

Les Empêchements de Vipassanā (Lausanne Oct 2009)

Bhante Bodhidhamma · International Talks · 51:42

*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa, Namō Tassa Bhagavato Arahato
Sammāsambuddhassa, Namō Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa*
Hommage au Bouddha, le noble bienheureux, béni et illuminé.

This evening I would like to speak about what we call the hindrances. These hindrances, in reality, contain all our sufferings. And it is understanding how to work with these hindrances – it is the understanding of how to manage these obstacles that will be our therapy.

We can divide these hindrances into two types: those that excite us and those that make us disappear. The stimulating ones are related to thoughts that are pleasant, and those that are linked to unpleasant thoughts.

So, let's first take all the hindrances that create happiness for us. When I speak of happiness, of course, I'm referring to the wrong type of happiness. So these are things that attack us, assail us during meditation – for example, planning our holidays, or planning an enormous business venture, or in the worst case, saving the world. There's this whole area of erotic and romantic desires. All these things can become obsessional.

And those of you who have meditated for quite some time know that you can quickly spend hours in this dream world. I have a friend who spent six months in meditation, and he told me that he spent all his time planning his trip to South America. The irony was that he never went there.

So we must be cautious with these dreams because they are often disconnected from reality. So how can we track them down?

The first thing is not to be aggressive toward them, not to see them as enemies. On the contrary, they show us where our weaknesses are. And even then, we must remain firm.

When we wake up from a fantasy, the object of the fantasy is not important. Whether it's holidays or the business we want to build, that's not what's important. But rather it's what seizes the mind and takes hold of the mind. It's the power. That's why it's important to note the attitude that causes this: planning, lusting, romanticizing. It's the attitude that causes the problem.

Once you've noted what the mind is doing, you simply return to the body. Because the response is in the

body. Because the body is that through which the attitude will express itself – it will express itself through a feeling. This is what we call an emotion or a state of mind.

So we're going to plunge into this physical feeling. We're simply going to feel the texture of this emotion or mental state. And our attitude is just to let it express itself. But if on the contrary you want to get rid of it, then you add extra energy into the system. And if you look at this desire more closely, you'll discover that it's rather a movement of not wanting. So this negativity also enters the system.

Aversion makes us push away. So aversion is an energy that will remain inside this psychophysical system. This psychophysical organism – that's a phrase I'm very fond of. I like saying it: psychophysical organism.

When we have fear, the fear makes us turn away from it. So now the fear is making us ignore the feeling. So don't be surprised that when you enter the body, what will emerge is fear or aversion. Because due to our past habits, we have built a whole system of personal defense.

And remember, because we're opening to ourselves – and this is the importance of dwelling peacefully in the present moment – we're learning to be completely open. So things inside ourselves can arise very quickly. And if this happens and you feel overwhelmed, then stop the meditation. Simply stop the meditation. Go walking, or place your attention on a part of the body that is neutral, like your hands. And then wait until equanimity returns.

It's true to say, unfortunately – unfortunately, it is true to say that things go much worse before they get better. But the final product is wonderful.

So when it comes to things that we find appealing, we enter the body and we stay with the feelings of excitement. And we wait patiently for this to exhaust itself.

Now, if you haven't experienced this, this is a very important experience to have. Because when you realize that healing occurs when you do nothing, that's a great understanding and realization. When I say "do nothing," I mean do nothing about the situation. The only thing we have to do is be open to the experience. This is how the heart can heal itself.

Consider the body. When you cut yourself, who heals the body? Our job is to keep the wound clean; the body heals itself. We don't need to take care of the cells. It's the same with the heart. Just keep the space clean, just with right attention, and the heart can heal itself.

The natural state of the heart is peaceful – it's quietude. This is the natural state of the heart. It's only through false understanding that we have created these turbulences.

The other types of turbulences we deal with are of the negative type: anger, fear, anxiety, depression. There's a long list of miseries that human beings create for themselves.

These emotions want to express themselves. And you feel a release when you allow them to express through a dream, a fantasy. But if we look more closely, each time we allow these emotions to express themselves through these dreams, in reality, they develop.

An obvious example, which I'm sure you've all experienced: in the morning, someone says something that irritates you a little bit. But you neglect it. Then comes coffee time. And while you're having your coffee, the memory resurfaces: "How could they do this to me?" And by lunchtime, it's just an enormous storm. You can't sleep. You have to take pills. This person insulted you just once, but you've made sure they've done it at least a thousand more times. And you've taken terrible revenge on them.

And even when we're angry and we slam a door, we feel a release. But what we must recognize during meditation is that in reality this is complacency, an indulgence. And for this reason, we employ the same technique. From the moment we notice that there's anger, anxiety or depression, we simply note and we return again. And we allow this mental state to express itself as a feeling.

