



Gradual Training on the Buddhist Path (1 of 2)

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Speaker: Leigh Brasington

Leigh Brasington 00:11

So the gradual training, that's the name given to a series of practices that we should undertake. It appears to be the curriculum for the monks and nuns in the Buddha's sangha. You become a monk or nun, here's what you gotta do. It occurs in 30+ suttas, in some form or another, has various elements, not all elements appearing in every sutta. In fact, no sutta contains all thirty elements. But there are a number of suttas that contain quite a number of these elements, particularly in the long discourses. And so by way of introduction, what I want to do with you, is share a sutta that exemplifies the gradual training. It's got a nice backstory. And you'll get a sense of what the gradual training is, as an introduction, and then afterwards, if there are questions on the backstory, we can do that and then we'll take a short break and then we'll start discussing each of the individual pieces.

Leigh Brasington 01:38

So now the sutta I want to share with you is the second one in the Long Discourses, the Sāmaññaphala Sutta. The discourse on the fruits of the spiritual life. I'll post a link to Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation, but I'm going to give you what I got.

Leigh Brasington 02:07

Thus have I heard, once the Blessed One was staying in Jīvaka's mango grove with a company of 1250 monks just outside the great city of Rājagaha. Jīvaka, who had given the mango grove to the Buddha to use as a monastery was the royal physician in the court of King Ajātasattu, King of Magadha. And on this occasion, it was the night of the full moon and King Ajātasattu was seated on the upper terrace of his palace, surrounded by his ministers and other members of the court, including Jīvaka. When the full moon rose King Ajātasattu uttered a joyful exclamation, "Oh, what a beautiful night. Oh, what a wondrous night. Oh, what an auspicious night. Perhaps we could visit some recluse or brahman, who could bring some peace to my mind."

Leigh Brasington 03:13

You see, King Ajātasattu had a very unpeaceful mind. This was because he had killed his father, good King Bimbisara. Actually, the Buddha met King Bimbisara before he became the Buddha. The story goes that King Bimbisara was looking out of one of the upper windows of his palace, and he saw a recluse going on alms round down below house to house. But this recluse seem



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different from other recluse, maybe more regal bearing or something. And so King Bimbisara, calls some of his ministers over and says, you see that recluse, follow him, see where he goes and report back to me. So three of his ministers followed Siddhartha Gotama back to vultures peak, which is a mountain outside the city of Rājagaha that's studded with caves. It's a great place for a recluse to go and meditate. And so while two of the ministers kept an eye on where Siddhartha Gotama had gone, one went back and told the king and the king rode out on his chariot, as far as he could go, and then walked up and introduced himself to Siddhartha Gotama, and you know, inquired about him. "Who's your family? Are your parents still alive? How many brothers and sisters..." you've been to Asia, you know the questions. Right? And it was an interesting conversation for both of them. And eventually King Bimbisara says, "Would you like to be a minister in my court?" But remember, Siddhartha Gotama had left home, not because he was seeking politics, but because he wanted to find out what to do about old age, sickness and death. So he politely declines. But King Bimbisara got him to promise that if he figured it out, he'd come back and tell the King. And sure enough, three years later, the Buddha, fully awakened, returned to Rājagaha and gave a discourse to King Bimbisara. And King Bimbisara was established in the fruit of stream entry. In other words, he attained the first level of awakening. And the king became a great supporter of the Buddha. But the king had a son, Prince Ajātasattu and Prince Ajātasattu was an ambitious man. He grew weary of waiting for his father to die and decided to take matters into his own hands. He strapped a dagger to his thigh and went sneaking into the king's private quarters, where he was immediately apprehended by the guards. And they hauled him up in front of the king and said, "Great King, we found your son sneaking into your private quarters, and he had this dagger strapped to his thigh!" Son, why were you sneaking into my private quarters with a dagger strapped to your thigh? "I was gonna kill you, dad." "How come you want to kill me?" "I want your kingdom." "Why didn't you just say so, here- you can be king." And he made him king right on the spot. King of Bimbisara was quite happy to let go of the kingship so that he could go and practice the dhamma.

Leigh Brasington 06:50

And so Prince Ajātasattu got to be king without having to kill his father. But he grew a little worried that his father was going to get bored with all that meditation stuff and want his kingdom back. So he ordered his father thrown in the dungeon. He didn't have the heart to order him killed. He just cut off all his food. He did allow one visitor, the Queen. When she would go visit her husband she would smear her body with honey, and the king could live by licking it off. When King Bimbisara wasn't dying King Ajātasattu went to see him. "Dad, how come you're not dead yet?" "Oh, When your mother comes to visit, she smears her body with honey and anger by licking it off." End of visits from the queen. But still King Bimbisara wasn't dying. So King Ajātasattu ordered him tortured. And during the torturing, he died.

Leigh Brasington 07:55

It is said in the commentaries that two messages arrived simultaneously back at the palace. The first message was the King Ajātasattu's queen had given birth to a baby boy. And for the first time King Ajātasattu understood the love of a father for his son. And he ordered his men: "Release my father from prison!" And then they gave him the second message which was that his father was dead. From that night on, King Ajātasattu had terrible nightmares. He would no sooner fall asleep than he would wake up screaming. And his servants would rush in: "Great



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king, great king, are you all right?" "I'm fine. I'm fine, go away, go away." And they'd go away and he'd fall asleep and have another nightmare.

Leigh Brasington 08:47

So on this full moon night, King Ajātasattu doesn't want to go to bed because he doesn't want to have nightmares. And if the king can't sleep, nobody gets to sleep. And so all the members of the court are up there with him when he utters his joyful exclamation about wanting to visit some recluse or brahman, who could maybe bring some peace to his mind. And immediately one of the ministers piped up and said, "This Pūraṇa Kassapa. He's long gone forth. He has many followers. He's deemed as holy. He's in the last stage of his life. You should visit him perhaps he can bring some peace to your mind." The King said nothing. Another Minister pipes up, "This Makkhali Gosāla. He's long gone forth. He has many followers. He is in the last stage of his life. He's esteemed as holy. You should visit him perhaps he can bring some peace to your mind. The King said nothing. Another ministry. Okay, you get the picture each of the ministers piping up championing his recluse or Brahman and the King never saying anything. After the hubbub finally calmed down, the king turned to Jīvaka, "Jīvaka! You know any reclusive brahman we might visit who could bring some peace to my mind?" "Great king. The Buddha, the perfectly awakened one is living in my mango grove with a company of 1250 monks, he teaches a dharma which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good. In the end, you should go visit the Buddha. Perhaps he can bring some peace to your mind." "Prepare the elephant vehicles Jīvaka."

Leigh Brasington 10:42

So Jīvaka goes running down from the upper terrace of the palace, down to the stables down below and he has 500 female elephants saddled up, along with the king's royal bull elephant. And then he goes running back up to the terrace and says, "Great King, the elephant vehicles are prepared! Do as you see fit." So the king had 500 women of his court seated one each on the 500 female elephants. And then the king and Jīvaka mounted up on the royal tusker. And went riding forth in full royal slender, with torture bearers going before. Must have been quiet a sight on that full moon night. They road out of the palace through the streets of New Rājagaha, and then through the Old City now at the south gate, and hung a left and headed towards the mango grove. But when they got near the mango grove It was quiet. It was a little too quiet. "Jīvaka! Are you betraying me? Are you turning me over to my enemies?" "No great king. Why? Why would you think that?" "You said there was 1250 people in this mango grove. I don't hear a sound." "They're probably all meditating, great king." "Look, you can see lights in the pavilion hall- go forward, great king, go forward."

Leigh Brasington 12:13

So they went as far as they could go on the elephants. And then they dismounted; the King and Jīvaka and all the women of the court and they went up to the pavilion Hall. The King is quite impressed. 1250 people sitting there absolutely silent, nobody twitching, nobody coughing. He's wandering around, taking in the spectacle, finally he says to Jīvaka, "Which one's the Buddha?" "He's the one sitting at the back, facing everybody else." And so the King wanders back to the back and he's really impressed and he says, "Oh, if only my son the prince could enjoy such peace as the company of bhikkhu enjoy." Buddha overheard him and said "Great King, do your thoughts follow your affection?" "Indeed they do, venerable Sir. It would be wonderful if my son



