

MN # 19
Two Kinds of Thought
Dvedhāvitakka Suta

A Dhamma talk by Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi
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BV: Tonight I thought I would instead of freelance talking, I thought it might be a good idea to show you a little bit more a little bit more directly about what the Buddha was teaching. And the way that I do that is I read from the suttas themselves, and I'll explain what they are talking about. The sutta tonight is called "Two Kinds of Thought."

MN: 1. THUS HAVE I HEARD on one occasion the blessed one was living in Sāvatti in Jetta's Grove, Anāthapaṇḍika's Park. Then he addressed the monks thus. Monks. Venerable sir, they replied. The Buddha said this:

2. "Monks, before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened bodhisattva,

BV: Bodhisattva means future Buddha.

MN: it occurred to me, suppose that I divided my thoughts into two classes. Then I set on one side thoughts of sensual desire, thoughts of ill-will, thoughts of cruelty. And I set on the other side thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of non ill-will, thoughts of non-cruelty.

BV: What are thoughts of renunciation?

S: ~

BV: Not only sensual pleasures, but letting go of the craving and the clinging. Letting go of holding onto things and taking them personally. It's thoughts of nonattachment. Nonattachment means when you have repeat thoughts about something, that means that there's some attachment there. You want to see something happen

in a particular way. You want it not to happen in a particular way. But you keep having these same thoughts over and over and over again. Renunciation is seeing that and letting it go. Letting go of the attachment to thoughts and feelings and taking them personally.

Thoughts of non ill-will. What are those? Non ill-will. Thoughts of Loving-Kindness. Wishing other people well. Thoughts of non-cruelty. What are thoughts of non-cruelty?

S: ~

BV: Yeah, that's part of it. It's compassion. Okay, compassion is a word that gets used a lot and its one of those words that everybody is supposed to know what it means, but then again, it gets mixed up. I'll give you a definition of compassion. Compassion is seeing another person in pain, allowing them the space to have their pain and loving them anyway.

If you go into a hospital, you walk into a hospital room where there is somebody that's dying of cancer or has an extreme amount of pain. The first thing that most people try to do when they walk into a room where there is a lot of pain is try to take that pain from them, by making themselves feel bad. "Oh you poor dear, I'm so sorry you're like this." That is indulging in pity. That has nothing to do with compassion. Compassion is walking into the room, seeing that they have that pain, and radiating love to them. Not focusing on their problem, focusing on Loving-Kindness. Keeping your mind uplifted.

Now what happens when you do that? That other person will start to let go of the dislike of the pain and their mind will start to become uplifted and then you're actually helping that person. It's a real tricky thing between pity and compassion. Pity is trying to take away somebody else's pain so that they feel better and you feel lousy, and that doesn't help them at all. But compassion is allowing them the space to be whatever way they're going to be, and loving them. Focusing on radiating a feeling of acceptance, radiating a feeling of openness, and happiness.

What happens, and I've seen this happen, I don't know how many hundreds of times. When I walk into a hospital room and I start radiating Loving-Kindness, all of the sudden that person gets into the present moment without any dissatisfaction in their mind. Their pain seems to become less and less. The more open my mind is to accepting their situation without trying to change it, the lighter my mind becomes. The lighter my mind becomes, the less tension and anxiety and dissatisfaction and fighting with what's arising, the less that happens for the person in the room.

So when you walk into a room and you start radiating Loving-Kindness to that person, your mind doesn't go down and say, "Oh you poor dear. I feel so bad for you," and you try to take their pain away. You don't do that. You keep your mind high. You keep your mind uplifted and their mind becomes uplifted too.

When I was in Asia I went to the hospital two or three times a week, visiting all kinds of different people. Most of them were very, very sick. And I started noticing some things when I would go into the hospital. I would go into a person's room and then everything would be going along nicely and they are starting to lighten up and they actually start laughing a little bit. And then one of their relatives walks in. And immediately their mind is already conditioned to disliking the situation, knowing that other person is in pain, trying to take that pain away, and making themselves generally unhappy. And what I've seen pretty regularly is that these are the kind of relatives, when they come in, they have to be doing something. If the window is closed they'll open it. They'll rearrange the pillows, and talk real quick and then leave as fast as they can. And the person that's sick winds up feeling absolutely terrible.

