How Vipassanā Relates to Daily Life

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 57:40

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-sambuddhassa three times — homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

Just roving around the topic of meditation, daily life, practice and all that, I suppose one interesting question we might ask is: why didn't the Buddha return to lay life once he'd become fully self-realised? Good question, isn't it?

Well, I think practically he'd become used to the wandering life, and the first people he taught were his old companions who were also wandering ascetics. They very quickly became members of his order, and very shortly after that people wanted to follow him, become his disciples. The first ordination, as it's called, was a simple word: *ehi*, come. So when somebody said they'd like to follow his teachings, be with him, join his *sangha*, his community, he just said, *ehi*, come along.

When the *sangha* was established, then the second type of ordination was established, where people took refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the *sangha*, which has now become the lay way of determining your commitment to the Dhamma. And then by around about twenty years — for twenty years, the people who joined were of high calibre. Then it began to slide down the slippery slope. The ordination then became quite a long one, maybe half an hour or so, in which certain questions had to be asked, such as: Are you still in government employ? Are you in debt? Are you a man? That was a very interesting one. Are you a human being? So various sorts of people tried to join the order.

One of the reasons, just as a little side note, was that the great court physician would treat the Buddha's monks free of charge. And of course, occasionally people would join the order in order to be treated without charge. So one of the questions is: Are you sick? And the rule is you can't ordain somebody who has certain illnesses. I remember a sorry case that happened with somebody with AIDS who wanted to join the order — they weren't ready.

Very quickly, he informed this particular grouping early on. Very shortly after his realisation he did go home and hugged his mother — or his stepmother — and met all his family, his extended family. And of course that was the moment when his wife said to their child, Rahula, "Go and ask your father for your inheritance." So obviously there's some feeling that the Buddha's not going to come back to lay life, and she wants him to make him the heir to his grandfather's fortunes. But the Buddha of course ordains him — that was his inheritance, the Dhamma.

There are two charming discourses. One when he's given when he's about twelve maybe, and the

Buddha's giving him all sorts of reasons why he shouldn't tell fibs. It's a lovely little one. And then later on when he's eighteen, and he's obviously struggling with perhaps leaving the monastic life. And eventually he also becomes fully realised.

So apart from perhaps that practical reason, it would seem that generally speaking, once one moves towards end game, there's really nothing there to draw one back into lay life. And that's just one of those things that happens, I suppose.

But on the other hand, there are lay people who become fully self-realised. One that I remember is a cobbler — an ordinary old cobbler becomes fully self-realised. So why is it that there weren't more people who were self-realised who were lay people? And I think the reason is the ambience that you're working in. The Buddha talks about lay life being dusty. That's the word he uses.

If we just look at our society, you can see that most people just aren't on the spiritual wavelength. So when you work with people like that, there's always a drag. They're not supporting you. It's like there's a constant negativity towards what you're trying to do. I mean, consider being in somewhere like Saudi Arabia or one of the virtually all Muslim countries, and you yourself want to do the five times a day prayer and all that — well, you wouldn't be considered silly or stupid. Right there in the middle of the office they'd all join in probably. And that's what we lack in today's society: this support from other people in our ordinary lives.

I'm always at pains to say to people that the jewel of the collection, the *Satipaṭṭhāna* discourse, which is the fullest discourse on how to become liberated — the actual techniques, what we are practising now, not in its detail but in its general format — was given to the people of Kamasadhamma. They were a tribe you could call them, I suppose, or a clan or whatever called the Kurus, and they lived in what now you would recognise as around about Delhi. He travelled quite a bit — he was all over the place on that Gangetic plain — and he'd been up there and given them some teachings. When he returned on this occasion, he was taken by the fact that they were actually doing what he suggested and were very mindful, and there was no gossip, no argumentation, all that sort of stuff. So he delivered to them this *ekāyana magga,* this one way path leading to liberation, which we now call the *Vipassanā*-only path — to them, the lay people. Not addressed to the monks or anything.

