



Wise Reflection for Unwise Times

Speaker: Ajahn Brahmali

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Ajahn Brahmali 00:05

Okay, good, nice to meet you all. This is my first time teaching, right here in Silicon Valley. It's cool to be here, you hear about this place, and actually, you're here. So that's kind of nice, isn't it? Famous around the world.

00:19

So, but of course, the what is really important is not so much where you are, or the people, people are pretty much the same everywhere; travel around the world. So what matters is kind of the dhamma, that is available. And it's kind of nice to see that, you know, wherever you travel around the world, there is an interest in these profound and beautiful teachings of the Buddha.

00:42

And so today, we're going to focus on kind of how to deal with the problems in the world from a Buddhist perspective, this is the idea of the title for today's talk, and what was the title again? There was about something about the Buddhist 'how to kind of look at the problems of the world and how to do that in a skillful way.' So as to, you know, kind of deal with it in a way that kind of leads to growth rather than to decline leads to more solutions rather than more problems in our life. This is going to be what this is really about. Does that sound all right? Yeah, everyone happy with that? It's too late to turn around now. But anyway, we'll see what happens.

01:27

So that is kind of the background for this. And it is kind of fascinating right now in the world, it seems to be so many kind of issues, and so many things everywhere coming together at the same time. We have like the big things like climate change happening here. We have, you know, we have all the political turmoil around the world. We have the saber rattling between the kind of the large nations, again, China and the US kind of trying to sort of see who is the who's the toughest guy or whatever. We have all the kind of problems with migration and refugees around the world. And there's so many things happening kind of in one at one time, of course, we just come out of a pandemic, which began kind of still feel the after effects of the pandemic right here.

02:11

So, and you can see that, obviously, one of the one of the consequences of having so many problems in one go, is that people also feel a bit of despair. Yeah, they feel a bit of kind of people get a bit depressed people feel a bit sad, people wondering what's happening with our society? Where are we heading here? And I think it is natural that we should have some of those feelings when the world seems to be going in such a strange way here.



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So what can we do with this from a Buddhist perspective, that's kind of the purpose of this, this talk today. And what is interesting to my mind is that if we think about these things in the right way, instead of being problems, we can turn them around into opportunities into something which actually enhances the spiritual path that makes us better human beings, and maybe even enables us to perhaps I don't know, we'll see what happens, maybe even solve some of the issues that we are faced with. So that is the plan.

03:18

We have quite a bit of time together. And I was told in the car that it would be good to kind of I don't know if we're going to need do we need some ground rules of any ground rules in place? Or is it just kind of whatever happens happens? Is that how it works, or? Yes, I think I would, I would, yes, please.

03:39

Schedule? Yeah. Unless you have....

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Maybe the latest one is the best one. So it's time to pick that one. Okay, great. Yeah.

03:49

We'll be breaking at about 10:30 for meal preparation, all kinds of stuff. So and then we'll clean up from 11 to 12:30. And so there are there'll be four sessions at that time. So please, if you haven't already, talk to me or Ram. We will put your food in the refrigerator, and then come out and warm it up. There's only one oven, so to take turns. So we'll start at about 11 and finish up eating by around one. Okay, any other questions?

04:33

Sounds good. Sounds great. Yeah. Sounds marvelous. Yeah. So let's see how it goes.

04:38

So I'm not going to I don't think I'm going to lay down any kind of rules for today. Just enjoy yourself, I think is important is to have a good time and to relax and to kind of, you know, meditation works when you're relaxed. And if you have too many rules, then the relaxation becomes hard. So, but I would maybe recommend not to talk too much, if you can, because usually, meditation works better if the mind is not too busy. So talk too much kind of has often a negative impact. So to see how see how things happen and what, how things go here.

05:10

So when we, I'm just going to get going, is that alright? let's get started. Yeah, and we can do some meditations after a while. And we kind of have a nice mix of meditation and talks and things.

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So one of the things about, you know, the situation in the world and how to deal with this, one of the things that I always say to people is that, and I think this is actually quite profound. And it's quite, I think, important to understand, it's a very Buddhist kind of attitude to the way the world works. And that is the idea that good things happen to good people. Good people can expect good outcomes. Yeah. And so this is kind of, to me, the bottom line of how to deal with the problems or the world is basically to remember that if you want a good future, at least for yourself, the planet is a different thing, we don't know what's going to happen with the planet. And that is often some of those issues are outside of our control. Anyway, that's how many? 8 billion people on this planet, each one of us is one person we're going to have any kind of minor, you know, ability to influence events. But at the very least, we can do something good for ourselves.

06:21

And what is kind of what is interesting, of course, we could do something really good for ourselves. If we do things in the right way, we're also going to have an impact on the people around us. Certainly, the immediate people around us, like our family, our work colleagues, these are my work colleagues, by the way over here Venerables Santusitta, and Chit Ananda. And so it kind of spreads out. And this is one of the things that I've always found in my life, it has a kind of ripple effect. If you live well, if you live with kindness, if you're generous, if you have a good heart, it doesn't just affect you, it affects everyone around you. It kind of ripples out in society.

07:03

And sometimes we're not really aware of that properly. Yeah, but I don't know if you have noticed in your life, I have noticed in my life, and when someone is really kind to me here, I want to be kind as well, where you can remember that it has an impact on your mind. It's like, wow, they were kind to me, they said this, what a wonderful thing, and it leaves an imprint on your mind. And you take that with you. And then you are kind to the next person here. And maybe hopefully they are kind to someone else. Right?

07:29

And small acts of kindness, some kind speech or a kind act or a little bit of generosity. Someone very kindly offered me water, the is one act of generosity right here. So thank you, who's responsible for this? Not sure. Okay. Anyway, someone is responsible for it, right? It has a ripple effect straightaway.

07:49

So I'm gonna take this opportunity to enjoy this act of generosity. Nice water, okay. And so it has it ripples out in the world. So it's not just about us. It's about kind of a larger society as well, it kind of goes out to everyone.

08:08

But in the end, this idea that good things happen to good people is a very fundamental kind of Buddhist idea. And of course, it has to do with kamma or karma. Would you say here's a kamma karma, karma. karma kāma. Okay, so depends a bit on which what language to speak with his Pāli or Sanskrit or whatever, but same word.



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08:29

And the idea of karma very often in Buddhism, when we talking about karma, it is this idea that you do something in one life, and it has an effect in the later life, this kind of very, very common idea in Buddhism.

08:43

But I think more important than that, is the way the Buddha talks about karma in the sutras. sutras are the word of the Buddha in case you don't know, I should ask, are there any beginners here? We don't know anything about Buddhism or only a little bit? Who are you? On the little bit? Yeah. Okay. Good. Welcome. Anyway, it's good. It's nice to have some newcomers as well. So that's, that's marvelous. So the, the Buddhist idea of karma, if you go to like a traditional Buddhist society, Buddhist country is very often this relationship between what you do now and what you're going to do in your next life. What happens to you next time around. And but the Buddha says, there's three types of karma. There's the karma, which kind of ripens in this very life. Yeah. Then there's a karma ripens in your next life. And then there's karma beyond that.

09:34

But I think the most important one for people because it actually affects us right here and now is the karma that ripens in this very life. Yeah. Because that is something we can experience something we can actually definitely enjoy.

09:47

Okay, the idea of future life there's always going to be a degree of faith and confidence involved in that, but this life is somebody we can relate to straightaway. And the idea of karma in this very life. And this is something that you will be able to see for yourself is that if you do an act of kindness, you tend to feel good about yourself. Yeah, Have you have you noticed that if you really come from your heart, okay, I'm gonna say something kind to you, you just feel good about yourself, right? It's just unavoidable. It's part it's, it's kind of the, this is kind of the base, the kind of, to me the root idea, or what karma is about.

10:25

And of course, that feeling good about yourself, and having a sense of, you know, of the self worth, and all of these kinds of things that are very, very important in life, if you have no self worth, then life becomes very difficult. So building these things up also, this is how this relates to also the karma in the future life or results in a future life. That what you do here, in this life, if you build up a good feeling about yourself in this life, it carries over also into the future. Because we tend to have we tend to be habitual, the way we think the way we are, as human beings, tends to kind of perpetuate itself over time. Yeah, if you look at your character, who you are, as a person, your character will have a certain stability to it.

11:10

If I ask you, who are you today, compared to who you were 10 years ago, 20 years ago, you will see both change. And you also see continuity here. And that change and continuity is also what we see, if you wish, across lifetimes, as well. So if you want to be able to withstand if you want to be more, if you want to have more kind of ability to deal with the problems of the world, if you



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have that inner sense of glow inner sense of happiness, if you build that up, but then the external world will have less effect on you, and more able to withstand that. Yeah, and that is incredibly useful, right? It means that all the shocks of life and guarantee that every one of us will have more shocks than we want to have.

11:58

This is just the nature of existence, you're able to deal with those problems in the world. So building up goodness, building up kindness, reminding us that this is the foundation for being able to deal with the world, but also the foundation for the spiritual practice itself. This is really the starting point of everything. Yeah. So and I'm sure all of you here are good people. Any bad people here? I usually like to ask this question. You I told you everyone here good person. And so yeah, in a place like this, insight meditation centers, right? insight meditation center? Usually people come here because they have some spiritual inclination, right? I mean, it's very rare that you find gangsters coming to places like this. And if they are gangsters here, then welcome. Now you're on the right path. There's always good news.

12:51

So you're already on the on the right track, and we're heading in the right direction. So you just have to sometimes we have to kind of add a little bit more emphasis on the idea of kindness in your life. Yeah. And when you remember the importance of the spiritual life to deal with everything in the world, all the worldly things, and also the spiritual things then you get the motivation to practice this path really well. So then this is kind of the point of this. The point is, how can we use the problems of the world to motivate us to live even better life? So yeah, if we can do that then it's kind of marvelous.

13:26

So I'm going to tell you a couple of stories. That is those of you who have heard my talks like the venerables here. I don't know if anyone else of you have heard some of the things. I say I'm kind of available on the internet, unfortunately. So you sometimes heard these things, but I'm going to tell a couple of stories in my life that changed my attitude to life a little bit, I'm going to start with a simple ways of dealing with the problems of the world, how we can use wise reflection to overcome these unwise times. And, and then we're going to take it deeper as the, as the kind of day goes on, right?

14:05

So when you kind of reach your limit, like this is too much, then you can leave, yeah. But start easy, so you can stay as long as possible. We take it deeper and deeper as we go along. And when you say okay, this is too much, I'm out of here, then please the door is over there, you're very free to leave at any time.

14:21

So this first little anecdote, or this first little story that I'm going to tell, this came from a book that I read when I was at university. That was a long time ago that I was at university was almost getting close to 40 years ago. And the girlfriend I had at the time, I don't have any girlfriends anymore, but I did in those days. And so this girlfriend gave me a book, right? It's a kind of the best kind of girlfriend. Yes, she looks after you kind of intellectually as well as otherwise. Here's



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a book for you. I thought okay, fine. And this book was a book about the idea of happiness. Yeah, the I think the title of the book is written by Norwegian fellow because I was living in Norway at the time. And the title of the book is something like, You know, human beings and happiness, something like that. And this fellow, he wrote this book very shortly after the Second World War, the Second World War was very devastating in Europe, you, I'm sure you have some ideas, parts of Europe were completely kind of ruined, there was nothing left like in some of the cities in Germany, flattened to the ground, all that was left was rubble, basically, and nothing more. Norway, it was a bit on the outskirts of Europe's, so not so badly affected, but still badly affected. There was food rationing, there was no clothes available. It was a difficult time for most people, some people were sent off to the concentration camps, obviously, in Germany, the Jewish population of Norway, which was very small, but still, there was some Jewish people there. Of course, they had had a much harder time. And some of them were actually sent off to the concentration camps and things like that. But also non Jews as well were sent off to these camps. So it was difficult. Yeah, there were people dying, and all of these kinds of things. And so he wrote this book just after the Second World War. And the idea, the point that he wanted to get across in this book, is that happiness is sometimes so paradoxical. During this time, he said, one of the most difficult times in Norwegian history here, when things were falling apart, sometimes family members would die, there were bombings going on, all kinds of things were happening, during this most difficult time in most people's life. Suddenly, he realized, actually, here, I'm more happy now than I was before the war. Right? And he thought, how can this be here? How is it possible that not everything around me everything, I can't get as much food as I want, can't eat what I want, can't get any clothes, my house is kind of, can't get any repairman to fix up the whatever needs to be fixed up. People are dying. And I'm more happy here. And it's almost like you don't want to say it, right? Because it kind of is kind of a faux pas, you can say you're happy when everyone is kind of the world is kind of falling apart. It's really going against the stream, going against what is supposed to be, it's supposed to be terrible and bad. So you almost had to whisper it. Yeah, actually, you know, I'm feeling happy. What's going on there? What's happening here? And then he realized, of course, that what happens during a situation when you go to war is that your attitude to your fellow human beings changes. Yeah, prior to the war, maybe there's more competition between us. There's more arguments within the family kind of we have you know, I know that here in the US we have a lot of political arguments and things like that. Yeah, I guess in those days they had that too, probably Yeah, arguing about things. And there's all of these things. But suddenly, because you have an external enemy here, that is so destructive, and destroys the externalities of your life, you kind of come together. Yeah, you have more compassion for each other, you start working together, for goodness sake, yeah, that's kind of unusual, that we actually work together, rather than working against each other, we start working together, you have more compassion, more sympathy, for your neighbor, the neighbor, who used to not like, suddenly you work together with that neighbor, because we have a common purpose, a common cause. And he said that feeling of working together, the feeling of having compassion for each other, the feeling of understanding the people around you, actually, that was far more important than the destruction of the external world around you.

18:36

And that is so profound, when you think about that is actually very, very profound and very kind of uplifting idea of how to look at the world. Because what it means is that the world around us is not so important for our happiness. What really matters for happiness is the spiritual qualities



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that we have. Yeah, that is what really matters is that if you have compassion, if you have a sense of kindness for everyone around you, if you have generosity for the people, if you have a peaceful quality within, because you're practicing meditation, or whatever, that is, what is important for being happy here. So he could say, in the midst of all the destruction, in the midst of all the problems of the world, actually, this is what matters. Now we have a degree of happiness.

19:23

And so I think this is a very uplifting, and very kind of promising idea how to think about life. And this is something that we can really bring into our present world as well. Yeah. To remember that in the long run there. What is going to make you happy is not so much the world outside, the world outside has some impact. Of course, it matters that you know, the world doesn't crumble, that we're not kind of being blown up by terrorists or whatever. Of course, that is very unpleasant. But in the end, if you want to be resilient, and if you want to find something more profound, something deeper, the qualities of the mind the, spiritual you, the aspects of you know, the our inner life rather than our outer life. That is what really matters. And it comes to mind as I say this, this is actually also one of the fundamental ideas of the Buddha himself.

20:17

Yeah, one of the, I don't know how well versed you are in the Buddha's discourse and the Buddha's suttas. But one of the most famous suttas of the Buddha is known as the Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta. You know that? Yeah, well, yes, you're nodding. Okay, great. You are sutta junkies just like me? Which is good as drunkies, it's okay to be drunk if you're drunk on the right thing, right? Sutta junkie, that's fine. So some of the things not so good, but sutta drunkie is fine. And one of these suttas, the Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta, it really means kind of the great passing away, or the great extinguishment, maybe something like that. And it's the sutta about how the Buddha's last journey, how he travels through India from the great country of Magada. It travels north and it ends up in a place called Kusinara where eventually passes away. Have any of you here been to these holy places in India? No, you haven't. Okay? Yeah, yeah, yes, you have, sure. Is that right? I can't see very well, with these glasses, my eyesight is kind of going down the drain. So that's kind of one of the reasons I practice a spiritual life because the your eyes and the body, everything is kind of failing as we get older. So anyway, so if you haven't been to India, it's actually quite interesting. Yeah, I've been a few times go to the holy places, the Buddhist places, it can be very inspiring and good. If you go with a come the right crowd and the right people at the right time of the year and all of these kinds of things, you have to be very careful what you do, because India can also be a bit challenging here. It's, you know, it's kind of very different from Silicon Valley, I'd say.

21:54

But nevertheless, it's inspiring to kind of be in the footsteps of the Buddha, so to speak. Yeah. So anyway, so the Buddha travels, yeah, to the north, and he knows that he is about to die at a certain point. In the sutta he says to Venerable Ananda, who is his attendant. He says, you know, three months from now, I will be passing away. He had a very clear idea that he was coming to the end of his life. And because he knew that he was coming to the end of his life, he had to prepare people for this fact. And you can imagine, if you are at that time in India, the Buddha is like the, imagine the Buddha, right. This is the, as far as I'm concerned, the greatest



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spiritual genius in human history. Yeah, there's no one like the Buddha in human history, you start to look at human history, the Buddha kind of stands to me, head and shoulders above everyone else. And so here is this person. And it's a human being right? It's not kind of some god or anything like that. It's a real flesh and blood human being here. And he's about to pass away here. And imagine that if you are part of the monastic sangha at that time, you're always looking to the Buddha for all the solutions. Yeah.

23:03

And sometimes I feel a bit sorry for the Buddha because every time there's a problem, you have to go to the Buddha, you know, "I, I lost my shoes, what should I do?" Like, all this trivialities of life, they would go to the Buddha to find solutions, I feel it sometimes it's kind of like that, when you are in a kind of spiritual kind of, you know, you have a bit of spiritual authority or whatever, as the Buddha obviously, hi there. And so go to the Buddha, all of these kinds of things, all the lay Buddhists at the time, yeah, they will go to the Buddha, they need a bit of inspiration, they'd come and listen to a talk by the Buddha, "Please master let us, you know, give us an inspiring talk."

23:39

And now this person, this kind of, one person you've been looking to, for all the solutions of life, the meaning of life, the purpose of existence, all of these kinds of things. He's about to pass away here. Imagine how difficult that is. Yeah, that's incredible shock to the system. I don't know you, yeah, here, Gil Fronsdal is the one who is the kind of the head of who started this community or whatever, right? Yeah. So imagine Gil passing away, right? Is that gonna be bad? That's gonna be bad right? Now, this is kind of worse. Yeah. This is the Buddha passing away here.

