Liberating Simplicity of Awareness

Carol Wilson · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Carol Wilson · 46:22

At the almost end of a day that sometimes can seem rather long, sometimes not—but anyway, it's almost over. And then there'll be another one and another one and another one. So there's no point thinking about it. There's only this moment. And that is so freeing. When there's only this moment, what's the problem? You don't like this moment, okay, but not liking is like this. What's the problem?

What I want to talk about tonight is just basic, kind of 101 introduction to awareness, which many of you who've done these retreats a lot have heard before. But I could remind myself about the quality, the power of awareness every single day and it wouldn't be too much. That's what we're doing here.

I like to call it the liberating simplicity of awareness, of mindfulness. If you think about it, which I often do, this aspect of our experience that we've been talking about—just this simple awareness of whatever's occurring—it's not a thing. It's kind of an activity, but it's a completely normal aspect of all of our experience, completely natural and normal. We so overlook it because it seems like nothing special.

What's amazing to me to contemplate is the incredible power of the steadiness of this awareness when we take refuge in it, rather than taking refuge in and trusting all our thoughts. The steadiness of awareness sets up the conditions for liberating wisdom—completely liberating from whatever's occurring.

Liberation not from the things we don't like in the world. When most of us first start practicing, somehow we think that nibbāna or freedom means all this junk stops happening. Please, God. Things get better. People get nicer. We don't get angry ourselves. Everything just is somehow better.

But the liberation that comes from the steadiness of awareness, from really taking refuge again and again and again, is not from this world. It doesn't remove us from experience of the world. In fact, we just surrender more fully into this moment, like I said in the beginning. The liberation is from the confusion, the suffering, our mistaken and confused understanding of experience, which takes us into worlds of wanting, aversion, confusion, me and other, and all kinds of descriptions of what we think is happening—which isn't happening at all.

The liberating power is incredible. I just want to talk about that tonight, pointing to things we all know but to help us remember, because we forget. We forget to trust awareness, we forget to notice it, and we forget to have confidence in it.

One of the definitions Neal really likes, of mindfulness awareness: Vipassanā meditation is experiencing the mind and body directly—not thinking about it, experiencing it directly—from moment to moment, with the right understanding.

Those are, in a way, three components. They're not separate, but three angles. Experiencing the mind and body directly, from moment to moment—not just once in a while—with the right understanding.

You might think, as I used to think: okay, I forget sometimes, but generally I'm aware, right? I know what's going on. I know I'm sitting here and I'm not in the dining room. I knew when I was eating, I was eating. I'm not completely unaware. How can it be so liberating? What's the difference? How is this mindfulness, this awareness different?

Part of it is that it comes with right view, and part of it is just the quality of the awareness itself.

Ajahn Sumedho—the American monk in the Thai tradition, he's ninety now but still at Amaravati, retired but giving lots of talks that are streamed online—one of his descriptions of awareness, and this is really his thing, his confidence in awareness: Awareness is not about making value judgments about our thoughts or our emotions, our sensations, or whatever's happening. Awareness is simply about knowing these things fully as they are, what they are in this moment.

And knowing means not the knowing of thinking about—"Oh, this is a tingling sensation." It's just that fullness of being with it, knowing it with awareness. Sometimes knowing is used in that way of "Oh, I'm aware of it." Knowing is like this. Not making any value judgments.

Can you just, for a moment, imagine how simple that makes life? Just notice going through the day—you see somebody do something, and the habit of mind makes some little judgment. They mean this, or they have that kind of personality. It doesn't even have to be negative. Just some little summation, putting them in some little box. Why? It's just a habit.

But just think: somebody does or says something, and there's no need to make any judgment about it whatsoever. There's no need to sum it up. There's no need to say that's what the personality is like. There's no need to add anything to it. Thinking about it is one thing, but just notice as you go through the days—in the moment that happens—how it's like, ah, it's so simple. Life can be so much more simple than our mind makes it.

You still know what's happening. You're not stupid. You're not disconnected. You're more connected. When we're caught up in all our judgments—it means this, that's the kind of personality they have, and I wonder what that says about me because I think that about them—that's not simple. That's complicated. And the more that goes on, the less actually connected we are, the less we actually know what's happening. We're living in this world of complication. How long does it take the mind to do that, from seeing to complication? We can get so far so fast.

And in terms of talking about right view, right understanding—when that's what's taking over, all these complications—we believe that. We believe it. And that's not the right understanding that we're talking about with this sense of pure mindfulness.

