

2019 Easter Retreat Day 1 Orientation and Talk

https://youtu.be/63G6axb9DJ8?list=PL3sECDBQqxIG_cNFItYyLQk5UT1P6gnyG.

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Where: St. Francis, San Juan Bautista, Ca

Talk by Bhante Vimalaramsi

Abbot, Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center: <https://www.dhammasukha.org/>.

Bhante Vimalaramsi: <https://www.dhammasukha.org/ven-bhante-vimalaramsi.html>

How to practice Metta/TWIM Meditation: <https://www.dhammasukha.org/beginner-...>.

What are the 6Rs: <https://www.dhammasukha.org/the-6rs.html>.

A complete guide to the meditation the way the Buddha taught: <https://www.thepaththonibbana.com/>.

Transcript

"Giving talks as much as I have been doing, my talks have started to change a little bit. I'm talking a lot more about using the **6Rs**. I'm also talking a lot more about recognizing hindrances and what do with the hindrances when they arise.

Also, I've been talking a lot more about getting into your own intuition and asking yourself questions. Too many people want somebody to give them an answer.

What I found is when you ask yourself, you get the answer much more quickly and it's always right.

"What's stopping me from going deeper?"

That's a reasonable question that you can ask yourself and you will get the answer.

So the teaching that I'm giving these days is a little bit different than what you've heard in the past. I hope you appreciate it and I hope you're successful with it.

People are becoming so successful that I'm not so excited about it anymore. Doesn't that sound odd?

So I'm just going to give you the basic instruction tonight.

A lot of you have already done the practice. I'm giving the instruction for beginners.

If you've already got your practice going and you're doing six directions, just follow the six directions with loving-kindness to start off with. Then when you come in for interviews, we can adjust.

When you're practicing loving-kindness meditation, you first start by sending loving and kind thoughts to yourself.

Remember a time when you were happy.

When that happy feeling arises, it's a nice flowing feeling in the center of your chest. As soon as that feeling arises, make a wish for your own happiness. You want to feel the wish.

Now one of the real mistakes that a lot of people make is they make it a mental wish but they don't feel it. You need to feel that wish. You make a feeling for being happy and then feel that happiness. You make a wish for feeling peaceful and calm and then feel peaceful and calm.

Put that feeling in your heart.

If it's joy then do it with joy. Whatever the feeling is that you make for yourself, put that feeling in your heart, and radiate that feeling to yourself.

One of the things that I found really helpful is to be grateful for whatever you're doing.
Gratitude is a big help for your practice and it helps your feeling to get stronger.
No criticizing yourself, no making yourself think about negative stuff.

This is a smiling meditation and that means smile.

In Asia they have this belief that anybody who sees you smiling will think that you're crazy.
So they're really reluctant to smile. I have to push them quite hard sometimes to smile.

If you want to progress with your practice, you have to smile.

The more you smile the more uplifted, your mind becomes.
The more joy you have arise, the better your mindfulness becomes.

That's a key word, mindfulness. It's really popular here in America, not so much in Asia.

What's your definition of mindfulness?

I went to Toronto to a mindfulness conference and I gave a talk near the end of the second day.
When I got there I said, "Okay you've been hearing about mindfulness for a day and a half. What's the definition?"

It was surprising to see 500 people become so quiet and they couldn't give me a definition of what mindfulness is.

So I'm going to give you this definition. It works a hundred percent of the time. It helps your practice to deepen and it helps your awareness to become sharper.

Mindfulness is remembering to observe how the mind's attention moves from one thing to another.

How does mindfulness move now? That's a key question. How does it move from one thing to another?

You are with your object of meditation and you're thinking about something else. How did that happen?
What happened first, what happened after that, what happened after that?

When you use this definition of mindfulness, it helps you to understand much more clearly and more deeply how the links of dependent origination actually work.

So how does this process happen? Because it's a process and it's an impersonal process.

Another word that's used a lot in meditation with the Buddhists is *anatta*.
"Oh, self!"

It doesn't have anything to do with self; it has to do with the impersonal nature of how everything works.
It's not you, it's not yours, it's not yourself.

Everything that happens is part of an impersonal process.

Anytime, you have a hindrance arise, why do hindrances arise? You ever think about that?
"Oh, I'm so restless!"

Why did the hindrance arise? Because in the past, you broke a precept and when you break a precept,
your little intuition voice says, "I shouldn't have done that."
Then you feel guilty and you take that guilty feeling and make it personal.

