

MN 121 The Shorter Discourse on Voidness - Culasunnata Sutta
Dhamma Talk presented by Bhante Vimalaramsi
JT5 17-Mar-10

BV: OK Happy Saint Paddy's Day. [laughs]

MN: 121

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvatti in the Eastern Park, in the Palace of Migāra's Mother.

{00:53}

BV:

The story about Migāra's mother: Migāra was her father-in-law. "Migāra's mother" was actually her father-in-law. "Migāra's mother" was Visākhā, and Visākhā came from an extraordinarily wealthy family. And when she travelled and became married to the son, she travelled with a Brahmin to watch her behavior, to make sure that she behaved correctly. Now, when Visākhā was eight years old, her mother took her to see the Buddha and she became a Sotapanna just by listening to the Buddha's talk.

So, she's sixteen...right around that age...and she got married and moved to another town with her husband. And there were some instances where it was kind of questionable behavior that she had. One night she went out and spent the whole night away from the house, which is kind of unheard of in the Buddhist culture or in the Brahmin culture. But what she was doing, her favorite mare was giving birth and was having a hard time so she went there to help. She spent the whole night to make sure that the mare was OK and the colt was OK. And the father-in-law noticed that and thought that that was really not good, so he started holding a grudge against her.

And then there was one day while he was eating his meal that a

monk came up to the door so that he could give alms. And he didn't pay attention to the monk so she waved the monk in and he still didn't pay attention to the monk. So Visākhā said, "He is satisfied eating stale fare, stale food", and told the monk that he should leave. And the father-in-law got really upset, and told her that she had to leave, can't be in this house. And she told him that she had eight Brahmin that came and they would judge whether her behavior was good or not.

The father-in-law said that one night she spent the whole night outside of the house, and that was really improper behavior so she should leave just because of that reason. And the Brahmin asked her was that true and she said, "Yes". And they said, "Why did you leave the house all night?" And she said, "I was with a lot of attendants and we were taking care of a mare so that she wouldn't die..." and that she was giving birth and took care of all of that. And the Brahmin said, "Well, that's no reason to banish her from the house."

And then he said, "Well, I was eating a meal one day and she told a monk that I was eating stale food." And the Brahmin said, "Is that right?" And Visākhā said, "Well, actually what I said was he was eating stale fare. And what I meant by that was, he was eating from the karma of past actions and he didn't want to make any good actions to continue being able to eat good food." "So, there's no reason," the Brahmin said, "There's no reason to be expelled from the house for that." And then Visākhā said, "But I'm going to leave." And the father-in-law got down on his knees and asked her to forgive him and said, "You are such a wise person!" And he opened up her sari and he started suckling on her and said, "From now on I'm going to call you my mother!"

That's the story. [laughs] That's why we have Migāra's mother.
[laughs]

ST:
Weird! [laughs}

BV:

Oh, those Brahmins, they were kind of strange. [laughs]

{6:28}

MN:

2. Then, when it was evening, the venerable Ānanda rose from meditation, went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said to the Blessed One:

3. "Venerable sir, on one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Sakyan country where there is a town of the Sakyans named Nagaraka. There, venerable sir, I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lip. 'Now, Ānanda, I often abide in voidness.' Did I hear that correctly, venerable sir, did I learn that correctly, attend to that correctly, remember that correctly?"

"Certainly, Ānanda, you heard that correctly, learned that correctly, attended to that correctly, remembered that correctly. As formerly, Ānanda, so now too I often abide in voidness.

4. "Ānanda, just as this Palace of Migāra's Mother is void of elephants, cattle, horses, and mares, void of gold and silver, void of the assembly of men and women, and there is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the Sangha of monks; so too, a monk—not attending to the perception of village, not attending to the perception of people— attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of forest. His mind enters into that perception of forest and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of village, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of people, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of forest.' He understands: This field of perception is void of the perception of village; this field of perception is void of the perception of people. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of forest.' Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains

there he understands that which is present thus: This is present.' Thus, Ānanda, this is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

{9:40}

BV:

Now, this is a pretty amazing concept because there's an awful lot of talk about voidness and emptiness. And here, what the Buddha is saying, that it doesn't mean being completely empty, there is nothing there in the voidness, it's void of everything. He's saying it's void of particular things. But as to what is there, there is that amount of non-voidness. So it's a pretty different approach to what the word "voidness" is talking about. And we'll get more into that right now.

