Overcoming the Taints by Endurance

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 21:24

This is my new Logitech Fandango and you are now seeing me in my full glory. I only hope you had a fruitful day. I do not say happy, but I hope it has been happy.

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samā Sambuddhassa
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa

Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-awakened one.

So just as I was getting used to looking at my own face while I'm talking, I'm now looking at an object in the middle of the room. A bit like being on radio, I suppose. So I've got to get used to that now.

Anyway, we're still on the taints. Oh, yes. Can't leave the taints. Just to remind you that we have seven taints here. Let me just read them through. It's good to revise them. There is the taint by seeing, which is through insight, remember. The insight through overcoming the taint, especially on not-self, the false sense of I through *vipassanā*. And then we had one by restraint, by restraining ourselves. Then we abandoned them by using things better. And now we have to abandon things by enduring. So the quality here, of course, is patience.

The Buddha is big on patience. The highest form of ascetic practice by which he means ascetic practice is renunciation. It's the highest form of renunciation because you are renouncing reaction to what is unpleasant.

So let's read what he says here. What taints Bhikkhus should be abandoned by enduring? Here, reflecting wisely, he bears cold and heat, hunger and thirst, contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, creeping things and COVID-19. He endures ill-spoken, unwelcome words and arisen bodily feelings that are painful, wracking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable, distressing and menacing to life. While taints, vexation and fever, so vexation is the aversion, fever is the desire, might arise in one who does not endure such things, there are no taints, vexation or fever in one who endures them. And these are called overcoming the taints by enduring.

So if we just look at one or two areas where we find ourselves getting very irritated, there are those little niggly irritations, aren't there? Leaving the freezer door open and finding that it's all iced up on the door. And then you kick it too. The toaster when you set it wrongly and it's burnt the toast, all these little irritations, an impatience with things too. It's surprising how everything has to be now. Everything has to be now. I read somewhere that Amazon spent millions on getting this immediate delivery, you know, what

do they call it? Prime Amazon or something. So that as soon as you've clicked on your box of chocolate, you can hear it drop in your letterbox. That's how we're demanding that everything has to be now.

In fact, I have to express a certain impatience myself here, confess to it. This little gadget I'm looking at, I did actually order through Amazon and after about two weeks gave up on them and went on to eBay. Now, that doesn't mean to say that I prefer eBay to Amazon. It's just that I finally got it on eBay. But I just remember my concern bordering on a certain annoyance that it hadn't been delivered.

Then there are neighbours. Neighbours, oh, my goodness. You know, if you have a noisy neighbour, it can drive you potty. I know it. I used to live in, you know, these two up, two downs. And my next door neighbor had a real love of Elvis Presley. Now, I myself like Elvis Presley, but not all the time and not the volume that she would play it. And I had to go down once and asked her to turn it low. I said, do you mind just turning it low? And her reply was, I pay my rates. I thought, well, OK. Anyway, she did. She was very kind. But yes, neighbours, those little noises from the TV or from music coming to the walls.

And this reminds me of when I used to go to Sri Lanka or the East, but mainly in Sri Lanka. When I first got there and I had this beautiful little hut, this *kuti* hut. And the squirrels were around. And what they used to do was they used to climb along the beams of my walking. There was a channel for walking, a *cha ṅkama*. And they were at the wood to get the grubs out. And this, of course, I found tremendously disturbing. And then there was this, what you might call, cartoon moment when I jumped off the cushion that I was sitting on and ran down the corridor waving this flag and beating these beams. I mean, these days, if that had been caught on camera, it would definitely have gone viral.

And, of course, I went back. They disappeared. And I thought, that's that. And, of course, as soon as I sat down again, they were at it, scratching away. So, of course, one has to accept these things, you see. Noises in the east. I only remember real quietness descending around about one o'clock at night. I used to wake up in a real quietness, two o'clock, and then it would all start at about three o'clock. But even in the absolute quietness, there would be no crickets or anything like that, cicadas. So there was always noise.

And I remember I came back once. I had to return to England. My mother and father died during that time. And I came back and noise was just overwhelming. The birds, the squirrels, there were these set of birds that squeaked to each other all the time. They're called the seven sisters and they don't stop talking. And then I noticed that, of course, as soon as I stopped getting irritated, within a day or two, I didn't hear them. This is the point, isn't it? You know, as soon as you're angry, as soon as you're irritated, your ear sticks on it. And as soon as you stop being averse, trying to reject it, trying to get rid of it, the attention moves away from it and it just becomes background noise within reason, of course.