So what is a hindrance? A hindrance is a past mistake.

Welcome to the real world. We all have past mistakes. It's okay to have a past mistake. Let's not do it anymore though. That's just causing more and more hindrances to arise.

One of the things that's very confusing for an awful lot of people practicing meditation is: When you're on your object of meditation and you have a hindrance arise, what are you supposed to do with it?

"Well, I've read books where they say you're supposed to push it down, push it away, and stop it from coming up."

Well, that doesn't work so good.

I have other practices that I personally have done for 20 years. Note it until it goes away and then come back to your primary object of meditation. That's not right effort.

Right effort is very plain; it's part of the Eightfold Path. When a hindrance arises, you use the 6Rs.

You **recognize** when your mind is distracted, that's easy.

Then you **release** the distraction. That means you don't make a big deal out of it. You don't try to control it. You don't try to do anything with it. You leave it be there by itself and relax.

What is craving?

How are you supposed to recognize craving when it arises?

What are you supposed to do to let that craving go?

How are you supposed to purify your mind?

That's what the meditation is all about—purifying your mind. So how are you supposed to do that? It's pretty easy.

Craving is not particularly strong but it's very persistent.

It'll keep coming back until you learn how to purify your mind. So let's take a look at craving.

Craving is tension and tightness in your mind in your head.

You've heard me talk about the meninges that go around your brain. Well, the meninges not only go around your brain, they go all the way down your spine.

So every time you have a thought, every time there is any kind of distraction that pulls your attention away from staying with your object of meditation, your brain expands a little bit and that causes tension and tightness in your head and in your mind.

So relax, let go of that tension in your head and in your mind.

As soon as you relax, you're going to notice that you don't have any distracting thoughts. Your mind is very clear, your mind is very bright and your mind is pure.

Why is it pure? Because you've let go of craving.

Now that's half of right effort, the rest of it is fun stuff. Bring up something wholesome.

Smile. Sometimes, you can get to a place where you're not smiling with your lips but you're still smiling with your mind. That's when I start talking about smile with your mind, smile with your eyes, even when your eyes are closed. A little smile on the lips and a smile in your heart.

So a smile is not just one thing. It's not just putting this silly grin on your face. It's about being happy. It's about allowing joy to help your mind become light.

As soon as you smile and your mind is light, bring that to your object of meditation.

Now for beginners, the object of meditation is yourself to start with—for the first ten minutes.

Then after ten minutes, you pick a spiritual friend.

A spiritual friend is someone who you respect a lot, who you like, they are the same sex and they are alive and not a member of your family, to start off with.

So a spiritual friend is someone that when you think of them, you sincerely wish them well. You sincerely have good feelings towards that person.

No person that you're going to pick is going to be perfect. They're going to have some things they've done that you don't particularly care for. But you let that go and you start appreciating them for the good things that they have done, for the times that you've laughed together, for the times that you've smiled and been happy with each other.

The more sincere you are with wishing them well and smiling, the better your meditation is going to become.

Now, in this last six months, I've had some pretty amazing experiences of people who have been doing meditation for many years and all of a sudden they get what I'm talking about. And by the second day of the retreat, they become a *sotāpanna* because they're practicing exactly like I'm showing you right now. It's hard to keep up with people like that but they're ready.

I wish that for all of you—to be ready. Don't add anything to these instructions. Don't take away any of these instructions. Just follow them as closely as you can.

Smile all the time.

I don't care what you're doing. I don't care if you're going to the toilet. I don't care if you're taking a shower. Appreciation and happiness—this is what we're trying to develop.

The more you have joy arising, the better your mindfulness becomes. The better your mindfulness becomes, the faster you start recognizing little tiny movements of the mind. And you start catching that and relaxing right then and your progress is going to be fast. It really works.

There's no time during the day when you don't have a smile somewhere—whether it's a smile in your mind, there's a smile with your eyes, a little smile on your lips or a smile in your heart. You want to have a continual smile all the time.

This feeling is real necessary because when your mindfulness is good, you'll start to see your mind start to wobble a little bit and then it wobbles more and it'll start fading away and going into something else.

When you smile all the time, your mindfulness is improved by 75%. It's not a maybe.

The more you smile, the lighter your mind becomes.

The lighter your mind becomes, the better your mindfulness becomes.

The better your mindfulness becomes, the faster your progress becomes.

It works. It's not a maybe.

