Taking the Practice Home

Guy Armstrong · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Guy Armstrong · 1:00:54

This afternoon I'd like to talk about taking this practice home. Before I get into details of what to do, I want to talk a little bit about this practice as an area for new understandings.

I came into these kinds of practices after I'd been doing Vipassana for about twenty years. I'd been a monk in Thailand and I'd done a number of three-month courses. When I happened upon the awareness practices, it felt like I was exploring a new room in an old house. I was familiar with all the other rooms, and yet there was this one off one of the main corridors I'd never been in before. As I started to know it and get familiar with it, I found that it changed my understandings of a lot of the ways that I'd held practice before.

Some of these we may have talked about in Dharma talks, some of them you may have touched on in interviews, but I wanted to bring out some of the ways that I felt practice changed as a result of learning about awareness and how my understanding of practice changed.

One of the key things for me was that I found a new and immediate refuge. I found something steady and reliable and trustworthy that was in my direct field of experience. The reason it was steady and reliable and trustworthy is that to some extent it was beyond change. It felt beyond change. Whether it is or not, the philosophers can debate, but it feels like that.

In that, there's a way that our center of gravity can shift from centering around objects and what's happening with objects, and even objects of mind. It can shift to this new place in our being that's another dimension. One of the great things about this other dimension is we don't have to produce it. You don't have to produce awareness. It's already here. It's always already here. You just have to tune into it.

We'd say that this dimension of our being, this empty awareness that we come to know as an intrinsic part of us, is an aspect of reality. It's a profound aspect of reality. Düdjom Lingpa, a Tibetan teacher, said that in taking up this practice, one is taking the fundamental nature of reality as the unsurpassable ultimate refuge. The nature of reality is our refuge, and we can touch it here and now.

The second thing that shifted for me is that I really saw the heart of dharma practice. As I talked about the other night, moving from the second to the third Noble Truth, this practice highlights that moment after moment. We're either in the second Noble Truth with craving, clinging and suffering, or we're in the third Noble Truth of temporary nibbana and release and ease.

My understanding of what I was doing in practice started to move to: am I in the second Noble Truth or am I in the third Noble Truth? Am I grasping or am I in empty awareness? If I'm not grasping, then I can

be in empty awareness.

This is pointed to by a quotation from the Buddha when he says, "Nothing whatsoever is to be clung to." That's the pith of that quotation. But he goes on to say, one who has heard this has heard all the teachings. One who has practiced this has practiced all the teachings.

This awareness practice highlights this central point again and again. Is there clinging or is there not? That's basically all we're concerned about.

The third thing that it pointed out to me is it showed another kind of path to awakening or liberation. The traditional path of early Buddhism relies upon these four stages of enlightenment, beginning with stream entry, moving through once returner, non-returner, and arhat, that are usually understood as four successive moments at deeper and deeper levels of connecting to the unconditioned element, direct realization of the unconditioned element, responsible for a moment of enlightenment.

This idea of awareness offers another way to freedom because in it there's the possibility of stabilizing. What is suggested here is that we have the potential to stabilize essentially in this area of non-grasping, the third Noble Truth. You may have felt that at different times in the retreat, that it was so clear and so steady that you felt stable in it for periods. There's no reason that with further meditation and further development, that stability can't go on and on.

Now after a couple of hours of talking yesterday, you may feel it's slightly more remote than it was two days ago. Nonetheless, this is a different description of a path to liberation. It may seem more possible for us because we've tasted that stability, and we know we just need to do it more.

Another way that it shows a little difference in the path is our normal understanding of the Eightfold Path is that we build up wholesome moments little by little, over and over, and they lead us closer and closer to the unconditioned, to the realization of the unconditioned. There's this lovely quotation from the Buddha: "Don't underestimate the value of wholesome moments. By the gradual falling of raindrops, a jar is filled." So accumulation of mindfulness moments starts to fill up the jar, and when it gets full enough, it tips into the unconditioned.

