And eventually, to your surprise, Costa Coffee will come. Grab your nose, but the body will keep moving past. It won't have that huge effect on you.

Loving kindness, you see? They translate *mettā* as loving kindness, which is all right, it's more the heart side, but it's goodwill. It's that goodwill, and just having that as a basic attitude to all beings, wishing them well. And in the morning just to practise that after your *vipassanā*.

So remember the *vipassanā* has to be brought into an attitude. *Vipassanā* is about understanding and wisdom. You have to translate it into an attitude. And that's why the *mettā* practice after *vipassanā* as a daily practice is absolutely necessary. Otherwise you can become too detached, too disinterested. And that's what draws you back into relationships. So make sure that you always do a little, even if it's only a few lines, just to bring you into an attitude.

And then as you get up, you take with you into your daily life the wisdom and the loving kindness that you've just been practising. It's a substrate.

And then finally, equanimity. And I think I've said before, this is the greatest of all virtues because it subsists them all. It keeps them all balanced, that equanimity. So that we can practise. And we lose equanimity when we get too excited. Every time we fall into an unwholesome state, we've lost equanimity, basically. Equanimity is that calmness of the heart, steadiness of attention and coming from the place of wisdom. That's what brings about equanimity.

So there we have it. We find ourselves doing things impulsively, things that we often sometimes regret, things that make us feel embarrassed afterwards. And what we have to do is recognise that, and then we make that resolution. And we remind ourselves, and then come the next time, hopefully we've got that clear, calm awareness, carrying all day long this sort of just relaxing into the present moment, and we see

that old impulse come, and we've got just that enough space to say no, in the sense of not doing it, and then to allow that impulse to arise and to slowly pass away, and then for the right intention to arrive.

And then very slowly you get this movement. And we can surprise ourselves every so often with a spontaneous act which is coming from the heart of wisdom.

So I can only hope, my words have been of some assistance, that your life will become fully happy and spontaneous, leading you towards final liberation, sooner rather than later.

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