So he himself had no doubt that a lay person could become liberated. He wouldn't have done that otherwise. He'd have given some general discussion, which he would normally start with for people who hadn't met him, about good and bad, *kamma*, the gods, living the good life. And only when he felt that they were ready for it, he'd hit them with the Four Noble Truths. He didn't start with that.

So here he's got an orderly people. I mean, we're talking about pre-industrial societies, farmers living communally with a committee ruling, a pastoral society. Although there was a great movement at that time towards cities, monarchical rule — the politics were changing. And there was a rise also of the merchant class, which hadn't existed before. So he lived in times which were changing, not as viciously as

ours, but definitely changing.

And it was felt by a lot of people, I think, that dislocation when you get times of change. That was one thing that fuelled the amount of men who went into the forests and lived a solitary life. There weren't that many women, partly because of the sexism, of course, and partly because of the danger as well.

So I think there are practical reasons why he didn't want to return, but I think that also there are spiritual reasons — that at that level nothing attracts, nothing attracts back into that form.

But he gave very clear pointers as to how we can turn the lay life into a spiritual life. And in my e-reminders, which I think all of you get and read diligently, I'm going through a day in the life and just delineating how it's possible to turn everything into a spiritual practice. So you're doing the same thing — you're still getting up, you're still dressing, you're still brushing your teeth. It's not like you're doing anything different, but somehow the attitude with which you do it is what changes, and that's what turns it into spiritual practice.

So even here now, I keep stressing this business of eating. So before, we're just eating. Either our minds are reading the newspaper, or we're just gobbling, or we're overeating. But suddenly, eating becomes a real spiritual practice in itself, both by way of developing a certain attitude towards food — seeing it as medicine, seeing it as nourishment, and yet not denying the pleasure. This is the point: not denying the pleasure. There is pleasure, that's fine, but not doing it for that reason, not doing it for comfort's sake.

And the important thing to remember is that the psychology of that runs through everything. It's not just with eating. I mean, we're talking about dependent origination. We're talking about the distinction between the point of *vedanā* and the point of *taṇhā*. *Vedanā* is the point where we experience sensations, feelings in the body, as pleasant or unpleasant. That's a given. That's what the psycho-physical organism does. It experiences things and gives us feelings. But then it's this other business, this *taṇhā*, which we've talked about this morning.

So that psychology can be translated to all areas of pleasures and joys in our lives. See, this is the great thing about the spiritual life: nothing is ever destroyed. The only thing the Buddha said was destroyed was greed, hatred and delusion. So everything is handed back, purified of its kinks.

Because of his style of talking about his Dhamma in a more negative sense — really to undermine concepts about the self and rebirth and all that — he tended to favour the negative approach. So saying that there is — we quote it in the morning — "there is a not-born." What does that mean? There is a not-born — what is it? So of course he won't go that far. Well, he does actually. But that's his preferred method.

So of course people would say, "Well, you're an annihilationist, you're a nihilist. There's not this, not that, so there's nothing. Therefore you're a nihilist." So he would constantly say no. He said no, the only thing that's annihilated is greed, hatred and delusion. And delusion — by delusion, fundamentally he means this

idea, feeling, notion of a self.

So when we're looking at pleasure, we're not trying to get rid of pleasure, we're trying to take something out of our relationship with pleasure, trying to reform that relationship. And it's the same with suffering. It's not as though we can ever get rid of physical suffering — it's just part and parcel of the body's way of being in the world, pain. But we can do something about our relationship to it. Same with relationships. We have difficult relationships — you can't do anything about the personality clash, but you can find a way of being with it where it's not so painful, or take the pain out, just accept the person as they are. And that process we call the process of liberation. That's what we're doing: process of liberation.

So when we go back and we start with actually how do we then bring it into daily life — how does the practice that we do in sitting meditation relate to our daily practice — then that's really what our task is. And if we can't relate it, if there's a distinction, if there's a hair's breadth of separation between the practice of meditation and the rest of our lives, we've lost it. Because the Buddha's teaching is centred upon a type of being in the world that we call mindfulness. So you're here all the time, you're bringing yourself back into the present moment all the time.