This awareness practice, in a way, reverses the process. It almost starts with the unconditioned. And it says, if you can get a little peek of this thing, trust that. Awareness is like the unconditioned.

When we glimpse it, we're almost looking from the other direction. And then we trust that expanding these glimpses wears away the kilesas. Awareness itself is free from kilesa. It's unstained. So when we can rest there, the mind is temporarily purified. That's the temporary nibbana that Ajahn Buddhadasa talked about. As we rest there more and more, the power of our natural state, the power of this free dimension within us, starts to wear down the kilesa, wears down the obscurations.

Another thing that becomes clear from practicing with this for a while is that now we know what to do in

practice when the mind becomes calm. I don't know if you've ever experienced this, but this happened to me a lot. I'd be with a practice like the breath or even body scanning, and I'd come into this state of calm where there wasn't much going on in the mind and there wasn't much going on in the body. Objects were really quiet. But then what was I supposed to attend to? I'd gotten there by attending to objects, and then what was I going to do next?

Sally talked about this possibility of samatha without support, which I've sometimes played with in my own mind—the way she described it as being with the stillness itself. So that's one approach. But I often felt I'd get to this open space of calm, and I didn't know what to do. I'd just kind of hang out there, but then my mind would drift because there wasn't really a clear place to land. The breath was really subtle, sensations were really subtle, there weren't many thoughts, and I'd just kind of float away into a little bit of distractedness.

Now when I hit that space of calm, I know what to do. I turn to awareness. It's always there. When the mind is calm, there's that foundation of samadhi that makes it easy to connect. A couple of people have mentioned, either in interviews or questions here in the hall, that when awareness is seen clearly, it becomes a very good focus for attention. It's a very clear part of our experience, and it's still and without kilesa. So it's a very good meditation focus when it's available. In times of calm, I find it's the clearest focus available to me. And because I have interest in it, that drift doesn't set in. It just feels wonderful to be in touch with that quality of awareness.

It's so interesting. Someone said in an interview the other day that they felt a timeless quality in this awareness. When they're with the awareness, it felt like it was out of time. And that's true for something that's not subject to coming and going. The perception of time is basically created by change. And when there is no change going on, time kind of falls away as a perception, as a felt sense. So that means we have discovered an element that is beyond coming and going, and it means it's always there—even in dreams.

I don't know if you've played with this at all, but there's this approach called lucid dreaming where you find your meditation subject in a dream. Awareness can be found in dreams also. It's there too. So wherever you are, awake or dreaming, you can find this focus.

Another thing I learned from being with awareness is I really learned the value of non-doing. In standard vipassana instructions, the direction to connect and sustain—vitaka and vicara—is so much at the heart of our meditation practice. Connecting and sustaining with the breath or sensations. Even in choiceless attention, we connect and sustain with objects as they come up. It's a beautiful practice and an essential part of deepening concentration. But at a certain point, that repeated effort to connect and sustain moment after moment isn't needed.

In some meditation experiences, you'll find the effort will fall away. In vipassana practice as well as the awareness practice, you'll get to a point where effort's no longer needed to be with the present moment. But this practice of awareness really highlights that non-doing with the instruction of resting. Once we get

the sense of resting and we have a clear focus—which is awareness—where the attention can go without movement, it really strengthens this feeling, the flavor of non-doing. And in non-doing, the self is really out of the picture. The self has stepped aside, and we're trusting we don't have to do the dharma.

The Dharma starts doing us. It becomes really clear that we don't have to do anything at that point. So there's this beautiful quality of effortlessness, this non-doing that emerges through this practice while still maintaining a clear focus for the attention.

This is the direction that surrender leads to—or that letting go leads to. Letting go guides us into this non-doing. We let go of control, we let things be where they are, as they are, and yet we can still connect to awareness.

This practice also highlights the importance of relaxation. If we're straining, we won't be connected to awareness. When we relax, it's already there.