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the prince could enjoy such peace as the company of bhikkhus enjoys, and then the king saluted the Buddha, saluted the company of monks, and sat down at one side. Sitting there, he said "Venerable Sir, may I ask you a question?" "Certainly Great King, ask whatever you wish." Venerable Sir, in my kingdom, there are people who practice many different crafts. There are elephant trainers, horse trainers, there are archers, spearmen swordsman, camp marshals, chainmail warriors, commandos, there are weavers, there are bakers, there are farmers. There are street sweepers, barbers, statisticians, accountants. All of them practice some craft. And it's possible to see here and now some fruit of their labor. Venerable Sir, can you point out any fruit of the spiritual life that's visible here and now?" "Great King. Have you ever asked this question of any other recluses or Brahmins?" "Well, actually, yes, I have. I've I've asked a half a dozen about this matter, but they just preach their doctrine at me they never got around to answering the question. It was most unsatisfying. It was like asking for a mango and being given a breadfruit. But I never said anything. I just went away quietly. So I asked you again. Venerable Sir, can you point out any fruit of the spiritual life visible here and now?" "Great King, I will ask you a question; answer as you see fit: suppose in your palace there was a workman, a slave who rises before you each morning, waits on you hand and foot, sees that all of your needs are met, doesn't go to bed until after you go to bed. Suppose this was slave were to think: "It is wonderful, it is marvelous the destiny of meritorious deeds. For this King Ajātasattu is a man and I am a man. And yet he enjoys the five strands of sense pleasures as though he were a god, while I wait on him hand and foot from morning to night, it must be the result of doing meritorious deeds. Perhaps I too, should do meritorious deeds. Great King, suppose at some later point the slave were to shave off his hair and beard, put on the ochre robe and go forth from the home life to the homeless life. Upon learning of this, would you send your men saying "Bring that man back and let him be my slave!" "Oh, no, Venerable sir. We would rise up before him we would prepare a seat, we would see to his food, clothing, shelter and medicinal requirements, we would provide for him righteous protection." "Great King, is this not a fruit of the spiritual life visible here and now?" "Yes, yes, I guess it is, Venerable sir. Venerable Sir, can you point out any other fruit of the spiritual life visible here now?" "Great King, I will ask you a question. Answer as you see fit. Suppose in your kingdom, there's a farmer who toils in his fields from morning to night. And of course, when it's harvest time, he winds up paying a large portion of his harvest as taxes to support the royal treasury, I suppose, this farmer were to think: "It is wonderful, it is marvelous: the destiny of meritorious deeds. For this King Ajātasattu is a man and I am a man; yet he enjoys the five strands of sense pleasures, though he were a God while I toil in my fields from morning to night and wind up paying a large portion of my harvest, as taxes to support the royal treasury, perhaps I too should do meritorious deeds. Great King, suppose that this farmer were to shave off hair and beard, go forth from the home life to the homeless life. Upon learning of this, would you send your men saying "Make that man come back and work in his field so he can support the royal treasury?" "Oh, no, Venerable sir. We would rise up before him, we would prepare a seat, we would see to his food, clothing, shelter and medicinal requirements, we would provide for him righteous protection. Great King, is this not also a fruit of the spiritual life visible here and now?" "Yes, yes, indeed it is, indeed it is Venerable Sir. Venerable sir, can you point out any fruit of the spiritual life visible here now, but more wondrous and more sublime than this?" "Listen carefully, Great King, and pay attention. A Tathāgata arises in this world, a fully awakened Buddha who teaches a dhamma which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end. A householder or householder's child hears the dharma, gains faith, and thinks: household life is crowded and dusty, going forth is



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free like the air. And then at some point, that household or householders' child or other person shaves off hair and beard, goes forth and join such the Tathāgata's order. Great King, when one joins the Tathāgata's order, they live restrained by the precepts, the rules of behavior. The first of these precepts great king: "I undertake the training to refrain from killing living beings." The second of these precepts great king: "I undertake the training to refrain from taking that which is not given." There are many rules, great king: we're celibate. We speak the truth. We don't use divisive, or harsh language. We don't engage in gossip or idle chatter. We don't take intoxicants. We only eat in one part of the day. We don't attend singing or dancing musical shows, we don't adorn ourselves with garlands and perfumes. We don't sleep in high end luxurious beds. We don't handle gold and silver; many rules great king. By keeping these precepts it may makes it possible to live with our senses restrained. Upon seeing a sight with the eye, we do not grasp at the signs or secondary characteristics, less evil, unwholesome states such as covetousness, or grief overcome us. When hearing a sound, smelling a smell, tasting a taste, touching a texture, thinking a thought, we do not grasp at the signs or secondary characteristics, less evil, unwholesome states such as covetousness, or grief, overcome us. By living with our senses restrained, it makes it possible to be mindful of all that we do. Mindful when going forward, mindful when coming back, mindful when looking forward, mindful when looking back, mindful when getting dressed and going on alms round. Mindful when eating, chewing, savoring and swallowing. Mindful when going to the toilet. Mindful when walking, standing, sitting, lying down. Mindful when speaking and keeping silent. Mindful when falling asleep and waking up. Also great king, we don't have many needs. We need food, clothing, shelter, we might need medicine if we're ill. Other than that, we're content with little. This makes it possible so that we can go wherever we wish like a bird on the wing. With these noble precepts, this noble guarding of the senses this noble mindfulness, noble contentment with little, it makes it possible to do the work of a recluse.

Leigh Brasington 22:04

Upon returning from alms round, having eaten the midday meal, one resorts to a secluded dwelling, the forest, the root of a tree, a heap of straw, a charnel ground, one sits down cross legged, holds one's body erect, and sets up mindfulness before oneself. Great king, when practicing meditation, there are five states of mind that might arise that hinder progress on the spiritual path. The first of these is sensual desire. Great King, sensual desire is like being in debt. If someone is in debt, they must continually work to pay off the debt. If someone is entranced by sensual desire, well, no sensual desire is ultimately fulfilling it only leads to wanting more sensual pleasures. But if someone who was in debt was to pay off that debt, they would rejoice and become glad. In the same way, if one can overcome sensual desire, even temporarily, when rejoices and becomes glad.

Leigh Brasington 23:17

The second of these hindrances, Great King is ill will and hatred. Ill will and hatred is like being physically ill. If you're physically ill, you don't feel well, you can't think straight, you're hot, you can't do what you want to do. If you're overcome with ill will and hatred, you don't feel well. You can't think straight, you're hot, you can't do what you want to do. But if someone were ill, and were to take medicine and overcome that illness, they would rejoice and become quiet. In the same way, if one can overcome ill will and hatred, even temporarily, one rejoices and becomes glad.



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Leigh Brasington 23:54

The third of these hindrances, Great King, is sloth and torpor, sloth and torpor is like being in a prison. If you're in prison, and you just sit there missing out on all the good things of life. If you're overcome with sloth and torpor, and you sit down to meditate, well, you just sit there missing out on all the good things of the spiritual life. But if a prisoner were to gain his freedom, he would rejoice and become glad. In the same way if one can overcome sloth and torpor, even temporarily, one rejoices, becomes glad.

Leigh Brasington 24:29

One of these hindrances, Great King, is restlessness and remorse. Restlessness and remorse is like being a slave. A slave is always busy, but doing what the master commands: "Go there, do that, come here, do this!" Not getting to do what the slave wants to do. It's the same with restlessness and remorse. One's mind is all over the place, one's body can't get settled. One can't really do what one wants to do. But if a slave were to gain his freedom he would rejoice and become glad. In the same way, if one can overcome restlessness and remorse even temporarily one rejoices and becomes glad.

Leigh Brasington 25:11

The fifth of these hindrances, Great King, is skeptical doubt. Skeptical doubt is like being on a perilous desert journey where bandits abound and provisions are scarce. First one thinks to go this way but no, there's sure to be bandits. Maybe better to go this way, but there won't be any water. One does more starting and stopping than actual progressing. It's the same with skeptical doubt. First one takes up this practice, but it doesn't give instant results. So one takes up another practice, but that one is kind of weird, and one does more starting and stopping instead of actual progressing. But if someone on a perilous desert journey were to arrive at a place of safety, they will rejoice and become glad if one can overcome skeptical doubt even temporarily, one rejoices becomes glad.

Leigh Brasington 26:03

Great King, when one sees that these five hindrances are not abandoned, one regards that as being in debt, being physically ill, being in prison, being a slave, as a desert road. But when one sees that these five hindrances have been abandoned, one regards that as freedom from debt, good health, release from prison freedom from slavery, as a place of safety.

Leigh Brasington 26:33

Thus secluded from sensual desire and unwholesome states of mind. One enters and remains in the first jhana, which is with thinking and examining, and it's filled with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. One drenches deep, saturates and suffuses one's body with the rapture and happiness born of seclusion. So that there is no part of one's body not filled with rapture and happiness. Great King, imagine a skilled bath attendant or his apprentice taking a metal bowl, pouring in just the right amount of water, and then just the right amount of soap flakes and then mixing the soap flakes in water until you have a homogeneous bowl of soap that does not trickle. In the same way one drenches deep saturates and suffuses one's body with a rapture and happiness born of seclusion, so there is no part of one's body not filled with rapture and



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happiness. Great King, this is the fruit of the spiritual life visible here and now and more wondrous and more sublime than the previous.

Leigh Brasington 27:40

Further, Great King, with the subsiding of thinking and examining, and by gaining inner tranquility and unification of mind, one enters and remains in the second jhana, a state without thinking and examining, that contains rapture and happiness born of concentration, one drenches deep, saturates and suffuses one's body with the rapture and happiness born of concentration, so there is no part of one's body not filled with rapture and happiness. Great King, imagine a lake far up in the mountains, no streams coming in from the east, the west, north or the south. Not even showers of rain. And yet at the bottom of the lake, there's a spring of cool clear water. The cool clear water from the spring would totally permeate the lake, totally fill the lake so there would be no part of that lake not filled with the cool clear water from the spring. In the same way, one drenches deep, saturates and suffuses one's body with the rapture and happiness born of concentration. So there is no part of one's body not filled with rapture and happiness. Great King, this too is a fruit of the spiritual life, visible here and now, and more wondrous and more sublime than the previous.

Leigh Brasington 28:57

Further, Great king, with the fading away of rapture, and by remaining mindful, clearly comprehending and equanimous one enters and dwells in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare "Happy is one who is equanimous and mindful." One drenches deep, saturates and suffuses one's body with the happiness free from rapture, so there is no part of one's body not filled with happiness. Great King, imagine a lotus pond where they grow blue, white or red lotuses which come up out of the mud but not above the surface of the water. From their tips to their roots, they would be filled with the water of the lotus pond. In the same way, great king, one drenches deep, saturates and suffuses one's body with a happiness free from rapture so there is no part of one's body not filled with happiness. Great King, this too is a fruit of the spiritual life, visible here and now more wondrous and more sublime than the previous.

Leigh Brasington 30:10

Further, Great King, with the passing of pleasure and pain as with the previous passing of joy and grief, one enters and remains in the fourth jhana, a state beyond pleasure and pain. That is, contains mindfulness fully purified by equanimity. One sits suffusing one's body with a pure bright mind so there is no part of one's body not suffused by the Pure Bright Mind. Great king, imagine a man covered from the head down by a white cloth, so there is no part of his body, not suffused with a white cloth. In the same way, one sits suffusing one's body with a pure bright mind so there is no part of one's body not suffused with a pure bright mind. Great King, this too is a fruit of the spiritual life, visible here and now, and more wondrous and more sublime than the previous.

