

Thai Temple Talk Pomona CA

A Dhamma Talk at Wat Buddhapanya (a Theravada Buddhist Temple)

by Bhante Vimalaramsi

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Hosted by: Ven. Dr. Chanya, Abbot

(Thai speaker intro) ... Go around country to take retreat and to talk Dhamma and have some discussion about Buddhism to the people. Today at first I would like to invite Venerable Vimala to talk about the way of happiness by Anapanasati practice of mindful breathing in and breathing out or any way or any technique to practice Dhamma to end our suffering according to Buddhism.

BV: Going to give me the book?

SK: Sure!

BV: Do you practice meditation? Yes, a little? Well maybe I can help you with that a little bit. Meditation has been practiced for a long time by following what the Commentaries say rather than what the Buddha said. I've been practicing meditation for thirty-five years, and for the first twenty years I followed what the Commentary taught. And then I started getting very curious about what the Buddha actually said about meditation. And what I want to do is read the instructions in the meditation to you. This is straight from the Buddha, and the instructions are a little bit different than what you might have heard before. So, it says:

MN: Breathing in long, he understands: 'I breathe in long'; or breathing out long, he understands 'I breathe out long'. Breathing in short, he understands: 'I breathe in short'; or breathing out short, he understands: 'I breathe out short'.

BV: What does this mean? You know when you take a long breath and you know when you take a short breath. That's what 'understands' means. It means that you know directly when you have a short breath, when you have a long breath. You'll notice that in these instructions there is no mention of where the breath should be seen. It doesn't say nose, it doesn't say inside of the nose, it doesn't say the upper lip, it doesn't say that you follow the breath into your lungs and back, it doesn't say you see the rise and fall of the abdomen. It just says you understand, when you take a long breath and when you take a short breath. You understand when your breath is fast and when it's slow. You understand when your breath is very heavy and coarse and when it's very fine. You understand. Now, the next part of the instructions are the actual, instructions the Buddha gave and how to do the meditation. It says:

MN: You train thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body'. You train this way: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body'.

BV: That means your physical body. Now, when you start looking at the instructions in the meditation, the Buddha does not over emphasize only keeping your mind on breath, and you get that idea by the next part of the instructions. It goes:

MN: You train this way: 'I shall breathe in tranquillizing the bodily formation', 'I shall breathe out tranquillizing the bodily formation'.

(5:50)

BV What does this mean? It means: on the in-breath you relax your entire body, on the out-breath you relax your entire body. Now a lot of people, especially in America, we have this idea that the body is from the neck down, and we think the mind is from the neck up. But actually the body is from the top of your head down, and this is where you will notice that there is some tension and tightness that arises. It's a subtle kind of feeling, and it happens with your brain. Now there's a little membrane that's all the way around your brain. Every time your mind's attention moves from one thing to another there's a little tightness that happens. That membrane contracts a little bit. So, when we're talking about tranquilizing the bodily formation we're also talking about this tightness that happens around your brain.

TT: 5:52

So, on the in-breath you relax and you feel that tension and tightness, you feel it go away, you feel your mind expand and become calm. On the in-breath you relax that tension and tightness, on the out-breath you relax that tension and tightness. Every time mind's attention moves from one thing to another, there is tension and tightness that arises. Let's say you have a thought arise, there's tension and tightness because of the thought. What do you when your mind becomes distracted while you're meditating? You let go of the distraction, and relax. Now, every time you relax that tightness, your mind is very pure. Your mind is very clean, and very alert. This what the Buddha talked about very often, about having a pure mind. Why is it pure? That tightness that arises in your head is craving. What is craving? Craving is the "I like it", "I don't like it" mind. Now this happens very fast. You don't really even notice that the "I like it", "I don't like it" mind is there until you start thinking. Now that's the next thing that happens. After craving there is clinging. Clinging is all of your thoughts, all of your opinions, all of your ideas, all of your mental verbalization, and it's also where you really start identifying very strongly with whatever thought or feeling there is that pulls your

attention away. When you let go of the craving then the clinging, doesn't arise anymore.

