

MN # 20
The Removal of Distracting Thoughts
Vitakkasanthāna Sutta
Dhamma talk by Bhante Vimalaramsi
04-Nov-05

BV: This is a good sutta for a start of a retreat because it helps you to recognize the distracting thoughts and what you need to do with them. So...

MN:

1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvatti in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There he addressed the monks thus: "Monks."—"Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Monks, when a monk is pursuing the higher mind, from time to time he should give attention to five signs. What are the five?"

3. (i) "Here, monks, when a monk is giving attention to some sign, and owing to that sign there arise in him evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion, then he should give attention to some other sign connected with what is wholesome."

BV: Now what does all of that mean? When a monk is giving attention to some sign, your object of meditation, and an unwholesome state arises, that means any kind of distracting thought that pulls you away from, because you're practicing loving-kindness, the feeling of loving-kindness and feeling the wish of the loving-kindness that you radiate, that is your sign. Anything other than that is considered a distraction. If a sound arises, your mind goes to that. That sound is considered a distraction. If a thought arises, your mind goes to the thought; that is considered a distraction. If a smell arises, your mind goes to that; that is

considered a distraction. At any of the six sense doors.

But when you get into jhāna, you learn how to be in seclusion. The first jhāna, it says that you're secluded from sensual pleasures, and secluded from unwholesome states. Being secluded from sensual pleasures means you close your eyes when you're meditating, you don't have the sensual pleasure of seeing arise. You hear a sound, you let the sound be, you don't analyze what kind of sound it is; it's just a sound. And you relax and you come back to your object of meditation. You're secluded from the sensual pleasure of hearing. And you do that with your taste, and you do that with your nose, and you do that with your body, and you do that with your mind. So that's how you become secluded from sensual pleasures.

It doesn't mean that sensual pleasures won't arise. But it means that you don't attach yourself to them. You see them for what they are: "It's just this." Let it be, relax, and come back.

Ok- When "evil unwholesome [states] connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion," now this is an interesting part of the sentence, "unwholesome states connected with desire"; what is an unwholesome state connected with desire? "I like it." "I want it." The unwholesome state is the identification with the desire for it.

Now the three characteristics of all existence according to the Buddha is everything is in a state of change. Everything is changing. And because it's changing, it's a form of suffering. Now why is that? The whole idea or concept of God is to find something that's not changing. Find something that's permanent and the same all the time. And when we finally come to the realization that everything is in a state of change, that's a source of suffering because we want everything to stay the same. And the last characteristic is that everything that arises is impersonal. In Pali, the word is "anatta". "atta" is self. "Anatta" means not self. But in the English language, that gets really confused, so what I wind up saying is if you take anything personally as being yours, that's the source of suffering; that's the "atta" and when you see everything as being an impersonal phenomena arising and passing away, now you have a proper

perspective, and that's "anatta".

TT: 5:42

So the unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hatred, which is the same coin different side as desire. Instead of pulling it towards you you're trying to push it away.

And delusion, that's kind of an interesting word. What is delusion? Not seeing things correctly, but also the identification with those things. So each of the desire and the hatred have delusion attached with them.

So when you are meditating and a thought arises, this is the way it works. You have mind and there's thought. Thought hits mind. And that is called contact. When that contact arises, then there is mind consciousness that arises. Right after mind consciousness, there is mind feeling. Now feeling is one of three things. Either it's pleasant feeling, a painful feeling, or it's neither pleasant nor painful. Right after feeling arises, craving arises. This is the start of the personal belief that this feeling and these thoughts are mine personally. It's the "I like it, I don't like it" mind. This is the weak link in dependent origination, the craving, and it's made a big deal of because craving is the source of all suffering. "I like it. I don't like it. I want it to be. I don't want it to be." Craving manifests as a subtle tension and tightness in both mind and body. The place that you can notice it the most, I've found, is the subtle tightness in your head. And sometimes it's very, very subtle. You wouldn't normally notice it unless you're looking for it. Every thought that arises causes this craving to arise with it. So every thought that you have causes contraction in your mind and a slight contraction in your body.

