The Mahāsī Method

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 48:21

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.

So this evening I just want to revise a lot of what we've said about the skills, these skills of meditation, and see if any questions arise from it.

I think one thing, well the first important thing is to recognise what these techniques are. Often we think it's, we might make the mistake of thinking that it's the technique which is creating the insight. You might say if you get the technique perfectly right, insight is bound to arise. But if you look at other areas such as sports, tennis, things like that, or instrument playing, you know these musicians and sports people spend hours practising the backhand over and over again or going up and down the scales. But then when it comes to actually playing the game, playing the instrument, it's a different situation, isn't it? Because if they are thinking about their skills, then it's going to sound pretty turgid. They're definitely going to miss being in the moment. When the shot comes over, they're more worried about what their backhand is like.

I had a friend in Bangkok who was Chinese and he was Australian champion for table tennis. And he said before he got this, and he actually on one game beat the world champion, which was very good, he thought, for himself. But to do this, he'd gone to Japan and he said the Japanese know how to train you. And he's Chinese and he said they have a really rigorous training programme which really lifts your game. But the Japanese don't win. And he said the reason for this is that they can't stop practising. They can't actually just play the game, let the practice go and just play the game. They're still too bothered about getting the shot right or something like that.

So these techniques are the same. All they're doing is laying the ground, preparing a basis for insight to arise. But the insight itself arises because of the power of your attentiveness. So all these exercises, all these techniques are doing, are just helping you to attain the right sort of attentiveness, the right sort of focus, and pointing you in the right direction.

And of course, this intuition that we talk about, this *satipaññā*, this intuitive awareness, is beyond the control of me, you see. I can't sit here and say, well, I'm going to meditate now for an hour and I'm going to have an insight into *Nibbāna*. Of course, it doesn't work like that. It's very frustrating.

Again, I'm reminded of somebody I met who, this is going way back when *vipassanā* was just coming in, as a practice in the 70s or something. And he said he'd heard about this course: meditation, *Nibbāna*, you see.

So he joined a week's course. And it's like anything else. If you do a course in cookery or something or whatever, they tell you what you'll achieve by the end of the course and you get a certificate. So he'd presumed that, you know, one week he'd get *Nibbāna* and get his certificate. It gave him a huge disappointment when he realised it wasn't quite like that.

So these techniques are to be seen for what they are, just simple techniques preparing the ground for the real, an actual moment-to-moment mindfulness that the Buddha talks about. And you can see when you're getting caught up in that, when you're getting too worried about whether you're doing the technique right, whether you've got it perfect. It's like there's something wrong there if somebody is really getting anxious about, am I doing it right? Have I got it perfect? So be careful of that idea of perfection as such.

The other thing to say about techniques is that it's not so good to mix them, because these various *vipassanā* techniques do have their own pros and cons. They've got their own drawbacks and their own advantages. And if you mix it, it's sometimes confusing for the teacher, especially if you don't tell them what you're doing. So it's good to keep on one line because the teacher generally can spot or can see when something goes wrong from the report that the meditator gives, you see. But if they're mixing stuff, it doesn't work. It's like these alternative medicines, isn't it? You're not supposed to do acupuncture and homeopathy. It confuses both the acupuncturists and the homeopaths because you're getting the effects in both. So this is much the same.

All these techniques have arisen out of some teacher, so this is the Mahāsī. And these techniques, you can find all of them, you can find in the commentaries. It's not that he made them up, but somehow he put them together in a way and he himself was an inspiration where it began a new school. That's basically what happened. And it usually happens when there isn't much meditation about, it's faded, and then you get this revival.

And the Mahāsī probably, he and a man called Ubākin, who began a system also, mainly, we know it mainly through Goenka and his centres in the West. And these two really did affect the whole Theravādin world with their methodology.

He himself was interesting because he was actually a scholar, a renowned scholar, and this meant that he was the sort of person who was very much up in his head. So the technique he uses of noting is specifically good for those people who are head-bound, just to keep the thoughts from wandering away. And I've always presumed that's why he developed it. I've never been able to determine whether that's right or not, but it definitely works in keeping the mind still on the object.

I think the other thing you have to be careful of when you come on a retreat is again this business of gaining something. If you have in mind a goal, then of course all your efforts move towards that goal, and in doing so you miss everything. It's like people who go for walks in the country and their idea is just to get to where they're going, and they're like that and they get there but they've missed out on the country. So be careful that you don't have any goal. It's best just to be completely open and let the practice itself

manifest what it has to offer you.

