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Cultivating Equanimity and Humility (unedited)
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Introduction and Refuge

Here we are again – not dead yet! We don't take any notice of that, do we? We think, 'Well, of course I'm alive!' But if we understood impermanence, we'd be blissing out now that we -- as Lama Zopa says – we didn't wake up in another realm, you know; a big surprise, with claws or something. Here we are, still in the same body, still our morality karma hasn't run out yet; basically, it's like, you know, gas in the tank; hasn't run out, how amazing! So let's make the most of today – a couple of hours, maybe; here listening, thinking, analyzing, Buddha's teachings, taking some tools from it ; something practical to work on my mind so I can be a better person so I can help others; minimally this.

*Sang gya cho dang sog kyi chog nam la
Jang chub bar du dag ni kyab su chi
Dag gi cho nyen gyi pe so nam gyi
Dro la pen chir sang gye drub par shog (3x)*

*(I go for refuge until I am enlightened
to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.
By the merits I create by listening to the Dharma
may I become a Buddha in order to benefit all sentient beings)*

Okay...can I see everybody? No, I can't. I can't see everybody. Never mind.
There's somebody back there? Where's Lilian, by the way? Is she not around?
Okay, good.

Okay, so we have been through the first two, I think, of these verses -- the 'Eight Verses of Mind Training', by Langri Tangpa, the sort of disciple of a main disciple of Atisha, who, you know – yeah – was responsible for this, kind of, way of packaging the teachings that's kind of fairly unique to Tibet – in a nice orderly way, you know. And as we've been saying, this particular text is from the more advanced teachings, actually; at the more radical level of really trying to *smash* this self-centeredness, this putting *me* first as a method for accomplishing genuine love and compassion which then gives rise to this remarkable state of mind called 'bodhicitta', this brave attitude of a bodhisattva where we will never give up working for the sake of others. This is what this is about.

We Need Sentient Beings to Develop Compassion

2:31

So, the first verse, 'determined to obtain the greatest possible good -- or 'benefit' - from all sentient beings, will see them as most precious', meaning without sentient beings, how can we possibly have compassion? We need to be around crazy, suffering sentient beings in order to energize our compassion; and that is taking the essence from them, really seeing that for me, the value of sentient beings is so that I can cultivate this outrageous level of compassion and love and

never give up the wish to continue benefitting them. That's the meaning of that one, you know; see them as most precious. They are precious because they are, like, the *source* of my compassion; they're the source, the reason why I can have compassion; so, for this reason they are precious. That's the specific point. That's why they're precious. That's why they're valuable. On the basis of them, I can become a Buddha. That's the meaning. So, treat them as something precious, which already is a tough call. Already – as I said before – this attitude assumes masses of former work in the wisdom wing, you know.

The second one as well: this outrageous attitude of actually seeing others as supreme, seeing me as low – lower than them. We discussed this one, you know; this attitude of, you know – again, like I'm saying – there's no way you could do this if already you have done no work on your own mind; you're already overwhelmed by 'victim' and 'me' and 'poor me' and 'not fair' and 'it all gets done to me' and 'it's not my fault'; which is the usual view of ego, the usual way we feel in life. This is why we suffer. This is the voice of suffering – 'poor me, it's not my fault'. I'm not being cruel; this is the way ego talks – kind of the irony of ego. It's self-pity, you know, and if we're still in that mode, there's no way in the world we can take this piece of advice in a skillful way. So, we have to really comprehend the meaning of it. In other words, the person who *is* qualified, actually delighting in other people's qualities that are 'better than mine' is only a person who's already done a lot of work on their mind and lessened the neuroses and become brave and optimistic and therefore humble. That's a wise person, you know.

So, the third one is kind of insane, you know, completely insane. It says, 'Vigilant, the moment a delusion, a negative state of mind appears, endangering me and others, I'll instantly confront it and avert it.' Well, that's ridiculous. That assumes – already that assumes a really highly advanced person. The assumption is that here you are; the default mode is *virtue* and every now and again this awful negative state pops up! But, it's the opposite for us; the default is the delusions. And that's not trying to be miserable; it's just the way we are, you know. The default mode of our mind is self-pity, is attachment, is neediness, is dissatisfaction; therefore annoyance, irritation, frustration, depression, low self-esteem; they're kind of rumbling beneath the surface, aren't they? And then we keep a smile on the face as best we can, but we look inside our mind, it's kind of confused and the thoughts uncontrolled, and worried about what people think of me, and upset the husband yesterday, and the kids this, and the grandkids that, and the boss this, and oh my god that; worried, worried, worried – always anxious, always worried. This is our mind, that's the default mode for us. So this already implies an incredibly advanced person: stable mind, control the delusions so that you notice one as soon as it arises. Wow! How amazing...

So, that's okay; see where we're at. So, the best for us is, of course, if once a day we can notice and identify a jealous thought, an angry thought, a frustrated thought, you know, which is just a polite word for jealousy, a polite word for anger. Frustration, annoyance, irritation; they're all very polite words for anger, basically. They're sort of 'small anger', that's all. We wouldn't say we're angry,

we'd say we're annoyed or frustrated; irritated, you know. Mild versions of anger; and we can see, we're having this much of the time. The dissatisfaction which gives rise to the 'I want', that's attachment, you know. And the upset thought, the offended thought, 'Who does she think she is,' that kind of thing. These are the little voices rumbling along in our head; not being so violent, therefore not so visible to our ears, not so noticeable. It's only when our thoughts are very strong and when they get to the level of being 'feelings' and physical and visceral; it's only then we notice them; and actually, by that point it's usually a bit late. It's a bit late, you know; it's like you're driving along on the freeway at a hundred miles an hour and you're about to crash and you realize you can't drive. That's about how we are in daily life. We kind of can't drive, you know, and, 'what am I going to do when I'm in the middle of a fight with somebody'; and that's like you in the middle of a crash – a bit late to ask, 'What can I do?'

The better thing would have been to have some practice under your belt, such that you could avoid the crash before it comes – that's the best thing. So, that's what we're aiming for.

So, because it mentions here this business of delusions, this actually is the stuff that's taken care of in high school – we're hearing it in university. So let's look at a bit more – we described it yesterday; this is really more the topic of yesterday: 'deconstruct negative emotions', that's sort of more that topic. 'Seeing negative people as treasures' is what's going to be happening tomorrow – Monday... Tuesday... Thursday. Whatever day it is. Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday – oh, that's that other thing. Well, whatever; we'll deal with them all one step at a time, whatever happens.

Buddha's Model of The Mind

8:22

So, again, let's just refresh ourselves about Buddha's model of the mind; how it works, how these states of mind function. We talked a bit about this yesterday, and again, let's just go in more detail. The point is here, you know, because we use words like 'anger', 'annoyed', 'jealous', 'frustrated', 'irritated', 'depressed', we just think of them as kind of an ordinary part of life. And then when we think about psychology, we get all very serious, we have to study Jung, and we learn about archetypes, we learn about bi-polar, we learn about ADID, all these different things that people say they've got now. You understand what I'm saying; we learn about Apsberger's, we learn about 'autistic', you know; we learn all these latest kind of mental illnesses that we are coming up with in the west; which is totally fine – I'm not complaining. And then we think, 'Oh, well, you know, that's psychology...but anger, jealousy? That's not psychology, that's just normal life.' But what's interesting, and therefore quite deceptive, and easily therefore can be glossed over, is the model of the mind according to the Buddha.

So, we know these words well. We know the words 'love', 'compassion', 'jealousy', 'hate'. We know them; they're part of our language, and we recognize every one inside our self. But what's interesting is this is *the substance* of the Buddha's model of the mind. It is the substance of it. Okay, the Buddha's psychology, when you study it in more depth, you study these; this is the

psychological way the mind works, but the other part of it, which is really crucial in order to understand the Buddha's view – let's just talk a bit about that now – is what they call the epistemological model; is the actual way in which the mind functions; and this is where Buddha is completely different. I mean, radically different. So different, we put it in the sky and we call it spiritual – so we mystify it. And that's a real insult, because it shows we can't use it then as proper tools, and we don't quite understand. And if we understand the way the mind works – according to the Buddhist view – we really can get to see how we can change our mind. This is the key to success, you know. But most of the time, we don't think about this. We don't study it, the centers don't touch upon it, so we don't factor it in; but it's extremely important. And it's highly complicated, the way the mind does function – according to this model – but let's keep it really simple and get to the essential points.

Okay. So, according to the Buddha, first of all – as we know – the mind is not physical. You've got to just hypothesize that; it's not evident obviously, immediately. One can only know that directly when one has very advanced stages of meditation and one can have direct experience of one's own mind. So that takes time, so we've got to take that as our hypothesis here, okay; that our mind is not physical. This word 'mind' is used synonymously with the word 'consciousness'; second point. Third, most radical; again, *it doesn't come from mummy and daddy*. Big shock – and even more shocking, there's no part of us that comes from a superior being. So, this is where Buddha completely differs both from the materialist model and the other religious models, which is the one of a creator. There's no – our mother and father very kindly give us a body, no argument there. But they do not give us a mind – this is the Buddha's view – because your mind isn't your body. And second, there's no part of us given to us by a holy being; there's no such concept as creator in Buddhism at all.

My Mind is Mine

11:39

Okay; so, mind is not physical, it doesn't come from anyone else. Now, the implication of *that* is kind of intense, and it's the very heart of Buddhism. It means that my mind is *mine*. And that means that the only place it can come from is previous moments of me; and then if we track our mind back – just pretend, you know, thinking this hypothesis that it's a separate entity; the thoughts and feelings and emotions of today coming from the thoughts and feelings of yesterday, like a river of mental moments – and then you can track back your body simultaneously and you get back to when you were twenty, nineteen, five, four, one month, a day, in your mummy's womb; you've got to keep tracking back the body in an unbroken chain of mental moments, wouldn't you, until you get back to the first egg and sperm coming together, you know; you have to track your body like that in an unbroken chain of mental moments from this moment until then. And then, of course, the moment before conception, you'd track your egg back to your mummy's body, and the sperm back to daddy's body.

Well, in the Buddha's view, you track your mind in the same way, you know; here's the mind of thoughts and feelings and emotions of now, coming from the

previous moment, and you track it back in an unbroken chain of mental moments, and you're going to keep tracking it back until the first second of conception; and then, the Buddha would say, once you've tracked your egg and sperm back to mummy and daddy, 'Oh, well...where's my mind come from? I see.' Because it doesn't come from your egg and sperm, and it doesn't come from mummy and daddy, and it doesn't come from a creator. So the question has to be, well; where's the previous moment of this continuity of mental moments starting now? There's only one way to go – the previous moment before *that* -- before the egg and sperm existed. Because mind is not physical; it doesn't need a gross body for its existence.

The Tantric Model of the Mind

13:15

In the tantric model of the mind, which is quite helpful, actually -- which is the same model they use in the Tibetan medical system – they talk about how we've got 'gross consciousness', 'subtle consciousness', 'very subtle consciousness' and they're all just seamless levels of our own mind, our own levels of capacity for cognition. 'Cognition' is the job of the mind: to know, to cognize, to be aware. That's our job, the job of mind. So, that capacity for cognition – that is to say, our mind – it can be at the very gross level. Now, that's the level we function at from day to day. This is the level that we all talk about in our materialist view, which is *conceptuality* and *sensory*. And that's all we posit as existing in our model, you know?

Then you've got subtle consciousness, as far as the Buddha's concerned. The conceptual and the sensory are just the tip of the tip of the tip of the iceberg; really limited in their capacity for cognition. But then you've got subtle consciousness, which we don't even posit as existing in our materialist model. This is where – when you learn to meditate – you learn to access that level of consciousness. The only time we would access it is when we dream; and we all know, dreams are this weird world. No-one quite understands it; it doesn't fit. There's no real agreement about what dreams are – according to the materialist model – and then, of course, you're going to have lots of experiences of people leaving their bodies; of course, that can't possibly fit with the materialist view; because they say it's your brain. Well, no one's brain pops out of their skull every now and again, we can see that...

