

Saturday Dharma talk, week 2

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If someone lived in a place where there were frequent and dramatic changes of the weather, frequent meaning frequently each day, throughout the day, they might get adept at taking on and off raincoats, sweaters, whatever is needed. It might become second nature. Right? It might be something that's done with great ease. Or it could be that someone has the idea that some particular way that they're dressed is the way. Nothing is going to get them to budge off that true, appropriate way to be dressed.

Doesn't matter how hot, how cold, this is the way it should be. And so they're really... sweating like a green hand, like a sauna, wearing their long underwear when it's 100 degrees. And they're freezing in their long underwear. That's all they're wearing when it's 20 degrees, zero. There might be an in-between where it just works. That probably other people would wonder.

So a silly example relates to us in our hearts, our minds, or in our life. If we think there's only one way we're supposed to be, we're like the person who believes there's only one set of clothes. For a human life, if I'm using the metaphor, the weather changes all the time. The circumstances we're in and our response to it changes all the time. There's a beautiful repeated poetic, it's in poems, Japanese poems, the idea of the moon in a dewdrop. That even if something is insubstantial as a dewdrop, you can see full enlightenment, the full moon.

But the dewdrop vanishes when the sun comes out. It's ephemeral, even the most ephemeral and substantial thing. So that's nice. Nice work. And then there's the world in a teardrop. This world we live in, there's so much suffering.

And when is it, when do we gaze upon the moon in the dewdrop? When do we gaze upon the world in a teardrop? Are we supposed to be exactly the same in each situation? When a four-year-old comes running happily, that they figured out how to tie their shoelace, what

response does that give when the older sibling comes home and feels deeply hurt by this cool bully? What response is that? And it can go on, these stories.

There's so many different things that happen through the day. So many frequent changes of the weather, to have a fixed idea of how the mind should be, what state we're supposed to be in, certainly always in a beautiful, clear, compassionate state, that's it. We're always peaceful and calm and luminous, expansive. That's the one, always in deep contemplation. As soon as there's this idea of always, this is the state. You might as well be wearing long underwear all the time.

Rather, what we're learning to do here is not to attain a state, as if some state is the right way to be. We're learning to be fluid, free, easy, to go between the different states that are needed. To respond appropriately with our hearts and our minds. Sometimes we cry, sometimes we laugh, sometimes we celebrate, sometimes we grieve, sometimes we help, sometimes we accompany, sometimes we simply stay out of the way. And to know and to be able to fluid and not hold on to any particular way to be is one of the ways we're training in the Dharma. And here on retreat, things will change.

Your state of mind, the clarity of your mindfulness, your ability to stay present, how quiet or active your thinking mind is, how concentrated or unconcentrated you are. Maybe after a period of being very concentrated, you're surprised to find yourself... hopelessly unconcentrated, distracted. And it's not a few people who feel disappointed by that. Sometimes it's much worse than disappointment. Some people are crushed.

They've been working for a concentrated state for years. They finally had it and it banishes. I must have failed. What did I do wrong? All kinds of attitudes come up. This could be for anything at all, any state, filled with loving-kindness.

You're just ready. You know, it's really easy to have loving-kindness for all people from a distance. And you're just ready. This is the way to be forever. It'll be this way. But then the person in front of you at the meal line... Takes two cookies when there's only two left, and you're behind.

You even forget even what loving-kindness is for a while. I mean, self-righteousness, indignation, hurt, everything is wrong. People are terrible. So it swings. But what if rather than being too focused on whatever state you're in, however your mind is. What if the whole purpose is not a state, but the ease in which you can move in and out, the ease in which you can hold whatever state is there, so that the more unfortunate states don't have a lot of power over you, so the fortunate states don't have a lot of seduction for you.

But just to hold everything fluidly, openly, relaxingly, willingly, this is the human life, the weather changes. And so part of what we're doing on retreat is to learn that skill, to learn that ability. And many of you have reported that you've had changes, surprised by one sitting to the next, to wake up the next morning and it's different. No need to take that as being a problem or unfortunate or something is wrong. It's just one more opportunity to learn how to be free, free with this, open to this, relaxed with this, fluid with this. And often the benefit of learning this is that some states, usually the difficult states, pass much more quickly, if we don't resist them, react to them, judge them, if we don't use them to define ourselves and judge ourselves in some way.