Another quotation, I think this is also from Sayadaw U Tejaniya: "This awareness is a kind of total freedom to receive life just as you experience it in this moment." A total freedom. Don't think of it—explore it through the day. Something comes up in your mind, you think it shouldn't be there because of whatever. This awareness with wise understanding is total freedom. You don't have to have any opinion. Oh, this came up. It's like this now, in space.

When we're talking about the steadiness of mindful awareness through the days here—the sitting, the walking, the eating, the mindful movement, whatever—more and more you'll be noticing this: what's happening in the body, what's happening in the mind. The reaction in the mind to what's happening is just another mental experience. And as we start to and continue to recognize a simple moment of awareness—oh, not liking is like this—and we're not needing to add anything to it or to push it away, just this total freedom to receive life as it is.

I love these quotations. I read them to myself all the time.

This one is from Sayadaw U Vivekananda. A moment of awareness, pure and simple. Just in a moment. Not trying to create anything. Life is coming and going, doing its thing. We don't have to create anything. Not rejecting what is happening. As things happen or stop happening—a sound, a thought, a sensation, my talking, whatever it is—as things happen or stop happening, don't forget awareness.

And acceptance of an experience—say there's a difficult sound, the experience is difficult, there's aversion, and you're struggling with it—you say, "Oh yeah, aversion's like this." Acceptance of the experience: there's a sense of ease that comes from that. Acceptance of an experience does not mean that we let go of being aware.

I don't know if you can quite follow this. Sometimes when we know we're struggling—I must be in reaction, I must be making a judgment about—oh, judgment is like this, ah, just receiving. And that sense of release, that sense of ease. Then sometime, in the back of the mind, because these habits of wrong view are really very subtle, more and more subtle the more we look—

the back of the mind thinks, "Ah, I got it. I got to the place of ease and not struggling. So that was the job. And now I can quit being aware."

We don't exactly say that. But it's like, "Oh, okay, I got to the relaxed place. That's good enough. Now I can take a break." It's as if we're doing a job, getting to some place. But we're not doing a job. We're not doing anything—except remembering, once in a while, that we can remember awareness. And then it starts to get its own momentum.

All the sixth sense experiences are happening by themselves, right? Sitting, walking, seeing, hearing, sensations in the body. Do you have to look very far to notice something happening? Did you have any moments today when you couldn't find something happening to be aware of? You might have. Completely blacked out, nothing happening. But that's a thought already happening. Sometimes we're looking for

something we think is *worth* being aware of—and that's a different story. But there's always something. Try to stop things happening. That's like a nightmare.

So life is doing itself, with this receptive quality of connected awareness: "Oh, it's like this now. It's like this now. It's like this now." And with that continuity, we start to allow wisdom to recognize more accurately what's happening, rather than our mistaken assumptions.

I want to talk about this sense of right understanding—or as Alexis mentioned, so-called right view. It's tricky using the word "right," because if you say right, then there's wrong. And if we have right and wrong, the habit—at least in English—right away you have a dichotomy. One's good and one's bad. Then we go for the good and we don't want the bad, and we're into this conflict. It doesn't mean that.

But in terms of accurate view, what's meant by "view" here? Really, in the mind, it's how we recognize and understand ourselves, the world, a particular moment of experience. So a view, in the most obvious way, is a belief—a belief system. We all have them. That's fine when we're aware of it. If I have a belief that I'm a Buddhist and I have ideas about what that means, fine. That's a belief, a view. But when I don't recognize that it's operating, when I'm looking at the world through that view, putting it as a template on experience and evaluating what experience means through that lens—and we don't even know we're doing it—that's how we get out of touch with what's happening.

I'll give an example I often use, which is kind of obvious. But first I want to read this from Ajahn Chah. He said, in a nutshell: "The teaching of the Buddha is to transform one's view."

It is possible for the view to change—view of ourselves, view of experience, view of the world. It only requires looking at things, and then it happens. That's really, in essence, what starts to happen and deepens through the steadiness, the continuity of just one moment of this simplicity of awareness. As Ajahn Sumedho says, just surrender—and it's like this now. Without anything extra. And not looking for anything. It's just like this. It's like this.

It's like this.

And gradually, as the awareness gains its momentum, actually the views that we don't even know we're holding start to show up. They start to be noticed with awareness as another thought, as another assumption, as another belief—which is fine to see. But not seeing is like gravity. We don't think every moment about gravity, we don't walk around thinking, "I'm being held down by gravity." That's just how things are.