Lots of people in all cultures talk about leaving their bodies; sitting on the ceiling, watching themselves, leaving the body, having experiences, going here and going there, during dreams, for example; at the time of death and then coming back...there's so many experiences. Well, this experience fits perfectly with this model, you know. It's the subtle consciousness, which does not need this gross body for its existence. Doesn't need it, but it does come along with it – the gross consciousness comes along inextricably with this gross physical body. In order to have the capacity to cognize something with your eye consciousness – remember, 'consciousness' means 'mind', and it's not physical – it has to have a decent eyeball working, you know? 'Ear consciousness' has to have a decent ear; so, the body is needed in order to have certain experiences, including conceptual states of mind -- if you've got no brain in there, you're not going to be able to

have one; if the brain's all screwed up and weird, your mind doesn't come out properly, you know? So, this gross body comes along with this gross level of consciousness.

Then, you've got subtle consciousness, according to this model -- and that is also coming along inextricably linked to a subtler level of physicality; and according to this model -- which is the same as Galileo and that mob back in the medieval times in our history -- they talk about the four elements. This is similar to the Chinese system, you know, they talk about the four elements like we used to in the west but we don't now, we talk about quarks and atoms and lord-knows-what. But according to this model, the subtler physical level is made up of these different components of the subtle physical level of energy that the Tibetan doctors talk about, which, when they feel your pulses, they can feel the presence of these, just like your acupuncturist -- you know, they call it the 'subtle nervous system', the seventy-two thousand channels, subtle channels. There's the 'wind', or '*prana*' that travel through those channels that are linked to the subtler levels of mind; the gross levels, too. And they call it '*kundalini*'; the white and red drops, as they call it. They're the components of the subtler physical energies, which of course, aren't posited as existing in the materialist world. So, that comes along with subtle consciousness. There's always a level of physicality along with the mind.

Then, there's 'very subtle consciousness', which we never have any access to, unless we're great meditators. It occurs every time we go to sleep. It occurs every time we die, but we're not aware of it because we're not practiced. So, this is the subtlest level of our consciousness, which too, also, comes along with, inextricably linked with a subtler, a very subtle level of physicality, which is the wind energy, the four -- the subtlest of the four elements. So, this very subtle level of consciousness is what arises at the time of death; and -- speaking loosely -- you can say it's like the repository of all the karmic imprints of everything we've ever said or done or thought; because everything we say, do or think programs our consciousness and leaves imprints or seeds or tendencies in it; and this is kind of carried here, like programming, really. And then, according to the karma that ripens at the time of death, that consciousness will leave this body and move on, propelled by the force of our own karma and go to a new rebirth, you know. And so on and so forth. This is the way they talk in Buddhism.

So, at the time of our -- we go back to the conception in our mummy's womb, if we track back our thought processes and feelings and emotions and unconsciousness' and sub-consciousness' general river of mental moments and get back to the first moment of conception, the body you track back to mummy and daddy; but the consciousness -- you keep tracking it back to a *previous moment of itself*. A previous moment of itself. And then before you know it, a few weeks before that, you'll find that it was in another body, at the grosser level again; and before that, conception; and before that, death; and before that -- going back and back and back.

So, Buddha's basic point is that your mind is *yours*, and you come fully programmed in this life with all your tendencies. You are the creator of yourself,

basically. It's the simplest way of saying it; not in a kind of 'magic wand', external sense, but in the sense of whatever we are internally, is our own programming. At the most basic level, it's a bunch of habits – all our tendencies, our feelings, our emotions, our intellectual, our lust, our rage, our psychosis, our bliss, our compassion, whatever's in your mind, that's yours from having practiced it before. It's a simple concept; it's just that we don't like it, you know. We'd rather think mummy and daddy made us so we can blame them. I mean, sort of like that. You don't blame God, unless you're an Italian. I can't tell you the rudest things Italians say about God and Mary, you know? I mean – we were Catholics in Australia in our house and we never dared say a word; our father who wasn't a Catholic would say the rudest things about God; we kind of kept waiting for God to come through the ceiling and punish us, you know? I know Lama Yeshe, when he visited his friend; one geshe, who was based at our Italian center – this was in the eighties – Lama visited him in hospital, in the ward with all the men, you know. And the Italian boys were translating all the rude things all the men in the ward were saying about God, when things go wrong, like, 'God is a pig.' I mean, my God...if we were Muslims, we'd all be killed. In the medieval days, you would have all been killed by the Catholics as well if you'd said that. And, 'Our Lady's a whore!' So, I think it's only the Italian Catholics who blame God, no one else would dare. But we love to blame mummy and daddy, we've no problem with that, you know.

So, the Buddha says, don't blame anybody, babe, take responsibility instead; be accountable. Yep, all your goodness and all your badness; because you did it before, honey. It's so simple, really. I love it. I just think it's kind of liberating. It means I can change. I think – this sound a bit stupid, you know – but it's really logical. If my mother and father really did actually create me – I mean actually; actually invent 'Robina', with no accountability from my side. If it were truly right, 'I didn't ask to get born' – you think of this – and they give me anger and fears and jealousy, not to mention being Hitler and having a psychotic mind; then I think you must blame them. You must blame them. I think it's completely outrageous that a person *dare* create another person with anger and jealousy and fears and garbage and then say it's their responsibility. I mean, I think it's the most shocking idea I've ever heard. We never question it in the west; we all feel intuitively that it's our mother's fault; but then our therapist says we shouldn't blame them. I think they're wrong, you should. It's really logical, actually.

But when the Buddha says 'you are responsible for what you are', then there's no one to blame. Take responsibility – it *is* yours. Kind of a bore, a bit of a bore – having anger and jealousy; but, hey – the love and kindness is yours, too. You can grow. This is the basis, this is this simple idea of this continuity of consciousness; and the law that runs it is this law called karma. Yes?

Q: So, say hypothetically, if your parents were feuding and fighting, and their vengeance and bashing back and forth rubbed off onto their children, it's their fault...?

Ven.: No, no, no, no...nothing to do with that. We'll keep going. You'll see. We'll say a bit more, and then you can have some questions.

So, our mind is ours, coming from previous moments of before, and whatever's in our mind is because we've practiced it before. Then, because you have this intimate relationship with beings – we do things in relation to other beings and we create history with them; and then according to that history, we meet them again and the same rubbish keeps happening, you know – back and forth, like tennis. It's ridiculous, you know, the good and the bad.

So, this is what Buddha calls karma. He says it's a natural law; no one made it up, no one invented it, he didn't create it. He's not speculating. No one's running it -- there's no one up there pulling the strings; it's a natural law, like gravity, like botany. Put certain conditions together and things will occur. This is Buddha's view; this is his own observation, okay?

The Way the Mind Works 22:49

So – we talked about the karma one, briefly and I'll go there in a second; but what I want to talk about here in particular is the way the mind works. So, first of all, there's the psychological way; and we know very well this model according to Buddha. We've got positive, negative and neutral states of mind. And this is, again, quite distinct to Buddha's approach, quite unique to Buddha's approach; as opposed to the way we think in our culture, that they're all part of the brain and the DNA and the genes and they came from the parents. Secondly, we give equal status to what the Buddha would call the negative or the positive. We say they're all part of a human being; we give equal status to them, and we say they're all normal.

So, if you're *abnormal*, it's because you've got *too much* anger, *too much* violence, or *too much* weirdness; then you're abnormal. But the normal person would have some anger, some jealousy, some depression...you understand my point. That's the usual view in our world. Buddha's is insanely different; yet again, radically different, and we discussed this yesterday. He is saying the positive states of mind: love, compassion; these ones are actually at the core of our being. They actually define our very nature. They are who we are, and they are the basis of all our potential; and we all possess the potential to develop these to perfection. This is the meaning of a Buddha; quite simple – *psychological development*. That the goodness is actually, like, the substance of our mind. They are actually what the mind is. We can develop it to a limitless degree.

So, what's holding it back right now – how come we're not infinitely loving, wise, compassionate, et cetera – fearless, blissful, un-neurotic – is because of the negative states. And Buddha's saying they don't belong. We don't need to have them, you know. This is quite shocking. And the job of being a Buddhist, from the mental point of view, from the point of view of being your own therapist – using meditation – your job is to identify the negative states, to distinguish them from the positive – which is a tricky, tricky job; we mentioned this yesterday just using a couple of examples – and slowly, slowly rid the mind of them *completely*. This is what Buddha's saying; this is point of all Buddhist practice. *This is the point*. So, we've got to hear this in a very practical way, you know, and it's quite

outrageous. It's hard to accept it, if we take our materialist model as our usual model; it's quite shocking, you know.

So, the first thing is to understand the first point about these negative states: they have two main characteristics, and the first one ought to be enough for us never to want to have them again and find methods for getting rid of them and that is that they're disturbing, they're extremely disturbing. They're extremely painful; the very having of a moment of attachment or anger or jealousy or pride or depression -- we all know, if we're looking at it carefully -- it's very disturbing.

Now, we know it's disturbing; so how come we don't go, 'Oh my god, this is unbearable. What can I do to rid my mind of *this*?' We don't say that. We think, because it's someone else's fault, they'd better change. 'I'm angry, but, hey, it's your fault! You change; then I won't be angry!' We don't take *any* responsibility; we completely dump the responsibility onto somebody else -- even including our good qualities --

'Why are you angry, Robina?'

'Because Isaac punched me in the nose!'

Everyone goes, 'Oh we understand that. How dare he? He's the blame; he's the cause of your anger, Robina.' So, of course, Isaac has to change for me to stop being angry. That's the usual mode we all live by.

'Why are you happy, Robina?'

'Oh, well, Bob gave me a hundred dollars.'

So, it's like we blame Isaac for our unhappiness, but we blame Bob for our happiness; it's the same deal. Do you get my point? We put the responsibility for happiness on the outside; therefore we hanker after that person to keep doing it; that's attachment. We *blame* the person out there for our suffering, which brings anger, therefore 'he is the cause of my suffering'. This is our philosophy now; Buddha calls that 'samsara' and he's fundamentally disagreeing with it.

But this just takes time to unravel, because it seems so logical, this view. It's shocking to think, as Buddha says, that we've got it wrong, you know? That just takes time; that's the disturbing part -- that ought to be enough for us never to want to be angry again! If you eat carrots and you vomit, if you thought that was an accident; you try it again and you vomit again; believe me, you'll never touch carrots again as long as you live! You don't need any more warning... You don't keep saying, 'Oh, it's someone else's fault,' and keep eating carrots. 'It's not my fault. I'm allowed to eat carrots!' Don't be ridiculous! But anger -- 'It's not my fault! I'm allowed to be angry,' we say. Meanwhile, you're completely breaking your heart. Buddha says if we just see this one alone, it ought to be enough for us to completely want to change. But we don't, because we blame other people. This is why (unclear2741) always ??? suffering with it.

Now, the other point about these delusions, these negative states, is where they're called delusions. It's kind of a cute word -- 'Oh yeah, they're delusions, how interesting.' Look at the meaning of it; and this is where we get into the actual way the mind works; and when we can understand this, we're on track with really living in the intention of the Buddha's approach, you know. This is quite specific to the Buddha's view, this one -- which I'm about to talk about. And

every time I've been here, over the years – how many visits I do not know – this is all I ever talk about. So, I'm sorry to bore you if you've heard it again, but we're going to talk about it again.

