Voice, Movement, and the Possibilities of Soul (2)

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 53:37

I'm very confused. It's hard to tell for me right now what's needed.

I had planned to continue our exploration of movement that we started the other day and do some different things with that. But I just can't tell if it's the right thing. Maybe it's the right thing for some of you and not for others. So I'm going to give you the problem instead of me.

What do you feel would be helpful now? Would it be helpful to continue your practice in silence? This is a question for each of you rather than coming to a committee meeting decision together. Would it be helpful to continue in silence and more stillness? Or would it be more helpful to continue exploring that thread of movement that we started the other day?

Asking what is helpful sometimes is not easy because sometimes we have a certain inertia or a habit pattern in one way or another. We tend not to like to move because we're just used to being still, and sometimes there's just sluggishness or a habit of being still. Or sometimes we want to move because we don't want to be still, and it's just a kind of reactive thing.

I don't know. But if we give each of you the choice, then for those that want, we can continue to explore the movement as we began two days ago. For others, we have a kind of free schedule this afternoon. You can walk or move outside or practice sitting outside and come back later. How does that sound?

Let's just take thirty seconds together and see what the kind of guidance is, which is different than just habit. You understand? There's really no right or wrong or better or worse option, just see if you can get a sense of what would be fruitful for your practice at this time.

The mats are going to be cleared, so whether you're staying or going, perhaps if we could move the mats, and then those who don't want to stay can have a free practice period outside. You can sit in the lounge if you want somewhere indoors to sit in meditation. Some of it was a bit intense for some people last time, so it won't be so intense today, just so you know that.

So if we move the mats and make your choice, and then we'll see who's left.

Okay, so again, if we can spread homogeneously through the space so each person has some room. Two things, as before: it's all optional. The whole thing is optional, as I just pointed out, but also any part of it is. I've done something relative to my back and ribs, so I'm not going to be hardly moving at all. So if any

movement doesn't feel right, don't do it, or just adapt it to what your body can do safely for you right now.

Let's just start again feeling the contact with the floor, feeling that rootedness, feeling the uprightness of the body. There's the gravitational pull and there's also a line of energy up from the earth, and the body gathers, organizes itself around that vertical with the sense of contact. Then the whole body as a field of awareness, a field of bodily texture, vibration, energy.

Taking just a minute to move your body however you would like in a way that just feels like it helps to loosen it up a little bit. So whatever that is for you right now.

Great. And feeling the contact again.

Now, the other day you all channeled with remarkably intimate insight this state of a drunken person. I was really, really impressed. This same friend of ours has been invited to a disco party—a seventies disco party, not trance techno. And they're even more plastered now. They're a really bad dancer. They have no idea that they're a bad dancer. They're loving it. They're totally into it.

Just for a couple of minutes, channel the boogie. You're really, really uncoordinated. It cannot possibly look good. You can hardly keep balance. There's not a trace of self-consciousness.

Yeah, okay, that's great. That's superb. You guys really know this. Wonderful.

Now, last time we did this thing with the fierce warrior, I want to tone that down a bit or take a different approach. Actually, I think it's better for this if, as much as possible, we arrange ourselves so you're facing the wall. So you're really doing this in your own space, kind of toward the wall, rather than in other people's faces. Perhaps we could form two ovals—if people face the wall, then it might leave people in the middle forming a smaller oval. Maybe I'll go into the middle to help with the arrangement.

Now we're going to do this two ways. There won't be any vocals with this one like there was last time with the screaming. So it's just with the body.

Catherine, can you demonstrate that? Yes, so this time it's like that—not like Gandalf. Again, it's this warrior who's got tremendous power in their legs, in their hips, in their pelvis, drawing energy down into the ground from the earth and down into the earth. But they're expressing this—I'm not going to do it myself—by stomping.

Catherine will demonstrate in a minute. But again, if you have any physical fragility at all, just temper your stomping. You've got to stomp, though. You can have a staff if you want. You can embellish this as you like.