Of course, this is difficult, because some of these emotions are really very painful. So as I was saying, if we can stay present until the moment it disappears, then we have confidence that this process actually heals us.

The fourth hindrance is called agitation and everything related to shame and guilt. When we speak of agitation, again there are two types. The first is simply the mind that gets agitated, that wanders. And again, we must practice patience.

As soon as we note the agitation, we return to the body. And if we don't feel any agitation in the body, then we return to the breath. And barely are we with the breath than we're already lost in the mind, and this happens during a sitting, the second, the third, and we think that meditation is no good. But this is meditation.

So we allow the mind to be agitated, to express itself, and then afterward we return to the body. And returning to the present moment, this is the practice. If this goes on for a week, for a year, for our whole life, this is the practice. And it's good practice.

If the meditator notes what the mind is doing and says to himself, "That's interesting," and continues the dream, that's bad practice. And one should feel guilty and ashamed. It's a great waste of time.

So when the mind is agitated, just have the patience to return again and again. Consider: from the moment you wake up in the morning until the moment you go to bed in the evening, does the mind stop for a moment? No. Then we come to meditation and we expect it to stop. It's just impossible.

So everything we do here and now must be integrated into our daily life. If, during those moments of the day when you're not doing anything in particular – walking from here to there, up and down the stairs, these little moments in between – we let the head wander away, we let the mind escape. That's why we

suffer so much here in the meditation hall.

And so, in daily life, from the moment we notice that the mind is escaping, we bring it here and now. But if you see this as a battle, it's exhausting. But if you see this as a relaxation, as a peaceful moment, then you want to do it.

So if you catch yourself running up the stairs with your mind in all directions – which I hope never happens here – bring to your mind this nice English word: stop. That puts an end to everything, and start again.

Agitation of the body is sometimes very difficult to work with, but it's easier than mental agitation. And the rule is: don't move. Under no circumstances, don't move. So you're sitting here, and the body wants to be over there. So you relax around the agitation. Make sure the jaw is relaxed, the shoulders are relaxed, the hands are relaxed, so that the agitation isn't trapped in the body.

And sometimes, you can put your attention on a neutral part of the body, like your feet. The feet are generally neutral. And then wait for equanimity to arrive. And then afterward, you can return to the agitation.

This also works if you're very restless and can't sleep. You adopt a comfortable position and refuse to move. And simply move the attention around the body. And you may find that you're suddenly asleep.

The reason for this is that the opposite of agitation is sleepiness. Dullness in the head and lethargy in the body. And these are authentic mental states. They're as important as depression, anxiety and all the rest, because this is caused by energies that go inward.

Like in the universe, we have stars that explode and then black holes. So the mind will suddenly implode into itself. Now, there's natural fatigue, of course. The mind needs to rest. But what we're talking about here is the extra. And we have developed, through sleep and laziness, an escape route.

So, first, like all these pleasures, they are pleasurable in themselves. For example, Sunday morning, when we stay in this subliminal state – just on that little wave of not being awake and not being asleep. This is very pleasurable, correct? But unfortunately, we are seeking happiness in oblivion. And also, when we enter unconsciousness, at least here, there's no suffering. Unfortunately, we always wake up.

But we always have in ourselves a little escape route. So when we feel a little depressed, a little bored, then we choose a comfortable sofa and then we start thinking, wandering a bit. And we go toward this state of sleepiness.

So, is there something wonderful that when we come to meditate, all we can do is sleep? I can't think of anything more annoying than watching the breath. It's very boring. So I'll fall asleep.

And this too, you must integrate into your daily life. You must look at the bed as an enemy. You must look

at your bed as an enemy. All the armchairs as potential dangers.

So what do we do when this happens to us during meditation? So it's okay if we fall asleep and continually we waver. From the moment when we wake up, we straighten the spine. And we penetrate inside this sensation of sleepiness in the head, or this sensation of heaviness in the body. And continue to move the attention just as you do in the case of agitation.

And this will allow the energy to return into knowing, into presence, into attention. And for people who know this and those who don't know yet, you'll be amazed to see how possible it is to be clear in this state of sleepiness. It's like a light inside fog.

So this simply tells meditators that there's this sleepiness, this lethargy. But the connection with indulgence has been cut. So it's this subtle indulgence that creates this sleepiness in knowing, the lack of clarity in knowing. Because the habit is to become the sleepiness.

So through all these hindrances, it's possible to rediscover this position inside ourselves: the position of the objective observer, the objective feeler. A nice phrase is "the observation post" – like on a boat, you have the lookout, up at the top of the mast, who observes. Right at the top. So you're at the top and you look down.

So you're always trying to find within yourself this position of the observation post.

Et à partir de là, nous pénétrons à l'intérieur du corps, à l'intérieur des sensations.