Leigh Brasington 31:10

Further, Great King, with the mind thus concentrated, clear, sharp, bright, malleable, wieldy and given to imperturbability, one directs and inclines it to knowing and seeing, one understands thus: this is my body made of material form, fed on rice and gruel, born of mother and father, impermanent, subject to rubbing and pressing, to dissolution and dispersion. And this is my



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consciousness which is bound up with it, and supported by it. Great King, insights into the nature of reality such as these are also fruits of the spiritual life, visible here and now. And more wondrous and more sublime than the previous.

Leigh Brasington 31:57

Further Great King, with the mind thus concentrated, clear, sharp, bright, malleable, wieldy and given to imperturbability, one can direct it and incline it to the various modes of psychic power, one can create a mind made body, one can wield the supernormal powers like walking on water or diving into the earth, being one, becoming many, being many, becoming one, appearing and disappearing, at will, passing through walls and ramparts unimpeded. Flying cross legged through the sky like a bird, stroking the Sun and Moon, wielding mastery over the body as far as the Brahma realms. Great King, these too are fruits of the spiritual life, visible here now and more wondrous, and more sublime than the previous.

Leigh Brasington 32:55

Further, Great King, with a mind thus concentrated clear, sharp, bright, malleable, wieldy and given to unperturbability. One can direct one's mind to remembering past lives. One can direct one's mind to seeing beings passing away and arising according to their karma. Great King, these too are fruits of the spiritual life visible here and now and more wondrous and more sublime than the previous.

Leigh Brasington 33:23

Further, Great King with a mind thus concentrated clear, sharp, bright, malleable wieldy, and given to imperturbability, one can direct and incline it to the overcoming of the asavas, the intoxicants. One can understand: these are the asavas. This is the origin of the asavas. This is a cessation of the asavas. This is a path of practice that leads to the cessation of the asavas. One can understand: This is dukkha. This is the origin of dukkha. This is the cessation of dukkha. This is the path of practice that leads to the cessation of dukkha. And one can follow that path all the way to the end. And put an end to the asava of since desire, the asava of becoming, the asava of ignorance, the intoxicants, and in so doing one puts an end to all dukkha. Great King, this too is a fruit of the spiritual life, visible here and now and more wondrous and more sublime than the previous. Furthermore, Great King, there is no fruit of the spiritual life more wondrous and more sublime than this."

Leigh Brasington 34:48

The King was impressed. "Wonderful, marvelous. It's like setting upright something that's been knocked down! It's like pointing out the way to one who is lost. It's like bringing a light into a darkened room so that those who have eyes can see, I go for refuge to the Buddha and to the dharma and to the bhikkhu sangha. May the Buddha please consider me a lay follower from this day forth!" And then King Ajātasattu got all shamefaced, and finally he blurted out: "Venerable sir, a transgression overcame me in that I killed my father, a righteous man and a righteous King." "Great King, indeed, a transgression did overcome you in that you killed your father, a righteous man and a righteous king, but it is good that you admit such a transgression for the sake of your restraint in the future." And then the king said, "We must be going, we have many things to do." "Do as you see fit, great king."



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Leigh Brasington 35:53

So the king saluted the Buddha, saluted the monks, circumambulated the Buddha and keeping the Buddha on his right side. He and Jīvaka and all the women of the court went back to where the elephants were parked, mounted up and rode back to the palace. Not too long after the king had departed, the Buddha said to the monks, this King has ruined himself, this king has destroyed himself. If he had not killed his father, a righteous man and a righteous king, then the stainless eye of dhamma would have been opened in him tonight, and he would have attained stream entry, the first level of awakening. But this king has ruined himself this king has destroyed himself. And the monks were very pleased with all that the Buddha taught.

Leigh Brasington 36:49

Now the sutta ends here but the commentaries go on to say that King Ajātasattu went back to the palace and had his first good night's sleep since his father died. And the King did indeed become a great protector of the dhamma. Three months after the Buddha's death was the first council of arhants. Five hundred of the Buddha's fully enlightened disciples came together in a cave just outside the city of Rājagaha to basically codify the Buddha's teachings to recite the suttas and to recite the precepts and this was the basis for well, the suttas and precepts that we have today. Obviously, they felt protected, being under the protection of King Ajātasattu. But King Ajātasattu was an ambitious man. After the Buddha's death, he set out on wars of conquest, and conquered all of the neighboring kingdoms and republics and built the nucleus of the first great Indian empire. But not all went well for King Ajātasattu. You see, his son killed him, and his grandson killed his son and his great grandson killed his grandson, and his great great grandson killed his great grandson. And at that point, the people of Magada said "Enough of these father killers, they killed the last of their line, and established a new dynasty." So, I love the backstory here. I mean, 500 Elephants. How can you get a better backstory? One filled with elephants, Kings, yeah, the whole works.

Leigh Brasington 38:38

But the real key part is the gradual training and that kicks off with hearing the dharma, gaining faith, going forth, or since we're lay people, committing ourselves to the spiritual path, keeping the precepts guarding the senses. Being mindful of all that we do. Being content with little, abandoning the hindrances, practicing the jhānas the jhanically concentrated mind practicing insight meditation. Supernormal powers, I'm going to put that as optional. It shows up in some of the recensions, some it doesn't. Don't waste your time, we'll talk about them. And then most importantly, overcoming the intoxicants, the asavas. The overcoming of the asavas is equivalent to full awakening. And so what we're going to do for the rest of today is talk about these aspects of the gradual training in great detail.

Leigh Brasington 39:50

But for right now, I'm going to stop and see if there are any questions about the back story about King Ajātasattu, Jīvaka, and coming to see the Buddha and what the Buddha had to say, not associated with the actual elements of the graduate training. If you have a question, you can raise your hand to do that. There's something called reactions down at the bottom. And there's a hand in the upper left hand corner, not that hand, the one that says raise hand, okay, you click that, and it'll raise your hand and I can see who you want to do that. There's more people than



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will fit on the screen for me. So if you wave your regular hand, I won't see it. So Josh, did you have your hand up?

Leigh Brasington 40:46

And you're muted?

Leigh Brasington 40:47

Yes, I did. Thank you Lee, that was a beautiful rendering, and reading. Very happy to be here with you today. But it wasn't so much about the backstory as it was about the the practices. So maybe it's not appropriate to ask now.

Leigh Brasington 41:07

Yeah, we'll go into the practices. And that way, you can you can ask it with a specific practice or practices.

Leigh Brasington 41:15

I guess the more general question for me is, doesn't this set up a certain expectation of what one is going to achieve along this path? That sometimes is seen as problematic by like, you know, in the Zen tradition, for instance, where any expectation of achieving anything is already problematic? It's more general question, I guess.

Leigh Brasington 41:45

Yeah. And the expectations. When I teach a retreat, I give two warnings at the start of retreat. First is if you're practicing concentration, because yeah, that's what I'm doing when I'm teaching jhānas, your unresolved stuff might come up. The other one is if you have any expectations, you're in trouble. Okay, expectations are the worst thing you can bring on a retreat. Okay, all that you can really expect is, it's going to be different from what you expect. Okay. So yeah, expectations do get in the way. But I mean, you signed up for this, you had some sort of expectation, this is going to be a useful way to spend your Saturday morning. Afternoon, right? Okay. So, yeah, the Buddha says, I teach dukkha and the end of dukkha. That's it. So if you don't have any expectations of the spiritual path actually benefiting you, you won't do it. But you can't focus on the expectations. What I tell the students on the retreat is yeah, take your expectations and dump them in the ditch across the road. But of course, that's, that's only a simile. What I tell them is, okay, I'm going to give you the instructions. And your job is to follow the instructions and not be worried about any goal or what it's supposed to produce or anything. It's like, I'm in Oakland, California. And suppose I wanted to drive to Chicago. And somebody gives me the directions, then says, you know, go down the street you live on when you get to the stop sign, take a right, and then go under the freeway and take a left, and once you're on the freeway, look for this exit. And if I start looking for Chicago, while I'm driving down the street I live on, I'm gonna run the stop sign and get T boned by a bus or something, right? You can't be focused on the expectations, you have to be focused on doing the things that you expect, eventually, sometime in the future, will get you where you want to go. And that's about the best way you can work it. Victoria.

Questioner 43:51



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That was by far and away the best storytelling I've ever heard in my whole life. So I just want to say that first. If and when I have the good fortune to have grandchildren, I'm gonna get in touch with you immediately when they're conscious. So you can become their teacher. That was fabulous. And I'm a huge elephant lover. I was just curious. It's may sound frivolous, but I know Buddhism has come under criticism a lot by feminists, etc. And it's, you know, the whole patriarchal business. I'm not one of those. It doesn't bother me. I'm not. But I am curious as to why the king took the 500 women and the 500 female elephants and only one it seems like he only had his one advisor counselor with him. Was it just to make a big show because this was to like kind of make it clear to the Buddha that he was the King or I mean I just it intrigues me because I would have thought he would have he would have come with his counselors or his retinue or something else.

Leigh Brasington 45:05

Yeah, it is a curious thing. So the first thing to say is the number 500 in the suttas should be translated as a whole bunch. Don't take it literally. So Jīvaka went down and settled up a bunch, a whole bunch of female elephants and the king's royal Tusker. And then the king decided, now did Jīvaka prompt him? "You know, we're going to see the Buddha, he's a really peaceful guy, you shouldn't be bringing your soldiers." I mean, we don't really have an idea. This is just presented in this and there's no backstory, there might be something in the commentaries. But you can't trust the commentaries. Okay, so perhaps what the king thought, Okay, I'm going on a mission to find some peace. And I should come being as peaceful as I possibly can. If I bring the ministers maybe it looks like you know, I'm, I am trying to exhibit my power more. But if I come with 500 women, or a whole bunch of women, and Jīvaka, whom Buddha knows really well, it's obviously I'm coming on a peace mission. And so that's my best guess. But I'm just guessing here.