Let me explain the two ways we'll approach this. The first way is to let the movement lead. So you do the movement, which is basically stomping with as much energy and awareness and intention and power and force in the lower half of the body. Then see what that brings up or what you're aware of energetically, or

perhaps imaginatively. The movement leads and the awareness notices. Does that make sense?

What's that? Perhaps people don't know what stomp means. Do you want to show them?

[Catherine demonstrates]

So that's quite a vigorous stomp. My vertebrae would probably just crumble if that happened, but temper it to what your body can actually do. That's great. And you can do one after another. So just something from the body and let the soul be aware of what happens through the body. Does that make sense?

So let's go with that. When you're ready. Take your time as well. You can pause between stomps. There's the energy body awareness, there's imaginal awareness, simple mindfulness, emotional awareness—just see what you notice. And then maybe you want to stomp and let it resonate after the stomp in the stillness, and see what you notice resonating in the stillness, if anything.

Please respect your body.

[Practice period]

Okay, that's wonderful, thank you. Now, slight variation on that.

Yeah, take a moment to let your body rest a little bit.

Now for a slight variation. This time, an image leads, but it's a deliberate prescribed image of some kind of warrior, as I was describing—someone who embodies this quality. How does that warrior move?

You have a small space to work with. How do they exude and demonstrate the ferocity and power and strength that they have? None of this means badness ethically, or evil, or any of that business. So it might come out something very similar to what you just did, or it might come out different. Maybe your arms are involved, maybe your mouth is involved, but we're not vocalizing at this point.

You understand—the image leads, and see how the body enacts that image. When you're ready.

Perhaps there's a kind of feedback loop between the gestures that you make and the movements, and then the effects of those movements in the psyche. And that shapes the next movement, or what you want to do, or whether to be still. Do this in a rhythm, at a pace that enables you to also be sensitive to the effects and the feelings—emotional, sensational, energetic, imaginal.

How does your belly feel, your lower belly? What is the sense of the vertical alignment of the body? And also the alignment of the intention?

Now one more variation. Let the space of this hall that we're in, allow an awareness of that, and how does that influence the movement, influence the expression or transmission or enactment, embodiment? So there is a wider awareness—yes the body, yes the emotions, the energy, perhaps an image—but somehow

it's connected to this space and the physical dimensions, geometries and actuality of this space.

You might have no idea what that means, but just what happens if you include that in the awareness? Stay facing the wall. You might want to glance at the room, just remind yourself what it looks like, but you probably know by now. And anyway, if it's an imaginal space, that's also fine. See what that does.

Again, in the time, the tempo, the rhythm that allows you to notice as much as possible as well. Same warrior, but in a certain space to which the senses are open. There's some kind of intimate connection, almost a physical connection between this warrior, their movements and the walls and the space of this hall. Some mysterious, almost physical, energetic, imaginal connection. They are two and they are one.

In the last few seconds for this warrior to exude in the body their essence, their being, their duty.

Lovely. Thank you.

Take a breather, maybe just a little bit of loosening of the body after those jerky motions, whatever needs to shake and loosen. Some breaths.

The next one—many of you will be familiar with this kind of movement. This one I can actually do. The hands come to the lower belly, like that, however that feels right. And then with the in-breath, they expand out like that. And with the out-breath, they come back in. See—big. Simple as that.

Your legs probably hip-width or even wider apart. Some of you will be familiar with this movement from certain other practices. For those people, I wonder—it would be really interesting to not just go straight into the usual way of seeing it or conceiving of it or interpreting it. That might be quite interesting. Can this become a movement that's open to other ways of sensing it, other ways of imagining it?

So it's really just that. And you can, if you like, feel yourself again really rooted with the floor, the connection with the floor, and perhaps centered, as if the center of your body is the lower belly, if that makes sense. And then you're breathing from there out into the world, or breathing in the world and then out, something like that.

