

Upon Awakening

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

An alarm clock is all well and good, but it is often a rude awakening. Consider how you wake up when, on holiday perhaps, you don't put the alarm on. One wakes into a presenting mood. But the jolt of the alarm creates a shock wave in the mind and heart, and we wake into that reaction. This is hardly a good start for the day. If you can quieten the waking alarm by smothering the clock a little or go to the expense of one with a rising alarm that is the better way to waken oneself. You can always put a second alarm clock which, should you fail to wake, is guaranteed to blast you out of bed. So we awake into a presenting mood. It may be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Should it be neutral, that is a peaceful start to the day. Should it be pleasant, the mood will grab an idea from the mind's library and create a reverie. It will do the same should the mood be unpleasant. These opening moments to the day offer us an immediate practice. To turn these opening gambits to our advantage, we have to be wide awake upon awakening. We will do this if we have made that resolute resolution to wake with the bell. It may take a little practice, but it is not so difficult to develop. We centre that immediate wakefulness into the body, especially attentive to that area in the mid-chest where we distinguish our emotional life. As soon as we recognise the mood, we acknowledge it and practice vipassana. And as in sitting meditation, we become equally aware of our reaction. Should we wide-wake into a peaceful state, rest there and acknowledge it, grateful for this gift. Develop a taste for it. See it as a default position and make a resolution to return to this peacefulness as often as we can throughout the day. Should it be pleasant, from excitement as to what the day beholds, to a flowering romance, to a joyful memory, whatever the cause of the happy mood, be wakeful enough not to be transported into the dream world. But again we acknowledge the state. We see the danger of a make-believe world and we wait, if possible, until it quietens, hopefully into an inner glow. This is to take the attachment out of joy. And we make a resolution to maintain this quiet joy. Should the mood be unpleasant, from depression, to anxiety, to anger, whatever the cause of the unhappy mood, we prevent it from hurling us into a mental maelstrom. So again we acknowledge the state. We see the danger – how the mood uses the mind to wind itself up. Bury the attention into the feeling of the mood and wait at least until it begins to subside. In this way we take the sting out of these unpleasant states. And we make a resolution not to allow negativity to hold sway. This is where the snooze button comes into its own. Here, not simply for the purpose of reminding us of time passing, nor to appease the base desire to exercise one's sloth, but the very opposite, to guard us from such indulgence of dire consequence! Such is the noble duty of the snooze button.

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