Questioner 46:21

But then in that case, why not just come with Jīvaka leave all the women at home. I mean, there must have been five hundred...?

Leigh Brasington 46:27

Well, he was the king. And he did want to make a kingly impression. Think of the celebrities in our culture, I mean, they have their retinue. Right. And so the king had to come with his retinue. And he's obviously the biggest celebrity in the whole area. I mean, you got to go a long ways to find somebody bigger than him. And he needs to, he needs to impress this on the Buddha, or anybody else that he interacts with. I mean, this has been his whole life, to prove he's the top dog. And so yeah, he's on a peaceful mission. He can't bring his soldiers even if he brings his male ministers, it's the best thing just bring a bunch of women, somebody has got 500 Women in his harem, that's going to really impress the Buddha, that he's the top dog. That's my best guess. Okay. Thank you. Right,

Questioner 47:23

I knew you'd have a good answer.

Leigh Brasington 47:25

It's speculation. That one we have to speculate on but yeah,



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Questioner 47:29

Well, who better to speculate than you? Thank you.

Leigh Brasington 47:36

Yeah, wonderful story. Appreciate it. So I guess that it had to be in order because you have to put something in order does all these things, these benefits, fruits? Do they necessarily have an order? Or do they kind of pop up and appear and disappear. They're in an order where each supports the next one. If you teach the precepts, it's much easier to guard your senses. If you're guarding your senses a lot easier to be mindful. If you're mindful, you really pay attention, you see, well, I don't need all the things that Western culture says I need, you know, I don't need to buy a new car every year, I don't need a four foot wide TV at all. Right? You're beginning to get a sense of: all right. I don't need what the culture says I need. Right. So now you've simplified your life. So when you start to sit down and start to meditate, you've got less likelihood of the hindrances arising. Because you're not thinking about, "Oh, should I get this kind of TV or that kind of TV?" I mean, no, that doesn't come up. Right. And you're going to need to abandon the hindrances to be able to enter the jhānas. So it's definitely in an order. And then with a jhanically concentrated your mind your insight practice is going to go much better. And you're going to need a get a whole bunch of insights if you're going to overcome the asavas and become fully awakened. So it's very much in an order. There's a sutta in the middle length discourses; don't remember the number. Yeah, I can't I can't bring it up. Where someone asked, "Do you have a gradual training in your dispensation?" (a Brahman asked the Buddha this) And the Brahman says, "This building has stairs going up to it each step leads to the next is there, some gradual training like these stairs and the Buddha gives him the discourse that I just gave you in terms of the practices. So yeah, it's specifically in this order. And it's specifically once you start with the jhānas becomes, well, a little more amazing every step along the way.

Questioner 49:54

I guess my thinking in asking that question, "Do I have to mess with mapping, keeping, keeping an eye on where I, where I, you know, am certain points and mapping and like, is that something that we should do? Or is that kind of like a feeling that it's either right or wrong, we don't have to map and know where where we're at?

Leigh Brasington 50:27

There's some of both of that, you've got to know what the precepts are to be able to keep them, right. And you got to start doing that seriously. If you're going to have any success on the spiritual path. And you've got to know what guarding the senses is, and you got to figure out what that's like. And so, but yeah, I mean, you're, you've sort of got an idea. You've practiced some of these, and you're walking down Main Street. And you come to the bakery, of course, which has the door open, right? And at that point, it's not like, oh, what precept am I supposed to keep at this point? No, it's, you know, right away: guard my senses or it's gonna grab me by the nose and drag me in. Yeah. So it's some of Yeah, do it in order, but it's not. It's not just just do it in order to do what's appropriate at that point. Yeah, your friend text you and says, a big TV is on sale. And you're like, Nah, I don't need that. Right. Or whatever. Thank you. Appreciate it. Right. Yes, yes. Hi,



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Questioner 51:38

My question was, I guess I didn't understand. I didn't, I wasn't sure in the in the story. Why was that every subsequent child killed their father for so many generations after that? It seemed like they didn't pick up the lesson from the Buddha. I just didn't understand the purpose of that in the story. And I was wondering if there is a symbolic gesture behind it.

Leigh Brasington 52:05

This apparently is history. Okay? Rather than symbolic. This is what actually happened in India. India has some pretty extreme cultural things that happened during that time. I mean, think about it, a king dies and his women were cremated with him while they were still alive. There was some really nasty violence going on. King Ajātasattu may have been a follower of the Buddha, but he was also a warrior. And so he was very much into, well, going and slaying his enemies and conquering all the kingdoms. So his son grows up and sees his father killing anybody that's in his way, and his father's in his way. So he kills him. Right now the tradition has been established that this is what happens and it goes on until the people revolt and kick the bad guys out. So, but it appears to be a historical fact.

Questioner 53:08

Thank you, that makes a lot of sense.

Leigh Brasington 53:10

Someone put in the chat. Royal patricide was also a tendency in ancient Israel, and later in the Roman Empire. Yeah, we don't want to go into the Roman Empire and all the craziness that came with the killings of the Emperors and everything. So it was a thing that used to happen, unfortunately...integrating presence?

Questioner 53:35

The longer title Josh's is on there, I'd probably my cut off. But thanks for the teaching and the reading of the teaching and the insights on this. I couldn't help but notice the comment on the idipadas here and how what I see for more teachers is that it gets blown off pretty easy, not the idipadas themselves, I'm sorry, the psychic powers, so called psychic powers that can has said to come from these and I know the Visuddhimagga talks about this, there's reports even of modern practitioners with this stuff, but not much it seems to be hidden. I want to get your take on it because I see different possibilities. Like you know, it gets laughed off in academia, people's careers are jeopardized if they really talk about this kind of thing. You know, there's things like maybe the reality was structured, you know, think of how life was different just 100 years ago, he talking all this time ago, you know, people can get into trouble people can get led off the path and start making this the point in the path like Devadatta and things like this. There's so many different possibilities. I like to hear which why teachers kind of stray from this or even though and then the other thing is so many people respect the Buddha, but then they but then they blow off some of his teachings, you know, but they really respect other ones. So yeah, I think that's enough.

Leigh Brasington 54:52



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So I will get into the psychic powers in detail when we get to that in this afternoon and what I think what's going on, And yeah, their importance or lack thereof. So yeah, we'll save it for this afternoon.

Questioner 55:07

Right, Wayne?

Questioner 55:14

So the backstories. So after the king leaves with his parade of elephants and his contingency, we don't know what happened after that. So at that point, we're left with just the ability to then speculate if we choose. And so I like to think of, to answer the question about the women are not riding they're on the elephants. They also heard the Buddha's teaching. Right. And, and I believe, now, I'm just this is just a belief. But not all those women returned back to the palace, some of those women stayed, became awakened, and became bikkhunis. That's when I speculate.

Leigh Brasington 56:01

I suspect they all went back to the palace, but I bet some of them came back.

Questioner 56:06

One way or the other,

Leigh Brasington 56:08

it definitely seems to be the case that the Buddha would give... I believe in the commentary to this sutta commentaries actually say that one of the, (this goes back to Victoria's question) one of the reasons that probably Jīvaka encouraged the king to bring the women was the Buddha would know that the king probably wasn't gonna become a monk or, you know, explain the the curriculum for monks and nuns to the king, it might give him some peace of mind, which the commentaries say it did. But that if women of the court came, then the Buddha would recognize there are people here who can really benefit from hearing this. And so I'm guessing the women all went back, but some of them returned to the Buddha to become nuns. This would be my speculation. And this is why the Buddha gave this particular teaching more to... Alright, he's got an audience of 500 people who've never heard the dhamma. And some of them might really be interested in as well as the king wants to know, spectacular things from the spiritual path. And so he's gonna lay that out there as well. So the fact that there were these women here does play into the fact that this was what happened. And I do think some of them came back.

Leigh Brasington 57:31

So yeah, I was gonna say something else, but forgotten what it was.

Leigh Brasington 57:44

So there's a couple things in the chat here.

Leigh Brasington 57:51

Another speculation, the women of the harem were fighting amongst themselves... we have no idea there. does not mythology or metaphor represent the feminine aspect or archetype?



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Leigh Brasington 58:11

I'm not sure what is being represented. Josh, you want to? Yeah, didn't quite get what it was put there.

Questioner 58:24

Yeah, I guess what I was suggesting that in the context of the narrative, that the participation of all of these women or the bringing up all of these women was kind of a necessity because of the way in which the feminine dimension as it were kind of mythologically, or is more receptive, more open. Yeah, in that sense.

Leigh Brasington 58:52

Yeah, that certainly fits now whether that was...

Leigh Brasington 58:58

possible to know. But...

Leigh Brasington 58:59

yeah, we don't know. The thing about Ajātasattu, we don't know if he had a good night's sleep that night. The commentaries tell us he did, but we do know that he became a protector of the dharma, because there are suttas that talk about him being, you know, a follower of the Buddha, as well as stories in the the Vinaya. And the fact that the first council was held, literally within a mile of the city walls of Rājagaha, I mean, that's pretty good protection there. So we don't know if he got a good night's sleep that night, but we do know that he was changed. Before this incident Ajātasattu was a follower of Devadatta, there are suttas that talk about him coming to see Devadatta and after the sutta he is a follower of the Buddha. So it did, certainly have a big impact on Ajātasattu.