MN:

5. "Again, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception of people, not attending to the perception of forest—attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of earth.

BV:

Now, this is talking about the Earth Kasina. How do you do that meditation? I don't know. The only kind of Kasina meditations that I know have to do with absorption concentration. I practiced them for about six weeks and then it didn't feel right so I quit. But I don't know exactly what it's talking about when it's talking, and I've never run across any teacher that knows exactly except through absorption concentration. Now a Kasina is a circle that's about this big and then you put it on a ring piece of wood, something like that. You put a piece of cloth over it. You take mud and you put it on like you put butter on bread, so it's covered completely with the dirt. And then you let it dry and you hang it up, if you're sitting on the floor, right at head level. And then you look at that and then you just start repeating the word, "Earth...earth...earth...earth...earth...earth." And then you close your eyes and try to visualize that Kasina.

There is eight Kasinas.

Earth -

Water - You take a circle and you have it covered on the outside of the circle so it's like over, you take a piece of cloth and you just kind of hole in the middle of it and then you spread it over where water is.

The Fire Kasina -

And the Air Kasina - I don't know how to make an Air Kasina.

Then there's four color Kasinas - red, white, blue, yellow.

I can't tell you any more about them. When I did it, I didn't do the Earth Kasina, I did the White Kasina. I had a lid from my bowl and I put the cloth over the top of it, put it so it was real tight and then I sat. And I was continually working with trying to visualize that. And I got so that I could. And then, I was using the Visuddhimagga at the time, and they say you have to do this until you see the counter-sign arise, which is like a very shiny, it's almost like a moon, a luminescent ball. And then there's things about making it big and making it small and making it bounce around and do all kinds of different things with it. But keeping your mind just focused on that. So it's a mental object. Interesting thing happened when I was doing that; I was getting fairly focused on this white Kasina and an ant started walking across it. And I saw the ant but I wasn't concentrating on it and I closed my eyes and I saw the white Kasina with the ant walking across it [laughs]. Interesting at least.

Anyway, the story that I got from people that hadn't practiced that but, all kinds of stories actually come out of meditation and monks talk about this sort of thing. And they said that if you really develop the white Kasina that you will start gaining psychic powers, psychic abilities, and you could turn a river into milk so people would never starve. That's what they said. Whether I really believe that or not is another story. I've never seen anything like that. I think it's just somebody's imagination, to be quite honest. I just don't believe it, personally.

But how you do the Earth Kasina, and why you do the Earth Kasina, I don't know. And I haven't been able to find out. So if anybody does run across somebody that knows, let me know, and I'll go talk to them.

{16:08}

MN:

His mind enters into that perception of earth and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. Just as a bull's hide becomes free from folds when fully stretched with a hundred pegs; so too, a monk—not attending to any of the ridges and hollows of this earth, to the rivers and ravines, the tracts of stumps and thorns, the mountains and uneven places—

BV:

I don't know why you want to do that. And this is almost exactly from the Visuddhimagga what they're talking about, but they don't tell you how to do it in the Visuddhimagga.

MN:

attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of earth. His mind enters into that perception of earth and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of people, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of forest, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of earth.' He understands: This field of perception is void of the perception of people; this field of perception is void of the perception of forest. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of earth.' Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: This is present.' Thus, Ānanda, this too is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

6. "Again, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception of forest, not attending to the perception of earth—attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite space.

