Practice in Ordinary Daily Life

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 1:09:15

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sama Sambuddhasa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sama Sambuddhasa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sama Sambuddhasa — Homage to the Buddha, the Blessed, Noble and Fully Self-Awakened One.

What I'm hoping to do is to explain the Buddha's model as to how the heart heals itself. When I say heart, when I use heart during this talk, I'm simply talking about your emotional life — your moods and emotions both the pleasant and the unpleasant.

This is an area where you'll find that Buddhist practice and modern psychotherapy meet, and I don't see a problem with that. But what sometimes seems to happen is that I get a feeling from some books I read that the Buddha didn't actually tackle this problem of our emotional imbalances. So I just wanted to make it as plain as I can this evening how we create the problems and how we undo them.

The fundamental problem lies with identity — as to who we are. Unsurprisingly, we think of ourselves as human beings. Unfortunately, having thought of ourselves as human beings on this particular planet and all that, our deepest desire to seek happiness, to be at peace, is sought within the world. And by making our happinesses and our joys dependent upon the world, it means that when the world forsakes us then we have all the downside of that particular commitment.

For instance, if I am attached to my morning cup of tea and I wake up one morning and there is no tea, this is potentially a disaster — one feels dreadful. That dreadfulness is caused because of that conditioning within me which creates morning happiness dependent on English breakfast tea.

At a more solid level of suffering, if my happiness is dependent on my job, on what I do, if I find myself identifying with that, when I lose my job, then I go through an identity crisis. I don't know who I am in society because that's how I've defined myself.

At an even deeper level, there's our relationship to other people, especially those close to us. And when they let us down, either because they leave us or they die, then I'm stuck with this dreadful pain in the heart, this grief, which I mistakenly think is actually the measure of my love, but actually is a measure of my attachment to that person. Because one good thing about love is that it can let go. It can allow the person to do what they want to do. But the grief we feel with the loss is a measure of how much we are dependent on that person for my personal happiness.

And the worst time comes when it's time for me to die. Because then, however I've defined myself looks pretty unsteady. And that's why death comes to us as a great shock. Because death is saying, whoever you

thought you are, you're not. If you've defined yourself by your body — I am this body — then for sure we're in for a shock. If you define yourself as, I am this person, I do these things in society, I have these relationships, all this 'I' and how we relate to the 'I', what death does is it undermines all those particular self-definitions and dependencies.

So you can see that somewhere deep within our psyche there's a mistake happening. And it's through this mistake that we form this relationship to the world we live in. And it's not just identity, it's also possession. So we form a certain safety, a safety net around us by possessing things, possessing money. We feel much safer if there's a hundred thousand pounds in the bank and not ten. So all that psychology around possession, around identity, is a cause of suffering for us. Because when we lose it, we feel grief. When we can't get it, we feel frustrated. And we're constantly afraid we might lose it. So there's always this underlying anxiety around those things that we're dependent on for our particular happinesses. Hence, the huge insurance industry.

From that position, we formulate a dual relationship to the world. We either want something or we don't want it. It's extraordinarily simple. If I like something, if I enjoy something, I try to hold on to it. I try to keep it. I try to develop it. If I don't like it, I try to get rid of it. If I don't like somebody, I try to take out a contract on that person and just get rid of them, thinking that in so doing, I should make myself happier. It might be a relief, but unfortunately it doesn't tackle the fundamental problem.

So this is the core of our problem. It's one to do with the question, who am I? And the essential purpose of insight meditation is really to solve that particular question. But you can see that from these wrong relationships we formulate, we've begun to develop a whole emotional life, a whole attitudinal life which is creating this inner atmosphere that I feel that often I have to suffer.

What it's done is it's created habitual patterns within the psyche. For those of you who know the words, these are what's referred to as your *saṅkhāra*. They're things that are put together. They're accumulations. Well, that's not quite the right word. They are inclinations towards a certain type of behavior. So, if one is in the habit of nipping into Costa coffee for an Americano, and you do it two or three times, it's very difficult to pass Costa coffee without slipping into your Americano. What is it that generates that compulsive behavior? And it is what we call these patterns, these habits.