TT: 8:19

So, the key to the meditation is this one extra step that's been ignored by the Commentaries, and this extra step is relaxing on the in-breath, relaxing on the out-breath. Your mind is distracted by a thought, by a feeling, by a sight, by a sound. It doesn't matter what the distraction is, there's always this tension and tightness that arises along with it. Now this is not big tension and tightness, it's subtle, and as you relax, you feel an expansion that happens when you let go of that tightness on that membrane that's around your brain. When you let go of that tension and tightness, you have let go of craving. That's the Third Noble Truth! The First Noble Truth is there is suffering, there is a distraction. The Second Noble Truth, there's a cause of that suffering, craving. The Third Noble Truth, there is the cessation of craving. The Fourth Noble Truth, there's a way that leads to the cessation of craving, and that's letting go of that tension and tightness.

When I teach the meditation, I teach that I want you to put this in - it's not in the suttas directly - and that is: I want you to smile. When you smile, your mental state goes up. Your mind is more alert! So, we put in this one extra step. Now, there's a method of remembering how to do the meditation. I call it the 6Rs. You Recognize that your mind is distracted, you Release the distraction. How do you let go of a thought? You don't keep your attention on the thought anymore. You take your attention and you put it on Relaxing, and then Re-Smiling, and then returning to the breath, and continuing on. You Repeat that process. Now this is the 6Rs. You Recognize, you Release, you Relax, Re-Smile, Return to your object of meditation, and Repeat that whole process. When you follow doing that while

you're sitting in meditation, you will start to develop the habit of whenever your mind is distracted, you use the 6R's and let go of that distraction. But you can carry the 6Rs with you into your daily life! Whenever you see that your mind becomes upset, your mind is heavy and is tight. How do you feel when anger arises? Not happy! You feel this tension and tightness, and you feel tightness in your body. It's not comfortable, but when you use the 6Rs you Recognize that you have this anger, and you Release it. 'Release it' always means not keeping your attention on what you consider the problem. Letting go of those thoughts, Relaxing. Now, Smile. "I don't feel like smiling. I'm angry"! I don't care, smile anyway. Hahaha! (Laughter) When you smile it makes your mind happy. It makes your mind uplifted. It makes your mind more alert. When your mind is very much caught in anger, or sadness, or frustration, or depression, whatever the catch-of-the-day is at that time, your mind is very tight and tense. "I don't like this feeling"! "I don't want this here"! That's the subtle thoughts that you have.

TT: 13:27

Now, we're made up of five things. They're called the five khandha or the Five Aggregates. You have physical body. You have feeling; feeling is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. You have perception; perception is the part of the mind that puts names on things. You look at this and your mind says this is a cup. Perception is the part of the mind that did that. Now, you have thoughts and you have consciousness. When an angry feeling arises, it's painful. Painful feeling arises and then your mind puts the name on that: "this is angry", and , you start thinking about all the reasons why you don't like that feeling, and you project it out onto other things and other people. But, what we have to start to realize is that feelings are feelings, and thoughts are thoughts, and they're not the same. You can't control your feeling with your thoughts. It doesn't work. How many years have you been alive trying to control your feelings with your thoughts? And what happens, the feeling gets bigger and more

intense. So, the thoughts get bigger and try to be more powerful, try to push that feeling away. But it doesn't work.

This is where you practice the 6Rs. You Recognize that your mind is distracted. You Release the distraction. That's means you let the feeling be there by itself, and you let go of the thoughts. You don't continue thinking those thoughts. And then you Relax. You relax the body. Now you Smile, and you Return. You bring that mind that doesn't have the craving in it back to your object of meditation. Now if you don't have that "I don't like it", your mind is pure for just a small period of time, and you're bringing that purity back to, your breath and relaxing, and you Repeat that. Now, the nature of these kind of emotional states is, they don't go away right away. So, your mind will bounce back to it, and then you do the whole thing again. You let go, you Relax, you Smile, you come back, and you continue on.

As you bounce back and forth, you start to see that there is a pattern or a process that happens, and as you become more familiar with how your mind actually works, you start to see that right before your mind really got carried away for a minute or two, there was something else that arose right before that. Something else, another kind of feeling was there. So, the next time your mind gets distracted instead of letting it go all the way, when you recognize that feeling, then you put the 6Rs there, and Release that feeling, and Relax, and smile, and come back, and continue on.