BV:

Now what we're talking about here is doing the Earth Kasina until you get to the fourth jhana. And then I suppose, I'm not really sure, I know this is what is says in the Visuddhimagga, it says that you can get all the way up to the eighth jhana by doing the Earth Kasina. So if that's your object of mediation, that's the way you would do that. But as we are practicing the Brahma Viharas, that would be our object of meditation so you would still be able to see the Base Of Infinite Space.

MN:

His mind enters into that perception of the base of infinite space and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of forest, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of earth, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite space.' He understands: This field of perception is void of the perception of forest; this field of perception is void of the perception of earth.

{20:20}

BV:

So, I guess what they're talking about is just getting to the fourth jhana and then using Infinite Space as their object of meditation. I guess that is what it's saying. I'm not positive.

MN:

There is present only this non-voidness, namely the singleness

dependent on the perception of the base of infinite space.’ Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: This is present.’ Thus, Ānanda, this too is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

7. “Again, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception of earth, not attending to the perception of the base of infinite space—attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness. His mind enters into that perception of the base of infinite consciousness and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: ‘Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of earth, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of infinite space, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance,

BV:

And the disturbance when you get into the arūpa jhānas becomes less and less. The vibration becomes finer of how your mind’s attention is actually functioning.

Repeats {There is present only this amount of disturbance}

MN:

namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness.’ He understands: This field of perception is void of the perception of earth; this field of perception is void of the perception of the base of infinite space. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness.’ Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: This is present.’ Thus, Ānanda, this too is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

8. “Again, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception of the base of infinite space, not attending to the perception of the base of

infinite consciousness—attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness. His mind enters into that perception of the base of nothingness and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of infinite space, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness.' He understands: 'This field of perception is void of the perception of the base of infinite space; this field of perception is void of the perception of the base of infinite consciousness. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness.' Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: This is present.' Thus, Ānanda, this too is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

9. "Again, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception of the base of infinite consciousness, not attending to the perception of the base of nothingness—attends to the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. His mind enters into that perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of infinite consciousness, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.' He understands: This field of perception is void of the perception of the base of infinite consciousness; this field of perception is void of the perception of the base of nothingness. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, the singleness dependent on the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.'

Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: This is present.' Thus, Ānanda, this too is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

10. "Again, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception of the base of nothingness, not attending to the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception—attends to the singleness dependent on the signless concentration of mind.

{27:33}

BV: What is the "signless concentration of mind"?

ST:

Cessation...

BV:

Cessation of perception, feeling and consciousness.

MN:

His mind enters into that signless concentration of mind and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution.

BV:

I don't think that that's really true. I think that he's just following the formula. How do you obtain confidence and steadiness when you don't have any perception, feeling or consciousness? [laughs] Yeah, he's just caught in following the formula that he used in the other parts.

ST: Go back in Pali and check it ~~

BV: Well, even there it could be a little bit odd.

MN:

He understand thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of nothingness, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, those are not present here.

BV:

Again, I don't see how this could possibly be, but...

MN:

There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life.'

BV:

What we're talking about here is getting into the cessation of perception, feeling and consciousness, and still having heat and vitality. And this is another way of describing that.

{29:30}

MN:

He understands: This field of perception is void of the perception of the base of nothingness; this field of perception is void of the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life.'

Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: This is present.' Thus, Ānanda, this too is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.

11. "Again, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception of the base of nothingness, not attending to the perception of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception—attends to the singleness dependent on the signless concentration of mind. His mind enters into that signless concentration of mind and acquires confidence, steadiness, and resolution. He understands thus: This signless concentration of mind is conditioned and volitionally produced. But whatever is conditioned and volitionally produced is impermanent, subject to cessation.' When he knows and sees thus, his mind is liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When it is liberated there comes the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' He understands: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'

12. "He understands thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the taint of sensual desire, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the taint of being, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the taint of ignorance, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life.' He understands: This field of perception is void of the taint of sensual desire; this field of perception is void of the taint of being; this field of perception is void of the taint of ignorance. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life'. Thus he regards it as void of what is not there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: 'This is present.' Thus, Ānanda, this is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness, supreme and unsurpassed.