I personally like them to these programs on a computer. If you look at your computer, where do these programs exist? But you press a button and something appears on the screen. Something takes something out of potential and just manufactures it. It's an electrical mechanical habit that if you press this button, the word program appears. Isn't that similar to us? We have these buttons, and if they're pressed, we behave in a certain way. And this behavior in a certain way manifests the strength of that habit. And often our response to things tends to be inappropriate.

Now, here's a really crucial point that the Buddha points to in our psychology. Whatever we experience, whether it's the seeing or the hearing, whatever is done to us by somebody else, whether it's something

beautiful or something not so beautiful, what I feel, what I experience as my response or reaction to that is not caused by the object. The happiness that I feel when I enter Costa Coffee for an Americano is not caused by the Americano coffee. All the Americano coffee can do is put a nice taste on my tongue. That's the contact I have with an Americano. That's all. The rest is completely manufactured from within my own psyche.

All the perception of coffee, all the comparison as to whether this coffee is better than Nero's coffee, the whole mentation is all to do with me inside myself and has nothing to do with the coffee that's been poured or the original coffee beans that were picked. The coffee beans do not cause my mental state. And my seeking happiness in coffee has produced in me a reaction, a learnt reaction to coffee. That whenever I smell coffee or taste coffee, happiness immediately arises. And I think that the coffee is making me happy. But it's not. It's my attitude to the coffee that has created this happiness.

If it were not so, if it were that the outside world were creating my mental states, in terms of the process of liberation I would find myself in an impossible condition. Because in order to make myself happy, this coffee has to be exactly the sort of coffee that I need to make myself happy because this coffee is making me happy. If this person makes me sad, the only way I can get rid of my sadness or my anger is to get rid of this person. That's very simple. But if all my mentation, if all my emotional life, if all my thoughts are self-caused, then I should be able to undo those processes within me which are unwholesome and continue to develop those processes in me which are wholesome. And there are wholesome processes to be developed. Love, compassion, joy, all the beautiful states that we can develop as human beings.

So now, if I perceive that there's something in me, an attitude, a misunderstanding — well I should say a misunderstanding which creates an attitude, which formulates a relationship, which formulates certain habits, is all conditioned on something that is happening within me — then how am I going to undo the processes within me which I see as being unwholesome, painful, and to develop those processes in me which I see as actually beneficial and beautiful.

Here, the Buddha's teaching is again very clear to talk about the practice of *vipassanā*. *Vipassanā* simply means insight or just the ability to find a position within ourselves where we can begin to see these misunderstandings and how they're working and what the trigger is that is actually causing the problem.

In the process, we turn inwards. There's an introspection. But it's not just the looking. It's a direct contact with what we're actually feeling. It's a direct experience of our emotional life. I'm only here talking about emotions. I'm not talking about the body with pain or anything like that. I'm just talking about the emotional life. And as I sit quietly with myself and an emotion arises or a mood arises or a mental state we can call it, say something has happened during the day and I'm feeling irritated and I'm sitting with this irritation — what do I notice happens? Suddenly I find myself in an argument with this person, creating an inner scenario where I'm finally getting my own back. This little scenario.

When I wake up from that I acknowledge — so this is the practice of *vipassanā*. I acknowledge that there is

anger. I'm not at all concerned with the narrative because the narrative is only a metaphor for the actual presenting emotion. The emotion is looking for some way of indulging itself and it's just stuck here as a volition, a wanting to be angry. It's got an energy in it that wants to go out and grab an object and murder it. So there's your anger. And because you're sitting still and the person whom you're angry with is not there, it wants to create a scenario where it can be fulfilling its particular wishes. And it does this through thought.

Something has happened psychologically to move that emotional state into a thought pattern. Something's happened there. And it happens so quickly that we don't actually see what that process is. So the Buddha is very clear. First of all, there arises a consciousness, a knowing, which contacts that emotional state. It's the bare consciousness. And it feels that consciousness as it knows that consciousness as a feeling. And it perceives it at the same time. All this is happening in microseconds. And it also determines whether it's likable or unlikable.

Now, funnily enough, we've trained ourselves to see anger as something quite likable. Think about it. Because when you express your anger, there's a feeling of relief. So this anger now is grasped hold of as a desire to fulfill the desire of the anger, the desire within the anger itself, which is to express itself. And that desire then becomes identified. We identify with that desire so it becomes 'I want.' And as soon as that happens, there's another moment where we put energy into it. And that's the will. And as soon as we energize that process, we're into a whole set of thinking. That's what's happened. And you can, if you're quick enough and you're still enough, sit there and watch the beginning of that process.