When I was going into a hospital room, quite often the people would tell me it's like fresh air coming into the room, when I walked in, because I was practicing Loving-Kindness before I went in there. And I always conditioned my mind that whatever that person is feeling, it's okay for them to be that way. I can love them. I can radiate this happy feeling. And as I'm walking down the hall going into the room, that's what I was doing. I was radiating Loving-Kindness before I got

into the room and they felt an immediate lightness in the room, because of that. And you've been to other talks of mine and I talk a lot about laughing and having a mind that has joy in it and that sort of thing. Smiling, you bet. And the reason that I talk about it so much is because I've seen it work so much. And I was continually going in even though the situation is very, very bad. Somebody has stomach cancer and they had their stomach removed. And they're in a lot of pain. After I would be there for a little bit, I would start saying things that would make them laugh. And when they started to laugh, the pain was not as intense. And their mind started to become uplifted, and that's where healing occurs.

So practicing compassion is a much different idea than what an awful lot of people talk about or think in Buddhism. When you're serious with practicing meditation and you start to go deep in your meditation and you don't have a very wandering mind, you get into these things that are called jhānas. Jhānas are stages of your understanding, and just levels of the meditation. When you practice Loving-Kindness, you go to the first jhāna. The first jhāna, it has thinking and examining and joy and happiness and balance of mind. And as you go deeper into your meditation, then you go into the second stage of the meditation, it's called the second jhāna. Where they joy is much stronger, the happiness lasts longer, the balance of mind is very nice. And you keep going, you go into the third jhāna, where joy is too course a feeling now and the comfortable feeling in your body and your mind becomes very, very strong, that's the happiness. And the unification of mind, your mind doesn't wander very much when you're in that stage. As you go deeper in your meditation, you'll go to what is called the fourth jhāna, and this is the place that the Buddha, he praised everyone that would get to this jhāna, because that's where your mind had very, very strong balance of mind, that's called equanimity.

Now I've practiced twenty years of meditation that was straight vipassanā meditation. And if anybody here knows about vipassanā, that's a long time to be practicing that. And you get into states that they called very strong equanimity. Then I started practicing more according to what the Buddha taught directly from the suttas. And

when I got to these stages where the equanimity was supposed to be strong, it was completely different than what I had learned for twenty years. It had always been kind of an intellectual balance, but when equanimity starts to come, it is a real balance in your mind and in your body. And someone could come up to you and slap you in the face and you will say, "Oh, why did you do that?" You don't have emotional responses to things because you have such balance.

And it's always kind of fun for me as a teacher to see people get into this state, because the day before they come to me and they talk to me about the meditation and everything is going fine. And then they have this deep experience of meditation and they walk in and you can just see it coming out of them. There's this great balance of mind and their balance of body and they sit down and they are just peaceful. "So how's your meditation going?" "Fine. Everything is good." "Is any excitement happening?" "No, no, no." "Everything is very nice." This is the highest feeling that you can experience.

Getting to the fourth jhāna is truly a wonderful thing. There's a lot of talk about getting into jhānas and people that talk about it, they try to put it up on this elevation place where it's kind of mystical and magical, and if one person talks about being in a jhāna, then everybody listens to it and goes, "Ooh, aah. I want that." And the jhāna is not like that. The way that you develop your mind so that you can get into the jhāna is by watching very closely what your mind is doing while you're sitting in meditation or while you're walking, or while you're doing some activities. You can get into jhāna, just about doing anything. I had one student that got into jhāna while they were riding a bicycle. They couldn't believe it. All of the sudden they have all of this joy and happiness and "Oh, wow this is great stuff!"

The way that it occurs is that there are five hindrances to the practice. Whenever one of these hindrances arise, it takes your mind completely away from the practice and being aware and you're caught by your thinking and your liking and your disliking and all of these kind of things. The first is lust or greed, the "I want" mind. The second is hatred, or aversion, the "I don't want" mind. The third

hindrance is dullness, sleepiness, sloth and torpor. This occurs because you're not really interested in what you're doing in the present moment, and you let your mind kind of ho-hum around and your energy goes down and all of the sudden you're daydreaming and whatever, and getting into your sleepiness.

The next is restlessness and anxiety. Everybody experiences that a lot. When your mind is very active and you're thinking about this and that, that means you have restlessness. When you're sitting in meditation, your mind takes off and starts thinking about whatever. That's part of restlessness. It's a distracted mind. It's the mind that says, "Oh, I've got to do this, I got to do that. I've only got ten minutes to do it, and I don't know what to do first." It's the mind that goes crazy.