Leigh Brasington 1:00:07

It just makes me feel like all you need to do to enter the stream is to listen to this teaching and not kill your father. Yeah, this raises a very important point, what does stream entry actually mean? What's going on there? On my website, I have a page that's got a whole bunch of information on it. Now, I'm going to see if I can bring it up right quick. Because, yeah, that will be easier... The four stages of awakening: various sources, so I'm gonna stick this in the chat, you can look at it later.

Leigh Brasington 1:01:11

Okay, so in the chat is a link to this page, you'll notice the first column are all the different ideas about what stream entry means. And certainly there are places where the Buddha gives a discourse and somebody gets to stream entry. And there are other teachings on it, where it's a lot more stuff going on. There's an excellent book called Practice After Stream Entry by Kim Allen, and it's a, it's a PDF, you can download and read. And even if you're not a stream enterer it gives you some ideas of what stream entry is about. And the sort of practices that you would do after stream entry are the same practice you would do before stream entry. We don't have the Buddha around to give an absolutely amazing dhamma talk, that's going to get somebody to stream entry. Unfortunately, you're stuck with me and other folks like me who aren't fully



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awakened, let alone Buddha's. So you're going to have to do more than just listen to a good dharma talk, and not kill your father.

Leigh Brasington 1:02:20

Okay, don't see any hands up, it must be time for a short break. So we're going to take a, let's see, it's two minutes till the top of the hour, take a 12 minute break 10 minutes past the hour, we're going to come back, and I'll start discussing the individual points that are mentioned in the gradual training. Short break.

Leigh Brasington 1:02:50

Okay, so I just put a link in the chat to Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation of the sutta that I just told you. My version of it is based on his translation. So in this, this is, I think the best translation of this particular sutta. This is from Sutta Central, which is a great website if you're interested in finding some suttas. Unfortunately, the interface is not so great for finding but, oh well.

Leigh Brasington 1:03:27

All right, so the gradual training, I'm going to put another link in the website. I mean, in the chat for another website. Now this is on my website. Right. So this is a chart that I made with the various factors now you can't read what it says. So if you scroll to the bottom of it. And the factors are listed by name, and the abbreviations and everything. So these are all the factors that are talked about in there. And the number next to... so the abbreviation is in the left hand column. The number next to it is the number of suttas this particular part of the gradual training is mentioned in and it's mentioned pretty much verbatim wherever it's mentioned. There's not much variety in it. And the the colors are sort of grouping things together. And then, yeah, I gotta leave the chart there. I'm going to scroll it back to the top now and scroll it down to this bar chart here. And this shows you what factors show up with what frequency. And that might be useful, something useful to have on the screen at this point, okay? That I'm sure you can get lost in it for quite a while staring at what's going on and what's considered important. But the first thing is GF, going forth. Alright, so someone hears the dharma, gains faith and goes forth. Or we could say someone, hears the dharma gains confidence that this is a reasonable path of practice, and then applies themselves to actually practicing. Right? So since we're lay people, we're not actually going forth. But we are, actually, have encountered the dharma, you wouldn't have signed into this day long if you hadn't encountered it and you must have some faith that yeah, this this has some usefulness- this Buddha dharma. And so now you got to practice it. And as you can see, this shows up in 24 of the 32 total suttas where it's talked about, and then we have the moralities. And there's a small section on morality, which shows up in 23 suttas, and then in 8 suttas there are medium and large sections.

Leigh Brasington 1:06:37

So now I'm going to unshare the screen...It won't let me do it. There we go. Up this here... All right. And I'm going to share something else with you here. Which is the actual sutta itself. Alright, so "Is it possible to point out any other fruit? Right, listen and pay attention. And a Tathāgata arises, someone hears the dhamma, goes forth." And then we have a summary at number 44. "When one has gone forth, one lives restrained by the restraint of the Patimokkha, the precepts, possessed of proper behavior and resort. And then we have a summary of what this means. One takes up the rules of training and trains oneself in them. In other words, keeps



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the precepts sees that the precepts are there, because this is what works. The precepts in Buddhism aren't about, "keep these precepts or you go to hell"... you can find that, I mean, there's one sutta in there that any Baptist preacher would be proud of, because it's hellfire and brimstone. But I don't think that's from the Buddha. I think it's a later composition. But anyhow, that one sees the danger in breaking a precept one sees that this leads me in the wrong direction. You're not keeping them because you've been told to keep them, you're keeping them because you understand this goes in the wrong direction. And when becomes endowed with wholesome bodily and verbal action, one's livelihood is purified, possesses moral discipline. And then we have a summary of the other bits: guards the door of the sense faculties endowed with mindfulness, and clear comprehension and is content. And so we drop down to the precepts and it's a little more than what we're given. Having abandoned the destruction of life, one abstains from the destruction of life one has laid down the rod and weapon and dwells conscientious, full of kindness sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings. So the first precept: I undertake the training to refrain from killing living beings. But according to the Buddha, there's a opposite is to be practiced. One dwells conscientious, full of kindness sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings. So my saying that the dana is going to help the refugees from the war in Ukraine is my practice of dwelling conscientious full of kindness and sympathetic for the welfare of beings. Your dana is your practice for that. Okay.

Leigh Brasington 1:09:54

Having abandoned what is not given one abstains from taking what is not given, accepting and expecting only what is given, one lives honest, lives in honesty with a pure mind. I remember after my first retreat, which was really my first exposure to Buddhism in any sort of depth, you know, they did this precept ceremony at the end of the retreat. And I didn't, I didn't take the precepts, because, you know, I was still a little well, leery of this religion thing. I was interested in meditation, but the religion thing was... but when I got back when I needed a pen, I didn't steal it from work anymore. You know, it just seemed like, I could upgrade my behavior here. And so that's what it means accepting and expecting only what is given. Right. And so if I needed to Xerox something for my own use, I would go ask the person who is the keeper of the Xerox: "May I Xerox something for my own use?" It just seemed like a good way to go. Next precept is about celibacy. And that's required for the monks and nuns, for lay people it's about not causing harm, our sexual energy is very powerful energy. And we don't want to cause harm with it, not cause harm for ourselves not cause harm for our sexual partners.

Leigh Brasington 1:11:28

And then, the next four are about speech. And normally, it's: I undertake the training to refrain from wrong speech. But here, wrong speech is laid out: abandoning false speech, if you're on the spiritual path, you're seeking the truth. I mean, that's what it means to be on a spiritual path, the ultimate truth. You can't find the truth if you're telling lies, you've got to be dedicated to the truth. Right? But you also got to be careful; the Buddha talked about if you know something is not true and not useful, don't say it. If you know something that is true, but not useful. Don't say it. If you know something is not true, but is useful. Don't say that either. You know, something is both true and useful, find the right time to say it, and say it with a heart full of love. So this is what really this part of the speech precept is about is, yeah, true, useful, timely, and said with love. Slander, well basically, one does not repeat here what one has heard elsewhere in order to divide these from the people there.



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Leigh Brasington 1:12:50

One is the reconciler of those who are divided, a promoter of friendships. So right speech is about bringing harmony. That's an important part of it as well. Having abandoned harsh speech, one speaks only words that are gentle, pleasing to the ear endearing, going to the heart, polite, amicable, and agreeable to the many folk. Yes, you can get someone's attention with a four letter word. But you'll make your point much better if you can get it across without resorting to four letter words, so forth. And then this also means refraining from abusive speech. And then having abandoned idle chatter: gossiping and idle chatter, how much of what we say is useless speech. The literal translation is animal talk. Right? Sampapalapa. Yeah. The Buddha said to the monks and nuns, if you want to talk about the dharma, that's fine. If you don't want to talk about the dharma keep noble silence. Yeah, we'll get to another thing about what the Buddha considered idle chatter as we go through this. But yeah. I'll mention that sometimes. you're encountering someone and yeah, you do talk about things that are more or less idle chatter. I mean, the Super Bowl is coming up. Right, I'm gonna go watch the Super Bowl with my friend that I always watch the Super Bowl with because that's when we get together once a year. You know, he's the guy I used to work with. And he's a good guy, and you know, he's a real sports nut and so I'm gonna go enjoy the Super Bowl with him. Okay, so, but he's also somebody that we can talk more in depth thing as opposed to that was a terrible pass or something like that. Anytime you find a chance to take a conversation to a higher level, definitely do so.

Leigh Brasington 1:15:00

And then where you would expect the fifth precept about intoxicants; one abstains from damaging seed and plant life. Alright, that's interesting. Ayya Khema pointed out that this has been interpreted that the monks can't keep a garden, which is basically laziness on the part of the monks. I'm sorry. That's what she said. It's mean if you're keeping a garden you're doing the opposite of damaging seed and plant life. Right? It came about because the monks and nuns would go on alms round. And during the rainy season, the farmers would plant the rice in the fields which were flooded. And if the monks and nuns went walking across a flooded field, they would damage the rice seedlings. So the farmers asked the Buddha's to have the monks not do that. So that's where the rains retreat came from. The monks and nuns would go on retreat for the three months of the rainy season and the devoted followers would bring food there because they knew where the trails were, and wouldn't trample the plants. So, what's there "abstains from damaging seed and plant life" doesn't really show you what was behind this whole thing, it's quite an interesting backstory there.

Leigh Brasington 1:16:30

One eats in only one part of the day refraining from food at night and eating at improper times. This has come to mean you can't eat after the Sun reaches its zenith. Okay. In India, it's a hot country. You don't need to eat all day long. Ayya Khema, when she was in Sri Lanka, equally hot, yeah, she ate one meal a day. When she went back to Germany, where it's really cold. She ate something in the evening because you needed the calories to keep warm. It's more about not indulging in food. Not overeating. Not eating anytime you're bored. That's really what it's about. When you're on retreat, the only excitement you have is mealtime, right? Okay? Don't eat too much at your mealtime. Because then you're gonna meditate and think about what's the next meal, right? Besides if you eat too much, then you'll fall asleep while you're meditating.