So how is a disturbing emotion such as anger and attachment -- how are they delusional? We get the meaning of 'delusional'; if someone says, 'You're delusional, Robina,' you'll be very offended, won't you? Because they're saying you're not in touch with reality. We'd be very upset; and this, I tell you, is *precisely* the point that Buddha's making. So how then – and now we're getting down to the point, the nitty-gritty of the way the mind actually functions; the so-called epistemological model – how the mind actually functions. So like I said, in the text when you study it in depth in the monasteries, you go to a really deep level, it's quite sophisticated, quite subtle the way they describe how the mind functions; but we'll just get the essence of it here.

So, delusional – if you're delusional, let's say you're angry. We know anger – okay, we know – attachment is harder for us to see that it's painful, like I said yesterday, because we mix it with liking something. We mix it with loving somebody; and it's only when the attachment doesn't get what it wants that we realize we have attachment – because anger arises; because anger is the response when attachment doesn't get what it wants. So, maybe with anger we can see more easily how it's disturbing, therefore not pleasant; although we defend our right to have it.

So, much harder to see how attachment is suffering, you know; but let's just use these two as these examples because these are the fundamental states of mind we're going between a thousand times a day; attachment being the default mode.

So, let's see how they're delusional. 'Disturbing' – makes sense; but 'delusional' – weird. Let's look at this, because this is the point. What Buddha's saying – okay; we're now describing the mental consciousness. The sensory consciousness is like dumb animals, really, you know. You see cups, you hear music...you don't really 'see' a cup, 'Oh, what a lovely cup,' that's not what your eye consciousness is seeing; your eye consciousness is very limited – all it sees is, you know, color and shape. Ear consciousness doesn't hear divine Miles Davis – all it hears is sound; but what happens is, because the senses and the mental consciousness are working perfectly together, the millisecond I hear that sound – because of familiarity with Miles Davis and the familiarity with that trumpet sound, and the attachment to Miles Davis as well as the liking of Miles Davis, all of these come perfectly together and I'll go, 'Oh, wow...amazing Miles Davis...' But your ear consciousness only hears the sound; the rest of it is a story made by your *mental* consciousness. So, that's where the workshop is; that's where the computer programming is; that's where all the happiness is, that's where the suffering is; that's where the *causes* of happiness are and that's where the *causes* of suffering are; that's 'where the workshop is', as Lama Zopa puts it; and that's what we must become familiar with. This is where we learn to be our own therapist – the workings of our own thoughts, feelings, emotions, unconscious, sub-conscious. This is our job as a Buddhist.

Three categories of States of Mind

31:27

So, okay; in that mental consciousness, like I said before, you've got states of mind. There's three categories only. One category is called 'positive states of mind', which in their nature are reasonable, appropriate, beneficial, virtuous; the source of my happiness and contentment and the basis of why I benefit others.

Then there's a heading called 'negative'; and they are in their nature are the voices of ego, are based on fear and panic, are extremely disturbing, are the source of my own pain and the reason why I harm others. This is the way we're – so, we're talking about flowers and weeds, if you like.

So, like if you go to botany school, you're going to learn all about the weeds and all about the flowers and you can draw them all perfectly on their pretty pieces of paper, and you're going to identify them beautifully, because they're all on a separate piece of paper, right, and you can understand all their characteristics, which you must do. But now, when you look at the garden out there, they're all mixed together, you know? You can't tell one piece from another. I don't know botany, so the best I can do is maybe I can recognize a rose, you know; but as for getting weeds and herbs organized, I wouldn't have a clue... they're all just big green stuff. Our mind is the same; it's like a big soup – and a pureed soup, at that. All the emotions are all mixed, all the feelings; the negative ones, the positive ones, all mixed together as a great big soup. We can't tell one bit from the other. Are you hearing me, people? This is why it's so tricky. That's *why* we've got to have concentration meditation. That's *why* we have to learn Buddha's model, Buddha's botany – what is a negative state, what is a positive, what are their characteristics, how do they function, how do I identify them; and slowly through your own mind you begin to see them and unravel them and change them. This is our job and it just takes time.

So right now, like I've been saying, because we've got no awareness of our own mind – we haven't been taught this in our culture – you know, from the moment we wake up until the second we go to sleep, we're totally focused on the outside world – we only notice a problem when it comes vomiting out your mouth! 'Oh! I must be angry!' A person who gets depressed only notices they're depressed when they can't get out of bed one morning... So it's a bit late; these techniques – and this is all Buddha says 'practice' is – are the ability to see what's going on *way* deep down, before it gets to the emotional garbage, before it gets to the paralysis or the rage. Brand new concept for us; wow, how interesting...but this is the point.

The Basis of Emotion is a 'Conceptual Story'

33:43

So when we get to see the mind in this way – and this is now the point about the way these states of mind function; big surprise, this one – these states of mind which we call emotions – both the positive and the negative – they do have an emotional component, there's no question; there's physical feeling, there's no question; the heart beating, they eyes, when you have strong attachment, strong anger, strong jealousy, strong love, strong compassion; it's a physical feeling, an

emotional feeling, we can see this. And that's what we *think* they *only* are – emotions, feelings, you know? But that's just the tip of the tip of the iceberg. When we start to learn to see our mind through concentration meditation – having learned Buddha's model of the mind very precisely, to know what exactly *is* a negative state; how does it function; what is a positive; how does it function; how is a negative one delusional – and we're going to describe this – we're going to see – and this is the biggest surprise to us – that at a deeper level, before they get to the level of emotions, they are basically conceptual stories. In other word, they're thoughts. Anger, finally, comes down to being a series of *thoughts*. But we've practiced those thoughts – not just – forget this life; I was good at anger from the time I was born. My mother can tell you that. She didn't have to teach me – now, why? From the Buddhist point of view, it's because I've practiced it in the past and I brought the habit with me. A friend of mine, when he was a little tiny boy, his mother was taking the lice out of his head – I mention this story all the time – and he's crying with compassion for the lice; his mother didn't have to teach him that compassion; he was already imprinted with compassion; he's now thirty-five; he's never killed a living being. 'Mommy, mommy, leave them alone; it's their home. Don't hurt them,' crying with compassion for the lice at the age of three.

So, he had practiced compassion, and all his behavior all his life has proven that he had it; because he came fully programmed with compassion. I came programmed with anger. We all come programmed with our own particular habits that are so spontaneous for us. That's why in our materialist world we say they're instinct, they're natural; we're all born this way. But once we understand they're just habits – like any habit, it happens intuitively, doesn't it? Once you learn to drive a car, it's second nature. You can just put the foot here, there, be on your cell phone and eat your breakfast at the same time. Well, you get my point. In the beginning, you're going to stumble; leg, clutch – well, you know, whatever – until eventually you've got it down. Piano, the same; everything you learn, you start stumbling along, not knowing it well; if you keep practicing, eventually it becomes intuitive, doesn't it? We all know that. That's why we've got anger intuitively. That's why we're jealous intuitively. That's why we're instinctively jealous, instinctively angry, or instinctively compassionate. Whatever it is, you look at the status quo – that's the one you've practiced. You came fully programmed with it. And when we start to look underneath – underneath the emotion; slow the whole process down – right now, it's going like a thousand miles an hour, these thoughts are so quick, you know, we don't notice them as thoughts. But once we get down to that level, we *will* see that they are conceptual stories.

So, if it's a series of concepts, if depression is simply a very elaborate viewpoint that you are holding in your mind, that you believe is true, then once you get to hear the words of that story you can change them. That's why we can change our mind. That's why we can change our mind: because they're stories. Stories are thoughts; thoughts – you can change them. It all comes down to being thoughts. And this is quite shocking for us, to hear this. It doesn't make sense at all, initially. In other words, what Buddha's saying is that *everything* that arises in our mind – not our senses – everything is finally a thought; it's an opinion, it's a

viewpoint. It's a viewpoint. Anger's a viewpoint. You know? 'How dare Bob do that to me!' That's a viewpoint, that's an opinion about Bob. We think it's a *correct* opinion. Why? Because he offended *me*; because *me* is the reference point for all our emotions; so as long as Bob does what *I* want, I think Bob's nice.

So, that opinion – 'Bob's nice!' – it's just an opinion. Based upon what? That I got what I want. What's 'Bob is so ugly. How *dare* he do this.' What's that? It's an opinion based upon that I *didn't* get what I wanted. So, all the negative opinions are based upon I not getting what it wants. That's all; they're opinions. It's a shock to us. Depression is just a series of thoughts deep in the mind that are that kind of person's response when their attachment doesn't get what it wants. Someone else's response is anger. Depression, anger – they're actually the same state of mind. One is internalized and becomes inert and is an opinion about how 'I this' and 'I that' and 'the world is horrible' and 'how dare the world be this way and so I'm depressed' – and another way of saying it is 'how dare the world be this way -- kick, punch!' You know? But they're both negative states of mind, they're both criticism, they're both based in anger. It's so shocking to hear this. So, of course they're physical; and in the materialist world, we only think it's physical – that's why we all have to take our pill; that's why they're making a fortune on us. Can you imagine if they find a pill to stop anger? My god, they're going to be so happy; they'll make an absolute fortune! They'll be billionaires. Trillionaires.

So, there *is* the physical; this is the point -- you go to your Tibetan doctor, it's exactly the same. She'll feel your pulses and she'll see there's a certain imbalance of the wind energy that's affecting a state of mind that triggers as your depression. Depression is mental. It's a viewpoint. It's a series of opinions. It's a habitual way of interpreting the world. But the mental part is inextricably linked to a physical part. And if the physical part's out of balance – they call it 'chemicals' in the west, the Tibetans call it the 'wind energy' – then you get your herbal medicine which adjusts the wind energy which then calms the mind which is connected to the wind energy. That's how you change; the same way as taking your Prozac or whatever you take. Are you with me, people? Are we communicating here or am I talking too fast?

Okay, stop; just to summarize for a few seconds and then we can have some questions. The key point I'm making here: we have mental consciousness and sensory. The sensory are really just idiots, you know, but they run the show right now because we just follow whatever we feel physically, but it really is very delusional. The mind, the mental consciousness is where all the stories are, the dramas; and all the emotional stuff -- including the good ones – are all basically coming down to being thoughts – opinions about something. 'Oh, Bob is a nice person.' It's an opinion, a view. One more point – one more point here: everything in the mental consciousness is an opinion or a viewpoint -- so shocking a concept to us! – that comes along with certain physical experiences when they're very strong opinions.

Now, the positive ones happen to be opinions that are to some extent in sync with reality; and that's why they're peaceful and sweet. The negative ones are

opinions that aren't in sync with reality. They're liars. They're delusional, and this is the way we have to get to see our mind. When we can see it this way, we're really on track with knowing how to change our mind as a Buddhist. So now, please ask me some questions about all this. Yes?

Q: Venerable, can you discuss antidotes and purification?

Ven.: Nowhere near that yet; far too soon. We've got to unravel all this first and understand how it works first. Then, that answer will come fairly obviously. Let's unpack all this first – questions about how all these emotions are finally conceptual. I need you to talk about it and ask questions; it's easy for me to say it but I want you to understand it and talk about it. Yes?

Karma and Parents

41:55

Q: Do our parents create or help us obscure our emotions...

Ven.: Every single person you meet in your life has some impact upon you, including your parents. Of course they do. Every single person – you have karma with individuals, you have karma with that dog, with that cat, with that worm, with that rat, with that mother, with that father, with the rapist, with the lover; we have karma with people, don't we? And depending on our relationship with them – and what's in our mind and what's in their mind – then things arise.

Q: So, is that a preprogramming between...

Ven.: Which part, darling?

Q: The – are your emotions pre – they're in there and so your behaviors are attracting each other and...

Ven.: Okay, so let's say you've got – let's say you're born to Mary – what's your mummy's name?

Q: Mary...

Ven.: Okay, so there you go!

Q: Mary Jane...

Ven.: Okay; you're born to Mary Jane, so – was it a reasonable relationship?

Q: Yes.