13. "Ānanda, whatever recluses and brahmins in the past entered upon and abided in pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness, all entered upon and abided in this same pure, supreme', unsurpassed voidness. Whatever recluses and brahmins in the future will enter upon and abide in pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness, all will enter upon and abide in this same pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness.

Whatever recluses and brahmins in the present enter upon and abide in pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness, all enter upon and abide in this same pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness. Therefore, Ānanda, you should train thus: "We will enter upon and abide in pure, supreme, unsurpassed voidness."

That is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ānanda was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

{34:37}

BV:

So, what we're talking about with voidness is different than the normal language of what is void. Ok, we have a specific definition of the voidness; it's void of this, it's void of that. But what there is non-voidness. There is only this amount of disturbance. So, the more you come to this quiet, still place in your mind and you can stay in this quiet stillness, your mind is exceptionally pure at that time. Why? You don't have any craving arising. Your mind is still. Your mind is at ease. Any slightest movement is seen and relaxed.

Now the relax step here is exceptionally important because you're getting to a place now where neither perception nor non-perception is becoming more apparent for you. And when you just step out of that and reflect what you saw in it there might be some fine little things that arise and you relax, relax. Everything that arises has some movement in it. What you want to do is keep relaxing until there is no movement. And when there is no movement that is the cessation of perception, feeling and consciousness.

When you come out of that state, that's when you see the links of Dependent Origination. You see how they arise and you see how they cease. When you let go of that little bit of ignorance, you've let go of all conditioned things. And that's when you experience the unconditioned. It's a real "Whoopie"! It's a real release realizing more and more that the links of Dependent Origination are not a philosophy, they're a reality, and you're able to see them. It's real insights arising.

Now, when you have a hindrance arise and your mind gets pulled away, why did that happen? Because your mindfulness slipped a little bit. Your attention slipped a little bit. Your interest in staying on your object of meditation slipped a little bit. "But there's nothing there! It's just stillness! I'm bored. I want excitement!" [laughs]

Sitting with a mind that doesn't move is real fun! It's really good! But we do have the habit of causing our own excitement. Mind will try to distract you in whatever way it can so that there is some movement. It's used to moving. It's been moving since time immemorial, from lifetime after lifetime after lifetime! It's always moving. And it's not just moving, it's flip-flopping! There's big movements and then there's that roller coaster ride with your emotions; I like this...I don't like that...I like this...I don't like that.

But now as you start to gain more balance in your mind from doing the practice, those real high highs and those real low lows start disappearing. Then it starts to be little waves of Pleasant...Painful...Pleasant...Painful. As you continue on with your practice and your mind becomes more and more still, those waves become little teeny ripples in the water.

Now, some people have been asking me if they're going to be able to carry this with them when they get home, and the simple answer is, "No". Why? Because you're going to get attacked by your daily activities and all the stuff that you do. You're going to have a dip in your practice. It's not going to be as good as it is here. Sorry, I wish it would be.

But when you get back out there, you're going to have stronger equanimity than you've ever had before. But you're still going to have this little dip in your practice. And then you practice every day. You sit one hour...two hours a day. You keep your 6Rs going all day. You'll get back up to where you are and you'll be able to go further.

Now something that you want to realize is if you have the desire to get back to the way you were before retreat you're going to lose the

advantage of doing the meditation. Let go of the things that pull your mind down. Keeping the 5 precepts very, very strictly is not a bad thing. It is a good thing. Don't indulge in your old ways of looking at things and your old ways of doing things. Keep your mind uplifted as much as you possibly can.

You will be able to experience liberation in this lifetime. When will it come? I don't know. That's not up to me. I've gotten you to the doorway. I've gotten the door open. Now it's your turn to walk through it. When you decide to do that, that's up to you. I can't help anymore. I've given you all that I possibly can. The rest is up to you.

When will it happen? Your choice, not mine.