There's a lovely poem by Angelus Silesius, a medieval Christian contemplative. Of course, he expressed it in theological terms, but listen to the way he describes the divine: "God is a pure no-thing, concealed in now and here. The less you reach for it, the more it will appear."

A pure no-thing—does that sound like awareness? It does, doesn't it? Concealed in now and here. The less you reach for it, the more it will appear.

As we settle into this level of relaxation and opening to what feels like it's beyond change, what seems to be always there, it opens an avenue to devotion. Devotion is sometimes not emphasized very much in Vipassana circles, but it has been a central part of every major religion throughout history.

The Buddha spoke of this after his awakening: "It is painful to dwell without reverence and deference. However, in this world, I do not see another ascetic or brahman more developed in virtue, concentration, wisdom, or liberation than myself, whom I could honor, respect, and dwell in dependence on. Let me then honor, respect, and dwell in dependence on this Dharma to which I have become awakened."

The Buddha is essentially saying that if there is someone more developed than we are in virtue, concentration, wisdom, and liberation, we can honor and revere that person. To "dwell in dependence" means to stay near them and continue learning from them. Fortunately today, there are many beings who are more developed in these ways than we ourselves are, so there are many examples for devotion in the community of senior practitioners.

But we don't have to neglect devotion to the Dharma itself. One thing I've felt, and that I've sensed from some of you in interviews, is a quality of awe and reverence for this awareness and what it opens us to. It's a mystery. How did this awareness arrive in this body? How is it that it can know the phenomena of the world? It can know our own mind. And yet there it is.

When I think about one single element of the Dharma that I can prostrate toward, I think about this

awareness—the mystery of this empty awareness that's always available. I can feel that reverence and respect when I turn in that direction.

Sometimes when I chant the refuges and come to refuge in the Dharma, I think about this empty awareness. That's what comes to mind because of its immediate, felt presence and its liberating potential.

This also gives us a sense of where we might incline the mind toward nibbana. We've talked about how awareness, like the unconditioned, may offer a direct link into the unconditioned, into nibbana, through this notion of Buddha nature. As we direct our attention in that way and feel its quality as a refuge, like the unconditioned, it gives us a sense of what we can release into—that which is beyond change.

Finally, it gives us a sense of the primary importance of awareness. In doing object-oriented practices for a long time—breath meditation, choiceless attention, body scanning, emotional mindfulness—we can really think that Vipassana practice is all about the objects that come into our experience, both the physical objects and the objects of mind. But this dimension makes it clear that there's something holding all those appearances, both physical appearances and appearances of mind. That which is holding them—this consciousness or awareness, this empty awareness—is more fundamental and more of a refuge, more important than any of the individual objects. So it can take us away from entanglement with the object.

When we're paying attention to objects all day long, it's hard not to get entangled. But this gives us somewhere else to be that's not entangled. It offers us that kind of different dimension—a primary dimension.

We've talked about this as empty awareness, the union of emptiness and awareness, the natural state. Sometimes it's also called natural awareness. There's a very beautiful quote on the last page of the study guide about the four faults of natural awareness. I need to correct one mistyped word—when we get there, you'll know it.

The Four Faults of Natural Awareness:
So close you can't see it.
So deep you can't fathom it.
So simple you can't believe it.
So good you can't accept it.

The second "believe" should be "accept"—it's so good you can't accept it.

This is what we've been exploring. This is what we've been discovering. It's so close. That's why I want to emphasize again: it's so close. Whatever you've received as your experience through that movement of turning, trust in that. It manifests differently for different people and differently at different times for all of us.

Sometimes it's just very clear recognition of the factor of awareness. Sometimes it's a heightened

vividness—you turn to awareness and everything kind of lights up. Sometimes there's a sense of letting go—you turn to awareness and there's a dropping that happens. Sometimes you turn to awareness and there's a stopping. The thoughts stop. The projections stop.

Whatever form it takes for you, trust that. Go with that. That's your individual glide path. It will deepen. In its deepening, it will clarify exactly what the nature of awareness is.

