

# Bodhisatta's Birth to Renunciation

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Dharma Talks · 46:02

---

*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sambha Sambhudassa Namō Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sambha Sambhudassa Namō Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sambha Sambuddhasa* — Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

I hope you don't draw any meaning from that small hesitation. The mind suddenly stops.

I just wanted to carry on a little bit with the Buddha's life and something I should have actually said in the last talk, but better late than never. The idea of spiritual reading as opposed to the way we would normally read. So we normally read really with an effort to accumulate knowledge, trying to gather information. But spiritual reading for spiritual purposes was developed I think best by the Benedictines. And they had these three methods called *Lectio*, *Meditatio* and *Contemplatio*. So one reads a book, an inspiring book rather than something like a — say a book by Ajahn Chah or something like that, which is written from the heart rather than an academic book, although even academic books can inspire.

And you read it as if you're reading poetry or listening to music. You're reading along and, of course, it's going in, whatever you're saying. And every so often there'll be a paragraph, a sentence or a phrase which seems to hit, to catch you. And what you do is you keep repeating that until, as it were, you've absorbed it. Like you might listen to a piece of music over and over again or read a poem over and over again. You're not thinking about it. You're allowing the heart to grasp it, you might say, an intuitive feel. And then when you feel you've had enough of that, you just stop still. And maybe some thoughts come around it, some ideas, some thoughts. So you can follow them for a little while and develop them. And then you just drop them and you fall into silence. And then you go to the next passage.

And what you may find is it has an inspiring effect. It makes you want to go and sit, as it were. And it's interesting because it pops out when you're talking every so often. You haven't tried to remember it or anything, but it's there, as it were, more deeply absorbed.

And in a sense, that's the purpose, really, isn't it, of all art, is to allow us to re-experience in our own way what somebody else has experienced. T.S. Eliot called it the objective correlative. Need I explain? What he meant by that, as I understand it anyway, was that I have an experience and I want to pass it on to you. I have to find some symbolic way in which your heart and mind can, as it were, communicate with me or with my mind. So I have an idea, say music, it comes out as a feeling, say joy for a start, as something different. So joy comes up in the heart and I'm a musician and so I want to express that joy and express it through a certain medium. And it's specific culturally, isn't it? Unless you've listened to, say, Chinese or Japanese music or even Indian music, you've got to get into that symbolism, that way of expressing these

particular emotions and understandings, music understanding. And that way, we two people can communicate at a deeper level than just an intellectual level. If I say I'm depressed, that's one thing. But if I write a piece of music that makes you depressed, then we have some deeper communication.

So when I'm going through the life of the Buddha here, I'm really just allowing thoughts to arise in that way and just to see what comes up. And often when I go through the same thing, different thoughts come up because other information from somewhere else has come in and other feelings come up. So every time I reread the life of the Buddha, there's always something new comes up for me around it. So this isn't an academic approach. Whether it's history or myth, it's in a sense immaterial because it lies there within the Buddhist tradition as an archetype, as an exemplar whom we're following. And anyway, I'm not an academic. I'm a would-be academic. So you have to take everything I say with a pinch of salt.

So the first thing is that we got to the point where he was about to be born. And he was born somewhere around 2,300, 2,500 years ago. And when you consider that, the length of time, and you consider how many religious leaders have probably appeared, started something, and then their offering, their teaching has disappeared. One example of that would be, say, the Jains. The Jains, if you look at the ancient maps, were, I think, just about as numerous at some point, maybe even more numerous than Buddhists in India. But somehow they fizzled out and are now down to somewhere around 3 million, which in the population of India is very small. Which doesn't mean that the teachings of the Nagantha were wrong or anything like that, but there's obviously some feeling there of fading out. I mean, it may grow again. But there's lots of little religions, and especially these days, you know, with gurus popping up here and there, and then that sudden rush of interest and it builds up and then it slowly dies away. So when you think that this is a 2,500-year-old tradition, you know, that inspires faith and inspires a certain trust.