Sometimes, people will feel that their mind is going super-deep and they have this idea, "Ahhh! It's about ready to happen!" And what happens is they lunge for it. The fastest way to not have it happen. Some people have, "Ohhh, I want to attain Nibbana! I really want to attain Nibbana! I want it! I want it! I want it! I want it!" It doesn't happen. You have to keep the mind open and realize that you don't know what's going to happen next, so quit trying to guess it. "Well, my mind is starting to go real deep! This might be it!" [laughs] Ok, wait and see.

ST:

For the hundredth time. [laughter]

BV:

Now is the time for you to ask the questions of yourself. "Do I still have some attachments to something? What kind of attachments are stopping me from gaining liberation? What's the cause...what's the condition of this restlessness that comes up? Or this pain in my head from trying too hard? What is the cause and condition? Why am I going through this"?

When you ask those kind of questions, your intuition will give you the answer. It has to be your intuition.

Some people are starting to develop the ability to have a divine ear or a divine eye so they'll ask Devas, "What do you think? What do I need to do?" But, actually, they don't know! You have to ask your own intuition. Your intuition knows everything about you. It knows what you need, what you're hanging onto, and how to let it go. It will tell you. But stay with meditation. Don't distract and try to do something else. Stay with this one meditation that you've learned. If you need to 6R things, 6R things. If you need to develop the habit of saying, "Not mine. This isn't mine. Whatever arises isn't mine." So, then do that. Use your own intuition and it will guide you from here on out.

Ok. Anybody have any questions?

ST:

When you ask that question do you do it like before a sitting? During a sitting? Or, um?

BV:

Experiment and see. I know what I would do but not everybody's the same. So, just... we can't depend on any other outside sources for our answers. Our answers have to come by themselves to us. "Well, when is the answer going to be? I asked it yesterday?" [laughs] Whenever it's ready to give you the answer and you pay attention to it. [laugh] If you don't pay attention to the answer it will get quieter and quieter and then finally intuition says, "Well, he's not going to pay attention to me anyway (sic), I'm not going to say anymore."

ST:

You've opened the doorway and have taken us to the threshold and opened the doorway, is there any way we can get a push? [laughs]

BV:

I'm pushing as hard as I can! But I can't do it! [laughs]

SK:

Like he put a crack in your cosmic egg and you've got to hatch it! [laughs]

BV:

Ah, you can't go through it, nobody can, that's the problem.

ST:

Um, I mean, most of us still, you know, work, you know we have jobs. So, this desire to do well in your job is also a kind of attachment? So, how do we let that go? I mean, we still need a job. We have to work.

BV:

Well, that's not really an attachment, I mean, is it? The desire...you want...I guess it depends on what your livelihood is, but your desire to do well means that you're using your intuition and it's guiding you and you become more efficient as you get better at doing the meditation. You don't have as many distractions pulling you away. You don't have any thoughts pulling you away. The desire to do good is what they call "chanda" in Pali. Chanda means "wholesome desire". That means the desire for wholesome things without being attached to it.

ST:

I mean, in my profession I know how to do, but as a team they say, "Ok, the other company is coming up with something so we have to do better and you know ~ whatever. Like, you know, so I don't know that feeling is ~.

Various voices: ~~

BV:

Well, there's competition along with greed (ST: pardon?), there's competition along with greed, but that isn't your greed.

ST:

No, I guess not my greed. But they ask us to do very well, you know...~

BV:

Well, they're always going to ask you to do very well even if you're just mowing the lawn. Right? I mean, you're expected to do a job well if they're going to be paying you. So, do it well.

You got something?

ST:

What if you go with your intuition and your teacher tells you it's wrong?

BV:

[laughs] You question the teacher.