24:12

So kind of the the real supreme leader of this whole community is about to pass away here. And then Venerable Ananda, he goes to the Buddha and says that well, you know, Master, I hope you will kind of give us some instructions, because before you pass away, because we are feeling a bit lost. Without you, what are we going to do without you? He doesn't actually say that, but that's what I'm kind of adding to the conversation to make it more interesting here. And so then he goes, and then the Buddha says to him, he says, Well, you know, haven't I told you, Ananda, and all the things in the world, everything that is compounded, everything that is conditioned, everything that has come to be because of causes and reasons. It all has to pass away. It all has to disintegrate. Haven't I told you this?

25:02

And then he says to Ananda, you should find the way to find the refuge to take the dhamma, In other words, the teachings of the Buddha, the dhamma, and the Vinaya. The Vinaya is like the practice, if you like, these things you should take as your teacher after I passed away here, and you should take refuge in these teachings that I have given. And also in your meditation practice. It specifically says that the place of refuge is what is called the four satipatthāna, the four mindfulness meditations, however you want to translate it, that's not the interesting point, how do we translate satipatthāna? We get back to that later on.



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25:41

So that is where you find your refuge, right? You find your refuge in the spiritual qualities, the spiritual practice, and of course, the refuge of satipatthāna. What does that mean? Well, it means that things like mindfulness of breathing, yeah, breath meditation. That's really what it means. In other words, you go inwards, you go within yourself, and you, you sustain yourself by the spiritual qualities that you have built up over time. Yeah, by your kindness, by the well being you feel when you close your eyes, you close the world outside off, and you just watch your breath, and you find peace, you find happiness, you find joy, you find all of those qualities within there. That is what is your refuge, the refuge is your spiritual life. That's what the Buddha says, Why? Because the external world is so unreliable.

26:29

Now, the Buddha is about to pass away here. Who knows what's gonna happen with the world around us? Yeah, it's just so uncertain, we have no idea what's going to happen, maybe things like kind of somehow muddle through and kind of make something out of this world, but we just have no idea. And because we have no idea because the uncertainty is so great, we need to find our refuge somewhere else than the external world. If you look for refuge in the external world, which is what the vast majority of people do in this, in this world, then we have a problem, because it's so uncertain what's going to happen with the world outside, we just don't know, it's not gonna, it's probably not gonna kind of collapse completely, because somehow things tend to somehow work out one way or another. But there's always going to be some serious issues. And because we have no idea what's going to happen, it's inward that we need to go to find solutions to the problems.

27:21

And so this is why that story of this fellow in Norway during the Second World War was so interesting to me, because I realized that sometimes we kind of touch, we kind of get in touch with what the Buddha was talking about, almost by accident, by you know, how life unfolds. And we realize these things on our own. And it was interesting as well, because when the war in Ukraine started, yeah, there's another kind of calamity happening around the world. That was much closer to where to where I came from originally. And it's kind of interesting when these things happen.

27:58

I was in Poland recently, because Poland is actually has a common border with Ukraine. I don't know if you how well, you know, the map of Europe. But there's a common border between Ukraine and Poland. And so I was in Poland. And of course, when it's so close, the the kind of the action of the war, it kind of is a bit more interesting. Yeah, it kind of you get more goosebumps when it gets so close to the military action here. So I was reading about, again, about the war in Ukraine, it was very early on when the invasions were just starting. The Russians were kind of coming in. And of course, the journalists were still there, and they're still in the country. It's kind of scary to be a journalist sometimes, but they are they're on the front line trying to see what's going on. And one of the things they were doing is that they were interviewing some of the people Yeah. And they were saying of course, you know, kind of stupid question. How do you feel about the war kind of stuff, right? And what you would expect of course, that people will say things like, "This is terrible. Yeah, the war is really really bad. Yeah,



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my kind of my workplace has been destroyed. There's nowhere for me to work anymore. My family members are being killed. Yeah, the kind of my hometown, My home is kind of has turned into rubble..." And you can see why people despair when these things happen. Yeah, your home getting destroyed is actually very traumatic. It's a very difficult thing to bear. And I know right here in San Francisco, that is something that is kind of, this can happen anytime here right? Isn't that true? Yeah, with the kind of the earthquake zone or these kind of things.

29:29

So this is kind of you have to be ready for your kind of your home to be destroyed at any time. In this place. Same thing in Perth, which is where I live, Perth in Western Australia, because it was very, one of the most bushfire prone or forest fire prone areas in the whole world. Every year we have houses burning down Yeah, because of bushfires and this kind of thing. So it is very difficult to take, when your home burns down even more difficult when your family members get killed. And so of course people are despairing. But what was fascinating to me was that among those people who were despairing, there were a few who said, you know, I, again, I'm not sure if I dare to say this, but I feel more happy. Now, life has become more meaningful to me after the war started. And it was exactly the same reason why this fellow in Norway was saying that, you know, during the Second World War, we were more happy, it's exactly the same reason, we have more compassion, we're more understanding for each other, we've worked together, which we never did before. And that kind of has changed our something within us. It's been like a spiritual awakening inside of us. And that is much more important to me as a person they would say, than whether the external world is kind of collapsing, or whatever. And again, it shows the same thing here, the idea of the importance of the spiritual path, the importance of what we do with our inner life with our mental life, compared to the world outside us, the external world outside.

30:56

And this, to me is like the most important lesson from the problems in the world, all the things that we see around us, all the issues that come, is that we need to turn away from the refuge in the external world, holding on hoping the external world will be okay, maybe it will, maybe it won't, we don't know what's going to happen. And we need to find that refuge, inside. Instead, the refuge in the spiritual practice, the refuge on the spiritual path, that is what really matters.

31:29

And if this, if the external things in the world are able to turn us around in this way, here, yeah, are able to kind of shift our perspective on what really matters in life, then maybe, for some of us, it's going to be for the good, maybe for some of us going to be something uplifting, something which makes a deep impact within us, which actually is going to be a very long term benefit for us. And if that is what happens, then it's marvelous.

31:57

And this is the right way, to me, of thinking about these problems in the world. Because if we do that, we can turn a calamity into something beneficial, something really problematic into a blessing in disguise. And then something kind of awakens up. And if we become better within ourselves in this way, again, as I mentioned before, it's going to have this ripple effect around us, we're going to touch other people in the same way, they too, will start to see the world in a



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new way. Because we are kind, they're gonna feel there's light in the world, there's possibilities in the world, something beautiful is starting to happen in this way here. And so this is really the kind of, to me, the spiritual solution, if you like to the problems of the world, some people say, that's not really a solution, we want to change the world, we want to have our cake and eat it, we want the world to be and we want the spiritual path, right? That's how people usually think about things.

32:56

But maybe there is no solution in the world. Yeah, maybe that's kind of sounds nice. On paper, you want to find a solution there. But maybe that is just an illusion, that somehow we always have to make progress, we're always going to, you know, there is a solution to every problem, maybe that's not the case. And if that isn't the case, then maybe we need to look at things in a new way. And this is really where the Buddha comes in. Because he allows us to find a different kind of solution or a more personal solution if you like rather than a solution in society itself. So I hope you are with me so far. I'm glad no one has left yet. Always uncertain what's gonna happen when I give this kind of talk, people think, "Oh, this guy's nuts, you know, we want to find solution to these things." So I'm glad you don't think I'm nuts already. So I'm very, very happy with that. But I'm going to stop there because I don't think it's good to talk too much. And I am going to, we're going to maybe it's important to do some meditation together as well. So we do some meditation together. And I'm going to kind of give a little bit of guidance as we go along just to get us going and nothing I'm not going to talk too much, but a little bit just to kind of get started. So let us do maybe half an hour meditation I think half an hour sounds good. That kind of acceptable. Yeah. All right. So let's do that and let's see. See how we go?

34:55

Okay, everyone, so in Meditation practice always start out just by making sure that you are comfortable. The idea of meditation is the idea of the Middle Way and the middle way is the place where the body kind of disappears. And for the body to disappear, you have to be comfortable. So make sure you are really nice and at ease.

36:08

And when you close your eyes, you can feel your body really well. So, it's not just about not having any pain in the body. It's also about being at ease. You don't want to be tense or uptight or anything like that. You want the body to relax. So take time just to really relax. We're trying here to get this deep relaxation as you possibly can.

37:43

And always take plenty of time as you start out with relaxing and finding the ease of the body. The body and the mind are very closely connected. And if the body is relaxed, the mind tends to be the same. For take lots of time. Don't be in a hurry to go to any meditation object. Just enjoy sitting peacefully here. Enjoy the peace and allow the body to relax

41:16

And just try if you can to tune in to that beautiful sense of peace that is available right here. It's actually a remarkably peaceful place to enjoy that peace and enjoy the peace of the good company around you and allow it to kind of permeate your body and mind and to make the



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meditation work the attitude is so important you'd like to have a degree of gentleness and kindness and positive feeling in your meditation practice.

45:24

And one way of doing that is just very briefly to reflect on the good fortune to be in such good company with people who practice the spiritual life, people who want to do what is right in the world, what a wonderful thing it is to be in good company like this and how sometimes how difficult it can be to find this. So rejoice in the good company here, rejoice and being part of something wonderful and marvelous.

49:45

And the idea here is just to be a passive observer of whatever happens, not to be involved in the world; to watch the world kind of pass by here. By the world I mean anything that goes through your mind anything you might hear or feel there, you just watch things coming and then going again afterwards and this is the idea of mindfulness, this awareness that just knows things without judging good or bad and allowing things to flow. So going with the flow is what this really is about.

54:36

And if you are able try to notice that the light of the meditation, the idea of leaving all the burdens of life behind right now there is nothing that you have to do in the whole world. Apart from sitting down and just enjoying the peace and enjoying the Freedom from all these things in the world. See if we can get your mind into that beautiful Space.

1:02:58

All right, so coming close to the end, not quite there yet. Just take a few moments before we come to the end just to review your meditation here and if you do feel that you are a bit more peaceful relaxed mindful whatever it is, ask yourself why that is the case?

1:04:14

Okay so, was that good? was that alright? Yeah, those who are newcomers Was it okay? Yeah. Yeah. Okay, good. Anyone thought it was bad? It happens, right? It's not. It's actually the reality some people don't enjoy meditation at all and they find it really hard and difficult. It varies a lot with everyone here. Does anyone have any questions or comments about the meditation? How to, what we're supposed to do, what you're not supposed to do, etc. Okay, everyone, everyone is really contented, happy that you want to want to say something? Yeah, please.

Questioner 1:05:14

Hello. So the idea of being a passive observer that was more like for the beginning, right? And later on, you kind of have to do something, when undesirable things comes up in the mind?

Ajahn Brahmali 1:05:37

Right. Yeah. So yeah, so there's much more to it. Of course, this is the starting point on meditation practice, really what we're talking about now. But the idea of being passive actually goes through the whole meditation experience. So you the idea is to take that passivity and basically making it more and more profound. And the more passive you are, the more profound



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the meditation is going to be here. But you're right, so sometimes you have problems, sometimes something happens in your mind, maybe you think about something or you are or fantasizing about the future or the past, or you've maybe you get a bit of maybe upset about something, all kinds of things can obviously occur, because you're dealing with your ordinary mind, and the ordinary mind is going to be reflected in the meditation itself. And then what you have to do is you have to learn to not, it's not so much about doing a lot, but it's more about nudging the mind in the right direction. Yeah, it's a kind of gentle nudging. And because if you do too much in the meditation, if you try to think too much, or counteract the problems with too much willpower, very often you just disturb the whole experience.

1:06:44

So you want to kind of be very gentle with yourself. So you know, if you start thinking, and then you have to do something to counteract the thinking very often you will find the thinking is about, obviously about stuff in your life. Yeah, it's about your job, or your family, or things that you have to do or lunch afterwards, or whatever it is about. And so then you just have to remind yourself that all of that stuff can wait. Yeah, or it is not that important. Actually, what I'm doing now is more important. So why am I thinking about the unimportant stuff when I'm doing the important things already. And so you kind of give yourself a gentle hint, in the right way, and then your mind kind of comes back to the present again. So this is really what it is about. So you want to do things very, very gently in this way. And the idea is then to gradually increase the passivity, the more passive the mind is, the less involved it is with anything in the world, the more peaceful it's going to be here. A lot of the activity is actually a burden. Yeah, when you're thinking you find out that all activity of the mind is really burdensome. And you start to feel a sense of relief. And when the when the activity of the mind, you know, fades away, and you are doing less and you're experiencing you're being a human. A human being rather than a human doing. Yeah. That's kind of the the idea here. That makes sense? Yeah. Yeah. Okay, good. Anybody else want to say anything? Yeah. Yeah. Couple of people over here. Yeah.

Questioner 1:08:27

Thank you. I'm building on the same point, like, Should you like, you know, analyze and charge your meditation during? Or should it be at the end, and then bring in more energy next time or just like, how does that work?

Ajahn Brahmali 1:08:44

Usually, at the end, there's a better place to analyze the meditation, if you analyze too much during the meditation, you end up not having much of a meditation at all. So it kind of tends to destroy the meditation. So that's why I say at the end, review your meditation at the end and see what happened, what worked, what didn't work. And it is the case that the reason why you feel peaceful is because your mind is inclined in the right way. There's something you're doing right. That's why you feel peaceful. And you will find sometimes in meditation is a complete mess. Otherwise, other times, it may be quite nice. Yeah. And there is a reason why it is sometimes a mess. Sometimes it is nice. And you will start to if you start to look into that you start to become very skilled at meditation because you understand how to set up your mind in the right way, so do most of the analysis at the end. But the idea is that also we tend to come into the meditation with the kind of number of skillful means Yeah, so you enter the meditation.



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You'd know, from past experience that if you think about certain things, well, this is the remedy. This is how I get out of it. Yeah.

1:09:49

And so you apply that remedy in a very gentle way. As I was saying to this gentleman over here, you kind of nudge the mind in the right in the right way. And as you kind of do a little bit of nudging the mind kind of starts to fall into place again, or especially, you know what is very disturbing, if you had a bit of ill will or something in a meditation, thinking about something negative, you know how to deal with that very quickly. Because once it kind of, you know, become strong, it's very, very, very difficult to get rid of, you want to kind of nip it in the bud as they say, and kind of get it sorted out as soon as possible. So but the skillful means you often develop outside of meditation in know how to incline the mind, you know, the idea of mettā, of compassion, you know how to reflect on other people in a way where you can forgive them quickly and easily. Because, you know, so these things are often kind of precursors, if you like, a prerequisite that you bring with you. Yeah, okay, good. Excellent. Yeah. Please, yep.

Questioner 1:10:55

So grateful for you all coming all this way to be here. Thank you so much. So, when meditating, what is the best way to let go completely of the face, for instance, the eyes if they don't fully close, a tendency to pull them shut, and also, the mouth of there's previous dental pain, and there's a habit of pulling the lip down to previously deal with that pain? How can one calm these down to completely let go of the face?

Ajahn Brahmali 1:11:25

Right. Basically, the idea is, sometimes you, if you try too hard to, you know, to let go, or whatever it becomes the opposite of letting go right becomes like more kind of holding on because the letting go process itself becomes a process of holding on. So very often, the best thing to do is just to let it be and Okay, so yes, there is some tension in the face. But if you are able to kind of stay with just with the present, and just be with things and maybe go to the breath, or do a bit of mettā, whatever, sometimes it tends to resolve itself as we go along. Sometimes, you know, you just can't go any deeper with it, with the relaxation. And then you just have to allow the meditation to kind of deal with the problem over time. So yeah, so the most important thing is just to be able to kind of relax, relax to the max? Yeah, and then allow these things to kind of unwind themselves as you go along and see what happens. Yeah. Good. Online, all right. Yeah.

Questioner 1:12:47

The question was, what are some examples of nudging my mind in a more calm direction?

Ajahn Brahmali 1:12:54

Okay, so examples of nudging in the mind. So let's say that you are thinking about things. Yeah. And when you're thinking about things, it is usually about kind of three things; you have thinking about the future, what you're going to do, how would how you're going to solve problems. You know, what, whatever, past maybe some kind of, you know, negativity about the past, someone said something or did something, which of course, happens all the time, right. Or it can be just fantasizing because the mind kind of goes off. Mind doesn't want to be here and now so it goes



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off. So the way to nudge the mind, is to remind yourself what is important in life? Yeah, what really matters. And the way, one of the ways of thinking about that is to think that well, my future is actually created by how not so much by how I solve the problems of the world, because the problems of the world are endless, you solve one problem, another problem kind of kind of comes up behind it, that there's no end to the problems of the world.

1:13:55

And because of that, it is not so interesting to resolve things in that way. The real way to resolve the future, the real way to create a good future is actually what you do now, in your meditation practice, how we react now to the people around you. Yeah, that is where you create the future. And once you understand that you're creating in the future in the meditation, not by thinking about the world, then there's nothing more to think about, it becomes kind of uninteresting. It is that future, you know, there is no future in a sense in that area of thinking about things. So you come back to the present, you come back to just enjoying the here and now. This is one way of nudging the mind. Another way would then be, you know have to do with, let's say that you have some kind of upset something happened in your life. Yeah. And then you just think very, very gently. You just forgive that person for whatever they did, because you know that people don't know what they're doing in this life. People do things because they are stressed out, people do things because they're having a bad day, people do think because they are blind, they're walking in darkness in the world, people do things for all kinds of reasons. But it's not usually to annoy you. Yeah, that's not why they do things. It's not personal. And when you remember that these things are not personal. At that moment, you can just let it go. And you come back to your meditation again. So these are ideas that you build up. And then when you come to the meditation, you don't have to think all of these things, all you have to do is kind of gently remind yourself of those things. They're like ideas. It's like you have a shelf of ideas or perceptions in your mind. And you take pull down the kind of appropriate perception, one that counteracts a particular problem, and then the problem kind of dissolves, that's kind of the the idea there. It's a very simple thing. It's all just having compassion for someone, etc, etc.

1:15:57

We have time for one more sure, yeah.

Questioner 1:16:17

Yes, there we go. Thank you for letting me on mute. Ajaan, it' so wonderful to interact with you, rather than through YouTube. Great. And thank you to the person who asked the question about the face. I found that very interesting. And it led me to also think about the other part of the body that tends to be very over represented in the mind, or the brain, which is my hands, what do I do with my hands? During meditation, I find at times getting very fidgety and trying different shapes and different placements. And you know, sometimes it can get a Yeah, I just realized a lot of restlessness there.