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Leigh Brasington 1:17:34

One abstains from dancing, singing, instrumental music, witnessing unsuitable shows. These are precepts for the monks and nuns. For the lay people, it was the first five, with intoxicants instead of damaging plants. He abstains from wearing garlands and embellishing himself with scents, beautifying himself with unguents. We live in a culture where it's pretty much required, that you can't just be who you are. You've got to beautify yourself, particularly if you're female. Right? You've got to do all this extra stuff. I feel sorry for the kids today. You know, when I was a kid, I was a hippie. And all I had to do to rebel was wear my most comfortable clothes and not get a haircut. Man today, you got to get pierced and you got to get a tattoo. And yeah, it's a lot harder and you don't got to do any of that. You could just be who you are.

Leigh Brasington 1:18:41

And one abstains from high end luxurious beds. This one also gets talked about more in the intermediate section on morality, but basically, don't waste your life sleeping. For the monks and nuns, yeah, it's developed into sleep deprivation in some centers, where you get four hours sleep a night, I'm highly recommending against that. If you get four hours sleep a night, when you meditate, you're just going to fall asleep. You need a minimum of seven hours and that's a minimum, get your eight hours, but don't indulge in sleep. There was a time in my life where I was into recreational sleeping. You know, Saturday morning, my mom would wake me up in time for lunch. Of course, I've been up after midnight, so I was probably only sleeping about 11 hours. But yeah, we got a limited amount of time here. You're already going to spend a third of it asleep. You don't need to spend more of it asleep especially you don't want to spend time asleep running away from anything. And that's what that one's about.

Leigh Brasington 1:19:56

These others... gold and silver... monks and nuns today can't handle money, but they can handle credit cards. It's gotten a little ridiculous. Ayya Khema talks about, she became a nun. All right, and now she was gonna fly from Sri Lanka back to, I guess, to the States to visit her daughter. And they gave her a credit card. She's like, what's this? I can't handle money, but I can have a credit card? And so she thought it was ridiculous. And so she had bank accounts, and she handled money. The idea is that money is not what's going on here. It's a means to an end. The Second Council, which was called 60 to 100 years after the Buddha's death; the town monks wanted to be able to handle gold and silver. The forest monks were like, no, no, you don't need to do that. Of course, the forest monks were only going into town on alms round, going back to the monastery. This was the break between the Theravāda and the Mahayana. They had the council and they decided "We're keeping all the rules." And the town monks were like, "Nope, we're gonna handle gold and silver." And they broke off. And this is where the divergence into the Theravada and the Mahayana started, about this precept in particular.

Leigh Brasington 1:21:13

And then the rest of it, uncooked grain, slaves, fields and lands, running messages and errands, buying, selling, dealing false Weights and Measures, crooked ways of bribery and deception and fraud, mutilating, executing, imprisoning robber, plunder, violence. I don't think any of us are doing this. But yeah, these are the rules. At the time. If you were a wealthy merchant, or a king, yeah, you could say to the spiritual Seeker, oh, yeah, go run this errand for me. Or you might



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have lands to keep, you know, if you have a house, you know how much energy you have to put into keeping your house running, things break, you got to call a plumber. I mean, yeah, if you're a monastic, you're not supposed to have any of that you're supposed to be devoted full time to just taking care of the spiritual path. And so that's what these are about.

Leigh Brasington 1:22:11

Now, as we saw in that previous screen, this first section on morality shows up on almost all I think it was what 24 of the 30 resentions of the gradual training, so we keep the precepts. That's basically what it's about. And if you want to short and keep the precepts down, it's don't cause harm. Don't cause harm to yourself, don't cause harm to anybody else. That's what the precepts are about. Now, in aid of these resentions, we have details. And I'm not going to go into any of this except number 52. You can read these later, it's actually quite interesting to read them and get a sense of what was going on in the culture at the time of the Buddha. And they do give you a sense of that.

Leigh Brasington 1:23:07

But this is the one that's the idle chatter, talk about kings, thieves, ministers of state, talk of armies, dangerous and wars. Talk about food, drink garments, lodgings, talk about garlands and scents, talk about relations, vehicles, villages, towns, cities, countries. Talk about women or men. Talk about heroes, I guess that's popstar celebrities, street talk, talk by the well. Water Cooler gossip, talk of those departed in days gone by, rambling chit chat, speculations about the world, about the sea, talk of loss and gain. Now, this doesn't mean that you don't know what's going on in the world. But do you really need a six o'clock dukkha report? I mean, because that's what it is. Right? Six o'clock news comes on. They tell you about the dukkha that happened in Ukraine and the dukkha that happened in Afghanistan and the dukkha that happened in Turkey and Syria and the dukkha that happened in Washington when they tried to prevent dukkha but only made more dukkha and the dukkha that happened in your local town and then they come back with the weather. You do need to know what's going on. I would suggest you get your news from reputable websites rather than from the TV. Remember, TV news is about keeping your eyeballs attached. It's not about elucidating what's going on. There are good sources of news on the Internet. BBC, you know, okay. They don't have an American agenda. Right, so you can get fairly good American news from the BBC. There are other sites like that. And then wrangling argumentation; the fourth book of the Sutta Nipata most scholars say it's very early material and the overriding theme of that book is not holding to fix views. And wrangling argumentation : You don't understand this, I understand it! How can you understand that? You're practicing wrong, etc. Yeah. How many arguments have you actually won in your life? What percentage of the arguments you've had in your life have you actually won? I mean, really where the other person goes, Oh, you're right. I changed my mind. Yeah. Especially how many arguments have you won on Facebook? Yeah, nevermind.

Leigh Brasington 1:25:41

Okay, so that's the middle section. It's worth reading and then the large section, it just goes on and on; this first one, 156: making auguries on the basis of thunderbolts and celestial portents, interpreting ominous dreams. Yeah, spiritual teachers are supposed to do all this sort of stuff, according to some people- and the Buddha is like, "Neah, neah. Don't do any of that. Go meditate." Alright, and this goes on for quite a while.



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Leigh Brasington 1:26:09

Alright, any questions on the precepts before we get to the next bits?

Questioner 1:26:31

I wonder, I see it often where, when there's a talk about the precepts in the suttas, the prohibition of intoxicants is left off. Like it was in this. Do you know why that is?

Leigh Brasington 1:26:52

The person giving the talk likes their glass of wine? Oh, no, I never leave it off. I talk about it. Actually, that first retreat I went on, this was with Ayya Khema who was my main teacher. And when she was talking about the fifth precept, she said, we are confused enough already. We do not need to ingest anything that makes us more confused. That had a huge impact on me at the time I went on that retreat. I was stoned five nights a week and had been for the last 14 years. I mean, I was a pothead. But I also really like to know what's going on. Why are things happening the way they are? And when she said, I don't need to make myself more confused. It had such an impact that I quit smoking pot immediately. You know, I would say it's a really important precept. It's in its most basic level, it's about drugs and alcohol. But it's also at a higher level, it's just not in taking in anything that's unhealthy. And that would include the books and the TV shows and the movies and the websites, and yeah, the list is quite endless. I would say if they have a 12 step program, it applies to that as well. Right? And then the highest level of this precept is, yeah, you try and ingest only things that are helpful. The dharma, right? Something you find inspiring. So yeah, anybody that leaves it out, I would strongly recommend that you raise your hand and ask how come they didn't bring it in? Because you don't want to get me started talking. But I think about other teachers teachings...

Questioner 1:28:46

...well, if it's in the suttas where I have seen it where they leave it out. They're talking about the others, but they just leave that out.

Leigh Brasington 1:28:53

Right. So where you see it in the suttas is an indication that it's fairly early material. The fifth precept didn't show up until the Buddha had lay followers. And the monks would come for a meal for the lay followers. And there was a story of a monk who got drunk and passed out in the middle of the road on the way home and he was like...(slurring) ... and so then he made the precept against intoxicants at that point. So this was fairly well into the Buddha's teachings. The first four precepts were there very early on. And then the one about the intoxicant seems to be early. So what we have in this particular sutta is traces of early teaching there. Now the the sutta would have taken place; the king would have come to see the Buddha probably when the Buddha was somewhere between 75 and 80 years old, okay, so towards the end of his ministry, so by then there probably was the precept but the gradual training had been codified without it because the gradual training was very early, apparently. Right? And it was just put into this sutta, the Buddha gave the discourse on the gradual training, and all of the gradual training, you know, when they talked about the small section on morality, they said exactly the same thing. That's part of the oral tradition. And so maybe originally, the Buddha didn't talk about the



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intoxicants, and then later, he did talk about the intoxicants, but when it was preserved, it was preserved in the earliest version.

Questioner 1:30:31

Oh, thank you. That's very helpful. I just wondered about that. I love your background stories. It's like I have a hard time trusting commentaries as well. And so I like hearing it from you.

Leigh Brasington 1:30:51

I don't know how much you can trust me. But I'm trying to do my best. I don't have any agenda other than I wanted to know. So one other thing I can say about the precepts, if I had to pick the most important precept, I pick right speech. Because if you act in a way that you would never be tempted to lie about what you did, then you're keeping the rest of the precepts. Right. So if you if you can never lie, because you never did anything that you felt you needed to lie about. Yeah, you've taken care of all of it. But yeah, this just precept is really important too, about avoiding intoxicants because they cloud the mind.

Questioner 1:31:39

Thank you so much.

Leigh Brasington 1:31:41

Sure. Victoria.

