

MN 128 Imperfections - Upakkilesa Sutta  
Dhamma Talk by Bhante Vimalaramsi  
16-Nov-05

BV: The sutta I want to talk about tonight is number one twenty eight in "The Middle Length Sayings", it's called the "Upakkilesa Sutta", the "Imperfections". This starts out with the Buddha, is really tired of the way that monks are treating each other in the town of Kosambi. You remember I gave you a discourse on the monks that studied the suttas, and the monks that studied the Vinaya, and how they were fighting back and forth, ok, this is a continuation for a little bit.

MN:

1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Kosambi in Ghosita's Park.

2. Now on that occasion the monks at Kosambi had taken to quarrelling and brawling and were deep in disputes, stabbing each other with verbal daggers.

3. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he stood at one side and said: "Venerable sir, the monks here at Kosambi have taken to quarrelling and brawling and are deep in disputes, stabbing each other with verbal daggers. It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One would go to those monks out of compassion." The Blessed One consented in silence.

4. Then the Blessed One went to those monks and said to them: "Enough, monks, let there be no quarrelling, brawling, wrangling, or dispute." When this was said,

BV: And this next line just blows my mind; how could anybody say this to the Buddha?

MN:

{...} "Wait, venerable sir! Let the Blessed One, the Lord of the

Dhamma, live at ease devoted to a pleasant abiding here and now. We are the ones who will be responsible for this quarrelling, brawling, wrangling, and dispute.”

BV: He’s telling the Buddha: “Hey boy, go away. You’re bothering me.” (Laughs)

MN:

For a second time... For a third time the Blessed One said: “Enough, monks, let there be no quarrelling, brawling, wrangling, or dispute.” For a third time that monk said to the Blessed One: “Wait, venerable sir! We are the ones who will be responsible for this quarrelling, brawling, wrangling, and dispute.”

5. Then, when it was morning, the Blessed One dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, entered Kosambi for alms. When he had wandered for alms in Kosambi and had returned from his almsround, after his meal he set his resting place in order, took his bowl and outer robe, and while still standing uttered these stanzas:

6. “When many voices shout at once  
None considers himself a fool;  
Though the Sangha is being split  
None thinks himself to be at fault.

They have forgotten thoughtful speech,  
They talk obsessed by words alone.  
Uncurbed their mouths, they bawl at will;  
None knows what leads him so to act.

‘He abused me, he struck me,  
He defeated me, he robbed me’—  
In those who harbor thoughts like these  
Hatred will never be allayed.

For in this world hatred is never  
Allayed by further acts of hate.

It is allayed by non-hatred:  
That is the fixed and ageless law.

Those others do not recognize  
That here we should restrain ourselves.  
But those wise ones who realize this  
At once end all their enmity.

Breakers of bones and murderers,  
Those who steal cattle, horses, wealth,  
Those who pillage the entire realm—  
When even these can act together  
Why can you not do so too?

BV: He's slapping the entire Sangha pretty well.

MN:  
If one can find a worthy friend,  
A virtuous, steadfast companion,  
Then overcome all threats of danger  
And walk with him content and mindful.

But if one finds no worthy friend,  
No virtuous, steadfast companion,  
Then as a king leaves his conquered realm,  
Walk like a tusker in the woods alone.

Better it is to walk alone,  
There is no companionship with fools.  
Walk alone and do no evil,  
At ease like a tusker in the woods."

7. Then, having uttered these stanzas while standing, the Blessed One went to the village of Bālakaloṇakāra.

BV: I love these names.

MN:

On that occasion the venerable Bhagu was living at the village of Bālakaloṇakāra. When the venerable Bhagu saw the Blessed One coming in the distance, he prepared a seat and set out water for washing the feet. The Blessed One sat down on the seat made ready and washed his feet. The venerable Bhagu paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side, and the Blessed One said to him: "I hope you are keeping well, monk, I hope you are comfortable, I hope you are not having any trouble getting almsfood."

"I am keeping well, Blessed One, I am comfortable, and I am not having any trouble getting almsfood."

Then the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, and gladdened the venerable Bhagu with talk on the Dhamma, after which he rose from his seat and went to the Eastern Bamboo Park.

8. Now on that occasion the venerable Anuruddha,

BV: Anuruddha was Ānanda's elder brother, and he became a monk at the same time.

MN:

the venerable Nandiya and the venerable Kimbila were living at the Eastern Bamboo Park." The park keeper saw the Blessed One coming in the distance and told him: "Do not enter this park, recluse. There are three clansmen here seeking their own good. Do not disturb them."

9. The venerable Anuruddha heard the park keeper speaking to the Blessed One and told him: "Friend park keeper, do not keep the Blessed One out. It is our Teacher, the Blessed One, who has come." Then the venerable Anuruddha went to the venerable Nandiya and the venerable Kimbila and said: "Come out, venerable sirs, come out! Our Teacher, the Blessed One, has come."