As you become more familiar with how mind's attention actually moves from one thing to another, you stop identifying with, the feeling and with the thoughts, so strongly. It becomes weaker. So, the anger becomes less and less as you Recognize, and Release it, and Relax, and Smile, Return, and keep doing that. After a period of time this hindrance, this anger, will start to get very weak, because

you're not putting your attention on it and you're not trying to control it. You're not trying to make the anger go away, you're allowing the space for the anger to be there, but you don't pay attention to it anymore. So, as you allow the space and Relax into that, you're letting go of your attachment to that anger. What is attachment? This feeling, these thoughts, they're MINE. This is who "I am". "I", "I", "I", "I", "I". "I don't like it. I want it to be different than it is". As you let go and start seeing this as a process, rather than, taking it personally and getting involved and trying to control it and make it go away, as you allow the space for that feeling and those thoughts to be, and don't keep their attention on them, they don't get any stronger, they start getting weaker. And as it gets weaker and weaker and weaker, eventually it will get so weak that it's not even there anymore.

TT: 20:04

Now I'm going to change for a minute and then we'll get back to this. Ok?

We have these things called 'hindrances'. There's five of them: You have lust or greedy mind or 'I want it' mind; you have hatred or aversion mind or 'I don't want it' mind; you have sleepiness and dullness; you have restlessness and anxiety; you have doubt. Now, these five things are called hindrances, nivarana in Pali, they're called hindrances because when they arise they take your attention completely away from what you're doing in the present moment. Now, when you're angry, do you know what you're doing? If you're chopping vegetables and you're angry, all of a sudden you cut yourself. Why? Because you weren't paying attention to that; you were paying attention to this distraction, this hindrance.

Now, when people start meditating, they have the idea that they're not supposed to have any thoughts coming in their mind, and that's not the way your mind works. Your mind is there so it can think. So, when they meditate they have this idea that thoughts are your enemy, something to fight with, something to control... "I don't want these thoughts. I'm going to push them away. Stop it! I want to be peaceful and calm"! Did you hear the 'I want' that I just said? What was that? That was part of the lust that's part of that desire to have things be the way you want them to be. Now, you can project the way you things to be, but when they're not the way you want them to be, that's the cause of suffering! So, when thoughts come up in your mind while you're meditating it's ok for the thoughts to be there. Why? Because it's the truth! When they come up, they're there! You can't fight with the truth. Any time you try to fight with the truth, any time you try to control the truth, any time you try to make the truth - and when I say truth, you can also substitute that word for Dhamma - any time you try to control the Dhamma, that is the cause of suffering. You can't control it, but what you can do is allow the Dhamma to be. < not sure – should these 3 be the lower case dhamma?> Release the thoughts, Relax, Smile, come back to your object of meditation and stay with your object of meditation. There we are back to the 6Rs again. Thoughts are not your enemy to fight with. Nothing is your enemy to fight with. If there's something that arises in the present moment that you don't like, the first thing that happens is "I don't like it!", craving... "I want it to be different than it is!", clinging... my old habitual habit, whenever this kind of feeling arises, I always act that way.

TT: 23:58

As you begin to see how mind's attention actually works, you start to see that there's a little process that happens, every time. Everybody's mind is the same. It doesn't matter whether it's a Eastern mind or the Western mind. Our mind works exactly in the same way. Let's do it this way: in order to see, you have to have good working eye, there has to be color and form, the good working eye hits the color

and form, eye-consciousness arises. Now, there's three things that have happened; there's eye, there's color and form, and there's eye-consciousness. These three things are called eye-contact.

S: Phassa.

BV: Yes.

S: Phassa.

BV: With, contact as condition, eye-feeling arises. Feeling is pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neither painful-nor-pleasant. If it's a pleasant sight then a pleasant feeling arises. If it's a painful sight then a painful feeling arises. Right after feeling arises eye-craving arises; "I like that", "I don't like that". There's this tension in your head, in your mind, and right after that then there's all of the thoughts about why you like or dislike that feeling, and then your habitual tendency

S: Bhava.

BV: of whenever this feeling arises I always act this way.

