Purifying Mind and Heart

Carol Wilson · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Carol Wilson · 1:02:47

We have been speaking frequently about how an aspect of this practice is about purifying the heart and mind, or we talk about cycles of purification and purity. Winnie was mentioning that at the end of her talk last night. So tonight I just want to talk a little bit about what we mean when we say purifying the heart and mind. What do I mean by it?

This has been something that's been really interesting and illuminating for me in my practice and my understanding of the whole path in the last few years. It's my current understanding because we know it's always moving and shifting. But really it seems to me that all aspects of the path that the Buddha taught—not just meditation, but all the different aspects—are different ways that he's offering to us to purify the habits of our heart-mind. The whole path is about shifting these habits from the suffering ones that are rooted in greed and hatred and confusion and delusion, toward taking more refuge until the habits of wholesomeness become more our refuge, more natural. And this is not just a good idea—it's the whole teaching.

In fact, this is the way the Buddha describes Nibbana. Someone asked the Buddha, "What do you mean Nibbana is directly visible, inviting one to come and see, immediate, to be personally experienced by the wise?"

The Buddha answers: "When, Brahman, a person is impassioned with lust"—that's the word for greed, lobha—"depraved through hatred"—that's all the different forms of ill will, hatred, fear—"bewildered through delusion, overwhelmed and infatuated by delusion, then she plans for her own harm, for the harm of others, for the harm of both, and she experiences in her mind suffering and grief. But when lust, hatred, and delusion have been abandoned, one neither plans for one's own harm or the harm of another, and so forth, and does not experience in her mind suffering and grief. In this way, Brahman, is Nibbana directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, worthy of application, to be personally experienced by the wise."

So he's basically equating the immediate experience of Nibbana, the real freedom of heart and mind, with the mind and heart that is free—temporarily or forever, but even temporarily—of greed, hatred, confusion. That's what we're talking about in terms of purifying the heart and mind. It's not just about feeling good. And it's not a should, or about being good or being bad. It's really just seeing what's causing suffering and what's not, and this is what he points to.

To me, it's really fascinating to explore all the different ways that we are doing this here and in our life. One way this has been helpful and illuminating to me is in terms of the many different meditation

practices. Just within Vipassana, there are so many different mindfulness practices, and then there are the samatha concentration practices, and then other kinds of practices.

I don't know about you, but it can be in my mind at times to think, well, which one's the best? Or which one's better? Which one should I be doing? Which one will I get more out of? Or which is the real one? For those people who can't do the real one, that's probably the one I'm doing—and which is the real one that's going to take me to the breakthrough? That's what we're here for, the breakthrough. This purifying the mind stuff, okay, that's what they tell us when we're lost in self-hatred, when our fear is coming up again for the ten millionth time, and they say, "That's okay, that's great, that's purification." We go, "Yeah, right," and walk out thinking, "What's the real one?"

But this is what's so cool: it's all the real one. And it takes it all, believe me. It takes all the different practices at all the different times of our life. Because the habits—I don't know if you've noticed—the habits of wanting arising, or ill will arising, or fear, or anger, or delusion, they come up a lot. Have you noticed that? That's good. That's the beginning of purification, to notice it. Seriously.

But do you notice how much they come up? And have you noticed how as your practice goes on—you've been here four weeks now—and whatever you may think is completely irrelevant, but all of you, your practice is deepening. Your practice is getting more profound. You're coming to see more subtle layers of stuff, which is both beautiful—the wholesome qualities of heart and mind you're seeing too, very important, equally to recognize with the so-called torments, or so-called defilements, or kilesas. I might use the word kilesa rather than defilements, which I really don't like as a word, and I don't want to keep saying greed, hatred, delusion, greed, hatred, delusion, so I may just say kilesas.

As your mindfulness gets steadier, and your mind gets a bit more collected, you actually, at times, notice these difficult qualities more than before. Has anybody noticed that? And then you think, "Oh God, it's going backwards. It's worse." But no, we see it on more and more subtle levels, which I'll talk about. And this is essential.

This understanding is essential. But only when we're meeting these difficulties with right understanding. Otherwise, it becomes unbearable. And even with right understanding, once in a while it's unbearable.

So to begin exploring what makes purification possible, what allows the habits of mind to shift—just a brief two-minute foray into Abhidhamma, which is really a twenty-five year study. So, two minutes.

When Winnie was talking about us being an open system, this relates directly to how we understand purifying the heart-mind. We use two different words in English—heart and mind—but in Pali, citta means both. There's no sense of split; it encompasses the whole mental activity, the psyche.