We get angry at people's opinions if they're not the same as ours. You know, this whole Brexit thing, boy, do we see some awful stuff there. And, of course, this is a fear that you're going to be somehow converted to their point of view. And that's, of course, where the pride sits. And so that when you hear something and you feel yourself getting irritated with the person for expressing that view, you know, we have to

remind ourselves everybody has their perspective. And if I open up to this person's point of view, I might not agree, but at least I'll understand where they're coming from.

Then you've got things like illness, illness that comes. I mean, obviously now we're suffering this COVID thing, but any illness, we don't want to be ill. That's the end of it. So you can be quite angry with yourself for catching a cold or angry with somebody else for giving you the flu or worse, COVID. And, of course, there's loss of work. A lot of people, loss of work. And that's another thing. That brings about a sense of depression, a sense of not wanting to bear with it.

So patience, remember, is not resignation. We're not resigned to it. We're not rolled over by it. Patience is accepting things as they are and recognizing that any aversion, any rejection, any trying to manipulate it for my own personal good is just causing more trouble. And it makes us even more angry.

Then the Buddha talks about the four worldly conditions. So there's gain and loss. So every time we gain something, we're happy. When we lose it, then we're unhappy. And we don't like it. And we get angry and we get depressed and all that. And it's recognizing that that's just not necessary. It's not necessary. Loss comes and that's the end of it. One receives it. One accepts it fully. And if one accepts it with a good heart, one always sees potential. You know, when that situation ends you're open and you're ready to see where the potential lies.

Fame and being ignored you see. You walk into a crowd and they all know you and they all greet you and all that. And then you get some high idea about yourself. And you walk into another crowd and they completely ignore you or worse they think they want to ignore you and that's even worse, of course. So this whole idea of having lots of friends. In the Sangha, often you find that they gather together because they feel comfortable in each other's company. But often when they mix in terms of their different nationalities, you find them not so open to each other. It's not so very nice sometimes, but it occasionally happens.

And then, of course, there's happiness and unhappiness. So one minute we're happy, one minute we're unhappy. And you have to bear with that. There's no point in trying to fight it. And whatever is causing the unhappiness, it could be a relationship, it could be the weather, it could be the situation financially, your own personal situation. And again, to get angry with it, to get irritated with it, to try and get rid of it, it's all wasted energy, all wasted energy.

And then finally he talks about praise and blame. We all like to be praised. That's wonderful. But blame, you know, we're always trying to defend ourselves. Even when we've obviously done something wrong, we'll find some way of defending ourselves. But of course it's worse if you're blamed and you know you shouldn't be. I mean, that is hard to bear, hard to bear. But he's asking us to bear with it, you see.

Now I just want to break off here to this delightful story of Kālī. And this is to do with somebody who is pretending to be patient. So, formerly, in the same Sāvatthī, so remember that's where his main

monastery was, well, definitely one of his main monasteries, Anāthapiṇḍika, the rich merchant had bought for him. There was a housewife named Vedehikā. Vedehikā should be really, and a good report about Mistress Vedehikā had spread thus. Mistress Vedehikā is kind, is gentle, is peaceful.

Now Mistress Vedehikā had a maid called Kālī, who was clever, nimble and neat in her work. The maid Kālī thought a good report about my lady has spread thus. Mistress Vedehikā is kind, is gentle, is peaceful. How is it now? While she does not show anger, is it nevertheless actually present in her, or is it? Or else is it just because my work is neat that my lady shows no anger, though it is actually present in her? Supposing I test my lady.

So the maid Kālī got up late. Then Mistress Vedehikā said, Hey, Kālī, what is it, madam? What's the matter with you getting up so late? Nothing is the matter, madam. Nothing is the matter, you wicked girl. Yet you get up so late. And she was angry and displeased and she scowled. Then the maid thought, the fact is that while my lady does not show anger, it is actually present in her. It's not absent. And it is just because my work is neat that my lady shows no anger, though it is actually present in her, not absent. Supposing I test my lady a little more. It's a bit cheeky, really, isn't she?

So the maid Kālī got up later in the day and Mistress Vedehikā said, hey, Kālī, what is it, madam? What is the matter with you? You get up later today. Nothing is the matter, madam. Nothing is the matter, you wicked girl, yet you get up later in the day. Now she was angry and displeased, and she spoke words of displeasure. Then the maid Kālī thought, the fact is that while my lady does not show anger, it is actually present in her, not absent. Suppose I test my lady a little more.