It's like going to a country, a strange country for the first time, and you've got no particular idea of what it is you want to see. Well, of course, when you go there, you're very open, you see, and you tend to see much more. But if you go there with just the idea of seeing ancient sites or tasting the food and whatnot, that's all you get. So have that sort of attitude of just open exploration and then you'll see it offers you quite a lot.

So it offers you an understanding of your physicality, of your body. It offers you an understanding of your psyche. And by the word psyche, I'm referring to the heart and mind. We've lost the word which combines those two ever since. And we can blame Descartes, blame somebody. Because he split off the mind, didn't he? And everybody got head-bound. But in the old way of explaining the human being, there was a word which conjoined both the heart and the mind in one. So we had the word soul, psyche. And we've lost that a bit. So now we have to keep saying the heart and the mind, or emotions and thoughts, but in a sense they're both one and the same process. They're just two sides of the same process.

So it's an ability to recognise just how the psyche works, how these two things work, and how we create the world. And of course there's spiritual insights. In Buddhism a spiritual insight isn't to do with some sort of transcendental communication with another being or something like that. A spiritual insight in Buddhist understanding is the final level of consciousness. That's what it is.

So if you look at the evolution of consciousness, not just in terms of the beings that you see like animals and all that, but just in ourselves, from the point where we are born to where we are now. We don't think like a newborn baby, I don't think it's possible. We've all lost that. We don't think like a three-year-old anymore. We don't have the magic anymore. To about the age of seven we live in a world where we believe what we imagine. That's why Father Christmas can come down the chimney. No problem.

So all these things manifest a different relationship to the world. And what we're trying to do is to take that process of consciousness, that process of relationship, to the very end. And what manifests at the very end? The very end is in a complete accommodation with the way it is. There's no struggle, there's no wanting for other than is given, and there's no attempt to destroy or annihilate what we don't want. So it's a contentment with the way things are, whether they be pleasant or unpleasant. And that's the state of non-suffering.

It doesn't mean to say you don't have physical pain, it's just natural to the body. But in terms of the heart-mind, the psyche, it manifests a very different relationship. And for that to happen there has to be this pulling out, as it were, of its confusion with the body and the psyche, this psycho-physical organism of our intelligence, this intuitive intelligence. And now all these techniques are to do with that. That's all.

All these, when I talk about distancing, I mean objectifying. I mean being able to turn the inside as objective as we now see the outside. You know, you don't come into this room and say, this is me. You'd be

put away. Inside, that's all we're doing. We're turning all this inner furniture, this inner environment, these inner walls that we see, the body and all that, we're turning it very slowly into an objective world. And in so doing, we're no longer reacting with it. And that's what produces this inner peace. Even when you're disturbed, even when you're angry, when you're stressed, you can still find a still small point within that storm, you see.

So that's what these techniques are hoping to do. And of course, not just here, but to actually take them into daily life. It's something that is contiguous. You can't stop spiritual practice like climbing a mountain. If you stop, you can stop so long and then you get cold and you want to come down at the end of that. You've got to keep going. So it's the same with spiritual practice. Well, you can't stop it. You've got to keep going once you're in it, you see.

In other words, now that you know, or for some of you beginning to intuit this level of consciousness, you can't go back on it. It's a piece of knowledge, you know it. And this awareness that we have, this intuitive awareness that we have, will always be in some way or other wanting to seek its own liberation. So this is beyond the idea of some sort of me or mine. It's something deep within us which seeks liberation, and that's what we really mean by the Buddha.

So if we just consider some of the techniques now, this noting. The noting is primarily, as far as I'm concerned, to contain the thinking mind. But it also has the effect of pointing you to actually look at something. And the Mahāsī talked about it like throwing a stone at a wall. So it's like making you. So as you say, rising, rising, rising, it's like it's pushing your attention to where you want to see. It's like a push towards it.

Now one of the problems that might come up is that the word seems to get in the way of what you're looking at. It seems to be very loud in the mind. It seems to in a sense obscure what it is you're looking at. Now when that happens, you see, what does that tell us? It tells us that our intelligence, this *satipaññā*, is locked into the intellect. In other words, it's always seeing things through the intellect.