Now, there's all of this identification with these thoughts and with these feelings, but you have no control over these. You don't have any control over your eye and what it hits, or having eye-consciousness arise, or the eye-contact, or the eye-feeling. Where you have your choice is as soon as that tension and tightness arises, the craving, you can Recognize now, you can really see it very easily, and you can let go of that craving. When you let go of the craving, there is no thoughts, there's no habitual tendency, and there is this pure mind.

So, it doesn't matter what kind of distraction there is that arises while you're sitting in meditation. That distraction is a hindrance, and all hindrances arise in the same way. You have the six-sense doors, there's contact, there's feeling, there's craving. If you recognize the feeling and you Relax right then, then craving won't even arise. But this happens fast. (click of the fingers) That was this process that

happened a million times. Ok, it happens very fast, but as you begin to Recognize how this process works, you start to see it more and more quickly, and it gets easier to recognize. So, the 6R's are a very important part, of learning how we cause our own pain, how we cause our own suffering. Nobody out here causes me to be angry. Anger is a painful feeling: "I don't like it", "I want it to be different than it is", "I don't like this"... my habitual tendency.

Now, what I am explaining to you is called Dependent Origination. There's a cause and effect relationship, and everything that arises, is impersonal. It's not personal. Your anger isn't personal unless you make it personal. When "I" get into it, and "I" don't like it, and "I" want to control it, and "I" want to make it different... as you identify more with the thoughts and the feelings, the tension and tightness gets very big, but when you practice the 6Rs, there is that letting go. It's Recognizing that your mind is distracted, Releasing that distraction, don't keep your attention on it; Relax, that's the step that is so important, because if you don't have that Relax step in it, what you're doing is you're bringing that craving back to your object of meditation. So, you have the Relax.. Smile, make your mind light, Return to the breath, and Repeat. 6Rs!

TT: 30:06

Now you can do this anytime, not while you're just sitting. We have hindrances arise all the time, right? We get angry, we get sad, we get a feeling that we have to do five hundred things and we only have twenty minutes to do it! And we start running around and not being happy because of the hindrances. Now, the hindrances are a very important part of the meditation, and now when I'm talking about meditation I'm talking about not just sitting. I'm talking about all the time. Life! What you're doing with your daily activities, that can be part of the meditation. Meditation is being aware of what your mind is doing, not getting caught by it. The anger comes up, how many times do you get caught by it, and you stay angry for, days. Now, how do you affect the world around you when you're angry? Not very nice. You're at war with everyone. Somebody says something you don't like and you're already angry, then that anger

comes up even stronger. And then you say things that you wish you wouldn't have said, later, or you do things that you wish you wouldn't have done, later, and this all starts from not being aware of what your mind is doing.

See, the sitting meditation is necessary because you can watch more closely, what your mind is doing in the present moment, and you apply the 6Rs; you Recognize, you Release, you Relax, you Re-Smile, you Return, you Repeat, coming back to the breath every time there's a distraction. So, you really start to learn while you're doing your sitting meditation, but, the biggest part of your meditation is while you're out here doing other things and watching what your mind is doing there. You need to sit in meditation for a short time every day. You need the quiet time. I say a short time, thirty minutes is plenty, but the thing is, when you get up from your meditation you don't stop meditating. You keep meditating.

Now, yesterday when I was at the park, I gave a lot of talk about smiling, and the necessary, part of smiling is that it helps you to be joyful. The more you smile, the lighter your mind becomes, the happier you feel. Right? So, why don't you smile all the time? When you smile all the time, you're really a lot more aware of when your mind starts to get heavy, when it starts to get hard, when you start to become attached. Any time you have repeat thoughts, the repeat thoughts are an attachment. An attachment is a hindrance. The hindrance is always "I am, that", identifying with it. As you practice smiling into everything, you become much more alert. Your mind is much more awake in the present moment, so you can see when your mind starts to get heavy, and you go "Oh, I don't need to do that, let's let that go!", and we can smile some more. When you do have a heavy mind, you have anger, you have dissatisfaction, whatever it happens to be. The fastest way to let that go is to laugh. To laugh with yourself about being angry.