And the big trick of that is this business of relaxing. Can't overstress that, really. And this relaxing into the present moment — stopping — just allows you to recognise what's there, what's actually driving you at this present time, and allowing it to become very conscious. And you can let go of things that have been accumulated. And that way, you not only reserve your energy, you actually take control of your life.

For instance, when sometimes one is late for work, you find yourself late for work, so there's this anxiety about being late for work — you missed the bus or something. And you can see that anxiety building up inside you. And you can't stop it. This is the point. You say to yourself, "Oh, I'm getting anxious. I won't be anxious. I'll just get there and start doing the work." But to do that is to deny your anxiety. You're up against what's actually happening in your body.

So you have to recognise: all this is an old conditioning of getting anxious about being late. If you're going to be late, you're going to be late. What's the point of being anxious? You have to argue yourself out of it, get a different perspective on it. You can't do anything about the feeling of anxiety because that's coming from a different conditioning, that's happening. But at least one can stop stoking it. That's the point: one can stop stoking it.

You do it by turning it into an object. There's your meditation right there, sitting on the bus or running for the train or driving like mad. Right there you're right there with the feeling of anxiety — you know it's there. That's enough. You're doing your meditation, and your attention is on either that, if you're sitting in a bus, or if you're driving of course you're attending to the traffic.

So by making that your object and relaxing — that takes a relaxation. You have to relax into the present moment. You have to be with it. So this practice of relaxing when you begin your meditation, of actually

stopping and being in touch with your breath and relaxing into the present moment — here it's easier because you're feeling pleasant neutral feelings, at least it's good to see them as pleasant, neutrally pleasant. And you're developing the attitude of just sinking, of just collapsing, you might say, just stopping in the present moment and just accepting what's there.

Normally speaking, we get this anxiety up, we get this rush up, we get to work and we keep going. It's like it hasn't clicked that we've arrived. Even if we arrived early actually, we're still rushing, we're still moving at this tremendous pace that we've set ourselves, on the perception that we're going to be late.

Then when you're here, now we've got beyond the stage of just watching the breath and now you're open to these negative states within you. So let's say you're feeling a bit depressed, a bit anxious and all that sort of stuff, and you're just sitting with the feeling. Now it's very interesting because in the discourse on how to establish mindfulness, the Buddha always talks about the inside and the outside, the inside and the outside. And often this outside is commented upon as being aware of other people's states.

So you get to work and somebody else is anxious. I mean, you're okay, you're calm — it's worse if you're anxious — but they're anxious too. So they start putting this stress on you. So normal people's reaction is to respond with stress themselves. I remember this phone call on a mobile in a train, and this woman — her voice is rising and rising and rising, and then there's suddenly this wonderful statement at the end: "I'm stressed out!" I wanted to go over and say, "Look, have a cup of tea or something, relax." There was a total desperation in it. I thought, "Oh God, she's in for a little breakdown or something."

Now, here we are sitting with these negative emotions. What are we doing? We're attending to them. We're attending to them, like a nurse attends. We're attending to them. We know they're there. We're neither pushing them away, nor are we indulging them. So somebody comes to us with stress — that's what you do. You attend to their stress. There's no need for you to get stressed because of their stress. What's the point of that?

So as somebody approaches you with stress or with anger or with their depression, you attend to it. Your attention is on them. And by doing that, by placing your interest into their attention, you undermine old habits of reacting the way you used to react before. Old reactions. You're not responding. You're, as it were, undermining that process.

The mind's very quick, isn't it? It'll flip very quickly. Things happen just in a second. You might be calm for a moment with somebody who's angry — next minute you've lost it, you've got yourself angry. So you've got to keep that real sharp awareness, and in order to do that it has to be backed with the right attitude. And if we haven't really grasped the right attitude, then it's very difficult to stop that reaction, even though we might be good-willed.

So we know that when we react to somebody who is in a negative state, it simply compounds the whole situation.