So the job of the meditator is as soon as you notice that you're thinking, to let go of the thoughts no matter how important you think they are at the time, no matter what is happening with those thoughts at the time. You let those be. That means you don't keep your attention on the thought any more; you let the thought think itself but you don't pay attention to it any more. And then you gently

relax that mental hold around the thought, and when you relax you'll feel an expansive feeling in your head. Right after that expansive feeling, your mind, it's like it takes a little step down and becomes very calm but it's exceptionally clear. There's no thoughts; there's no opinions; there's just pure awareness, at that moment. Now you bring that attention back to your object of meditation.

If you haven't caught that craving when it first starts to arise, then what happens after craving is called clinging. And clinging is all of your views, your opinions, your concepts, your belief that these thoughts and feelings are really yours and the belief gets really strong with the clinging. And it turns into a story line about why you like or dislike this feeling or that feeling.

Right after that, then what is called bhava. I always get stopped with that one because I don't like any of the definitions I've ever read.

TT: 10:02

S: ~

BV: b, h, a, v, a. But I think that we'll just go along with experience and habitual tendency. And this is where, when this kind of feeling arises, my mind always does this and it's because that's the way it's been happening for a long time, lifetimes in some instances. I have some students that I've taught past lives to, and they are very uncomfortable being at heights, being on a ladder, being up on the roof, whatever. And they see with their past life times that... the reason they're like that was because they got either thrown off a cliff, or fell of a roof and died. So there's fear from that. Another example is a lot of people are very deathly afraid of snakes. That's because in past lifetimes they've been bitten by snakes and died, and they don't want anything to do with them now. But the fear is irrational. But that doesn't make it any less real.

So, what the Buddha suggests is that when these unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, hatred, and delusion, then you should give attention to some other sign connected with what is

wholesome. What is wholesome? Your object of meditation is wholesome. So your job as a meditator is always to come back to your object of meditation. So your wholesome state is your object of meditation. And at first, you're sending loving-kindness to yourself for ten or fifteen minutes, and the rest of the time you're sending loving-kindness to your spiritual friend. Those are the only two people that you get to send loving-kindness to, same person, all the time. If you pick a person of the opposite sex, mind can get infatuated very easily, and you know what an infatuated mind, what a problem that can be. And it turns into a distraction, so you pick a person of the same sex, and you won't have those kinds of problems arise so easily. So you stay with the same person.

Now, the further instructions that I'm going to be giving you right now have to do with what you're doing when you do your walking meditation too. Now you do your sitting, you sit for no less than forty five minutes, no less. When your sitting is good, stay with it as long as it's good. When your sitting is over, you don't stop the meditation. While you're getting up you stay with your spiritual friend. Now I insist that you smile, and you smile all the time, and feel that smile in your eyes and in your heart. Feel that smile in your mind. It's very important because if you want to have good progress with your meditation, this is the way to do it. Smiling all of the time helps your mind to have joy arise. And when joy arises and it's very strong, your mind becomes very settled when the joy fades away. You feel very peaceful, very calm; you don't have distracting thoughts; you don't have any distracting things; all you have is a feeling of very deep tranquility and comfort, and that's very important.

So when you're getting up from your meditation, and you're going to be walking, you can walk on a path, but don't look around. Keep your eyes down. If you look around, where your eyes go, there goes your mind; where your mind goes, there goes the distractions and you don't even notice them. So it's best to do walking, just pick a spot where you can go back and forth, maybe thirty or forty feet. Stay with your spiritual friend all of the time.

Now we have the habit of, when we walk we let our mind kind of ho

hum and that habit will still arise. But as soon as you notice that your mind is doing that, don't criticize; don't complain; don't get hard on yourself; just start over again. The only time you're not meditating is when you see your mind is doing something and you think it's more important to do that than it is to meditate. Then you're not meditating any more. So when you see your mind is distracted by anything, simply let go of the distraction, relax, come back and smile some more and radiate some loving-kindness to your friend.

TT: 15:22

Walk no less than fifteen minutes. If your walking is good, walk longer. But don't walk more than an hour because that will tire you out. And the longer you sit, the longer you should walk. So if you sit for two hours, don't just walk for fifteen minutes.

