

Overcoming the Taints by Developing the Seven Factors of Awakening

Bhante Bodhidhamma · YouTube Talks · 22:14

Good evening. I trust you've had a fruitful day. I do not say happy, though I hope it has been happy.

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsbuddhassa

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Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-awakened one.

So we must continue with the taints. We're now coming to the last one. Breathe a sigh of relief. I shall read the passage and then we'll go into it.

Just as a little reminder, it's always good to just go through them again. There are taints that should be abandoned by seeing. That was the one with *vipassanā*, seeing not-self. Taints should be abandoned by restraining. Taints should be abandoned by using. Taint should be abandoned by enduring, by avoiding, by removing those other thoughts, and finally developing.

So what taint should be abandoned by developing? Here, the meditator, the *bhikkhu*, reflecting wisely. Don't forget there's always a bit of reflecting wisely. Develops mindfulness enlightenment factor, which is supported by seclusion, dispassion and cessation and ripens in relinquishment. He develops the investigation of states enlightenment factor, the energy enlightenment factor, the rapture enlightenment factor, the tranquillity enlightenment factor, and the concentration enlightenment factor. And finally, the equanimity enlightenment factor, which is supported by seclusion, dispassion, cessation and ripens in relinquishment. While taints, vexation and fever might arise in one who does not develop these enlightenment factors, there are no taints, vexation or fever in one who develops them. These are called the taints that should be abandoned by developing.

Just three words there: seclusion, dispassion and cessation. So this seclusion *viveka* means, well there's two meanings - either you seek seclusion from people, I mean we're in a sort of state of seclusion, but it's also meaning a seclusion within ourselves. That's when we close off and investigate ourselves within ourselves. Dispassion *virāga* is that state of not being overcome by any of the defilements.

Cessation *nirodha* is the point where everything, as it were, phenomenal disappears. And this lovely word relinquishment, the word is *patinissagga*. *Nissagga* means to give, it means to let go of, to relinquish everything. *Pati* is everything. It means to just let go of everything and jump. It has this quality of

beginning something, of getting into something.

When I read that, I was reminded of the story around Jesus. I hope you've all read your New Testament recently, or the Bible. If you remember the story of the rich man who came to him and said, look, I keep all the laws, I keep all the rules. What must I do to enter the kingdom of heaven? And he said, drop everything, leave everything and follow me. And the rich man went away shaking his head sadly. So there's a point where you have to let go of everything. It's a sort of death. So that's the meaning of these words: seclusion, dispassion, cessation ripens in relinquishment. Now the cessation and relinquishment are both, I think, the same moment.

Now you'll notice that these qualities, everybody has them, and they all come up at various times. Everybody has awareness, everybody has that sense of investigation, curiosity, sense of wonder. Everybody has that, well that's what the rapture is referring to. *Pīti* means any sort of physical shaking because of happiness, a little thrill up the spine, to great absorption joy. But here of course it's the joy of interest, the heart's interest. Tranquillity, people feel tranquil at times. Concentration. Equanimity, sometimes people are equanimous about things.

So none of these factors are something strange to us. We all experience them. What turns them into enlightenment factors is we turn those qualities to investigate the Dharma, and specifically those three characteristics of existence: suffering, the cause of suffering, and reactivity and all that, impermanence and not-self.

Anyway, there are a couple of discourses which go into this a bit more deeply. And the one I'm looking at is actually the discourse on the breath, how to develop a meditation on the breath. It's 118. And it's right towards the end.

So the question is, how are the four foundations of mindfulness developed and cultivated? How do they fulfill the seven factors of awakening, the seven factors of enlightenment? So he says *bhikkhus*, remember that means all meditators, whatever occasion a *bhikkhu* abides contemplating the body as body, ardent, fully aware and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.