Now, in our daily life, this is sometimes quite obvious to us. I mean, even if we take a flower, these, I've forgotten the name of them. No, no, this one here. Oh, orchid, thank you very much. You see, when you look at an orchid, if you've seen lots of orchids, you don't really see that orchid. What you're seeing is fitting into your conception of an orchid, from all the other orchids you've seen. It flips into a category of orchids. And we trick ourselves in thinking that we're actually seeing that orchid. But it's only when you begin to place your eye on it and really see it, really actually see the delicacy of it and the different little bits and pieces that in a sense the word orchid begins to disappear because what you're seeing is something quite unique.

And this is something you can practise while you're here. The flowers are coming out and you can just place your eye on it. And you'll see that by just doing that, by saying the word looking rather than naming the flower, you'll see that very slowly you just become quite concentrated upon what the flower is offering

you. The flower doesn't want to be categorised. And that's clarifying this ability to see things as they really are. That's one of the phrases that you get throughout the scriptures. To see things as they really are. To see and understand things as they really are. Not as I would wish them to be, as I think they are. And thinking that we know something is one of our big delusions, isn't it? We confuse the thought with the actual experience.

So a word actually helps us to just stay there so long as the word is reflecting more the process that we're doing like looking, seeing, touching, feeling. I don't mean to say that in certain things we can't use a noting word to describe what it is we're experiencing, which is pain or something like that.

And the noting word also just helps us as it were to keep a distance because it's in a sense anyway pushing the object away so that we can actually note it. It's all part of that process of pushing something away to look at it more clearly. When we get involved in a pain or an emotion, that falling into an identity with it, we can't see it because in a sense we're suffering it. We're more concerned with how I feel about it rather than seeing it objectively. So when for instance pain comes from the posture of your back or your knee, see that's an opportunity to just say pain, pain. And the more you say it, you see, the more it pushes away. You can see it objectively. So the word does have an effect on the way that you're looking.

And if it does have this effect of being in between you and the word, see, just keep the noting going, but keep putting the attention on the object, and very slowly the word, as it were, disappears. It begins to move into the background, as it were, and it's like a background note which is pushing you forward. And this tells a meditator that this intelligence they have is slowly emerging out of its confusion with thought. So if you find that, just keep gently working at it.

Now the other thing about noting is it has to be deliberate because it's actually an act of noting. So that's why some of you have already noticed that you can be happily sat here saying rising, falling, your mind's miles away. When you come back you're still saying rising, falling. And that tells us how mechanical it can become and how easy it is to create a habit in the body.

I mean, again, going back to sports and musical instruments, you know, just running up and down the scales of a piano, the fingers just do it. They don't have to think about it. Even for us, when we walk across the road, we don't have to think about our legs. You'd have to think about your legs. It's terrible, isn't it? But you just go, and the legs follow you, moving up and down flapping away underneath you and you don't notice that. And if you consider lots of things that you do, it's all automated. It's all automatic. And thank heavens for it, thank heavens for it. Here however we are trying to be mindful even of the minutest movements because we want to really catch intention and we'll come to that the importance of catching intentions towards the end.

So that's the noting business. And the other thing is of course to keep it going until it becomes quite habitual and it just stays there. Now one of the reasons it becomes habitual is because every day we're doing the same thing.

It's really boring. Seven days of doing exactly the same thing. You walk from here to the dining room, you eat, then you go to your bedroom, you go back, then you come back here. You're always doing the same thing. And this makes it very easy to really make very clear to ourselves the process of thought, of intentions, of actions.

When I did this long retreat with my teacher in Burma, all day long I was stuck in a room like this. We didn't go out because the windows are open, there's no point. And it's too hot anyway, and the sun. So all day long I'm in this room, sitting and walking, never going out. And then there were two times, or three times we went out. One for breakfast, one for lunch, and one for a drink. And it was just down the stairs, across the yard, and you sat at a table. And the breakfast was always the same. Lunch was slightly different. And the drink was always the same, this sort of dreadful chemical orange juice. And then you went back up, up the same stairs, across the same way.

And what that does is, of course, it begins to make it very, very simple to watch the most minutest movement of the body and mind. Because you're not thinking. There's no choice left. You don't say to yourself, now, shall I go down this way or shall I go down that way? No, you go down this way. There's only one way to get there. So by sweeping away any idea of choice and confusing choice with freedom, you're simply doing what you have to do. And the more you restrict yourself, the less the mind has to think about what you have to do. And this means that you can really, really settle down to observing the minutiae of how the body and mind work.