Ven.: Okay, so then we could say that due to strong virtuous karma in the past, in one particular set of lives between you, you created some virtue with each other. You must have been really kind to her and good to her; because here you are: you run this time to Mary Jane's womb, and she turn out to be a nice mummy who's reasonably kind and loving and every single bit of what Mary

Jane is, is Mary Jane's qualities – right? They're hers, from her being good in the past. But how come you got them is because you were good in the past to her.

So, you could have been born to a mummy who abused you, and starved you or raped you or gave you cocaine or something; they are her qualities, but hey! – you created the cause to have that mummy and her behavior because of your doing that to her in the past. Do you see? So, there's two of you, each with your own stuff; each with your own stuff and you come along and you've got some history together. Yours is yours; hers is hers. But you create the cause to have her and she creates the cause to have you. She might have given birth to some psycho, but she didn't, you know; she was lucky to get a nice girl as her daughter. Hitler had a mother; poor old Hitler's mummy; imagine how bad she felt...

Q: So, as I've grown older, I *became* a very angry person, but I don't feel like I was that way as a child...

Ven.: Oh, no, it was there though; it's not possible for it to start... maybe it -- your -- okay. The bottom line would be -- for the Buddha -- attachment has to have been there from the start; which is neediness for having things the way you wanted them. And so, maybe you were getting that to some extent, or maybe you didn't *express* your frustration so much; but the fact is, if you didn't have any anger before, that means everything in your life, you would have been blissfully content; nothing would have disturbed you ever. *Ever*. You would have only been happy. Even if your mother didn't do what you wanted, you wouldn't have minded. So maybe it was your anger wasn't strong, but it's only since you're grown up and grown away from Mary Jane that you're now seeing your mind and investigating it and this is coming to the surface, you know. But the whole idea is; it's like saying 'I didn't have roses in my garden when I was little, so the roses must have suddenly started later...' But they couldn't have just *started*; there had to have been a seed there before. You understand my point. The seed just hadn't ripened yet; but the seed had to have been there from the past. You understand my point. It's your anger.

Q: So, there could have been stifling...

Ven.: Oh, of course. Oh my gosh, yes; this is exactly what we do -- of course, of course. And because we're not taught methods to see our minds clearly, we live in denial much of the time. We either have -- mostly, our mode of existence in our world is, you vomit it all out or you suppress it. And then of course, the suppression mode inevitably brings the kind of depression-type view where it all comes out later as all crooked and weird, you know? Or you have the one that vomits out everything, so then it's naked to you and everybody else, you know.

So, this mode here is this enormous capacity for awareness; not just for seeing your mind -- 'Oh, I'm being mindful' -- but seeing it with a real intelligence, using Buddha's kind of 'botany', if you like, as the explanation for what's going on in your mind so you can interpret it well. Do you understand? Yes?

Q: I love how – I've heard the description that it's an 'unskillful response'.

Ven.: What is?

Q: Anger...that anger is unskillful...

Ven.: What do you mean? Why do you love that?

Q: I like it because it feels so much more compassionate ...

Ven.: What do you want to be compassionate for? No, no; you've got it wrong in my opinion. You're just trying to pussyfoot. You've got to see how anger is heartbreaking to you, not negative. What we do now is we beat ourselves up; so that's why you prefer 'unskillful' – because you assume, 'Oh, if I'm angry I must be bad.' That's a mistake; you're not bad. Your anger's bad.

It's like, you might have cancer *here*; it doesn't mean the whole of you is ugly. You've got to see the cancer as vile, and the more precise you can be about where it is, the more – if you think, 'Oh, cancer's unskillful,' you won't ever try and fix it. Nothing's wrong with thinking anger's bad or negative; but it doesn't mean *you're* bad. That's the mistake; that's the mistake. Anger is horrible; it destroys us. It breaks our hearts; it destroys us and it's what causes us to harm others. Do you see my point?

The Roommates and The Attachment of Wanting the Approval of Others
46:48

Q: Yes, I do. So, is indecision – being un-decisive – is that a form, is that a subtle combination of two things?

Ven.: Okay, the way Buddha's psychology describes -- oh, what's going on here; sorry. There are many – something's not working. I'm sorry; I'm just suffering – I've got my sciatica. Hang on a minute, I've got to adjust myself, I can't bear the pain, I'm so sorry. My back – look at this. Now, a little cushion behind me, that'll do. And now a big cushion under my feet; then we're happy. Yes, that one; now I'm sort of tipped up at the right angle. Okay...alright, I think that's better. Thank you so much.

Okay, so; the point is, the Buddha's model of the mind says we've got – the way I like to say it is we've got about fifty roommates in there; and some of them are called virtuous; they're called 'love', 'compassion', and each has got its own voice, its own way of talking, and its own assumptions. You understand? And then you've got the crazy roommates; and they're all the voices of ego; and they're called 'attachment', 'anger', 'jealousy', 'pride', 'low self-esteem'. There's a few main ones, and all the variations of them, you know. So, those are the emotional ones; and then you've got lots of others that seem more mild – like indecision, doubt; you know, this kind of thing. They've also got their own function. So each of us is a different recipe of the same things; that's all. Some have a lot more anger, but really decisive. Some people are angry, but indecisive. Some people are – so each one is like a different shape because of this.

So, this is why we have to recognize – get to hear the different ones, and the ones that are causing us pain, you know? So, indecision – or doubt, they call it, you know -- is really a state of mind – it's a specific state of mind that is, that is just, maybe for other reasons, other bits and pieces of mind that are working away, that means it's hard to make a decision about something. So then, there's so many things it could be, you know... Maybe afraid to make a decision because you've got a particular – you might have a strong attachment to reputation, a strong attachment to what people think. That might be another part of you that is the cause of why that is not so helpful. You understand? So, you've got to just learn to listen to it carefully.

But in general, indecision or doubt is – the fact is, indecision is, 'will I do this or will I do that', isn't it? 'Is this right or is that wrong?' So, because it's a question, there is an answer, but you have to have a clear basis for – the basis for a decision. So, for example, would it be, 'Shall I do this job or that job?' Or, 'Should I marry this guy or that guy?' Is that the kind of – or is it just everyday little stuff?

Q: It's a job...

Ven.: Okay; this is very simple then. This is very simple. If you are clear – crystal-clear in your mind -- that you wanted the best pay – you with me? – you would never have indecision; because it's easy; 'Oh, Where's the best pay? There's the biggest number. That's the job I'll do!' Instant. Easy, isn't it? So, it means your basis for a decision is not so clear. You get my point? The reason – so this is why, in the Buddhist point of view – you've only got two reasons to do anything. You think of this, and you practice this, and I tell you, you'll stop being indecisive.

The first one – which is the wisdom wing – you think to yourself, 'Will this job help me develop my mind better?' which means: become less angry, less neurotic, less fearful, less jealous – that's your inner work on yourself; and if the answer's 'yes', honey, you go for it. If the bigger one is, 'Will this help me be more beneficial to others?' which is sort of like a bit of the same – more compassionate, more wise, all these things; they're the reason to decide, they're the reason, they're the basis – for a job, for a relationship, for where to go, where to live, what to do. 'Will this help me develop myself spiritually and help me help others?' They're the two things. Are you understanding my point? If you have this every time as a basis for your decision, you'll be able to make a decision easily.

And there's sometimes you can't be perfect and make the right decision every time; so be brave and dare to be wrong, dare to make a mistake. Dare to make a mistake; fear of making a mistake is just attachment to ego, because we're scared – we say we're scared to make a mistake, you know, but it's really fear for what people might think. Our deepest attachment, which is very hard to see, is attachment to other people's views. We're very strongly caught up in trying to make everyone happy, you know? Which is wonderful to want to make people

happy, but usually it's mixed with attachment to what they think of me. So, we've got to look into these things; they're quite subtle to look inside and see it, you know?

It's so interesting – I think I mentioned this, but I'll mention it again here – I can't remember exactly where it was, just let me look it up; it was somebody in **The Guardian**, the English newspaper – I've got my I-pad so I can check; I'll ask Google-god to find it for me – so, basically, they said that – they interviewed people at the time of death, before they died; the things that were the most common problem that they had before they died; one of the most common was this terrible regret at wasting their life at not following their heart and not doing what they really felt was right. All the time trying to placate other people; doing what they thought other people thought was right. This is what holds most people back, darling... This is familiar: you're familiar with this?

Yeah... so first of all – this is the point: we've first got to think, you know, sometimes we're even too scared to look at options; 'Should I do this job? Should I go to that country? Should I take a holiday?' Most of the time, before we even say 'yes' or 'no', we're saying, 'Oh, no, that's not possible. Oh, no, I can't do this. Oh, what if this...' We're cutting ourselves off at the knees. So treat it – the thing for me that is so clear; you can come up with the answer, you've got to know – in other words, you've got to know what you want first. If you haven't done it yet, you just have to say it. You've even got to know you want to kill your father... You've got to know you want to kill him before you decide whether it's good to kill him. But if we just say, 'Oh, no, I can't do that because this because of that...' we'll stay paralyzed.

So, you put the things out there as options; you write it down: 'Well, I can go here. What are the advantages?' If you have your mind go to that possibility, and then you see if it's reasonable; and then you can decide afterwards – but not cut yourself off at the knees. The first thing we say is, 'Oh, that's not possible, I can't do that. Oh no, because I've got to do this, I've got to do that; oh, no, I can't do this because of this and that.' This is an old, deeply ingrained habit inside us; fearful to do something different, fearful to do something that other people mightn't like.

So this is kind of scary; this is what holds most people back, you know. It's quite interesting. Do you understand what I'm saying? And this is how we all are... Maybe this is going to take too long... **Guardian**... oh, I'll do it later.

Three Levels of Suffering

54:06

Q: So, any time that I get upset with somebody, or some situation, like a strong disturbance in my mind; my assumption should be, 'My mind is lying to me,' and...

Ven.: Well, you've got to label the state of mind first. What's the name of it? Sounds like anger to me...

Q: Well...

Ven.: Has to be anger...?

Q: Yeah, well, anytime somebody is doing something that... or not doing what you want them to do...

Ven.: That's called anger. It's called anger...it has to be, because if it made you feel good and go towards them, it's called 'attachment'; if it makes you go, 'Oh my god,' and go away from them, it's called 'aversion'. Fundamentally, it's that. It's either attachment, which means it looks nice to you, and you think 'Great!' or it looks un-nice to you and you think, 'Euchh!' -- that's called 'aversion'. There's attachment or aversion. That's it. That's it. Simple. So now, you call it for what it is: aversion. Anger.

So then, you've got to see how anger is lying. So, how would anger be lying? What's one of the lies about anger? What's one of the ways it lies? For example, what's one way – it lies in many ways.

Q: Well, all my lifetime, it's just that I've had unrealistic expectations...

Ven.: That's one of them. Okay...but that's a function of attachment. First of all, one of the fundamental ways that all the delusions lie is that the object of that state of mind appears uglier or prettier than they really are. That's the way it lies as you've got it – that person doesn't look so cool to you now.

Q: I define them right then and there by whatever it is they're doing that minute...

Ven.: That's another mistake. There's many, many mistakes – that's the fundamental mistake of ego-grasping; of ignorance that sees them as inherently bad. That's the biggest mistake of all. But if you track the psychological progression – there's you, bopping along in life, like the rest of us, with the assumption deep in your bones that I must get what I want every second'. That's the way attachment sounds and feels, okay? And that's based on an even deeper sense of dissatisfaction – always wanting something more. So then, there's the hankering after 'things being the way I want them'.

Now, the gross level of this is when the cake looks more delicious than it really is, or the divine person you're in love with looks more divine than they really are; but the moment-by-moment one is more subtle. It's just this assumption that I must get what I want and the millisecond a person does the opposite, *that second*, aversion arises. So yes, one of the functions of that assumption is an expectation, of course it is: 'I expect to get what I want every second,' so its very bare-bones energy is expectation, of course it is; 'I expect to get what I want.' You're driving on the freeway, and some car drops in front of you; you didn't *think* you were *expecting* to be relaxed, but you were; and the moment I come in front of you, anger arises.