A habit that some people get into when they're doing their meditation is they'll get stiff, and they feel a little uncomfortable so they'll break their meditation and change their posture and then start sitting again. I don't want you to do that. If you're going to break your posture, get up and walk because that gets your blood flowing a little bit and it's all meditation any way. So continue on with your meditation just in a different posture, that's all you're doing. See, the whole thing is, the pain is going to come up once you start sitting for a period of time and stiffness or whatever and you start identifying with it and: "I don't like this and I want it to stop." Now you're fighting with the pain and you're not seeing the pain for what it really is. It's just a sensation; it's not even your sensation; you didn't ask it to come up. It came up by itself. What you do with that in the present moment dictates what happens in the future. When a pain arises while you're sitting and you see it clearly and you let go of the thoughts about it and relax and allow the pain to be there and relax and come back to your object of meditation and then you go back and you bounce and come back and forth. You're developing your mindfulness to a very strong degree. The thing that's most important is to see how your mind's attention went from your object of meditation to that sensation. How did that happen? What happened first? What happened after that? When you start bouncing back and

forth you start becoming more aware of... You'll catch some of the later things at first and then as you continue doing it you'll start catching a little bit sooner and a little bit sooner. And when your mind gets in balance enough the pain will either go away or it won't. But it won't matter. If the pain is there any more it won't pull your attention to it because you have this equanimity, this balance. Always after you've let go of an attachment which is what is pulling your mind to that sensation always, on the other side of that there is relief. With the relief joy arises. Joy is there for a variable period of time. It lasts fairly long but is very, very, very good. Very nice. You feel like you've really accomplished something and you feel very happy about that. When the joy fades away, and it will, when joy arises there's no real difference between joy and painful feeling. One is a happy feeling pleasant feeling one is an unpleasant feeling. It's just feeling. You treat the joy in the same way as you treat the sensation. Your mind goes to that joy, you allow the joy to be there. You relax into that. Come back to your object of meditation. If you hold on to that joy and you want that joy to last that is the fastest way to make it disappear. When the joy fades away you will feel more comfortable than you've ever felt before. You'll feel comfortable in your mind. You'll feel very comfortable in your body. And this in Buddhist terms, in Pali it's called sukha. In English it's called happiness. And then there's a very unified mind that doesn't get distracted. Now what I just described to you is the first jhāna.

TT: 19:55

Now jhāna, there's an awful lot of people that make an awful big deal about jhāna. But jhāna means this is the first real stage of your meditation. It's just a stage of your understanding at that time. That's what jhāna means. An awful lot of people they go : "Ooooh ahhh jhāna", but I don't make that much of a big deal about it. It is a big deal but I don't make a big deal out of it. It's a level of understanding. Kind of lets you know where you are in your practice. But if you come to me and say : "I had this experience." I'm not going to say : "You're in the first jhāna." Because that doesn't matter. It's, I will push you to go deeper to see what's after that. Only after you get around the fourth jhāna do I start talking about

jhānas. What's been happening in this country and in Asia is your teacher will say: "Well, you got to the first jhāna" and all of a sudden the pride starts coming out, you know: "You can't talk to me that way. I've got the first jhāna." Give me a break. It doesn't really mean that much, in that way. It is a sign for me to know where you are so that I can encourage you to go further, and that's the whole point of them as far as I can see. It's really for the teacher to know. After you become reasonably good at getting into the jhānas, then we can talk about developing the mastery of the jhānas and that's where you need to know what it's like to feel the first jhāna what it's like to feel the second jhāna and to be able to go in and out of that at will. It takes a little practice. But it's kind of fun practice.

Ok we got to what is wholesome.

MN:

When he gives attention to some other sign connected with what is wholesome, then any evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion are abandoned in him and subside.

BV: Now there's something in Buddhism that's called the five hindrances. Now in Pali they call it nivarana. They're called hindrances because they stop you from meditating. And they get in the way. They get you involved in thinking about other things.

The five are: lust – greed – "I want". That's the first one.

The second one is: hatred – aversion – "I don't want."

The third one is: sleepiness – dullness. And it has attached to that: "I don't care" – indifference. There's other things that happen in it too, but I won't go into that here.

The next one is... The sloth and torpor and the restlessness are the

two major hindrances, that will last until you become fully enlightened.

Restlessness and anxiety. After the indifference then there is the restlessness and anxiety. That's a feeling of being unsettled. And it has "I" attached to it.

And the last hindrance is doubt or perplexity: "I don't know whether I'm doing this right or not. I don't know."

Now all of these have that very subtle: "I am that" attached to it. And it's very easy to get involved with any one of these hindrances, and you can be pulled away for a long period of time depending on whether you like it or don't like it or how your attachment is to it.