It's an open system. When we talk about mind, we're not talking about some static entity, some self-existing thing that does things and decides things—as if purifying it means we get out the scrubber and start cleaning with steel wool, scrubbing and scrubbing until finally we have this pure lump of mind.

It's not like that at all.

As Andy Alinsky puts it very succinctly, the mind is not a subject, a thing that has objects as content. Rather, it is the activity or process of cognizing the flow of events. Just as the body is, so is the mind an activity, a process arising moment to moment and passing moment to moment, like everything else.

Here's a quick Abhidhamma foray—I don't want to get sidetracked, but the way it's described, a moment of mind or psyche involves consciousness, which we've discussed as one of the aggregates: viññāna, that simple quality of knowing. This arises in every moment, the pure knowing of an object. In itself, it's neither wholesome nor unwholesome. A sound comes and there's that knowing. Labeling it as "hearing" is then a mental factor.

So any moment of consciousness arises together with various mental factors—these are the sankhāra aggregate. Various mental factors co-arise with consciousness in a moment, forming what you might call a moment of mind, citta.

In the way Abhidhamma breaks this down, it identifies fifty-two different specific mental factors. In any moment of consciousness, many of these arise together—it's not just one at a time. Don't go nuts trying to see them all. We're simply using this framework to help us observe the obvious things.

For example, there are seven mental factors called universals that arise in every moment of consciousness: contact, where consciousness meets the object; vedanā, feeling tone; saññā, perception; cetanā, volition; ekaggatā, one-pointedness. Yes, you who thought one-pointedness meant being deep in the fourth jhāna—it's actually a universal factor, just the quality that allows the mind to know for an instant that something is happening. There's also attention, and something called life faculty, which sustains the vitality of consciousness and the mental factors just long enough for that moment to exist.

Just to give you a sense of how intricate this becomes—and I'm really not going to go further—many mental factors arise together in one moment of consciousness, and they come and go. Consciousness is a living, changing experience, always changing.

Along with the seven universals that are always present, other factors come and go. Some are wholesome—leading toward happy states, toward clarity—and some are unwholesome. Altogether, they identify fourteen unwholesome factors and twenty-five beautiful ones. Just so you know, there are far more beautiful ones than unwholesome ones. We simply tend to notice the unwholesome ones more because they really make a mess of things. But the wholesome ones are numerous, and many arise together.

Of the unwholesome factors, the three roots are delusion, greed, and hatred. Delusion is present in any unwholesome moment of consciousness—always. Greed or aversion may not always be present; there are states with just delusion alone. But if greed is present, delusion is there too. The same with hatred—delusion accompanies it. However, greed and hatred never exist simultaneously. These factors

come and go, just as all the beautiful states do.

Among the beautiful states, nineteen beautiful qualities are always present together. Just as an example: faith, mindfulness, non-greed, non-hatred, neutrality of mind—which is equanimity, called tatramajjhattatā in Pali, for your information.

I love that. Tatra majjhattatā. Standing in the middle of everything, kind of—equanimity. And tranquility of body and mind, lightness of body and mind, quite a few. And then others that come and go with specific consciousnesses.

So it's complicated. All that we don't need to know. But the thing that we see that makes it interesting is that because every moment consciousness is arising new, it has the potential to be different. It is different in every moment. It's not steady state. But it's not that it's just random and haphazard—oh, this moment the mind is completely filled with hatred, the next moment maybe it'll be completely filled with bliss, who knows, let's hope.

It's not an act of will, right? We've all tried that. "May my mind be peaceful. May metta arise." I know that sounds like the practice, but I mean just like an act of—okay, may metta arise, may this ill will stop now. It doesn't work. It's lawful. It's not random. But as we've seen, it's not in our personal control.

Because the changes are lawful, in the most simple way: whatever is present in one mind moment makes it that much easier for it to arise in the next. I mean, that's not rocket science, right? You've probably noticed—if you're really angry about something and you really stew on it for a moment, what's likely to be in the next mind moment of consciousness arising? Probably not, "Oh, isn't life beautiful?" It's like, "I can't believe it, I can't believe it." It kind of topples over. As the Buddha says, what the mind frequently thinks and ponders upon, that becomes the natural inclination of the mind.

So whatever mental qualities are arising frequently, frequently, frequently—it becomes a habit. That becomes the natural inclination of mind. But this is equally true for the beautiful qualities as it is for the difficult qualities.