So remember that faith in our understanding is not a belief. A belief is putting faith in a statement. So if you were to say, I believe the Buddha was enlightened, you're in great danger of being deluded. There's a difference in believing it, in believing that statement, and in trusting it. And in a sense, we don't know, do we? We don't know what the hell he was talking about until we get there. And when we get there, we don't know whether it's the end. There may be something more. Who knows? So it's a case of trusting, and the trust grows as we practice because we get the benefits of it. And that leads us towards that goal and hopefully we get a peak of it, a little touch of it, and then at that point that faith becomes immovable because now we've had a taste of that end that we're moving towards.

So when we consider that for 2,500 years millions of people have been practicing in this way and have been considering the life of the Buddha, and it's affected them, and cultures have grown around it. One, it's part of the basis of our faith, the fact that it's been such a long and deep tradition, and that it's spread over cultures. So obviously similar to Christianity and Islam, which have been able to go beyond greatly their cultural bounds and move into different cultures, being developed by them in their own way. And so there is, I think, that trust comes with something which has such an ancient history.

So that's something that, you see, in the sense of this meditazione and all that, thinking of that, it raises that feeling of faith. It raises that feeling of trust, you see. And you stay with it. You delight in it, you see. So remember that part of our practice is going through all this hell stuff. But the other part is developing what is beautiful in us. Just when something joyful comes up, don't kick it out. Say, oh, where's all my depressions and anxieties? It's a case of when if you're reading, say, in the library or you're listening to a tape and suddenly you get this lovely piti come up, this joy around the teaching or this interest, you see, then stop the tape, stop the book, you know, and just stay with it, you know, and let the heart absorb it. Don't rush through it, as it were.

That age, of course, just as an aside, was quite an age for human beings because at the same time there was Moses, it was Lao Tzu in China, Socrates. And it's known in the history books as the Axial Age. Something happened in human consciousness. Something moved, something turned. And from that you can say history begins. Written history, the history that we know, actually begins around about that time. History in India begins with the life of the Buddha, frankly. That's when it begins at that time. History in the sense of facts begins.

So anyway, he's born, and being a very advanced being, he's chosen his mother and father, and seems to have chosen rather well. He's a local potentate, and his mother also belongs to a family which is also rich and powerful. He's got the good *kamma* there, you see. And as you know, she wants to go home to have her child, and he's born under these Sala trees on the way. She gives birth in the park at Lumbini.

So this is the theme, isn't it? The Buddha and nature. He's born under a tree, he's given the light under a tree, and he finally dies under a tree. And that connection with nature, something that in our society, obviously, you can lose, especially living in a city. I remember I was once out in a meditation center and this little chick had fallen on the ground. It had fallen out of a nest. And being a townie, I just looked at it and wondered what to do, you see. And I'm looking at this chick thinking, now, what do I do with this, you see? So I went down to pick it up and put it on the wall just in case the cat would take it, you see. And as I bent down to pick it up, it bit at me and I leapt out of my skin. This little tiny little bird's scaring me to hell. So eventually I did finally get it on the wall and I don't know what happened to the little thing. And I was saying afterwards, probably if I'd have found that in the town, I'd have probably stamped on it and put it in the bin. That's how detached you can become from living beings and nature.

So, again, it's a case of just recollecting on those things and what nature means to us. Walking in nature, being close to it, hugging a tree occasionally. How close are we to the ground, to the actual earth that we live on. Do we ever sit and consider how we are utterly dependent on what the earth is giving us in terms of the produce of the ground? The air that we breathe, things like that. The water that we drink. And that understanding of the body being just in this constant change of it's like a double edged fountain with stuff coming in on one aperture and then escaping through all the rest and you get the feeling of the body not being at all static but this flow it's actually in a state of flow it's digesting and giving away and receiving and digesting and giving away so you get this feeling of being a little bit part of that process that we see in

nature.