When I was in Indonesia—I've been going there for eight years or so—so they really believe me when I tell them to do this stuff. There were 34 people who did a retreat with me there. That's one of the retreats I gave there. Out of 34 people, there were 30 experiences of Nibbana in that one retreat. 30! That's a pretty high percentage.
It really works.

I'm giving you these instructions in the clearest way that I can but I want you to understand you have to take responsibility for yourself.

You have to be able to recognize when your attention is starting to wobble off of your object of meditation and go to other things. You have to have strong interest but it has to be with a sense of fun.

I know meditation teachers aren't supposed to talk about having fun.
They're not supposed to talk about smiling.

There are times when hindrances arise that you can really get caught for a period of time. So what are you supposed to do with that? Laugh. Laugh with yourself. Why? Because your mind is crazy. And it's okay to be crazy.

The fastest way to overcome any hindrance that I know of is by laughing with yourself.

The more you laugh with yourself, you go from "*I am this and I don't like it*" to "*Well it's only this. Do I want to carry it around with me?*"
No, let it go.

The biggest problem with people in Asia, especially in India with the Goenka practice, is their seriousness. If you're doing a Goenka retreat and the teacher sees that you're smiling, they will tell you you're not doing the practice correctly, you have to leave.
"Go away. You can't have fun with the meditation."

Well, I'm here to tell you that they don't have fun and they suffer really big. They have a lot of pain and anxieties and all of these different things that their one-pointed concentration can suppress for a period of time but it always comes back. Because they don't understand craving and how to let it go.

It's real important for you to understand how this process works.
Don't take anything seriously. Laugh with yourself.

Your mind has gotten into some old habits because of breaking a precept, feeling guilty and then having it come back at you over and over. It gets stronger with your dislike and your want to control it and you get frustrated. Then you get into your anger and your anxieties and you're suffering all the time.

Don't do that to yourself. You can't blame anybody else for your pain.
Your pain is because of your actions in the past.

Now you might have done something three lifetimes ago and you have this hindrance coming up now.
Okay. We don't care about why it came up—it doesn't matter.

**What matters is what you do with what arises in the present.
What matters is how fast you can remember to use the 6Rs.**

But you don't use the 6Rs as some kind of stick to beat away hindrances. Just let that hindrance be there by itself. If it doesn't go away, okay, don't pay attention to it.

Don't make a big deal out of anything.

You're going to hear me say that a lot. That was the one of the things that I found that the Asians really identified with. Don't make a big deal out of it. Stop making it into something that's big. Stop trying to control it. Let it be by itself. Don't pay attention.

If it doesn't go away, okay, so what? Relax, smile, come back to your object of meditation. If it didn't go away, your mind will go back to it and you get to do it again until you finally let go of that attachment, that wrong idea in a personal self.

And when you let go of that attachment, that hindrance is going to go away by itself. You don't have to push it. You don't have to make it be something special.

If you try to make it into something special, you get to do it over and over again till you learn not to do it anymore. So it's a real important thing for you to realize that you need to have fun with the meditation.

Don't be getting serious with stuff. Don't set yourself up to cause pain. Stop making a big deal out of anything.

It's only a thought. Did you ask the thought to come up? Did you ask the feeling to come up?
"No."

Well, why are you taking it personally?

Why are you saying, *"This is me, this is mine, this is my sadness, this is my anger, this is my frustration."*
No, it's not. It came up because of past actions and breaking a precept.

One of the things that I started stressing a lot is you have to take responsibility for yourself.

Yep, you made a mistake in the past. Okay. You don't have to do it anymore. You don't have to take it personally and try to fight with it. What you need to do is allow it to be there by itself. Don't make a big deal out of it. Just let it be there.

You want to be here, you want that anger to be here. Fine, it can stay as long as it wants.
"I don't care, it's not mine anyway. I didn't ask it to come up."

I didn't tell myself, *"You know, I've been angry for a while. I might as well be mad now. Let me see who can I be mad at around here?"*

You don't do that. It happens because of the past actions that you did and you took it personally. That's where the mistake is. It's not something to blame. It's not something that you try to stop. It's something to realize.

"Okay, that did happen. Maybe I remember what it is, maybe I don't. I don't care. It's just a feeling, it's just a thought."

So allow it to be by itself. Smile. Relax into this stuff.

Stop making big deals out of nothing.

"Well I don't like this and I've never liked it."

Okay. So who cares?

"Well I care."

How much pain are you causing yourself because of that? Well then, let's just let it go. It doesn't matter.
"Yeah but I remember."