J'ai abordé maintenant tout ce qui était en lien avec les plaisirs, tout ce qui était en lien avec l'aversion, incluant la peur, la dépression, etc. Nous avons parlé de la lethargie et de la somnolence, et nous avons parlé de l'agitation. Une petite chose que le Bouddha rattache à l'agitation est la culpabilité, le remords, tous ces sentiments autour de l'agitation. Donc, ce que le Bouddha rattache à l'agitation, c'est tout ce qui a trait à la culpabilité, au remords, à la honte. Quand ces états apparaissent, eh bien, traitez-les comme des états négatifs. Nous sortons de la fantaisie, de la pensée, pour pénétrer à l'intérieur de ces ressentis.

Si vous pouvez résoudre quelque chose que vous avez fait de mal, eh bien faites-le après la retraite. Et si cela n'est pas possible, alors comprenez cela comme étant la conséquence d'une mauvaise action et demeurez simplement avec cela - c'est demeurer avec le *kamma*. Il n'y a pas besoin de nous punir au-delà de cela.

Enfin, il y a le problème du doute. Le Bouddha souhaite que nous ayons un certain type de doute qu'il appelle l'émerveillement - c'est l'émotion du philosophe qui est à l'intérieur de nous, le scientifique à l'intérieur de nous. Tout ce que le Bouddha nous dit est mis en hypothèse - c'est pour nous prouver que c'est vrai pour nous. Le but c'est de vérifier si pour nous cela est vrai, si cela nous correspond.

Le doute dans le Bouddha, nous pouvons le mettre de côté en mettant notre confiance dans ses enseignements, au moins pendant cette retraite. Vous n'avez pas besoin de vous engager à vie - vous

pouvez le faire petit à petit. Quant au manque de confiance dans l'enseignant... Dieu nous en préserve ! L'enseignant de *vipassanā* c'est seulement quelqu'un qui donne des instructions. Et si les instructions ne marchent pas, alors nous remettons l'enseignant en question. S'il y a toujours un sentiment d'insatisfaction après avoir considéré cela avec prudence, nous allons trouver un autre enseignant.

Mais je crois que la plupart d'entre nous, nous souffrons d'un manque de confiance en nous-mêmes. Nous traiterons cela de la même manière que nous traiterons tous les autres états mentaux négatifs.

Quand le doute surgit, le doute sceptique, cela est basé sur une certaine forme de peur ou d'aversion - la peur de l'échec, la peur de la critique. Si une personne a cela, ça peut miner toute leur vie. Par exemple, si un travail se présente à vous et vous vous posez la question "est-ce que je peux le faire, oui ou non, je ne sais pas", avant même que vous preniez la décision, le travail est loin. Si vous voulez vous engager dans une relation sérieuse, vous vous posez la question "est-ce que c'est bien, est-ce que c'est la bonne personne, etc.", et avant même que vous n'ayez pris la décision, la personne en a marre, elle est partie.

Ce doute sceptique peut vraiment miner, saper la vie de quelqu'un, et surtout les personnes spirituelles. Sans confiance, on ne fait pas l'action. Quand il n'y a pas de confiance en soi, nous n'agissons pas.

Chacun d'entre vous ici doit avoir confiance en la pratique, sinon vous ne seriez pas ici. Mais ce qui se passe, c'est que sur la durée, nous ne nous rendons pas vraiment compte que nous progressons, que nous nous développons. Contrairement à lorsque nous avons juste commencé, là parfois nous pouvons voir des progrès assez rapides. Et puis nous commençons à perdre la confiance. Faites attention à ces moments où vous n'avez pas l'impression d'avancer.

C'est comme ces vieux marins qui étaient dans cet état de... vous savez, les doldrums ? L'équateur où il n'y a pas de vent. Les marins ont l'impression qu'ils n'avancent pas, qu'ils ne vont nulle part. Mais sans qu'ils le sachent, le courant de l'océan les emmène. Si vous continuez de pratiquer, vous verrez que vous avancez. Faites attention aux doutes de soi.

Nous avons ces cinq domaines de négativité en nous-mêmes : les plaisirs et les aversions, la somnolence et la léthargie, toute l'agitation à l'intérieur de nous-mêmes, et le doute sceptique. Si nous devons faire un constat simple sur comment gérer tout cela dans la méditation *vipassanā*, eh bien c'est de sortir de l'esprit pour aller dans le corps et permettre à ces états mentaux de s'exprimer - dans cette expression ils finissent par s'épuiser.

La dernière chose à mentionner, c'est que cette énergie ne disparaît pas, mais elle est transformée. Très naturellement, tous ces plaisirs vont faire place à des qualités plus saintes, bénéfiques. Toutes les aversions vont se transformer en leur opposé : haine en amour, cruauté en compassion, égoïsme en générosité. Toutes ces énergies qui étaient somnolence et léthargie deviennent pures. Et le doute devient une confiance ferme. Vous êtes en train de commencer un processus de transformation.

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