And the last is doubt. And the kind of doubt that arises is whether you're doing things correctly or not.

Now, these hindrances, just about everybody in this country teaches us that we need to destroy, crush, completely stop the hindrances from arising. And the hindrances, whenever they arise, are showing you where your attachment is. The hindrances are very necessary for your spiritual development. Doesn't that sound odd? But whenever a hindrance comes, it pulls your mind away so far that you don't even know what you're doing. Anger is a great one. You get angry and you get in a car and start driving, it's frightening, because you're not really driving and you're not really paying attention to what you're doing, and that's how accidents occur.

Now why do these things happen? "Oh, I just wasn't thinking at the time." Yeah, you were so caught up in your emotional state of dislike of the dislike, that you were pulled completely away and you're caught in your thinking and your wanting and your dislike of situation or whatever it happens to be, that you don't know what you're doing in the present moment. And when you don't know what you're doing in the present moment, and a car in front of you puts on the breaks, you don't see it. And what happens? An accident. Why did that

occur? Because you weren't being mindful. You weren't being alert. You were caught by a hindrance.

Now, when you're sitting in meditation, especially when you start meditating, your mind is going to flip-flop. Your mind is going to think about this and think about that and you might be away from your object of meditation for two or three or five minutes and not even know that you were caught by it. But as soon as you notice that, then you let go of the thoughts, let go of the feeling, relax, and come back to your object of meditation. It's okay that your mind went away that long. Can't criticize yourself. Don't come down on yourself, don't tell yourself that you're supposed to be better than that. Because you're as good as you are. At times your mind is going to be very distracted.

Now, when these hindrances arise, they don't just come one at a time. They like to run in gangs. So you have dislike arise, and then you have the restlessness arise right after that, that really gets into it and thinks about it. Becomes more and more distracted by it. But, it's okay, it's all right that your mind does that. When you're sitting in meditation and your mind runs off. You have sadness arise or dislike arise or whatever the catch of the day happens to be, and it pulls your mind away for a while, that's okay that it did that.

But as soon as you notice that your mind has gone away, then you let that go, you relax, you come back to your object of meditation.

Too many times I have heard people give instructions that say something to the effect that "Thoughts are your enemy. You don't want to think when you're meditating." And it's just not true. It's not the enemy any more that being quiet is the enemy. It's just what arises in the present moment. What are you going to do with that? As soon as you recognize it, you let it go, you relax, come back to your object of meditation. Every time you do that, you are developing your observation powers. You're starting to be more alert with what your mind is doing in the present moment. So instead of flip-flopping like this, after a while it starts slowing down a little bit and doesn't get caught for quite as long. At first you get caught for two or three

minutes and don't even know it happened. After you become familiar with how your mind works, you start catching it a little more quickly. You start becoming familiar with how this process works. As you become more familiar with how the process works, your awareness of the process becomes faster. Your mind becomes more alert. You start to stay with your object of meditation for a longer period of time. So instead of being caught for a minute or two minutes, or three minutes by these wandering thoughts, after a while you are on your object of meditation for a minute, or two minutes, or three minutes before your mind gets distracted again.

Now the thing with hindrances is that an awful lot of people will practice the kinds of meditation that stop the hindrance from arising while they are sitting very still and very calm. But when they get up and start moving around and they lose their concentration, guess who comes by to play. You start having these hindrances attack you, and they're really strong and you're not aware of they work. So what I'm showing you right now is the importance in being able to recognize the hindrances, to allow them to be, relax, come back to your object of meditation. This is called right effort. It's part of the 8-fold path. Although I don't like to use the word right effort. I like to call it harmonious practice. I want you to be in harmony while you are doing this. That means not doing it too fast. When a hindrance comes, you don't grab it by the neck and throw it down and stomp on it. You see it, you allow it, you relax, you let it be.

There's four different parts to a harmonious practice. First, noticing that your mind is on an unwholesome object. Your mind is caught by a hindrance. Noticing that. Next, letting go of that unwholesome thing and relaxing the tension and tightness caused by that movement of mind[*'s attention*]. Relax. Next, bring up your object of meditation, your wholesome object. Next, stay with your wholesome object as long as you can. Now, you've heard me talk a lot about smiling. That's part of your object of meditation. It's very necessary. Why? Because it's easy to notice when you're not. Okay? It's easy to notice when you're not smiling. So, start again. Don't criticize yourself because you're not smiling. Don't tell yourself that you're supposed

to be better than that, you're supposed to be doing it all the time. Because that's critical thought and that has aversion in it.