Now I've had some soldiers who have been doing really bad stuff when they were put in a situation where they had to shoot guns at other people and harm other people. And they have PTSD. What is that? Okay, you made a mistake in the past. Can you forgive yourself for making that mistake? I mean, truly forgive yourself. It's hard work. Forgive yourself.

This is one of the things that I found especially in India that everybody beats themselves up a lot for some of the things that they've done. Some of the things that they've done are really bad. They have hurt other people and that keeps coming up and at night they have these nightmares and they see the faces of these people.

Well okay. Why don't you forgive yourself for doing that and ask that person who is in your mind to forgive you for doing that and stay with the forgiveness until you feel relief?

I have seen miracles happen with forgiveness meditation.

I have seen people that have really lived very rough lives. They've harmed other people, stolen from other people. So they have this huge amount of guilt. If you want to get rid of it, you have to forgive yourself because you made a mistake. Don't make a big deal out of it. It happened. Now forgive, let it be, relax, smile.

Two people came to this retreat, both of them were soldiers and both of them had PTSD and they really suffered. They weren't about to smile.

"Everything is bad and I feel so guilty because of some of the things that I've done to other people."

Well it's going to take a little while. Sometimes it takes four or five days but you start forgiving and you forgive yourself for making a mistake. You forgive yourself for having anger. You forgive yourself for causing pain to somebody else or you forgive somebody else for causing pain to you.

The more seriously you do it and get into it, the more relief you have. The more relief you have, the happier your mind becomes. Both of these guys, after only a ten day retreat, have completely different kinds of personality. Now they actually walk around smiling.

One of them wrote to me not too long ago and he said it has changed his entire life. Now this isn't psychological nonsense that we're talking about. Psychology doesn't work as good as it could because you're looking for answers of "**why**" and we're looking for answers of "**how**".

How did this occur? What can you do with it as you see it happening in your mind again?

I had one student who did a retreat and he had a memory of a past lifetime where he killed somebody. He remembers that he was out on a beach and he had a sword in his hand and he killed somebody, and as he turned around, somebody killed him. He had this very strong memory of dislike for that whole situation.

So he came to me and he said, "What am I supposed to do with this?"

I said, "Well forgive yourself for killing somebody else. Ask that other person that you killed in your mind to forgive you."

person that he killed didn't like the idea.

"I'm not going to forgive you for that."

But you have to keep going. Eventually that guy that he killed forgave him in his mind. He had such relief that it changed the health of his entire body.

It's your choice. You can do that or not.

I'm just the guide and that's all I am.

I'm not your teacher. You're your own teacher.

You teach yourself all kinds of things, especially where you have repeat thoughts. It's just like it's on a tape deck.

You have these repeat thoughts coming up over and over and you really don't like them. So you take that dislike and give it to somebody else. But you don't really give it away. You cause other people to be sad.

So anytime you have repeat thoughts, guess who has an attachment?
Guess who's taking it personally? Guess who's causing themselves so much pain?

Then you give that pain to other people because you don't like it and you want to transfer it.
"It's not my problem, it's their problem. They did this."
No, no, no!

The thing about Buddhism is you have to take self-responsibility.

You can't blame somebody else for your pain. You can't blame somebody else for your breaking a precept in the past although you try to. It's always easy to blame somebody else for your problem but you're just mirroring it.

You have to do it sincerely.

This is a word that I've been using a lot lately—sincere. It has to be sincere. You have to really mean it. It can't just be some surface, *"Yeah I forgive you that. I've done the forgiveness. I don't need to do it anymore."*
No, come on!

You've got to do it completely until you feel relief and when you feel relief, your mind is going to be amazing. Your mind is going to be so uplifted and happy. And you know what? It stays around. You start feeling happy all the time. That's why I wrote in one of my books, ***Life Is Meditation, Meditation Is Life.***

Do you have hindrances arise in your daily life? If you don't, there's something weird about you. But what do you do with it?

This is an all-the-time practice.

It's not just about sitting. This is about living and looking at how you caused yourself suffering, how you caused your own pain because somebody didn't meet your expectation. Somebody didn't do what you wanted them to do. Somebody said something that wasn't really nice.

**What are you doing to yourself?
How much pain have you caused yourself?
Why not let it go?**

Let's have some fun on this retreat. Don't take anything seriously.
"Easy to say!"