The Buddha's way of putting it is that hatred is not overcome with hatred, but anxiety is not overcome with anxiety either, and depression is definitely not overcome by becoming depressed. It doesn't help a person who's depressed if you become depressed—then you're both depressed. Isn't that lovely?

I can never remember the name of this comedian from around the Second World War time. There's this scene in black and white on the old TV that I always remember. He's about to jump off a London bridge, and a policeman sees this and goes up to him and says, "Excuse me, sir, I do believe you are trying to..." And there's this conversation about why he's jumping off the bridge, and the policeman gets all caught up, saying all this despairing stuff about why life is hopeless. Of course, the sketch ends with both of them jumping off. That was brilliant, wasn't it? And that's what happens when you get caught up in somebody else's emotional state.

So in our relationships, both in our more intimate personal relationships and in work situations, it's just maintaining that attitude of knowing that if one reacts in a negative way to somebody else's negativity, then you both jump off the bridge. It's as simple as that.

When that's been saturated, when that's really saturated your being, then you've established a different attitude. That doesn't mean to say that the old conditionings aren't going to be there. So if somebody comes to you in anger, you can feel the whole condition—you want to bite back. But because you've established this attitude, you very quickly know that all the person wants is for you to listen to them. When you're angry, all you want is for them to listen to what you're saying. Not only listen in the sense of what you're saying, but what you're feeling—like, "I am angry with you."

It's being able just to stay with that in that attending way. Not in this passive-aggressive way, or aggressive passivity. It's like you're standing there saying, "You're not touching me." Well, I mean, that's really aggressive. That's going to make them really want to bite. But if you manifest the fact that you feel their anger, and there's that empathy with their anger, then there's not that aggressive response.

You've always got that magic word, "sorry." That drains people's anger. And then after you've done that, of course, you prove it was their fault anyway. You win anyway. Be careful of that—the one-up, the gotcha.

Now, can you see the link between sitting with your own mental states and sitting with somebody else's? The inside and the outside. You're taking the practice directly into your daily life.

When it comes to insight, all this really is about creating peaceful states around us. How is it that we have this special practice called *vipassanā*, which is about seeing these three characteristics? How does that work? How does that translate into your daily life? Because it's only with those sorts of insights that there are radical changes. These are root changes. We can change our personalities, we can change our attitudes, we can do a lot to change the surface psychology. You can even change your body—you can do a bit of exercise and stuff like that—but it's not getting to the root of it. The root problems are to do with these wrong ways of seeing things. So where we see permanence, there is impermanence.

Now you might say, "Well, I can see impermanence everywhere," but the fact is, when we're struck by crises, then of course we find it a big shock. It's the level of shock, it's the level of fear which shows us our relationship to a situation which we thought was steady, permanent, unchangeable.

And then there's that business of the wanting and not wanting. That's a bit more obvious, taking that into daily life, and we'll come back to that.

And then there's this other business of *anattā*, not-self. When you're sitting like this, of course, it's a privileged position because you have found this objective observer place, this observation post, as Nyanaponika calls it. He's a pretty famous writer in Theravāda, a German. He's died now. An observation post—you've found this observation post within yourself.

So this is a fairly privileged position you might say, because you're not moving, you're not doing anything, so now you can watch. You can watch the psychophysical organism in action. You can see the body feels, the heart emotes, and the mind thinks. What else is there? That's it. And you can see that things are changing, you can see how you're relating to what's inside you, and that's something coming from this wrong idea of indulgence and resistance, and you can see this business of not-me, not-mine as you become very clear in your seeing that these are objects.

So what's an object can't be the subject. It's as simple as that. Even the feeling of self-awareness, as we said, is an object. You're aware of a self, so you can't be that either. But it's actually looking at that and constantly re-experiencing that which makes these things very obvious to you.

So now, how can you have a spiritual insight in daily life when you're washing the pots or when you're talking to somebody or when you're doing a job and all that?