Going back into our daily life, how do we work with this new practice? Formal practice is still really important. Even though this gets into the effortless, formal practice remains crucial. This is from Shabkar, whom we've read a couple of times: "Butter is made from the essence of milk, but if the milk isn't churned, the butter won't form. Sentient beings have Buddha nature as their essence, but if they don't practice, they won't be enlightened."

So we need to keep practicing. In this arena, it means we need to keep turning to and recognizing awareness.

I think this practice is really well suited to informal practice times—off the cushion or off formal walking. It's a practice you can truly take with you out into the world because you don't have to locate your breath. You don't have to feel tingling sensations in the bottom of your feet, or anything like that. You just turn and notice awareness, and it's always there. It's always available.

At the end of one retreat, Mingyur Rinpoche gave direct instruction for maintaining this practice in informal times. He said to recognize it one hundred times a day in informal moments. One hundred times a day. I wanted to take that up as a practice some years ago, so Sally bought me one of those ticket counters—the ones where you check people going through a turnstile. I would try to hit one hundred with that every day. It's not easy, but it really helped keep track.

What I found the best avenue for that was boring meetings.

And being connected to Spirit Rock, I sat through many boring meetings. Every few seconds I could do a click on that counter, and within a few hours I'd reach my hundred. Driving might also provide this opportunity, or walking around shopping, or tending to daily tasks—anywhere you have a little free attention available. One hundred times a day really keeps you in touch with the practice.

When we sit down for formal practice, we often discuss this at retreat endings, and we usually recommend trying to sit two hours a day if you have the time. At this phase of your life, that may seem impossible. There were certainly times when I was working full-time that I didn't feel I had time for that. But as some of us in this room are moving toward retirement territory, this may be very possible. The only reason for not doing it might be lack of commitment, so really consider this deeply. If your schedule permits the possibility of sitting two hours a day, take it seriously.

My teachers told me this. Joseph told me this on my first retreat, and I've tried to maintain this for most of

my practice career since then. It's fluctuated depending on my level of busyness, but I find that if I can sit two hours a day, it keeps me basically as balanced as when I emerge from retreat. That practice truly maintains my level of equanimity and equilibrium. Of course, do what you can in that regard. If it's twenty minutes, that's still beneficial and helpful.

Continue to go on retreats, naturally. From the stories of people like Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Mahabua, we know the great masters spent many years in retreat, doing nothing but sitting and walking meditation. That's how they became great masters—that's how the butter gets churned. So do what you can in that regard.

Many people here have done extensive long retreats, so I know I'm speaking to the choir to a certain extent. But I still want to encourage that continuation. I tell myself that every year: Guy, keep sitting long retreats. It remains tremendously valuable for me.

Some have asked where they can do more retreats in this style. It's not easy to find. There's usually at least one retreat a year at Spirit Rock that follows this approach. We advertise it as the Awareness Retreat. Philip Moffitt has been part of that retreat for years, and Sally and I have taught it many times. So there's typically at least one such retreat annually. Sometimes it's part of the Advanced Practitioners Program, and one might need to join that program to access the retreat. But many years, it stands on its own.

Another possibility is to attend one of the longer retreats at Spirit Rock or IMS. These are standard vipassana retreats, but if you want to practice awareness meditation, you can approach your teacher and say, "On this retreat, I want to do this awareness practice. Can you support me in that?" A number of teachers on those retreats could accommodate this. They wouldn't give instructions in the hall, but they could support you in interviews. You could bring recordings of talks from this retreat or other helpful talks and listen to them in the evenings, getting reminded of the instructions while practicing this style among others doing standard vipassana practice.

As many of you know, Sally and I will be offering this retreat again next September—basically the same curriculum, here at the Forest Refuge in September 2020. The application is already available on the website.

There will again be a lottery for that retreat. But we will be doing it again in the fall next year.

So a few words on how to integrate this practice with your existing practices. Sally's just encouraging me to say something about the Advanced Practitioners Program, which she started.