Don't make a big deal out of anything. If you're making a big deal, who's making it? Who's causing themselves suffering? You're doing it to yourself. You're your own teacher.

Now one of the things that I've been telling a lot of people to do, and that takes a heck of a burden off of me, is to ask yourself questions:

**What's the cause of this?
Why is my mind blocked right now?
Is there something that's stopping me from going deeper? What is it?**

Ask yourself that one time and then listen for the answer and the answer will come.
I started doing this a lot more with people that have been practicing with me for a while.

I didn't talk about intuition so much before.

I told this one man. "You've got to ask yourself what you're doing because you're starting to get angry and you're giving me that anger. I don't want it; it's yours. So ask yourself, why are you angry?"

So he did and he came back and his face was all glowy and he really had a happy look in his eyes. I said, "Well, what's the answer?"

And he said, "Well, I've been waiting to get enlightened and now I don't need to wait."

He didn't get enlightened yet but his waiting caused the block, caused him to get frustrated, caused him to get angry. So he stopped waiting.

The next day he came in. I looked at him and said, "Oh you were successful. Good!"

He stopped waiting. It can be something as simple as that or it can be something else. Who knows?

Ask yourself, "What's the cause and condition for this to stop my meditation? Why am I having so much restlessness?"

Ask yourself. You'll get the answer.

One of the students said, "Is it ever wrong? Is your intuition ever wrong?"

I said no.

He said "I can't believe that."

I said, "Well, you know I've been practicing it off and on for 45 years and I haven't had a wrong answer yet. Sometimes I forget to ask and get caught in this or that for a period of time but eventually I do ask those kinds of questions."

The first time I went through this, I was working at a meditation center and I had a lot of jobs that I wanted to do. I had to fix a lot of things. And this man came to the meditation center and he was going to do a retreat.

So the teacher came to me and said, "I want you to stop doing everything and do a retreat with him so he doesn't have to do it alone."

I said, "Okay that's fine."

That's what I was at the meditation center to do, so, yeah, okay, fine.

And I had restlessness. I'm not prone to restlessness. It was really odd. I had two or three days where it was hard to sit still and I thought, "Why is this happening? If anything I'm prone to sloth and torpor, I'm not prone to be restless."

So I went on and my intuition came and said, "Well you don't really want to be here, you want to be fixing that."

And I thought, "Oh, yeah, that's right."

My mind was tending towards thinking about that instead of staying on my object of meditation. So I let go of the want to do this other stuff. All of a sudden my practice got real deep.

So don't forget to ask yourself the question. If you're running across something that you really don't understand and your mind is going crazy for one reason or another, ask yourself why.

"What am I doing to cause this kind of problem?"

Your intuition will tell you. It really does work.

So there's smiling. There's having fun. There's laughing with how crazy your mind can be at times because it's really comical.

This one lady came to me one time and she said, "I have such pain. What can I do?"

And I said, "Well, smile."

"I don't feel like smiling."

I said, "Okay. Then why don't you laugh?"

She said, "It's not funny!"

And that's what I did, I laughed.

And because I laughed she laughed and because she laughed, I said, "How did your mind feel now?"

"Oh, I feel great."

"Okay. Remember that."

We are our biggest hindrance because we take things personally.

And we keep on repeating the same things over and over and over again and cause ourselves more frustration, more pain, more anxiety, more sadness or whatever it happens to be.

Or it can even be some kind of attachment to a certain kind of way of acting. It can be an attachment to anything. It's where your mind grabs on and says, "This is me. This is who I am."

So when you have more fun and you turn this into a game instead of a serious problem, and you start to laugh with yourself a little bit, all of a sudden, you don't have this problem anymore.

You're starting more and more to realize how tricky craving can be and it'll come up real fast sometimes. But it's only craving. It's not even yours.

What is craving?

"I like it, I don't like it. It's a painful feeling, I don't like it. It's a pleasant feeling, I like it."

"I."

That's the start of it. That's the start of all of this nonsense stuff that we get caught in for years and years and years that we keep on fighting with.

And we keep on trying to give it to other people.

"It's your problem, you're doing this to me."

How silly is that?

"It's my problem. And it's only a problem because I make a big deal out of it. Because I'm causing it myself."

Lighten your mind, smile more, have more joy.

Joy is an enlightenment factor for a reason.

Joy is right in the middle of all the other awakening factors. Joy is the thing that gives you balance.

The more joy you have, the lighter your mind becomes, the better your mindfulness becomes—your awareness of how tiny little things start arising all by themselves.