So, if there weren't that expectation – which is a really subtle level of attachment – we would not get angry. So that's the most fundamental one. Expectation is a function of the attachment wanting what it wants every second; *expecting* to get what I want every second. That's the basis; and that's why it gets disturbed. Then it gives rise to anger, or annoyance, or frustration, or irritation; or despair and depression, depending on your mode. And this is happening a million times a day; a thousand times a day.

Q: It seems like we're almost at a disadvantage for having a life where we pretty much get a lot of the things we want, you know; I mean like, it seems like, growing up in America, middle class; you haven't – you've pretty much always had the things that you need...there's this idea that, if things could only – if I could only get a little bit of this here – it feels like you're close to...

Ven.: Exactly right; and that is because – and that's where -- exactly. So that's where, if we understand, in the first Noble Truth, there are three levels of suffering. And the first one is the 'suffering of suffering' and in ordinary human terms, that would be the life of somebody who doesn't get what they want – who's in prison, who's treated lousy, gets raped, has a cocaine-addicted mother, who's abused; do you understand? So, if we don't have that, then we tend to think, 'Oh, I'm not suffering,' because that's the only way we understand suffering. In other words, that's when you get what you *don't* want; that's the mode for most people. We call *those* people suffering – the poor people, the suffering people, the junkies, you know.

But because we have been the ones who have gotten – as you say – what we want most of the time: nice mother, friends, things, food, blah-blah; that means we don't have much of the first kind of suffering. But the trouble is with this – we are more involved in the second level of suffering, which is called 'the suffering of change'; but we can say it more easily – it's actually the suffering of attachment and anger and depression at a subtler level; and that's why rich people go kill themselves. Rich people get depressed and go to therapists because we think, 'Oh, I'm not suffering,' and so we only notice it – and that's what Lama Zopa calls the 'inner prison'.

One of these young Mexican guys who first wrote to us in prison, who's got the gross level of suffering, okay, living in these garbage dumps, in one little cell, twenty-three hours a day, with ten books and the inside of a pen and that's it, and he's lucky to get out alive; we would call that the first level of suffering – you understand my point. And he said, when he wrote to him – he wrote to Rinpoche, and Rinpoche said, 'Your prison is nothing in comparison with the inner prison of ordinary people,' and that's the second kind of suffering that we are living in. And as he said, it's the prison of attachment, the prison of depression, the prison of anger.

So, we *get* the gross level, but because we're not noticing our mind, we're not seeing the constant dissatisfaction of attachment. Even if you're getting multimillion dollars, even if you're getting the best clothes on earth; there's still this primordial dissatisfaction which is the nature of attachment, which *can't* be

satisfied by food and handsome people. And that's rumbling along – that's why we get depressed and want to kill ourselves; because we're not dealing with that subtler level of suffering; and this is the one that Buddha's *really* into -- you understand my point – the having attachment and anger in the first place.

Q: What it feels like to me is 'entitlement'...

Ven.: That's the way we have it at the gross level, yeah. And that's what attachment is; it's a sense of 'I deserve it'. And that's what attachment *is*. And then that's why we get so angry when we *don't* get it; because I *don't* deserve it. But they are the two of the biggest lies; because the Buddha says there's no such thing as 'don't deserve' or 'deserve'. It feels to us like 'causeless'; like, 'just the fact that I'm a human, I deserve to get a good mother', so, she doesn't bliss out about her beloved Mary Jane every day; she just thinks, 'Oh, that's normal,' but how dare her mother start abusing her – she doesn't *deserve* that. But, everyone deserves a good family; but there's no logic *unless you've created the cause*. That's the point. That's why we have to own it ourselves.

Justice?

1:00:58

Q: I mean, the story – at some point in my life I realized that the story I'd been telling myself for too long – that it's an unjust world and it's particularly unjust to me – I'm wondering, from this viewpoint of karma, is there even such a thing as justice?

Ven.: No, there isn't. In the big, biggest, biggest picture point of view, putting all the nuts and bolts of this puzzle together, there is *nothing* that is so-called 'unjust' or random. In other words, no matter how much you might hate your garden, completely overgrown by weeds; you know it's not a question of saying, 'This is not fair.' *It's your garden, and whatever's in your garden is there because you put it there; and you didn't take care of it, or you did take care of it; and that's the attitude of karma*. In the conventional sense, of course, there are victims: Tibetans are victims of the abuse of the Chinese – in the conventional sense, of course you can use that word; and in the conventional sense you can say it's wrong, which is why it's appropriate for the Tibetans to try and fight for their country – well, not using angry means, because it's not going to help them.

So, in a conventional sense a baby is a victim of an abusive father; so, if you have a misunderstanding of karma, you'll go, 'Oh, well, they deserve to suffer.' That's *totally* not the right conclusion. The point of karma is – the best way to say it is simply an *explanation* for why that flower is there; why that weed is there; then what you have to do is know what to do with it. That's the point.

So – and that's the point – what you're saying is so true; this sense of entitlement, 'unfair', 'how dare'—this kind of thing; that is the actual voice of ego, based upon the misconception of attachment and anger, based in turn upon the misconception of ego-grasping, the fundamental sense of 'I' in the first place. So, this is the deepest lie of all. When we've unraveled all those lies, that's what realizing emptiness means – therefore there's no longer the sense of 'I', the

neurotic sense of 'I', no longer entitlement, no longer anger, no longer depression; because you've cut the root out. Isn't it? Makes sense?

So, what we're talking about here is really having quite a sophisticated understanding of the conceptual stories of every single state of mind that arises, being able to analyze it carefully, identify it as a deluded one or a valid one; hearing what it's thinking, hearing its story, hearing its assumptions and unpacking it; unraveling it. So, it's not just a question of vaguely 'knowing your feelings'; that's so grossly superficial I can't even describe. Are you getting my point, people? It really means going deeply – not into the past; this is again the point I'm making. In our materialist world – because mummy and daddy made us, as far as we're concerned – we always look into the past to see what people did to us as the explanation for 'why I am what I am'. This is okay; you can learn something, but it's too, too, too gross for the Buddha. Where to go is into *my mind itself* – unpacking, unraveling, deconstructing; hearing vividly and clearly the elaborate stories that my states of mind are telling *me* that I am grimly holding on to as the truth – which in reality, Buddha says, are based upon level and levels and levels of misconception.

So, it's a quite sophisticated way we have to work on our minds. There's no shortcut, it won't go overnight; part of the thing is, we've got all these roommates in here. While we're doing this job, we've got to learn to live with these roommates. You've got to learn to hear the angry one, the violent one, the jealous one, the fearful one, the depressed one. Don't be scared of them, which is probably what happens in our life, you know – we don't want to know about it, so we tuck them away. We've got to let them all run riot. It's as scary as hell; because if you can't hear, if you can't identify the problem you can never solve it.

So, we've got to go into our minds with great courage, knowing it's not all going to go overnight; we've got to hear every stinking rotten little old crazy-house roommate; the angry one, the neurotic one, the fearful one, the jealous one, the doubtful one; listen to their voices clearly but don't identify with them – then you're not scared of them. This is such an important point. Yes?

The 'Useful Lie'

1:05:06

Q: So, ah, I'm understanding that in order to get some distance from the disturbing attitudes you have to not identify with them...

Ven.: That's exactly right; precisely...

Q: But it seems like in order to get your handle on love and compassion and wisdom and the six paramitas, we do the opposite – we actually identify with them...

Ven.: Absolutely! With the good ones, oh my god, yes.

Q: But to me that seems like a lie...

Ven.: Why is that?

Q: Because it seems like – my understanding, where I'm at is that I don't – I have those qualities to the degree that I cultivate them, they're not inherently a part of me any more than anger is inherently...

Ven.: That doesn't mean they're not a part of you; you're chucking the baby out with the bath water in that statement. You're suggesting, therefore, that they're not part of you; you've gone too far. At the moment, as long as we don't realize emptiness – okay, forget even that. The fact is, there *are* negative states in there, these roommates; and you've got virtuous roommates. Until you've realized emptiness, you might as well start identifying with the good ones, baby; you might as well, because eventually when you've realized emptiness, it'll be fine.

But we've got to start somewhere, so – we've got to give ourselves courage and inspiration; it's too much to realize emptiness before you've even lessened the neuroses and the fears. You want to start identifying with some good qualities; because the negative states of mind – ego-grasping is addicted to the negative thoughts, can *only* hear the negative – so the very first humble level of working on our mind, we've got to start actually pointing out our good ones and saying, 'Hey! I can grow that.' Don't be scared of that. Now, if you grasp at it too strong, and then you set arrogance forward, then you've got a problem, of course you have.

But you've got to state the facts: there's love and kindness there; they're buried right now because we're addicted to hearing all the lousy roommates. We give them all the power. So, start giving the good ones power first; then, slowly, slowly we get more sophisticated and then we can start to realize the emptiness of even those. Progressive, you know? Do you see my point? We *need* to give ourselves inspiration. We've got to have some courage. What do you think?

Q: I think it sounds – to be blunt, and coarse – like a useful lie.

Ven.: That's right! Hey! Precisely! Well done! Well done, girl. Spot on! Go for it. Well done – one step at a time, honey. Perfect – exactly right. A useful lie. In other words – even attachment – attachment's going to be a long way before it goes; and my feeling is, you might as well be attached to a nice person, for example, than an ugly one who's going to harm you. Be sensible! Use your attachment until you get rid of it. Yes! A useful lie; well done. Congratulations.

Identify With and Grow the Positive Qualities

1:07:53

Q: Are you saying to pay attention to the positive thoughts?

Ven.: Absolutely – and try and grow them. But even more than that, you could say – in a conventional sense – that the good qualities are actually at the core of your being; whereas -- and that's where a big distinction now – they don't have

equal status with the negative ones. When you realize emptiness, your good ones don't cease, but hey, when you've got emptiness, your bad ones definitely cease. The good will never leave you, but they're also empty; but the bad *will* leave you – there's a big difference. You hear that point? That's important.

Q: Doesn't still that past negative karma have to be paid off?

Ven.: That's purification, darling; that's coming way before. Yeah-yeah, that's coming, that's coming. Of course it does. So go on, what did you say, Isaac -- you've got to identify your good qualities. Part of our problem is this: again, like we were talking yesterday about having confidence or being arrogant; it's easy – like if you were to start identifying with your good qualities – if you've got arrogance in you, which is one of the bad ones – it's easy to then say, 'Oh, I'm really good,' and you over-exaggerate your good qualities; then you'll just poison yourself. So, we've got to learn to know there's going to be arrogance there; you can't help it. There *is* attachment; you can't help it. But have the courage to identify your efforts, your hard work, you're trying your best; you *are* being loving; be accurate about your good qualities. Be accurate about where you're at with those; but the deeper point is to know that they are your potential and they can never be removed from your mind. And that's very important to remember. You see my point?

Q: I think I do, yeah...

Ven.: Good – because ego is addicted to negativity; that's its job. And this is what just drags us down and destroys us. We've got to start, humbly and simply, identifying the *good* roommates; giving them some power, you know – because they're the ones who are going to conquer the *bad* roommates, initially. No question. Patience has to win over anger; forgiveness has to win over blame, you know, we've got to give them the power.

Q: I guess I identify with them even though...the tool for changing anything with the disturbing attitudes is, to find a way to stop seeing it as 'myself'.

Ven.: Absolutely, yes.

Q: ...and until I do that, I've got no traction with it... so, you're just saying, 'Use the fact that I've noticed how powerful that is in the other direction.'