Well, the understanding is that this intelligence that is the knowing, this intuitive intelligence, which is prior—prior to the mind with its thoughts, prior to emotions. Most people think of intuitive intelligence as a feeling. Sure, it manifests, it communicates its understanding through feeling, but it's not feeling, it's not emotion, and it's not the body either. And that's what we're discovering every time we access this observation post.

Now that intelligence is being primed every time you sit to begin to see life from one of these three perspectives. Every time you sit, every time you make the conscious effort to see these three characteristics, it is being informed, it's informing itself, and that manifests in your daily life in various ways.

So when this tsunami struck Sri Lanka, there were some very well-meaning counsellors who went there to help people overcome their trauma. And they were surprised to find that they'd overcome their trauma. It wasn't for them—for people of Eastern mentality—it wasn't such a huge trauma as it would be, say, to a Westerner, because they accept, they have the attitude of karma, they have the attitude of impermanence. Everything's impermanent. What's the problem?

It doesn't mean to say they don't suffer the loss of loved ones and all that, but there isn't this ongoing post-traumatic stress. All that's gone because of that easy acceptance of the way things are.

So now we constantly remind ourselves that there is impermanence. Everything is impermanent. You simply do not know what's going to happen in the next moment. You just don't know. Just recently we've had these Israeli attacks on Palestine and on the West Bank. So there were people there—I mean, they're in dangerous positions, they know they're dangerous—but some innocent people, their lives have just been blown out. That's it. Same with the Israelis. Not so many, but these bombs come over and three people have died in a day just from these rockets going over the fence.

So you're there, you're frying your chips and getting your sausages ready, and you've got your HP sauce out, and that's it. You're up there looking down at all these sausages and they're all splattered all over the place, and you're floating in mid-air.

I have a very strange sense of humour, but there was somebody I know—she was about seventy-odd. And she met an old-time sweetheart, going way back to her early days. I got this story secondhand. Well, they fell in love and they got married, and she brought all her stuff over from America—a couple of thousand pounds—they set up in this beautiful... I went to visit them actually. They set up in this lovely little cottage in a nice little English country village. And not so long married—I mean, when one comes of a certain age one has to accept things—it seems as though he was just going for the toast out of the toaster when he collapsed.

And I've always thought of the horror of dying as you're grabbing hold of a piece of toast. As you're lifting the piece of toast with marmalade to your mouth, unable to clamp your jaw over it. To me, it's a nightmare.

So once we grasp the impermanence, it takes away the reverberation of disaster. It takes away the reverberation of loss, of grief, and that sort of stuff. There is just the grief, there is just the loss. There's not behind it some feeling of injustice. Human beings are always clever at making themselves the centre of the universe. It was such a clout to our ego when we realised that the earth actually went round the sun. And it was even worse when we were told that we were just animals. We just rose up from the animals. We were just fitter, that's all. That was a hit, wasn't it, to the old ego.

So this... What we do as humans, we project our sense of justice onto the universe. There's no justice in the universe, there's only laws. Tsunamis happen because earthquakes happen under the sea, or a tectonic plate shifts. Nothing to do with justice, nothing to do with morality, nothing to do with the way the earth is—it's that sort of law. So when people say, "Oh well, it's a shame he died young," it's a law. The body runs along different laws from human justice, and that's the way it is.

So just getting the idea of impermanence saturating the way we look at things—everything's impermanent. Even to get up in the morning and say to yourself, "Everything's impermanent. I don't know

what's going to happen today. I think I know what's going to happen. I've got it all planned. I actually don't know what's going to happen." That puts us into this mindset, this framework.

And the Buddha's great statement about impermanence is that when we actually grasp impermanence in its real fullness, we realise there's nothing in the world worth holding on to. Nothing in the world worth holding on to—not even ourselves. This is the point.

Now that, at first, might strike as a bit frightening and whatnot. But it's tremendously relaxing, isn't it? We don't have to hold on to anything anymore. Yippee! So it's like when somebody steals something from you. We have this idea that I possess something—I possess my mobile. It's my mobile. I can prove it in law. This belongs to me. I'm attached to it. And then somebody steals it, and I'm still going around saying it's my mobile. But it's the thief's. The thief owns the mobile. And I'm suffering like mad because they've got my mobile.