Now when you get in, you're going to go through the first-day blues. Everybody does. It's okay to go through the first day blues but don't take it seriously. It's just that your mind is used to being out there. Now you're going to be going in and you're going to be watching and your mind will dull out.

The more interest you have in staying with your object of meditation, the less you're going to have sloth and torpor but it's still going to come.

Your mind just might dull out for a little while. Okay, that's fine.

Or you're going to get a little restless. Okay, that's fine.

What do you do with that? Use the 6Rs. Stop taking things personally. Start playing this game of life because that's what it is.

Use that perspective. Keep your mind light. Anytime you get serious, how much pain do you have? How much suffering do you cause yourself? This all intertwines with **Dependent Origination**. And this is how this whole process really works. This is the backbone of the Buddha's teaching.

As you start to understand how this process works and your mind starts to settle down a little bit, you get to start seeing it more and more clearly, more and more quickly. This leads to a natural high, a natural uplifting of your mind that will stay with you in your daily life. It's not a "maybe," it really does work.

So for those that are just starting out with the meditation, spend 10 minutes sending loving and kind thoughts to yourself.

Sit no less than 30 minutes and I mean no less. I don't care what's happening. Sit no less than 30 minutes. When your sitting is good, sit longer. I don't care what the restlessness or the sleepiness is for the first day of the retreat. Go through it.

You have to sit no less than 30 minutes.

But people that have been practicing for a while, they're going to sit for an hour, two hours, something like that. That's okay. You can do that. You can sit longer.

Ask yourself, "What's the cause of the sleepiness?"

You can start off on the first day by asking yourself the question, "What's stopping me from going deeper? Why is this sleepiness here? Why do I have this restlessness? Why do I have this frustration? Why do I have this anger? Why does it keep coming up in me?"

What difference does it make? We don't care why. Stop making a big deal out of the hindrance. Let it be by itself. Relax, let go of that tension and tightness in your head, in your mind. Smile and come back to your object of meditation. Stay with your object of meditation as long as you can. It's pretty straightforward. It's pretty easy.

The biggest complaint I have by almost everybody in every retreat that I give, they start complaining, "*It can't be that simple. It's got to be more complicated than this.*"

Well, that's funny! When I hear somebody's been practicing Goenka for 30 years and they tell me how complicated the meditation is. And after a couple of days, they come back and they say, "*No this can't be right. I must be doing something wrong. This is too easy.*"

Well it's not always easy but it is always simple. Sometimes you're going to have a hindrance. It's going to keep coming back for a while. So?

Every hindrance that arises is your teacher.

It's teaching you where you have an attachment and what the attachment is.

The attachment is always "I am that."

It's always taking something personally from your past actions. So let it be simple. Don't make it complicated.

Now a lot of people have done a lot of meditation and meditation teachers talk about **anicca, dukkha**, and **anatta**. Everything is impermanent, it's suffering and it's not self.

You're going to see that all on your own. You don't need me to say that stuff over and over again. You're going to see how things change and you're going to see it for real. It's not going to be some philosophy. It's not going to be just some words that you think you understand intellectually.

You're going to see things changing. And because they're changing, it's unsatisfactory, it's painful. Sometimes it's more painful than others but it doesn't matter. It's just because it's changing that it's painful. But it's never yours. Ever.

Anatta. That's one of the most confusing ideas in the whole world.

"Well, it's my self."

And I've heard some people say, "Well you have to build up your self before you can see "not self." What's that? It's nonsense! You don't have to build up your self so you can see your self. You see your self every time you have an attachment, every time there's a hindrance coming up—you're seeing it up close and personal right there, right then.

That's why it's so important for you to use the 6Rs and relax. Let go of that tightness caused by that wrong belief in a personal self.

"Well that means I'm going to disappear."

I don't think so. You're still going to be here.

"Well, where am I?"

Well, your mind is very clear and it doesn't have any attachment in it. That's all you're seeing.

You're seeing how this process works more and more clearly. And it's not you, it's not yours. You don't have to take it personally. You're still going to be here. You still have your aggregates. They're going to be here. You're still going to have feeling and perception and you're going to have some thoughts occasionally.

Now one of the things that I want you to be careful of is do not use the 6Rs too much. Don't use the 6Rs as some kind of a block to stop things from coming up. When you first start out with your meditation and you're with your spiritual friend and you're staying with your spiritual friend, a thought comes up. But it doesn't pull your attention away from your spiritual friend, it's just a thought. You don't need to 6R it. Just ignore it.