The biggest hindrance is restlessness, but it not only has restlessness in it but it also has "I like it" and "I don't like it" in it. The kind of restless(ness) that arises that's very pleasant is planning something. You're sitting in meditation and all of a sudden you notice that you're planning, and it's so nice you don't want to stop. "Ah, these are great ideas and I should be writing these down." and what you do when you notice that that's happening is tell yourself: "We'll put a red flag on these ideas and have them come up at another time when I'm not sitting." And let them go. But it's a good way to indulge when your mind's a little bit bored, and a little bit, yeah, there'll be a little bit of doubt that comes in with that. These hindrances they don't attack you one at a time they like to beat up on you in as many ways as possible. And your mind knows where all of your soft spots are, so it will attack in those places just to distract you. Your job as a meditator is to let go of those distractions, relax, and come back to your object of meditation. It doesn't matter what the distraction is.

TT: 25:28

Now, the sloth and torpor, the reason I tell you not to just change your posture and continue sitting is because your mind will get very

dull, and when it starts to get dull there are places that are like blank spots. You don't know what any thing is happening. It seems like this is some kind of high spiritual experience but when in fact all it is, is your body energy is too low. And it's just like somebody took an eraser and made that page clean. So when you notice that's happening you have to walk a little bit more and you need to walk a little bit more briskly to pick up your energy, get your blood flowing. You have to be very aware of what your mind and body is doing in the present. When you're in a retreat you want to be sure that you get enough exercise. It doesn't have to be brutal exercise but you have to get enough exercise so that your energy level stays good.

One of the reasons that sloth and torpor arises is because you lose interest in staying with your meditation object. Ok, your interest isn't very sharp. The sharper your interest is, the less the hindrances will bother you. So you need to have this enthusiasm and curiosity about staying with your object of meditation and seeing what's going to happen next. When that arises, you will not have the dullness and sleepiness arise. So when you have sloth and torpor it means that your mind starts losing a little bit of energy and it starts humming a little bit and all of a sudden you notice that you're starting to slump and then you're starting to nod. Ok, those are all signs that you're caught by sloth and torpor and the way everybody tries to overcome sloth and torpor is to put in a fantastic amount of energy for a short period of time and then they go back to the sloth and torpor. So, at those times when you're practicing loving kindness meditation you think on your friend and how you truly like them and you see them in your mind's eye doing something that was really nice and you really appreciated it either for you or somebody else; it doesn't really matter. But that will get your enthusiasm going a little bit in a gradual way instead of trying to put out a lot of energy and sit up real straight and "I'm going to really do it." That's the fastest way to slump back down and get caught into it again. But with all of the hindrances you have the "I like it" and "I don't like it". You have the greed and the aversion. And you need to see how these arise.

It always comes back to how did mind's attention go from being very nice and very happy here, to over here. (gestures). How did that

happen? The closer you can see how these things arise the faster you start recognizing them, the faster you can let them go. And that is the main question in Buddhism, is "How?" Today, people want to know "Why?" And "why" is not the question. "Why" gets into your concepts and thinking about and all of these kind of things. "Why" doesn't matter. How the process works, that's the key to getting deeper and deeper into your meditation. And "why" has led into a lot of misunderstandings with psychoanalysis and all of these kind of things. Pretending that the psychoanalysis is part of Buddhism. But it's never ending "why". Because you get so caught in wanting to find out the reason, you never see how your mind is moving and how it's acting and how your habitual tendencies are playing in on this.

TT: 29:57

Now I've already given you seven or eight links of the dependent origination of how everything works. These happen quickly. These happen over and over again. When you start becoming familiar with your meditation as your mind starts to settle down, you start seeing these more and more and more. And it becomes clearer and clearer that this is just part of an impersonal process that's arising and passing away quickly. If your awareness is fast enough, as soon as a feeling arises and you let go right then and relax, craving will not arise. If craving doesn't arise, clinging doesn't. If clinging doesn't arise, your habitual tendencies don't arise. So you're cutting off a lot of the suffering by seeing the process and how it actually works. That's what the meditation is all about. It's not about getting into jhāna. It's about developing your attention so it becomes so sharp that you don't get caught by the craving. Now the second Noble Truth is the cause of suffering is craving. If your mindfulness is good enough and you catch that craving as it starts to arise and let it be and relax, then you get to experience the third Noble Truth which is the cessation of suffering. When you experience that enough times, you will get to the final cessation of suffering which is the experience of nibbāna. And I don't talk much about the experience of nibbāna because it's an unconditioned state and how can you even talk about something (unconditioned) with conditioned ideas. Just let it be said that this is where the Buddha's liberation is and that's what he was