So this willingness to show up, this too, this is here now, this too now is to be held and seen with grace, seen with generosity, seen peacefully, known calmly, felt willingly, and, made space for, give it breathing room, this too. So as the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* develops over time, at some point, some did some fifth times, the mind might feel as if it has less clinging than usual, a less ill will or delusion. It might not feel contracted or scattered anymore. It might feel expansive. You might be surprised that there's some qualities of non-clinging in the back room of the mind. Look at that.

Who would have imagined? It might have felt that the mind was steady, calm, concentrated, absorbed. And then the last one here in this series, observation of the mind, is a mind that's free. Right. And this, in this stage, is usually explained not ultimate freedom, complete freedom, but partial freedom. Partial freedom temporarily.

But as this, these states, these ways the mind can be become clear and clear, stronger and stronger, more present, it's easy to take them as being the point. This is it, I have it made. This is how it's supposed to be. Another way of seeing them is that these states are providing a better contrast to see where we still get stuck. They're allowing us to see more clearly. Like if you, the classic sutta example is if you have a white cloth that has been bleached and cleaned and new and completely white, if you put a little bit of dirt in it, a little bit of mud or oil, it stands out.

It's obvious. But if it's been, it's a white napkin that hasn't been cleaned in 25 years, used every day, and it's like, you know, maybe there's a half a percent of it which is not stained somewhere if you look hard. One more stain doesn't matter. One more a little bit of dirt, you hardly notice. Than if your mind was a napkin. What would it look like these days?

Hopefully, being on retreat, it starts looking cleaner. At least cleaner than it was. Maybe it gets really clean. The cleaner it becomes, the more expensive it becomes, the more less clinging and craving it has. It becomes easier and easier to see. It's... where there's still dirt, where

there's still some issue, where we get stuck, where we hold on and cling, where we engage in ways with ourselves and the world that causes suffering.

We start seeing subtle, more and more subtle, more and more deeper. And subtle and deep, it doesn't mean it's unimportant. Sometimes it means that we're getting down to the roots of it all, the very seeds, the very source of how we suffer, of how we react, how we get caught in all kinds of states, all kinds of attachments. So part of the purpose of this *Satipaṭṭhāna* is to become fluid between states, but also to have good states of mind, good states of heart, that help us to see more clearly where we can become even more fluid, more free, more at ease, more peaceful. So that maybe at some point, no matter what the weather is, we're good with whatever state of mind that is evoked or fluid. We're not caught in one mind state, think this is how it is.

It's so easy to do that for people doing Buddhist practice. I've known people who have had wonderful states and they're trying to hold on to it, or they're trying to act as if they're in that state. Or they're fooling themselves into sometimes. I've known people who've fooled themselves where they kind of imagine that they're kind of in some wonderful state. But *Satipaṭṭhāna* is to become quiet enough, still enough, spacious enough, silent enough, to start seeing where we get stuck and how that works, and to learn how to become even freer, more fluid, more able, to meet the world, the crying world, the laughing world, the smiling world, the grieving world, in a way that supports this world and supports others. It's appropriate not to be stuck.

That there's one way. So the last of these mind observations is one knows a free, freed mind, free mind as a freed mind. Who knows a mind that's not free is a mind that's not free. And as I said, it usually means in particular ways. Some of you might spend long enough caught up in some hindrance, some mental preoccupation that's spinning and keeping you hooked and caught in anxiety and fear. And then it just, it's not there.

Temporarily, you become free of this difficult state. It can feel like such a relief. It can be a source of joy and happiness. And so to be able to recognize that, oh, this is, and not just to recognize that it's that kind of freedom, the freedom from certain afflictive states, but even more. To register, to feel, to sense, to take in what it's like for the mind to be free. To take in good states.

Let them register, let them be known. I'm calm. It's a wonderful teaching of the Buddha that nourishment, the food for tranquility, is tranquility. Isn't that great? What that means is... You've got to eat it. You've got to take it in.

If you're tranquil, register it. Feel it. Don't just belittle it or overlook it. Don't think there are more important things to do than be calm. There's things to be anxious about in this world. You have a long list, so you... Might as well go through the list.

Take in the calm, feel it. Feel the good when it's good and healthy and appropriate for a variety of reasons. It nourish and feeds us in good ways. The inner life, the yoni, the heart, the mind benefits from being fed well. Also because as we let it register and really feel and sense what this is like, we have a better reference point to notice when we lose it, when we get caught, when we compromise it, when we have abandoned it. And seeing that more and more clearly, at some point you can see it so clearly with mindfulness as strong.

You even see the danger of losing it. It looks like, oh, look at that. I know these symptoms. I'm in danger. I'm in danger. Of being caught in that fantasy.