When I tell you over and over again that you play this as if it were a game, I'm being serious. If you're critical about yourself, you're not playing. You're being heavy. You're pulling your mind down so that these heavy emotional states and mental states can come up more and more. See, one of the reasons that I picked this particular sutta to talk about is for this statement. (Paraphrases) "Whatever a person frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will be the inclination of their mind." What do you think about all the time?

The more you think and ponder about unwholesome things, lust, desire, anger, revenge, the more those kind of thoughts will come up. The more you practice smiling and wishing somebody else happiness, the more those kind of things will come up. What you think and ponder on, that is the inclination of your mind.

Being able to recognize the hindrances when they arise so you don't get caught with them as long, that means that they won't come up and be as strong as they were. It means that you will be able to notice when your mind gets caught by these things, so your mind won't incline towards that so much anymore. The more you incline your mind towards having fun, laughing, smiling, wishing other people well, the more your mind will incline towards that. And the more your mind inclines towards that with your daily activities, the more it will incline towards that when you are sitting in meditation. And your meditation goes deeper faster. See meditation is not about sitting like a rock. Meditation is about watching what your mind is doing all the time.

Now I like to go on walks every now and then. Sometimes I like to go out for two and three miles. Guess what I'm doing with my mind. Thinking about this or that. Liking this or that. Disliking this or that. No. That's my time to be wishing everybody around me happiness, with every step. Continually. See your daily activities are incredibly important when you do them consciously. When you have to walk from here to there, what are you doing with your mind? Most of the

time most people ho-hum. Thinking about this and thinking about that. Liking this, disliking that. Letting their mind run all over the place. You think and ponder on that kind of thing, and it's going to continue.

So when you walk from here to the car, start wishing somebody happiness, smile, have uplifted thoughts. The more you can smile, the easier the habit becomes. So when something occurs that is not so nice, you have more of a balanced mind. You don't get on that emotional rollercoaster. So you have more balance in your life all the way around. Things don't happen the way you want them to, well, welcome to real life. That happens. And it's okay. Unless you think it's not. And you start resisting it and you start fighting it, and you start getting these repeat thoughts over and over again. And you start dwelling on the dissatisfaction of the situation. What are you thinking and pondering on? What's the inclination of your mind? Somebody said something in the morning you didn't like. You've been fuming about it all day. You run across that person in the evening. What do you think is going to come out of you?

See the hindrances are really tricky because it's all the time that these things can come up. And if you're not aware of the hindrances and how they work, then you're continually reacting. You're acting like you always act when this situation comes up. Because that's your habitual tendency now. When you start practicing and start watching how your mind is working, then when somebody says something you don't like, you can allow them the space to say that and be that way without taking it personally.

Hindrances are about taking whatever arises very personally. "This is me, this is mine, this is who I am. And I like it or I don't like it." Now, what is the "I like/I don't like it" mind? How does that manifest in your mind and body? That is what the Buddha called craving. It always manifests as tightness or tension in your mind, in your body. That's the second noble truth. The cause of suffering is craving. Craving always manifests as tension or tightness in your mind and in your body. And if the Buddha only went that far it would truly be a pessimistic view of the world, wouldn't it? But he started talking

about the third noble truth, the cessation of suffering. How do you experience the cessation of suffering? Let go of the craving. If that's the cause of suffering, when you let go of it, there's no more suffering, right?

The easiest way to let go of craving is to be able to laugh at, laugh with yourself. For getting caught by this heavy emotional state. When you can laugh with that, you're not caught by it anymore. It changes that state from "I am that," to "It's only that." Now that's a major change. And that's the first factor of the fourth noble truth. The noble 8-fold path. Harmonious perspective. How many times have you run across people that are always serious? They never smile, they never laugh, and they never seem to be happy, ever. The more you can smile, the more you can laugh, the more uplifted your mind becomes. The more you experience joy, the better your awareness becomes. It takes practice though. Gotta smile. All the time. I'm not just talking about a smile on your lips. Not one of those painted on smiles. I'm talking about a smile. A smile in your heart. A smile in your mind. Takes practice. That's why I go out for walks. So I can practice. And get a little exercise on top of it all. Kill two birds with one stone.