In the vipassanā, what we realize is that when I'm sitting still and just feeling the anger objectively, but feeling it, there's no suffering. When I'm aware of the wanting to indulge the anger, there's no suffering. As soon as I identify with it, suffering arises. There's a magical moment where the awareness, the mindfulness, consciousness — for a better word, I prefer the word knowing — loses itself in the process of becoming angry. And at that point, where we put the energy into that process of mentation, we're becoming. This is what the Buddha means by becoming. Moment to moment, we recreate the sense of self. And unwittingly, every time we do that, we empower that particular habit, that particular condition. So we get more and more. There's more and more potential for anger.

Now, you'll all have experienced, I'm sure, sometime in the morning, somebody saying to you something which has slightly upset you. Nothing much. Didn't like it. And then you've put it to the side. You're not going to be bothered by it. That's the way they are. And then you go and have a cup of tea. And the mind works on it while you're eating lunch. By the time you get home, it's raging. You have to take an aspirin. This person only insulted you once, but you've repeated it. We've repeated it to ourselves a thousand times so that the original little bit of being miffed becomes this huge raging anger, which can only now be revenged by some heinous crime. All that process was never even originally caused by the person who spoke those cold words to us. Even the original reaction of being miffed was self-caused. And we've created this whole world of burning anger all within ourselves and mistakenly determined that they're

the problem.

The whole of the Buddhist psychology brings us back into the realization that it is me that's creating my world. Even as we walked into this church, this hall, it's not a denial that the hall exists when we're not here. There is a reality of this hall at a certain level. But all of us would have had a different experience of this hall. We're all living in a different hall, actually, even from what we can see. I'm completely — I'm living in a very different hall from you people, I can assure you. I can see the organ for a start. So everything that I experience is being manufactured by my own psyche. I like the word psyche because for me it joins the whole mental process of emotions and thoughts, which actually work together. It's us that split the two. The one is always firing off the other.

Now, here's the magic of the Buddha's teaching. Having developed a certain conditioning — we'll stick with anger — having developed a certain conditioning of anger, how are we going to get rid of it? Having now developed it to such a delicate degree, how do we now undo this process? If we try and undo it, we find ourselves in contradiction with the given state. We're trying to get rid of anger. Have you ever tried to do that? What you end up doing is pushing it away. What you end up doing is suppressing it and worse, you end up repressing it because no energy can get rid of this turbulence. All you do is you put bad energy into bad energy because you don't want that.

What we discover is by allowing the anger to manifest, it cures itself. It blows itself out. Now when I say allow the anger to manifest, I'm not talking about allowing it to form thought patterns. We've already understood that to be a way in which it indulges and grows. What I'm saying is, what the Buddha says is, sit with it, feel it, allow it to manifest. And — this is the tricky bit — see how you're relating to this anger, to this feeling. Does fear arise? You observe the fear. Do you think it's going to overtake you? You observe that fear. Are you averse to it? Is there some judgmental thing going on? 'I shouldn't be feeling angry. I'm a bad person because I feel angry.' You observe that. That's also another conditioning. Is there a desire to enter into the anger and to develop it? You notice that. But all the time you're centering on the feeling that's arising in the body from this conditioning of anger.

Now, you're neither suppressing it, you're not repressing it, and you're not developing it. So what can this energy do? It can only exhaust itself. And that's how the heart heals itself. You don't actually have to do anything. Once you've understood that process, that's where your attention goes — just to being with the presenting state. Whether it's anger, depression, anxiety, despair, guilt, shame, the whole gamut of human misery. All you need to do is attend to it. And you can even flavor the attending with kindness, so that you're allowing it to come up and blow away.

Now, when it comes to those things that we enjoy, all the indulgences of life, perhaps we have a problem with overeating, it's the same thing. When you sit with those particular desires, you find that they're not actually so pleasant. They're only pleasant when they're being gratified. To be in a state of thirst is not pleasant.

It's only pleasant because we know when we drink the Coca-Cola, I'm going to feel great. So to sit with those desires that we see are over the top and to allow them also to express themselves is to take away that conditioning. And what is that conditioning based on? It's based on this fundamental misunderstanding that happiness is to be found in the sensual world.