Only when your attention gets pulled away from your object of meditation, use the 6Rs.

So you don't have to try to use the 6Rs with every thought that arises. If you're able to stay with your spiritual friend, just ignore that thought. Those thoughts will go away by themselves. You don't have to worry about it. Only when your attention gets pulled away, use the 6Rs.

So please have fun. Please smile more. Don't worry, you're going to hear me say this stuff over and over again. You will probably get tired of me saying it But I don't care.

End of discourse.

Question-answer session

I've been talking for a long time. Do you have any questions?

[Silence]

That means I explained everything...

[Q]

Oh good...

[Q]

I didn't say 30 people, I said there were 30 experiences of Nibbana.

Yeah, you've got to become a **sotāpanna** and then **sotāpanna with fruition**, then **sakadāgāmi** and **sakadāgāmi with fruition**, **anāgāmi** and **anāgāmi with fruition**, then **arahant** and the final one is **arahant with fruition**. That's when you're off the wheel.

But I found out some real interesting things that I'll be able to talk with you more about. So it wasn't 30 people, it was 30 experiences because some of them had two or three experiences in the 10-day retreat.

But I was in Australia and there were only four. I felt like a failure. I couldn't get them to be serious with the practice. They'd been doing too many other meditations and they were trying to incorporate what they learned from somebody else.

And the simple fact is if you don't follow the directions the way I give them, it's not going to work so good.

[Q]

It'll take a while to work out why you're doing that because it's some kind of attachment from past experience

[Q]

More attention. The more interested you are and staying with your spiritual friend, the less you are going to have sloth and torpor. It's more attention.

Well, I'll tell you exactly how sloth and torpor works.

You're with your spiritual friend but then you have these little tiny thoughts. And you kind of take more interest in them than with your spiritual friend. And then you start to get kind of dreamy. And then your back starts slumping. And then your head starts bobbing. That's generally how it works.

I could be a lot more specific but I'm not going to be. You have to tell me. Take an interest in how it arises. It's just a hindrance, it's not even yours. Okay? And smile more.

[Q]

6R whatever takes your attention away. But don't try to control the bodily feeling. Allow it to be there. Soften your mind. Let it be there by itself. Smile, come back to your object of meditation. Your mind gets pulled to it again, do it again. But you're not doing it as some kind of control.

But don't stay on your object and try to force your mind to be there. Like you have a pain coming up. This is a natural process. You will naturally progress. Don't fight, don't resist. Don't try to make things be the way you want them to be. Your job is only to observe.

And look at what your mind does with a pain. Okay, it grabs on that and says I don't like that. That's aversion right there right then. The more that pain is there, the more you try to squeeze it and try to control it and try to make it be the way you want to be And that's exactly the opposite of what you're supposed to be doing.

Everything in Buddhism is this: [Bhante opens the palm of his hand.] It's allowing it to be.

Well it's a painful feeling. Okay. So?

Yeah, we have painful feelings. Sometimes it can be really intense but it's only a feeling. It's not your feeling. You didn't ask it to come up. Allow it to be there. Don't keep your attention on it. Don't make a big deal out of it. Let it be there by itself. Come back to your object of meditation. Eventually, one of two things is going to happen. Either it's going to go away or it's not.

But as you develop more equanimity in your mind, it's not a big deal. It's only a pain and it doesn't pull your attention to it anymore. It's okay. That pain is there, so fine, it can be there. I didn't ask it to come up, it's not mine. Eventually, that pain will just fade away by itself.

What is the cause of these kind of pains? It is a hindrance, isn't it? Because of something you did in the past.

Now when I was practicing so much straight Vipassana, I had major pain. And it was like somebody took a knife and they stuck it in my arm and they ripped down like that and then turned the blade and then pulled it out. And it was so intense that I couldn't pick my hand up and I had that pain off and on. It wasn't continuous but I had that pain for about 15 years because nobody told me what to do with it. Eventually I learned to develop enough equanimity to it so it just didn't bother me anymore and when it stopped bothering me, it went away by itself. Never been back.

See, that's one of the problems with a lot of people that are practicing meditation. They still make big deals out of things and then they try to control it and then they're causing themselves immeasurable amounts of pain and suffering. They're doing it to themselves.

The magnificent thing about the Buddha was he made it so simple that your progress is going to be fast if you follow the directions the way they're given.