And suddenly when you realise, actually, you can't own anything. What you can do is use it. Ah, what a relief! And then you think, well, the thief might need it more than me. And you're happy to give it away. Just like that.

So that impermanence seeps into an attitude. And that's important to understand. The Eightfold Path begins with right understanding, and the second one is right attitude. And if it doesn't drop into an attitude, it just remains at this nice intellectual level. "Oh yeah, everything arises and passes away." So what? There's no catastrophe when something does arise and pass away.

So it has to sink into—and that's a heart state. When I say heart state here, I'm not talking really about an emotion. An attitude isn't an emotion. You have to be clear about that. An attitude is a way of relating—it's an attitude. An understanding: everything's impermanent. What does that mean in terms of my relationship to objects, my relationship to people, my relationship to myself, my own body? How does that relate? And that's your attitude. And then of course it manifests in the way we behave, in the way we do actually relate moment to moment.

Now the next one which seeps into our daily life is this business of *dukkha*. So dukkha, remember, is one of these big words in Buddhism. It covers everything that makes us unhappy in the widest sense of that meaning—from the most trivial things to catastrophes. The whole gamut of human misery is contained in this word dukkha, which actually means a hard place. This is a hard place.

And when the Buddha says, "Go into this, where is the suffering?" then it's to do with this psychology of wanting and not wanting, wanting and not wanting.

Now, just a very simple change of attitude—just a change of words—like, not getting what you want, but wanting what you get. So even that, wanting what you get, there's a flip, and you think, oh! And suddenly you're contented. To develop the attitude of contentment with what I've got.

And of course it's difficult in a society which is driven by consumerism, because consumerism depends on your constant discontent. As soon as you're contented, that's it. Consumerism collapses, the whole industrial base. "I don't want a car, I'm content, I'll walk." You can't do that. You've got to be discontent. So this whole feeling of constantly being discontent—the whole of the advert is to make you feel discontent. That's why you want that, whatever it is.

But constantly saying to ourselves, constantly beginning from the platform of, "This is okay, this is the way it is, it's fine, it's not a problem, it's good, it's the way it is"—content. And what you do is you begin to separate need from want. Sometimes you need—you need a new pair of shoes and that's the end of it. So you go and get a pair of shoes. And then there's that dividing line. So you now know this is need, this is want.

Wants come up sometimes for various reasons. Say to lift your spirit, you might buy yourself something rather pleasant or ask somebody else to do it. But at least there's not this churning of the heart that goes out and constantly exercises this retail therapy. Seeking comfort in shops, for heaven's sake. Ridiculous. "I don't feel comfortable unless I'm in Marks and Spencer's." Ridiculous, isn't it? Where do I go when I'm sad? Marks and Spencer's. When I feel depressed, I go to Marks and Spencer's. "It's been a disaster, Woolworths has gone. Oh my God." Weird ways of relating to the world.

So you can see that even now, we're watching the suffering of wanting, not wanting.

A desire comes up—we want to think about this, we want to plan our holiday—and we're constantly pulling ourselves off and feeling that strong desire, that willfulness in us. When it's something unpleasant, that's even more difficult. But to be able to be easy with unpleasantness—see, now it's cold. The difference between room temperature and outside is vicious.

Our attitude is to resist the cold. We rush from the bungalow to here to get out of the cold, instead of greeting it: "Ah, cold, great!" The freshness of it. I'm not suggesting you catch a cold, you understand. But to take that attitude into daily life—you can do it. And again, it's this constant self-reminder. So as soon as we see ourselves passing a shop and wanting that—yeah, hold on. Just pull it back, pull back that energy.

And all that energy, by the way, that we're using in getting what we want—it's not being wasted. You can displace it, you can take your interest elsewhere. In the old days they used to talk about sublimation, a religious idea of sublimating your desires. You don't hear that word often these days. That's because, really, through the agencies of people like Freud, people think that there are certain instincts and desires that are blocked or locked into certain things, like our sexual appetite. They're just stuck there and you can't get rid of them.