Now, the reason for that, of course, is that when you see how it works, and we're specifically interested in how we create suffering for ourselves, then, of course, you see the way out. Unless we can see how it is that we create problems for ourselves, we're not going to see a solution. But when you see how we create the problem, then the solution manifests at the same time. That's all the Buddha did. Remember, we're following the same path as this ancient personage 2,500 years ago. He just sat under a tree and walked about a bit and sat under a tree and walked about a bit and he began to see where the suffering was arising from.

So that habitual practice and the noting allows us to go deeper and deeper into the process of mentation, the process of the body. I think that just about covers noting. Does anybody else have any questions or something about noting as such? Have I missed something? I suppose one thing is not to worry about the word too much. Sometimes there are many experiences we have for which there just isn't a word. Just a general word, feeling, thinking. Always remembering what the word is trying to do. If we find ourselves getting caught up in, is this the right word or the wrong word, and we're searching for a dictionary, then we've definitely lost the plot.

"Can I ask a question? Is there sort of tension between the benefit of noting in objectifying whatever it is, but at the same time the desire to actually experience it? But at the same time you're trying to also be fully conscious of the experience."

No, that's a really crucial point to understand. The word helps us to push away so that we get some objectivity, some sort of witnessing, some sort of ability to be objective with what it is that we are trying to experience. Then, once you've got that position of being objective, once you've got that position where you know that you're not being caught up in the feeling or the emotion, one then goes towards it. And hopefully, through the power of that curiosity and the power of that focus, there's a collapse into the object, the word disappears, and there's just the pure experience.

Now that's really your true *vipassanā* moment. But that you can't make happen. This is the point, because then at that point the self also disappears. It's like when you fall asleep. Where are you? Where have you gone? And who wakes up? So it's like you're moving towards that just by this noting, but it's the interest and the curiosity which will draw you towards the object you're trying to understand and feel.

"Presumably the moment that you do achieve that kind of being in that experience, the moment you notice that, you've lost it."

Exactly that. Yes, that's right. It's one of these paradoxes that you're most happy when you don't know it. As soon as you know you're happy, you've lost it. It's like when you watch a film. You're perfectly happy, completely enthralled by the film. And then it ends. That's it, you've lost it.

But our aim is really to become very intimate with the body, heart and mind, and not to be too concerned about that business of losing, becoming, collapsing into that process, because that happens naturally when the conditions are right. Even at the level of objectivity, you can still be having insights, spiritual insights, because you are observing impermanence, you're observing your reaction to things, and you're also, by creating that distance, recognizing that what you're looking at can't be what's looking, because you're looking at it. So these themselves are true spiritual insights. And again, remember, what we mean by spiritual insights is a change in the way we relate to the world. These are radical changes in the way that we see the world.

"So if you notice a pattern of thinking, say judging for example, so if you notice that the thoughts that come into your mind are judgmental of either yourself or of other people on a repetitive basis, on a frequent basis, you notice a sort of habit of that. Then what's the process for reflecting on that which doesn't involve... Is there a process for reflecting on it?"

Well, if, for instance, something like that is coming up, as a constant judging, judging, the first thing to recognize is that you can't change that. It's a conditioning. It has to run its course. And it'll run its course and empty itself of its energy so long as we don't identify. And by noting it as judging, you're not identifying. Otherwise, you'd be judging. But you can hear these little judgments going on. I'm no good. She's no good. They're no good. They're better than me. I'm worse than them. And you just hear that going on. But by just observing it and noting it, it no longer has power over you. That's the point. But we'll deal with those things more clearly tomorrow when we talk more about the hindrances.

So sitting. Remember that your sitting posture is the very physical representation of the enlightened mind because there is that alertness in the posture, the energy, but there's also to be the relaxation. And those two are the qualities of your observation, a relaxed but alert looking. And of course that's difficult for us because one way we either fall asleep or the other way we get tense. And it's just being aware of that and just bringing, it's always starting with that calmness. Starting with the calmness and then raising the curiosity. That's the way to do it.

And don't struggle with pain. The tell-tale is, as soon as pain, whether it's physical or emotional, has actually made it difficult to investigate, then that's it, you cut, you go for a walk, you take a break. There's no point, because this is a process of investigation. If you can't do it, what's the point of suffering it? And then, of course, one builds up a resistance. You can take a bit more pain and all that sort of stuff. You can hang around with very difficult emotions more. And I think you have to be slightly careful not to push that because you can frighten yourself. That's one of the problems. And just go easy with things.