And so this is where it can get really interesting to explore how the mind works. What is the experience, the effect in the mind, in the heart, in our thoughts, speech, and actions when the qualities in the citta in that moment, when the habit of greed or ill will or fear or delusion is running the show? And what's it like when the beautiful qualities are present? To really explore the nature of both.

The only way that is really possible, I think, is what we've been doing here—cultivating mindfulness, this quality of just interested, kind attention. What really helps is to bring this attitude of curiosity to it rather than the attitude of, "Oh my God, this is so ugly to look at. I can't believe my mind."

I don't have to tell you, right? We take it so personally. That's why I love it when Winnie last night gave us the big picture back 25,000 years in time, when we can't really know the cause of anything, but the cause

contains everything. And the night before, multi-universes from Joseph. Go all the way out there back to the Big Bang—and maybe that's only one universe out of multiple ones—or go back 25,000 years or even longer to the first Homo sapien. It's hard to take it quite so personally when you see the aversion coming up in the mind or the wanting coming up.

If you can remember: oh, this is like a scientific, heartfelt investigation, both of the nature of suffering, but also just how does the human mind work? Here's an example of it. They all kind of work the same. It's amazing to think. We all have our different personal stories and personal history and all.

But if we get really interested in looking and seeing, we can begin to perceive the nature of greed. How does it work? How does it do its job, to use U Tejaniya's language? How does aversion work? How does it do its job? How do faith, mindfulness, and wisdom work? How do they do their jobs? And it's mindfulness, of course, that allows us to see all of this.

Coming back to the Buddha's teaching, his pointing to nibbāna as directly visible when the heart-mind is free from kilesa—and the reverse of that being that all of our internal suffering comes from these three roots of greed, hatred, and confusion in our minds. For me, when I look around the world, all the human-imposed suffering out there—not natural catastrophes, but the human-imposed suffering—and we can list it all: war and religious intolerance and racism and poverty and economic injustice and crime and abuse and fear, all of it going on and on and on. You can see it. You can really see it as kilesas acting out through the body, speech, and mind of beings.

When looking on that level, when one has the "noticing the kilesa" lens on, it could be overwhelming. There's so much of it. You can really see it though. But then, when we look in our own minds and see how much suffering arises when the mind is filled with ill will or aversion and it leads to speech or action, how much suffering there is when we're aware of it—then when we notice other people acting that way, that's where the connection comes, the natural compassion.

That doesn't mean what people are doing is okay. Just like it doesn't mean that if I'm acting from ill will and that's really suffering, I should go ahead and break the window because I want some fresh air—it doesn't matter. It doesn't mean we do whatever. It doesn't mean the horrible actions are okay, not at all. But it shifts us from responding from knee-jerk ill will to being able to respond from compassion. That's wisdom. That's the wisdom that changes the whole show.

And that wisdom comes from the steady mindfulness that's exploring these suffering habits in our mind, and all the practices that help us in various ways to shift that. Because just as it's true that all the suffering comes from these difficult states, it's equally true that we—all of us—experience beautiful states as well, perhaps even more so. Moments when we're not driven by greed, by hatred, by confusion.

This is true in the world as well. Look around the world, and if you put on the wholesome lenses—you don't get it so much from the news. Every now and then the news will tell you something really good

somebody did. You have to kind of listen for it. But just looking around the world, there's beautiful stuff: acts of great love and courage and compassion and generosity. Everywhere you look—famous people, people you don't know, little things on the street—when you're looking for that. And we see that in ourselves too.

This is from Ajahn Buddhadasa, from an article he wrote called "Nibbana for Everyone," which should be encouraging. He was quite a scholar, but in this long article he's talking about nibbāna. He writes that nibbāna may be summed up as the coolness of mind and heart that results from the extinction of kilesa, from the extinction of defilements in the mind. Whenever they're not present, there is what may be called nibbāna, whose meaning is "cool."

He's making a pun on the Thai here, because apparently—I don't speak Thai, although I spent quite some time there—a lot of Pali words have made their way into the language. They talk about cooling rice; they say the rice has "nibbana-ed." So he's making a pun. He had quite a sense of humor.

But he goes on to say that because the kilesas, the defilements, are conditioned experiences—aspects that come into the mind and go, as I was describing—they have birth and death like anything else. And when the causal conditions are not present, the defilements simply become extinct. It's not like an act of will, getting out the hammer to get rid of the kilesas. When the causes that are feeding them stop feeding them, they simply don't arise.