So now, if we cannot find happiness, and if we can undo all the unwholesome conditionings that we've got, what is it that we're actually moving towards? What's the process of insight meditation or Buddhist practice? You don't have to do it sitting, it's just an attitude, it's a way of living. Where's it actually taking us?

What we find is that by accessing this position of the observer, we are constantly relocating ourselves to a different centre. When we are a body consciousness, when we think we are the body, then it's very difficult to find any objectivity to the greed and the desires of the body. How do you experience yourself as a body self? Well, I mean, as very young children, I think that's what we are, up to about the age of three or something, I don't know. But when you trap your finger in a door, for that one moment, you are a body. All you are is that searing pain. There's no objectivity, one becomes the pain. That's a wonderful example of being the body.

When you're now finding this position of observing the body, feeling the sensations of the body, you've relocated out of the body. You're not the body because it's an object. You can't—the object and the subject can't be the same. You're feeling the body as an object, the sensations.

Keeping more to our emotional state: when do we become emotions? When are we our emotions? When we lose ourselves. When you go into a rage. When you say to yourself, "I am depressed" and you're completely lost in it. When you're anxious and you panic and you run around panicked. Then you become an emotional self. There's no distinction between the self and the mental state it finds itself in. But through this process, one relocates to a different position of the observer, the feeler, the one who knows, the experiencer.

And it's the same with thought, except that thought and images are even quicker than both the body with its sensations and the heart with its emotions. And so it's even harder to actually be objective about thought. But at least when we come out of thought, we can see where it is that we've been caught, that what it is we've been caught up in. And by doing so, we relocate to a different position. This relocation is the observer.

And especially in meditation, but also in daily life, just sitting in a park and just watching, finding yourself in that position, you see, is a point where you discover that there's no suffering. Now, this isn't the final point, because obviously there's still a sense of self. If there's a sense of self, you see, then there must be something that knows the self. Right? So even that can't be the final position.

How do we experience, you might say, nirvanic or perfectly happy moments in our daily life? If you put a

good intention in your mind to do something and you give yourself to the action, it may be that at first you're aware of yourself doing something and then suddenly there's a loss of that self-awareness. You might have experienced it doing the garden or a job that you're really interested in. But you have to be careful because every time you lose yourself in something, if the intention is not pure, then it'll be developing these other types of habits which causes problems. But if the intention is pure, it'll be developing a habit which is supporting our liberation. Liberation from what? Liberation from suffering. That's all the Buddha's teaching.

And when we enter into those states where we lose a sense of self, when we come out, we also recognize that we've lost a sense of time. Time and self arise together. And we also notice when we reflect on that moment, that in the moment where there was no self and no time, we were perfectly happy.

So even in daily life, even in ordinary daily life, we can begin to move towards those places which we know are going to develop this inner sense of peace and happiness, which is not dependent on the outside world. Not dependent on another person. And that, you could say, is the process of liberation. Liberation from the fetter, from the shackles of belief that the world can produce pure happiness.

Now, having said that, does that deny the pleasures and joys of life? Not at all. All it's saying is your relationship to them are of a different order. You neither want to possess them, nor do you identify with them. You simply enjoy them. And the distinction between enjoying something and indulging is extremely subtle and difficult to get. But in that distinction lies our happiness or lack of it.

And when it comes to those things that we find painful—when we can sit with patience with them and bear with them in a patient way, we find actually there's no suffering. So all this suffering, dissatisfaction, unsatisfactoriness, discomfort, all that stuff has never been caused by the world, by anybody else. It's all been caused within ourselves by a wrong understanding. And that wrong understanding is undermined through right practice and through the insights that we get by investigating ourselves through these processes of insight meditation.

And if we do this with a certain commitment, a certain diligence, then hopefully we should see some benefit and it's always possible that we may be fully liberated even in this lifetime. But I do not want to give you false hope. But at least we can over a period of time feel that there's a sense of deep meaningfulness about our existence. That's where the real joy lies. That we're not here for some peculiar reason. That there is a deep meaningfulness to our lives. And that our lives are becoming more at ease. More at ease. That we're more contented. We tend to want peace. We tend more to want what we get than always get what we want. And we find ourselves living in harmony with the way things are, even when the way things are are not particularly pleasant. But you work with them in such a way that they don't cause the old depressions and anxieties of the past. And these are the telltale signs that we're actually moving spiritually.