Then, of course, it's a consideration to think about the importance of our parents. So he's chosen these two people. Well, I doubt if we chose the people whom we ended up being born to. And just to recollect what we owe our parents that usually we hold on to the more sticky bad memories that we have of them but when you consider what our parents actually did for us then you come to the conclusion of the Buddha that even if you were to carry your mother and father on your shoulders all your life you would not have repaid them their gift even if they kicked you around a lot. You're still here. You made it. And parents being so much part of our makeup, even the little habits we have, just the way that we do things, we pick up from our mother and father, just that intimacy that we have, especially with our mothers.

And then, of course, his mother dies within a week. So one wonders what effect that might have had on a weak old baby. We know that the intimacy is already there. It's already there in the womb. The child actually knows the mother's voice, the feel of the mother. And having tasted her milk and got close to her, and then suddenly there's a change. There's a change of environment. And although it's her mother's sister, one wonders whether there's how that early child would have been affected by that. Knowing later on what identity crisis he goes through, his existential crisis, sickness, old age and death, there's a suggestion from our own in-depth psychology that this was the beginning of his suffering in terms of that awakening to loss. Never mind the birth process.

So now he's born, and the next thing is, of course, is that he is recognized by the seer, the ascetic. And the ascetic says he's either going to be a world-conquering monarch, or he's going to be fully enlightened, a fully self-enlightened being. This business of the world-conquering monarch is like an alter ego that runs through the scriptures. There's always a picture of this monarch who rules the world out of the Dharma by way of the precepts. And it runs almost, you might say, concurrent with the idea of the Buddha being the fully self-enlightened being. In other words, if he hadn't have chosen that path, this is what he would have done. He would have set his horse loose, this is the way he did it, and followed his horse, and wherever the horse went, he'd have conquered, and eventually the whole world would have been brought under his Dharma rule.

The story about the *Chakravartins* is that finally one of them doesn't keep the precepts and the whole thing begins to collapse. And there's one discourse which is rather interesting from a modern point of view, well, from any point of view, but specifically these days, and that is that poverty is the root of social evil. That's what the particular discourse says. And that's something also that we can think about.

But this idea of the split within us between the worldly life and the spiritual life, see, that stays with us all the way, doesn't it? That stays with us all the way. And there's a not to say that we're going to become world-conquering monarchs, but there's always that pull towards the world, you see. What is the world? It's riches, isn't it? Riches, power, fame and sensual pleasures, you know, the pleasures of life. And so even here, you see, you know, when you're doing your meditation and you get that feeling, really, which is not

sustainable from the body's point of view, that you might have a cup of tea and there's no need for it, and then you might say, oh, there's the world-conquering monarch, you see. I have to let go of that. And then I get back onto your seat. So if you consider that there's always that split within us, one of renouncing the world and one of being dragged away into it. And it's just good to see it in these terms.

So here the Buddha has been prophesied that he's going to take the one or the other. So now he's brought up in a very worldly way. So once his father knows that he could shoot off and become an ascetic, he definitely doesn't want that. He wants him to follow him in the family and build up the empire. He surrounds him with pleasures, basically. This is the tale.

But I would have thought that his particular group, the warrior caste, the *Kshatriya* caste, which were the dominant caste in that part of India. As you move towards what is now Bengal, it would have been the Brahmins. But in his part of India, it was definitely the warrior caste, which were the top caste. That's why you'll see him always taking the mickey out of the Brahmins in the scriptures. He always says, well, a true Brahmin does this and does that. He doesn't do this. He never talks about the warrior caste. The true warrior caste is always the Brahmin. So he's knifing occasionally. In, of course, a very compassionate way, I'm suggesting. It's usually, of course, Brahmins that are approaching him when he's talking about Brahmins.