Ven.: Right. Identify with – there's still more than that, because the good ones *are* at the core of your being and are indestructible and when you're a Buddha, you'll be infinite love, infinite wisdom, infinite compassion, infinite peace, infinite patience; they will be there *fully blown*. They're there; you've got to identify with them. But then when you realize emptiness, you understand they're empty as well. But they're *there*; and the negative ones will be gone for eternity.

So that's – I mean – this might just sound quite technical now – and it is – but it's really liberating when you can get it; because this now – what I'm about to tell you is the proof you can get enlightened, it's the proof, okay?

The Proof You Can Get Enlightened

1:11:02

When we take this view – that your mind is yours – then we take the view that everything in your mind is an opinion, a viewpoint, an attitude, an idea, a thought; which sounds quite shocking to us, but it is; everything in your mind is that. So, what Buddha's saying about the positive states, they are, to some extent – and this is directed to you, now – in sync with reality. They're not totally based in emptiness yet, but they are in sync with some level of dependent arising, some level of interdependence; which is reality – which is why they're peaceful, because they're connected to others – that's a sense of interdependence. The negative ones have *no* basis in reality *whatsoever*. They are *lies*.

So – let's just keep this really simple here – and I will say to you: 'There are two cups on my table.' Now, please – hear my words. First of all, can you establish, can we all agree, that that is a thought in my mind...

Q: Yes.

Ven.: ...called 'there-are-two-cups-on-my-table'? Now, you mostly will just go, 'Oh, yeah, that's right.' Isn't it? But why is it right? What's the logic for it being right? What's the logic for its being a good thought, a correct thought? What's the logic?

Q: I see the cup.

Ven.: Okay, you've got eyes, and you see a thing over here. Now, you label it 'cup' right? So we all agree in this room that that's labeled a 'cup', wouldn't you agree? So, because we all agree it's labeled a 'cup', and because we all know mathematics, this is called 'one', and because you have eyes that are working; because you see a table, and because we all agree that the label for this table is 'table', we don't have to go look up Google for all that, do we? You can understand my point, because we've got it down, haven't we? 'One – cup – on – my – table.' In a millisecond we can say that's right, can't we? But if we didn't speak English, you couldn't say that; if you didn't know numbers, you couldn't say that. Do you understand? If you didn't know what that was called, you wouldn't say that was right. You'd have to work it out first, wouldn't you? So, we've all worked it out to perfection, haven't we?

So therefore we *know* that is one cup on my table. So, there's two things going on here, and this is the point. This is how Buddha talks; this is his *thing*: there is a thought in Robina's mind, and he says there are billions of thoughts in all our minds. Some of those thoughts happen to be valid, *because they are in sync with reality*. And some of the thoughts are *not* valid, because they're *not* in sync with reality.

Are you hearing me, people?

So, I say, 'There are two cups on my table.' What do you say to that? That is a thought in my mind, isn't it? It is a thought; just like 'there is one cup on my table'; they're both thoughts, aren't they? But look at the difference – on is in sync with reality, and that reality is no big deal; we have *conventionally agreed* that 'one', 'cup', 'table' – we've all got the definitions clear, haven't we? So that's a *conventional truth*. We've all bought into the idea 'one', 'cup', 'table'. Are you with me here? Now, that's how everything exists, Buddha says, conventionally. But we're not happy with that. We project lots of lies – but that's another discussion.

So here, I have another thought. 'There are two cups on my table.' That is also a thought. But because we have all agreed upon the conventional truth of 'one' and 'cup' and everything, we can immediately say, 'Robina, no, you're wrong. There are not two cups on your table.' You can tell me that, can't you? And now, look at this – and let's say I haven't got much vested interest in believing there are two cups on my table; let's say it's my religion to believe I've got two cups on my table. Believe me, I'm not going to change my mind easily; I'm going to have a war with you, because I want to believe in my truth. Do you understand?

So, I will go, 'Oh, you're absolutely right – there's one cup on my table.' Now, what happened to the thought, 'there are two cups on my table'? What happened to it?

Q: It changed...

Ven.: No, more than changed. What happened to it?

Q: It transformed...

Ven.: No, bugger that! What happened to it? Who said 'gone'? Precisely! It didn't transform; they're two thoughts, they can't – they're two thoughts, right? So, one thought literally stopped existing in my mind, didn't it? It stopped, didn't it? So what caused it to stop?

Q: The truth...

Ven.: The truth; precisely. That's *how you get enlightened*. I'm not kidding here. This is Buddha's point; this is why we get a bit shocked with religion -- we tend to think mathematics has to be true or it's not true. You all can agree; we understand, that's conventional reality – same with cooking and botany and gravity; we all learn the laws and then we all agree upon them. Okay? You know that. And you know – you have the right to say 'one and one is seven'; you do have the right, but look at the trouble you'd get in – because no one would agree with you, you'd just be in trouble.

So, you are allowed to think what you like; that's what we think in religion: 'Oh, I'm allowed to believe in what I like!' we say. So, I have a vision, so I write a new

book, and I've got a new religion. That's how we get new religions every day; because we don't think we have to prove them; we think everyone's got a right to believe what they like. Don't we think that about religion? Well, that's disgusting, in my opinion. That's intellectual laziness beyond belief. It's complete delusional nonsense; and this is the point that Buddha's making. He *is* saying there is reality. He *is* saying there is the way things exist. *And* he is saying all minds have the potential to be in sync with it, to cognize it. That's what he means by enlightenment.

So, he's not telling you he wants you to believe him, he's not going to force you; he's going to get you to work with it and think it through and eliminate from your mind all the lies that aren't in sync with reality – that's growing all the states of mind that *are* in sync with reality until there's nothing left. That's what enlightenment is.

The Primordial Lie

01:17:00

So, okay; the lies that are in our mind now are slightly more deeply primordial than 'there are two cups on my table'. There's the most primordial lie of all, which is that 'I exist from my own side, I am intrinsic'. This is the hardest lie to see; it's impossible for us – but that's the lie we finally have to eradicate. On the basis of that lie – which we absolutely believe in one billion percent – we then have the lie that 'I am needy and hopeless' and therefore crave this and crave that; then the lie that 'how dare you do that to me, it's not fair' and then the lie of aggression and all the other business and then the lie of pride and arrogance, then the lie of depression; these are all the lies that are based on this root lie, and our job is to unpack them – to see the truth, to argue with them, until eventually they are gone from the mind *forever*. It's a practical psychological procedure. It's just going to take a few lives; that's all. Are you with me, people?

And the key to understanding *this* is that everything in our mind is a story, is an opinion, is a conceptual description of something. But because we've believed these lies for so long – and this is the point – as Lama Zopa says, bad enough – okay; we've believed in these lies for so long that now things appear to us as true.

So, if I'm a racist; let's say I have a really narrow, ignorant mind and I say, 'I hate pink people!' You know? I'm not going to say to you, 'Well, you know, every time I see a pink person, it appears to me in this way, and I realize it's not true; it's just my mind making up a story.' We don't speak this way, do we? We will say, 'Pink people are this.' Do you get my point? We've had this ignorance in our mind for so long that whenever we see that object the thoughts in our mind are so vivid and so nonsense and so liars; we've had them so long that the *people actually look like we think*. We've made that story. We've created that story. Even as there's anger arising in your mind if that person doesn't do what you want, they look ugly, don't they? You don't say, 'It's my mind, making them up,' when you see the chocolate cake, you don't go, 'Well, that's just a chocolate cake; it has no inherent nature. I'm just causing it to appear delicious to me.' No way!

So, because we've had attachment for so long, it's got to the level of being visceral and we believe one million percent in the story it is telling us and we don't even think it's a story; then it causes the cake to look divine. We dump all the blame on the cake and so stuff it in ourselves and think 'It's not my fault.' This is how samsara works.

So, not only do we have these big stories in our mind; we've had them for so long and they actually make things and people and events appear the way they appear to us. And then we think – as Lama Zopa says – that our mind is not even playing a role. That's the depth of the samsara that we're in. Are you with me, people? So, it takes time to unpack it.

Q: So, is there a physical manifestation of our beliefs?

Ven.: What?

The Emptiness of Fred

1:20:00

Q: So, when we look at the cake, and we build it up so much, it physically does taste better; our taste buds...

Ven.: Yeah, actually... No, of course; it's very clear. Listen, honey; if you're in love with Fred – do you like boys? I don't know who people like these days; everyone likes everybody. Let's assume you like boys – okay. Let's say you love Fred. Fred looks gorgeous, doesn't he? So, when you have contact with Fred, it feels very nice. But when you hate Fred, excuse me, it don't feel so pleasant, does it? You wouldn't want him to touch you, go anywhere *near* you; you can't even stand the sound of his *name*.

So, it proves there's nothing in Fred, baby, that is actually gorgeous or ugly. Everything is coming from your mind, and that triggers all the wind energy in your body, gives you a very good feeling, which makes the face all sparkly and bright – you believe it's all Fred, that's why you cling to him, and then you get really disappointed when he dares to be a regular person like everybody else – he farts in the sheets and everything else, you know? You get my point? Everything is made up by the mind, Buddha says; it's not a joke. It sounds cute and cosmic but it's quite true.

As Lama Zopa says, when you finally realize the emptiness of Fred – or the chocolate cake, or yourself, or everything else – it is as if there is no Fred. But there *is* a Fred – for your mind; but what *does* exist is so subtle, it is *as if* it is an illusion. Because finally, Buddha is saying, *everything* comes down to how our mind sees it.

There is something there; you can't say there's not. There's elements here, and the elements also are beginningless, Buddha says, by the way. The universe consists of minds – which are beginningless – and the four elements, which are also beginningless. And the way the elements configure is based upon minds and karma, you know.

Q: Are they 'earth, fire, wind and water'?

Ven.: That's right, yeah... Yes?

Q: The stories or series of thoughts...do you need to tell yourself to erase that primordial sense of self that's the craving...

Ven.: The craving is not the grossest one; the deepest, the subtlest is this – really, we can't even put words to it – it's this instinctive, primordial sense of an 'I' that is separate from others; an 'I' that exists in and of itself, find-ably, real. So the only way to argue with that deepest lie is to think about *dependent arising*, which is the 'king of logics', as Lama Zopa says – as Tsongkhapa says – to prove emptiness. So, that's dependent arising; and I think the last time we're going to talk about dependent arising. Emptiness. This is the emptiness one; it's the deepest, the most instinctive lie is the one they call it colloquially, 'ego-grasping'; and the direct antidote to that misconception is the teachings about dependent arising and emptiness.

So then, on the basis of that ego-grasping we have deep attachment and craving. The opposite to this is to break down and analyze how that object is not – it doesn't exist – it's a story -- that our attachment is *exaggerating* it. Our attachment is *exaggerating* the deliciousness of the cake. So, it's to analyze carefully the way these states of mind are delusional in the way they exaggerate and in their expectations and all this kind of stuff.

The way to counteract the story of anger is to, you know, is to see it's just the response when my attachment didn't get what it wanted. So, each one has its own precise antidote, you know, and the more we can *hear* the voice of attachment, the more we can hear what the opposite is, we can hear the way anger talks, the more we can hear the opposite; the way we analyze and argue with them -- do you understand -- all these crazy roommates and their crazy stories. Yes?

The Story may or May Not Be Accurate

1:24:00

Q: That's kind of what I've been doing in dealing with some – you know, disturbing attitudes come up and it just sounds really simplistic but I just go, 'Wait a minute – it's empty. It has absolutely no real value.' My either pushing it away from me or pulling it towards me and yet physically I feel either this need to push it away or to pull it towards me and then I'm thinking, 'But wait a minute. This is all empty.'

Ven.: Okay, now that's one – but to be really strictly speaking accurate, that was – you're bringing in a bunch of different things in there that aren't quite precise.

Q: Okay...

Ven.: So, to say it's all 'empty' is excellent, but you – it's, ah – you've got to have the meaning of that. And then to say the next thought, which isn't about emptiness; it's about something else...