And the other great benefit of spiritual progress is the feeling, the growing feeling of connectedness with

other beings, with other people. And that manifests in our kindness and gentleness, in our easy forgiveness, in our compassion, in our sympathetic joy. And when you feel these things are growing within you, these are the signs to you that you're moving spiritually.

So with those words of hope, I can only hope that my words have been of some assistance. May you be fully liberated from all suffering sooner rather than later.

So if there's any questions, brickbats...

You're finding what one writer calls very happily an observation post within yourself. It's like a bird watcher. They find this place, a hide. They actually call it a hide, where you can just view the birds and you never interfere, you're just watching. By the end of it, you can write your bestseller.

So it's the same. As you find this position in yourself of that little hide of this observation point, which we feel, generally speaking, as the observer, the feeler, the knower, the witness, there's all sorts of words for it, then you begin to understand how your psyche is working. It's all birds. Everything.

And what you're trying to see is the connectedness of things and how the one arises dependent on something else. So you put something sweet on your tongue and your heart becomes happy. You put something sour on your tongue or something not tasty and you can feel a bit depressed. The mind comes up, the mind remembers something from the past and suddenly you feel sad, some nostalgia arising. The mind remembers, and you feel it in the body. You feel heavy or you feel whatever. You remember something from the past and it makes you laugh and your body reacts with lovely sensations.

Bless you.

Well, that's right. How many of you have actually done any insight practice? How many have not done insight practice of Vipassana? So you'll be coming tomorrow.

Metta practice is just developing the heart of goodwill. It's often translated as loving kindness, but that in a sense gives it a feel which is not necessary because you can practice goodwill when you feel horrible. You can still send out goodwill messages when you don't feel very well.

Sometimes if you're watching, so we say, suppose you're watching a cat. I've just been at a house where there's a cat. And at first you might just watch it in a sort of disinterested way, and then somehow you form a relationship with it, you're still watching it, you're still observing what it's doing, but there's a sort of kindness exuded towards the cat. So you're inside yourself and you're watching these feelings, perhaps a nasty one, say you feel a bit depressed, you feel it, but there's as it were within the looking, there's as it were in the contact, there's a feeling of embracing it, opening up to it, a certain kindness towards it. These things obviously become apparent with the practice. If you haven't done the practice, it's a bit abstract.

"You said towards the end that doing this suddenly your life has meaning."

Not suddenly. Never suddenly. Yes, it has meaning. Well, normally speaking, the meaning of our lives is dependent upon the life we're living. It depends on my relationships, on my job, on everything else, you see. When I begin to realize that these are very untrustworthy meaningful things, because they can disappear, I'm seeking for a deeper meaning as to why is it I'm here in the first place?

And what spiritual practice does is it takes you to that core purpose of your being here. And in Buddhist terms, it's the evolution of consciousness. It's the evolution of the knowing. Don't confuse that with the act of cognition, which is a mental thing. It's that deep knowing within us which is confused with the body, heart and mind complex. And the process of meditation is the process of extracting that from that confusion. And in so doing, it discovers its true nature.

And the Buddha refers to it, he tends to refer to it in a slightly negative way, as the unborn, the undying, the uncompounded, the unconditioned. Which means that it tells us what it's not. If we were to describe what it is, it puts a concept in our mind and we start searching for it. You see, a soul, see? And as soon as you start defining something, it's very difficult not to search for that thing that you've imagined. But whatever it is, it's beyond the concepts, because concepts are only to do with this particular level of being.

And you'll find that in all *vipassanā*, insight meditation, whether it's that to do with the Theravada school, or the Zen school, or the Tibetan school, all of them tell you to get rid of thinking. They all tell you. Zen puts it as no mind, which people think that you might be zonked out or something. But all they're saying is no thought. Why should they do that? Why is that so important? It's because that's what we are looking at the world through, we're experiencing the world through preconceived ideas.

When you see a tree, you immediately compare it with all the other trees that you've seen. Just the word "tree" conjures up ideas with which you look at a tree. I remember a teacher used to teach art to children. She would take them to a tree and get them to draw the tree, and of course they'd all be this stick with a lollipop on top. And then she would get them all to lie underneath the tree looking up and then draw the tree. And of course, just seeing it from a different perspective produced a much more realistic tree.