With your daily activities, when you practice smiling, and you start having joy come up more and more in your life, in your mind, you'll start to see when your mind gets heavy. When your mind starts to get heavy, that says right there, guess what? One of my old friends is coming to visit, I've got a hindrance right now.

I gave a retreat in Missouri a couple of years ago and everybody was trying really hard. And they were trying really hard so much that they were starting to get stale. So one morning I went into the meditation hall and I said, "Okay, I don't want anybody to meditate today. I want you to go play. I don't care what you do. Go do anything you want. There's only one catch. Any time you see your mind getting serious, you have to let it go and have fun." And they went off. Have no idea what they did for the whole day, had fun, I suppose. They came back in for the Dhamma talk at six o' clock and everybody was glowing. They're relaxed, giggling, laughing, having fun. And I said,

"Well, how did your meditation for today?" And they said, "Well, we didn't meditate today." I said, "Did you watch your mind, and any time your mind gets serious, you let go and started having fun again?" "Well, yeah." "Oh, good meditation, isn't it?" And then I told them about how sneaky I am. (Laughs)

You see, it's not a matter of over trying, it's just a matter of being aware of what your mind is doing in the present moment, and when it's heavy, to let go of that. Laugh with it, have fun with it. Smile. Relax. And I've had some students that have been going through such heavy emotional states and they come and they talk to me and they say: "There's nothing worth laughing at." And that makes me laugh right there. (Laughs) And before long, they're laughing right along with me and seeing how caught they were and how they were causing their own pain. See the whole thing with the meditation is that you're responsible for whatever arises in you. And what you do with whatever you do in the present moment dictates what happens in the future. If you have something arise, and you don't like it, and you want it to be different than it is, and you start fighting with it and you get heavier and heavier and heavier, you can look forward to having that happen over and over again until you've learned to not fight with it.

The more you can be light and have an uplifted mind, and smile with what you're doing in the present moment, the easier it is to notice when your mind becomes heavy. And when your mind becomes heavy, that's telling you right then, right there, "I got an attachment." And that's the time to see where your attachment is. How did that arise? What happened first? What happened right after that? What happened after that? How did this whole process begin? And the Buddha had an answer for that. He called that Dependent Origination.

There's a feeling that rises. Feeling is pleasant, unpleasant, neutral. It can be a physical feeling or an emotional feeling. It doesn't really matter, you handle it all in the same way. Oh boy, the psychologists are going to hate me for this. Feeling is pleasant, painful, neither-pleasant-nor-painful. Right after that feeling arises is when craving

arises. That mind that grabs on. The tension and tightness. This is the "I don't like it" or "I do like it" mind. You see, where that "I," that identification comes from? The craving. "I don't like this feeling. I want it to stop. I want it to go away." Or, "I do like this feeling. This is great stuff. I want more of it. I want to hold onto that and have it happen more and more." That's the craving mind. It always manifests and tightness, especially in your head. And when you let go of that tightness, you can feel an expansion and a calmness that happens. Pure awareness arises. That's the cessation of suffering.

Anyway, right after craving, there's clinging that arises. And I've been reading an awful lot of Buddhist articles and magazines about clinging and I haven't seen a real definition of what clinging is. Everybody knows you're not supposed to do it. "Cling to nothing!" Okay. And what does that mean? I mean, that's a good platitude. Sounds great. But what does it mean? Clinging are your opinions, your thoughts, your desires to make things happen in particular ways. Your concepts, that's what I was trying to come out with.

And right after that it's your habitual tendencies. When this kind of feeling arises, there's always this craving and there's these kinds of thoughts about it and they always happen like that. Because they always have. So, when you have a heavy emotional state arise, how did it happen? See, this is the reason that you want to practice sitting meditation. Not only with your daily activities, but when you're doing your sitting meditation you can watch things more closely. You can watch what your mind is doing much more closely than when you're distracted by doing other things.

So it's necessary to do your sitting practice as well as your daily activity practice. And they work very well together. Because once you start to see how a hindrance arises, how the feeling is there, and the craving is there, and the clinging is there, and your habitual tendencies, once you see that when you're sitting, then with your daily activities you can start to see it more clearly. You have much greater clarity. But it takes the sitting practice to be able to watch closely enough without the distractions of your body moving around, to be able to see how your daily activities are going. And it takes

doing your daily activities and practicing so that you have that inclination of mind, so when you sit, your sitting is much better because you're doing it all the time.