In the long-term view, in the Buddha's understanding, so long as there's a self there's going to be an existence. So we have an eternity of time to sort this one out. There's no need to get into a panicky rush about it. And even if we are more inclined to believe in one life, then the meditation works in that it's at least sorting out this present moment, and hopefully we'll make our future life a bit more easy to live with. That's the important thing about the sitting posture. Don't struggle with pain to the point where you can't do the investigation.

Now, the walking is really important. People tend not to see its importance, but it's extremely good for developing this calm attentiveness. It's very calming, and you don't have to go so slow. When you're going so slow like that, like we do in the evening, that's really also to investigate. Because the feeling of the foot rising is different from the feeling of the foot moving forward is different from the feeling of the foot falling and it's different from the feeling of the foot pressing. And it's these discriminations that are making, that are sort of tuning this intelligence, making it more sharp to see things that previously would have just seen as just one feeling, the foot moving through the air. But you can also use walking gently up and down just to develop this calm abiding. So it's a very powerful exercise. So don't try and do as much of it as you can.

I know there's a tendency to rush off for a cup of tea, and there's nothing wrong with having a cup of tea, you understand, but often it sort of lengthens out to 40 minutes, and then you do a 10-minute walk and come back and sit. But it's much better if you do want to have a beverage and make it short and sweet, and really just keep walking up and down.

Going slow, so that's his other big technique, the Mahāsī's technique. Really try to, if you find yourself rushing anywhere, just stop. Just stop in your tracks. And just let the energy fall away. And then just take your time. I don't think you ought to be going faster than left, right, left, right. That's about it. If you're going faster than that, you're rushing.

And try to find little things during the day when you can really take your time. Now this door for instance, you can actually open and close it completely silently. You don't have to bang it to or push it, and you can make the opening of that door a specific exercise. I always know where people are by how they go out through that door. Pushing the door open to your bedroom. Just do it very slowly and just sort of communicate with the spring.

Certain things you can't go so slow. You can't brush your teeth at that speed. You'd never finish. But there are many things that you can do where you're not actually holding anybody up. That's the other thing about the bathroom. There may be people waiting. But there are many things that you can do which you can go really slowly at. And just observe it. And the main place, of course, is when you're eating. If you finish before me, you're definitely going too fast. Because I'm eating at what I would consider to be an ordinary pace. An ordinary pace.

And of course, the more you go slow, the more you see. We've all seen these films on TV of nature, like a butterfly or these hummingbirds, how their wings flap and you can actually see it. And it's just slowing the film down frame by frame. So that's all we're doing. The slower you go, the more you'll actually see. You'll see the connection.

So we chant this dependent origination in the morning. The Buddha there is showing us that although we experience life as one continuous thought process, thought emotional process, actually there's myriads of little processes going on. And what we're catching are sort of end products. And these processes are going on continuously throughout the day. Even to see something, there has to be a process whereby what hits the retina has to be sensed in the mind, it has to be categorized, it has to be put into some sort of picture. And what we see is the final product, the picture. Same with hearing. There's a whole process going on from the point where all there is is pressure on the eardrum. By the time we get to alarm bell or bell to sit, that's gone through a whole load of mental processes to get there. But what we're always aware of is the end product.

And what we're also specifically interested in is not just the way that we produce a certain concreteness about our existence, a certain substantiality, whereas in fact it's all these myriad processes going on, is to see it as something transient. But also we're interested in this relationship we have, wanting, not wanting, wanting, not wanting, wanting, not wanting. And that's another level of this mental process, which for the most part we're not really aware of.

Just watching people around supermarkets, they don't distinguish the product that they're looking at and the wanting of it. It's already my product. As soon as they see it, it's my product. They've already bought it. And that for us is very important, to see the distinction between liking something, disliking something, and wanting and not wanting. Pleasant, unpleasant. Wanting, not wanting. And that will become more and more obvious to us the more we slow that process down. So make an effort over the next few days to just take your time, basically. Take your time.

So finally there's this intention. Now first of all what we mean by an intention here is a desire. Right? It's not been empowered, so it's a desire which is arising. This is a very important moment in Buddhist psychology because as a desire it's not having a conditioning effect, it's not an action, it just lies as a potential in the mind. But if we act on it, or as they put it in these awful committee speak, if you action it, then it immediately becomes an act. And once that happens, it will have a conditioning effect within us. And of course, it will produce something. If it's wholesome, it will produce something wholesome within us. If it's unskillful, it will produce something unwholesome.