Ajahn Brahmali 1:17:06

Right, okay. So I mean, obviously, the restlessness really comes from the mind, right, that's where it kind of arises from, and it expresses itself through your hands, which is kind of interesting. So, again, I would say that don't, don't worry too much, you know, and, if you try to hide to hold your hand, still, you try too hard to do anything using that willpower very often is



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often a bit counterproductive, because we're trying to do the meditation rather than actually just doing it. So instead of worrying too much about your hands, just allow your hands to be there, allow them to do their own thing, and come back to the mind instead. And look at the kind of the root causes of the problem. And the root cause of the problem is, again, some degree of restlessness, some degree of desire or craving, or whatever it is that is driving this process. And of course, that is settled down by just enjoying the peace, allowing things to be and not, you know, pushing things at all. And over time, my prediction is that your hands will start to settle down yeah? because you are moving because your mind is becoming peaceful, your body will kind of follow along as you do that. But do things very gently. I think one of the big problems in meditation practice is that we are told to do mindfulness of breathing. And so people sit down and they start watching the breath straight away. And very often, that's a bad idea. It is not how the Buddha taught mindfulness of breathing, I'd to sit down and watch the breath straightaway. Because you are often not ready to watch the breath, the mind is too restless, the hands want to do things. And these kinds of things. So really, what we should always do is to give rise to mindfulness. First of all, that is the most important thing here. Mindfulness is the basis for all meditation practice. So give yourself time to learn to allow the mind just to be aware, just to enjoy the feeling of sitting down peacefully, to being in good company, or whatever it might be. And as you learn that, as you kind of learn the, I don't know if it is a skill, because it's almost like an anti skill as you just learned to be natural, in a sense. Yeah. Then the mindfulness starts to come. And I'm pretty sure that the problems you have with your hands will just fade away by itself. And it won't actually be an issue. It just feels like an issue right now. But actually, I you know, getting this right and this way, I think you will just find it dissolves. And one day you wonder why it was an issue in the first place. Thank you. Okay, good luck, Charles, sir. All right. So it's time to break for lunch. Is that right? Yeah. So ah, there's the bus coming. Okay, good

1:20:11

All right, so had a good lunch? Yeah, everyone, you sure? Yeah. The international cuisine is really nice. So usually after lunch is a bad time to do meditation, right? I know, falling over, I'm going to fall off the side here... So let's have a bit of let's start off with a bit of dharma discussion and questions and comments or whatever you like. And then if it dries up, I can always talk a little bit, get good at talking after being a monk for so long. So is there anything that anyone would like to discuss from this morning or anything? Anything really, if you want to, if you have any questions or whatever, we can discuss that now. If you have any disagreements it's okay. Complaints? No let's leave the complaints aside, but apart from that?

1:21:08

From this one? Yeah, please. Okay. Let's take the questions from online. Yeah.

Questioner 1:21:13

So one leftover question was what is the relationship between acceptance and right effort?

Ajahn Brahmali 1:21:23

Between acceptance and right effort? In a way acceptance is right effort. So that is right effort is kind of strange, because right effort doesn't necessarily mean that you are actually doing anything, it doesn't mean that you are applying yourself or anything like that. Right Effort, letting go is right effort. Yeah, acceptance is right effort. Letting be is right effort. The ability to just to be



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mindful is right effort. Not doing anything is right effort. So it's kind of strange. Yeah, right effort is about, ultimately, it is about developing good qualities. So anything you do that develops a good quality in the mind, that is right effort. So it can be like I said before, like nudging the mind a little bit in the right direction, or you can just be allowing things to be without doing anything at all. So anything which gives rise, which kind of moves you forward on the path of meditation is right effort. And acceptance is one of those things. So yeah, a lot of the things that we're trying to do on the Buddhist path, of it takes quite a bit of contemplation and thinking about things. Yeah.

1:22:37

So if you're going to be able to, for example, if you're going to be able to forgive other people, how can we forgive people? Sometimes we say forgive, but how do you actually do it? It's easy to say, but it's not always easy to do. And the answer is, you need a particular way of thinking about people to be able to forgive them, you need to kind of get in the right mindset. And what is that right mindset? Well, it's basically the idea that people don't really know what they're doing in this world, right, that people have no idea. People don't people are kind of walking in darkness in delusion. And they kind of, you know, stubbing their toes all over the place because there's no lights to see where you shouldn't be going. Yeah. And once you start to understand the delusion that people are under in the world, how can you not forgive them when they do crazy things? Yeah, when people kind of say something bad to you, which probably happens almost every day. Yeah, yeah. Everyday people say stupid things in this world. So what are you gonna think, you know, you're gonna say that actually, they are just, you know, they had a bad day that things weren't going right for them, that they don't know kind of what it really is what it is to live live a good life.

1:23:47

And because of that, that's why they do bad things. And this is kind of where it comes from. And I think the, personally, I think the majority of people in the world, they actually want to be kind, they want to do the right thing. Yeah. Because I think deep down every one of us, we know that when you are kind towards others. When you treat other people well, we know that you feel good about yourself. Yeah, deep down, we know that we know we actually really want to do these things. And still, even though we want to be kind even though we want to live an ethical and moral life, but very often we can't Yeah, I'm sure everyone here probably wants to be, you know, kind all the time, if you could. Is there anyone who doesn't want to be kind all the time. Everyone wants to be kind all the time, right? I'd like to be kind all the time. Sometimes I get these thoughts in my mind. Yeah, that are kind of leading me astray. It's terrible. What happens? I go to ajaan Brahm and I say, "Please what's going on there?" No, I don't do that. And so that is kind of the despairing thing, right. When people actually deep down, they want to be kind. They want to do the right thing they want to be of service to the world. Service to themselves and everyone else, but they can't. And the reason why they can't is because the habits are so strong.

1:25:07

Yeah, and I, you know, if everyone here knows, sometimes we get angry, even though you don't want to get angry, it's just habits coming out of you. So what you have been doing for lifetimes, probably, and at least many times in this life if you don't believe in other lives. And so it comes



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out whether you want to or not. And this is kind of why the spiritual practice is often hard, because the spiritual practice is actually about overcoming habits and overcoming habits is very difficult, and when you know that you become more forgiving other people, because you know how hard it is. And this is like a very important part of the idea of non self. Yeah, anattā, the idea of non self, the idea that we are basically not really in control of ourselves. We are under the thumb of habits and things from the past. And it's very difficult to kind of get out from those habits and those things, this is what not-self is about. So when someone does something nasty, there's not because of they want to be nasty. It's just that it's their non self nature, their habits coming out in a bad way. You happen to be there at the wrong time in the wrong place. And so you have to bear the brunt of those negative things coming out of that person. Does that make sense to anyone? Yeah, makes sense. Yeah. Okay, good. I'm not the only one that makes sense to, great. Okay. So yeah. Yes, please. Go. There's one person over here who would like to? Would you like to? Yeah.

Questioner 1:26:56

Probably, this is too big a question for my shoes. And pardon me, I am a very novice and an immature practitioner. But this is something I'm struggling with for quite a while in terms of practice. And you just brought it up, I mean, about self and no self. And the question of context versus content. You usually when your mind is very thin, and you're not so caught up in the contents of what's going on, you have this the way only to explain it is the line between content and context kind of things out a you are just this, there is the experience itself. In our head usually happens, either with effort when the mind is thin, or occasionally very rarely, you know, just like that. My question is, is because you know, when that happens, there are no attachments as such. It's, I cannot even say what is your view is freeing, because it's just is but either way, is there some way...And probably the entire practice is to stabilize it. But my question is, is there something during the practice, or a particular kind of meditation or something, when you're still caught up, and you're still trying to, you know, probably, I don't know, if I'm hooked on to an experience of sort or trying to get there. If there is anything which can be done during practice. Where, you know, it's trying, trying, trying, and then it just follows up, but it takes quite a bit of effort, prolonged practice to get there. of sorts. Yeah. I don't know if I make sense.

1:29:11

So you're saying you're gonna get to the point where you don't try anymore, and things like kind of natural and easy and mindful or whatever. And how do you get there? Well, the way you know, it's very interesting the way that the Buddha explains meditation in the suttas, the suttas are kind of discourses, the word of the Buddha in a sense, and the way he explains it, is that he essentially says you don't need to make an effort. You don't need to even have an intention. There's this kind of famous phrase in the suttas where he says, 'Anā cetanāya karaniya', which means that no intention needs to be done. Well, actually it shouldn't be done. That's what it says. And it says that the process of meditation is according to nature is "Dhammata". "Dhammata" means according to nature. Dharma is nature right? The lawfulness of nature. So dhammata is according to nature.

1:29:59

So if something is in accordance with nature, if you're trying to do it, you can't do nature and nature has to happen by itself, you can't make nature happen. Yeah, is that the famous simile



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that I think Ajaan Brahm sometimes uses, you know, you have a mother with a small child, and she's going to teach the child how to grow a plant. Yeah, so she kind of puts a sunflower seed in the kind of soil and kind of watch it a bit and says okay, now, your job is to come and water this seed every day, and you will see how the plant grows, right. So after a while the plant comes to the surface, and it starts to kind of grow, and after a while, this child gets very impatient, because it goes so slowly, yeah, it's only a few kind of millimeters every day is too slow. It millimeters, okay, you know, fraction of an inch whenever. I forget that I'm in the US now. So I have to kind of use the American terminology.

1:30:50

But so, and then, of course, the child gets impatient. So it grabs hold of the plant, and pulls it, that goes against nature, nature has to take its own course, it has to go if you start pulling the plant, you destroy the plant, basically. And it's the same thing with meditation practice, if something is to happen according to nature, you can't make it happen. You can't force it to happen. You can't use the *cetanā*, *cetanā* is the intention, or the will to make things happen. So what I say is that the whole process of meditation all the way to the very end of the path that which is like liberation, from suffering, or whatever, all the whole process is automatic. So what does that mean? Well, what it means is that you have to go backwards in that process to the very beginning point. And then you have to look at the beginning point, what is that? That is what you have to strengthen. Because if everything else is automatic, well, then the beginning point, is the critical point, because everything will start from that. So what is the beginning point? What do you think? Yeah. It's a good guess. Yeah, it's a good guess.

1:32:01

But it's not actually quite quite right. Because mindfulness itself actually comes from causes. Mindfulness is something not something that is just there yet. It has its own causes, in a sense. So the Buddha says, *sila*, or morality, or kindness is the root of everything. Yeah. If you are a truly kind person, if you truly have a good heart, if you have compassion for all beings, if you have a sense of *metta* and love for the world, that is where the whole process comes from. And it's quite simple in a way, because, you know, the reason why so hard to be mindful is because the mind is, as long as we have desires, and ill will, and these kind of things the mind is going to be in the future, is going to be in the past, because the nature of these things to be in the future and the past, but if you are kind of going to feel good about yourself, you're gonna have a sense of self worth. Yeah, everyone is looking for self esteem, that's the path to self esteem, just be kind, that's the path, you're gonna feel good about yourself.

1:32:57

And when you feel good about yourself, you're gonna have this inner feeling of happiness about how you live, yeah, you're gonna be it's not kind of an ego thing at all. It's just a kind of quiet sense of being pleased with how you live: Yay, me living in a good way! And from that, because your mind is like going into the future, and the past is kind of in the present. And you have the joy that comes with feeling good about yourself. Those are the two fundamental things that makes meditation possible. Yeah. Because if you are happy in the here, and now the mind will be present. And when the mind is present, you tend to be happy in the here and now that is where the thing just goes by itself. So the critical thing is this idea of morality. But morality is very broad in Buddhism, it's not just don't kill and don't steal it is you know, it's about actually



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positive morality, how to be kind, how to be supportive, how to be compassionate, how to think in the right way. And it is very, very challenging to be moral in the way that Buddha taught. That's actually very hard. It's a very high bar to clear because, you know, to be have compassion all the time. It's not easy to be kind of all the time, it's not easy at all.

1:34:14

So that is where the practice lies. And the more you're able to live like that and you have to integrate it into your entire life, your entire life has to be like that. Sometimes people think that this is my spiritual side. This is my worldly side. No, no, no, no, that that's no good. Yeah, everything is your spiritual life. Everything from even when you dream at night to make your spiritual dreams. It's true. You think I'm joking? It's true, spiritual dreams- have you heard about spiritual dreams? There's a story of, I hear, this is a...I'm not sure if I should tell the story but some stories are kind of half secret right? I can't... I'm divulging secrets here. That's kind of, I'm not sure that's a good idea. But I know people who that dream at night, and they have dreams that are so powerful, this is one person who told me this, he said he was dreaming that he was bowing down to somebody here. If you have a lot of faith, if you really believe that the Buddha was awake, and he was a greatest spiritual master in human history, or you have faith in some other person who may be a great meditation master, bowing can be profoundly blissful. Because you are bowing to something very beautiful. Yeah, you're bowing to something... wisdom, kindness, compassion, understanding. It's wonderful to bow down to these things. Usually, we bow down to movie stars. That's bad idea, right? That's, that's our usual kind of people that we look up to in this world, or some people do anyway. Yeah. And so and he said that when he bowed down to this person in his dream, becomes so blissful, he woke up straight away. Yeah. Because the bliss was so powerful went straight into a deep state of Samadhi, meditation straight from that. That's what I mean by spiritual dreams, right? So this is where your mind inclines so strongly to the spiritual path. And that, you know, you you dream about these things, that's literally what is going on there.

1:36:06

So it is kind of really permeated in your life. So that is what you have to do. And that is where the challenge really is. And, and, you know, if people really understood the power of morality and kindness, if they really, the more you understand that, and that comes from right view, yeah, right view is that what tells you, it informs you the power of these things. If that is there, in your mind, lodged firmly in your mind, strongly, you never forget it, it's always there. The mindfulness tells you almost all the time. Okay, must be careful, must think in the right way. And this is why someone who is a stream enterer, have you heard about this expression stream entry? Yeah. The idea is that when you become a stream enterer, you are perfect in morality, you never forget it. It is so lodged in your mind, it is always kind of there at the back of your mind. And it kind of guides you all the time. So we should try to approximate the idea of stream entry here and be like stream enterers in our life. Say? It becomes you Yeah, right. Yeah, exactly. Morality becomes an expression of your character, right? Yeah. That's exactly it. So the ego fades away. You're not to be the person in the ordinary sense anymore. Well, I guess you are, in some ways, but yeah, exactly. Have I even remotely answered your question? Oh, yeah. Okay, good. Great. So, please.

Questioner 1:37:39



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Thank you. You brought up earlier that, you know, if you look back at yourself 10 years ago, there's part of you that's the same, part of you that has changed. If there's not self, what is it that gets reborn, this is something that I'm always confused about.

Ajahn Brahmali 1:37:56

The way it is explained in the suttas, it's like the stream of consciousness. Yeah. So it is no different from what it is now in this life. Because in this life, you look at yourself, you see that there is change, and there is a continuity, two things coming together, change in continuity here. And it's no different from one life to the next one. It's the same thing as you find in this life, change and continuity. So the mind that you are now in some way, similar to the mind you had 10 years ago, and in some ways is different. If you go into future life, it will be the same thing. It will be something that are similar, some things that are different. And then that's why you can recall your past lives, right? And that's why you can say, oh, that was me in the past life, because you recognize yourself, just as you recognize yourself in this life. That's really what it is. It's a stream of consciousness, kind of carrying on.

1:38:45

I think the problem, the reason we why we have such a hard time with these ideas in our modern world is because we tend to have this kind of physicalist, materialist outlook. That's kind of the modern outlook that we have. And I think it is fundamentally flawed outlook on the world. The world just isn't like that. And one of the things, I don't know much about philosophy, but I know enough to know that these ideas, you know, like materialism, the kind of opposite of materialism is idealism, where the mind is primary, the mind is the primary thing and kind of the rest of the world is an expression of the mind in a certain way. And if you look at the history of philosophy, I'm talking about Western philosophy now. You can see how it kind of goes back and forth. It's like the fashions of the time, right? Okay. Now it's fashionable to be a materialist. If we go 150 years ago, it was fashionable to be an idealist. Yeah.

1:39:39

Some of the famous German philosophers they were idealist philosophers like Friedrich Hegel and Arthur Schopenhauer and some others as well. Who else? Kant, Immanuel Kant was partly a, it sounds like a name dropping which I am, because I don't really know much about this philosophers, but I know enough have to know that they were idealists. And then of course the tide turned, it turned in the in the 20th century, and people became materialists. And now I think it is slowly turning back again. There's something happening in the world. And those people who are in the know, who are in that sphere, they say there's something major happening. Philosophers are starting to kind of look at the world in new ways. Scientists are taking things in a new way. Some of the kind of very famous neuroscientists, there's a fellow called, what's his name, again? Christof Koch or something like that. He's like, very famous neuroscientists is a German by birth. I think he works here in California, somewhere not sure where, and here is basically now moving, you know, one of the world's foremost, it is very, you know, up there.

1:40:48

And he's kind of moving towards the mind being a fundamental aspect of nature, and not being a secondary kind of outcome of material phenomena or anything like that. So these are just fashions. We take this fashions far too seriously. Yeah, we are trapped in fashions, we are



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trapped in a certain worldview. And we kind of think that this is much more important than it actually is. And so once you see the world in that way, it opens up entirely new possibilities. And the idea that somehow you get born into this world, and then you die, and everything comes to an end, although that actually is far less certain once you see the world in different way. Yeah. Anyway, yeah, please, David. Yeah.

Questioner 1:41:34

Ajaan, if there's interest in ordaining but an inability to do so. What are the most skillful conditions that can be put into place to allow enough suffering to be let go of for the first three fetters to be completely unshackled that go up? And how does knowledge that that has occurred arise? For sure.