Good enough? In-breath, the arms come out. Out-breath, they come back in.

If that feels wrong, switch it around. Just see. There's not like a right or wrong here. We're just partly developing different kinds of sensitivity. So play, yeah? Okay? Ready when you are.

And like with all of these things, there's the possibility of pitching the sensitivities, the noticing, the awareness at different levels. No right or wrong. So it might be simple mindfulness, just the sensations, contact with the floor, of the arms, of the breath. It might be energy flows or movements. But it might open up, could be emotional awarenesses, could also be imaginal awarenesses. This body with these gestures, these movements, this flow.

Again, when you feel ready to add to it the dimension of the awareness of this space, the geometry, the

physicality, the corners, the ethos of this space. So the gesture, the movement and the space are connected, somehow mysteriously intimate, reciprocal, in relationship. They are two and they are one. They are one and they are two. And see what helps. Eyes open, eyes closed. It could be sensational, emotional, energetic or imaginal. What you notice. There's no right or wrong.

What is this body? Is it really just what I think it is? What I'm used to thinking it is? What I was taught it is? And what is this space we are now in together? What can it be?

Again, when you feel ready, adding, opening up just a little bit further, not just to the room, but to the world. The whole world. The earth with all its beauty, all its creatures, all its craziness. Maybe even the cosmos—the stars, the galaxies, the interstellar reaches. See how wide. If it feels better, just the earth, just the world, or even wider.

But this movement is in relationship somehow—self and world, body and other bodies, other forms, space. What can happen in your sense of this movement, in your sense of what it is, what it does, what you are doing, what is being done through you?

Just last few seconds of this one. Taking your leave of this particular window, this particular contact, this particular love. A little bit of wriggling, shaking, just to loosen things up. However you like.

The next one is vocal. And again, we'll do it two ways. Firstly, just the vocals, and then secondly, the vocals and how does your body want to move with those vocals. I don't know, it's probably got a name, someone might know, but I'm just calling it a throat hiss. So that's it.

You can just be still and do that, and again, you can see what's the most helpful. Right now, for me right now, what's the most helpful pitch of the awareness? If it's just, okay, so there's some sensations in my throat, it's good to be aware of. Does it do something emotionally or imaginatively or energetically?

And then let's just do that with just the voice. You get this? Throat hiss? Make sense? Sure, it's a to the wall one, yeah. But be aware if your mind puts this in a box or an ethical box. And again, let the rhythm be so that you can also pick up on any resonances or anything you notice in the body, in the heart, in the image, in the energy.

Okay, wonderful. And now we'll add the possibility of moving in any way that feels right, which might be you stay completely still.

Just as it was just now. But how would the body or how does the body want to move? Perhaps in conformity and expression of an image that goes with this, or just the energy or something. So this time you can move your body as feels somehow like it goes with these vocals. If there is an image, let the image lead.

Ready when you are. And again, maybe there's some echoes when you come to stillness and quietness, and then you can do it again. So if that helps, that kind of rhythm helps to see the reverberations, the

resonances before you start again in your own rhythm, whatever feels helpful.

Just a few more seconds on this one. Thank you, that's great. Just coming to stillness and let your body relax. Stillness and relaxation.

Next one. Very, very subtle. Very, very simple. Again, it's okay if your body is just rolling the head. That's it. Standing and just... I would probably do this with the eyes open. It's just that—one way or another rolling the head, but how much in the simplicity and the smallness of the movement can you see how delicate the awareness can be? What you might notice in the sensations, in energy or an emotion that might go with it, or image.

Aware of your whole body, aware of the whole energy body. There's no particular thing that's supposed to happen. Who is it who is moving their head this way, whose head is moved this way? Who is it in response to the universe?

And very gently, can you bring this movement as you continue to do it into relationship with the molten core of the earth and with the stars? Somehow standing on the earth, the body upright and open and sensitive, between the mystery of the stars and the heart of the earth. And you and this body plunged into mysterious, inexplicable manifestation in this cosmos.