See the more you can practice your smiling, having an uplifted mind, and wishing somebody well with your daily activities, the more you can do that, the easier it is when you sit in meditation. It's really kind of funny because I was teaching in Asia where everybody was pressured to be very serious. And I'd go to visit people that were taking a retreat, and the standard look on people's face was this. Deep lines right here, frowning because they're trying so hard. When I started teaching Loving-Kindness Meditation, and started having people smile, and lightly practice all the time, even when you're eating, when you take a shower, whatever you're doing, you get a chance to smile while you're doing it.

Okay, there's eighty people that were practicing the retreats, whenever they got off the retreat, the first thing they talked about was how hard it was. How much pain here was. "Oh, this is really difficult." And then they start getting the pride because, "Oh, I did it. This is pretty good." But when people would come and they get off one retreat and their mind would be very hard like a rock, and then they'd come and do a retreat with me. And I'm saying, "Hey, you gotta be smile. You gotta be happy. This is okay." And then when they got done with their retreat I was teaching, they were talking about how they wish it would last longer, how much fun they had doing it, how much different it was than anybody else they had ever done before.

Having a mind that focuses on uplifting thoughts and smiling into things, although at times it can be difficult because you forget by and large you will notice that everything starts to get easier in your life. Everything starts to become easier to do. Because you don't have that mind that has the resistance in it. Now you have a mind that is more open and accepting and loving and kind.

I get kick out of an awful lot of people that are on peace marches and having rallies for peace and that sort of thing, because an awful

lot of them are doing it from dissatisfaction, dislike. Do you want to affect the world around you? So it becomes more peaceful? Then be more peaceful. Practice smiling. Practice watching what your mind is doing in the present moment. Let go of the tensions and tightness. Let go of the mind that wants to think and run around a thousand miles away. Just let it be, relax, and then come back and start smiling some more. That's what the practice is all about. "Let's do it again. Let's do it again. Oh, I forgot. Let's do it again." That's what the practice is.

It takes a lot of effort to remember. It takes a lot of effort to notice how you're causing yourself pain and let go of that, because we get caught in those ideas. Things have to be this way. When they're not, I don't like it. And that "I don't like" causes your mind to get caught by a hindrance. And when your mind is caught by a hindrance, you're not in the present moment anymore. You're either in a dream world about what you want to see happen or you're in the past. You're not in the present anymore. The more you can practice smiling, the more you can practice having joy in your mind, the more you can get into the present moment. And being in the present moment is exactly the place that has no suffering in it. That's where you let go of that craving. And when you let go of craving, that is the cessation of suffering.

Now every time you let go of that tension or tightness that arises in your mind from a thought or feeling or whatever or whatever that arises, your mind has an expansion feeling in it. Feels like it opens up a little bit. And then it takes a little step down. It becomes calm, it becomes peaceful. And this is the pure mind. This is the mind that you bring back to your object of meditation. This is the mind that is the cessation of suffering. Doesn't last very long. See the whole thing with the craving is, it's not particularly strong. It's pretty easy to let go of that tension and relax. But it is particularly persistent. And it keeps happening over and over and over and over and over again. And the only way you're going to be able to have it let go completely is to practice watching what your mind is doing in the present moment and let go of those nonsense thoughts.

I had one teacher, he kept calling them "rubbish thoughts." "Throw the rubbish out. Let go of that stuff. It's all nonsense." And then relax. And then get in the habit of bringing up these happy thoughts, these thoughts of wishing well for somebody else. My biggest problem when I go out for a walk and I'm practicing Loving-Kindness Meditation is people stop and ask if I want a ride. Now how many of you go out for a walk and have somebody stop and ask if they can give you a ride? Not so many. See the more you practice these kinds of things, the more those kind of things happen. People want to help you. They want to do things for you. Why? Because they like being around somebody that has an uplifted mind. It's comfortable.