Ajahn Brahmali 1:42:04

Okay. I would recommend people not to be too worried about these kind of factors and kind of get into particular point because it tends to become an obstacle. Once you have these kinds of goals. And you become too goal oriented. I mean, this is kind of the way we are brought up in a Western culture, very goal oriented, you have a goal, you work hard towards that. But the spiritual path is different. It's almost like you let go of the goal. And by letting go of the goal, it sort of happens by itself, it kind of evolves. So I would focus on the simple things. How can I be more kind? Yeah, that's kind of the easy things. How can I just be more gentle in my life? How can I support other people? How can I give coffee to people? Yeah, that was, that was beautiful. I really, that's really nice. I mean, you know, part of the nice thing about getting a cup of coffee is not so much the coffee, but it's the kindness of the people behind it. Yeah, it's a wonderful thing when that happens. And I was just walking down the street here before and I, you know, from in my culture, you don't say hello to people on the street. But here, you say hello to people on the street, right. And I said, "Hello, good morning" people respond, you know, initially look at your bit funny, but then they can, okay, fine. We'll, we'll say good morning. That's kind of it's kind of nice. And so this is really, again, this is where it is at. That is what we should focus on, rather than focus on the stream entry or, you know, letting go of the three fetters or whatever. Because that's where the practice really is. And often this idea of getting somewhere, it leads to frustration, it leads to problems, it leads to living in the future a little bit because not looking at the here and now. So I mean, it is kind of a goal in a sense set, but it's a goal that is way way at the back of your mind; it is not something that you keep at the front of your mind to motivate you. Motivation should just be to be kind and then get the immediate results of that kindness. Okay, I feel good. When you have a kind thought about someone you feel good straightaway, yeah, it's straightaway it has its own instant reward when you do that. That is what you should focus on. And one of the kind of big mistakes that people often use, they, you know, the three, so called lower fetters that are the things that you let go when you become a stream enterer. Letting go of the precepts and observances: Sila Mata Paramasa in Pāli. And so people often, Sila here- really is the precepts. It's, like morality, right, letting go of morality. And then people think well, yeah, letting go of morality... I better not hold on to my morality so much, because if I hold on to it too much, I'm not letting go of this fetter, I'm not gonna become a stream enterer. So I better kind of relax with my morality. That's the wrong way of thinking here, yeah? And the reason is because these fetters, they are not let go of by how we practice now. That's not, I mean, we don't practice now and then somehow, that leads to letting go of them in the future. What we practice now is the Noble Eightfold Path and then this is the result of practicing the



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Noble Eightfold Path, so you don't actually let go of these things. You know, the letting go of them is not part of the practice is what I'm meant to say this the result of the practice and the result of the practice is just the Noble Eightfold Path. And I hear this all the time, I shouldn't hold on so much, to my precepts. No, please hold on to your precepts. If you don't hold on to them, you're not going to keep them. Yeah, it's as simple as that, a little bit of holding on is necessary here. And this is kind of this idea that attachment in the world is a, it's a gradual letting go of attachments. And we all we need to have things to hold on to here. And the reason we need that is because we have a sense of self, a sense of self isn't by definition, it is a holding on. That's what a sense of self is, your sense of self means that you identify as something. And of course, that is going to be where you hold on. So if we're going to identify with anything, identify with being moral, identify with being kind, yeah, then you have a wholesome sense of self, that is going to lead you in the right direction. And then you grab on to a higher rung of the attachment ladder. Yeah. And you get more refined attachments. And then gradually, you overcome the path in this way here. But you don't kind of let go of the fundamental things too early. If you do, you're never gonna get anywhere. So the next, the doubt is another one of the three kind of low fetters well, that you know that that's not something you can really do. Anyway, the way to overcome doubt is to, according to the suttas, is to investigate the teaching and to practice and then by investigating and practicing, you overcome doubt. And the last one is Sakkaya ditthi, the view that there is an existing personality. Yeah. So that is kind of the thing, which is the fundamental thing that you overcome when you become a stream enterer. And that's how, you know, really, I suppose that you are a stream enterer, it's very easy to delude yourself. There are lots of so called stream enterers in this world. Yeah. And they are and that's so lots of kind of, they're very, very easy to overestimate yourself. I don't know if you've been on the on the internet, you have all the internet arahants, have you seen those? Famous internet arahants, like arahant so and so and then they have their homepage, right? "Arahant so and so" And okay, that's not an arahant. That's absolutely sure. So there is a lot of overestimation in the world. So really, the what you should do, if you think that maybe you are stream enterer, you should go to some teacher who can point you in the right direction. Someone you have reasonable confidence in and might know what they're talking about. But again, it's very hard. You don't really know when this world knows what they're talking about. So it's difficult. Anyway, something like something like that would be my Yeah. Yeah, please, yeah.

Questioner 1:48:00

Thank you, bhante, for being here today. Really appreciate your good thoughts. You said something this morning about the Buddha didn't teach ānāpānasati that way. I'm wondering if you're referring to like when I learned, when I first learned how to meditate. You know, it was about, you have to figure out where you're, you're feeling the breath in your body and it's like, okay, is it in the tip of your nose? Is it in your chest, or your stomach, your belly expanding and contracting? And that was how I was taught to, to have attention now, is that, is there something that? You know, it seems like it takes a lot of effort. So yeah, you have anything to say?

Ajahn Brahmali 1:48:56

Yeah, yeah, of course. Yeah, absolutely. So what I was thinking is this that the way the Buddha teaches mindfulness of breathing in the ānāpānasati sutta, is that he starts off by laying the foundation for the practice, right? And so he says there that you, you sit down, yeah. And when you sit down, you straighten the body. Uju Kaya Paṇidhāna or something like that. And I always



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like to call it a bit of Pāli because it gives me more authority, you know. So you straighten the body. And then it says you establish mindfulness, right? That's what it says in the sutta. And this is all before you start watching the breath. So you should ideally, we should have mindfulness first. And this is what I mean by you know, getting things in the right order and not watching, going to the meditation object too quickly, because if you go straight to the meditation object, and the mindfulness is not established, the only way you're going to be able to watch the breath is through willpower. To the Buddha says willpower is not really the way to go. You know, I mean, a little bit of willpower is going to happen anyway because you can't avoid it. But we want to minimize the idea of willpower. And so the only way to do that is to establish mindfulness first. So a lot of the practice, when we sit down there is about allowing the mindfulness to arise, sitting back, waiting, guiding the mind guiding it away from desires and ill will, finding that neutral balance somewhere in between not having any pain or pleasures through the body, so the body becomes irrelevant. This is the kind of definition of the middle way in the suttas. And then as you do that, when mindfulness arises, and you wait, and often the best way, the way I like to think about breath meditation, is to wait for the breath to come to you. Yeah, if you go to the breath, that's kind of the definition of willpower. But if you wait for the breath to arise, well, then you are doing almost the breath meditation almost automatically, oops, suddenly, the breath is then okay, I guess I'm doing meditation now. And then it lasts for a while, and it disappears again, and then you wait for it to rearise. And so this is kind of what I meant by, there's a tendency, you know, there are certain systems of meditation, where you are told you come into the meditation center, you kind of get sat down on the seat, and you get to Okay, watch the breath. And you don't really get told that actually breath meditation happens in a certain context. It happens, you know, with a certain Foundation. And that foundation is really the what I was getting at when I said that this morning. Does that answer your question, Ron?

Questioner 1:51:47

Yes, thank you very much. Great.

Questioner 1:52:04

How does one come to terms with severe emotional trauma from like combat? PTSD? Okay.

Ajahn Brahmali 1:52:18

That is a very good question. That's usually what you say when you don't know what to say, "that's a very good question." But no, it is. It is. Of course, it is a good question. And the I think the the answer is gradually, yeah, that's kind of the answer, usually. And I think with many things, it is good to do spiritual practice. But when many things like that, it's also good to get some professional counseling, right? Because actually, these things are really hard to deal with. And sometimes professional counselors or psychologists, they will have some kind of things up their sleeve that we don't necessarily have in Buddhism, right? Because the Buddha was not someone who, I mean, of course, it is about finding happiness and letting go of suffering, but it's not kind of meant for people who have had specifically difficult experiences in life. So, you know, live, live well, yeah, do the right thing. And if the trauma is with other people, which it often is in life with other people, then just gradually learn to see those people in a different way. Yeah. I mean, we all had difficult experiences with people in life, I've had my share of difficult experience with people. But as you practice this path, you learn that actually, these people didn't know what they were doing. Right, they had no idea. And the more you see that, the more you



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see that they were actually acting against their own self interest. If someone treats you badly, actually, they're making bad karma, they are going to feel miserable in the future. They think what they're doing is going to bring them happiness, when actually it brings them suffering here. And once you start to get that you start to feel sorry for them, right? They don't know what they're doing, for goodness sake. Yeah. And then actually, gradually, gradually, slowly, slowly, you can actually start to have compassion for even the perpetrators of crimes in this world. Because they are foolish, right? Eventually, you have compassion of everyone. I mean, the victims is kind of fairly obvious. But even the perpetrators, because in the long run, they may suffer actually more than the victims, which is kind of a weird thing. Weird way of looking at things. That's kind of the Buddhist outlook for you, that's a bit upside down there. Yeah. So go with it slowly, you know, take it stage by stage and I you know, I think it may be difficult for you to see now that the trauma can come to an end. But if you do it stage by stage avenues open up that you may never have knew even existed were possible.

1:54:46

So, Venerables would you like to? I forgot that you were here completely, now I'm reminded. Would you like to add something here? Yeah, maybe you can have a microphone please for the Yep.

Ayya Santussika 1:55:03

We can see what you think of this. I think when you're working with it could be, it could be the whole mess of not just the things that happened to us. But the things that we've done also, because we're also caught in a system. And we're also caught in conditioning. And when it comes to PTSD and trauma, now, I'm not a psychologist. So there's a lot I don't know. But I've been for a long time working with the first three noble truths as a way to work with that. And it fits in very nicely with some therapies like somatic experiencing, where you're turning towards that feeling in your body. And being able to in a, in a supportive environment, stay present with what the feeling is until you can really see that change and dissolve. And it is really good as, as Ajaan said, to get support from someone who is trained to guide someone through those processes. But it really has a deep effect, when you're able to let that unravel through the body. Because the body holds on to those things. And then, of course, everything Ajahn said about how we see ourselves and others and that compassion and kindness. You're welcome. Yeah.

Questioner 1:57:12

Hi, my question is a little bit related to the previous one. But in my situation, I've been targeted a lot. You know, growing up as a mixed race person, being LGBTQ, gender non conforming, and, and having periods of homelessness in my life as an adult. And I now live in a vehicle and I have people come at me, sometimes. Someone came at me yesterday, telling me that I couldn't park where I was on the side of the road. And, you know, in that moment, in those moments, when someone is coming, you know, being confrontational with me, I find it really difficult to hold on to my compassion, I have so much, also PTSD around being targeted. And, and then it came up today in the meditation, you know, and it's like playing in my mind. And I'm saying, I want to let this go. It's, you know, it's just there. It's like, I can see this person's face. And, and I was thinking in your example about, you know, the people, or the person who was, you know, finding happiness in those difficult circumstances of the war that, you know, I'm assuming he wasn't one of the people that was taken off the concentration camps. And so what if you're, I mean,



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obviously, my situation is not equal to that. But what do you do if you're in a situation of being the targeted party? You know, to find happiness, it's very hard to find happiness when someone's in my face and telling me, you know, I can't exist where I'm existing. So, thank you.

Ajahn Brahmali 1:59:11

Yeah. (nervous laugh) Yes, I indeed, and you know, this is this is why sometimes the practice is difficult right. And then in a sense, this is also why the practice is so rewarding, because gradually, gradually, you know, hopefully, you will be able to deal even with these very difficult situations. And the person of course, who benefits the most from that will be yourself, because the idea of being able to let go and have compassion is this very, very beneficial to the person who benefits the most is always ourselves in these kinds of situations. So I agree with you, it is very challenging, but it is also in a sense, what the Buddha is asking us to do. You know, the very, one of the most famous similes of the Buddha is the famous simile of the saw. And the simile of the saw is the Is the simile where, you know bandits kind of get hold of you and they pin you to the ground and the take out the big saw and they hack you to bits with a saw. And the Buddha says that whoever gives rise to a mind of ill will or a mind of whatever, you know negative mind states that while they do that is not practicing my teaching. So the Buddha is, you know, he's basically setting the bar incredibly high. And what that means is, that doesn't mean that we should despair if we can't clear that bar, because it's very hard to clear. But what it means is that this practice can have some extraordinary results. If we do practice it in the right way, if we keep on going, even though we may not be able to understand how it can be done. If we keep going, those results will eventually happen. And that is kind of the promise of the Buddha. And that is what is so extraordinary here. So even though you know, and I, I can obviously, not fully understand what you're talking about, because I'm not in that situation myself. But I have some idea because we all had difficult experiences in our life. Even though you cannot see the solution right now, to that kind of situation, keep on going and one day, the solution will appear, suddenly, you have put all of these things behind you. And you say, Wow, I can do it now. Isn't that amazing? And you will actually see those people in different way you see yourself in a different way. And you're able to let go of things that actually for most people are impossible to let go of. And then you know that you're really reaping the benefits of this practice. So just keep going here. Yeah, just don't don't to lose heart. And know that these results are possible, because they're are people in the world. I met people in my life who are extraordinary, people who are just, never get angry at all. I have lived with people for 30 years, who I have never seen angry here. And that's kind of... is that possible? It turns out it is possible. So when you see these things, you know that the path kind of is there, you know that things that seem impossible in the world actually can be done. So please just carry on. Slowly, slowly, slowly, keep on understanding what the Buddha meant by these things. I tried to deepen your appreciation of these teachings. And gradually as you do this, things will happen for you. You want to come back on that one. You're very welcome to come back if you're like. Gone. alright. Okay.

2:02:40

Yeah, please. Please, please, please.

Ayya Santussika 2:02:54



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This morning, when you were telling the stories about the man from Norway, and and the some of the people's experience during the war in Ukraine, I mean, I'd heard you tell these stories before. But this morning, something came to mind that I hadn't thought of before. And I wonder what you think. Because there's a component there in both cases of having to do without the things those people were used to in their life. So there's an element of renunciation there. And I just thought, well, maybe there, in addition to all the things you said about, you know, coming together with others, and having a purpose and being kind to each other and more caring, that's all incredibly powerful, totally agree. But it occurred to me that there's also that having to do without some of what you're used to, and seeing that you can do it. And there's a kind of courage that arises. Do you think that might also be a contributing factor to that happiness?

Ajahn Brahmali 2:04:05

That's interesting, isn't it? Yeah. The fact that you are, in a sense, renouncing, and you're living and you kind of become strong through renouncing in a sense. And I think that there may very well be something to that. I think it does make you strong, whenever you renounced something, you give something up. There's something in your mind, which actually makes you a stronger person. It enables you to renounce even more in the future. And there you are faced with it. And if you, because you're faced with it, you're kind of forced to renounce or either you renounce or you suffer even more, so if you choose the right track, then? Yeah, that's an interesting point. Yeah. I think you may very well be right about that. Actually. I'll reflect on a bit more and then kind of see what comes out of that one.

Questioner 2:04:54

Ajaan, in the morning when you mentioned the Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta, I think we discussed this in the midweek KBB meeting. There's a mention that the Buddha, he can only, don't quote me on this, but he said that, you know, he's in pain, he's dying, but he say he is he dwells in the signless concentration of the mind to, to survive, you know, to deal with the pain. And then also, when Mahākassapa was practicing, I think he's also being told by the Buddha to, to focus on the signless concentration of the mind?

Ajahn Brahmali 2:05:33

Who?

Questioner 2:05:33

Mahākassapa. I think so. In the Animitto sutta. I think, yeah. Okay. I just, I just want to understand what Signless concentration of the mind is, if you have any insights?

Ajahn Brahmali 2:05:48

any insights... welll a sign, the Pāli the word is nimitta. Yeah, and so a sign is kind of how you recognize things, you recognize things by their sign, yeah, you will get "person" okay, what is a person? It's two arms, two legs, something like that. There's a kind of a person and a head. And so the things are recognized through their signs. And if something has no sign, it means that all you're seeing is impermanence, or seeing change all the time. So the sign business is really a kind of a deep, deep contemplation or a deep focus on things being changing all the time looking at change, and allowing things to you know, all you see is see change, you see nothing kind of inherent in anything, everything's just moving moving all the time. That is kind of the idea



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of the signs, we have this kind of three types of meditation, you have the, the Sunyata samādhi, which is emptiness, concentration of seeing in itself, and then you have the Animitta samādhi, which is kind of not seeing anything as permanent seeing changing all the time. And then we have the upānāhita samādhi, which is non-direction that is usually connected, I think, with suffering. So there's kind of the three characteristics that are focused on in certain way. So how does that work? And why does it work? Well, I don't really know, I think any kind of deep samādhi will probably do at that particular point. Not sure why he mentioned the animitta samādhi. I mean, a jhāna state have a similar kind of effect. Yeah, the body is gone. But maybe it is because Buddha use a different kinds of meditations depending on circumstances or context. Maybe he wants to talk about different meditations to leave those teachings to posterity so that we have access to them later on. Maybe something like that. I'm not sure exactly why he talks about that teaching in that context. But any kind of deep samadhi will kind of take you out of the, you know, away from the pain and the body. So, yeah.

Questioner 2:07:57

To clear my mind, sometimes when I'm going into meditation, I go to gratitude and love. And it kind of washes through me and I feel like it's a cleansing. Is there, would you advise I continue to do this, or is there any, does it make me not neutral enough in my mind? Or is there anything that slowing me down by doing that?

Ajahn Brahmali 2:08:22

It's good, that's marvelous. That's wonderful. Yeah. Excellent. Splendid. So, no, that's great. I mean, the whole, one of the kinds of things about meditation practice is to give rise to positive feelings, you know, and if you're able to do that, that's, that's wonderful. Because that is, you know, one of the roots of meditation practice that. The Buddha always talks about the six annusatis, these are the six recollections. And one of them is the recollection of your sila. Yeah, the silannusati or cāganusati, recollection of your generosity, and whatever way you're able to give rise to those positive feelings, they become the foundation of the meditation practice. So what you would want to do is you want to incorporate that into watching the breath. Yeah. So you want to bring that joy that you have to the breath, you can maybe have gratitude to the breath? Yeah, thank you, breath, for being there. Without you, I wouldn't have gone very far. Right? It's true. So you can have gratitude to your breath. It's like and you can see your breath as your friend. Yeah, like friend. I mean, if we are practicing breath meditation is like we are going with this friend on this kind of really interesting journey or meditation practice. Yeah. So you kind of think of your breath as your kalyānamitta or whatever and you have gratitude and it bring that joy together with the breath meditation. I would really recommend people to do breath meditation because breath meditation is the meditation that the Buddha really teaches in the suttas. Yeah. Very fascinating, isn't it when we often talk about satipatthāna practice in satipatthāna being the, sometimes called the foundations of mindfulness, which is not a good translation, maybe the establishing of Mindfulness are the applications of mindfulness, or just mindfulness meditation or whatever, foundations of mindfulness is not a good translation because it anyway, let's leave that aside for now we can discuss translation some other time. But what he says here is interesting is that satipatthāna is fulfilled by mindfulness of breathing. That's how you fulfill it. Yeah. All the four satipatthāna has fulfilled that way. So all we have to do, from where we are now to all the way to the end of the path is watching the breath. Yeah, very simple. So simple. How come we're not arahants already? That's what I want to know, we



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should be there, it's so easy. And of course, it is easy. The instructions are very simple. But actually putting them into practice turns out to be not not so easy. Yeah, the path can really be summarized into two things. Kindness, and mindfulness of breathing. Yeah, those two things together, that's the whole path. And it's just about putting into practice, and then you kind of in business, so bring that joy with the breath. And then see if we can make your meditation really come alive by bringing these things together. See how deep you can go.