Questioner 1:31:44

Yes, um, I'm involved in a lot of interfaith dialogue and things like that. And that's actually what led me to Buddhism originally. And so I'm wondering, there's a phrase that's used a lot in, like, the Episcopal liturgy, I guess, and maybe others. sins of commission and omission, and I love that idea. And so that's when the precepts are elaborated upon in the suttas, that's the feeling I get. Is that, am I on the right path? In other words, that, like you said, about the giving the dana to the Ukraine, and that kind of thing, that it's not just a matter of, of not doing the bad thing. It's also a matter of being proactive, and doing the virtuous opposite of the bad thing. Is that right?

Leigh Brasington 1:32:38

That's exactly right. Yeah, so not killing. Right. That would be a sin. If you kill that's a sin of commission. Right. Not being generous would be a sin of omission.

Questioner 1:32:49

Right, right. Yeah. Great. Thank you.

Leigh Brasington 1:32:52

Sure. Catherine. Are you still muted? Yes.

Questioner 1:33:00

Hi, thank you. I was interested in the source of your historical analysis, if there's certain scholars that you follow about this, or is it something you study directly and came to your own conclusions? particularly interested in how, you or whoever, discovered that the splitting of the



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Mahayana and the Theravāda and was over the precept about gold and silver and that it was mainly urban monks who became the Mahayana? And also how, how you found out that the fifth precept of about intoxicants is a late precept.

Leigh Brasington 1:33:44

Yeah, I don't have all of my sources there. Okay, so one source that I have is a book called *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, by Govind C. Pande and he goes through all of the suttas and decides which category they go in. Their early, they're late, they're a composite sutta or don't know. And the big bucket is the I don't know, bucket. Okay. So that's part of the scholarship I've done. There's also a PDF on my website in the reading list, called a *History of Mindfulness* by Ajaan Sujato. And he talks about how to determine what suttas are early and late and that sort of stuff in there, as well as being a really deep dive into well, the history of the Satipatthana Sutta and the history of mindfulness. So those are two things that can refer you to. The history of why the split between the Theravāda and the Mahayana, I don't remember where I came across it. I suspect that it's talked about in "The Chronicles of Sri Lanka," (that may not even be the right name.) Which is, which obviously has some good information in it and obviously has some mythology in it. Okay. So it's not that helpful, but I could have come across the reason for that split also in a book on the history of Buddhisms (plural) or history of the Buddhist Religions (plural) by Richard Robinson. If you plug in history of Buddhist religions into Amazon, I think that will enable you to find it. It's a college textbook. So it's like \$90. But there are used versions of it around. And I saw one for as little as \$16, since the best history of Buddhism I've ever read. So that was good. "The Awakening of the West" is that Steven Bachelors book? Yeah, there is good information. And that about early Buddhism. There's another one, I think it's called "How the Swans came to the Lake" or something like that, which is about Western Buddhism, and I don't remember the author. So I'm reading this historical stuff. And something strikes me. The precept on intoxicants being later. Yeah, I don't know where I read that. There are, I think it's two volumes by Thanissaru Bhikkhu on the precepts for the monks and nuns, and it gives some of the history behind each of the precepts. And it could have been there where I first picked it up. But I pretty sure I read it someplace else as well. That's about the best I can do.

Questioner 1:37:08

Thank you so much.

Questioner 1:37:13

Thank you. I have a question about the precept on non harming. Where it seems it's not really possible to live a life without killing or without harming. If I grow a plant and want to eat part of it, it's sort of feels weird to like, take out the leaves, it's hard to grow. And so I take the precept as not harming mindlessly and trying to do that mindfully. But I was I was wondering if you had any thoughts on the on that topic? Yeah.

Leigh Brasington 1:37:48

So the literal is to not harm breathing beings. And plants were not known to breathe at that time. Okay, so it was perfectly okay to harm a plant in order to eat it. Now, you weren't to damage, seeds or plant life. So you, you could harvest to eat, but you wouldn't go around, walk up to a tree and start pulling leaves off of it or something like that. Okay, so that's one. Two, there's a sutta in the middle length discourses number 55 and it was given to Jīvaka, the Royal



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Physician; Jivaka wants to know, is it okay for the monks to eat meat? And the Buddha says it's okay, if the monk doesn't know or suspect that the animal was killed for them specifically. So if you go on alms round, and they put chicken curry in your alms bowl, you can eat it. But if you go to have a meal with a family, and you hear squawking in the background, and then it's quiet, and then they serve chicken curry, you can't eat it. All right. But I take the precept to do my very best not to harm living beings. Okay, and so a spider in the house, okay? Get a cup, get a piece of paper, take the spider outside. A fly, yeah, try and shoo it out rather than swat it, you know, things like that. So do the absolute best I can to not cause harm. And we're all going to fail. I mean, if you're out for a walk, and you're not paying attention, you'll step on an ant. Okay, you kill the ant. So you want to be mindful, so you don't step on ants. But you also want to be mindful of what's going on around you. So you're not just looking down and walk in front of traffic. So yeah, there's always going to be trade offs. It's not possible to live as a human being without being reliant upon killing either plants or animals or both. And you're going to make mistakes. The Jains, who were another tradition at the time of the Buddha took this to such an extent that they would wear a mask over their face to keep from inhaling insects, and they would have a little broom and they would sweep the ground in front of them, so they wouldn't step on an insect, and the Buddha...yeah, that's taking it a little too far. In talking about karma, he said, "Karma: oh monks, I declare, is intention. And so you don't want to intend to harm anything. And you want to intend if at all possible to prevent harm. But if the ants invade your kitchen, yeah. Okay. You're going to need to deal with the ants, it's just going to be unhealthy for them to be there. Maybe it will teach you the lesson to keep your kitchen cleaner. So the ants don't have any reason to come in. That's about the best I can offer you. Yeah, the idea is, do your best to not cause harm and realize that, unfortunately, there probably going to be times where you do wind up causing harm.

Leigh Brasington 1:41:10

Thank you. All right. Anything else on the precepts? Okay, restraint of the sense faculties: "And how does one guard the doors of the sense faculties? Having seen a form with the eye one does not grasp at the sign or details. All right. So can you see me? Can everybody see me? Am I on the screen as well? You can see me? Yeah, what am I holding? What is this? You think cell phone? Yeah. How did you know it was a cell phone? It didn't have a sign on it? It has, it has the signs of a cell phone. Right? It's a rectangle. It's got a screen? It's thin. Right? So you conceptualized what you saw as a cell phone? That's the sign? The characteristics would be? Was that Android or iPhone? I wonder if he has the app that does whatever. I wonder what he uses for his GPS app. Okay, those are characteristics. Right? So the ability to identify it. Okay, that's the sign. What is this? Can you tell? It's a picture of a bird and some flowers? Right? Yeah, well, there's no bird or flowers. It's just colored shapes. you conceptualize them as bird or flowers. Right. And now when you look at it, it turns out, you know, it's a greeting card. Right? It's a greeting card, you know it's a greeting card? Right? How do you know it's a greeting card? Well, it's got a nice thing on it and it opens out. That's the sign- the characteristics: Oh, what's this about? What's it say inside here? Right. So now you're going through the characteristics, what's inside of it. So the sign is the minimum information so you can recognize what it is. And then the characteristics are all the other details about it.

Leigh Brasington 1:43:33



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Okay, so you see something and you do not grasp it the signs or characteristics. Since if one were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the eye, evil unwholesome states such as covetousness, and grief might assail him. One practices restraint, guards the faculty of eye, achieves restraint over the faculty of the eye. Now, guarding the senses doesn't necessarily mean you don't look, you have to look. They tell you, as a little kid, look both ways before you cross the street, it still applies. You have to look; our senses are how we navigate the environment. So we can't shut them off. I mean, yeah, you go meditate in a sensory deprivation tank for a while, but most of the time, you're going to need your senses turned on. The idea is not to get hooked by the senses. Right? You see something? You recognize what it is, if there's something you need to do about it, you do what you need to do about it. Otherwise you let it go. Rather than oh, I want one of those. This is the covetousness right? He's got a real nice, whatever. I want to get me a real nice one. I'll ask him if he'll give it to me. I mean, he's got lots of money, he could buy a new one. Whatever craziness you come up with because you weren't guarding your senses. You see he's got a whatever, and that's it. You just don't take it any further. And then you do with the others. With hearing a sound, you hear a sound. You identify as an aeroplane, you don't have to look up in the sky and see, is this a twin engine? Is this commercial? Is this private? I mean, you might, but you don't have to. You smell a smell that's going past the bakery. If you don't guard your sense faculties, the smell is going to come out, grab you by your nose, drag you into the bakery, and force the cinnamon bun down your throat. Right. So the idea is that you see the sign to the bakery, and you guard your senses, such that when you arrive at the bakery door, you are at the end of an exhale, and then you deeply inhale through your nose, so you can enjoy the pleasant vedana of the smell and keep walking. You didn't grasp at the sign, you just took it in, enjoyed the pleasure and kept going. Right? Same thing with flavors, tangible objects, and mind. Right? If I start talking about playing a card game, a card game in which you get to name Trump's right, or I start talking about a family full of Trumps, you had different reactions to the same word. Right? Okay. So now, if in that second case, you have a negative reactions start running off about those horrible people. Or in the first case, you think, oh, yeah, I got a bridge game tonight, I've got to practice up, I need to study the book again. Right.

Leigh Brasington 1:47:00

So you heard the word and it puts something in your mind, a concept in your mind and you're going, you're running with the concept, not the sound, the sound of my voice isn't what engaged you, it was the concept you made out of the sound of my voice, that's a mind object. And you grasp at the signs and characteristics of the mind object that you created. Okay. And so the whole idea is that you don't get hooked by your sensory input, you use the sensory input to navigate the environment. If something pleasant comes along, enjoy it. As long as you don't get hooked, such that covetousness, or grief or overcomes you if something unpleasant comes along, deal with it. Right? Is nothing wrong with sensory input.