It's so much easier than thinking we have to do that. We just explore and see what's feeding it. What starves kilesa? What feeds the wholesome? And by observing this through steady mindfulness—cause and effect—what's so wonderful is that what feeds the wholesome is actually steady mindfulness leading to wisdom. When wisdom recognizes wholesome qualities, they get stronger. We don't have to make that happen. In fact, we can't, because when we try to do it, we only know how to do things from wanting and aversion. But when we notice faith, it brightens the heart and mind.

When we're truly noticing mindfulness and awareness, appreciating them, it becomes so much easier for mindfulness to arise in the next moment. And what starves the kaleshas is the same thing: wise attention, wisdom. When wisdom recognizes what's going on with the kaleshas, it's not an act of "Oh, this is bad, stop." It's more like seeing. So many people have described these little moments of seeing wanting for something—perhaps wanting a particular mental state, as someone was describing—and seeing how the states are just changing, changing, changing, sometimes so quickly. Wanting comes up, and you see the state go away before you even recognize the wanting. It doesn't make sense anymore. You don't have to say, "I'm going to stop wanting that state that already passed." The wanting just dissolves. It becomes extinct simply through the steadiness of clear seeing and wisdom. This is what starves the kaleshas.

So he's talking about this—back to Buddhadasa—that when the conditions aren't present, the defilements simply become extinct. And although this extinction is temporary for all of us, in other words, the coolness takes place temporarily, it still is a phenomenon that has the real sense of nibbana, even though it's not

the lasting one.

Anyone can see, he says, this temporary nibbana which nourishes we sentient beings, though we still will see the difficulties arise from time to time. Anyone can see that if the defilements were with us all day and all night, every second without ceasing, who could ever stand them? Cast your mind back. Do you really, really think that the defilements have been with you all day and all night, every second without ceasing? We couldn't bear it. Under such conditions, we'd go mad.

So let us consider well the fact that one survives because there are periods when the fires of kalesha are not burning. And in fact, we could say that these periods last longer than when the fires are burning. Periodical nibbana keeps us all alive and well without any exceptions. We survive because of this kind of nourishment. This is truly normal and natural.

Just like last week when I was saying to notice not only when the sense of self arises and passes, but also to notice the moments when it's not there—it's equally the same. We bring this interest, this exploration, to how the kaleshas arise and work, what feeds them, what starves them, how they function, how they create suffering, and what helps to purify and shift the habits. We also bring equal interest and non-identification, non-selfing, to all the moments of coolness, of non-defilement, because noticing that equally is equally important. This is really essential to our path of awakening.

As the Buddha said, if it were not possible, I would not ask you to do so. It's not easy. And as we go on and explore, as I mentioned at the beginning, what we start to see in terms of exploring how the kaleshas show up and what helps to purify the habits is that they're tricky little devils. They can be incredibly gross and obvious, or they can be really quite subtle. This is what we want to explore with interest, not taking it personally.

To begin with recognizing how these roots work on a simple level: when you recognize greed or wanting in the mind, when you recognize ill will or aversion, when you recognize delusion or confusion, or you have some vague sense that there must be some confusion because you have no clue what's happening—you can guess there's some delusion going on. That's one level.

But knowing that even in our complex and deeply habituated personality patterns, our deep traumas and sufferings—which are much more complex and which arise for most of us over and over on retreat—it's not that you're always going to see the clarity of greed, hatred, or confusion in the middle of those experiences. But even our complex, difficult emotional states are triggered by one or two of those roots. You may not see it at the root, but exploring how these roots of suffering work on a simpler level is one of the great things we can do on retreat. And then sometimes you can start to see how they function on a more complex level.

We begin to explore how these qualities, when arising in a moment of mind, a moment of consciousness, distort perception and lead onward to suffering. The Buddha once said that lust, greed, hatred, and

delusion are makers of measurement. Makers of measurement. What that means is that they impose limitations upon the range and depth of the mind—creating a sense of here, a sense of there, a sense of somewhere to get to.

I'll give you some simple examples.

I talked some about that last week, but I'll say it again. Noticing when you become aware of wanting in the mind—and this is easier with little things—but we want to get into, "Oh, okay, here's desire," rather than getting focused on what we desire, or why we shouldn't desire that, or talking ourselves out of desiring it, or pretending we don't desire it and going and getting it, or whatever it is that we're doing. What's much more interesting is to take your attention and turn it onto the desire itself, onto the quality in the mind. And notice, just noticing, like it's a scientific experiment. What does it do?