teaching. The final goal. As you continue on in seeing how the process works you start recognizing it and you start seeing: "This works the same for this as it does for that. It always goes in the same order. Isn't that amazing?" And I like to call the kind of Buddhism that I'm teaching the "Oh Wow Buddhism" because you start looking and you start seeing things you've never seen before and you go: "Oh wow! That's really something!" and quite often people come to me and they start telling me: "Yeah, this was really great! I really understand what you're talking about now." And then I encourage them and they go back and sit and a little while later they come back and go: "Wow, I thought I knew what you were talking about but now I really understand." (laughs) And it's a process of "Oh wow!" and that's what makes it fun. And this is the best show in town, watching your own mind and how it works. It's much more interesting than distracting yourself by going to a movie or doing other things. It becomes real interesting.

MN:

With the abandoning of them his mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to stillness, and concentrated. Just as a skilled carpenter or his apprentice might knock out, remove, and extract a coarse peg by means of a fine one, so too...when a monk gives attention to some other sign connected with what is wholesome...his mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to stillness, and concentrated.

TT: 34:01

BV: I don't like the word concentrated because concentrated has... One-pointed concentration causes mind to contract and focus and this is exactly the opposite of that. It's stand and watch. It's not focusing intensely only on one thing. It's watch the process of dependent origination as it arises. This is the thing that is very confused in a lot of Buddhism, including Theravada Buddhism. Over the years the Brahmins and other cultures have put in their own practices and they have eliminated one extra step that the Buddha insisted was necessary to attain nibbāna. By eliminating that one extra step it changes the entire result of the meditation. And that one

extra step is letting go and relaxing. When you practice one-pointed concentration, your mind is on your object, it gets distracted, you let go of the distraction and immediately come back. Now, when you have that craving arise and that contraction and that tension and you're bringing that slight tension back to your object of meditation. When you're practicing the way the Buddha teaches in the suttas, he says very clearly to tranquilize your mind and your body, and he says it over and over again. Because of that your mind doesn't get so deeply absorbed in one thing to the exclusion of everything else. You don't go as deep in the concentration. As a result, you get to see how this process of dependent origination actually works, and you get to see it over and over and over again until finally you realize it, until finally you know for a fact: this is exactly the way it is. That's the point where your understanding has turned into very deep wisdom, and that's the point where you become enlightened.

An awful lot of people have this idea that it's some kind of mystical magical experience that all of a sudden just pops up: "I'm enlightened". And they can't really explain what happened to them because they don't know, it's just a psychic phenomena that occurred. But when you start getting into the Dhamma and into the Buddha's teachings, he teaches you over and over again in so many different ways: this is how this process works. And as your understanding deepens then you go into the different jhānas and it all has to do with your understanding, not so mystical magical experience and the ultimate experience is finally seeing dependent origination as it truly is and that realization is so strong it changes everything in your perspective. So that's what nibbāna is aimed at, developing your true understanding of how this process works in everything that arises. So you have a lot of different religions that they talk about having truth, but nobody really came up with the truth of this process in the way that the Buddha did. So you have truth in other religions but this truth goes over to here and this truth goes over to here and not every religion has the same end result because of the subjective's truth. Like the Buddha when he was a bhodisatta he went and he practiced with Āḷāra Kālāma and he got to the seventh jhāna and he went to the teacher and said: "Is this as far as it goes?" and Āḷāra Kālāma said: "Yes. This is as far as the

truth goes.” But he wasn’t satisfied with that so he went to different teacher, Rāmaputta, and he got to the eighth jhāna and he went to the teacher and said: “Is there something other than this?” and he said: “This is absolutely the highest truth that anyone can ever experience”. And from his perspective that was right. But the Buddha wasn’t satisfied with it because he saw there was still something, some subtle stuff still holding on.