10. Then all three went to meet the Blessed One. One took his bowl and outer robe, one prepared a seat, and one set out water for

washing the feet. The Blessed One sat down on the seat made ready and washed his feet. Then those three venerable ones paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side, and the Blessed One said to them: "I hope you are all keeping well, Anuruddha, I hope you are comfortable, I hope you are not having any trouble getting almsfood."

"We are keeping well, Blessed One, we are comfortable, and we are not having any trouble getting almsfood."

11. "I hope, Anuruddha, that you are all living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes."

"Surely, venerable sir,

BV: What a relief to hear that one.

MN:

we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes."

"But, Anuruddha, how do you live thus?"

12. "Venerable sir, as to that, I think thus: 'It is a gain for me, it is a great gain for me that I am living with such companions in the holy life.' I maintain bodily acts of loving-kindness towards these venerable ones both openly and privately; I maintain verbal acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately; I maintain mental acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately. I consider: 'Why should I not set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do?' Then I set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do. We are different in body, venerable sir, but one in mind."

The venerable Nandiya and the venerable Kimbila each spoke likewise, adding: "That is how, venerable sir, we are living in

concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes.”

13. “Good, good, Anuruddha. I hope that you all abide diligent, ardent, and resolute.”

“Surely, venerable sir, we abide diligent, ardent, and resolute.” “But, Anuruddha, how do you abide thus?”

14. “Venerable sir, as to that, whichever of us returns first from the village with almsfood prepares the seats, sets out the water for drinking and for washing, and puts the refuse bucket in its place. Whichever of us returns last eats any food left over, if he wishes; otherwise he throws it away where there is no greenery or drops it into water where there is no life.

BV: That’s one of the rules for the monks. If we throw food that we don’t want away on greenery, it can harm insects and that sort of thing, so we have to be real careful of that and we can’t put it in where there’s fish even because it can rot and it can foul the water.

MN:

He puts away the seats and the water for drinking and for washing. He puts away the refuse bucket after washing it, and he sweeps out the refectory. Whoever notices that the pots of water for drinking, washing, or the latrine are low or empty takes care of them.

If they are too heavy for him, he calls someone else by a signal of the hand and they move it by joining hands, but because of this we do not break out into speech. But every five days we sit together all night discussing the Dhamma. That is how we abide diligent, ardent, and resolute.”

BV: When I was in Burma, the first time I went, it’s a huge meditation center, and there’s thousands and thousands of people around. Fortunately most of them are Burmese, so they left the Westerners alone, but among the Westerners, because we were the minority by far, we kind of clumped together, and anytime you get

together with another one in a foreign country you have the tendency to talk, but they kept on telling us: "Don't talk, keep noble silence." So finally I got the idea, and I started not going around where they were gathering, I was just doing my own meditation, I did this for six weeks. The only person I talked to every day was the teacher about the meditation And with that I found that my meditation really took off, really did well. But after about six weeks, that's about as long as I could stand it, I was about ready to pop, so I started talking again.

And right after that, this was during the time when the army was shooting people in the streets in Rangoon, and you'd hear gunfire, sometimes it wouldn't be very far away. And we were always thinking that the government was going to expel us, just kick us out no matter what. They did show restraint and waited till after the rain's retreat. And they said: "The rain's retreat ends on Wednesday. You have to leave Wednesday night." But they didn't have any airplanes leaving. And they were really unreasonable about it, they kept on saying: "You have to leave Wednesday." And I kept saying: "But how can we leave Wednesday? There's no way to get out." Finally they let us leave on Thursday. But that was a real interesting time, I'd never been in an entire country that shut down everything. They shut down their electricity, they shut down their phones, they shut down the mail, they just closed everything. And we didn't get any food into the monastery for awhile. And what they were trying to do was they were stopping the food from coming into the city to try to suppress the city, but there became such an outrage that, I was at Mahasi Center which is very highly respected, there was such an outrage that we didn't have any food coming in, that the people were taking their own private stashes and bringing food in and then they really started fighting the government, and the government finally let food come into us anyway. But it wasn't much, it was just like a couple handfuls of rice and maybe one vegetable, and that was it. So I got to watch all kinds of cravings for food arise, which was pretty amazing because some of the foods I craved, I didn't eat. Mustard, I never eat mustard, and all of a sudden I have this huge craving for mustard, and I'm going: "Where did that come from?" And pizza, Aw, I would have given my right arm for a pizza. But it's just one of the

tricks that mind likes to play, so it was very hard to remain diligent, ardent, and resolute, as these monks did, in those times, because you would hear gunfire, when you would be sitting and all of a sudden it's like less than a block away. One time I was out walking and I saw a guy line up and shoot the gun, and I saw somebody fall. But after the army guy, he just turned around and walked away, they just got up and ran away. I don't think he hit him but . . . (Laughs) You talk about having a real active mind right after that. It was really amazing because all of these fears and anxieties and you know these guys are shooting guns so close, what happens if one ricochets off and comes at me? You know, oh, boy. But, as it turns out it was just more grist for the mill. And it was a good lesson in how to let go of these kind of anxieties and all of those kind of things.

MN: 15. "Good, good, Anuruddha. But while you abide thus diligent, ardent, and resolute, have you attained any superhuman states, a distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, a comfortable abiding?"