I'll give this example I often use, but it was a good one. I was in the desert in California, teaching in Yucca Valley years ago. I love walking out in that desert. They're very peaceful in the early morning with Joshua trees and a few little animals, but you don't see much. Occasionally there are these large land tortoises, and it's really special to see one. You don't see them often.

So I was out walking and just feeling peaceful and open and present. And the thought came, "Maybe I'll see a tortoise." Which could just come and go. But it didn't just come and go. It landed with wanting, with greed. And this is what keeps thoughts going—it's not the thought. We don't see the greed underneath it, or we don't see the aversion underneath it, even though we may see the thought.

I noticed how this affected things. What had been just really present and open became present *wanting to see a tortoise*. So I'm walking, completely focused, looking, looking, looking, and the mind is like, "That's not a tortoise, that's not a tortoise, that's not a tortoise," looking, looking, looking. Completely different experience. Absolutely the mind is narrowed and limited and measured. Where's the tortoise? Here am I. Where's the tortoise? And before there had been no sense of that at all.

Really interesting. This is what happened. Oh, forget the tortoise. Settle back. Just what is. Notice the difference. The second one is a moment of purity. The greed dissipated. The greed will dissipate eventually because everything changes. Feeding it would be, "Yeah, I need to see a tortoise, I need to see a tortoise." At some point, noticing the tightness, bringing the awareness to the tightness, okay, just let it be. The craving dissolves by itself from wisdom. Playing with that, seeing how that works.

Same thing with aversion. Have you noticed? With aversion, it's more like the mind shrinks back, but it tightens and narrows. Have you noticed how when something brings up a lot of aversion in your mind, you're married to that object just the same way as if you were really grasping at it? If there's a loud, disruptive sound and there's aversion to it, have you noticed how that kind of takes over?

Or have you ever had a time—maybe I shouldn't say this because it'll trigger it for people—it happens to almost everybody on retreat, where all of a sudden you notice you're swallowing a lot. And it drives you

crazy, as if you weren't swallowing before. And then all you can notice is how much you swallow. And the aversion builds, and then you think everyone in the room is waiting for you to swallow. No one else is—I don't know what it is, but it's a well-known meditation phenomenon. Sooner or later, if you haven't had it yet. And then you'll find, a week later or a day later, you never even notice it again.

You wonder, "What was that all about? Am I still swallowing?" What was that all about? It was all about aversion, that's what it was all about. Just boom—it takes over the world. Notice that. The maker of measurement, it shrinks and narrows our consciousness.

And then, of course, as I talked about last week, it's all about me. But one way to understand this sense of measurement—I like the way Sogyal Rinpoche talks about it. He says that in Tibet, when they're measuring to build a house, to measure the foundation and make what we call the footprint of the house, you stand there holding a string. From you, you measure the string out as far as it goes, and then from you, all the way around—that's how you make the measurement of the house. He said that's like the sense of self. Everything's measured from here. Everything's measured from me. Every sense experience becomes: What does it say about me? What does it have to do with me? Just noticing that again really narrows and constricts the world.

And even anything that happens comes to feel like a message from the universe. Have you noticed that? So I was thinking, if that day I had seen a tortoise, the mind goes, "Oh, the universe is really all coming together to show me a tortoise." The whole universe is conspiring to let me have my desire. Or the universe is all conspiring to make these unpleasant sounds happen to me. Why me? It's this sense of narrowing, restricting.

So notice how it works. It works like that for everybody. Notice when it comes, when it passes.

And then as we start to get a feeling for it, there will be times—in our more difficult, really deep strong patterns—sometimes they're just so strong that all we can do is be really present with them with kindness. That's already the purification process. Because the habits, the knee-jerk habits, are that we meet stuff with greed, hatred, and delusion and keep on feeding it. That's kind of what we learn in the world. To meet a difficult state of heart or mind with kindness, with friendly interest, with even just simple awareness—that moment is the purification of consciousness.

We tend to think that purification means this bad stuff is going to stop coming up. When am I going to purify my whole personality? I think I said this last time, but it can't hurt saying it again. I've been waiting. I've been waiting a long time for my personality to purify. And so have my friends. Just in our meeting this afternoon, my closest friend asked, "What's a remedy for her personality?" This is what we live with. No one here—I've pretty much given up. I'm much more at ease with it. That's the purification.

The purification is meeting what's arising in the mind and heart right now. It's not about changing the object. So there will be times when our patterns are so strong, all we can do is meet them kindly. That's

shifting. That's purifying.