When he went out and started on his own doing all of the different austerities and different practices of the day, he went as far as he could with each one of those practices. He experienced their truths as far as they went, like the truth of holding your breath meditation. I mean he went so far as to cut the thing underneath his tongue so he could swallow his tongue so he would not have wind coming through his ears and that sort of thing. And he went as far as he possibly could with that meditation until he was experiencing extreme physical pains that really kind of ran down his body quite a bit. But he realized he went as far as anybody could go with that meditation. Somebody could equal his effort but they couldn’t surpass his effort and he saw this doesn’t lead to nibbāna. Now he was going through all of these severe pains but it didn’t affect his mind. It just ran his body down, it was really hard on his body not having air.

TT 40:11

Then he did the same thing with foods. They had this belief that there were certain kinds of papaya. If you only eat papaya then you will become enlightened. He went as far as he could with that one: “Nope, that’s not it” and there was one with sesame seeds and there was one with just rice and eh, there was one with mangos. But he did that and he ran down his body energy so badly that he collapsed. His skin was a natural golden color. It had turned black. He could touch his spine by touching his stomach. He was really in bad shape and he was so far gone that if he didn’t start taking food very quickly he was going to die. He realized that he’d gone as far as he could with that truth. It didn’t lead to the final cessation of suffering so he started taking food. And the monks that were around him at the time said: “Well you’re getting luxurious because this is way that leads to

nibbāna. So they left him. And he built up his body, and during that time he started looking at the deep insights he got from seeing there is suffering. What's the cause of the suffering? There's old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain grief, despair. What is the cause of that? Why does that arise? Birth is the cause of death. If you're not born, you're not going to die. And he went through the entire list of dependent origination that way and he saw that it was true. And he saw exactly how it worked in his meditation. But until he got that deep, deep realization of: "This is the way. There's no other way. This way is the way to nibbāna." Bang! He got it. And that changed his entire perspective. So there's all these subjective kinds of truths, but there's kind of a, in this country, "All paths lead up the mountain to the peak". Yeah, well try that on Mt. Everest sometimes. Sometimes you can't go this way because it's impossible to go this way; you can only go up to here. And then you have to stop and either go to another path, or turn around and go back.

This is the thing that made the Buddha so unique because he tried all of the subjective truths that there were, to see where they led, but the only way that he saw progress was to let go of the craving. That's how come he came up with the Four Noble Truths. He saw that there's a basic problem: everybody is suffering. And in this country a lot of people don't like that idea: "Well, I don't suffer."—"Well, you don't suffer? Tell me how you feel when your mother died. How about your father? Your closest friend? Your lover? Whatever. When they die, how are you going to feel? That's suffering."

That there's a cause of suffering and the cause of suffering is craving, and it manifests in the same way every time. Right after a feeling arises it manifests as tension and tightness in a very subtle: "I like it" or "I don't like it." Right after that what arises is all the reasons why you like it or don't like it, all the reasons how your opinion starts dictating what's happening in your mind. And this is definitely a form of suffering and it's a form of grasping because we all hold to our own personal beliefs: "This is the way it is." And we have to let those go because if we keep holding on to: "This is the way it is" you're never going to reach the final goal.

Sāriputta was second in wisdom to the Buddha. Before he became an arahat, before he became so wise he would sit in meditation and he would analyze dependent origination, think how it worked for every instance and every possible scenario he could come up with, but he never became enlightened; he never became fully awake until one day he was fanning the Buddha and the Buddha was giving a Dhamma talk, and Sāriputta realized that the Buddha wasn't even attached to the Dhamma and that realization was so big for him that he became an arahat right then. Because he had the slight: "This is the way it works and I know it". And you can't have even that. You have to just see things the way they are and let them be without identifying with them, without that little dash of craving and clinging.

TT: 45:25

Now this particular sutta, it goes into five different ways of removing distracting thoughts. Now I've spent most of my time just on the first way because this is the way. They give you other suggestions, but my personal feeling with this sutta is that it was added much later and it was added when one-pointed concentration was added in with the meditations, not exactly what the Buddha was talking about, but the meditation of absorption and that sort of thing because all of these things are talking about different ways of handling it if your mind is trying to get one-pointed and you have all of these problems with it. Your mind resisting the concentration.

Ok, we get to the last one. I like this one because it's a graduated process. And they say if your mind is still going to be distracted then you try to replace it with something else or you try to think how revolting it is and all different ways, but we get to the last one and it says:

MN:

7. (v) "If, while he is giving attention to stilling the thought-formation of those thoughts, there still arise in him evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion, then, with his teeth clenched and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, he should beat down, constrain, and crush mind with mind.