So remember that ardent is that real energy that we need to maintain that mindfulness, fully awake, mindful and putting away covetousness and grief. That's just another way of saying greed and aversion. Unremitting mindfulness is established in him. And whatever occasion unremitting mindfulness is established in him. On that occasion, mindfulness enlightenment factor is aroused in him. And he develops it. And by developing it, it comes to fulfillment in him.

So that quality of awareness is something that we, just by constantly establishing it and maintaining it, it becomes a continuous factor within us. I don't say continual, which means there's never a break, but at least it's there for longer and longer periods.

Abiding thus mindful, he investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full

inquiry on it. So just read that again. He investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon it and fully inquires upon it. So this is *dhammavicaya*. This is that process of looking into something, just as any scientist might, really investigating. But this investigation, of course, is our own inner phenomenal world, the world of the heart-mind, the body-heart-mind that we experience internally.

And abiding thus mindful, a *bhikkhu* investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry of it. Now on that occasion, the investigation of states enlightenment factor is aroused in him. He develops it. And by development, it comes to fulfillment in him. So again, the same process, just keep practicing, keep practicing, and it comes to fulfillment.

Then he says, so he's going through it in a particular manner, going through it in a particular specific manner. And he wants to investigate and examines the state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it. Tireless energy is aroused, tireless energy. And then again, whatever occasion, tireless energy is aroused in the *bhikkhu* who investigates and examines etc. On that occasion the energy enlightenment factor is aroused in him, he develops it and by development it comes to fulfillment in him.

So this is that energy effort that we need. Of course you must remember we always fall usually on one side or the other. Not enough, we fall asleep. Or too much, often over-efforting to try and achieve something, instead of just remaining in that lovely space of just being aware, just investigating.

The first two he begins with, by the way. The first one is Awareness *Sati* and the next one is *Paññā*. They always come up together in the discourse on the *Satipaṭṭhāna*, how to establish the four foundations of mindfulness. These two words always run together, *sampajāno-sātimā*. *Sampajāno* is with intuitive intelligence, *sātimā*, mindfully. And that's why this place is called Satipaññā.

And in one aroused with energy, unworldly rapture arises in him. Unworldly simply means not sensual. So this is something to do with the spiritual life. Now this rapture that I was mentioning before is the sense of wonder, the sense of curiosity which is very natural. You see it in animals. It's in all sort of intelligent beings. In all little sentient beings, all sentient beings have some sense of curiosity. I saw a video that somebody sent me of whales, and a playground was empty and a load of sheep got in there. And blow me down, before you knew it they were on the roundabout going round and round. It was quite funny to see it.

So again, just by arousing it in him, he develops it and it comes to fulfillment. And then when this rapturous state is established, they're occasioning him of tranquillity. Tranquillity enlightenment factor is aroused in him, he develops it and it comes to fulfillment. So this tranquillity, you know, we all feel that at times: calmness, feeling at peace, feeling at ease. And that supports this curiosity which can get a little bit excited, it can go over the top. So that calmness balances that state of over wonder, over curiosity. We'll come to that again in a minute.

And in one whose body is tranquil, he feels pleasure and the mind becomes concentrated. And on

whatever occasion, etc., on that occasion, concentration enlightenment factor is aroused in him, he develops it, and by development, fulfillment.

Now you'll notice concentration comes after calmness, you see, and I'll talk a bit about that a bit later. So remember that. First of all, that sense of calmness, sense of peacefulness, and then the curiosity and the concentration is drawn. It develops around those qualities.

He closely looks on with equanimity. So here now the sentence changes. He closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated. And on whatever occasion a *bhikkhu* closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated. Now this equanimity is really about an attitude of that objectiveness, that objectivity - not getting involved, no reactivity. And of course that also is aroused in him, he develops it and development comes to fulfillment.