But then there are other times when we can start to see—for instance, self-judging, which is a pattern that many of us have. Now I can recognize when it comes into my mind. I can feel the energy like a cloud. And I know it's dosa—aversion, hatred mind. I know that. I know that's the root. I can feel...

Dosa, which is the Pali word for hatred—I actually prefer this term because it encompasses a wider range, all the many gradations of aversion. I can feel it, and I can see how each moment of aversion that I'm identifying with—"Yeah, that is really bad, you are really horrible, you are really hopeless, this shouldn't be happening, you should be better by now"—just distorts the perception and makes the next moment more distorted, more affected by ill will, by hatred. It turns into a downward spiral. Does that sound familiar to anybody?

So that's going to happen. It's going to happen. But what we do is we start to get interested in exploring *ho w*. In these simpler moments of kalesha, we're getting a sense of how they feel and how they function. Then there will be times when the mindfulness is steady and strong enough that you can really explore within the complicated pattern. I can really see the aversion in the self-judging, and I know how it works well enough. I know I can't trust any assessment or any thought that comes out of this mind when self-judging is distorting perception. So when you recognize self-judging and then you're trying to assess how good your practice is, forget about it. Just recognize, "Oh, that's aversion in the mind. Feels like this." That's the shift from being caught to changing the habit. This is what we're talking about with purification.

When I talk about all the different ways the Buddha offered us different aspects of the path, how they're all working and helping us in different ways, shifting these habits—each of these is a whole talk, so I can only mention them briefly. But he talks about three levels, just as a way of describing how these kalesha, these torments of mind, show up in our experience.

The first, strongest level—the English translations are always so Victorian and odd—but the translation is something like "the kalesha of transgression." Let's just say it means you act it out. The greed, the hatred, the confusion is so strong that we speak or act from it. And what is the purification practice for this? It's sila. It's taking on as practice a relationship to the five lay precepts, or the eight precepts, or the 227 precepts, in whichever way we do it.

When the energy of the kalesha is so strong—and we all know this—it comes out our mouth. Or look in the world: people act from it. We can rationalize forever, but you can really see when we're paying attention how strong it is when we act, when we say the thing, when we do the thing, when we steal, whatever it might be. The practice of sila, the practice of restraint, is a very powerful practice of purifying the habits of the mind and heart on this really strong level. And I sometimes think I never quite appreciated it enough.

Restraint—consciously refraining from wrong speech—that's actually one of the wholesome mental

factors in the Abhidhamma. Restraint, wise speech. Or restraining from wrong action: stealing, lying, killing, all of that. Wise action is one of the beautiful mental factors. And wise livelihood is one of the beautiful mental factors.

Of course, you'll still notice we may consciously not act from greed, but you'll still notice the greed in the mind. But there's that beautiful quality of refraining, of restraint, and that's really important to notice. So whatever you have been doing in your life before here, I don't know, but probably there was a lot of refraining from unwholesome speech and action. And here, all of us together being on at least the five precepts—consciously take it in. Notice all the times that you haven't acted out of greed or out of anger. Out of delusion is harder to notice, but those two are easier.

We tend to judge ourselves because we're still seeing the greed: "I'm so greedy and I'm not going to go get seconds on dessert, but I'm so filled with greed." It's easy to sit and judge that rather than noticing the beautiful quality of restraint. And because it's lawful—what we practice, toward that the mind naturally inclines—you start to notice. I hope you start to notice. I'm putting it in your mind to look and see if you notice that restraint starts to come more naturally and easily.

I'm just picking food because for some people it's complicated, for some people it's just an obvious example. But I remember my first long retreat here. I'd be first in the food line, or soon anyway, soon after the food came out. And there was one guy—I didn't know anybody—he would come ambling in twenty-five minutes after the meal was served. And they didn't keep refreshing the food like they do now. He'd come ambling in and there'd be some things left and some things not. And I thought, "God, he must be enlightened."

He just comes in and eats and leaves, and I'll never be like that. But now I notice when I'm on retreat, I don't think about it. It's nothing, it's not an act of will, but just somehow, from many years of practicing refraining in different ways—as soon as you want something, you go get it—no, we don't. Whatever it is, it doesn't matter what. That refraining from acting out of greed is strengthening this wholesome quality of non-greed.

So just recognize that in all your time here, all the moments of the day. It's not every moment—there are moments when greed isn't there. You're not strengthening non-greed; it's already not there. But notice when there's conscious refraining from action, or just when it doesn't arise, when it gets more natural and easy. That's a quality of the habits of mind and heart purifying. Sīla is a powerful practice—conscious conduct in our lives.