BV: That sounds like the way to teach, doesn't it? (laughter)
And I was talking with somebody that was a teacher of jhāna and I was laughing about this. I said: "I never run across anybody that's had any problems like that when I'm teaching them". And he said: "Oh I run across that myself personally".

This was added later because that's not really the teaching of the Buddha. Let me go...

MN:

When, with his teeth clenched and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, he beats down, constrains, and crushes mind with mind, then any evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion are abandoned in him and subside.

BV: Wow, that's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. It doesn't work that way, but I'll tell you, in Burma they teach this part of this and they don't teach the first part. And you notice how long I spent on the first part.

I want to get back to a couple of the hindrances again – sloth and torpor and the restlessness because when sloth and torpor arises it's kind of a dreamy feeling and it is very pleasurable. People if they aren't really good practitioners in meditation they hear me give the instructions of: "Let go of the thoughts and relax."— "Well, I'm already relaxed." "Let go of that feeling and relax."— "Well I'm all ready... I'm just about ready to go to sleep. What do you mean relax?" There is craving attached to that. So when I'm saying relax I mean letting go of this. With sloth and torpor when it comes, you want to sit a little bit straighter, still not so rigid you're going to cause problems but a little bit straighter and when you notice that your posture is starting to slump a little bit you're not caught by the sloth and torpor yet. You're on the way to being really caught by it. If you straighten your posture and take more enthusiastic interest in your meditation then that will fade away much more quickly. Now what you do when there's sleepiness is you get up and you walk on your

straight line but you walk forward, you get to the end and stop. You don't turn around, you walk backwards. And you get to the end and then you walk forwards and you get to the end and you walk backwards. Walking backwards helps to bring up your energy because there's the uncertainty of what's behind you and you have to be more aware and that sort of thing.

TT: 50:13

Now with restlessness, which is really a major hindrance, it has a feeling of unpleasantness about it. There's a scatteredness kind of feeling and it really isn't a very pleasant kind of feeling even though the restlessness can turn into planning mind which is a pleasant feeling, there's still this underlying tightness. When you're sitting the instructions are: "Don't move, don't scratch, don't rub, don't change your posture". The reason that that part of the instruction is there is so that you can see how restlessness arises when it arises. You want to see how the process works. Restlessness manifests in all kinds of distracting kinds of thoughts, but it also manifests as tensions and tightnesses and aches and pains in the body and that sort of thing, anything. Your mind will try anything to get you to move and it's sneaky. But you're seeing how that process works kind of nips it in the bud.

S: If you're not comfortable sitting for forty five minutes, you can just sit in a chair I gather, right?

BV: Yeah. Don't lean heavily with your back. But you can take a towel and roll it up so... or in the small of your back. That's fine, just don't heavily into it and don't slouch into it.

Now, if you're not doing, used to doing a retreat, you'll find that your knees start giving out after doing it a few times. I don't want you to cause physical pain to yourselves. There's two different kinds of pain with the meditation. There's the real physical pain and then there's the meditation pain. Meditation pain, it's just as real like a pain in your knee can be incredibly painful. But the way you find out that it's a meditation is you get up and you walk and within thirty seconds to

a minute that pain has disappeared. And you just don't notice it any more. Real pain doesn't go away. If you start getting real pain I definitely don't want you to sit like that any more. There's nothing wrong with sitting in a chair.

I had a teacher that insisted that I sit for very long periods of time which was fine. I was sitting six, seven, eight hours. But because he was making me push to do it, I developed blood clots in my legs. And I've had that problem for many years now and I can't seem to get rid of it. So that was not skillful on his part to make me do that and it wasn't skillful on my part to follow those kind of instructions. But there are times when I can sit for very long periods of time very comfortably without hurting my body and that's a natural unfolding of... Sometimes it might seem like forty five minutes is three hours when you're sitting and sometimes forty five minutes is like five minutes when you're sitting. When it's like five minutes then continue sitting. You don't have to get up then. When you feel that it's time to get up, get up. But be careful of hurting yourself. I don't want to see you hurt yourself. I know a lot of people who get really involved in their striving and they're willing to do anything just to get to the end of the goal. We don't really play that game. We'll let that game go.

Ok. So before the end of the Dhamma talk I always share merit.

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.

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