So he's there in his palaces, and we go through this whole business of an identity crisis. So it's very interesting, really, from a point of view of the general growth of our psychology. He's married around about the age of 16. This is the myth, which would have been normal in those days. We know in India you get married pretty soon. And somewhere in his mid-20s, I would have thought, and this happens, I think, to a lot of people. You know, it's the first crisis in life about leaving go, letting go, like youth is passing. There's something within the person which is saying, actually, let's get serious. So it's usually around about 25 onwards that people get married, they get a job, and they stop being fools. And they think more about what they can get out of society.

And this carries on, doesn't it, until the midlife crisis when you're looking for a bridge to throw yourself off. So it's a case of... In that time of the age of 25, I'm not at all surprised that he suddenly begins to waken up to the reality of life itself having had such a good time for 25 years – sex, drugs and rock and roll.

And this crisis has two parts which is rather interesting. The first part is he's had a – they've had a good old party and there's a disgust comes up. This is the story of Gautama Buddha, and it's the Jataka. It's one of the tales, and it's creative. And it's got some lovely passages. And here it's describing how he woke up after this night, and this is what he saw, you see.

"As the Bodhisattva woke up and sat cross-legged upon the couch, he saw those women" – see these are the women who had been enticing him and dancing, etc., etc. – "who had lain aside their musical instruments and were sleeping, some of them with saliva pouring out of their mouths, some with their bodies wet with saliva, some grinding their teeth, some talking in their sleep, some groaning, some with

gaping mouths, and some others with their clothes in disorder, revealing plainly those parts of the body which should be kept concealed for fear of shame. He saw the disorder in which they were and became all the more detached from sensual pleasure. The large terrace of his mansion, magnificently decorated and resembling the abode of Sakka, king of the gods, appeared to him as an existence, seemed to him a house in flames. He made the inspired utterance, 'Alas, this is beset with obstacles, alas, it is constricted,' and his mind was greatly drawn towards renunciation."

Now, unfortunately, it stresses the business of disgust. And to me, that's always been not a very good word. They often talk about, they translate this word *nibbidā*, which also you'll see comes up in one of the sermons. *Vipassanā* knowledge is *nibbidā*. For some reason, they always describe it as a disgust. Now, to me, the word disgust always has an aversion to it, an aversion. But if one were to enter the life, to enter a spiritual life with aversion, then obviously there's some feeling there of pushing away, of not wanting. And that will come back upon you because you have to face that disgust. You have to go beyond disgust.

Sometimes boredom. Sometimes, yes, it's described as boredom. But I think the real word in English is weariness. Weariness. When you've done something often enough which has brought you pleasure, you get weary. You might listen to the same piece of music and get a lot, and then you become weary of it. It's like you've had enough of it.

And one of the things that you might have experienced is, for instance, playing tiddlywinks with a child. I don't know what you call it in the States. It's just flicking little things into a pot. And a three-year-old might come to you and say, "Come and play tiddlywinks." So because you want to communicate and you enjoy being with the three-year-old, they're delightful little beings, you play tiddlywinks. And after a good 10, 15 minutes of tiddlywinks, when all the little things are in the pot, you know, you think it's been a good little game in your way, but the kid's jumping up and down saying, "More, more, more," you see? And suddenly you're saying, "Well, you know, I've got to get on, I've got to do this," because another game would definitely make you feel weary.

So it's a case of, it's that sort of, if you can get the idea of world weariness, like you've had enough, you know, enough of trying to get rich, enough of getting into the rat race, enough of worrying about this, worrying about that. And it's not that you're disgusted with it or angry with it, it's just you've had enough.

I had a friend of mine who told me that he was a bit of a jazz follower. And he went along to this jazz concert. And just the way through it, there just came this sense of weariness. It wasn't a disgust. It was just like, enough of, and that was it. He didn't need it again.

So there's something about staying with a pleasure. Be careful that you don't push pleasure away out of fear, but actually experience the pleasure fully. If, for instance, you've got... I mean, you can try it. I shall be in another country, so you won't be able to sue me. If you have an obsession with something, like food, say you're a chocoholic, something like that, and so take a piece of chocolate and really nibble at it and make every nibble worth its salt. Actually completely taste it, let it drip around your tongue, slap it around

the mouth. Do all your sorts, do everything you can to get the fullness out of that. And you may find that after one piece, you've actually had enough. Because normally speaking, you're feeding into something else when we're obsessed with something, when we're addicted to something. You're trying to feed something else. And when you see how horrible chocolate can be, then one becomes weary of chocolate.