TT: 34:53

I'll give you something, when I first started noticing exactly how this works: I was helping somebody build a house, and I was doing it for free. I just wanted to help him, and we were having fun doing it, but what happened was, all of a sudden because it was his house, he started thinking he was my boss, and I'm just doing it because I like doing it. He's not my boss, but he started thinking he was, and he said something to me, and I got a lot of anger! And I started walking away and I'm digging my heels into the ground, "that no good so-and-so while I'm walking", and it became apparent to me that he thought he was my boss, and that was funny to me. "He thinks he's my boss!", and as soon as I laughed, I went from, "I'm angry and I don't like it" to "It's only this, it's only this feeling of anger, what is that?". You can let it go very easy when you laugh! Developing a sense of humor about how crazy your mind is, is the fastest way to be sane, and welcome to the human race, we're all crazy. Hahaha!

When you develop this light mind your meditation, your awareness of everything else improves. It really becomes the text, the Buddha's word becomes alive again because you see that he wasn't teaching something that was just something to talk about, or something to pay respect to, or something to think about. He was teaching us how to live without suffering, how to have a happy mind, all the time! The easiest way to have a happy mind all the time is to smile, and laugh, and have fun. Now, you're going to have times when something happens and it going to be horrible, but when you start developing a mind that is very content and peaceful in the present moment, then your mind has balance in it. So, you don't suffer when something bad happens. Last month my dog, I mean he was my buddy, he was really my pal, he was killed, got hit by a car. And they told me he got hit by a car and I went "Well, he's gone". I didn't sorrow, I didn't cry, I didn't get upset. He was there and now he's not there anymore. There is balance when you practice this kind of meditation.

TT:38:24

When you practice the 6Rs, when you Release you Recognize, you Release, you Relax, you Re-Smile, you Return, you Repeat that

process. When you do your sitting meditation, the hindrances, when they arise, are your teacher. The hindrances are showing you that your mind gets distracted. Why does it get distracted? Because of an attachment, from the past, and you pushed it down and pushed it down and pushed it down until you forgot it, and now that hindrance comes back. As you begin to practice the 6Rs, whatever hindrance arises, it's showing you how to meditate. It's helping you develop the habit of practicing the 6Rs, and the hindrance becomes weaker, and weaker and then it goes away. What happens when a hindrance goes away? Relief! "Ah, somebody just took this heavy weight off of my shoulders." Then you have joy arise.

Now, there's five different kinds of joy. Three kinds of joy happen for anybody at any time. Two kinds of joy only happen through the meditation, through mental development. The first kind of joy is like goose bumps. It's there for just a short period of time, disappears. The next kind of joy is like a flash of lightning. It's very intense, but it's only there for a short period and disappears. The next kind of joy is like standing in the ocean, and you feel a wave of joy coming over you. It's not as strong as the flash of lightning, but it's very pleasant. Wave after wave just comes over you as very happy feeling. Now, every time joy arises, right after the joy fades away there's a feeling of tranquility, a feeling of very strong peacefulness. Now, the next two kinds of joy only happen through the meditation, through letting go of the hindrances. When you have this kind of joy arise, you feel very, very happy. You will smile whether you want to or not. You feel very light in your mind, very light in your body. It's a happy, happy feeling and it has some excitement in it. Your mind just kind of wobbles a little bit with it, it's such a strong feeling.

Now, as I said I've been practicing meditation for a lot of years. I've had a lot of teachers, and, for the first twenty years of the meditation I was always told whenever I got joy "Don't be attached!". Well, I didn't want to be attached, so when joy came up I started pushing it away "I don't want to be happy"! That doesn't make sense. What do you do when joy arises? You treat it the same as a painful feeling. Painful feeling, pleasant feeling, same coin, different sides. You treat

the feeling the same way. You allow the feeling to be there, it's a happy feeling, yes. Ok, and Relax, Smile, and come back to your object of meditation. The joy will stay for a period of time and then it will fade away. Right after it fades away you feel very, very tranquil. Very peaceful, "Ah this is what I'm meditating for." And you feel more comfortable in your mind and in your body than you've ever felt. And, your mind just stays on the breath very easily and relaxing, almost no effort at all. You can still have an occasional wandering thought, but you see it very quickly. You let go of that, Relax, and then come back again.