2:11:11

Yes, at the back there. Yeah, please, do have a microphone again.

Questioner 2:11:22

So about the Satipatthāna Sutta, And you said that can be done through mindfulness of breathing. But from what it seems to me that satipatthāna sutta, It's, it's like these drop down menu that you can you click on one, and there's like a bunch more showing up. And you click on one, a bunch of more showing up, like the 32 parts, and then earth, water wind, So, can that really be done through mindfulness of breathing? Or do you have to sort of go through them systematically? Like, like scanning through different these drop down menu?

Ajahn Brahmali 2:12:11

Yeah, so that's a good question. Yeah. So the the answer is that, you know, the Buddha says specifically, that mindfulness of breathing completes and fulfills satipatthāna. Yeah, he says that, specifically here. So actually, according to the Buddha, that's all you have to do. But of course, the reality is that you may get stuck. So what happens when it gets stuck, you're watching the breath, and it doesn't get anywhere, and then you get tired, you get fed up with the breath, you know, doesn't really work. And so then the question is, well something is blocking you from actually being able to do that meditation properly. And that is where some of these other things come in, what are the blockages for the breath meditation to develop naturally? And one of the main blockages is our attachment to the sensory world, the other world with the five senses, that is one of the main blockages, and this is where the idea of, you know, the 31 parts of the body, not 32. But 31. You know that? That's exactly the brain. So you use the brain to figure that one out. That's interesting. So I'm saying that because I'll get back to that later on why that is interesting. But 31 versus 32. Yeah, so why. So then we use those kinds of meditations, the 31 parts of the body to let go of the senses a little bit, specifically to the body. Because attachments to the body, attachment to the senses are very closely related to each other. So that's where that particular practice comes in. It lessens the attachment and holding to the body that allows the breath meditation to go deeper later on. Yeah. And then you practice the breath meditation in that way. But actually, so part of this whole thing is, yes, you do the breath meditation, but you're also aware of the obstacles, you're aware of what of the, you know, you only go so far, okay, you need to do some thing. And then I need to do something more, which is like a contemplation or an understanding of the nature of these things, letting them go, then come back to the breath again. So I would say that the breath is plenty enough. And it's actually very many interesting things that comes from this idea, because if you read the ānāpānasati Sutta, the Buddha's explanation of the mindfulness of breathing there are 16 steps. So you know how this works 16 steps?

Questioner 2:14:35



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So according to So, I took the satipatthāna course from Barre center Buddha study, and that will be the first one and the next one will be ānāpānasati. So,

Ajahn Brahmali 2:14:51

Say again? What will be the first one? So the first

Questioner 2:14:56

So this is taught by Bhikkhu Anālayo. And the first one is satipatthāna. And then after you complete that, and you explore it a little bit on your own, then you can start looking into ānāpānasati. And so that's how I've been thinking about this.

Ajahn Brahmali 2:15:15

Okay? Well, I'm not sure exactly what he has said, actually I'm going to visit him when I go there. I'll ask him what he what he means by this. So, I the but in the suttas, as the Buddha is quite clear, yeah, that ānāpānasati fulfills satipatthāna practice. So, if you go to the middle length sayings of the Buddha suta, number 118, called the ānāpānasati Sutta, the mindfulness of breathing sutta. And you read it for yourself, you can see it for yourself, what actually what it says in there. And there are some very interesting consequences from that, because, you know, the mindfulness of breathing sutta is divided into 16 steps, and four times four to four tetrads. In each one of those tetrads relates to one of the four satipatthāna. So the first four steps relates to the kayanupassanā, the contemplation of the body, the second four relate to the Vedanupassanā contemplation of feeling, the third one, cittanupāsana, last one dhammanupassanā. So if you take the second one, which was the contemplation of feelings. Yeah, that is equivalent to the second tetrad, the second of the ānāpānasati sutta. If you read the ānāpānasati sutta, the second tetrad, It's all about pleasant feelings. If we go to the Satipatthana, sutta, on contemplation of feelings, it talks about knowing pain, physical pain, mental pain, all of these kinds of things. So how can it be that watching the breath and all only experiencing pleasant feelings, actually fulfills the contemplation of painful feelings? Is that a question? Kind of give pause because I'm going to see the expression on your face. I apologise, I'm being naughty. I'm taught by Ajaan Brahm to be naughty, that's kind of how we how we do things in our monastery. So, the answer is, right, that you when you when you have a pleasant feeling in the mind, or whatever, piti or sukha, whatever, the painful feelings have already been overcome, the painful things that completely gone at that particular point. And the way to contemplate certain things, the most powerful way of contemplating something is not in their presence, but by their absence. So if you see painful feelings in the body, usually you're told, okay, go to vipassana retreat, contemplate the feelings of the body as we can maybe get a little bit of insight from that, but the most powerful insight into painful feelings, are by contemplating them in their absence. Yeah, because when something is completely gone, that is the only time we can understand something. It's like the old simile of the tadpole becoming a frog. Yeah, when as long as the tadpole is in the water cannot really understand water. Because allways in water, how can you understand something that you're always surrounded by? Once the tadpole becomes the frog, jumps out of the water, Oh, yeah, now I get it. That was what water was. In the same way, when something disappears completely, is completely gone. That is the only point we can really understand it properly. And that's such a beautiful thing. To my mind, you don't have to contemplate this blooming pains, right? Just let go of the pain, just go straight to the bliss- isn't that great?. And this is kind of my kind. This is what I, because I'm a disciple of



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Ajaan Brahm, Ajaan Brahm is kind of the bliss kind of person, right? So go to the place right away here. Forget about that pain there. And to me, that is a far more satisfactory path. And so there isn't really much explanation in the suttas anywhere, apart from this particular thing is that the satipatthāna sutta that we have to contemplate pain, no. Contemplate pain through its absence. It's far more far more powerful, and also far more pleasant. You want to please come back from that one. Please. Tell me off if you think I'm wrong.

Questioner 2:19:11

I'll check the sutta first

Ajahn Brahmali 2:19:13

Check out the sutta, see what you think. Yeah.

Questioner 2:19:17

Thank you so much. It's always good to hear from someone with depth of experience.

Ajahn Brahmali 2:19:22

Yeah. I'm gonna, if you write down what Venerable Analyo said to you, I'm gonna, I will confront him when I see him at Barre, see what he says.

Questioner 2:19:49

All right. So there's maybe two short ones from YouTube: Ajaan, Can you talk about the role of meditation in Buddha's gradual training? And then another one, what should one do when a spiritual mentor is unavailable?

Ajahn Brahmali 2:20:06

Right? Well, the second one first, the spiritual mentor is always available because the spiritual mentor number one are the suttas. Yeah. So the the Buddha is always there, the Buddha is still talking to us through the suttas. So take the Buddha as your teacher. I think one of the kind of really the mistakes that we make in modern Buddhism is that we take everyone as our teacher except the Buddha. Yeah, and kind of this Ajaan, that Ayya, that Bhante, this whatever and the Buddha is kind of forgotten and all this even though he is the original Teacher of teachers, and he is the old teacher, yeah, the Uber teacher, still we forget about, we forget about the Buddha. So take the Buddha is always there, and then you are okay. And if you can find a kind of living teacher as well, that can be helpful. Yeah, because it's good to have someone who can ask questions sometimes, but it's not 100% required. And then there is of course, there is the YouTube teachers who can take some of these YouTube teachers as well, and see how that goes. And the meditation the, on the Buddhist path, the purpose of meditation on the Buddhist path, really, is to, if you look at the Noble Eightfold Path, what is the Noble Eightfold Path and what it is, it is a path of purification? Yeah, you purify yourself, it starts off with the right view that's just get through going in from that right view comes the right intention. And after right intention is all about purification. That's why it's all about morality, is about right effort, which is about purifying the mind. After right effort comes the right sati the right mindfulness, which is breath, meditation, satipatthāna meditation. And the purpose of that is to remove the last little defilements of the mind. So enables you to attain Samadhi, the deep meditations, yeah, the very profound stages on the path there. So that is the purpose of meditation is the kind of the final



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purification of the mind, for the mind to access the deep samadhi the deep stillness that are there, which are required to culminate all the way to the very end of the path. That's really what it is about. And there's more to meditation or there's more to mental development than that, that there's also contemplation and reflecting on the teachings. This is also extremely important, developing your perceptions, seeing the world in the way that Buddha saw the world, all of these things are part of the cultivation but meditation proper, which is this watching the breath is really about that.

2:22:46

All right, so let's have a break. It's already 1:32. And then we can do some more meditation or whatever afterwards. So let's have a 15 minute break. See you back again afterwards.

2:23:04

Okay, good. Let us carry on. And I'm going to continue on the theme for this morning here about how to kind of find a way with all the problems in the world and to see how we can reflect on these things in a wise way. And what I'm going to do is to have a look at a sutta very, very briefly, one of the discourse of the Buddha. I'm going to read it out for you and I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the things that the Buddha mentions in this particular sutta. So hope you are ready for that. And if you're not ready for it, you're gonna get it anyway so that's the way it goes. So let's have a look at it

2:24:36

Okay, so we're going to have a look at a sutta which is called the attadaṇḍa sutta in the Pali language, which means something like that kind of taking up violence or taking up arms or taking a punishment or something like that. The word daṇḍa in Pāli means quite literally "stick" in English. And it's like stick is kind of punishment, etc. has the same, exactly the same meaning in the Pāli language. And this particular sutta is found in a collection called the sutta nipata. Anyone heard about the sutta nipata before? Yeah? Yeah. Okay. Sutta Nipata is found in the Khuddaka Nikāya, there's five Nikayas in the Pāli language five, collection of the suttas. Khuddaka means the short collection, the short collection is the longest one. That's kind of how things often go. And so this is part of this short collection is one of 15 or 18 books in the short collection. And it's called the Sutta Nipata and this particular sutta is in the Aṭṭhakavagga, the chapter of eights, and it is one of the, considered by many to be one of the ancient parts of the suttas of the Pali canon. And this particular sutta is one of these auto biographical suttas where the Buddha talks about his own experience. Yeah, and I don't know about you, but I always find this very interesting, where the Buddha talks about what made him go forth. What made him become a monk, how he was thinking about the world. Yeah. And of course, the reason why the Buddha teaches in this way is to inspire us. And to say, like, well, this is what I did. And you should be doing the same thing. Yeah?

2:26:28

So this is kind of, always to me very interesting to see how the Buddha, Well, this is not really the Buddha it's the Buddha to be, it's before his awakening here, how he was thinking about life, how we looked at the world, and then kind of made him reach ultimately, the awakening experience based on these particular things. So this is one of these autobiographical suttas, and it's all in verse. And so verse often kind of inspiring. So we'll, have a let's have a look and see



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what the Buddha says, it's kind of only going to have a look at the short part of this particular sutta. Because it's quite a long one and lots of verses, I'm going to focus on what I consider the kind of the essential part of which relates to what we're doing now. So Attadaṇḍa Sutta. This is how the sutta goes, this particular translation is by a monk called Bhante Sujato, who has translated pretty much the whole Pāli, all the suttas. And this is his translation of this particular sutta. So I'm going to read it out. And I'm going to come back and discuss these things in a bit more detail in a in a second. First of all, I want to make sure I see properly.

2:27:59

All right. So this is how it goes. "A peril stems from those who take up arms. Just look at people in conflict. I shall extoll how I came to be stirred with a sense of urgency here. I saw this population flounder like a fish in the little puddle. Seeing them fight each other fear came upon me. The world around was hollow, all directions, were in turmoil. wanting a home for myself, I saw nowhere unsettled. But even in the settlement, they fight. Seeing that I grew uneasy here, then I saw the dart right there. So hard to see stuck in the heart. When stuck by that dart, you run about in all directions. But when the same Dart has been plucked out, you neither run about nor sink down." So that is the kind of the starting point of this particular sutta. And after that comes the whole path, how to practice. And then ultimately at the very end, comes the result of the practice. So this first part here, this idea about the world being in turmoil, and you know, I thought that kind of fits with how the world is a bit at the moment. So it kind of fit fits in very nicely with that. And of course, the idea with this first part here is to set up right view, you're looking at things in the right way. And then based on that right view, which is then the first factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, then comes the practice. And then as you practice you then come the result down the track. Yeah.

2:29:48

And so it's fascinating that all the, when you read the suttas, you read the Word of the Buddha. You see this kind of pattern again and again, the pattern, you can recognize the Noble Eightfold Path almost in any sutta that you look at, because they tend to have this gradual, this gradual instruction, starting with right view, then the practice, then the result, you see this system systematized in this way again, and again, that's very useful information. Because once you understand how the suttas are laid out, how they are structured, then it becomes possible to interpret the suttas in a much better way. If you don't really understand the structure, it becomes much more ambiguous how to understand these things. But with that kind of as a background, it becomes more clear. So let's see what the Buddha has to what he's actually all about here, or the Buddha to be I should say, again, not really the Buddha yet. So he starts off with "A peril stems, from those who take up arms." So taking up arms here is this idea of punishment, daṇḍa.

2:31:05

Also, the idea of kind of violence, really, in any particular way. Peril, is like fear, fear, peril, danger, all of these kinds of things. And just look at people in conflict, seeing the conflict in the world. You can see how the perils how the danger stems from people taking up arms. And then he says, very interestingly, "I shall extol how I came to be stirred with a sense of urgency here." The idea here, this is the Buddha to be just by looking at the world, looking at the people taking up arms, looking at the conflict in the world. That is how he came stirred with a sense of urgency here. That's how he and of course, the idea of being stirred with a sense of urgency here. This,



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you know, it's pregnant with the idea of going forward and becoming a monk, or practicing the path and all of these kinds of things. Yeah. So just by this, looking at the world in turmoil, seeing the problems around us understanding that there is something to be dealt with here, actually leads to this whole, the beginning point of the path and the process of awakening. That's kind of good, right? It means that if we deal with the turmoil in the world in the same way, it has the same kind of beneficial outcome, or it may have the same kind of beneficial outcome. If you reflect on these things in the right way, the ultimate result of seeing things with clarity, understanding what is going on, is awakening. Yeah, that's kind of the outcome of this. So that's kind of good. Sometimes we think that all the turmoil in the world is bad. But it really depends on how we deal with it. If we think about it in the right way, it may have some very beneficial effects down the track. Yeah.

2:32:59

This is essentially the message here. And the Buddha to be, he then says, he says, "I saw this population flounder, like the fish in a little puddle, seeing them fight each other fear came upon me." Yeah, again, this is the Buddha to be, fear came upon me here. It's kind of nice to be in good company, isn't it? You look at the world, you see woah, everything is going down the drain. fear comes upon you, just like the Buddha to be here. So it isn't necessarily bad, that idea that we are fearful or we feel that there are problems in the world. It is again how we deal with it, which is either good or bad, not the thing in itself. And if we use that sense of fear, that sense of concern about the world in the right way. Again, it will have this tremendous outcome if we use it in the right way. Like fish floundering it says here, like fish in a small puddle. And so what is this puddle that the Buddha is talking about here? And the idea here, of course, is that the whole world is floundering like a fish in a small puddle. It means that we are also in this puddle. What is this puddle? This puddle is like, the way I understand this is like the sensory world. The sensory world is this small little place. It seems large, yeah, because we we tend to somehow think of the world as a large place, 24 time zones. When you travel from Australia to America, you kind of suffer from bit of jet lag when you come here, because you have all these time zones we have to go through and it seems like you're going a long way. But actually it is just more of the same. I come here I see people with exactly the same problems as everywhere else.

2:34:48

You go to Thailand you go to back to you know, my country of birth to Norway, you go anywhere in the world it's basically the same issues that affect people everywhere. It's a small little place. It's a small pond and you can't escape it just from traveling around, going from one country to another one that is all basically the same pond. So the world is small, even though it may seem large, because there's nothing new under the sun. Remember, once we were, you know, Ajjan Brahm was giving a dhamma talk, and it says, you know, yeah, people want to travel around the world, they want to go and see the Eiffel Tower or the Great Wall of China or whatever. And he said, instead of going to see the Great Wall of China, just go to the edge of the monastery and have a look at the monastery wall. Yeah, good enough. Monastery wall, It's like this tiny little wall. Yeah, the great wall of China is this massive kind of masterpiece, but basically it's the same thing, right? It's just a wall for goodness sake. Yeah. It's rocks planted on top of each other, and it is not that that interesting. Yeah. It's more of the same there.



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2:35:57

And this is kind of the world and I remember one of the great teachers in Thailand, he was considered arahant by many people, a man called Ajaan Thate. And he was kind of saying similar kinds of things, people travel around the world, and what do they experience? Go to France, French cuisine, go to, travel to Hong Kong to get Chinese cuisine and go to Italy, you get some spaghetti. Whatever it is. And it's not that exciting. Yeah, it's just okay. It is kind of, it is variations on a theme. But the themes are the same, we are in this little pond, in this tiny little thing called the sensory realm. And in the sensory realm, we flounder in the sensory realm we're thrashing about trying to find a way out, but actually, the sensory realm is inherently problematic. And to me, this is one of those very interesting things. Because to me what the Buddha is saying here, that people are floundering in the world. He's saying that the sensory realm is fraught through and through with violence, with conflict with problems. And as long as you hang out in the sensory realm, it is inherent to that realm, that there's going to be problems. We try to build the world, we try to have different political systems, we tried to have institutions that kind of work reasonably well. And sometimes we are on the right track. Sometimes we get societies that are reasonably coherent, and then it kind of goes well for a while, then it starts to go down again. But the point is that there is no final solution there. There is no kind of Utopia on in the sensory realm where we can say we have found a solution to all of this. It doesn't exist.