Just as I always remember, slightly to a slight point, but you know during student days one tends to drink a bit. And I remember going through this period just getting absolutely paralytic. I don't think you have this syndrome in the United States so much, but in Britain we have what's called binge drinking. And you just go, you just drink. You just drink, drink, drink until you drop. And it seemed, I know the people on the continent seem to be getting into it now, so it's not a very good thing. But I remember waking up, literally I woke up in the gutter. I woke up in the early morning and my head was in the gutter. My body was laying on the pavement and my head was in the gutter. And I woke up and turned over and I thought, "Oh my God, this is terrible."

And I got up and this throbbing head and all that and feeling sick. And the closest place to me was a graveyard. So I entered into the graveyard and lay, because I was feeling so bad, I lay on top of this grave. And it slowly dawned upon me that the suffering that I was getting from the pleasure wasn't worth it. It wasn't worth getting that drunk. So I set myself this task that the next time I'd get tipsy, but I wouldn't go over the top. And to my surprise, I really enjoyed myself. And so I came off all that binge drinking and still have a decent liver.

So you can see it's... Sometimes there's a lovely little poem from Blake which I was trying to find, but I just can't get it. He says it so beautifully, that the road to salvation is often through the road of excess. In other words, you get to this point where you've just saturated yourself so much with this stuff that you just don't want it anymore. You're over-weary with it.

So when it comes to pleasure, you see, here especially, make it a real exercise in food to really get in contact with what is pleasure. Get in contact with the tongue. When you approach the food, get in contact with the body. There's hunger there. This hunger is mixed in. It's both a natural appetite coming from the body, but there's greed there. There's a seeking of happiness in food, a seeking of relief. I mean, after that sit, you really want to have some happiness. So there's this seeking of happiness in the food, and that's greed.

And as you approach the table, you see, and you put the food on your plate, just be aware of how much you're putting and be aware of the feelings and the contact you're making with the food and the way the mouth is salivating and all that. And remind yourself you can always go for seconds. So then when you eat and you're sitting in front of the plate, just wait. Get in contact with the body and just feel that magnet. You want to become... You want to become the... What is it? Ghetto, ghetto we had today. We want to become that food.

And then, you know, mindfully making that intention, you see, and lifting, lifting up, scooping, lifting. And

then as that food touches the tongue, you get this amazing explosion of delight, you see. Now stay with that, stay with that at that physical level, you see, and make that very clear to yourself. This is taste, this is the physicality, the basic ground upon which all my happiness rests. There's two inches of skin on top of the tongue. At this moment, my happiness is dependent on that.

So, and I'm chewing, I'm feeling the texture of it, and I'm actually feeling, we're actually feeling the sensations of pleasure. See, what is pleasure? That's the question. What is pleasure? It's not a question of trying to describe it, but of a direct experience of the tongue in delight. And then when that's really, really clear in your mind, as it were, and you've penetrated it, you might take a few bites, as it were, sometimes, or even at the beginning, it depends, you know, it depends how you want to tackle this.

You can come away a little bit and you can see that it's surrounded with this joy. See? And that's the mind. That's the heart. It's delighted in this food. And then if you stay off it like that, you see, especially if you just leave the fork on the table there and just stay there looking at the food. You can see that there is this desire for the sensual pleasure. There is this desire to eat more. And somehow what was being satisfied when we were eating now becomes like a magnet, like a drawer. Like sucking you into the plate.

And if you can just stay with that, and all we're doing is we're just investigating. Because remember, part of it is natural. Part of it is appetite. You've got to eat. And just stay with it. And then as you keep eating, and investigating these three qualities, the basic sensual stimuli that are coming into the brain and which the mind is working with to produce an idea, spaghetti, lettuce. What are the sensations it comes up with when it says spaghetti, lettuce?