Generosity, the practice of generosity—not so much about what one should give, that's a whole other talk—but the quality in the mind of the joy of sharing, the joy of connectedness. It's really a beautiful, joyful quality. You can't share much with things here, and please don't start with each other. But we're giving each other the generosity of heart, the space to be quiet with yourself. That can be a generous act. Refraining from going and talking to someone can be an act of generosity. Appreciate that. That's a letting

go of craving.

This is a whole other teaching of the Buddha, a practice that's really a powerful way of purifying the habits of greed in particular, but also ill will, and also of separation. When you're really offering something to someone, the sense of separation goes away. And if you really are, from your heart, offering something—even a smile—there's not ill will present in that moment. There's open-hearted generosity. It's one of the beautiful states. The beautiful and the unbeautiful don't coexist in any moment.

So there's generosity. The second level is called obsessive kilesa. And this is, I'm sure you know, when the thoughts are just spinning—thoughts of greed, thoughts of ill will, thoughts of delusion—on and on and on, obsessive, obsessive, obsessive. This is one we get to make really good friends with here on retreat. It happens a lot in life too.

And what practice really helps us cool that out, balance that out, is samādhi. So you're going to see this is sīla, samādhi, paññā—the three parts of the Eightfold Path. Samādhi, collectedness of mind, is what starts to purify, temporarily, the obsessive kilesa—the spinning, spinning of ill will, wanting, delusion.

We've talked about how in samādhi, this collectedness of mind, when there's some concentration, the hindrances are kept away. And it's really quite interesting to see, as the mind gets more and more collected—and I don't mean it has to be one-pointed, but collectedness of mind, samādhi, all the samatha practices, all the brahmavihāra practices, or ānāpāna, being with the breath—but it's also what we call momentary samādhi, khaṇika samādhi, which is the steadiness of awareness, of attention, on changing objects, which is very much our vipassanā meditation. With that, as the attention gets steady, steady, steady—have you noticed we've mentioned continuity once in a while?—steady, steady, steady, that's what leads to the collectedness of samādhi.

And as the mind gets collected, the hindrances don't really, they can't really—the strong ones, greed, hate, ill will, doubt—they don't really get in. And as the mind gets more and more collected, more calm, even greed and lust, anger, agitation, don't really arise.

This is one of the reasons people like the collected mind, the concentrated mind, so much. Partly we like it because we think, "Oh good, I'm finally getting somewhere." Okay, that's not so wholesome. But partly, when there's that sense of collectedness—it can be with mettā, or it can be when people come and say, "Oh, the awareness, the mindfulness is just kind of flowing by itself and things are coming and going and there's no real problem. Whatever's coming, it's interesting"—there's a sense of there being no agitation, no anger, no wanting. It's just whatever's coming is seen. That's the kind of purification of mind. The torments aren't arising.

And as one practices, really very one-pointed into jhāna practice, the power of the collected mind gets really strong and you can really taste the sense of purity. But it doesn't have to be that strong. We can taste it, notice what the pure mind feels like—the mind that isn't driven by wanting, by agitation. Sometimes,

before we've started practice, we may have never even really noticed that that's possible.

And when you feel it, even just a little, it's like, ah, just this coolness, this peace. It's the mind that isn't distorted by the kleshas. One person described it to me as feeling like the awareness is squeaky clean—you know, like when you're cleaning a window and it's so clean it squeaks. There's just nothing in the way.

So we notice that. Of course, later greed can arise for it, because this is a temporary purification. But it is really shifting the habits of mind. First we're even getting a sense that this is possible. I remember many times in practice where the peacefulness and happiness of the mind that isn't riddled by kleshas is so much more peaceful and happy than any sense pleasure I could think of. Any. Every sense pleasure starts to seem really gross compared to that. Which is why we can get so attached to certain kinds of concentration. That attachment part comes later, and that isn't helpful. But in terms of the obsessive defilements, it's the collectedness of mind that really helps to shift the habit.

But it's conditional, of course. And so when the conditions that lead to the collectedness change or go away, the habits of klesha can come back in again. Not can—they will. Sometimes, slowly, slowly, the purity can last a while and we can rediscover it. We learn to appreciate it. We learn how to feed it. But once in a while you'll have a period here where you feel really focused, and then somehow it shifts and you feel like you're just hit over the head by some really strong, difficult emotional state. And you go, "How did that happen?" Because it's kind of like the steadiness lifts up and the old habits come roaring back.