2:37:41

And one of my favorite suttas, I don't know why I keep saying favorite, I like every sutta. I keep on saying, my favorite, but I got so many favorite suttas. But one of the suttas right? Okay, one of the suttas has all these similes about the sensory realm, and about how and the problem is of the sensory realm. And one of these similes is the simile of the bird. The simile of a bird that gets hold of a piece of meat. Yeah, and when the bird gets a piece of meat, the bird is very happy because it's difficult to get meat in the bird realm. Yeah, birds usually have to be happy with insects or whatever. Meat yay, meat really, really happy. It flies off with a piece of meat. But the problem is, is that if a bird gets hang of a piece of meat, the other birds, they don't have any compassion. Yes, the other birds think, yeah, that bird is getting meat, I want that meat. They go after this bird. Now this bird tries to fly around kind of get away from these other birds, but his other birds are bigger. The other birds catch up with this little bird. And if that bird doesn't let go of that piece of meat, it's gonna have big trouble. Yeah, because there's other birds are going to try to rip that meat out of it claws or out of its beak or whatever. And if it isn't careful, it's going to die because of that. And this is a simile for the sensory realm. Yeah, how the sensory realm is fraught with conflict. Because the world outside is a shared experience in humanity. And because it is a shared experience, it means that we tend to want the same things. Yeah, this is the shared world around us, the world of people, the world of things that we can, you know, belongings that we have. And if one person wants to get more and wants more than their fair share, someone else is going to have to have less.

2:39:33

Yeah, so if the economy doesn't grow fast enough, and someone wants more than the kind of their share of economic growth, someone else is going to have less and so we fight over things. You know, the typical place where we fight the most is in the area of relationships. Yeah, we want the same partners, we want the same, and you know, this is kind of a very difficult area for, you know, for people is the idea, is the finding a good partner in life. And then when eventually



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find the good partner, then you are jealous for the rest of your life because maybe they find someone else. Yeah. And they kind of want to hold them. No, don't look at that person. Yeah, look at me. You know what it's like. And so this is the area of partnership. Of course, if we do find a good partner, and we live happily with that, then that's wonderful. But it's always has problems coming with it. The same thing with wealth, you know, things like from the moment you are a small child, you kind of fight with your brothers and sisters over the toys, maybe who is going to get the last piece of cake. And then you know, you get to kind of into your adult life, and you're kind of at work and competing with fellow workers to get the raise or to kind of be promoted or whatever.

2:40:45

And then when your parents die, fight over the inheritance, it goes on and on and on that world is always, these problems are inherent to that world, because it is a world outside of us. And because we have to share the world outside of us. And we're very bad at sharing very often, we're going to end up with problems with violence, with conflict with all of these things, it is inherent to that world precisely because it is the world outside of us. And so the solution is quite obvious. Yeah, if the world outside of us is problematic, because we have to share it. And we are very bad at sharing very often, then, of course, the world inside, which is a world that we do not have to share.

2:41:30

But with that we develop on our own, our own private lives. That is the world that we should do something with there, yeah, because that world, if we develop inner happiness, it is something private to yourself, it is not something that will ever lead to conflict, because it is separated from other people. So that then is the answer to this thing, there's conflict in the world that is inherent in the sensory realm, the way to avoid that, the way to go in a different direction, is to go to the inner world, instead. And what is so extra powerful about this is that if you do develop the inner realm, and you do develop a harmony within yourself, you do develop a compassion understanding in the world. And you develop a sense of metta and kindness for everyone around you, then when you go back into the ordinary sensory realm afterwards, you become more harmonious also in that realm, because you bring those spiritual qualities back with you into the world.

2:42:32

So not only do you develop qualities that are never in conflict with anyone else, but you develop qualities that you take with you back into the world afterwards. So you also create harmony outside later on. The outside world is less important to you, what starts to matter is the inner world. And because the inner world is what matters, conflict is reduced, you have more time for other people, more kindness, more understanding, more compassion for the problems in the world. This kind of what the Buddha is talking about here. Yeah, or the Buddha to be here, understanding the distinction where there is a problem, where you withdraw from that world, because you understand it is inherent to that world. And to me, this is a very powerful idea that the sensory realm is inherently problematic. Yeah, it will always have conflict down the track. Yeah, yeah.

2:43:27



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If you read some of the suttas there is the greater sutta on the mass of suffering found in the Majjhima Nikāya 13 and 14, the shorter and the longer sutta on this. And it kind of elaborates on this theme, why that realm of the external realm has to be a realm of conflict, that there is really no two ways around it. The only way to change that is to go inwards instead, and develop the spiritual life. And it kind of makes the flaws of the sensory realm, very obvious when you see that. And of course, now we're given all of this extra, this kind of, we don't really have to look very far. Because if the world is having all these problems, it makes it more in your face, it makes it more obvious what is going on there. And it's easy to turn away from that sensory realm. When the floors are becoming so bleeding obvious, as they say... as they say? I'm not sure if they say that... anyway, they sometimes they say that. So yeah, so seeing them fight each other, fear came upon me, the Buddha to be was fearful when he saw the violence in the world. It's kind of extraordinary. The Buddha is one of us. We are in a similar track as the Buddha. This idea of understanding the Buddha in the right way I think is very, very important. Very often we misunderstand who the Buddha actually was. We think of the Buddha as some kind of, you know, universal consciousness or something outside of the ordinary realm of humanity here, we put Buddha on a pedestal, like here pedestal. How are you Buddha? That's not the Buddha, right, that's just a... Anyway, so we've put the Buddha on a pedestal, we have to remember to put the right kind of thing on the pedestal, we're putting a human being perfected on the pedestal, someone who has developed human qualities to the highest possible potential. That is what we have on the pedestal, we don't have God on the pedestal, we don't have something kind of entirely different from us on a pedestal. It's a human being.

2:45:42

And once you get that, it becomes very interesting. This is what you see here, of course, you see a human being, this is a human reaction to understanding to seeing the world clearly. The amazing thing with the Buddha is not that he is different from us. The amazing thing with the Buddha is that he was able to see clearly where it is so hard to see with clarity. So then he says the world around was hollow, all directions were in turmoil. Wanting a home for myself, I saw nowhere unsettled. The world is hollow, there is nothing in the world that is stable. There's nothing in the world that you can hold on to. There's nothing in the world that will give you that satisfaction that everyone really wants. Everyone wants to be happy. Everyone wants a place where they can stand where they can rest, when they can relax. That place doesn't exist in the world. That's what the Buddha is saying. It's hollow, it's empty, there's nothing to hold on to.

2:46:45

And of course, that is kind of, again, kind of frightening. Yeah. And I liked the idea of, you know, you're kind of standing on a carpet. And the moment you stand on something, standing is like attaching to something because you're taking a stand somewhere. This is what you are relying on when you take a stand somewhere, you stand on something. But carpets have this tendency into being pulled out, pulled from under your feet! When carpets are done, someone comes and pulls the carpet out. And the moment the carpet gets pulled out from under your feet, of course, you stumble there, and you fall over and you hurt yourself. And the nature of the world is for the carpet under our feet always to be pulled out. Yeah, this is the idea of impermanence. Nothing can really be relied on in this world. And this is what the Buddha is saying here, the Buddha to be, is kind of starting to see, this is the idea of the hold on us of the world. There's no way to call home, the moment you go and you find a house, this is my home, then the earthquake in San



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Francisco comes. Yeah. And the bushfire comes in Western Australia. And it's kind of astonishing, you know, you see the newspapers in Western Australia, you see the house completely burned to the ground, a family with all their belongings completely destroyed, and they're crying, here, they're grieving, it's very, very traumatic. And because this, you take this as something to be stable, something that actually is your little place of safety in the world, it turns out not to be safe. And this is kind of the issue with that human realm, we have to look somewhere else if we want that stability, if you want that safety if you want that refuge.

2:48:29

So "nowhere is unsettled." In other words, nowhere is unsettled with these characteristics of impermanence and instability and problems. But even in their settlement, they fight. So you try to find the settlement still, you find kind of a nice place, then you keep on fighting. "Seeing that I grew uneasy here." Pāli word is *Ādāti*, it means like, almost like this discontent, yeah, you're no longer content with the world. And then I saw a dart there so hard to see, stuck in the heart. And so here we are kind of moving because the Buddha is here, the Buddha to be, is shifting a little bit. He starts off by seeing the problems in the world. And of course, once you see the problem in the world, that's like seeing *dukkha*, it's like seeing the first Noble Truth.

2:49:19

Okay, so if there is a *dukkha*, if there was a problem, if there is suffering, if there is an issue to be dealt with, the second question is almost what what is the cause? Why is there *dukkha*? Why is there a problem in the world? And this is the dart, the dart shows you the cause. And of course, the dart in Buddhism is often a metaphor for craving, the desire; all the desires that we have in the human realm and ultimately the desire for existence itself. These, this is the problem. This is really the issue. And so here we can start to find the solution to the problem. As long as we desire those things in the world that are unstable, is kind of obvious that we have a problem, right? If you desire unstable things that cannot really be relied upon, then of course, there's going to be a problem. This is what the Buddha to be is starting to see here. When stuck by that dart, you run around in all directions. When you're stuck by craving, craving drives you on in the world from place to place, around and around, the slave to craving: *Taṇhā dasa*, as it says in the suttas. So you run about, but when that same dart has been plucked out, you neither run about nor sink down there.

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So the moment you pluck out the craving, you're no longer under the control of craving, you're no longer the slave of this master called craving in the world. And then you are free here. And then you are liberated from all of that. It's a very nice idea, this idea of being the slave to craving. Because very often we think that craving is our friend, if you look at the majority of people in the world, they will say, yeah, it's because I desire things that I get things done that I kind of, you know, get all these wonderful things in my life that desire, where the world be? Desire; the world is run by desire, right? Without desire, we'd been the Stone Age. Maybe that isn't such a bad idea? No, I don't know. I'm going over the top here. But you know, the point is that craving is really in the driver's seat. Yeah, the point is that craving is what makes us restless. Craving is the thing that kind of makes you not being able to sit still. Yeah, you kind of try to close your eyes. And you see your mind is kind of either it's running riot, or you're falling asleep. And of course, the reason for that is usually because of craving, that desire either tires



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the mind out, or it drives the mind on kind of endlessly on and on and on. You are the slave at that moment, when you try to become still, when you try to calm down. That is when you understand that you are actually not in charge at all, it is something else that is in charge, you may have thought for your entire life, that craving was your friend. But now you understand that craving is not your friend, the craving is your master, you are the slaver, you're being driven by this thing we call craving. And it's quite hard to see because so much of our life is also the idea of identifying with the, with the doing, doing is such an important part of the thing we call our ego or our sense of self, you are the doer in the world. And by doing we satisfy, we gratify the sense of self by doing things in the world. And of course, craving is very closely related to the idea of doing there's very little doing if there's no craving. And so very often we identify with a craving, and we're very pleased with the craving. So seeing that craving is a problem is actually can be quite hard. Once you start to see that, especially during meditation practice, then you can also, the path starts to open up to make an end of all of this. And that is what the Buddha to be is seeing right here in this beautiful little sutta called the attadaṇḍa here. The fear of the frightful things in the world there.

2:53:27

Now, so this is how the Buddha to be is thinking, Yeah, and this is kind of gives us an idea of how we also should think about the problems in the world. So when you read the news, wherever you read the news, or hear about what's happening in Ukraine, or with climate change, or with refugees everywhere, and all the problems that we have in this world, you start to realize actually, sure, I'm going to do my best to help out, I'm going to do what I can to do things, but also to recognize, to understand that there may not be any final solution to these things. We do our best. And even though we do our best things may go down the drain. Yeah, this is kind of the problem of the world. And then once you start to realize that you change your attitude a little bit, okay, let me see where the real refuge from these things are. Actually, they are on the spiritual path. They found in meditation practice, they're found in living a good life of morality and kindness. That is the real refuge. In the meantime, I will do what I can to help the world. But I also understand that there may not be a solution. There was a very famous monk who lived in Sri Lanka for a long, long time, I was telling you I was having a chat with the bikkunis here, the two Venables here a couple of days ago, and I mentioned this particular monk here, and they hadn't heard about this monk before. So if they hadn't heard about that maybe you haven't heard about this monk either. So I'll tell you a little bit about this monk. You want to hear about this Monk? Yeah. Okay. Okay, good. Okay.

2:55:05

Let's just check in just in case I got it completely wrong here. So, this particular monk, He was born in Germany. And he came to Sri Lanka, I think in his 30s. And he was a very, from the very beginning, he was kind of very, very dedicated to Buddhism. And sometimes you wonder why why is it that some people come into this world and kind of fall into the spiritual path straight away when there's others, they kind of wander around in the world doing all kinds of weird things. Yeah, some people kind of get into this world and they become monastics and why is that? Why is that some people have this incredible drive to practice spirituality in this way here. And I think being you know, kind of dyed in the wool Buddhist as I am, I think very often the reason is because of past lives. Yeah, you have been a monastic or a Buddhist in the past life.



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When you come into this existence, the drive is already there, because it's already part of your, your psychological makeup when it come into this life.

2:56:06

Anyway, so here, he was one of these people and he went to Sri Lanka, this would have been in the 1930s, something like that. Yeah. So they kind of inter between the two World Wars. And so he went to this place called the island hermitage in Sri Lanka, this island hermitage had been established by another monk who was originally German. And this is where all the kind of Western monks tended to congregate, yeah, because I guess they could understand each other. So they will kind of go to the same place. And there was a number of German monks there, and he was one of them. And he was very famous from the very beginning for living this incredibly secluded existence, he would just meditate. And apart from meditating, he would read the suttas. He had the word of the Buddha, there's the two things that he did meditate and read the sutras. And he would spend about 10 years on this island hermitage. And he would learn the suttas. And very often he would learn them by heart. Because what he wanted to do, he wanted really to just wander around. Yeah. And to be able to wander around, you have to, you can't really carry books, yeah, in 1930 is the only way to have the suttas was to carry, having them in books. So you had to learn them by heart. So he learned all the suttas by heart so he could carry them in his mind.

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And then after 10 years, when he felt it had learned enough suttas, and his meditation was kind of good enough, he started wandering in Sri Lanka. So for the next 40 years, he would just wander all the time, all the possessions that he had, he would carry with him; from place to place, find a nice place to meditate, maybe stay there for a few days or a few weeks, and then carry on to another place. Yeah, sleeping at the root of a tree. Yeah. Maybe finding a kuti somewhere, if you go to a friendly monastery here. And then for the rains retreat, where the monastic are supposed to stay put, he would then stay in the monastery for the rains retreat. This is like the really the classical, the kind of the original way that Buddhism was practiced all the way back the time of the Buddha. And this is how this German monk would live. It's kind of extraordinary isn't it? Imagine having all the belongings, and it wasn't much that he had, carry it with you and to sleep, you know, and under a tree somewhere, meditate, and then carry on like this for 40 years, is kind of astonishing. But this was what this monk became very famous for. And, you know, sometimes, and he didn't really have any plans or anything like that there was no kind of purpose to his wondering, just finding a nice place. And according to one of the stories, he had been to some house somewhere and someone had offered him a meal. And they saw him wander off, and he was kind of wandering towards an intersection. They said, "Where are you going to go at that intersection?" He said, I'll decide when I get there. Yeah, it was completely kind of, no? without any aim, without any purpose, just finding a good place to meditate. That was all it was all about. And of course, to be able to do that; and this is what is very interesting, to be able to live like that you have to find happiness somewhere else. Yeah, it is no happy, I mean, you live on one meal a day. There's no entertainment, there's no relationships, there's nothing, you live an incredibly simple life. And the only way you're gonna be able to survive that kind of life is to have some inner happiness and profound inner happiness. And if you do have that kind of profound inner happiness, well, then that kind of lifestyle is actually helpful there. Because you are renouncing the external world. And you're



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relying entirely on the inner life to be able to sustain yourself. Yeah, so inner happiness is all that he lived on that inner happiness.

2:59:52

So when you see someone like that, either they're torturing themselves, or they're having a lot of success in the meditation practice. So look out for those wonderers. Yeah, if they come through here, Silicon Valley, the wonderers, tick, tick, tick. Okay, that one? That's an interesting one. Are there many people like that there's probably not many here, right? It's probably... even in Sri Lanka, hard to find these kinds of people. So let alone in Silicon Valley, so. So that's kind of fascinating. And it says something about what the monastic life really is about. And it says something about why it is important for monastics to withdraw a little bit from society. It says something about why monastics should not really be too involved in society. Because if you are too involved, you cannot actually access that kind of happiness because that happiness actually is accessed precisely when you withdraw a little bit from the world. Yeah, if a monastic gets too involved in society, well, basically the only happiness that you have is the happiness of the world. Yeah. It's like the happiness of ordinary people living ordinary lives, when you are very involved in the world. That is where you find your happiness, in entertainment and eating in the evening and these kinds of things. And so if a monastic lives like that, they won't take too long before they too fall back into those old ways. So it's important to find that seclusion, where you withdraw from that world, otherwise monastic life is not really sustainable. So this is what he did. Yeah. And then of course, he became very famous for this.