But in spiritual terms, sublimation means that you guide that energy and put it somewhere else. That's all it is. The mind and body, as we know from our great quantum physics, is just energy. So if you decide to displace the energy away from, say, eroticism, and you put it into art, then that's your sublimation. That

transference, that transformation of energy, away from desires which you see are unwholesome, to desires which you see are wholesome, is part and parcel of that process.

I'm not suggesting that erotic desires are per se unwholesome—they obviously have their place in time—but if you find them clinging on the mind, obsessive, it's a case of slowly displacing them, putting our interests elsewhere. So it's the same with shopping. People put a lot of interest in shopping, in fashion and all that sort of stuff. All they have to do is just draw their interest elsewhere, just re-educate themselves. That's all it is. It's just a process of re-education.

But they won't do it unless they see the suffering. That's the point. And the problem with pleasure, the problem with joy, indulgent joy, is that while you're in it, it's great. That's the problem. And you're prepared often to suffer the consequences so you can have this bit of joy. It's only when you get the comeback.

I was just thinking there of a friend's father who always smoked, always smoked. Then he had a heart attack, and he suddenly stopped, just like that. He got the comeback. It's unfortunate that it was so strong a comeback, but it just shows. Now, the comeback of all indulgence is the craving. The possibility of grief, if you lose what you treasure. The anxiety, once you've got something, the anxiety of losing it—that's why we've got a massive insurance industry. And of course the frustration of not getting it when you want it.

So by taking this inner understanding of wanting, not wanting, into daily life, it moves you towards contentment. That's the joy, that's the subtle joy. And that's another reason why to develop this calmness on the breath and to begin to see—it is actually a very delicious place to be. Often we find it, but we do it in contrast to agitation, in contrast to stress. We'll go home and just flop in the chair, and just for a moment there's no radio, there's nothing, we just sink into the quietness of the moment. We might walk into a park, or come out into the country, or sit in the garden, and just for a moment we'll actually sink into that space, to that little bit of peace.

But we'll do it as an antidote to another thing. Whereas what we want to do is to develop it as a prime condition, something that we can return to at any time, and as it were, remains a substrate beneath our psychology. There's always this deep sense of calmness within us, no matter what we're doing on the surface. And again, it's just training. It's just training ourselves to do that.

So the breath there—watching the breath, feeling the breath, seeing it as a place where we can develop this calmness and peace—is directly related to daily life. Because you can always come back to your breath. When I say stop every so often, just come to an end of what you're doing and catch what it is you've accumulated—some anxiety, some stress, whatever—and allow it to pass, there's always the breath. And the breath will be a place that you'll go to, just like your garden or the park. It's a place where you just find that inner peace for a moment.

Now the sense of not-self is one of the key factors. In his second talk, the second talk he gives to his five

disciples—at the end of which they're all fully liberated, by the way—he says clearly that which arises and passes away cannot be under your control.

Every time you get into the self, one of the ways that the self manifests is the desire to control, power. Every time you see yourself wanting to control a situation, control a person, you'll know it's coming from the self. It's not the same as being in charge or being an authority in which you are given the power to make decisions. I mean, that's an occasion where you take on responsibility and you try to make the wisest decisions you can. But in terms of this other business, where things are not going your way and you're getting angry, where you're getting angry with your spouse, your partner, because they're not doing what you want them to do, or your kids, and you're getting frustrated and anxious and all that—that's all to do with this sense of wanting to control.

So again, it's this business of taking that into daily life and just recognizing that our control over things is pretty limited and that things happen outside of our control, and that there's—in the old phrase—you've got to go with the flow, you've got to be in harmony with what's happening. That harmony is not always pleasant, but you're actually moving with it. You're not trying to control something which is actually outside your control.