What I've just described to you is the first stage of the meditation. This is your first level of understanding of how your mind's attention works. In Pali they call this jhana. Now, this is a different kind of jhana than almost everybody teaches today, because this is called an aware jhana. Most people teach jhana and it's a one-pointed, deep, deep, absorption kind of meditation, but this is not like that. What's the difference between the two different practices? One, your mind is on your object of meditation, this is the one-pointed concentration, gets distracted, you let go of the distraction and immediately come back to your object of meditation. This develops a very, very deep, strong kind of concentration over a period of time.

TT: 44:40

What I'm showing you today is different than that. Your mind is on your object of meditation, there's the distraction, now these are the same thing, you let go of the distraction, that's the same. Now, you Relax the tension caused by that distraction, that's different. That one extra step changes the entire meditation. Now, a lot of people when they tell you about doing the breathing meditation, they tell you focus on the breath, just stay on the breath, but I'm telling you that the breath is the reminder to relax. So, there's not just the breath and focusing only on that, there's the breath and relaxing. In-breath, Relax, out-breath, Relax, distraction, let go, Relax, in-breath, Relax, out-breath, Relax. So, this one extra step, that is in the suttas, I didn't make this up, I read to you the sutta, you have to tranquilize your bodily formation, Relax that tension and tightness. That's what

makes the Buddha's teaching, different, than anybody else's teaching. This one tiny little step: Relax!

How many people here have had headaches before? Everybody, huh? Well, when you get a headache, how does it come up? Well, you start feeling muscles getting tight, and tense, very hard, and then the pain starts. Well, if you don't want a headache then Relax! I don't get headaches!

S: A good Tylenol. (Laughter)

BV: Don't use Tylenol, there's no need. Just be aware when all of these tensions and tightness, Relax! Smile! Laugh! Be happy! The laugh and 'be happy' helps you to relax more. Very important!

The Buddha's biggest wish for every human being was that they would be happy and free from suffering. He spent forty-five years showing all different kinds of ways to be happy, and relaxed, and free from suffering. When you start doing this, you will start noticing very immediate effects. You'll start noticing that your mind is more in balance, that your life becomes easier, and that you become happier. This meditation is very amazing this way.

As you continue on with your smiling and your relaxing, you get and you experience the first jhana, and then your mindfulness will become weak for one reason or another; a distraction happens. Now, you have another hindrance to work with. Now, when you have another hindrance to work with, now it's not such an emergency, now you're starting to understand "Ah, this is how this works", "All I have to do is give the 6Rs... Recognize that there's a distraction, Release that distraction, Relax, Re-Smile, Return, Repeat.

S: So many Rs.

BV: So many Rs. We call them the 6Rs. Now this system is called a mnemonic system. Mnemonic means that it's just a system to help remind you, that this is what you do when there's a distraction. You

don't have to do it verbally in your mind; it's Recognize, Release, Relax, Re-Smile, Return. Repeat. It just gets to be in a flow.S: ~So many Rs it's an art. (?)BV: (Laughs) Art, that's right. Yeah, the art of happiness. (Laughs) TT: 49:30But when you start doing this more and more you start to gain the habit of doing it, so you can let go of the pain and suffering you get when you're out here. Now you become more balanced in your mind all the time, and you start to gain a lot of confidence: "Ah, now I'm starting to understand what the Buddha was talking about". It's not just empty words. This really does work, and it affects me". He was such a wonderful teacher. He was amazing because, after 2500 years we still have what he was teaching. That's how importance the teachings are. And it's not just for monks, it's for everyone.

As you begin to recognize how the hindrances arise and you start letting them go, you start going deeper and deeper into the meditation. Now, a lot of people have this idea that, experiencing jhana is just for while you're sitting in meditation. Can you have joy while you're doing your daily activities? Can you have happiness while you're doing your daily activities? Can you be content with what you're doing while you're doing it, during your daily activities? You can experience jhana any time. It's not the same as the one-pointed jhana that everybody teaches, the absorption jhana, it's not the same. Now, as you let go of another hindrance, then you go into a jhana, this is a second jhana. The second jhana you have very, very strong confidence that this really works. The joy you experience is much stronger. The light feeling in your mind and in your body, your body can become so light that actually it can float.