BV: He's asking whether he's either gotten into any psychic abilities, or he has any attainment of Nibbāna.

MN:

"Venerable sir, as we abide here diligent, ardent, and resolute, we perceive both

BV: Now here the word is translated as "light". In Pāli the word is "obhāsa" which is "radiant", and that changes everything.

Repeats: we perceive both

MN:

radiance and a vision of forms. Soon afterwards the radiance and the vision of forms disappear, but we have not discovered the cause for that."

BV: The upakkilesa. The kilesas are what obstruct your meditation. And it basically comes down to generally speaking, the five hindrances. They're called hindrances because they stop you from



meditating right then and then you have to work with that until you can let it go.

So -

MN:

16. "You should discover the cause for that, Anuruddha.

BV: Now this is how he did it.

MN:

Before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I too perceived both radiance and a vision of forms. Soon afterwards the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared. I thought: 'What is the cause and condition why the radiance and the vision of forms have disappeared?'

BV: So that's a question you can ask yourself when a hindrance comes up. "What is the cause and condition of this?"

MN:

Then I considered thus: 'Doubt arose in me, and because of the doubt my collectedness fell away; when my collectedness fell away, the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared. I shall so act that doubt will not arise in me again.'

BV: In other words, what he's starting to do is he's starting to question whether he's doing it correctly or not. So, what he basically did when he said: "I shall act so that doubt will not arise again" is if there's any doubt that comes up he will dispel it right then. He'll notice that it's there and let go and say: "Let's continue this to the end", see where it leads to, see what it boils down to. And there is the clinging mind in this, because we all have views of the way we think it should be. Sometimes we have to let go of our views in order to let go of the doubt. So that he's talking about being exceptionally mindful and alert as to how this process is working. And you have to understand too, that while he was the Bodhisatta, he was investigating all of the links of Dependent Origination at different

times. But he was investigating those, so he was getting the general idea of how this all worked so that he could sharpen his mindfulness.

MN:

17. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute, I perceived both radiance and a vision of forms. Soon afterward the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared. I thought: 'What is the cause and condition why the radiance and the vision of forms have disappeared?' Then I considered thus: 'Inattention arose in me, and because of inattention my collectedness fell away; when my collectedness fell away, the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared. I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention will arise in me again.'

BV: Now this is the one thing that I've talked to you a few times about, keeping your interest, your interest in your meditation object. When that interest in that starts to waver a little bit, that's when inattention comes, and it's almost always followed with sloth and torpor.

And this is part of the balancing act of what meditation is all about. You need to have the right amount of energy. If you put in too much energy, you're forcing it, you're trying too hard. I've had students that I've jumped up and down and done everything I could think of: "Stop trying so hard!" Finally, to one of them, I said: "You can't do this anymore. So let's go for a walk."

And we went by a . . . I don't know if I should tell this or not - (Laughs) We went by a little pond. It was right by the road, There wasn't a railing there, it was just a little lip. And I kept walking a little closer to the pond, and they were on that side, and finally they got close enough and I pushed them into the water. (laughs) And then I said: "Now have some fun!" And they got out and they were furious with me, they were really angry at me because I'd done something like that, and I ruined their meditation.

So we had a long talk about that, as to what really meditation is all about. And every time you see that your mind is getting serious,

there's an attachment, and there's the identification with whatever that is. And it causes that craving, the: "I don't like it", or: "I like it", whichever one it is, it causes that to close down around it, and it causes that to continue to arise over and over again.

But the arising over and over again is, like I was talking last night, it's like being on a tape deck. It's the same words, it's the same phrases, it's in the same order, and if there is something that arises like that and it continually comes up, that is your key to saying: "I'm identifying with this, this seems like a big problem to me right now, it's like a huge mountain, and I don't know how to overcome the mountain." So, what to do? That's the question.

How to overcome this huge problem in your mind, and the way to do it, is to laugh right with it. When you laugh with it, all of a sudden this huge mountain, it's a little tiny bump in the road. That's what the identification with your thoughts and feelings does to us, and I say to us because it does to all of us. Nobody is unique. So anytime you see repeat thoughts about the same thing, then it's time to stand back and take a look at it, and as you develop your sense of humor about how badly you got caught by this one again, then you're not caught.

Every time, and this was an accident that I found this out, every time you laugh at yourself for thinking that this is such a big thing and it's such a big problem, all of a sudden it only turns into: "It's only this, what's such a big problem about that? It's nothing. Relax!"

And it was like I said, when I found out it was pretty amazing. And the way I found out, I was building and I was in Hawaii, I decided that one of my friends, he was starting to build his house by himself. And I decided: "Well, I'll give him a hand." So I was doing this for no money, I was just going and helping him every day and we were getting it done. And all of a sudden he started thinking he was my boss.

He started telling me I got to do this by this time and it started really getting to me. And he went away and I was walking back up to my truck to go home, and I started thinking: "That sucker thinks that

he's my boss." And I'm walking along and my heels are digging into the ground and I'm really grrrrrr. And I really didn't like that whole situation. And then it dawned on me how absurd it was that he thought that he was my boss.