We've got to be quite precise in the way we see how it functions and precise in our assessment of its story.

Q: And what I've noticed is the story is *my* story; and that's what makes it 'right', is because I thought of it, so it must be right! And what I've been working at to *not do* is to not always....

Ven.: You mean that as opposed to someone else's view, you mean?

Q: Right; because I have this thing that rides around with me all the time that goes, 'Oh, that's cool, and that's cool...' And, 'Oh, I remember what I did twenty years ago,' and then it flips over here and does something else and it flips over there and something else...

Ven.: I'm losing you, I'm losing you, I'm losing you...

Q: The train of mind...

Ven.: I know, but I'm losing your point.

Q: I think I might have lost it, too...

Ven.: You're talking about *your view* but this is not quite accurate. Listen – this is not quite accurate; because your view could be right. Let's just say you told me there's one cup on my table. And I think that sounds stupid, and I think you're just being mean to me, and I say, 'How dare you say that to me!'

Q: And I've *done* that!

Ven.: Now, please, can you listen, darling? Can you listen?

Q: Yes!

Ven.: If we're speaking objectively, what you did say is in fact right. What you did say is in fact correct. So, you need to know it is correct. And then because you're trying to – the only thing there is the problem is that you want to be arrogant with me; so, you stop being arrogant, you realize I'm deluded and you say, 'Oh, that's okay, Robina,' And you let me have my way. But you're still correct; don't think you're not correct. So, you said this and you are correct; nothing wrong with that. So, the reason that you don't want to give up – if it's delusion – is because you're attached to your view, and you know you're right; and that's what's so infuriating – we know we are right and people can't see our truth. And that's where we're clinging on to – even if you are right, it doesn't matter. Relax. So, that's like 'giving the victory to others'. So, I just wanted to make that point. So, you might be right, but that's not the point.

Q: So, do not always tell myself it's stupid, because it might be right.

Ven.: Of course you do – but sweetheart, not only that, you need to know what is right – that's called 'wisdom'. But if it's just an opinion about art, you know:

'Well, I think it's a nice cup.'

'Well, I think it's an *ugly* cup!'

And you've got to have a war about it. But you could go to, you know, all the cup designers and come up with what is – you could do that and get opinions and prove that you're right; you could do this; or, you just kind of – whether it's one cup or two cups seems a bit more rigidly right or wrong; you just go relax, 'Yeah, it's fine,' because it's just an opinion, and in the end even if it is two cups and it's wrong, it's still an opinion... Let me have my opinion if I'm so deluded, let me have it, you know. 'Relax, it's okay, Robina, you're right. It's cool.' Do you understand?

So, you've got to know if you're right or wrong – it's not as if there is no truth; there *is* truth. You've got to know the truth; and that's where – when it comes to the truth about bad things – we tend to think, oh, because, it's wrong out there we've got to get angry. That's another discussion, now; but you've got to *know* there's a war out there, but just because there's a war it doesn't mean you get angry. Just because you're right doesn't mean you get angry with the person who doesn't agree with you – you've got to know what's right and wrong; that's what wisdom is. It's a question of how to deal with it at the time – what's skillful in relation to the situation. That's the point. Someone else? Anything?

Ven.: Go ahead, Marga -- Marg-gah – Bostonians talk like Australians in some things! 'Mar-gah', they'll say... great!

The Benefit of Humbly Owning Our Own Good Qualities

1:28:38

Q: You made me lose my thread! One of the things I heard you say a few nights ago when you were talking about people who are angry or psychotic – different things – and you were really encouraging us to see the better part of the other person and I was thinking about it when you were talking about how difficult it is for us to acknowledge those positive qualities that we have. But maybe if we, you know, think about – well, if we look at the better part of others, not only are we helping others – because people really respond to that, don't they – but we're helping ourselves...

Ven.: But my point, Marga, would be that we *can't* do that until we've done it to yourself. It's not possible.

Q: We can't do both together?

Ven.: We can, but I think the realization of this has to be first with oneself. Often, there are some people who are always kind about other people, but they never find their own good qualities. So, it's very *kind* of them to be kind to others, but they haven't done it for themselves yet; so their attachment is very mixed with their praise of others. But when you really can see your own good qualities and

own them carefully and humbly and realize the delusions don't belong and you can change them; that's really, then, very – it's stable. Then the genuine ability to do it to others is coming not from attachment, but from genuine wish to help others. Really important. Do you understand?

Q: I do, yes.

Ven.: And that is something – and that's the point – what's your name, darling? Rachel, right... This is a really, really big point, this one. At this very first level of practice where you don't even hear about emptiness, this first stage is in junior school and high school, where we're learning to look into the mind and identify the causes of our suffering, that is identifying the lousy roommates, the anger, the fears, the jealousy; and they are the addictions, they are the voices that we hear most now, and they *are* the ways we identify ourselves, which is what holds us back.

So, even though in that level of practice, that is our main work – to identify the poison; identify the pollution – and the real job of looking at the virtuous states come later, in the compassion wing; but still, as a major antidote to lessening the power of the delusions, is to simply identify with the positive, identify with the opposite. We've got to do this – we can't avoid it. So, when we can identify more with our good, already just that loosens the grip of the anger. It loosens the grip – whereas now with ego, I'm angry and then we get spiritual, and then I'm angry because I'm angry; and I'm a bad person because I'm angry – so, we kind of increase the anger.

Whereas, 'It's okay, Robina; it isn't your true nature,' which is sublime emptiness, 'I can change, I can become less angry,' meaning as soon as I even say that thought, I'm moving towards the opposite of anger – which means, wow! I can change.

So, we've got to do this; you can't avoid it. You've got to do this – identify with the good parts. Then there's some humility; then there's some kindness to yourself. Then you recognize karma and why you're suffering and you really want to change. Then it's easy to go to the compassion wing and then go to emptiness. Does that make sense? Yes?

Q: I want to ask about emptiness...

Ven.: Well, ask your question, darling, yes.

The Succinct Definition of Emptiness

1:31:54

Q: What is emptiness?

Ven.: 'Emptiness' is the Buddha's way of talking about how things exist ultimately; that nothing has an inherent nature. Ignorance – our ignorance, our ego-grasping, this deep delusion of mind – believes one billion percent that I and everything else exist inherently. If we don't know what that means, we've got to

look into that. That it exists in and of itself, from its own side, not depending on anything else – and this is the source of all our suffering. Attachment, anger and all the rest come as a result of this instinctive belief. So, Buddha's saying that isn't accurate. Things have no inherent nature. Things do not exist from their own side. Things exist interdependently. Things exist in dependence upon various factors. That's the basic idea.

Q: Thank you.

Ven.: Yes?

Finding the Map, and One's Place On It

1:32:56

Q: So, along those lines...I get confused about meditating as far as if it's sequential – there's one style to do to get you to another, to get you to another...I feel sort of like I'm floating out there. How should I meditate today? Sometimes, you know, I'll do a bit of...

Ven.: What's the basic purpose of meditating? Why are you trying to meditate? What are you trying to do on this job here? What are you trying to accomplish? How do you label it? What are you trying to do?

Q: Well, sometimes I'm trying to...

Ven.: Overall. Big picture.

Q: Oh, the big picture...

Ven.: What's the course you're on? You're in a course, okay? What's the course, what's the end of the course? For you? What's the goal?

Q: Enlightenment.

Ven.: So, that is your goal. Okay, so that makes sense to you. Okay...so then, on that goal, you've got these stages of practice, haven't you? You've got to work on yourself, work on your own behavior first, then work on your mind, then help others, then achieve bodhicitta, then realize emptiness, and then you get to become a Buddha. You can know all of that, and you can know you can pick and choose from all of these practices according to where you're at. So, one day, you're really grasping and freaking out because you're in love with somebody and they haven't given you what you want; you're having a mental breakdown, you've got to really work on your attachment. Another day, you're feeling like it's been hard to be generous to somebody so you work on your generosity. You pick from this big toolkit and you use whatever tools that you've learned about that you can apply in that day. You know where the tools come from; some of them are university tools, some are middle list tools, some are those tools – you understand, you've got to know where they all belong; and then you have your different practices, according to what you've done. You pick and choose, you can pick and choose; but you know what you're doing when you're doing it, and

why you're doing it. It's up to you – there's an awful lot of meditations out there, an awful lot of approaches; so you've got to know *why* you choose *that* tool for *which* purpose. You're the boss.

Of course, there's a classic way you can follow the teachings and follow the practices: do this then this then this, and that's reasonable; but once you've learned a lot of the tools you can apply them according to your own ability, based on all the teachings that you've learned. Does that make sense?

Q: Well, it does. I don't know what is where; I don't know what is 'college' and what is...

Ven.: Well, if you want to get to enlightenment on this particular path, you'd better learn that. Hadn't you? Don't you think?

Q: Some people say that when you meditate on emptiness, that's college...

Ven.: It depends, darling. It depends on where you get your teachings from. Do you get your teachings from here, or from different places?

Q: Different places...

Ven.: Well, then that's for you to sort out. That's your job – to find out where you fit, where you belong and whose instructions you want to follow. Just like cooking or music, isn't it? That's up to you.

Q: Well, I mean if you live in a small town and you don't have the university there, you tend to find your resources where you can find them...

Ven.: That's all you can do...

Q: You know, you'll find a book and... I study out of a book a lot because it's there every day and I go to whatever event is going on around town, but, you know, I'm getting teachings...

Ven.: What do you think you need to do about this? It's up to you, isn't it? It's your life, it's your job, your life, you're here; it's *you* – no one can run your life, so what do *you* think you need to do? Let's pretend we're learning about – let's pretend we're talking about music here. Let's pretend. You say, 'I really like music, I try a bit of this and I try a bit of that and there's no music college and...' What would you think you should do? You first have to decide if you really want to learn music, isn't it? You say you want to go to enlightenment; I asked you first what your goal is and you said that; well, you've got to know what it is, right? And you've got to know how to get there. Now, that's up to you, isn't it? Or should someone else tell you this, do you think?

Q: Well, no; it's up to me; and that's why I'm asking. Is there a sequential way to do things? I mean, is there a, you know, a ...

Ven.: That's what I'm telling you, darling; that's what I'm telling you all the time. This is what I'm saying about Atisha; this is what I said when I talked the very first day; this is what I mention every single time I've been here; that, yes, of course; the whole Tibetan packaging of the Dharma: junior school, high school, university, post-graduate; it's perfectly laid out. It's all perfectly laid out. Of course it is; exactly, darling, that's the point. That's why I keep saying; give reference to this, (The Eight Verses) exactly where it fits in the teachings. Absolutely, it is; yes it is. So, it's up to what you're going to do about it, isn't it? Are we communicating where I'm trying to come from, here? Are you seeing where I'm trying to come from?

Q: Yeah.

Ven.: Okay, so that's up to you to find out...is it not?

Q: Uh-hum.

Ven.: If you say you want to go to enlightenment, well, you better first work out what enlightenment is; everybody uses the term, you better decide if it's the one some Hindu talks about, the one that some little hippie talks about, is it the one that Lord Buddha talks about, is it the one – that one you'd better find out, too. Do you understand my point?

Q: Yes.

Ven.: Keep truckin', girl.

Q: So, I mean, that's it. You just...

Ven.: No. What's 'it' and 'just' what? What are you saying?

Q: So, I have to continue doing what I'm doing...

Ven.: Who told you that? Excuse me – you're the boss of your life; you can do what you damn well like. You can make any decision you wish. It's a question of how much you want it. Is it not?

Q: Uh-hum.

Ven.: Are you kind of getting my point here? I don't want to put words into your mouth but I'm trying very hard...

Q: Well, yes...

Ven.: What am I telling you? What are you getting from this?

Q: I'm getting that I have to find the path that works the best for me...

Ven.: Precisely.

Q: ...based on what my individual needs are and how to go...