So that's why the accent is always on when you're sitting and you hear the bell go or you've done the reflections and it's time to go up. Intending to rise. So now you're empowered. You're not acting like an automaton. You're watching the intention arise. Intending to rise. Now that's the moment you can reflect and say, is this a good thing to do or a bad thing? Is it skillful or unskillful? Virtuous or unvirtuous? That's the only moment you've got in terms of choice. Once you rise, you've lost it. You've already created an act.

That's why in the standing meditation, you can stand there and say, intending to walk. Nothing happens. You can stand there all day, intending to walk. Now these intentions, remember, they're not huge, strong desires. We're not talking about cravings. We're just talking about a simple intention, a wanting to walk. And you can stay there with intending, nothing happens. And then suddenly there's a decision and your foot moves.

So this is a magical moment isn't it? How does something move out of potential into an actual? Now that moment of actuality the Buddha actually calls will, and at that point an act is created. And then you can't stop its problem. It's already gone into the system. And if it's something out there, it's gone into the world, and you'll get your response.

And again, we'll talk about karma in that larger sense towards the end of the week.

So that's why when we're eating, rather than get caught up in this natural appetite that we have, just get lost in it, turn it into a greedy thing, just by noting the intention "wanting to eat", having made a previous intention that you're only eating to nourish the body, and you're reaffirming that intention every time you eat. So these are conditioning acts. And the more we condition ourselves to eat to nourish the body, the less we're going to find ourselves with some eating problems. And that's of course one way to come out of an eating problem if we find we have one. It's just not reinforcing the intention to eat for comfort's sake or for happiness.

And so intention is a really important thing to note, and if you can at least begin by noting main intentions, which is the intention to rise, the intention to walk somewhere, the intention to start your sitting, the intention to eat, if you can start by noting those, they create a natural break. You're actually stopping for a moment. They're a natural stopping. And in that moment there's this ability to reflect.

And what this is showing us is that if we were to take this full time, then we'd become in charge of our

lives. Begin to be in charge of it rather than behaving by old conditionings or coming under other people's influence, right? We gain our, you might say, autonomy.

So you'll be hearing me constantly encouraging you to note your intention. There's a little passage in the Visuddhimagga which is a later commentarial work in which a teacher is teaching his students and at one point he raises his hand and he stops, stops talking. And then he just puts his hand very gently back there. And his students say, "What happened there?" He said, "I didn't note the intention." It was just an old automatic thing that he did. But if you're quite wide awake, if you're really awake, you'll see it come across the mind: "move your hand", intention to move your hand, intention to scratch.

So that's the same with when you get an itch. So you note your intention. You try and handle the itch as much as you can, right? And you see this enormous desire to scratch. And when you can't take it anymore, say "intending to scratch", and then just watch how the mind reacts to it, how it becomes relieved of its tension once you've given yourself a good scratch.

So, these are your basic components of your practice. This continuous noting as best as you can, going slow and slower, and trying to choose certain actions during the day where you really do things very slowly, so that you've got a standard. That's why we walk together in the evening. There I hope to create a sort of standard for you of going slow. And then try and do that as much as you can during the day and noting intentions.

Just as when you're intending to eat there's a sort of back story about the intention, which is your bigger intention is to only eat for healthy purposes, then I suppose for many other intentions, in order to decide rather than simply noting that you're intending to do it and then doing it, if there's a possibility of saying "I'm not going to do it", you need a kind of back story of intention about what's the bigger intention behind the intention. It helps to have a sort of large intention. So the intention here behind this whole retreat is to develop moment to moment mindfulness. That's the purpose of all these techniques: to actually be completely awake to the presenting moment.

And of course our nature is not to stay there. We like to live in the future or live in the past. We don't like to be completely in the present moment unless it's really happy. Unless we're really, really enjoying it.

Is that it? Any other questions? We'll meet of course tomorrow in case something comes up. I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. May you be liberated from all suffering sooner rather than later.

Now your response is *sādhu*, *sādhu*. Which means "well done". Now you can imagine how I feel if I don't get *sādhu*, *sādhu*. It's desperate, isn't it? Very good.

So we have some walking and then at quarter past come in again and I'll come in to do the walking meditation with you. And we'll sit the last period together and finish with me.

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