Don't make a big deal out of anything. Write that across your eyeballs.

Don't make a big deal. Allow everything to be there. Let it be by itself. Relax. Smile. Come back.

Let all of these things be there by themselves. And you're going to develop more and more equanimity. And with that equanimity, you start to get into the deeper states. And then you really start having fun with the meditation. I guarantee it.

Have you ever heard a meditation teacher give you a guarantee that you're going to have fun?

You have got to follow what I'm showing you. And it'll be more and more clear as we go on, I promise.

Anybody else?

[Q] [6Rs]

Recognize that your mind is distracted. You just know that you're not with your object of meditation anymore.

Release the distraction. That means don't keep your attention on the thing that pulled you away.

Relax the tightness caused by that distraction.

Re-Smile, put a smile on your face, in your mind.

Return that smiling mind, that doesn't have any more craving in it, back to your object of meditation. Stay with your object of meditation as long as you can.

[Repeat.]

That's the 6Rs.

So I'm used to everybody being successful. So you'd better be successful or I'm going to get mad at you. No pressure.

Walking Meditation

Stay with your object of meditation when you're walking. Do not walk slowly. Walk at a normal pace. If we see you walking slowly, we're going to tell you, you've got to walk faster. You've got to be able to carry your object of meditation with you when you're not sitting.

What good is it to put your attention on your feet when you want to be staying with your object of meditation? Don't put your attention on your feet. Walk at a normal pace.

There are some times depending on what you're doing, I'm going to tell you that I want you to walk fast. Stay with your object of meditation.

They will tell people to run up and down stairs; up and down the mountain; The reason that you're walking at a normal pace is to get circulation going and to stay with your object of meditation.

If you're with your spiritual friend, stay with your spiritual friend while you're walking. Don't be looking around. Keep your eyes down. Where your eyes go, there goes your mind and you're going to get distracted. 6R that, come back and stay with your friend.

It doesn't matter how many times your mind is distracted. What matters is what you do with the distraction after it occurs. Recognize it, release, relax, smile, come back to your friend, stay with your friend. It's pretty simple. Don't try to make it complicated.

I keep on recommending to other people, don't get old. It's not worth it.
But having fun, now that's the important thing.
You're not going to get old if you have fun.
So have fun with the meditation. Don't be getting serious with anything.

Now I'm not going to be giving interviews tomorrow but the day after tomorrow, we'll have a list of when you can come.

How many people?

[not audible]

Piece of cake. They gave me 50 people at one retreat and I see everybody every day. That was tough. Plus I give a two-hour Dhamma talk. And in my spare time I collapse, just fall over.

Okay anything else?

Have fun. Don't be getting serious. The lighter your mind is, the faster your progress in the meditation becomes. That's why I want you to smile all the time. Smile while you're eating. I don't care what you're doing. Smile.

Now if you wake up in the middle of the night, get up and try sitting on your bed.

If you feel that's not going to work, then go back to sleep. But sometimes you can wake up and your mind is fairly alert. You start sitting. You can have a really good sitting. I'll make sure you get enough rest. Don't worry about it. I'll take care of you.

Now before you go to sleep, there's two things I want you to do:

1. Make a determination what time you're going to wake up in the morning.

Don't make it the same exact time every time. Let's say, you want to get up at five o'clock, well do 4.59 or 5.01. Just try to do that right before you go to sleep.

"I'm going to get up at this time." If you do, good. If you don't, that's okay too.

2. But also I want you to make a strong determination right before you go to sleep that you're going to wake up smiling and happy and when you do, don't stop.

Wake up smiling and happy. It's a nice way to start the day.

You'll be able to sit fairly long fairly soon but when you're first starting out, no less than 30 minutes.

But if you sit for 45 minutes, okay, fine.

Or you sit for an hour, okay, fine.

Or you sit for three hours, okay, fine.

I'm kind of getting used to that sort of thing these days. Because I had these guys who were really good meditators. They just didn't have the **relax** step. They didn't have fun in the meditation. They were really serious.

I had to work hard to get them to smile and I was doing this with Sister Khema and she got a stick that had a feather on it. And she said, "This is my laughing stick. So anytime I come around and I see you're being serious, I'm going to tickle you with it." You have to laugh.

Okay let's hear share some merits.

*May suffering ones be suffering free
and the fearstruck 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 Nāgas of mighty power
share this merit of ours.*

May they long protect the Buddha's Dispensation.

Sadhu!

Sadhu!

Sadhu!