So the maid Kālī got up still later in the day. Then Mistress Vedehikā said, hey, Kālī, what is it, madam? What is the matter with you? You got up later still today. Nothing is the matter, madam. Nothing the matter, you wicked girl. And you get up still later in the day. And she was angry and displeased. And she took a rolling pin and gave her a blow on the head and cut her head. Then the maid Kālī, with blood running from her cut head, denounced her mistress to her neighbours. See, ladies, the kind lady's work. See, ladies, the gentle lady's work. See, ladies, the peaceful lady's work. How can she become angry and displeased with her only maid for getting up late? How can she take a rolling pin, give her a blow on the head and cut her head?

And later on, a bad report about Mistress Vedehikā spread about. Mistress Vedehikā is rough. Mistress Vedehikā is violent. Mistress Vedehikā is merciless.

So often you might get somebody who doesn't show anger, but actually it's all hidden in them. I remember one person whom I knew who actually declared that he never felt anger. But of course, it was all over him. I mean, you could tell it a mile off that he was very angry.

So it's a case of bearing up, bearing up what we have to suffer now. It's that sense of endurance. And of course, in our practice, there's a lot of that because when we sit, all this turbulence comes up, you know,

the fears and the worries and the angers and the depressions and all the stuff that we suffer from. And remember that we open up to it and we open up to it with loving kindness. We embrace it. And if we can take that attitude to anything in the world that disturbs us, then obviously it just undermines this wrong relationship we have of getting angry, of not wanting to endure things.

Of course, it gets worse because there are severe situations. Victims of violence, and, of course, torture. That's the worst. That really is quite awful, torture. And we know that even our own soldiers were playing at torture. And that's very hard to forgive, especially when you've been really brutalised like that. There was a lovely book, actually, although he wasn't particularly brutalised in a way, by, I think it was Brian Keenan, called "An Evil Cradling." And it goes back to the 80s I think something like that where he was hostage. Some of you might remember, and that is definitely worth reading and his ability to forgive them. This is remarkable. And you'll find that you'll find people who've been terribly damaged and are able just to forgive. And so forgiveness is the way out of this resentment towards them and resentment towards yourself. You know, you have to be able to forgive yourself.

It's often a case of pride, you know. It's an inverted pride. I'm horrible. I'm useless. I'm terrible. I ought to live in hell. So, again, the Buddha gives us a wonderful simile, which many of you will know. It's called the simile of the saw. Because if bandits were to sever you savagely, limb from limb, with a two-handed saw. He who gave rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be carrying out my teaching.

When I said this at one point, at one place, somebody said, the Buddha had a great sense of humor. But I think he actually means it. Hearing Bhikkhus, you should train yourself thus. Our minds will remain unaffected. We shall utter no evil words. We shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving kindness, without inner hatred. We shall abide providing them with a mind imbued with loving kindness and starting with them we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving kindness abundant exalted immeasurable without hostility and without ill will. That is how you should train yourselves.

Because if you keep this advice on the simile of the saw constantly in mind, do you see any coarse speech, trivial or gross, that you could not endure? No, venerable sir. Therefore, because you should keep this advice on the simile of the saw constantly in mind, that will lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time.

That was what the blessed one said and the bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the blessed one's words. So this is our overcoming certain taints. Remember taints are oozings, floods, these washes of negativity, of unwholesomeness that are within us, and they manifest in specific situations, specific incidences. Therefore, we have to have that real awakenedness to catch the first movement of irritation, of anger, of rejection, of trying to change something just to make us feel more comfortable.

But more that sense of opening up to the unpleasant—and then you see there's no suffering in it, there's no suffering in it.

So I think that brings us to the end of that little particular section. I hope that's been useful for you, and I hope you can take that into your practice. Remember, this is not just something to think about intellectually, but something to really apply moment by moment in your meditation practice and in your daily life.

When those moments of resistance come up, when you feel that contraction, that wanting to push away the unpleasant or grasp onto the pleasant, remember this teaching about endurance. Remember that you have the capacity to remain equanimous, to stay present with whatever is arising without being overwhelmed by it.

This is one of the most practical and transformative aspects of the Buddha's teaching—this ability to meet all of our experience with patience, with tolerance, with that quality of endurance that doesn't get caught up in the reactive patterns of the mind.

May you all find this helpful in your practice, and may it lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time.

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