When I was practicing meditation in Burma, I was teaching a man loving kindness meditation, and I was practicing meditation along with him, and he was sitting on the floor, and all of a sudden I hear this, (Thump!) and I'm going "That is a strange sound, what is that?". And then a couple of minutes later, (Thump!) and this went on for a whole hour, and I'm thinking: "Boy, there's something happening, and I'm keeping my eyes closed, I'm being a good yogi, but my mind is thinking a lot". (Laughs) So, after that meditation period I talked to him, I said "What is that sound that's coming from

you"? He said, "Well, I don't know how to explain it. I just feel so light, and all of a sudden, I'm floating, and I'm there for a moment and then I come back down". And I thought "This was all makeup stuff, this isn't real". You know this is just what everybody hopes they can have that happen to them. So, I just said "Let's go and sit again". So, we're sitting and I hear the (Thump!) and "I can't stand it, I gotta open up my eyes and see this". And it really was true, he went up off of the floor about that far (makes gesture) and he was there for a moment, and he (Thump!) came back down, and he'd pop back up again. I've taught probably two thousand students meditation. He's the only one that's ever done that, unfortunately. But it is for real and it can happen.

TT: 53:42

When the joy is strong enough you feel very light. When that joy fades away you feel so comfortable in your mind and in your body, oh very, very nice! And it's described this way: when you are walking in the desert and you see an oasis and you're very thirsty, just seeing the oasis your mind gets excited, and this is called joy. Your mind gets very happy, "I'm gonna get some water soon". Now you go to the water, and it's in a pool, and you jump in the water, and the water is exactly the right temperature, and your mind goes "Aaaaah!", and your body does the same thing, it goes "Aaaaah, this is perfect!". That is what the Buddha called happiness. And that's what you experience, and it keeps getting stronger for a little while. Your mind stays on your object of meditation very easily, doesn't get distracted, but eventually, your mindfulness for whatever reason starts to get weak, and guess who comes to visit? You have another hindrance come up, but now you start looking forward to the hindrance coming up because you know that it's teaching you, very, very strong lesson in how this process of mind's attention works. You're starting to understand very easily now how mind moves from one thing to another, and it's an impersonal process, and it's ok for it to be there, and you start letting go more and more and then you let go of that hindrance, and you go deeper into your meditation."

Now, this stage is kind of funny when I'm talking to my students because they'll come up and I'll say "Well, how's your meditation?" I know they've been sitting in the second jhana. By the way, I never tell people what jhana they're sitting in. They don't need to know. It's just sign posts for me so I know how to talk to them. So, they'll come up and I'll say "Well how's your meditation?" and they say "I don't have any more joy", and I say "Ok, so how's your meditation?"— "Well it's good, but I don't have any more joy" and I say "Well, do you feel a very strong balance in your mind?" — "Yes, I feel very balanced in my mind"— "You feel really comfortable in your mind and your body?" — "Yes, I feel very comfortable in my mind and in my body, but I don't have any more joy", and I say something like "Good, continue you don't have to have joy."

Your mind becomes so peaceful and calm that joy is a distraction now. So, your mind just lets it go, you go deeper than that, and now you've experienced the third jhana. As you have another hindrance arise, then you start working with that and you'll start noticing that: "I don't feel my hands. I don't have any arms. My feet, they've disappeared. My legs are gone." As you let go of tension and tightness in your mind, you let go of tension and tightness in your body. What you're feeling is tension and tightness when you feel your hands and your feet. As your mind becomes tension free, so does your body. So, you don't feel your body anymore.

Now, as if an ant walks across your hand, you will feel that because there is contact. Sounds you will still hear, but as you go deeper in the third jhana you start losing feeling in the body. And then you have this hindrance and you let go of this hindrance and you go where your mind goes very deep, and this is called the fourth jhana where you have no more feeling in the body. You feel very, very strong balance in your mind. When people get to the fourth jhana that is where I say that they are no longer a beginner yogi. Now you are an advanced meditator.

TT: 58:50

And that's as far as I can take you right now because we have to eat.  
Hahaha.



Text last edited: 16-Feb-08