I'll give you this example. It's a broad example, but it works down to very subtle levels. I've often used this because it was such a fun experience. Some years ago, I was in Burma with friends, and we were with a group of people giving a dāna offering of bags of rice in a poor village. It's all done very formally there, and it's really lovely. It's not like you just buy some rice and make a pile and people take it. You offer it face to face. It's received. There's blessings. It's just a lovely experience.

So we were in this small village offering in this room. And later—you always take pictures, ten million photographs of every dāna offering there ever was, and then you look at them all—so later we were looking at the photographs from a couple of different cameras. And in some of the photographs, there were these perfectly round light circles. Perfectly round.

We're looking at those, and a couple of our Burmese friends said, "Oh, that means devas were there." Devas are celestial beings, they're bringing luck. Devas are said to be drawn to the wholesome, drawn to generosity, drawn to what is good. So there were devas there, liking it.

Then one of us, who was actually a nun but also a scientist, said, "That's not devas. That means there's a little drop of water, a little drop of moisture in the camera." She was positive. They were positive. And our kind of way of thinking was, "Well, which is the right one?" That would be right view—which is the right one? And if I get the right thing to understand, then I know it. That's how we tend to approach it. And that's what freezes us up.

Just to end this story: our scientist friend, a couple of years later, was in Tiruvannamalai in southern India, where Ramana Maharshi has an ashram. On the full moon night, literally millions of people come to do pradakshina, to walk around the mountain. So she was there on a full moon night, with people walking around—it really could be a million people. And she took a lot of photos; she's a photographer. Then she sent me pictures. They had all these perfect light circles. And she said, "Oh. I know there's no moisture in my camera. Maybe it is devas." Who knows?

So views can change. And the point of right view is not putting our belief system onto our assessment of what's happening. It allows for another possibility to emerge. When we know what it is, it slams the possibility shut. And then we can't see—not in this case, there wasn't suffering—but in our own experience, we can't recognize with awareness how confusion and suffering may be arising in our heart due to a kind of mismatch between our opinion of what's happening, our idea of what's happening, and what's actually happening.

We don't see that because our view—so-called wrong view—is so strong we don't even know it's there.

So awareness, with right view, is simply meeting experience, not through the veils of our preferences and beliefs. Just receiving what is, however it is. And we can't just do that by thinking about it, because we don't know what we don't know.

In the Buddhist teaching, of course, the very strong views that arise from misperception—that we don't recognize accurately because our perception is distorted, overlaid by view—what the Buddha always talked about is that we don't recognize the impermanence, the continual changing nature of all experience. Always. Intellectually we may know it, but intellectually knowing is not the same as meeting experience with wise awareness free from any overlay of our opinion. We don't even know it's an opinion. We might say, "Oh yeah, I know everything's impermanent," but in the moment of seeing, there's

an assumption of permanence we don't quite catch. Sometimes. Not always, but sometimes.

These are the examples the Buddha gave, perhaps the most subtle. In experiences of suffering, for example, because everything is changing and we don't realize that, in any moment we place a particular clinging onto some experience: "This is going to do it for me." How often do we do that? We may not say those words, but in our mind it's like, "Ah, now everything's going to be copacetic. I got it." How long does that last?

Finally, we don't see the inherent suffering, the discontent, the dis-ease. We don't recognize it, and we think this beautiful whatever it is—from a brownie to a new relationship, to a new job—this is going to be the thing that makes everything okay. We still don't see that. We see it as beautiful, so we get lost.

And of course the third misperception, which is usually talked about as seeing anything as being a self-existing entity—either me as separate, self-existent Carol, like this, or even this bell as a self-existent bell that's always been like that. One way I heard a Tibetan Rinpoche talk about this recently—I liked it. He didn't even go to self or not-self. He just said the third misperception is that we think we see things how they are, but we don't see things how they are. And we don't recognize that.

I'm sure many of you have heard of Thich Nhat Hanh. He's passed away now, but he was very famous, and one of the ways he would talk about this particular perception—with the bell, with anything—he said the bell is only made up of non-bell elements. Have you heard him talk like that? Whatever you pick is made up of all other elements, and it ends up connecting with everything in the universe. Where do you stop? So there's the bell, there's the metal, there's the fire that shaped it, there's the people that dug the metal out of the earth. How did the metal get formed? How did the earth get formed? How were the people fed? And the sun and the food and their ancestors and the earth? You go back to the Big Bang. You take anything. And is the Big Bang even the beginning of things? Or in Buddhist cosmology, that's just one out of endless eons. So, who knows? And if you're thinking, "Well, I don't believe that," that's fine. Who cares if we believe it or not?