Here I am giving him all my energy and he thinks he's my boss and it struck me as funny. As soon as I laughed, all of a sudden it went from: "I'm angry, I don't like this situation" to "Oh, it's only anger." And that doesn't mean that I didn't solve the problem later by telling him: "You're not my boss, don't think you're my boss, I don't want to be bossed around or I'm out of here." But it was the laughter that broke the cycle. And I started using that in other instances, and I began to see that all of these major things that I have built up in my mind that are insurmountable mountains, they're just these little tiny bumps, bump, bump, bump, so I started developing a sense of humor about how crazy my mind is, because it is.

I used to have contests with some people who'd say: "Whose mind's crazier, yours or mine?" And, especially when I was teaching a retreat and someone would come up with a big thing and what I would say was: "Oh, my mind's a lot crazier than yours, try this one!" (Laughs)

But what the sense of humor does, is it helps you put a perspective, that's a little bit different from: "I am this, I don't like this situation, I want it to be different than it is." And grumble, grumble, grumble, and you know how your mind takes off with this kind of stuff, it really kind of enjoys it, it's entertaining to it. And then when you laugh: "My mind really took off on that one, that was great stuff!" And you start reflecting on it, then you find out that there's no holding on to it. "It's just these thoughts, ah the thoughts are nothing.

Every time we get serious, things get more and more difficult to do. When you keep your mind filled with loving-kindness and that sense of fun, magic happens. Everything gets easy, the people that you had disagreements with before all of a sudden they become agreeable.

I mean there's all kinds of magical things that happen, and like I told

you before I used to go to visit the hospital often. It's easier for me to go visit the hospitals in Asia than it is here, and it's kind of interesting because I would go to visit mostly Chinese in Malaysia, in the hospital, and I would be radiating loving-kindness and I was really with them and helping whatever way I could. And then I would walk from that bed over to the next bed which has a little Muslim man and he's going (gesture) "Come on over here", and he grabs on to my hand. "Do some of that for me." And Muslims don't like Buddhists, and they especially don't like Buddhists in robes, that's really strange to them.

But it's so universal, everybody, bar none, everybody wants to be loved. So I saw it as my job to do that. That's what my job is as much as I possibly can. And that's not to say I still don't get caught, still run around with the mental states that keep going back and forth. But it doesn't happen near as often as it used to.

So if you start noticing repeat thoughts, take that as a sign to lighten up and start smiling. If you can laugh, laugh, if you can't, at least smile with yourself and try to do something particularly nice for whoever is around you at that time. Like I was in the store and there was some very offensive things that were happening - I won't go into that. But I had to wait in line to get whatever needed to be got, and instead of my dwelling on what those offensive things were, I started looking at the hard time that the cashier was having with everybody. It's like she was fumbling and she wasn't very good, and she was having trouble with the computer, and so it was a long wait.

So I started radiating loving-kindness to her. And then when I got up to her, I said something about: "Some days are real hard, but you know, I feel so happy today and I saw you smile this one time and that really made me feel good, thank you." All of a sudden my mind is exceptionally clear and bright, and so is hers. So it's the practice of doing those kind of things that you change the world around you by your mental state.

You can change the world around you in a positive way or a negative way, that's where your free will comes in, it's your choice whether

you're going to do it or not. But the more that you focus on the wholesome, on the kind, on the gentle, the easier everything becomes around you. And your mind because of that develops that joy, and with the joy is that incredible alertness that when your mind starts to heavy out again, you can notice it more quickly and let go more easily.

And this comes back to what I was saying here, about the inattention. We get so caught up in the game that we lose attention to what's really important, and as we start to develop our mindfulness; which the function of mindfulness is to remember. To remember what? To remember to smile. It always comes back to smile.

I mean I've been practicing for so long, I ought to have a smile on my face all the time, but I know that I don't. But putting in a sense of fun to whatever you're doing, helps overcome inattention, even though there's some: "I know I have this meeting and I've got a talk with this person and it's not going to be an easy thing." But if you still put loving-kindness into the meeting before you go in to the meeting, for instance, when I was a layman and I was building these expensive houses.

I was working with presidents of banks, and they were Chinese. They didn't have any time to mess around. They wanted you to get in there, say what you had to say, make the decision and get out. So I always went five to ten minutes early into the building. I would go to the bathroom, I would look in the mirror, and I would start smiling, and in my mind I was radiating loving-kindness to the person I had to talk to. I was radiating loving-kindness into the meeting as it's guiding so that every thing will work out so it's agreeable for everyone, and I was radiating loving-kindness to myself.

Now I did this for five to ten minutes. You want to try an experiment, take a watch, stand in front of a mirror and smile for five minutes. You've never known five minutes could be so long! (Laughs) But look at how you feel afterwards. The thing that I noticed when I first started doing it, my judging mind will come out and say: "God, what

an ugly smile that is. You know, you're not very good looking, and my mind was playing all these numbers, and before long: "Ah, that's nothing. Let it go. Let it go. Just keep smiling."