No thanks. Oh, I can see that I'm on the edge now of ruminating about my high school resentment. And now that it's been 55 years, I don't even know if she's alive. Okay. It doesn't matter, it's a good resentment. Who cares about calm?

The danger is resentment is the food for more resentment. That you're feeding these things and it grows and grows. So you can see the symptoms, see what's happening. Oh, no, thank you. Not with aversion, not with, but with a generous mind state, a peaceful mind state. Right? A kind attitude. No, thank you.

That's all very nice and good if you have a freed mind state. And when you're also supposed to know, in this very simple way of knowing that's being taught here, to know calmly, to know peacefully, to know kindly, to know yoni-fully. I don't think that's in the dictionary yet. To know it simply as a mind that's not freed, as opposed to comparing it to a freed mind than being upset or angry or discouraged. Just this is how it is now. Always learning that skill, the ability to know, where the knowing is not reactive.

The knowing, the feeling, the sensing is peaceful, it's clear, it's calm, it's open, it's willing. It's a knowing and feeling and seeing that you actually enjoy doing. So you wake up in the morning, I can't wait. I get to be mindful today. It's so good. And that's not, of course, not easy to find.

And I'm not trying to be polyanish about some kind of thing, but there is a healthy, good way of enjoying the practices you do here. Whether it's mindfulness, kindness, loving-kindness, equanimity, concentration. Whatever you do, can you do it in the way that you enjoy? Chances are, if you do it in a way that you don't enjoy, it probably won't work. So there's fluidity, there's freedom with whatever state, state of mind, state of heart. And to go back to

the first one, you know, knowing a mind with craving, as a mind without craving.

I said this before, but I think it's such an important point. If the mindfulness is strong, craving, ill-will, delusion can never include, it never defines the whole state of mind that we're in. Because when mindfulness is strong... That itself is not craving, not hateful. So that's why it's possible to say one knows a mind with craving is a mind with craving, because it's the third foundation of mindfulness. Mindfulness is strong now, so the ability of the mind to hold things in this healthy way has been developed.

So one way that I understand or interpret these four, usually called foundations of mindfulness, I like to translate it as four ways of establishing awareness. One way of interpreting it is the first three are a preparation for the fourth. It's creating the conditions for the fourth to be beneficial. Right? To be able to engage well with the fourth foundation, so we can be liberating and freeing, so we can support us in developing a very healthy inner life. So it supports us to allow something deep inside, beautiful inside, to grow and develop.

So in these time that we've gone through the first three foundations, we have been building a nest. Remember the poem, building a nest of silence so that we can abide and rest in the nest together with the eggs. We're incubating something, allowing something to grow and develop. Someone told me that apparently Phoebe's ordinarily extremely noisy birds, but maybe they're silent when they're sitting on their eggs. Maybe there's a way of understanding you that usually you're pretty noisy, even if you don't speak inner noise. But when you make the *satipaṭṭhāna* nest and these... deep inside we're sitting on the yoni, sitting on the eggs.

Maybe that's a time to be silent, to be silent, to care, to nurture, in preparation for the deeper work. So for me it's very significant, this image of incubating something that can grow or could hatch. I believe I said it already that the Buddha used that... idea of a chicken sitting on its eggs, as a metaphor for how we do this practice. And then we'll see when we do this fourth foundation that it involves both a shedding and a growing. Some things are abandoned and some things are brought to fulfillment. They fill out.

So, so we're coming to a wonderful transition to the Fourth Foundation. That will happen on Monday. Tomorrow, Sunday, I won't be here. And we'll have the same schedule we did the last time I wasn't here, where Inez will lead the sitting at 8.15, and then the afternoon schedule will change. Okay. I think it's the sittings at 3.15 to 4, right? No, 4.15. 4.15 to 5. So that'll be, the schedule will be up. And to a small degree, I'll say this, hopefully you'll excuse me, the talk was meant to be kind of a little encouragement. Okay. To stay in this period of preparation, getting ready for Monday.

You've practiced really well. You're still in the preparation stage, so hang in there. Keep getting ready. We have a lot of time still and more is coming. Take good care of your practice, not only for yourself, but also for your community. Your own practice will benefit if you are here at the retreat center and at home, it's a little bit more difficult.

But it matters that you're on the tiles. And I love seeing those of you have your camera on. And it's kind of, it's very encouraging to see that also there's a way of caring for your practice community to support their practice as well. Care for each other these days. And I'll be back Monday morning. Thank you. Thank you.