What Sally put together was a series of three retreats over the course of twelve months. One retreat focused on emptiness, one on awareness, and the third on liberation. They're designed for people who have already developed considerable meditation experience plus some study background.

In addition to the three retreats, the whole group—about a hundred people—signs up for the complete

program. You form a dharma buddy relationship where you have regular conversations with one other person. There's an ongoing mentoring group where you meet monthly with people in your geographical area or online if you're in a remote location. These groups are led by a teacher, you have a mentor in the program, and there's monthly homework and reading. So it's a very comprehensive package, and for people at your level of experience, it's an excellent program.

The Awareness Retreat got woven into that program, and details are available on the Spirit Rock website. You can search for Advanced Practitioner Program. There's one currently running, and there won't be another one for a year or two. There's still a description you can read that's quite interesting.

Now I want to talk about how to integrate this practice when you go home with your existing practices—vipassana and metta. The basic suggestion is the way we did it here: continue with your foundation practices.

Remember that we first turned to mindfulness of breathing to develop a foundation of samadhi or concentration. We turned to loving-kindness to further open the heart. And on those two foundations, we moved into awareness practice. So at home also, this is a good combination.

You'll see when you get home how this carries forward for you. Everybody's experience is different. One thing I've found is that when I leave an awareness retreat, it's really accessible for a while. Then, as the samadhi drops off when I move back into daily life, my avenue to awareness drops off as well. So I find it's not as accessible a week or two down the road after coming out of a retreat like this.

I find it helpful in my daily practice to support awareness with a samadhi-oriented practice. Breath and metta both qualify for that. As I start a daily sit, I might do a period of mindfulness of breathing, then check to see if awareness is available. If it is, great—I'll just stay with that. If it's not, then I might do some metta practice, because metta is also a foundation of concentration. Then I'll check again if awareness is available. If it is, I'll rest in that. If it's not, I'll stay with one of the foundation practices.

So really go home and see what your experience is. You don't have to be delicate about the awareness practice and say, "Oh, I better not try it now. I'm not samadhi-ed up enough." Try it whenever you have the inclination. But if it doesn't connect, don't take it personally. It could just be that the samadhi isn't there as the foundation.

I've come to appreciate a lot that if awareness isn't available, using the practices that lead to samadhi in daily life is valuable, because I find that's the element that's usually missing. In my daily life, I don't have the foundation of samadhi—settled in the present moment, the steadiness that Sally's talked about—that I do in retreat. So in daily life, I find a samatha practice like breath or metta very helpful. I do a lot of it. And then if I feel the settledness, I'll turn to awareness. If it connects, it's wonderful just to rest.

So I would integrate it remembering the practices you've done on this retreat and using them as you've played with them here, whatever has been helpful for you. And again, trust what you get when you turn

to awareness.

It doesn't help to doubt what arises. If you have a sense of a shift as you turn to awareness, trust that. Stay with that. It may not be the perfect union of emptiness, awareness, and responsiveness. That's perfectly okay. Something happened. Some shift took place. Stay with that. Rest.

Especially if you have a sense of resting and being in touch with what's happening—the awareness is functioning to reveal objects, you have present moment awareness, and there's a sense of resting—that's a great beginning. Trust that and follow it.

When you go back into retreat practice, of course you might want to dive back into awareness straightaway. But again, I'd recommend taking a little time in your next retreat, even if it's just a week, to build in a little foundation of samadhi. Spend a few days with the breath, or spend a few days with metta, whichever one steadies you better. After that foundation is there, shift into this other gear and go back into the recognition of awareness.

I want to close with a quotation from the Tibetans. One we've heard before, but it's worth hearing again:

"Don't dwell on the past. Don't invite the future. Don't alter the innate wakefulness. Don't fear phenomena. Apart from that, there's not a damn thing." —Paltrul Rinpoche

Questions and Clarifications

A participant raised an interesting question about reconciling different approaches to practice. She had heard the earlier talk about Ajahn Maha Bua's extraordinary effort—sitting all night, every night, for months on end—and wondered how this aligned with the Buddha's memory under the rose apple tree, where he dropped into a very pleasant state of ease. Could this more relaxed approach also be a path to awakening?