Once you get into smiling, then you go into the meeting, and it was amazing how easy the meeting was. I'd go in there and say: "Look it. You wanted to do this, we can't do it this way, we have to do it this way and it's going to cost more money because of that." And saying that to a Chinese is very difficult thing because they expect everything for nothing, that's what it boils down to, but I couldn't run the business that way. And I'd say: "Well, there's these other options." And I'd point out the other options. "What do you want to do? I can do it for the same money if we do it this way, but it won't be quite as nice, so it's your choice." And more often than not, they would go with the more expensive thing, which made everybody happy. (Laughs)

But the times I didn't prepare myself, I'd be late for one reason or another, and I went right in to the office: "Ahhh!" Difficult. I couldn't get my point across, he wasn't attentive to what I was talking about, I wasn't really hearing what he was talking about, what he wanted and all of that. It would be a meeting that would drag on for fifteen or twenty minutes and it was hell.

So I got in the habit of always making sure that I got there early so I could smile. And Lou is on the phone a lot, and I told her that she has to have a mirror set up so that while she's on the phone, she could look at that and smile, and just before we left to come here, I told her that every day she had to stand in front of the mirror for ten minutes and smile. And jeeze, is she ever pleasant to be around. (Laughs)

I'd get up in the morning, I'd go in and get my coffee and she'd come bouncing in with a radiant face and happy, and: "Oh, I like this stuff, this is great stuff." So it does come in to smile, because there's some study, I think it was the University of Minnesota if I'm not mistaken. They did a test, psychological test on the corners of your mouth. And they found out when the corners of your mouth go

down, your mental state goes down. When the corners of your mouth go up, guess what? So why do I make this a smiling meditation? I'm a sneaky monk. I'm really a sneaky monk. So if your mind is going to be uplifted, when you see that you're starting to heavy out, things aren't going quite the way you want, that's the time that you really need to focus more with the smile, and softening into these things. Not becoming upset because it doesn't happen the way you want it to, but taking it as: "This is what's happening right now, I have two choices. I can push and try and make it stop and go away, but that's only going to lead to more suffering, or I can smile and relax into it." And it's your choice.

And we all have these lessons that we have to teach ourselves. And you can say: "Well, I'm your teacher." I'm not your teacher, I'm your reminder. The more times I get to remind you to relax, and smile, the more it sinks in and the easier your meditation, and nothing makes me happier then to see people smiling and having a good meditation. It's really true.

I did a practice for awhile while I was in Malaysia, and because I was a monk I could do this sort of thing but, and I can recommend it for other people but it's really a difficult practice. And that is every time I came to a doorway, I practiced loving-kindness, in the doorway. If I was sitting, and I got up to walk, my first step was with loving-kindness. It's not an easy practice, and I was doing that. I must have been doing that for about three months before I would pretty much hit it every time. And then it got to be a fun thing, but it was difficult, because I'd forget, and what I made myself do was, if I got up and started walking and I didn't have the first step with loving-kindness, then I would walk backwards to where I was sitting and sit down and then get up again and say: "Ok, now we're going to do it right."  
(Laughs)

Or the same thing going through the doorway. Every doorway I went through, I'd try to practice loving-kindness. It's just using little keys like that, and then developing it into a habit, and then you start finding that you carry it for longer and longer, and it gets easier over time, but it's not an easy practice, it's really difficult. But, being a



monk, I didn't have anything better to do with my time so . . .(Laughs)  
It was either that or read, so . . .

Ok, where was I?

MN:

18. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent...I considered thus: 'Sloth and torpor arose in me, and because of sloth and torpor my concentration fell away; when my concentration fell away, the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared. I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention nor sloth and torpor will arise in me again.'

BV: The inattention leads to sloth and torpor, it leads to a mind that dulls out pretty easily, and it leads to a sleepy mind.

One of the things that an awful lot of people when they're doing a retreat, I say: "Well you notice the sloth and torpor and you let it be and relax." And you say: "Well I'm already sleepy, why should I relax?" But there's a tension and tightness behind it, and that's the: "I am sleepy." And the identification with it that causes the clinging and the views and all of this kind of thing to arise, so you need to relax that and come back. And again try sitting a little bit more.

I want to say rigidly, but that's not a good word for it. A little bit straighter. And you'll find that you can catch when your back is starting to [slump] and right then you're not completely caught by the sloth and torpor, so it's easy to let go and relax.

But the thing with sloth and torpor is it's particularly persistent, so what everybody does with sloth and torpor is try to put in a whole lot of effort, so it won't bother, and then all of a sudden you're caught with it again. So, it's the learning how to investigate the sloth and torpor, how to investigate how it arises, and the, your energy increases as you become more interested in how this process works.

And that's a slow building of the energy, I say slow building, it's five or ten minutes of that before you finally realize that the sloth and

torpor doesn't bother you any more, you can just let it be. So that's the way we handle that one. Because there's a lot of different things that you never really recognized with the sloth and torpor before, but now as you start to, you get to the place where your back starts doing that, [slumping] and you see that, and you let it go and you say: "What happened right before that?" And then you recognize a feeling a thought something like that, and then you come back and you see that feeling or thought and then the back starts doing that and you go: "Ah, now we're starting to see a pattern."