3:01:26

And then, later on at a certain point, this is a story Ajaan Brahm tells sometimes, you've probably never heard this story, and if you have let me know but this tells the story when he went to Sri Lanka, he went to Sri Lanka in I think 1993 thereabouts. And he went to this one of these very famous monasteries in Colombo, Colombo is the capital of Sri Lanka. And the monastery is called the Vajirarama. The Vajirarama means like the diamond monastery, something like that. And this monastery was very famous for having all the most famous monks in Sri Lanka would stay there. One of the monks who stayed at that time was venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, who you've probably heard of, yeah, he's kind of one of your homegrown American monks. And he's over in living in New York State at the moment. And so he was there and Ajaan Brahm knew him a little bit because you know, Western monks are few and far between. So everyone kind of knows each other a little bit. And so he went there, and he kind of had a discussion or a chat with a venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, and then he asked him well, do you have anyone in this vihāra, in this monastery, who I should really meet? Bhikkhu Bodhi thought...ummm, That's a good point. Actually. Yes, we have this old German monk. Yeah. You may never have heard of him. His name is venerable Ñāṇavimala, you should meet him. So he kind of ushers Ajaan Brahm into this room, into this monk, he's kind of ancient monk who looks like he comes straight out of the forest. Looks really, looks a bit rough, this monk when you see them, not like us, kind of come from kind of, you know, more kind of, less kind of rough areas, actually, it's a bit rough up in the karunā Buddhist vihāra, but it's not as rough as this. And so he goes into this room, right, and he sits down in the presence of this monk, yeah. And Bhikkhu Bodhi, Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, he leaves the room. And he really regrets this later on, right but he leaves the room and leaves Ajaan Brahm and one other monk in that room. And then Ajaan Brahm says, this monk gave him a dhamma talk going on for about two hours or



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something. And as Ajaan Brahm is like, you know, Ajaan Brahm tells that, this was the best dhamma talk that he ever heard in his entire life. And Ajaan Brahm, he was a disciple of Ajaan Chah, you can imagine how many good dhamma talks he had heard in his life, Ajaan Brahm had been around the entire northeast of Thailand with all the famous meditation teachers there. He said this one was the best one and maybe because he was a Westerner, yeah, because when you're a Westerner, you have certain things in common. And sometimes the dhamma may not translate very precisely across cultures. But when there is that meeting of cultures, maybe it's easy to understand, maybe that is one of the reasons, but he said this was the best dhamma talk he ever heard and Bhikkhu Bodhi said afterwards when Ajaan Brahm came out of the room, he had these big eyes, these kind of shiny big eyes, and Bhikkhu Bodhi knew he had just been in the presence of something very powerful and had heard a really, really good dhamma talk. Yeah. And Bhikkhu Bodhi said he regretted that later on. He wasn't present for that thing. Yeah. So this was this meeting with Ajaan Brahm. So what did he tell Ajaan Brahma right? This is kind of the interesting thing here. I was gonna say "I have no idea." No, I'm not I'm not gonna say that.

3:04:47

Good. What did he say? And of course, the things that you say, and this is kind of what is kind of fascinating about the dhamma, the things that are spoken about are often very much the same things, very often the things that we hear, we hear about the same kind of things again and again and again. And very often it is not what we hear that is the most important thing; very often that is how it is presented that really matters. And when you are in the presence of someone who is very powerful like that, that is the power that those words are presented with, that is the difference. And that is what makes things really go to the heart. Yeah, so this is when you are in the presence of someone who maybe has no defilements, someone who is very peaceful, someone who has these extraordinary qualities. It's like the dhamma takes on the new gloss, not because of the content, but because of how it is delivered. That is part of the reason. But of course, there's also some interesting stories. And one of the stories that this monk taught Ajaan Brahm was the story of how he decided to become a monk. Yeah. And he tells this story of, this was in Germany in the interwar period between, not so long after the First World War. Yeah. And this was a time when the kind of I think, I guess sometime after the war, the economy in Germany was getting getting a bit better again, after being being down in the doldrums for a while. And he was walking around the town. And he was kind of looking at people seeing how people were enjoying themselves. And they came to this place. This place that was like a beer garden. The "Beir Stuber" I think it's called in German. It's like a pub, but basically, right. And so he looked at all these young people, they were enjoying themselves in this pub. They were sitting there kind of with a German beer and kind of drinking away. And as they were drinking away in the basement of this building, a fire started up in the couple of stories above. And he saw all of these young people drinking, while the fire up there was getting greater and greater. And some of the people would of course, they would come out of the pub because they realized, Jeepers, there's a fire going, we better kind of get out. But some of the people remained. They stayed. They said, Oh, yeah. Oh, no, don't worry about that fire. Yeah, is still far away, have a good time. Now we have a chance to get free beers. Yeah, because everyone is going, we get some free beers now. And then, of course, what happened, they kept on staying and staying and staying, enjoying the free beer, getting intoxicated, not understanding the danger that was there, until the whole thing collapsed on top of them. And at that point, this



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person who was to become this famous monk Ñāṇavimala, he realized the nature of our life. This is what our life is like, the world is on fire. Yeah, this is what the Buddha says, right?

3:07:42

In some of the suttas, the world is on fire here. We don't understand that the world is on the fire. And because we don't understand it, we stay on and on and on carrying on with our ordinary things, doing our ordinary work, playing with the five senses. Yeah, enjoying our sense of pleasures here and there, not understanding that there is a profound problem going on. The problem is the turmoil of the world. Everything is out of control. Yeah, we don't know where this is going to end. This is the problem. And so here was this man who for some reasons was ripe; understanding that the world really is on fire. And that was all that he needed to remind him of the problem of the world. And off to Sri Lanka, he was wandering around in the jungle of Sri Lanka for 40 years, probably finding the solution because he became a very, very powerful person, as a consequence of his practice. And this is how it all started here. So this is interesting. Yeah, to me, this is really fascinating. Yeah. And so this is what he told him, He told him this story here. Yeah. This is the story he told him and he told him much more, of course. But this was kind of the one thing that really stood out. Many of the other things would have been things that you hear all the time about kind of practice in the past, practicing samadhi and these things. But this was the one thing that was kind of his addition to all those other things.

3:09:10

And so, but it is the same theme, the reason I'm talking about this, because it's the same theme we're talking about now, yeah, we're talking about the world and the problems in the world and all of these kinds of things. So, again, it comes back to this thing, using the problems in the right way, understanding this, and this is the right view, at the very beginning of the path that allows us, gives us that fuel to the spiritual practice, and shows us how important it is to have a spiritual life and to do something with that so that we actually can find a real solution to the conflict and the turmoil of the world that is really what this is about.

3:09:51

So this is kind of why, to me, why the dhamma is so interesting, yeah. And why it is so important to contemplate these teachings. Because actually, they do give us solutions that are very interesting, very profound and very useful to deal with some of the issues that are just as common now in our contemporary society, as it was at the time of the Buddha, or as it was, in the interwar period, it's all exactly the same kind of problems. It's just that they have a slightly different kind of angles, slightly different feeling to them, because the times are different. So I'm going to stop there time is going very fast. Why does time always go so fast? I don't know why this happens. But this is kind of the way it is. And this is like our lives, Time goes fast. Yeah, suddenly, it's all over. And kind of. So I've got to, let's have another short break. When, after the short break, I'm going to discuss a little bit more, we're gonna have a bit more q&a and discussion. Of course, let's have a very short break. And I'm gonna discuss a little bit more about why this happens, how it is that the world is like this. And then what the Escape is towards the very end, this have a five or six minute break, just enough to kind of stretch our legs a bit and use the restroom if you need to, and then we'll see you back again here. Buddha, and this particular sutta is called the Sakka pañha Sutta, the questions of Sakka. The Sakka is the Lord of the gods. Yeah. And so this is kind of the Lord Of The Gods coming down to the Buddha and



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asking questions. And this is how the gods are seen in Buddhism, is very different from other religions. In Buddhism, the gods come to the Buddha. In other religions, we go to the gods, that's kind of almost the reverse, which is kind of fascinating.

3:11:54

So what is this conversation between God and the Buddha if you'd like, yeah? And so I'll just read a little bit out to you, this is a very long sutta, it is a very nice sutta. And if you want to have a look at it, you can, it's found in the long discourses of the Buddha number 21. And it goes on for a long time, this is only a very tiny extract of a very long sutta. So this is how it goes: "Having been granted an opportunity by the Buddha, Sakka asks the first question: 'Dear Sir, what fetters bind the gods, the humans, the demons, the dragons, and the fairies, and any of the other diverse creatures, so that though they wish to be free from enmity, violence, hostility and hate; they still have enmity, violence, hostility, and hate? This is kind of one of those, I don't know, very interesting questions, right? Why isn't it that we live in the world where there are wars, where there's always conflict? There's always arguments, where even family members can't really live together in peace. Why is that when everyone wants to live in peace? What is the, How come there is such a discrepancy between what we want to do and how we actually live? It's a very, I don't know, it's kind of a good question. I don't usually hear people asking these kinds of questions. They should be asking these questions, but they don't. Right.

3:13:29

This is the problem. We always ask the wrong questions in this world. We ask the questions like "where can I make the most money? That's kind of irrelevant? Yeah, that's the wrong question. This is the right kind of question to ask is "Why is it that we cannot live in peace and harmony with each other, when we actually want to live in peace and harmony? And if we can analyze this question properly, we can get some very interesting answers, very useful answers. So what is the answer to this? And the Buddha replies, he says, Lord of the gods, the fetter of jealousy and stinginess, bind the gods, humans, demons, dragons, and fairies and any other diverse creatures. So even though they wish to be free of enmity, violence, hostility and hate, they still have these things. Yeah, the fetters of jealousy and stinginess, because we hold on to things, because we are attached to things Yeah, stinginess as a matter attaching to things. Jealousy is about attaching to things in the world, because we hold on to things we attach to things in the world that ultimately leads to violence and all of these kinds of things. But what I really want to discuss here is actually what is the root issue? What is the root problem? I'm going to talk about this very fast because the time is so short.

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So the cause then of jealousy and stinginess say the Buddha is like and dislike. And because we have like and dislike in the world because there are things that we prefer and things that we kind of are averse to that we don't like, we reject- from that arises the fact that we are attached to certain things and we reject other things. Yeah, it kind of makes sense. What does like and dislike come from? It comes from desire. Yeah, we because we desire things, we divide the world into the liked and the disliked. Then we attach to things, we have jealousy and stinginess. And ultimately, that then leads to violence down the track. Yeah. What is the source of desire? He says thought, because we think about things. What is the source of thought? I'm not going to go into this in great detail, we could, and it's actually quite interesting.



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But what is the source of thought? And this is the answer, the source of thoughts are the concepts of identity that emerge from the proliferation of perceptions. These are the source of thoughts. So what is this? What does this mean? Concepts of identity that emerge from the proliferation of perceptions. It's a bit of a mouthful. But the idea behind this is that everything in the world all problems in the world, all violence, stems from the idea or the problem of identity, the idea, the sense of ego, having an ego, having a sense of self identifying with something, that is the root problem. And that's kind of fascinating, right? Because we are, most people in the world, they are proud of who they are, this is me, this is myself, this is kind of my world I have built up, built up my own life, I'm proud of what I have achieved. And the Buddha says, well, that actually is the source of the problem, this kind of self that we're trying to create for in our lives, it is very, contrary to how the world tends to look at these things. And because this idea of identity of having a sense of self is kind of inherent to human existence, it shows that actually, that as long as we have that sense of identity, there is no solution to the problem of violence, no solution to the problem of a conflict, and all of these things in the world. Yeah, because it's rooted in something that is just everywhere, in human society here, you cannot really avoid these things, unless you practice a spiritual path all the way to awakening itself. This is how profound it is. And so what this means is that really, there is no escape in the world from these things, because the very root of the problems in the world are such that they cannot really be eliminated from our society. They are, we have a society precisely because of the existence of these roots.

3:18:02

So it is inherent to how our world is structured how our world functions, and to our very lives. And because of that, there isn't really any solution. Yeah, this is what he's saying, Well, there isn't a solution in the world, the solution must be found somewhere else. And of course, the solution then is precisely to overcome this identity. Yeah, that is really the only solution. And once the sense of identity, once the sense of "I am" the sense of kind of creating our own little world, and having you know, and identifying with certain things, when that is overcome, then you find the solution to this to this problem. So the solution to all the social problems that we have are really found individually. They're not found in society. In society, there is no solution, it is only on an individual path that these solutions actually exist. And that's kind of extraordinarily interesting. Yeah. Yeah, it means that really, what we have to do, if we want to solve these things, we have to come back to the spiritual practice, we had to come back to the Noble Eightfold Path. This is where the solution is found. It doesn't mean that the world is kind of bound to always be bad and evil, there will be times when the world is better. There will be times when the world is worse. Yeah, it kind of fluctuates a little bit. But the point is that there is no end goal in that world. There's more of the same down the track, it gets better and then it gets worse again, and it gets better for a while. And this is kind of going around and around and around not really actually having any purpose.

3:19:41

There is this nice expression in the suttas about you know how we kind of we roam around in the samsaric existence. samsāra is this idea of birth and death? Yeah, how you kind of go round and round and round, coming back to the same thing. Yeah. And the Pāli word is saṃsarati and



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saṃdavati and these words mean something like just roaming. And of course, the English word roam means, like without purpose. Yeah, without goal without having any kind of direction, not heading anywhere, we just kind of going here, then they're left and right, forward and backwards. And we find ourselves pretty much back where we were, again, back to square one. What are these games called, we're going to go up and they can probably fall down to snakes and ladders or whatever. Yeah, Chutes and Ladders, okay, so maybe the American version, all right. So this is where we tend to roam around. And this shows you why and the thing that we roam around, the stake that kind of holds us tied to this world, is the sense of identity, the sense of "I am" the sense of I Am... whatever it is that you want to fill that thing with, the "I am" with: that is the real problem. So this is profound, to say the least Yeah, it's very, very deep and very deep seated. And so then the solution is really the spiritual path. That is kind of what this is all about. And this is where we kind of, why we are here. Yeah, this is why we want to practice a bit of meditation. This is why we want to follow these instructions to the Buddha, because that is where the solution is, to the war in Ukraine, to the climate crisis. To the refugees. Yeah, there may be worldly solutions as well, which take you some of the way. But the real solution to these things is found on the spiritual path. It is kind of counterintuitive. Yeah. You sit down in meditation, you close your eyes, you follow your breath, and you find a solution to the war in Ukraine, what are you talking about? Are you serious? Yes, actually, we are serious about that. That is where the final solution is found. And so how should we go about practicing the spiritual life, if the spiritual life is so important, that that is where we find the solutions to all the problems in the world? Remember the world, what is the world anyway, the world really is each of us, we are our own world, right? Your world is your life and the way you experience the world around you. It's in one sense that it makes sense that the solution should be within us, and not somewhere outside. Because the world really is the world of experience of individuals. So that is the world where we have to do something. Yeah. So we come back to the spiritual path. And I'm going to end, just end up just talking very, very briefly about how we can go about practice in the spiritual world. I have mentioned already before that, it is really very simple. And the spiritual path is sort of boils down to two things. On the one hand, you have the idea of morality or kindness in the world. And on the other hand, you have the idea of meditation, which really comes about through mindfulness of breathing. Yeah.

3:22:55

So kindness and mindfulness of breathing. Yeah. So it sounds very simple. So how can we make this work? How can we ensure that we are as kind as we possibly can? How can we change our mental attitudes and mental outlook so as to be more constructive in the world and the way we deal with worldly things. And the most important thing on the Buddhist path, the thing that actually kind of makes everything else possible is right view. Yeah, today, basically going to the suttas. So going to that is the Buddha's gift to us of right view. This is what the Buddha gave to the world. The Buddha is said to be the Eye of the World, because the Buddha sees first, and then he gives us access to those teachings access to the same insight through the way he teaches. So if you want to speed up the spiritual path, if you want to make it as powerful as possible, the first factor on the Noble Eightfold Path is the most important one right view. Because right view is what informs everything else on that path. If you want to be kind, right view is the most important thing because right view tells you the urgency of the practice, it tells you why it matters, it reminds you that your house is on fire, because your house is on fire.



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Now is the opportunity to do what is right. Every time we kind of mess up on the path and of course we're gonna mess up and that's okay. Yeah.

3:24:23

Okay, well, then we forgive ourselves and we carry on. But every time you do make a mistake, it's like you're taking a step backwards. And you can't really afford that, right? Because every time we take a step backwards, it's difficult enough as it is to go forward. And so you establish that mindfulness at the back of your mind of the importance of this practice, so that you avoid taking those steps backwards, and go forward as much as you possibly can.

3:24:49

So come back to these teachings. Come back to this amazing suttas, discourses by the Buddha. Allow that to inform how you live your life. Listen, also, of course, to contemporary teachers, but make sure that you are careful with choosing your teachers wisely. Yeah, they should, the way they teach should conform with the way that the suttas teach. If it doesn't conform with the way that Buddha taught, well, then you may have a problem. So choose wisely. Yeah, don't kind of be too haphazard with how you choose your teachers, and take ultimately, the final teacher always to be the Buddha, and allow yourself gradually to be brainwashed by the Buddha. Yeah, I like the idea of brainwashing.

3:25:37

And I remember when I first came to Bodhinyana Monastery, Ajaan Brahm said something to the effect "Have you come here to be brainwashed?" And I said, "No way, absolutely not, no chance." And Ajaan said, "Well, you've come to the wrong place if you don't want to be brainwashed." Because the point is that you get brainwashed anyway, right? And brainwashed is the nature, is the reality of being human beings. Brainwashing just means being influenced by the world. And so we can choose our brainwashing- you can choose the good brainwashing or the bad one. That is really the only choice we have, but brainwashed you're gonna be regardless. So make sure you get brainwashed by the good brainwashing, the best brainwasher is the Buddha. Yeah, he kind of Scrubs your brain nice and clean. And then you are on the right track, get the good brainwashing Yeah. So this is what this is about. Actually, he really is in a sense about brainwashing in a sense. And then of course, you will quickly come to decide for yourself whether this is good for you or not. And as you do this, if you find it to be good, well, then you know, you will just carry on with these teachings in a good way. And then this is how the practice then gradually unfolds. How kindness on a daily basis become possible. And this is really the thing that you all, everyone who is on this path needs to focus on the most is to make that sila, as firm as you possibly can. Yeah, because when the sila, when the morality when the kindness is practice consistently all the time, this is where the progress happens, then, when you come to your meditation practice, you start watching the breath is going to be easy here. It's going to happen by itself. Yeah. Why? Because the foundation is in place. And then the whole path unfolds. As the Buddha says, without any need to win anything, the breath unfolds, the joy happens, all of these beautiful results happen as a consequence. And then you're going to come back to the Buddha, you're going to cry your eyes out because you're so blissed out, because the Buddha has given you this beautiful teaching. So you're gonna come here and you're going to bow down, even if it's at the statue of the Buddha, it's good enough, I'm going to bow down to the statue of the Buddha, because the Buddha is so awesome. Anyway, I'm gonna



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stop there. We have still have a few minutes left, but I wanted to give us a chance just to kind of discuss these issues a little bit. Before we call it a day, so. Okay, yeah.

3:28:19

Does anyone want to say anything about all of this? Are you scared now? Are you are you convinced about this? Or do you think it's a bit dodgy So please.

Questioner 3:28:44

This may not be related, but is samsāra impermanent?