Our problem is to go beyond the world that we've constructed through our thoughts and continue to construct through our thoughts. Even at the basic simple experience of taste, you see. As soon as we put something, like if you're eating a pizza, you go and order a pizza, you've got an idea of what a pizza is. And when you get your pizza, it's either a pizza or it's not a pizza. It's just not a pizza. "This isn't a pizza."

But even those, remember the old, I don't know whether they, they don't seem to sell them anymore, but those old pizzas, they used to sell in plastic bags. Now, if you'd never had a pizza before and you tasted one of those, you'd have said, at the end of it, you see, and got into it, you'd say, "Well, that was a rather nice, chewy sort of bread with a hint of tomato. Very pleasant." Call it a pizza and it's a disaster.

So our big problem, this is the biggest problem we have, frankly, is to stop thinking, is to see the world without thought. And we do that by burying the attention in sensation and feeling. That's what we do.

That's how you do it. So what is an emotion before you give it a name? What is it? What is pain before you call it pain? That's a mental construct. There's no pain in the body. There's only sensation. Pain is a mental construct. You can prove this to yourself tomorrow.

Even people whom I deeply love are still objects of my mind. I can never know them in themselves. And they can never know me. All we can form is a pleasant relationship. A loving relationship. But I can never know you. You can never see the world as I see it. And I'll never see it the way you see it. In this way we live in parallel universes. So is there any wonder that we get angry with each other?

The Buddha himself reduced all his teachings to a very simple three-word formula in the original language of Pali. And it translates as, "I teach suffering, unsatisfactoriness, and the end of it." That's it. He was only concerned with that area of our lives where we're not happy. His whole psychology centres on that. It's not a developmental psychology. It's all about how do you attain perfect peace and happiness.

And we don't really get on to the spiritual path in Buddhist understanding until we realize that nobody can cause me psychological pain. This at first comes as a great disappointment because it's been very pleasant blaming others. But you cannot say to your partner, your spouse, to your friend, "You make me angry." You can't say that anymore. "You make me depressed, you bore me." Which is a disappointment.

Well, of course, you know, the way one overcomes that is through the rather painful process of forgiveness. Oh, that's not a problem. I mean, you're not supposed to purposefully enjoy suffering, for heaven's sake. Oh, no, absolutely not. No. And if you are putting up with it, then in a sense you've got to ask yourself, why am I putting up with this rubbish? What keeps me in this particular place?

There was an old program, member of, he's going back years now, and they interviewed this bag person. You know these people who carry bags of rubbish? I don't see them these days. Do you see them? It's gone, hasn't it? There was a little neurosis there, a social neurosis. You used to see them around stations and all that. Yeah, I remember them. Yeah, about, I don't know, twenty years ago? They'd be carrying bags of rubbish and bits of paper.

And they asked this lady, this woman, she was sitting there in a cafe. And wasn't mad, wasn't mad at all. They just asked her, "Why are you collecting all this stuff? Why are you carrying this stuff around?" And she said, "I was involved in the death of a child." It's her way of expressing her penitence, her guilt, and inability to forgive herself, which is probably the hardest thing of all to do anyway, to forgive yourself.

But all that harm, all that pain that we have received from others has not been the direct cause of the traumas within our system, or the pain within our system. That's why they can be expunged, either through certain therapeutic techniques or *vipassanā*. But the real thing about all this is forgiveness.

And when you hear somebody say, "I can't forgive," see, that's the child. That's the child who says, "I can't sleep because they want to watch the football." Of course you can forgive if you don't want to. You don't want to let them off. You want to punish them.

And they've done that in the States, haven't they? Where they thought that would be some sort of healing process, where they've allowed the family of the murdered person to watch the execution of the murderer. It's not been satisfactory at all. They didn't think it was painful enough. "Do it again." Because revenge, isn't it?

And there's beautiful stories. I've got a book of beautiful stories of forgiveness where all that pain goes. One of the most startling is of a mother whose son is murdered. And she visits the murderer in prison and continues to visit him. And when he's released, only a young man, she takes him in as her son. That's a bit of forgiveness, wasn't it?