Now what happened right before that one? But then you have to start taking the interest in how it arises, you sit just a little bit more erect and then you put a mental note with that: "When my back starts to slump more, I'll notice it." And that's the way that I found that I could overcome the sloth and torpor without having my head bouncing around.

Just about everybody that starts a retreat, you go through a period of sloth and torpor, and it's kind of funny because when I was in Asia, I'd been meditating for two years without a break, and there would be other people coming through, and I'm sitting there in meditation and all of a sudden I'm feeling, guy on this side is starting to go: "Zeeep, zeeep, zeeep" and the guy on this side is starting to go like that too. And I [thought]: "Ok, I'm going to break my meditation and I get up and I look and sure enough they're both going like that and I started calling them the bobbing bookends. (Laughs)

And we had group interviews, there would be six or eight of us that would go to see the teacher at one time, and he would talk to each one and you'd get up and leave, And the first one came in to the interview and he said: "I've got sloth and torpor something fierce." And the Sayadaw said: "Is your head bobbing up and down like this?" And he said: "Yes." And he said: "Well, this is like those lizards, they're bouncing their head up and down, so you have lizard mind." (Laughs) You have to understand, this Sayadaw has no sense of humor at all. (Laughs) And to come out and say something like that was really a shock.

Ah...

MN:

19. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent...I considered thus: 'Fear arose in me, and because of fear my collectedness fell away; when my collectedness fell away, the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared.' Suppose a man set out on a journey and murderers leaped out on both sides of him; then fear would arise in him because of that. So too, fear arose in me...the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] 'I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention nor sloth and torpor nor fear will arise in me again.'

BV: How do you not have fear arise? When it comes up, it's real hard, your mind is like stuck in ice, it's frozen, and that fear is real and it affects your body and it contracts your body. The easiest way to overcome that fear is first by noticing the tensions in your body, where they are, and try to relax them as best you can. And when you get to a certain place, you'll notice that your mind is not so rock hard with the fear and it's a little bit easier to relax, but it takes a lot of work, you're going to be bouncing back and forth for a little while, letting the fear go, you'll find it in your arms, your shoulders, small of your back, your buttocks, even your feet have tension in them, and your jaw, your neck.

But as you put your attention on that and relax, smile, wish yourself well. There are times in the meditation that you need loving-kindness more than anybody else, so give it to yourself, it's ok to do that, and then when that fear comes back you say: "Well I had this real tightness here", and you relax that and look at your throat and relax that and wish yourself well again, and relax the shoulders and the stomach and ...

So you're practicing your loving-kindness and you start to see that the fear is just a feeling. And you can be sitting and all of a sudden a noise can come up or there can be a flash of light or something and your mind will just catch on to that and all of a sudden there's these

ghosts that are fifteen feet high that are going to eat you alive. And your mind really takes that as for real. But as you continually relax into that, and send your loving-kindness to yourself, then it won't come up so much. And you're starting to see: "This is how this process works." So it's easier to let go of that way.

Ah -

MN:

20. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent...I considered thus: 'Elation arose in me, and because of elation my collectedness fell away; when my collectedness fell away, the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared.' Suppose a man seeking one entrance to a hidden treasure came all at once upon five entrances to a hidden treasure;" then elation would arise in him because of that. So too, elation arose in me...the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared. [I considered thus:] 'I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention...nor fear nor elation will arise in me again.'

BV: The elation is joy that you grab onto, and you get involved in with the thinking about. So you stay with your object of meditation, you don't have much problem with that. So that's actually a reasonably easy one to let go of, but that's the one that all of the Asians are deathly afraid of. "Don't be attached!" – "Ok, piece of cake."

MN:

21. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent...I considered thus: 'Inertia arose in me, and because of inertia my collectedness fell away; when my collectedness fell away, the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared. I shall so act that neither doubt nor inattention...nor elation nor inertia will arise in me again.'

BV: Inertia is another word for torpor, it's just dullness. It's like you put your butter in the freezer, and you have fresh baked bread, and you want to put some butter on it so you get it out of the freezer and you scrape real hard, and then you try to put it evenly on the bread.

Your mind is like that butter, it just doesn't spread so easily, it just kind of dulls out, it doesn't want to move. It just wants to be there and that's it. And again, the way to overcome this is by taking an interest in how this whole process works. One of the things that helps overcome inertia, is by doing your walking meditation and walking backwards, because it helps you to pick up your energy, and it puts a little bit more sharpness to your mindfulness, because you're afraid you're going to walk too far and fall over or whatever, so you have to be a little bit more alert, and that helps overcome inertia.