The more you practice being happy, the more your mind will incline towards being happy. Easy. Right? (Laughs) Not so easy. Why? Because you haven't practiced enough. Practice more. Practice more smiling. Practice more acceptance of the present moment. You're practicing the entire 8-fold path when you're smiling, when you have a laugh. Not laugh at something. Laugh with something. Every time you can laugh with yourself for being caught, being upset, being overly serious, every time you can laugh with that, you're not that anymore, you've changed your perspective. You've changed your view of the entire world. And it just takes a little practice. And the way you start is by doing it now. And when you forget, you don't criticize yourself for forgetting. You just start over again. And every time you forget, then start over again. It's a new game. But keep it a game.

The more you practice, the easier it gets. And might as well start right now. (Laughs) And continue on as much as you can remember. That's the thing with the sitting meditation. You do the sitting meditation every day, and that helps remind you for your daily activities. Cause you need quiet time. Now when you're practicing meditation, and you have the time, when your meditation is good, don't stop it. Continue on for a period of time. You sit no less than 30 minutes. But sometimes you'll sit for 45 because it feels good. Sometimes you'll sit for an hour. Sometimes you can sit for two. You don't look at the clock to see. It doesn't really matter. But I've had students that could sit for eight hours. Not because they had to, but

because they wanted to. Because it was so interesting watching how their mind would start to go away and they could let it go and relax and come back. And when you get to certain levels of your meditation, it starts to be a tight rope walking experience. If you don't put quite enough effort into your practice, swish, mind gets dull. If you put a little bit too much effort in, swooo, mind gets restless. And it gets incredibly interesting when you get to that stage.

I think if you could remember to write this statement down, you should do it and put it where you can see it fairly often: "What I think and ponder on, that is the inclination of my mind." When I was at the Washington D.C. monastery, somebody just bought me a computer. And I had this fancy printer and I put that up right, underneath it I put, it means the more you smile, the more happy your mind becomes. We get way too serious. Way too serious. I gave a retreat in North Carolina and this lady, she came and she started telling me about her practice and then she started talking a little bit about her life and her dissatisfaction with life. And I said, "Well why is that?" "Well, all of the stuff that's happening in the news." I said, "Do you read newspapers?" "Yes, three of them a day" And I said, "No wonder you're not happy." You don't need to read a newspaper, you really don't. I found out about this tsunami the same day it happened. I don't read newspapers. I'm in a place where I don't have any radio reception. I don't have any television. I still heard about it. You'll hear about the things that are important. You don't need to read newspapers to get your information. And I told her that there was a real interesting thing that she could do with her television, and that's throw a brick in it.

S: ~

BV: You don't need it. All that news and such, it's just not worth it.

S: ~

BV: Do I have an alarm clock? Yes I do.

So, why don't we sit for a short period of time. I'll give you the instructions. When you practice Loving-Kindness Meditation you first start by sending loving and kind thoughts to yourself. You remember times when you were happy. When that happy feeling arises, it's a warm, glowing feeling in the center of your chest. It's kind of a radiating feeling. As soon as that feeling arises, then you make a wish for your own happiness. "May I be happy. May my mind be peaceful and calm. May I be filled with joy. May I be cheerful." Whatever wish you make for yourself, feel that wish. You know what it feels like to be peaceful and calm. Bring that feeling of peace and calm, put it into your heart, radiate that feeling to yourself. You know what it feels like to be happy. Bring that feeling into your heart, and radiate that feeling to yourself. Whatever wish you make for yourself, you want to feel that wish. You can make the same wish over and over again as long as it has meaning for you. Or you can change the wish occasionally. But you don't make the wish like this. You don't say, "May I be happy. May I be happy. May I be happy. May I be happy. May I be happy." When you do a wish like that, it turns into like trying to memorize something, and you start thinking about other things.

You want to feel the wish. Make the wish. Feel that peace and calm, if that is what your wish is. Keep that feeling in your heart. When that feeling starts to fade, then you make another wish. While you're sitting like this, your mind is going to wander. You will begin to think about other things. As soon as you notice that your mind is thinking about other things, then simply let go of those thoughts, don't continue thinking them, even if you're in mid-sentence, let it go. Relax the tension and tightness caused by those thoughts, in your head, in your mind, in your body. And gently come back to the feeling of Loving-Kindness and making a wish for your own happiness. It doesn't matter if your mind wanders 50 times during the sitting and 50 times you see that, you let it go, you relax, you come back to your meditation object. That is a good sitting. A bad sitting would be noticing that you're thinking about something and to continue thinking, not letting it go.