And I think this comes most obvious when we get involved in politics—politics in the wider sense of the meaning, people's issues like the business going on with climate change and the economy and all that sort of stuff, which are not to be confused with small party politics. One can see what has to be done, everyone can see what has to be done, but there's not the political will. So there arises in people a certain frustration.

And that's really not accepting these two rings that are around us. The first one being one of power—what you can do to help the situation. And if you step beyond that, you're into frustration, you're into despair. And that takes an act of humility. Humility doesn't mean humble. It just means seeing yourself as you really are. That's what humility originally meant. And the other ring is influence, whereby you can get other people to do what you think is right. Beyond that, there's nothing you can do in any physical sense.

But we do have another outlet which allows us to feel at least that we are, shall we say, in communion. And that is, of course, to offer *mettā*. I mean, that's the joy of *mettā*, that you can do nothing, but at least you can send out thoughts of intentions, goodwill intentions towards a situation. Even if we don't believe that they actually affect people, at least it's a way in which we might feel within ourselves that we're doing what we can, full stop. Develop a goodwill.

Now, such is the quality of this intuitive intelligence that it can have insights at any time. And it's well known in the Mahāsi tradition that insights don't normally come when you're sitting. It's when you get up and do something that the insights come. And the reason is that often when we're sitting, we're very subtly trying to achieve something, trying to see something. And then when we get up from the posture, we sort of say, "All right, nothing happened there, forget it," and off we go. But we retain that mindfulness and lo

and behold, there are these sudden insights that come. Because this intelligence has been released from this craving, been released from the self just for that moment.

So it's not as though insights can't come at any time of the day, any time you're awake, once this mindfulness is established. In fact, the Mahāsi's teacher—that's the Mahāsi, in case you didn't know, when he was about fifty—the Mahāsi's teacher is said to have intuited *anicca*, the impermanence, as a direct experience of momentary arising and passing away as a dog passed by. There wasn't a dog, there was just a dogging. The dog arose and passed away momentarily. Because that's the teaching of *anicca*.

It isn't something which is changing in the sense that you might take a piece of clay and you make a cup and then you screw it up and you make a saucer. So it's the same clay. The Buddha's teaching is quite radical. It actually collapses into potential or nothing—I can't say nothing. It collapses into a potential. It's not there. And out of there, it arises again. That's what's happening. The universe is stroboscopic. It's not continuous in the Buddhist teaching. So for him that was a deep enough insight for what we call one of the paths and fruits—stream entrance or whatever level he was at.

So that's—I hope I've made fairly clear the intimate connection between your meditation and daily life. If I haven't, you can leave little notes of complaint. Kindly. Notes of complaint.

And remember that the root thing is this constant establishment of mindfulness. And just as a last word, in the discourse on loving-kindness, which we chant in the morning, the Buddha's urging us to develop this loving-kindness. And at the end, he says, "Whether you are standing, walking, sitting, or lying down"—so those are the same instructions for mindfulness. Sitting, walking. In other words, in any posture, doing anything. So long as you're awake, so long as you are mindful, you should develop this mindfulness. And here, he's talking about a mindfulness saturated with loving-kindness—saturated with goodwill. That's a bit better. Goodwill. Because it's not meant to be an emotional thing.

"This," they say, "is the noblest way to live. And if you do not fall into bad ways, but live well and develop insight, and are no longer attached to all the desires of the senses, then truly you will never need to be reborn to this world again."

So there you have it. Mindfulness saturated with goodwill. And in the morning when I, after chanting, I say make your resolution for the day. That's an important moment, because that's going to set the underground tone of the day. So find a little phrase for yourself—to live consciously with goodwill or something like that which strikes you as the way you want to be.

It's also good to also create something where—something that you're not going to do. You're not going to go down that road today. Keep it to today. Don't go beyond today. It gets depressing because I think I'm going to be like this for the rest of my life. But if you do it day by day, it's manageable, isn't it? Just today. Today I'll be good. Tomorrow I'll play hell. But today... We'll keep doing that. We should arrive.

So I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. May you be liberated from all suffering sooner

rather than later.

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