The Buddha's recollection of that memory came after six years of the most intense practice anyone has ever described, including extreme ascetic practices. When his mind was finally turned to relaxation, that was the right balance. Then it could open beautifully to the unconditioned.

Our minds are not as prepared as Siddhartha Gautama's was. For us, effort is needed for most people. But it depends on your motivation and what you're aiming for in your meditation practice.

If you're aiming for full enlightenment, as Ajahn Maha Bua was, going full out is probably most likely to succeed. I think of teachers from the Tibetan tradition—Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche said he had spent more than half of his life in solitary retreat. Yet when I met him, he was very light and open and cheerful, not pressing anybody. But clearly he had been doing that intensive work for years and years.

If you want the highest result, you have to work really hard. But that's not the case for all of us. Many would be happy with a level of harmony, peace, good conduct, harmonious mind states, and good

relationships in daily life. That's a noble goal in itself.

This path of achieving harmony through a more relaxed way, still combined with retreat practice and even long retreats, is more realistic for most people these days.

The number of people who are going to go the route of Ajahn Mahabua, even in Thai monasteries, is very small. He's an exception. That's partly why he's a great teacher.

For us as lay people in the West, my view is if you do one retreat a year and keep up your daily practice on a regular basis, you will be well on your way to having a harmonious life with good relationships and wholesome states of mind. That's kind of our recommendation.

But I know I'm also talking to a group where many of you have done long practice and found huge benefit from that. So where there's the inclination to longer retreats, go for it. They make a lot of difference.

Judy's Question: Self-Retreat Practice at Home

I've also done a lot of self-retreat in my home, and I found it a wonderful way to practice when I have the time. Two things about self-retreat that I've tended to adopt and shared with others who found them helpful:

First, make a schedule for yourself. Around a familiar environment, it's much easier to space out and get distracted by email or mail or cooking or anything else that's there in the home environment. So I would recommend making a schedule for yourself that's doable.

When I do a group retreat at Spirit Rock or IMS, all I do basically is sit, walk, sit, walk, sit, walk all day because that's what the group schedule says. I'm carried along by the energy of the rest of the yogis, and that's doable. If I tried to do that at home, I think I would frustrate myself because it's difficult to maintain such a totally intensive schedule on one's own.

So I make a schedule for myself that I feel is doable. For me that involves about six sittings a day, some walking, some yoga. And I tend to study on those retreats—that's when I do my dharma reading, the more challenging dharma reading where the mind has to be slowed down to get into it.

You have to figure out the schedule on your own. See what works for you. See what's doable. But those are the elements I'd recommend: make your schedule, include some walking periods, some yoga or movement, some time for study, and listen to dharma talks in the evening.

Roger's Question: Other Traditions Teaching Natural Awareness

Regarding attending retreats by teachers in other traditions whose teachings are along the lines of this natural awareness—I would recommend it.

The two that I've practiced with are Sotni Rinpoche, whom I've mentioned, and Mingyur Rinpoche. The

difficulty is that with those teachers, they teach a lot of different styles of retreats. Mingyur Rinpoche has become so famous in the West that it's very hard to get any personal time with him. His retreats have a lot of people, and only a few retreats in a year will he teach that are open to people like us, where he'll give the depth of instructions in this technique.

So you want to look to see that if you're going to go to a retreat with Mingyur Rinpoche, it includes what's called "pointing out instructions." That means he's going to teach on the nature of mind. The same is true of Sotni Rinpoche, who I've sat with much more. I found him a very reliable teacher, but he teaches many retreats that are not nature of mind retreats. Again, you have to look at the course description and see if it says "nature of mind."

If you have an opportunity to sit with one of those teachers and they're teaching nature of mind and offering pointing out instructions, I think you could find it really helpful.