Ok -

MN:

22. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent...I considered thus: 'Excess of energy arose in me, and because of excess of energy my collectedness fell away; when my collectedness fell away, the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared.' Suppose a man were to grip a quail tightly with both hands; it would die then and there. So too, an excess of energy arose in me...{ ...}

BV: So when you feel this excess of energy, it is always restlessness. It comes for a lot of different reasons, but it's always, the start of it is: "I want." You have an expectation, you want things to be in a particular way, you use an excess of energy to get it, and your mind becomes more and more active and more and more energetic, and more effort is put into it, and it seems like you're at war with yourself.

So you have to let go of all of the expectations of what you want to see happen during the meditation, and it can be a subtle little thing like I was telling you before, this one lady was very good at getting into jhāna, and she tried the determination of: "I want to get into jhāna." And every time she sat after that, she was putting in that little extra effort to get there, and that was the thing that stopped her from getting into it.

When I got her to change the determination to have her mind be alert, peaceful, calm, then the jhāna came back very easily because

that stopped her from that little, it doesn't take much, just a little extra push can cause the restlessness really to run away with you.

Now I was at a meditation center and I was doing all kinds of things, I was busy building this and doing that, and a guy came and he wanted to be doing a one month retreat, so the teacher came to me and he said: "I want you to stop what you're doing and I want you to meditate with him." Well, that's what I was there for. But I really in the back of my mind, I said: "Well you know I want to get this done and I want to get that done, but I want to meditate too, a good month's retreat, that's ok."

So two days into it I have restlessness like you can't believe, I can't sit for more than twenty minutes, and I'm going out of my tree, and I started doing some walking and when I did the walking meditation, it was almost like a run. And finally I went: "Well, what's the cause of this? This really hurts, I don't want this to be like this, what is the cause of that?" And that's when my intuition kicked in, and it said: "You don't really want to be doing this." And when I recognized that, it was like: "Oh, just that little desire to be doing something else, it's caused me two days of hell."

Well, I want to be meditating more than anything else, this other stuff is just nuts, why do I want to do that? Just let it go, it will take care of itself." And I had a great retreat after that, I mean really great retreat. But it was just asking the question and then settling down a little bit, and waiting for your intuition to come and give you the answer, and it will with each one of these things, it does happen that way.

MN:

23. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent...I considered thus: 'Deficiency of energy arose in me, and because of deficiency of energy my collectedness fell away; when my collectedness fell away, the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared.' Suppose a man were to grip a quail loosely; it would fly out of his hands. So too, a deficiency of energy arose in me...{....}

BV: So what are we talking about here? We're talking about that balance of your energy and you have to be real careful with it, and this is a learning process. So you have to let go of the: "I want", and you have to start looking at the amount of energy you're putting into your interest. And your interest is incredibly important, your curiosity as to how all of this works, what the right amount of energy is for this time, because it's not going to be the next time you come and sit, it's going to have to be adjusted a little bit.

That's one of the reasons that I was telling you last night, this is the most fascinating process that I've ever run across, I can't imagine being anything but a Buddhist, because there's so many: "Oh, wow"s, and they're little ones for yourself, you know: "Oh, wow, I was doing it like that and it was knocking me off balance."

Now you have to be more heedful of: "Oh, we have to adjust a little bit here, a little bit there." and its just like little tiny tweaks, and at the base of that is your smile, because that helps you to get into your intuition. And you've heard me say before, play this like it's a game, and I literally mean that, this is a game to be experimenting with, and tweaking here and tweaking there, and see if: "Does this work? Well it didn't work so well, let's try this one." It's ok to experiment, as long as you're smiling. Got to smile. (Laughs).

Ok -

MN:

{24....} I considered thus: 'Longing arose in me, and because of that longing my collectedness fell away; when my collectedness fell away, the radiance and the vision of forms disappeared. {....}

BV: Longing, that subtle little desire for the goal. Just: "I wish it would hurry up, I've been doing this long enough, I want it to happen now." It's not a very loud kind of thing that happens in your mind, but it has some impatience with it and jeeze , "You know, Reverend's been talking about this for so long and, it should be happening now."

So that longing pulls you out of the present moment and it causes all kinds of problems, and one of the longings that does occur, is when the hindrance does come, the longing for it to go away, that will make it stay longer. So we have to be really careful of that and just notice that your mind has a tendency to want things to be in a particular way, and let go of that, you never know what's going to happen next.

OK -

MN:

25. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent...I considered thus:  
'Perception of diversity arose in me, {...}'

BV: Now what you're going to see, and you can get hooked by it, is how impermanent everything is and you start watching that. But, the problem with watching impermanence isn't doing that in particular, it's the starting to think about it, and you get caught with your thoughts as you're watching these impermanent things arise, and these things happen very fast, and you've got change happening, happening, happening, happening really, really quickly, but if you get caught in just watching it at one level, you don't go any deeper, that's one of the things that's probably my biggest challenge for showing people how to meditate, is saying: "Well what came before that?"

This is a question that drives her [KK] crazy, because she'll come and she'll tell me some real neat insight and how it all worked and all of this stuff, I say: "Yeah, what happened before that?" – "Before that? You mean there is a before that?" (Laughs)

Now this one is going to get you -

MN:

26. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent...I considered thus:  
'Excessive meditation upon forms arose in me, {...}'

BV: Whoa, what does that mean? Excessive meditation, there's no



such a thing as excessive meditation is there? But you can get stale, ok, you try so hard for so long, and it just seems like your progress just isn't there and you keep doing it, you're doing it in the same way and you haven't got that enthusiasm which you need.