But the sense is that without recognizing it, our habit is to perceive things as separate, ongoing, self-entities. And from that perspective, that's really one of the misperceptions, one of the inaccurate views, that leads so quickly into confusion and suffering from just any simple experience. Do you know what I mean? All of them do this.

Some people, though, find that the way to see this more clearly is in the changing nature of things, and that starts to become obvious. With steady awareness, you can't not notice change. If awareness is at all steady, there's no way not to notice change. Because how long does one thought last? How long does a sensation stay exactly the same?

I mean, if you're really steadily aware, you'll see that nothing lasts for more than a second. You might think it does, but that's because we quit paying attention and we're thinking about it. "This pain in my

knee has been here all day." But if you really just surrender into it, it's changing all the time.

Some people find clarity through the sense of the unsatisfactory nature. You think this soup is going to really set you up for the day. The first bite is so perfect—it's cold and warm and tasty. The second bite, it's nice. The third bite, it's kind of so-so. The fourth bite, you're already thinking about something else. And by the fifth bite, "Yeah, I'm done with this. What's next?" We don't notice that without steady awareness.

And the third one is just that whatever's happening tends to be taken personally. This one is the one that goes so far, so fast. With awareness it's just another thought, another view that's noticed, no problem. It's not that we have to get rid of anything. Remember, awareness with right attitude is not to reject any experience. It's not to make anything happen. It's not to stop paying attention when we feel at ease. It's just to keep noticing.

But notice how with these views that we don't recognize, this is where the confusion and suffering comes so quickly.

Here's an example from a friend of mine. I'm sure you can relate. She went into work, and as she went in, there were a lot of different people in the room. One of her colleagues, as the colleague came in, looked at her with a frown and with a really angry look. But they didn't speak. The colleague went off and was doing their work.

So my friend was like, "Well, what was that about? What's she so angry about?" You see right away—not even a view, just the assumption: she was angry and it was at me. "What did I do?" And the whole day, every time she'd see the colleague from a distance, they didn't have interaction, and the colleague wouldn't be smiling. "Well, what's the big deal?" She's going through, "What did I do? What's her problem? The least she could do is come and talk to me about it." The whole day. Can you imagine? This isn't so far-fetched, right?

This is what we're doing. This is what is occurring. And we think we're present.

In that situation, she might have thought, as she did, that she was aware. She was aware of the look of the person. She was aware of her thoughts. She was aware of being angry. She was aware of feeling hurt. But she wasn't aware of the sense of taking it personally and the assumptions that led to. And that that led to all these different thoughts.

At the end of the day, when she connected with the person, not only was the person not angry, the person hadn't even been looking at her. The person was completely involved in something going on in their life at home and had nothing whatsoever to do with my friend—who had spent the whole day making up incredible stories. And so sure of it.

You see how we do this, right? Can anybody relate to that? This is what we do.

So with awareness, we're not simply going to decide, "I'm not going to get caught in any of these

assumptions." No. But we keep bringing the awareness and say, okay, I feel angry now. As we become steady with awareness, we start to notice more—oh, an unpleasant look. And that's our habit. Something's unpleasant, we don't like it, we pull away, or we get angry, and we take it personally. If she had been smiling, it would have been nice—oh, pleasant. Everything's great. That's pleasant. We feel good, and we take that personally too, though we don't notice it.

This is why the steadiness of awareness is so important. We start to notice: oh, unpleasant look; oh yeah, I feel angry. And then we start to recognize what anger feels like. Remember, we're not rejecting any experience. Any experience that's arising is a doorway, a gateway to awareness. There's no experience that's better to be aware of than another.

The freedom that comes from not getting lost in fear and aversion doesn't come from saying, "Aversion is bad, push it away. I'm going to pretend I'm not angry and make up a different story." I mean, we try that. It works for a little while, but it's not true freedom. Freedom comes from recognizing: oh, aversion feels like this. It's not personal. Through steady awareness, you see how it came about through causes and conditions. It feels unpleasant, it's like this, and it doesn't have to go anywhere. It doesn't have to spend the whole day making up stories.