So this is the third level, called the latent kleshas—the underlying tendency for one of the kleshas to arise given the appropriate conditions. It's like if the seed is there, you give it water, it's going to sprout. Don't let this one make you feel hopeless and discouraged. But it's why things are going fine, fine, fine, you're really focused, and all of a sudden you let up—oh, let me just enjoy the trees—and whop. Where did that come from?

And it can be little things. Someone told me a few years ago, on retreat here, on a three-month retreat, they were very mindful, noting everything. They were walking past the breakfast table after breakfast was over, just noticing: walking, looking. And then all of a sudden it was like a different part of them—their hand just went out and grabbed an orange and took it and kept on going. And they're like, "What? Where did that come from?" They didn't notice the wanting come up, and the acting felt like, whoa. Not that it was bad to take an orange, but it's just like, where did that come from? It can be like that, very small, or it can be really big.

And so here, what the practice is, is wisdom—clear seeing. The Buddha said these underlying tendencies for the kleshas to come about are not seen through by an act of will or by doing, but by wise seeing. This is where our steady mindfulness comes in—to just be with it, not to fix it or hate it, but to just be willing to stay present. Because we never know when a sudden old habit will emerge. We just never know. I don't

mean this like a scary thing. I mean, this is why we want to take refuge in awareness.

So, okay, two examples to end. One is on the scary side, but just shows how we never really know. When a latent defilement comes up so strong that we act it out, it could be just a few seconds, and it could change our life. I was listening to an interview on public radio last year with two men who were working with young prisoners—young men who were in for life, or for many, many years. And they were talking to one young man who was in for life. They didn't say what he'd done, but some violent things. I'm assuming murder, but I don't know. And he said—this young guy, the men who worked with him were reporting it—he said, "You know, I just wish I had back those three to five seconds of my life where I did this violent act, for which I'm now in jail for life." Three to five seconds.

We never know. Now, the more we have been practicing all these other aspects—of sila, of generosity, of samadhi, of mindfulness—the chances are our habits are really getting so purified that it probably wouldn't come to that for any of us.

But still, we never want to abandon wise seeing. And it's not an act of will that the purifying happens, but simply through watching to see.

I'll end with this last example from a good friend who has told me I can use it. It's mundane, but this is our life—why seeing is what allows the wisdom, the paññā, to arise, which by itself dissipates the habits, changes, purifies the heart-mind.

This friend's family lives quite distant from where she lives. I've known her for about thirty years. It's been quite difficult when she goes home to visit—just her mother and sister now—and it's always challenging. Every time she goes, with all her years of practice, she makes that affirmation: "I'm going to go home and really work with mettā and not get sucked into the dynamics and not get sucked into being negative." Have any of you ever done that? We know how that works.

So she always does this. She goes home and tries it, and it's a really difficult situation with her sibling. After a retreat here a couple of years ago where the emphasis was really on what I'm talking about—just bringing kind awareness to watch the habits in mind and see how they work, trusting the mindfulness to bring the wisdom, and that that purifies by itself instead of trying, because by trying we don't even let ourselves see what's happening—she said she got on the plane and started her usual routine: "Okay, when I walk in the door, I'm going to be really kind, I'm going to be really..." And then she said, "Wait a minute, let's just watch the mind."

So she started watching, and she saw that as soon as she got on the plane, her mind went into reactive mode. She got resentful and resistant. She was saying things like, "Oh, I'm going to just be nice, filled with love and kindness," but underneath she was thinking, "Oh, with Mom and my sister, this is going to happen." She saw her mind, her heart, building up this whole story. And she just watched it—how the aversion was coming as a habit.

When she was watching with awareness, really present with it, that was already purifying, because she wasn't feeding it. And delusion feeds it. We pretend it's not there, and it keeps on working under the radar. So she was watching the whole thing. She walked in the door and she saw how as soon as she walked in, she was ready for battle. She just saw that in herself. Instead of feeding it, it relaxed. And she saw when her sister came, she was ready to have a difficult interaction before her sister opened her mouth—didn't even give her a chance.

She just watched like this. She said it was the best visit she ever had. Because she was able to be with her own process. And just by trusting the steady mindfulness, she was able—not by an act of will, but by wisdom—to see that the processes, the habits, were being purified.

This is what's available to all of us. All of these different aspects support us. So when you're having a really bad day and you don't have one moment of mindfulness, contemplate your sīla. All the acts of restraint. That's wholesome. That's changing the habit of mind from self-negativity, from dosa, to something beautiful. Just for one example.

Okay, that's enough. Thank you for listening.

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