Ven.: No. Well, that's where you're at *now*. But you've got to find a path that is the path you want to *be* on – which is like a map; which has a goal. And it sounds like you haven't found the one you're on yet. Is that right or not, darling?

Q: Um...yeah, I guess it is.

Ven.: So, you've got to keep moving. You've got to know what you want; and have the courage to put it down there: 'I want *this*'. And then you have to check if you have got that map right now; and if you haven't -- and you really do want that – you'd better find a map. And then you better get on that map and start doing it. You are, sort of; but based on what you're saying right now, you're kind of assuming... there's this doubt inside you. You're assuming already the status quo is the way it is – 'Oh, well, I haven't got a map and I'm not sure,' just stumble along and – that's terribly depressing. Why should you think this way?

Q: Well, I'm looking for a map, I guess. I mean, I'm looking...

Ven.: Good! Good! Good! So then *persevere* and really look and look until you find the map that you think is the right one. It's up to *you*, sweetheart, this is what I'm saying...this is what I'm saying to you.

Q: Okay, so... there are different interpretations – okay, I had a conversation earlier about what a 'sangha' is, and one person's definition of a sangha is a group of people who are like-minded and study together and support each other. But somebody said, 'No, no; a sangha is a *monastic* organization, and it's a very enlightened...

Ven.: Right. Then? So what are you going to do about that?

Q: So, then I have to decide for myself, I guess...

Ven.: Okay. You don't have to say the words 'for myself' because everybody can only decide themselves, can't they? But what do you do to work out whether something's right or wrong? What do you do? What do you have to *do*? What thinking do you have to *do*; what actions do *you* have to take to be confident that's the music school for *you*; that it's the, you know, the carpentry school for *you*? That that's the enlightenment school for *you*. What do *you* have to do now, because *you* are in charge of *your* life? *What do you have to do*, do you think?

Q: I have to decide what rings true...

Ven.: Excuse me, 'rings true' is pathetic...you don't – what 'rings true' about math? You do your *research*, you go deeply into it; you look into these things – but the only reason you'll do that is if you really want that goal.

Q: Well, if I research it, I'm just looking at other people's...

Ven.: What else can you do? *What else can you do? What else can you do?*...No, no, that's nonsense. You don't think, 'I'm going to study mathematics,' and then, 'I don't know whether Einstein's right so I'm just going to make my mind up.' That's total rubbish! You've got to have – you've got to do some – this is what *everybody* has to do, about whether you're learning music or how to get enlightened. You've got to do research, and use your wisdom to come up with some *confidence* that that school is a valid school; that Einstein is a valid teacher; that the Dalai Lama is a valid source. *You* have to find out that; *you* have to have confidence – not just what I think, 'Oh, I don't know,' you know, 'maybe...' It's too weak; it's too fearful.

Q: But... I'm basing the decision on what other people are thinking...

Ven.: What else in the world do you have but what other people have done? What else is there? Buddha is *another person*. Dalai Lama is *another person*. Einstein is *another person*. You have to look into that field; look into what people say; you have to look into their reputation; look into what they're saying and come up with a conclusion yourself – a confident conclusion – intellectually, inferentially, that that is valid. *You* have to do that; everybody in this universe has to do that – you're nothing special. If you sit back and are fearful to make decisions because you're worried about what people might think – which is how you're talking about your big mistake of not knowing how to make a decision – you'll always be sitting on the outer edge wondering 'maybe this, maybe that, not sure this'; you've got to be a bit more courageous with your mind, darling. You've got a super-bright mind; you've just got to keep researching until you're confident!

Q: But, what if you're looking at people's opinions who you do – who *are* knowledgeable...

Ven.: That's all part of your research, isn't it? That's all part of your research, darling. This is the most basic thing Buddha says – 'don't believe a single word I'm telling you'. So, you have to check up on the Buddha, you read a bit about the Buddha; you see if the Buddha's valid. Then you look at the people who express Buddhism in this life; and check up if they're valid. You can't do anything more than this. But you must do at least this, because *you* have to decide where you're going to get your Buddhism! You're the boss of your life, baby; not even Buddha is. All you can do is use your intelligence. Be brave! First you have to know what you want, then you have to do research, then you climb onto that map and start following the instructions. Otherwise you just walk around in circles until you're dead. So be brave; trust your own wisdom.

I'm talking to everybody in this room right now. This is exactly what *anybody* has to do. It's exactly the approach that Buddha would take. Don't believe a single word; but you've got to have *confidence*; which comes from your research.

Q: But there's a point where you have to have a certain amount of – what's the word I want – faith?

Ven.: Of course – what else is there? *Confidence*, darling, it's the word '*con fide*' – 'with faith'—faith based upon *your* intelligence; *your* wisdom. There's nothing else you can go on; there's nothing else you can go on. That's it. Keep truckin', baby...

Q: Well, I'm just getting hung up on definitions, I guess, and I...

Ven.: You better find out what definitions you're going to decide are the ones you're going to follow. Had you not?

Q: Uh-hum.

Ven.: Again, same point. It's up to you, darling.

Q: Yes, it is.

Ven.: It's the same thing every single time. And this is the one about you having the courage to make decisions. Everybody has to do this. Every single person is in charge of their own life.

Q: So then does this come full circle to having the conversation where -- and then -- where you're having that conversation with somebody and then you decide on what it is you believe and you just go, 'Oh, okay...'?

Ven.: That's total superstition. I couldn't care less what you believe in. I'm not interested in believing in something. That's too insulting -- to anybody. If you're trying to find out who's the best mathematician or the best musician, you just don't say what you 'believe in'; you put yourself out of it and you try to see objectively what's out there and then see what's reasonable, based upon the logic that you're doing; not just your own feelings. You're taking your feelings like they're some kind of -- you've got to be more intelligent than that. One step at a time, darling; and have some confidence in your own ability to make some decisions, to make choices. And then you learn from your mistakes. Come on! You can't be perfect straight away...

Q: There are a lot of choices...

Ven.: Huh?

Q: There are a lot of choices when somebody decides that, you know, 'the Buddhist path is for me' but then there's this thing of merit; there's an awful lot of choices so the question seems to be, you know, is it just a question of individual affinity with a particular path, like, 'all of these paths will work and I just have to figure out which...

Ven.: I don't know; there's an awful lot of rubbish called Buddhism out there. A complete load of rubbish! A load of nonsense, in my opinion. Be very careful what we choose, you know? A lot of garbage.

Q: But even here in Missoula, you have a choice between two different...

Ven.: Well, it's up to you to...what are you saying to me? Why do you say that? So?

Q: Well, it's not like you just go to math class and it says you are...

Ven.: Why are you saying this? What's the point behind this? What's the point behind it?

Q: I'm asking a sort of the similar question; like once you decide that you want to follow a Buddhist path, what are the criteria...

Ven.: I've just answered the same question; the whole conversation I've had now answered that –so obviously I didn't say it clearly enough. Everything I've said to her was answering your question. Obviously, I didn't say it clearly enough.

Listen! We have no choice, do we, but to start with where I am now, with what is in front of me.

What choice do I have? What choice do I have? The thought arises, 'Oh, I want to learn music.' That's my first step. You've got to know what you want, and *then* you think, 'Oh, let's investigate music.' What else can you do but do that and do your research and ask questions and look things up? There's nothing else to do but that. Is there not? Tell me something I've missed. Tell me something I've missed!

Q: I think what I was trying to ask was...

Ven.: I've missed it obviously; I'm sorry.

Q: ...that a lot of people have this sort of indecision is that...

Ven.: Okay; use music – no, no, stop, I'm being rude – Use music as our example; I live in Missoula and I went to a concert and the first time in my life, I thought, 'Oh...I'd love to be a musician.' The thought has to arise first, doesn't it? So, my first question to her is, 'What do you want?' She said, 'Enlightenment, I suppose.' My questions led from there. So, I want to learn music. What do I do *then*? What's my next step in Missoula? Here I am in Missoula. What do I do then?

Q: What kind of music and what instrument.

Ven.: Precisely. And then what do you do?

Q: And then you find a teacher.

Ven.: And how do you decide what teacher's good?

Q: By getting on the internet and Googling teachers...

Ven.: And then what do you do? You ask them, you go to meet them, you talk about them, you see it, you check up, you do your *research*. Then you be brave enough to actually make a decision. There's no other way, whether it's music, enlightenment or anything else...or killing people, you do the same thing. You start with a thought, 'I want to kill people.' Then you work out the methods: get the best guns, the best teachers, then you go kill people. It's how you learn everything! There's nothing more you can do with what's in your own mind right now and what you are capable of doing. Is that true? Would agree with what I'm saying?

Q: Yes.

Ven.: So be brave, baby, be brave. Be brave. Get out there and really don't just stand on the edge and put your little toe in wondering what's right and what's wrong. Really engage, really engage. Go to this one, go to that one, check on this one; check on that one. Aspire every day; have thoughts – every thought counts, okay? Every thought counts, you know, so have the aspiration, 'May I be clear.' You're talking to yourself here – 'May I be clear. I want to be clear. I want to find my goal. I want to make the right choices.' Those thoughts will put those seeds of courage in your mind – not talking to god or anybody. 'May I do it. I want...' Everything exists on the tip of the wish, Lama Zopa says; everything is a thought, an aspiration. You've got to have the courage to have a thought, and a wish, and then you follow it, and you learn each step from your own experience; and you adjust yourself here and you adjust yourself there. You don't just go like a bull doing it. You learn each moment what you're getting. Each step you take, you learn from that step; and you adjust your step this way, and you adjust your step that way. Before you know it you'll be on your path looking back and you'll be happy. What else can we do? We are the boss. Keep trucking, darling; be brave. BE BRAVE. Trust your wonderful big heart and your wonderful big intelligence; because you need these too. And just keep truckin'. And *enjoy* it.

Everybody: Thank you! Thank you!

Concluding Prayer

1:50:12

Ven.: Okay, everybody. It's time for finishing and having dinner. Isn't it time for supper? Okay, so we delight in this wonderful day we've had together; all these thoughts and steps and thoughts and courage and all the rest...may all these seeds we've planted in these two hours ripen magnificently and may we nourish them from this step forward with our efforts, with our courage, with our intelligence, with our brave hearts; so that we *can* develop our marvelous potential; so we *can* be of benefit to others. That's all. We'll do this little prayer that Lama Zopa Rinpoche wrote –no, it's different. He didn't write this, but it's a nice little prayer – it is a different one – oh, there it is, it's all there. It's very short; it's shorter than I thought – so this sweet little prayer that Rinpoche wrote – you can read the colophon later. So, if you haven't got it, you just listen.

'The object of refuge of myself and all transmigrating beings in all our lifetimes
Is the embodiment of the Three Jewels, the all-encompassing Three Refuges in
one:

the Guru, the Wish Granting Jewel, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the master,
Padmasambhava; The Dharma Kings, Songtsen Gampo and Trisong Detsen; the
abbot, Shantarakshita; and the numberless holy beings who preserved and
spread the Buddha-dharma in Tibet and the Tibetan people who practiced and
served Buddhism so faithfully for a thousand years, as well as those along with
many others died, sacrificing their lives for Tibet and His Holiness. May all their
positive wishes be fulfilled immediately. Due to their limitless kindness, the sun
of Tibetan Buddhism is now risen in the west, which is a dark land.

But now that I have met with the Dharma, I have received the perfect human
body enabling me to lead a meaningful life.

Our Refuge and savior, the supreme one, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people
have been so kind to us. Remembering this, we make the following dedicating
prayers.

May all His Holiness the Dalai Lama's wishes be successful immediately. May
the snow land of Tibet achieve pure freedom and develop the Buddha-dharma
even more than before in Tibet and may all mother transmigrating beings
achieve enlightenment quickly.'

There we go; okey-doke.

Transcribed by Fran McDermott