And it's an interesting process if you really give yourself to it. You may actually see, you may actually experience the transformation of hatred and revenge into compassion for the person through a change of attitude within ourselves. You might actually experience that transformation.

She lost her father, Rajiv. Of course. There we are. How interesting.

Yes, one of the core teachings of the Buddha is the role of intention. Everything begins with your intention. An intention you can describe as a desire or a wish. It's a movement in the mind of wanting. If that's unwholesome, it's going to create an unwholesome conditioning. If it's wholesome, it'll create a wholesome conditioning. This is where your true *kamma* lies in Buddhist understanding.

What happens, you put an action out in the world, what comes to you from the world is being—you can't say that's your true *kamma* because it's been messed about with by all these other people in the world. What you get back may be inappropriate to your original action. For instance, you may go to a lottery and buy a pound worth and you win ten million. That's not your *kamma*. That happens to be part of the whole system of joining a lottery. And if you have an understanding, "Oh well, in my past life I must have given thousands and thousands of pounds away," you're just rationalising something which is a perfectly ordinary, you can put a straightforward rational argument to it.

On the other hand, you might do some good and the person hates you for it and continues to hate you for it. And that's it. That's their problem. Real *kamma*, in terms of the liberation of the heart, in terms of achieving this pure peace and happiness, is within ourselves.

So when we intend something, it's important to recognise, is this going to do me good or bad? And remember that when you pay attention, it's an act of intention. Every time you pass a billboard on the bus and you look at it, it goes in. It's conditioning you. Because you've made an intention to actually attend to it. So that's why your intention is the beginning of your conditioning.

So having recognised that this intention is a good intention, you then empower it and go into the action. As you go into the action you may be aware of yourself doing what you're doing, but as your concentration grows and your commitment grows, you lose yourself in the action. That is, you can call it a jhanic moment. Ask yourself when you finish that, ask yourself how was I in that moment? You'll see there's no

suffering. There was peace, there was happiness.

Now, if you go into a situation with indulgence, it's exactly the same. You go in there saying to yourself, "I'm going to really enjoy this film. I'm going to really enjoy it. This is the sort of film I want. A lot of violence and sex, great." So you go in and you lose yourself. Two hours. And you come out, no time, no sense of self. But unfortunately, there are consequences within the psyche. One is a loss of self into an indulgence which is going to create problems, and one is a loss of self into a non-indulgence which creates the beautiful mind.

So that's where it's like in anything like when you give something. Say you want to help somebody, so you're giving your time, or you want to make a donation to something, you're giving of your wealth. When you do something like that, just stop for a minute and get your attitude right. So I'm doing this for the benefit of somebody else. And then you get that benefit of renunciation. And what renunciation does is it loosens that possessiveness on things. It loosens it up. And when your thought is full of that, when your mind is full of that intention, that's when you start doing. Or that's when you give.

Now, is that the end of the problem? No, because as you're doing, these other thoughts can come in as well. But you know what they're there, because you're aware of them coming, and you keep re-establishing your right intention. And in that way you train yourself to keep on the straight and narrow.

When you're giving, and you give something, and you've done it with that mind full of the purpose that this is for the benefit of somebody else, you're actually giving it. As soon as you give it, you always get that little thought come up: "You are truly a very generous and wonderful person." But you turn on that. That's an afterthought. That did not affect my giving. Or it could be more negative: "Too much, get a bit back." Ah, you catch it there. "I caught you there, Mara." This is the evil one. And all the time, you're making the effort to make sure that your intentions are wholesome and good, and eventually, you surprise yourself with spontaneous actions of goodwill.

For which you may not be loved. So you're not dependent on whether somebody appreciates it or not. Then you get into fame and celebrity. Then you've really had it. Then you become the classic do-gooder. The do-gooder is someone who does you the good they want to do you. And you'd better like it.

Well, one of the big things that works for me is to keep saying "Stop." The biggest, one of my biggest tricks for myself is to keep saying the word "Stop." Just get in the habit every time you stop. Great, isn't it? It only lasts a bit, but at least in that moment there's been stop. Wonderful word.

So after you've answered the phone call, stop. When you're doing something here and you're involved in this, the phone goes. There's no need to launch yourself at the phone. I mean, most people will hang on for three rings. So you know you stop. You hear the bell. And then you put it down. Stop. Relax. Relax the shoulders. Stop. So you're constantly bringing yourself back into the present moment, into the presenting

moment. Very little, very simple trick.