When you're sitting, you want to sit with your back reasonably straight. Please don't move your body at all. Don't wiggle your toes, don't wiggle your fingers, don't scratch, don't rub, don't change your posture, don't rock back and forth. Sit very still. While you're sitting like this, there can be some sensations that arise in your body. You want to cough, an itch, heat, vibration, a painful feeling. As soon as that arises, your mind will be drawn to it, and then you start thinking about that sensation: "I wish it would stop. I really don't like this feeling when it happens. I wish it would just go away." Every thought like that makes the feeling become bigger and more intense.

So the first thing you do is let go of the thought about the sensation. And then relax the tension or tightness in your head, in your mind. Next you will notice that there is a tight mental fist wrapped around that sensation. You really don't like that sensation there, you really want it to go away. The truth is, when a sensation arises, it's there. That's the truth. And it's okay for that sensation to be there. It has to be okay, because it's there. Any time you try to fight with the truth. Any time you try to control the truth. Any time you try to make the truth be anything other than it is, it's the cause of suffering. Allow that sensation to be there. Make it okay for it to be there. Relax, gently come back to the feeling of being happy, making a wish for your own happiness.

While you're doing this meditation, this is a smiling meditation. You want to put a smile in your mind. A little smile in your eyes, even though your eyes are closed. A smile on your lips, a little one. And a smile in your heart. Whenever you notice that you're not smiling, then start again. After about 10 minutes, then you start sending loving and kind thoughts to a spiritual friend. A spiritual friend is someone of the same sex and they are alive. A spiritual friend is someone that when you think of them and their good qualities, you really like them, and you sincerely do wish them happiness. You make a wish for their happiness. "May they be free from suffering, may their minds be uplifted. May their minds be peaceful and calm. May their minds be open and accepting. Filled with happiness, filled with joy." Whatever wish you want to make for your spiritual friend, feel that wish. Take your spiritual friend and put them right in the

middle of your heart. And give them a great big heart hug. Wish your friend well. Feel that wish. Take a real interest in your friend. Really like them.

Long pause (Meditation Time) removed from sound track

Okay, now let go of your meditation and gently open your eyes whenever you're ready. That was a real short one. Can't help it, I'm long-winded.

So when you do this, it's best to sit no less than 30 minutes. The first ten minutes you send those loving and kind thoughts to yourself. Truly like yourself, appreciate yourself, wish yourself well. The rest of the time you send the loving and kind thoughts to your spiritual friend. Same spiritual friend the whole time you're sitting, same spiritual friend every time you sit. And this, I'll start putting you through changes after a while. You can't change spiritual friends unless I tell you you can change. Okay? Your spiritual friend will definitely feel the good effects of this. But there's a reason that you stay with the same spiritual friend, because it's real easy if your mind is a little bit agitated, "Oh, I don't want to do that. I want to send it over here to this person." And then you start jumping all around and your mind never really gets settled. And the next time you sit then you start thinking, "Well, who should I send it to this time? So if you send it to the same person all the time, then you won't have that problem.

Now this particular practice, Loving-Kindness, will take you very, very deep. And the person that you send the loving and kind thoughts to will feel that. I was in Malaysia one time and there was about sixty people that came for a retreat, and they'd never heard anything about Loving-Kindness Meditation before. And they didn't really believe that Loving-Kindness was a feeling that you can give to somebody else. So I had everybody get in a circle. And I picked the saddest person I could find out of those sixty, and I had them sit in the middle. And everybody started radiating Loving-Kindness to that one person. She wasn't sad anymore. (Laughs) And then other people said: "Well, I want to feel this too." So we started putting five

people in, ten people in, so everybody could get a feel of what it's like. It's a very definite feeling. It is a very pleasant feeling. And it's kind of fun.

Yes?

S: ~

BV: No, it doesn't matter. It could be like a movie picture like they are doing things. Or it could be like a photograph, like they're just sitting right in front of you. It's whatever you feel comfortable with. But the visualization is not as important as the feeling and the wish. Those are most important. A lot of people have trouble visualizing a picture. But they visualize with words, and you can do it that way too.

Okay, let's share some merit then.

*May suffering ones, be suffering free
And the fear struck, fearless be
May the grieving shed all grief
And may all beings find relief.*

*May all beings share this merit that we have thus acquired
For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.*

*May beings inhabiting space and earth
Devas and nagas of mighty power
Share this merit of ours.*

May they long protect the Buddha's dispensation.

Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . .

Transcribed by Kelly Jansen

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