So now, and then, so the first one was on the body, so now of course he says exactly the same thing with the other three establishments of mindfulness. First of all, feelings - feelings in the body but mental, emotional feelings. The next one is, of course, mental states. And then finally, mental objects, by which we mean seeing things through the seven facts of enlightenment, the five hindrances, the three characteristics of existence, the four noble truths. It's a way of investigating things. And this is how the four foundations of mindfulness are developed and cultivated and fulfilled.

So then he just repeats himself, or he repeats it. Remember this is learned by rote and so repetition is just part of that helpful process of keeping things in mind, being able to remember them. Because this is how the seven factors are developed and cultivated, fulfill true knowledge and deliverance - deliverance from suffering, of course. And as usual, this is what the Blessed One said. The *bhikkhus* were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words. They didn't always delight in his words, but on this occasion they did.

So what you find in the traditions is often an accent on effort and concentration. This is very much the way my own teachers worked, very much pushing this whole idea of really pushing the concentration, making the effort. And well, it worked for me, it works for a few people, but I did find in my own teaching that to put the accent more on curiosity and calmness seemed to help people a bit more to see these characteristics.

So it's not as though this is the final way that the seven factors can be generated one after the other. I mean, if you want me to remind you the way the Buddha does it, or the way it's put in the scriptures here, so he starts off by establishing awareness, and then there comes that sense of investigation of everything. And with that there comes this energy, this tireless energy. And then there comes this interest. Now for me that's the other way around really. I put interest first and then the investigation of the Dharma. And then there comes this tranquillity and then finally, sorry, then there's the concentration and finally the equanimity.

The thing is that they balance each other so that the effort is balanced with the concentration. So if you don't put enough effort and there's good concentration, then you tend to fall asleep or go into a state of unconsciousness. And if there's too much effort, then of course the restlessness begins and you just find it difficult to concentrate.

With that interest, the curiosity, the sense of wonder, there has to be a carefulness not to get excited. And that's what tranquillity does. It just keeps it nice and soft. If there's too much tranquillity, you fall asleep. If there's not enough tranquillity, you become restless. And the same with investigation of Dharma, which is supported by equanimity.

So again, if there's not the equanimity there, then you're looking for something, you're trying to get something. And if you do get it, you're probably fully, I think if you think you're awakened, you're probably fully deluded. So it's a case of being careful that you're always taking this stance of just watching, just feeling, just knowing.

And many of you will remember the three, four, five year old, when they see something, how the jaw drops and say, what is it? So this business of, that's the, you know, this is what Zen calls original mind, right? To approach something as if we had never seen it before, to approach the breath as if we'd never breathed before. Which of course is very difficult, but we can find a way of accessing that observation post within ourselves, you see, and just watching, just feeling.

And that's one of the blessings of the noting technique because the noting does, shall we say, stop the mind thinking about things. And even though the word is there, your attention is towards the object and you begin to notice other things. The note itself is only centred on one particular little thing that you're feeling. Like for instance, if you're watching the breath rising, you're just aware of that process of rising. But of course we're feeling it, we're actually feeling that process. And we're also aware of the image of the abdomen or the nose, wherever you're observing it. And within all that, there's just a sensation.

And as we drive the attention towards just sensation, we'll get to the point where the arising disappears. We're using a different word. Actually, at that point, normally there's no time to note. One is absorbed into the object. And even the sense of where it is has gone. So that's how the process works.

And all of these things, all of these seven factors, remember, are all guided by awareness. Where the awareness is, the other six factors come up to support it. And that's often why when we're being taught how to meditate, all these seven factors are not really talked about, apart from saying, you know, concentration or interest. I don't remember any of my teachers making any big effort to teach the seven factors as such. It was always when your attention, when your awareness is there with right intention, the seven factors support it.

So I think that brings to an end our investigation of the taints. I might come back to the last paragraph and we might spend just one or two evenings or whatever it takes on the fetters, what it is we're supposed to

be unfettering, unchaining ourselves from. I can only hope my words have been of some assistance and that you are not left completely confused.

And I think it's time now to do a bit of meditation.

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