ST:

It's my last day. [laughs]

BV:

~~~ the teacher.

S2:

And the teacher tells you what?

BV:

It's wrong.

ST:

You go to the teacher and you say, "My intuition says this..." and the teacher says, "You're wrong." Then what do you do? He said question the teacher.

ST:

Can you elaborate on what you mean by question the teacher.

BV:

Ask them why, ask them why they said that.

ST:

I see, have a discussion about it. I see...

SK:

Buddha said to test it. Does it work? And you follow your intuition, right? Stretch? Oh...sorry! (laughter)

BV:

Say that again.

SK:

The Buddha said to test it, and if it works, keep it. And if it doesn't, let it go. So you're an individual, right? So you test it, then you do what you want about the teacher, right?

BV:

Well, that's why you talk with the teacher about what he thinks, or what she thinks. I know it isn't very Zen, because the teacher is always right, but...

ST:

I'd never believe that! [laughs]

BV:

Good for you! [laughs] Yeah?

ST:

I fight with Bhante all the time!

BV:

Yeah?

ST:

Really? [laughs]

BV:

It's true. He's always testing.

SK:

Geez, Erwin used to test him. Mixed voices ~~~

BV:

Erwin had trouble believing his experiences. Now it's starting to, he's starting to believe it whether he likes it or not.

ST:

At a certain point you have to apply Ockham's Razor, right?

BV:

But everybody has to use their own self-responsibility. That's one of the things I really like about the Buddha's teaching. See for yourself. Test your intuition to see whether it's correct or not. Don't be afraid of making a mistake. It's OK to make a mistake because you know what not to do next time, if you're paying attention. You know, I tried this and it didn't work. Well, let's not do it anymore. That's just causing more pain to arise. So you say, "OK, that one didn't work. Let's listen to the intuition and see if this one does." It's right more often than wrong. Let's put it that way.

OK? Yes?

ST:

OK, so I followed your advice and it worked.

BV:

Uh oh!

ST:

And you said at the end of the talk, night before last, "OK, smile and have fun"!

BV:

Yes.

ST:

You said it like that, "...And so have fun!" I took that as a challenge. [laughs] So, I've been, how can I say, I kind of took the striving out of what I was doing and decided that I would make it try to have as

much fun with it, because this is such a beautiful place and the energy in this room is just so fantastic. I have never been in a group of meditators like this before. I just feel so fortunate. So I thought, "Oh, I want to drink this up." [laughs]

So, I've been having as much kind of fun with it within the context of the meditation. And the meditation has been more, "I can't wait to do it all the time!" You know, and then I find that, "Oh, I'm doing it right now! I can do it all the time!" And, so, ah, but, I think that that fun factor really put a lot of kind of juice in it and I don't feel that I'm striving but I'm working with it maybe even in all the contexts of my waking hours.

BV: The fun factor builds up the joy enlightenment factor, the balancing factor. So you learn more and more subtly what all of those enlightenment factors are and that balance that joy gives with that. It takes out the seriousness and puts it a lighter more agile, alert mind.

I told you I was sneaky. [laughter]

I tell you some simple things that possibly could help, then you see whether it does or not. If having fun doesn't help for you, if laughing doesn't help for you, if smiling doesn't help, then don't do it.

ST:

I can suggest a really good Zen monastery. [laughs] You won't smile at all! [laughs]

BV:

And if they hear you laugh, you're out the door. [laughs] Then see whether this is, ah, more appealing.

ST:

[Whispers] Edit that out of the recording. [laughs]

ST:

Go ahead and say it right now. [laughs]

BV:

How does your mind feel?

ST:

Good, really!

BV:

See? Light! Now your mind is very agile! Your mind is very alert! I've had a lot of people over the years complain to me that it was too hard to laugh because this is serious. [laughs] And that's what I do. I laugh at it!

So, with a light agile mind, you can see where you're attached or what you're doing that has things out of balance just a little bit. So the sense of fun with that, it takes the serious striving, I mean Nibbana is serious stuff, isn't it? It takes that seriousness out of the striving so that your mind can be more agile and light and alert to what enlightenment factor needs to be adjusted. And it will come as an insight, "Oh, let's try this one!" or "This seems like it's a little low. Let's try that and see how it goes."

OK. Anybody else?

{59:46}

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 . . .

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