And whenever you find yourself rushing, stop. If you're going to be late, fine, stop. It doesn't matter. If you lose your job, fine, stop. Relax. So the more we can get the habit of just stopping, that's the big trick.

I visited, some of you will know, Plum Village, you know, Thich Nhat Hanh's place. Do you know that place in France? Well, he has a little trick of—he has somebody who can ring the bell anytime in the whole monastery. So once he rings the bell, everybody stops. You have to stop walking, you have to stop, stop. And even, and he's put it down even to the phone bell. As soon as you hear the phone bell, you stop. No matter what you're doing, you're brushing your teeth, stop. And it's just a little practice of stopping. I think you'll find that, I find it really powerful.

And the other thing is, when you know that you're doing something which just carries you away, like the computer—you're on there for three hours, for heaven's sake. So, get yourself one of these watches with a timer on it. Just put a thirty-minute timer, and then really obey it. Like, stop. Stop. Cup of tea, when you have a cup of tea, when you have a break. So make that a little ritual, a little ceremony, right, where you stop and you make it a meaningful break.

Most times you make the cup of tea and mind's all over the place and then you put it down and you think, "Did I have that cup of tea or not?" Or you make it and it goes cold, you have to go to the—oh damn, what's that machine called? The microwave, stick it in again. You do that all day with the same cup of tea. So yes, it is, it's not our habit. We're always living in some future time. We're always moving towards the future.

And your own body language, to make sure your shoulders are always relaxed. And the jaws relaxed. Teeth are usually set apart, not clenched. If you relax your face, you can feel a smile come. All the dopamine starts pouring out. Nobody else can see the smile. You still look grim. Just there you can feel it. Just come to the natural relaxation of your face.

"But I suppose for most people that is already quite an advanced stage, you are already able to control yourself, you can stop. What if you were seriously addicted, like addiction to tobacco and alcohol, for instance, how many times would you stop?"

Ah, that's a different, yes, no, no. That's a slightly different type of stopping. I'm just talking about stopping what you're doing and being present. Stopping a heavy habit is hard work.

Well, if you have a... I mean, my father used to smoke heavily. And it was ruining his voice. He used to like singing in a choir. So he stopped himself. He stopped smoking by whenever he would normally have a cigarette, he'd go and take it out on the piano. I mean, that's a sort of skillful way of displacing your energy.

But I think you just have to be careful with an antidote that you're not actually suppressing the problem. That's all. You still have to be in contact with the feelings that are being presented. That's all. But there's

also times in our lives when it's inappropriate to express what we feel. We might be feeling a bit depressed in ourselves, but we meet a friend and you lift yourself over it, don't you? And be friendly and joyful. So you're putting it aside, as it were.

But I don't particularly like antidotes because they tend to suppress. Through certain practices like *metta*, the goodwill practice, you can build up a real charisma. A real person that everybody wants to hug. But it's just sitting on top of this pig's will. It's like icing on top of pig's will. It's not really dealing with this stuff. So there has to be some time when you can allow these more unwholesome turbulences to manifest.

"Well, that's another one. It's either it's producing a beautiful state of mind, which is good in itself, or you can observe the quality of impermanence in the breath, in which case it becomes an insightful practice."

"So that could be used as a situation where your mind is repressing that particular emotion, not suppressing it? You could be using it for that. Not wanting to feel something, so you put your attention on a physical action or..."

I mean, there are times when it's skillful to put to one side unwholesome states. Just put it to the side and say, "I'll deal with you later or another time."

"There's also this thing about watching sensations and the connectivity between thought processes and sensations. Would you like to say something about that?"

Well, bodily sensations are, they're perceived by the mind, they're perceived, and then some thought comes up around it. Just an ordinary thing like eating. Just watch your mind when you're eating something. It's always talking about it. Always saying something about it. It's forming a relationship. The mind forms a relationship with sensations. All we have to do is make sure that it's a wholesome relationship. That's all.

So when you eat, for instance, you eat to nourish the body. That's it. If it tastes nice, consider that to be a plus. It doesn't have to. Not if it's just to nourish the body.

Is it time for a cup of tea, is it? Thank you very much.

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