Just noticing what you notice with all the sensitivity, all the care of sensitivity that you can bring. And then coming to a close of this particular movement, taking your leave of that particular window.

And the next one, Catherine, do you mind demonstrating? So if you can all see Catherine. Oh, if big people need to crouch. So legs are going to be hip width apart, something like that. And the movement is just centered at the pelvic floor, or definitely the lower belly or even lower, and it's just a rotation. Either way, whichever feels right.

And at the same time, there's a vocalization, just R. But the R... Can you do it? And I'll talk as you're doing it. So the three parts: pelvic rotation, R, and then whatever feels the right thing to do with your arms.

Yeah? You've done it before. You did it at my house, yeah. So that's where it gets... See if it can start down where the movement is coming from. So it's really quite a low R. But as you're doing it, it might feel like actually it feels more right for it to come somewhere higher up in the body. So just kind of see what's right. And the arms can do whatever they... when they feel it. A steady pitch. Yeah, probably a bit more in the hips, like a bit...

That's a good point. So now, I'll just speed up the process.

Thank you to Catherine from Croydon.

So, just one more time. Let me explain this clearly. Got it? And then I'll throw in just a few little variations. Is that okay?

So, basically, from the pelvic floor, as low as you can get, there's this kind of rotation. What kind of rotation? A really subtle one or a really big one? A fast one? A slow one? What feels right? What pitch feels right?

Try first as low as you can go with the sound, like it's really coming from the belly, but maybe later it doesn't feel right. What kind of arm movements do you want to do? It's okay?

So, when you're ready, just play with it and experiment and see what feels right. Whole body awareness but almost centered at the hips, at the pelvis, pelvic region, belly, lower belly.

What do you notice in the sensitivity? Sensitivity. That's wonderful. Thank you.

So let's try one more thing, but it's a solitary, still meditation. Actually, I'm wondering practically about how long it will take to get back the cushions. Well, we're going to need to do it anyway, so why don't we do that now? See if you can do it with the whole mindfulness of the energy body, so don't lose the holding of that awareness as we put the room back together.

Once you're settled, just come into your meditation posture and the meditative awareness with the energy body, with the poise of mindfulness and sensitivity.

I'm going to give you a few options—you've actually heard them before. We'll just spend a few minutes on this. If we had longer, you could probably go through each of the options. But just explore what you feel drawn to of these different variations.

With all the energy body awareness and the sensitivity and in your posture, you bring, you call up something that either has been an image for you, or is an imaginal image, or that has come, or one that has touched you, or something that you have felt that imaginal connection with, as Catherine was talking about—the sensing the soul. It could be something out in the garden, it could be this place, it could be this hall right now, anything like that. Deliberately summon, invite this sense of that presence.

Then the options are to keep the physical body still and see how the energy body might move in relationship to this image—this might be a tree or whatever it is. Or you can actually, in your place, move a little bit. So instead of keeping the physical body still and just feeling that kind of imaginal movement and energetic movement, you can actually move a little bit. So that's two options.

And then it might be that the image is other. How do you move in relation to that image? So it might be a kind of devotional or some kind of erotic dance, or you might be receiving something from the image. Or you might enter that image and, so to speak, become that image. So it's no longer other. And how does that image move?

So there are a few different options. There's no right or wrong—they're just different variations of possibilities.

It's just that—and we'll spend a few minutes together opening up that option—there's a deliberate instruction here, so don't just sit and watch your breath or something like that.

So let's try that together. Does it make enough sense? Good.

First you have to invite the image with respect and come into relationship with it, just with sensitivity, with care.

Sometimes it's a fuller, richer experience if the physical body is still. It's interesting. And sometimes the opposite—fuller, richer if the physical body actually moves and enacts something.

Allow whole body awareness. Sometimes the movements that the energy body would make or is making are not actually physically possible. They don't even make sense anatomically. So be open.

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