And then imagine there's no aversion—I'm making this up now—no aversion, you're doing your work, then you happen to catch sight of her again and she still looks really sullen. So you have awareness. Oh look, she looks sullen. Oh no, is she mad at me? Oh, look at that again—taking it personally. And you just see that. You don't even try to stop it, but you see it. It changes everything.

This is where it becomes—it's really sometimes fun, actually—to just be taking refuge in the awareness and watching what comes up, feeling how easeful it is not to make a "me" out of all of it. Not to have to believe it, but to see how it comes to be.

I think Alexis mentioned this, but I'll give you the same example from myself. You know the certain views we have of our personality? I think he mentioned self-judgment, being down on yourself. It's such a habit. And I think as we're looking, we can see how particular habits of our personality have been formed.

For me, self-judging, lack of self-worth—that's a strong one. Going through my life, I can see how it was created through experience. I know how it was created. I know how it's been fed. And I'm really familiar now with how it feels when it comes up. I can recognize it with awareness because it's so habitual. It's a habit based on conditions. The particular conditions present themselves, you push the button, and self-judgment might come up.

It doesn't mean every time it does. Sometimes the condition might be that I'm tired and somebody looks grumpy. Or I could go home and be tired and think, oh, I don't like how I said that. And that could be the end of it. Or that could continue, depending on whether I'm tired and awareness isn't very strong and there's aversion, or a lot of other things happened, or I got a nasty email. All these things come together.

But recognizing how it feels—and it's so clear as you get familiar with your habits and maintain that steady awareness—we can say, oh, I don't like how I said that. Oh, I don't like how I said that. Ah, self-judging feels like this. It's simply the next arising experience. It's arising due to causes and conditions. When it's recognized as simply another condition, it doesn't have to go away. It stops being a problem.

It doesn't start being pleasant. But we're not here to get rid of unpleasant. And secretly, in the back of your mind, keep looking—because it slips in there: *This shouldn't be happening. It's unpleasant.*

Well, every experience is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral in our mind. And they are not all going to start being pleasant. Ever. So get over it.

Unpleasant doesn't have to be a problem. *Oh yeah, unpleasant is like this.* And I recognize that's what's happening. Actually, I don't recognize—awareness recognizes. It's like, *ah.*

We start to... it's not really "we" doing this. I don't know how else to use language. We start to and continue to take refuge in the awareness rather than in the experience of what's happening, what it means about me, or my ideas about what's happening. And sometimes when we really do this—*oh yes, the awareness of self-judgment is like this*—it can feel like the trust, the attention, is really landing in the awareness, because there's a sense of ease even though the thing is still happening.

But for most of us, this isn't our habit. And as I said, awareness is so difficult precisely because it's so—you don't notice it, right? It's always available. It's so close, so much a part of our experience, that we really don't even notice it most of the time. We don't pay attention to it. It doesn't have all the juice. Self-judging? That has some juice. If we want that kind of juice, we can keep feeding it. Awareness is like this—quiet, unassuming. It's hard for us to trust, but that's what these retreats are about.

This isn't about having some great experience by the end. When I go on retreat now, for however long, even if in the back of my mind there's something like—not that *this* will be the one that does it, okay, finally I got over that—but maybe something good will happen, right? Something. I'll feel a little... whatever at the end. But really, it's like this: six days or three weeks or a month or however long of many, many moments to practice recognizing awareness. What a gift.

It doesn't matter what's happening. You're having some really lovely, blissful, quiet experience? Great—awareness. You're walking up and down in a fury? Great—awareness. Whatever is happening all day, in all our activities, each moment is a new moment to practice recognizing awareness.

And each moment, there's no big thing that happens. We don't get lights going off. So we tend to—often it's neutral. And we like pleasant, we don't like unpleasant. But neutral? Boring. Something needs to happen. And often nothing's happening externally, so we make up something internally.

Watch. When I first saw this, I couldn't believe it. I watched my mind on retreat make up a completely unpleasant, suffering scenario of what might happen when I went home—if I saw this person and they

said that. Anger. Hurt. On and on.

But at least there was a sense of me getting upset. It was better than calm. Aware and calm. It's like this. Just to notice that.

So we start to really learn how to have confidence in awareness, and it takes our willingness to keep practicing. Again, with Ajahn Sumedho, I learned so much from him about this particular area because it's what he talks about all the time. Some years ago I was at a retreat with him somewhere, and he was in a group—it was a bunch of teachers, so maybe he was letting his hair down, though someone can't really let his hair down because he doesn't have any.