Michael's Question: Staying Connected During Cognitive Tasks

The question is how to stay connected with this practice while doing more cognitively demanding tasks.

And this is a challenge because if thinking is involved in what you're doing, it's hard to be mindful and think at the same time. The mindfulness of thoughts usually interrupts the flow of thoughts. So for instance, when I'm writing something like a talk or when I was writing the book, I didn't feel it was practical for me to be mindful and write at the same time.

So with that kind of cognitive activity, and this is probably true for a lot of desk jobs, I would just try to come back into my body periodically, regularly, and check that I still felt balanced. I think keeping an eye on when you're involved in work like that is sufficient—is the mind going out of balance? Am I getting involved with grasping, proliferation, unwholesome emotions coming up?

Now, listening to a podcast is in a different territory. It's like listening to a Dharma talk. And I find that in listening to a Dharma talk, I have fifty percent of my attention in the words of the talk and fifty percent on, say, my body. And there's enough processing power to hold them both. So I find that very doable, and this practice would be great for listening to a Dharma talk. Keep fifty percent in the awareness and fifty percent on the content. Not that much gets said in a Dharma talk, really. So I think you could do that.

But other things like writing, where you're really having to think, or an architect planning a building, I think it's much more difficult. And then the important thing is keeping an eye on whether your mind is staying in balance.

The question is how to do the two hours a day. Any way that works for you. For me, it's generally been one hour in the morning and one hour at night. But if you wanted to sit three forty-minute periods, that would also work great. So it's sort of what your time allows and just see how it adds up. And when you sit them just depends on your individual schedule and what works for you.

Actually, for a long time, before I hurt my back, I was sitting two hours before breakfast every day. I'd do an hour of sitting, half an hour of yoga, and another hour of sitting. Other times I'd sit for an hour in the morning and an hour when I finished work in the evening. It just depends. Whatever adds up.

Teachers in our Sangha who would be capable of instructing and guiding in this practice: Sally Armstrong, I think, is pretty good. Joseph Goldstein can. Philip Moffat has spent a lot time in this territory. Adrian Ross has taught these retreats quite a bit.

You know, as Michael was saying, it depends on the flavor, like Andrea Feller and the Utajaneya style. So Sally's bringing up what Michael referred to, the Sayadaw U Tejaniya style. I don't regard it as equivalent to this. All apology to Sayadaw U Tejaniya, whom I respect a lot. It's a different practice. So if the practice you want is knowing awareness or mindfulness of consciousness, Sayadaw U Tejaniya's approach is different from that. So the teachers who teach roughly along the lines of mindfulness of consciousness, I think I've named the ones that come to my mind.

Oh, Suzy Harrington. Yeah, Brian Lesage. Yeah, Suzy Harrington and Brian Lesage are leading the current APP program along with Don Scott. You could get more information from Don about APP.

It's interesting. Robert Reyes' book wasn't on your list of...

So the comment was that Rob Burbea's book wasn't on my list of suggested readings on awareness. There are two reasons for this. One, I haven't read it yet. The second is that my understanding is he focuses more on emptiness than on awareness, so I don't know if he has the kind of awareness approach that we've been exploring this week.

Oh, and the suggested reading list is posted underneath the bulletin board—it's a little half-page list of books. If you haven't picked one up, there's a copy for everyone.

Well, this is about where we were planning to wrap up. So why don't we just have a couple of minutes of sitting together?

Actually, Sally had the brilliant idea to take a group photo. Are you all up for that? She's brought her camera, and we thought we would gather up here because there's a little more light.

I think we're going to need to arrange ourselves in a few tiers to get everyone in the frame—some people standing, some kneeling. For those who have their zabutons here, you can just bring them over and face this way.

So you are now released on your own recognizance. We'll come back here at 7:30 for our course closing together. And remember, silence returns at 5:30, please.

Transcriptions produced locally using Swiss low-carbon electricity. Corrections and rewriting by cloud-hosted AI.