So then, and you're aware of the delight. That's to be had. Delight in food, there's nothing unskillful about that. The heart should respond with delight to things. But there is that something twisting it, something putting a kink in it of that consciousness wanting to seek delight, to somehow identify with it, to grasp it, to attach to it, and you you might be able to feel it with as a sort of magnet as a draw it sucked and if we keep eating like that very at some point we get this beginning to get these really clear signals from the body enough you see enough now you can't always trust that because if you have some emotion in the body like you feel a bit anxious or something then it's tight and it doesn't take all that much food but.

Let's say, just generally speaking, you are relaxed, you're in a decent mood. So the body begins to give you these signals, "Enough, enough," you see. Now normally we override that and just go for the cream cake. But here, because we're strictly doing our meditation, we hang on in there, you see, and we feel the override more deeply. More. See? And you hang on in there. You wait, you wait, you wait, you wait, you wait, you wait, and wait right to the very end of that. Right to the very end.

Now, what we want to make a distinction between is the satisfaction, to use that word, the satisfaction of eating something fulfilling desire. The satisfaction, which, remember, increases our attachment, increases our desire, and after a little while we want more, more, more. So that's satisfaction. And call it contentment, which is when the mind is not in a state of desire. And it's to taste those two as something

quite separate experiences, and to know that contentment is a figure of the nirvanic mind.

One of the qualities of the unconditioned mind is that there is no desire. So we can experience that by watching right to the end point when the desire just goes out right at the end. Like a light on a wick, it just goes and it's out. And then just catch that peace in the mind and that contentment.

When the Buddha is asked, when the Buddha, somebody complains to him, as a deva complains and says, "Look, this training is very hard." He says, "Well, it is." He says, "But people do it and they attain liberation. And *Nibbāna*." And he says, "*Nibbāna*, yeah, but so what?" And he says, "Well, when you get liberated, you are contented and with it happy. *Tutti sukha vahati*. You are contented and with it happy." So he's describing to this person his state of mind. He's contented and with it happy. That's the state of his heart, at peace, contented, happy.

Now we can begin to taste that in these moments when especially desire has been very strong and we just watch it, feel it just dying away because we're not feeding it. And of course the added benefit of that is that we get over our obsession with food.

The next thing, of course, that moves him are what's known as the four signs, sometimes the three signs. So you remember the story, he's out hunting three times, he comes across a very sick person, a very old, bent-over person, and a corpse. And in some stories, an ascetic sitting under a tree, in which case there's that hope. Maybe there's a way out of this suffering.

So here, he's entering into what we would call these days an identity crisis, some sort of existential crisis, a sort of feeling of the absurd. If you say to yourself, "At the end of this life, there is complete disappearance, there's complete annihilation, that's it," you're stuck with this terrible fact that we're conscious and we're suffering. So why, you know, the idea of suffering becomes absurd. It becomes ridiculous. It becomes unreasonable, absurd, beyond reason.

And I thought to bring along this, the myth of Sisyphus, whom some of you might know. Sisyphus is, well, it just says he was going back to ancient Greek mythology, so he promoted navigation and commerce but was avaricious and deceitful. He killed travellers and wayfarers and from Homer onwards Sisyphus was famed as the craftiest of men. When Thanatos, Mara, the king of death, came to fetch him, Sisyphus put him in fetters so that no one died till Ares came and freed Thanatos and delivered Sisyphus to his custody.

But Sisyphus was not yet at the end of his resources. For before he died, he told his wife that when he was gone, she was not to offer the usual sacrifice to the dead. So, in the underworld, he complained that his wife was neglecting her duty, and he persuaded Hades to allow him to go back to the upper world and expostulate with her. But when he got back to Corinth, he positively refused to return, until forcibly carried off by Hermes. It's a lovely story. And of course, finally, he has to go to hell. He's in hell, you see, because he's been a bad boy.