Ajahn Brahmali 3:28:54

Is it impermanent? We make it impermanent, right? So whether samsāra is impermanent or not depends on on what you make of it. I think it's important to understand what samsāra actually is, first of all, because we tend to think of samsāra as like, the world around us, like the universe, but actually samsāra is your inner world that's really samsāra. It is the kind of the process of getting born and then dying and kind of carrying on round and round. That is samsāra. And that, of course that moving on always kind of going on from life to life, that is impermanent, if we make an end of it. Yeah. So in that sense it is potentially impermanent. But if we don't make an end of it well then you know, it's going to keep on going. Yeah, exactly. So yeah.

Questioner 3:29:50

I would like to thank you very much for the reminder about, so I'm serious, you know, I practice and I know the truth, but I'm distracted by samsāra, by what I like and what I don't like. And so I really appreciate the clarity. I mean, the starkness of the choices you make either end in freedom for, you know, this mind, and also the world being better. Or the other stuff, the mess that, you know, is there. And I just appreciate that conclusion. Because I cannot be reminded too often.

Ajahn Brahmali 3:30:38

Yeah. Good. Yeah, thank you for that comment. That's, that's great, so I agree with you so much. The idea of being reminded of the dhamma is so important, you know, and one of the greatest benefits of being a teacher, is that you're reminded all the time because you're teaching these things, right. So thank you for listening to me, because I'm kind of the one who learns the most. Yeah, that's kind of remarkable. So now I fully agree with you. And it's kind of interesting. I've been living with Ajaan Brahm at Bodhinyana monastery for almost 30 years. Yeah, I listened to Ajahn Brahm every week and I've heard every story of Ajahn Brahma 100 times. But I still enjoy it. That's kind of the weird thing I go and listen to Ajahn Brahm. When you are in the presence of someone like Adam Brahm, he has an extremely, extremely profound meditation is one of the kind of great meditation masters in the modern era as far as I'm concerned. And sometimes when you listen to Ajahn Brahm it's like you get drawn into this kind of, like this kind of track with this kind of massive, you get drawn into the slipstream. Yeah, of Ajahn Brahm, he kind of pulls, kind of goes first and you kind of come behind it, and you cannot avoid feeling, you feel the profundity of the peace, of the kindness, of all the good qualities that are there. Yeah. And every time I go there, I'm reminded of these things. And this is kind of the idea of having a teacher. So you know, we all kind of have our teacher, and it ultimately goes back to the Buddha himself. And then we need to be reminded, again, and again and again. And this is one of the



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things I would recommend all of you to do, always come back to these teachings, make sure you have a source, you have some kind of watering hole that you can go to, and drink the water of the dhamma to remind you to keep you on the path and remember how important it is. Because that is ultimately what kind of keeps us going. The inspiration. Yeah, the ability to sustain the practice depends on inspiration, and kind of keeping that view straight within us. Because the distractions are so large and so enormous in society. So absolutely. So thank you very much for that comment. Yeah.

Questioner 3:32:58

Go ahead. Um, you hear me? We can hear you. Yeah. Thank you very much for this talk today. It's been really very enlightening. And I have a question about when you're traveling on your own spiritual path, and you're dealing with the morality issues and the kindness that you'd like to carry and comes in conflict with your professional life or career. Do you have any words of wisdom of how you navigate those situations?

Ajahn Brahmali 3:33:48

I don't know, obviously, exactly the circumstances you are in. But generally speaking, you have to make the most of the situation you are in my experience, usually you can, you know, you can do, we can all do more. Whether it's within our professional life, or family life, or whatever it is, there's always more that we can do to kind of live well. And so I would say you know, you do the best you possibly can, but if the professional life ultimately does stop you for whatever reason from living well, then you have to decide what you are going to prioritize, what really matters to you. Yeah. And I will say that the spiritual path is so important, you should never really dilute the spiritual path or you know, not practice that because of some worldly reason like your professional life or whatever. There comes a point when you have to make some really tough choices. And you have to ask yourself that maybe you need to change your job maybe even if it comes to that? I mean obviously you try not to because if you have a nice job and you are thriving and you enjoying it and you tried to make the most of the kind of combining the spiritual life and the job. But sometimes we have to make really tough choices in this life. And we have to kind of decide what really is important in life. When you die, you look back on your life, what is that's going to matter to you? And whether you've had a successful career or not, is going to be completely irrelevant. on your deathbed, you're going to say who cares? What is going to be relevant to you on your deathbed is how you treated other people. is you're going to think back Oh, yeah, I was kind to that one person. Wow. What a wonderful thing and you're gonna die with a smile on your face. So what, you want to die with a smile on your face or do you want to die in another way? Yeah. So this so this is kind of the thing, that from the perspective of death, everything starts to become clear what actually really matters. And this is one of the reasons why the Buddha always recommended death contemplation. Yeah. At the moment of death. What what is it that matters? If you were to die? Tomorrow? How would you want to live now? Yeah, if you knew that you're gonna die tomorrow. And maybe you will die tomorrow. Maybe I will die tomorrow. Maybe I will die on my next breath. I didn't die. Okay, good. So yeah, so anyway, please. Yeah. Great.

Questioner 3:36:34

I have another question from online, okay. If I develop terminal cancer in my 20s, can I conclude that it is the ripening of bad karma from my past of my current life or from my past lives?



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Ajahn Brahmali 3:36:51

You cannot really conclude that now, it's very hard to know the Buddha said there is many causes for why we get sick. Bad karma is one. The other reasons Yeah, just the kind of the environment or whatever that causes illnesses in the body. So once you have been born as a human being, you can expect all kinds of stuff. Yeah, that happens to human beings. So it is not necessarily bad karma. And in any case, it doesn't really matter what it is. Yeah, the problem is the same. The problem is that cancer happens to people, whether you are good or bad, or whether you are short or tall, or you know, whatever, left handed or right handed, I happened to be left handed. So that's why I'm saying that whatever happens, yeah, the cancer happens to people. And so the idea of illness, it is inherent to human existence. And that is what is the important point. And that is what makes you kind of want to practice the spiritual life, because there's another problem that you cannot really get rid of, we have to be very careful with things like, you know, sometimes we blame things on kamma. And one of the kinds of the terrible thing that I sometimes see in the Buddhist communities is that, you know, we say, Oh, it is their own fault that they are sick, because some karma in the past life. And that is completely a misunderstanding of the Buddhist teachings. And it's the wrong way of thinking about karma. All of us have plenty of bad karma in there somewhere, any one of us could get sick because of that bad karma. It happens that some people it ripens for the people it doesn't. So we should never kind of become callous or hard hearted, and not cared about others, just because they're having a difficult life or whatever. The idea of blaming things on karma and then becoming kind of uncaring, and not having compassion is the wrong way of thinking about things. Everyone who is sick is worthy of compassion. Yeah, we can all be all gonna be there one day, and then we also want to be worthy of that compassion of the people around us. That is the right way of thinking about this. So we need to be very careful how we use the ideas of kamma vipāka. So we don't kind of kind of grab, misunderstand what the intention behind these things actually are. So I would say don't worry too much about the reason; instead learn the lessons. The lessons are what matter and the lessons are always that the spiritual path is what really is important in life now.

3:39:27

All right, have any more questions online or is that it? You got one more All right. Anyone here wants to say anything here before we go online? Yeah, okay.

Questioner 3:39:46

Thank you Bhante. I got a question about dependent arising

Ajahn Brahmali 3:39:50

dependent arising All right. Okay. So we got to do everything.

Questioner 3:39:54

It's gonna last till tomorrow, but the first factor the Buddha usually explains is avijja, which is ignorance. But the second noble truth tells us that tanhā is actually the cause of dukkha. So I'm just wondering how come is not...

Ajahn Brahmali 3:40:12



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Which one is it? Is it avijja? Or is it tanha? I want to know what is actually the real cause? Yeah. Okay. So all right. This is kind of getting a little bit on the side of the, what we have been talking about. I'm very happy to answer that. But maybe is there one online? Is that more relevant to what we're talking about? Or is it this kind of also a bit? Just have a hand raised on Zoom. Okay. Yeah, that's fine. These are all important questions. So let's see what the Zoom question is about that. Yep.

Questioner 3:40:58

Thank you, Bhante. I just wanted, perhaps you should answer that other question right away. I wanted to personally thank you, for your always inspiring talks. And I've been, my partner and I have been listening for the last couple of years to your talks from Australia, and of course, all of these hard places to get to. So we're just wonderfully appreciative of your generosity for traveling. And now we're in the same time zone. And I just wanted to personally thank you and tell you how much it means to us. So thank you.

Ajahn Brahmali 3:41:47

Wow, that's a really, really good question. The kind of question I like, yeah. This is really great. Yeah. No need to answer it. No need to Okay. Okay, good. And that thank you for thank you for thanking me. That's been really, it's been nice to hear that. And so that's, that's wonderful.

3:42:04

So let's go to avijjā and tanhā. So, you know, one of the kind of interesting things about dependent origination is, what does it really boil down to? Yeah, and this is kind of one of those very, I think, interesting and important questions because dependent origination, it is given in so many different forms in the suttas sometimes we have the 12 factors of dependent origination, sometimes 11, sometimes 10, sometimes nine, sometimes 8,7,6. How far down can we actually go? When is it no longer dependent origination? At what point does it stop being dependent origination? And that's a very, I think, important question to answer because to my mind this is very often misunderstood in the world and things that are not actually dependent origination, are called dependent origination, what is the kind of bare minimum of dependent origination? And the answer to that question is to go to the second noble truth. Yeah, because the second noble truth is really dependent origination is an expansion of the second noble truth. Yeah.

3:43:13

So you find that in a sutta, in the Anguttara Nikaya, three in the numerical discourse, where it specifically says that dependent origination is an expansion of the second noble truth and dependent liberation or dependent cessation is an expansion of the third noble truth, yeah, the ending of things. And of course, what is the second noble truth then, the second noble truth, as you rightly said, is that craving is the source of suffering, right? It's the source of dukkha. So that is the two main terms in that second noble truth craving on the one hand, and suffering on the other hand, but there's one more piece of information in the second noble truth, it is not just any craving, it is the ponobhavika craving, ponobhavika means re-existence craving, the craving that has to do with existence. Yeah, so rebirth is also a part of the second noble truth.

3:44:09



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So the second noble truth contains three important elements craving, rebirth, and suffering. So any expression of dependent origination, if it's going to be a full expression of dependent origination has to have those three elements in it in one way or another. Yeah, rebirth has to be there, craving in one way or another has to be there, and then the idea of suffering which is the problem, has to be there. Yeah. So that is kind of the bare minimum. And then the Buddha starts to flesh that out, you know, he fleshes out, well, what actually, what happens? Why is it that craving leads to rebirth? And to explain that I'm not going to get into that now, but then he adds the factors of upādāna which is clinging as a factor of bhava, which is existence to explain how craving leads to rebirth and then rebirth goes to suffering. But then he does another thing and he explains the, how craving itself arises. Yeah. And the reason why he does that is because craving cannot be stopped in his own right. Craving is like a given in our lives. So, we can maybe reduce craving by saying, Okay, I'm going to restrain myself etcetera, etcetera. But you can only restrain yourself so far, it doesn't actually, restraining in itself does not end the craving. To be able to end craving you have to analyze back further. And this is the idea of analyzing before craving, saying, well, the cause of craving is feeling, because of feeling is the sixth sense bases, the cause of the six sense bases is, name and form, nāma-rupā. Cause of nāma-rupā is consciousness, cause of consciousness is Saṅkhāras, volitional formations- that's a terrible thing, volitional activities, willed activities- choices if you like. And the cause of choices, the ultimate cause of the whole thing is avijjā, or ignorance or delusion. It stems from delusion, and delusion is why we crave. And of course, the reason why the Buddha goes back to avijjā in this way is because he knows how to deal with avijjā. Avijjā is ignorance or delusion. The way to overcome delusion is to practice the Noble Eightfold Path. Because the purpose of the practice is to see things clearly right and to understand the nature of reality. That is what eliminates ignorance. So the reason why he goes back before craving is to show the solution to the problem, the solution is found in seeing things according to reality. That's why we have these two factors there. But the reason why craving is focused on; because craving is what drives the round of existence is because we crave that we project ourselves into the future, and we keep the samsaric cycle going. So craving does matter. But to find the solution, you have to bring it back to avijjā and to ignorance and to delusion in the world. So this is how kind of this, as I understand it, these things fit together. Yeah.

3:47:15

Okay, small questions are good. Yeah, let's go for small questions.

Questioner 3:47:26

For a novice seeker, like I'm looking for print version of suttas which are not very intimidating, what would be a good place to start? Printed, you want the printed version? Yeah, because when I'm on the computer, I tend to go to other places.

Ajahn Brahmali 3:47:41

Okay, I what I would recommend to you is a book called "In the Buddha's words", which is an anthology of the suttas. It is done by Bhikkhu Bodhi, Bhikkhu Bodhi is one of the supreme translators of the suttas in the present day. He's one of the great jewels and right here in America. Yeah, he's kind of your American sutta jewel. And he translates it beautiful. His English is just beautiful. Yeah, he translates like, it's just wonderful to read. But not just that. But he introduces them explains what is going on. He has nice notes at the end to explain what's



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happening. And then he puts it into kind of a nice little chapters. Yeah, so one chapter on this, one chapter on that, that is very, very good place to start. So start with that. Once you have done that, come back to me, I will tell you what to do next. So this is kind of your reason for coming back next time. So at the back there, okay, great.

Questioner 3:48:46

I can't remember where the teachings, where it says this in the teachings, but there's like three kinds of tanhā Right, there is craving for sensual desires. There's bhava tanhā, and then Vibaha bhava tanhā. So a craving for existence and a craving for non-existence. What is craving for non-existence mean?

Ajahn Brahmali 3:49:04

It's like suicide. You commit suicide because you had enough, you can't, you know, you're craving non-existence. But the thing is that because it is craving, it doesn't lead to non-existence leads to more existence. And that's kind of the problem. Yeah. So you crave for it, you have kind of, you know, you may Yeah, so you that's kind of the sad, sad thing about, and this is why we don't really recommend suicide in Buddhism, because actually, you come out the other end, the problem is still there. And you kind of carry on. Yeah,

Questioner 3:49:33

I guess I'm kind of asking the question because I work with traumatized clients who have suicidal ideation often. So it's kind of like in the Buddhist understanding, even if it's suicide, death by suicide, the mindstream still continues, right? Yeah,

Ajahn Brahmali 3:49:49

yeah, exactly. Yeah. So

Questioner 3:49:53

And that this is an automatic process that keeps happening. It's just the craving is what is driving from birth to birth?

Ajahn Brahmali 3:50:01

Yeah, craving is like a projection into the future craving is always about the future, right? It's about some desired future state. And as long as you are projecting yourself into the future, actually, that's what happens, you actually keep on going. So you have to stop that projection into the future. And that's why the ending of craving really is also the ending of or being reborn.

Questioner 3:50:21

And it's like, you just see that it's, when you're seeing these projections, you're recognizing, like, this is just another thought this is just another... is that what it is, it's like, you're just using awareness to recognize that these are just forms of delusion in the mind.

Ajahn Brahmali 3:50:33

Yeah, you can do that. I mean, yes. But I mean, in the end, what you have to do is practice the Noble Eightfold Path, get into some deep meditation and get some insight into the nature of the mind. That's really what it is, it's really about understanding oneself, that's what it comes down



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to. So it is very, very profound. You can use those, I guess. You know, if someone is suicidal, and you can tell them, Well, this is just, you know, thoughts arising, I don't know if that works with them, but no, it doesn't really work. You have to be... Yeah. Alright. Fair enough. But I, you know, on the other hand, it's important not to stigmatize people who commit suicide, I think that's also a very important thing. And I think in Buddhism, our approach, as far as I'm concerned to the idea of suicide is that suicide is not necessarily bad. Yeah, as often we'd say that suicide is terrible, and it's bad. Yes, it may lead to rebirth. But most people get reborn anyways, that isn't necessarily a bad thing.

3:51:27

What is bad or good is how we commit suicide. Everything in Buddhism is about intention and what motivates us. And if we can be driven to commit suicide by very bad things, yeah, we can do things out of the really terrible intentions or anger or whatever, then of course, it's going to be bad. But sometimes, let's say that someone is terminally ill, and they have lots of suffering, they don't know what to do with their life. And they think, there's no point to this anymore, I can't meditate can't really do anything. So maybe I should end my life. And in that kind of situation if they do that with a degree of clarity. And they do it out of a sense of compassion for themselves, and maybe for other people, because there isn't any purpose to this existence anymore. Then I would say that it may not be bad karma. Yeah.

3:52:15

It's very difficult to talk about individual situations. But I would say, maybe if your intention really is good, it cannot be bad karma because that's how karma is defined. I had a man who came to me many years ago, and he was had some kind of terrible neurological disease that kind of made him gradually more and more unable to function. And eventually, he was just lying in bed couldn't do anything. And he had decided beforehand, he asked me, you know, is it okay for me to kind of go to this clinic in Switzerland called Dignitas clinic, where they will help you commit suicide, you know, if you're on your deathbed, so he said, is that okay? And I said, I can't really say it's okay. But, you know, I say if you do it in the right way, at the very least, there's not going to be bad karma. Yeah. And so I think in Buddhism, we can take some of the stigma out of suicide, I think that is really important. And then we can kind of get good support. Yeah, and we can kind of do something positive, make something positive out of a very difficult situation. Thanks. Okay, everyone, so that's it, I think, any last comments any, sort of, nothing? Everyone is okay. Yeah. Good. Everyone has heard. Everyone is too tired to ask any more questions. That's great. So okay. What do we do now?

Questioner 3:53:51

If you would like to make a donation to support Ajahn Brahmali's teaching, you can do that with cash or check or credit cards. It's the paper that that says to use the basket near the front door it's not a basket, there's a slot in the front door. Thank you very much. Please take your food home. And utensils and dishes. If your utensils not there, it's generally washed and put away, so feel free to look for it. We accidentally put it away. And also I asked him for four or five....

Ajahn Brahmali 3:54:45

yay. Well done. That's good, there's another one back there. That's marvelous. Yeah, sounds too, too good.



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3:54:59

Great Okay, well I just got to, I might as well say goodbye, I suppose. Very nice to meet you all there is one of one of the wonderful things about traveling around the world is to meet fellow Buddhist and people because it's always a kind of a good occasion and it's always happy and is always positive. So it's, it's wonderful and maybe our paths will cross again and if they don't, that's okay as well. So we'll see, see what happens. I wish you all the very best. Good luck with your practice, and good bye for now.