And that happened with some students when we were up on the ridge and we did our morning sit and I said: "Today, I don't want you to meditate at all, today's a play day." And what I said was: "There's only one catch to playing today, you can't take anything seriously, no matter what happens today, you can't take it seriously. I don't care what you do today, you can go down on the river, you can play in the forest, you can do anything you want, but don't take it seriously."

So, there was an awful lot of laughter and a lot of playing that happened that day and we have big rocks on the road and we had to clear them out and we had to clear them out so she got them to make a game out of getting the rocks and throwing them off the cliff, and there was one person that was driving up, he was kind of a grumpy individual, but this man, who was starting to have fun, got him so enthusiastic that he started smiling and having fun throwing rocks off.

It got time for the Dhamma talk, and they were all in, they were glowing, everybody was really doing good, and I said: "Well, how did your meditation go today?" - "Oh, we didn't meditate." And I said: "You didn't? Did you take anything seriously today?" - "Oh no, you told us we couldn't." And I said: "Good meditation, wasn't it?" And the we had a long discussion about how sneaky a monk I am.  
(Laughs)

But that's the way mindfulness needs to be: light - don't take any of this stuff seriously. Lightly, lightly - doesn't mean that you don't get things done, they cleaned that road off beautifully; they got a lot done. But they had fun doing it. And with that sense of fun, came this lightness and alertness of their mind, when it started to get heavy, they started: "Oh, I'm being serious, I don't want to do that now." So they'd laugh, and make somebody else laugh along with them, and they affected the world around them, especially with this

grumpy guy. He didn't like to laugh so much, but he was having a great time because that's the kind of energy there was.

MN:

27. "When, Anuruddha, I understood that doubt is an imperfection of the mind, I abandoned doubt, an imperfection of the mind. When I understood that inattention...sloth and torpor...fear...elation...inertia...excess of energy...deficiency of energy...longing...perception of diversity...excessive meditation upon forms is an imperfection of the mind, I abandoned excessive meditation upon forms, an imperfection of the mind.

28. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute, I perceived radiance but I did not see forms; I saw forms but I did not perceive radiance, even for a whole night or a whole day or a whole day and night. I thought: 'What is the cause and condition for this?' Then I considered thus: 'On the occasion when I do not attend to the sign of forms but attend to the sign of radiance, I then perceive radiance but do not see forms.

BV: So he was doing it in an imbalanced way.

MN:

On the occasion when I do not attend to the sign of radiance but attend to the sign of forms, I then see forms but do not perceive radiance, even for a whole night or a whole day or a whole day and night.'

29. "As, Anuruddha, I was abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute, I perceived limited light radiance and saw limited forms; I perceived immeasurable radiance and saw immeasurable forms, even for a whole night or a whole day or a whole day and night. I thought: 'What is the cause and condition for this?' Then I considered thus: 'On the occasion when collectedness is limited, my vision is limited, and with limited vision I perceive limited radiance and limited forms. But on the occasion when collectedness is immeasurable, my vision is immeasurable, and with immeasurable vision I perceive

immeasurable radiance and see immeasurable forms, even for a whole night or a whole day or a whole day and night.'

30. "When, Anuruddha, I understood that doubt is an imperfection of the mind and had abandoned doubt, an imperfection of the mind; when I understood that inattention is an imperfection of the mind and had abandoned inattention...abandoned sloth and torpor...abandoned fear...abandoned elation...abandoned inertia...abandoned excess of energy...abandoned deficiency of energy...abandoned longing...abandoned perception of diversity...abandoned excessive meditation upon forms, an imperfection of the mind; then I thought: 'I have abandoned those imperfections of the mind. Let me now develop collectedness in three ways.'

31. "Thereupon, Anuruddha, I developed collectedness with thinking and examining thought; I developed collectedness without thinking but with examining thought only; I developed collectedness without thinking and without examining thought;

BV: He's talking about getting into the first jhāna, getting into the second jhāna.

MN:

I developed collectedness with joy; I developed collectedness without joy; I developed collectedness accompanied by happiness; I developed collectedness accompanied by equanimity.

32. "When, Anuruddha, I had developed collectedness with {...} the knowledge and vision arose in me: 'My deliverance is unshakeable; this is my last birth; now there is no renewal of being.'"

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

BV: Meditation is... everybody has a different idea of what it is but it's really about watching the more and more subtle things as they're starting to arise, not holding on to any one thing so tightly that it

makes everything else unobservable, so doing it with a light mind, doing it with a sense of fun is absolutely necessary, and you have no idea how much resistance people have to hearing that in Buddhism. "Life is supposed to be suffering." "Ok, you can suffer all you want, I don't care, I'm going to have fun!" The Buddha said we're the happy ones, and that makes sense to me. So be happy.

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 . . .

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