And his job is to roll a boulder up a hill. And when it gets to the top, it rolls back down. And so he's got to

roll it back up. That's his job for eternity. For eternity. And Albert Camus, who was one of my favorite... Well, he was, yeah. He was one of my, a French existentialist writer, actually wrote a book called *Sisyphus*, in which this became a motif for the absurdity of life.

If you really, really believe all there is, is annihilation, why get up in the morning to roll that boulder up the hill, and go to sleep, and then let it roll down again, and the next morning you're going to roll it back up the hill? And when he was absolutely at one with this idea of the absurdity of suffering, which I think the existentialists understood very well, they definitely understood the first noble truth, he said that the only dignified way to approach this problem was to commit suicide. That was his answer. Luckily, he did not have to follow his own thought too much because he sadly died in a car crash.

In 1956 he didn't have to take his logic into action, you might say. So this idea of death, especially death, the whole process of dying, of illness, of growing old and then dying—unless there is some understanding, then you have to really face the whole thing of annihilation.

In last week when I was answering a question about afterlife and rebirth and all that sort of stuff, one thing I like to say is that in terms of the Buddhist teaching, the people who don't believe anything's going to happen when they die are, in my estimation, much closer to becoming liberated than the people who are. For the simple reason that when we believe something is going to go on, it comforts us. The self feels comfort in the fact that, oh, when I die, I shall be born. I'll be happy if I'm born a rat, as long as I'm born, as long as I keep going, this I. And so there's never facing the collapse of the self, which happens at death. I mean, that's supposed to happen.

And even, I think, Muhammad said, "You have to die before you die." You have to die before you die. And I think even Christ put it in some way. "Unless you are born again"—he put it in a more positive way—"you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven." You will not be born again. So there's something about facing the horror of that point of complete loss of self, which is death, which is part of the process of our liberation.

And he was so shook by this that, of course, he decided to leave home.

So in your meditation, when these fears come up, you see, these fears of sickness, old age, and death, go into them. They've come as messengers from the gods. They're there to awaken us. And remember that it's all delusion. It's all symbolic in the mind. You have to, as it were, remember, always go beneath the thought, beneath the image, to the viscera, to the actual mental state that's driving it. You have to go into that fear, feel it, get accustomed to it, get comfortable with fear and really allow it to express itself.

Because this fear, remember, is always generated out of that delusion of self. And as we become accustomed to fear, that's *Māra*. That's the expression of our fear, expression of our delusion. So as we become accustomed to fear, then of course the sense of self is disappearing. The sense of self manifests through these negative states. But as we become accustomed to them, we see them. If you remember

Māra, when he attacked the Buddha every so often, Māra had to slink away because the Buddha saw him.

Seeing, feeling those emotions, burying ourselves in them, seeing them even going beyond the idea of an emotion, beyond the idea of a feeling, to the constituents themselves—you know, like the feeling of sickness, the feeling of tightness, the nausea, getting right down to the physical level, and in so doing, it's a process of depersonalising. You are depersonalising the process. And that, of course, eventually relieves us, and hopefully we can stay steady in fear. So once we've lost our fear of fear, what is to frighten us?

And I shall quote your own very great president, Roosevelt, who said, "What are we to fear but fear?" I think I've correctly...

So I'd like to bring our little talk to an end there and I'm going to in one of the times anyway, I want to do an exercise rather than give a talk on looking at the body, an exercise of looking at our relationship to the body, our feelings of disgust with the body and all that. These are exercises that come out of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* discourse. And then to move it just towards the end, towards a little new age input of healing. And I'll tell you when I'm doing it, so if you're not particularly attracted to that, you needn't come.

Because somehow we have to find a way of making this deeply meaningful to us in ourselves, rather than it just being stories, as it were. So I can only hope that my words have been of some assistance to you and I can only hope that even by the end of this course you will be fully liberated.

---

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