But anyway, he was talking about how even then, after all these years of really knowing the freedom of this resting with awareness, seeing the impermanent nature of all experience, being fully with it but not taking it personally, knowing that deeply—even so, he was going through a period of really a lot of difficulty at Amaravati, opinions and decisions. And he said, "You know, I'm the abbot and I'm making the decisions, and a lot of people really hate me, don't like me." He said, "My personality doesn't like that. It's really hard, really feeling all the things I feel." And he said he was going through that, and then at some point he made a really firm commitment to himself, a conscious vow in a way, to have confidence in receptive awareness.

He knew that, of course, but there's a way we get lost in our stuff when it's really strong, when external experiences are really difficult, eliciting really difficult internal experience. Caught in our stuff—caught in grief, anger, really resisting or blaming, and really suffering from it. So he made this really strong commitment to remember to have confidence in awareness.

That really means when you're feeling grief or anger or self-righteousness—self-righteousness is a very difficult one—to have confidence in awareness means you're aware of it. "Oh, self-righteous, grief, I see you." But that's not it. Awareness is just right here in it. Self-righteous grief feels like this. Really drop in, but it's awareness receiving rather than being in it. I can't really say it better than that, but explore it. It really feels different. There stops being a fear in that moment of feeling the thing, because it's just what it is, and awareness receives whatever it is.

Once we can see that in the little things, the trust, the confidence in the liberating power of this steady awareness grows in our heart and mind because it becomes our experience, this conscious awareness.

Anam Thubten, a Tibetan Rinpoche, talks about this just dropping into awareness. He says, "Dropping into being the pure witness to whatever is being experienced without holding on to or rejecting any aspect. Dropping into being the pure witness." He was saying that this is true nonviolence, true ahimsa. When we're really dropping into our experience fully like that, the effect is nonviolence, compassion, openness, non-separation. That's what allows compassion to arise, not the fear of what we're experiencing.

But we don't have to go to that level. We simply practice remembering awareness of just this moment.

How's the body feeling? Hearing is happening. There's some thought. You don't go looking for anything—just remembering awareness.

Thich Nhat Hanh calls it coming home. I was listening to a talk of his. Since he died a few years ago, YouTube has so much material—it's amazing. Sometimes I want a little twenty-minute dharma hit, and there's a lot of Thich Nhat Hanh teachings available. Some I like more than others. In this one, he was talking about loneliness and the illusion of connection. He was discussing devices—this was about ten years ago—and how we think we're so connected. We're texting this person and emailing that person.

I'll think, "Oh, in a single day I was connected with people in Singapore, someone in Burma, someone in Indonesia, a couple of friends in Switzerland, then my friends here." And this is an idea—so I'm really connected. But he's saying that's the illusion of connection.

Meanwhile, we're walking and we don't even know we're walking. Maybe you're making your dinner, but thinking about how you're connected with someone in Singapore. You're not actually connected with either one. It's an illusion.

So he talks about the act of just sitting down and being here fully in your body—that's connecting. Feeling your breath, feeling aversion, really present with it—that is connecting. That's really the miracle of mindfulness as he talks about it.

You come home. And you find, as we go through the days here with awareness, in a moment of really connecting—say, with breathing—we're not trying to hold on to it, we're just feeling it. Or you're walking, and ah, just landing, feeling the feet. Awareness doesn't have to be tightly focused.

As we start and continue to just trust this relaxing into awareness, something shifts. "Oh yeah, I'm just walking, coming home." Suddenly we start noticing more. You might notice other feelings in your body. You start to notice thoughts that are coming. You suddenly notice hearing, or feel the coolness of the air, or smell the rain. You're not looking for any of that. But as we take more refuge in awareness, the experience of the world starts to open up—internally, externally—because we're not choosing. He really calls this coming home. And that, I often think, is what awareness is about: not trying to achieve, just being here.

I want to end with one short quotation from Upasika Kee, who was a Thai laywoman from the last century. There's a book of her teachings called *Pure and Simple*. She was a very powerful yogi—and tough. These Thai forest women and men are serious practitioners, as we are.

She said: "What is, is. What is not, is not. No need to add anything extra."

If we could live that simply, just in one moment. What is, is. What is not, is not. No need to add anything extra.

And just in this moment, remember awareness. That's it.

If you're falling on your face and you need to go to sleep, you go to sleep. It's not about what it looks like to anybody else, or even to you. What's happening now?

Okay. Good night.

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