Leigh Brasington 1:47:50

However, sometimes it's necessary to be choosing wisely what your sensory input is. There are movies that you probably shouldn't see, because well, what they're promoting. There are books that you probably wouldn't want to read, there are TV shows, there are internet websites there. There's a whole lot of stuff where it's probably better just to guard your senses: don't go there.



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Alright, so sometimes guarding the senses means you don't go there. Sometimes it means Yeah, it's fine to go there. Just don't get hooked. All right, so Merrell has their hand up.

Questioner 1:48:35

Thank you, Leigh. Can you hear me? Yes, I can hear you. Okay, so I just had a birthday. And I got some cards from people. And I put them up on my desk altar. And sometimes I just sort of step back, and I look at them. And I do it because they're pretty. They remind me of that people that that sent the cards who I love and if I'm feeling lousy physical kinds of things, they help elevate me to a level where I have more equanimity in a way so, but I can know that sometimes I might look at them or think about the person and then awful thoughts might happen, which doesn't usually happen. But that's not a beneficial way, beneficial thing. But I've been wondering, I mean, about focusing on things that are pretty like thought, you know, you put flowers on your altar and doing that, is that a, mean, I find that it's beneficial. I mean, the flowers are going to die and put the cards away. They're not permanent. They're just something that's there for a while. And that was that was one question. So if you have any comments that? Yeah.

Leigh Brasington 1:50:01

So, yeah, it's perfectly okay to enjoy the beauty of life. And if you have cards and they're temporary, and you put them up and you're reminded of the people and you enjoy their beauty, it's fine. If, however it goes off into any sort of craving and clinging, I mean, that's, that's what we're trying to prevent is craving and clinging coming up. If, so if it comes into craving and clinging, then it's not so useful. But yeah, I don't I don't see a problem with it. You have to really be mindful of how you're processing that sensory input. Are you grasping at the signs, or secondary characteristics? Basically, if you're just enjoying the beauty and appreciating that you have good friends who wish you a happy birthday? I don't see a problem. If you're looking at it and going, Yeah, this friend needs to whatever or, you know, this person is a great friend. I wish I had more friends like that. I mean, yeah, now you're starting to wander off into something else.

Questioner 1:51:11

Right, I see that as different. I see that as sort of mind habits, other kinds of things that are not beneficial, which I can note and then come back to center. Exactly. So I have one other thing I was going to ask you. Yeah, it's about... Okay. So when you were talking about sound, and, you know, you can like music, not like music, that kinds of stuff. But being aware that that's happening versus, oh, I have to go buy that album or something like that. But it was thinking about post traumatic stress when it comes to sound. So it's, it's the somewhat the opposite. Because when a sound for me, when a certain sounds occur, they bring the PTSD, and I'm practicing with it for a while. So it doesn't do it as harmfully, or whatever. But there's the point for people who have PTSD, where a sound or sight automatically start a very negative process within one person that causes harm um, so I don't know is there any, any comment you might have about that? Because it's like you want you, you can shelter some of your senses. And you know, to practice learning to do that, but there's some senses that are very hard to shelter, because of the, whatever the cause is, like PTSD or something that has been dramatically input into you, it might take a long time to heal.

Leigh Brasington 1:52:59



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Right. So if you're dealing with PTSD, you want to deal with it in small doses, so you're not overwhelmed. But if you're triggered by a site or a sound, that's not under your conscious control. Right? You if it was under your conscious control, you wouldn't have gotten triggered. Okay, so it's taken you over because of what has happened in the past. Right? At that point, the job is primarily to recognize this has triggered something from the past, it's not happening right now. In other words, you want to find that I'm not in the same situation, as I was in when this sight or sound was associated with the traumatic experience. So you want to you want to drop into the present to the best of your ability. Now, it's also quite possible that you're in a similar situation, say you are in a car crash. And the one of the things that triggers you is the screeching of brakes. Alright, and now you're out driving, and you hear the screeching of brakes and you start to have the PTSD response, because it's a very similar situation; you're in a car and you hear the screeching of brakes. Yeah, it's going to take an enormous amount of mindfulness at that point, to bring yourself back to: okay, it's not involving me, because it's such a similar situation. But if it's not such a similar situation, you want to use your mindfulness to drop into the present to see okay, I got triggered, but at the moment, I'm safe. And even if it is in a car and screeching brakes, you check your mirrors and you see that yeah, you're safe, even though you're going to have much more adrenaline than you want to have. Yeah, dealing with trauma is really difficult. And one of the things that's really necessary is not to get it in such doses that it's overwhelming. And that, unfortunately is is a common thing that happens is yeah, you just get triggered again and again. And then sometimes it's like you recognize, okay, this, this is a potential trigger. I'm not gonna go there. Is this helpful?

Questioner 1:55:30

Is what you said, helpful? Yes. Yeah. Okay. I mean, it is. What I do with my PTSD, I've learned to do but it takes a while, to be able to do that. But I hadn't, I guess I hadn't thought of it. So much as a sensory, I can't find my word, sensory trigger. No, I knew it was a sensory trigger. I knew I was triggered. But I haven't thought about it as a sensory trigger. Because in that same way, I could put this with everything, because it's still all very similar, even though it's different to understand what I mean. Yeah. Thank you very much.

Leigh Brasington 1:56:23

Yeah. And there are some good modalities for treating trauma. Peter Levine, he has a book called Waking the Tiger, and somatic experiencing stuff that's actually very good treatment that you can work with, for dealing with trauma.

Questioner 1:56:41

I have read his book and done some of his things. And that was helpful, because it's sort of a gradual step. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Leigh Brasington 1:56:51

Sure. Yeah, trauma seems to have a half life you deal with half of it, but half of that's left and you deal with half of that. Always some residual. But good luck with it.

Questioner 1:57:00

Thank you very much. Thank you,



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Leigh Brasington 1:57:03

Raj.

Questioner 1:57:05

Hi, Leigh. The session has been really interesting so far. So thank you so much. I've just got two quick questions on the precepts. One is relating to your own experience. And then the other one on the precepts themselves. You mentioned that in the early stages that you quite didn't pay much attention to the precepts. And following your first retreat with Ayya Khema, you started to follow them. That's what I understood. So did you see a significant difference on how the path developed or whether you could get into the jhānas easier once you started following them? And they had a real impact on the progress in the gradual training? And then the second question...

Leigh Brasington 1:57:53

Wait, wait, one question at a time. So my first Buddhist experience was a 10 day retreat. So no practice. Well, I tried to meditate. But I, what I quickly learned on that retreat, what I thought was meditation was not what Ayya Khema thought was meditation. So I really had no, I mean, yeah, I grew up as a Presbyterian preacher's kid, I could recite the 10 commandments, you know, don't kill, don't steal, don't bear false witness, all that sort of stuff. But I wasn't taking any of that all that seriously. Except, well, prior to that first retreat, I would say my spiritual practice was ethical hedonism. Alright, so I wasn't ripping people off. But I was, you know, out looking for a good time. Right? It wasn't killing. Well, I would kill the bugs. I mean, so. So it all changed at once to...oh, yeah, it make sense to keep these precepts. And it makes sense to do the meditation practice. So it went from, you know, nothing, no practice, really, to, oh yeah, keeping the precepts and doing the practice. The jhānas were still three years away.... yeah, three years away from then, so it made no difference in my jhāna practice, because that hadn't even begun. And your second question?

Questioner 1:59:19

Thank you. Yeah, so as laypeople, so of course, what we're looking at is what the Buddha preached to the monks at the time. So as lay people, do you think that keeping the five precepts is would form a good base to get into the the path of gradual training? And do we need to look at other recommendations as well in terms of precepts as we develop the path?

Leigh Brasington 1:59:50

I think the five precepts are the essential foundation of the path you've got to do that. If you don't do that, yeah, you're gonna be causing harm. I mean, these, these are the things that are to try to help you not cause any harm. Anything more than that would be anything you realize that you might do that might cause harm, and don't do that. Or anything that you might do that can be of benefit, then go do that. So taking it from the five precepts are: alright, here's the baseline. And then anything else you can take over and above that it's not specifically covered, yeah, pay attention to it and don't cause harm and do provide benefit. So, but yeah, they're the essential part of the path you can't get into the jhānas, you can't really follow the spiritual path, unless you're keeping the precepts.

Questioner 2:00:52

Thank you. All right.



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Leigh Brasington 2:00:55

I think there was some stuff in the chat

Leigh Brasington 2:01:05

Isn't it about the middle path in regard to the senses? Yes, it's about the middle path in regard to the senses. But sometimes, no, you don't stick your hand in the fire even a little bit. Right. If you stick it in for middle length of time, you'll get seriously burned. So it varies as to where it is. We have to use our senses to navigate the environment. So yeah, but don't get hooked.

Leigh Brasington 2:01:40

Is there any concern about not having enough time to listen to the day's entire lesson? It's being recorded. So some excellent books on trauma and meditation Peter Levine's book. Somebody just just gifted me this book. Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness by David A Treveling. I have not read, I looked at the beginning of it, it looks very good. What else is in the chat?

Leigh Brasington 2:02:30

Okay, somebody says David's book is great. And the person that said it I know and I would trust her opinion, definitely. Okay. So mindfulness and clear comprehension. This is basically about being mindful of everything you do. So mindfulness: sati. Sometimes you see it translated as awareness. It's about being aware of what's going on in the here and now. Ram Das was right, be here now. Pay attention to what's happening in the here and now. And so whatever you're doing, and this is particularly about your bodily actions, be mindful of it. It's really simple to say, Be Here Now, pay attention. One of the practices I like to give the students is what I call walking outside of time, go for a walk, where you don't have to navigate your way back, you know how to get back, right? And you don't have to watch out for tree roots or anything like that. And now can you just pay attention to the here and now to such an extent, you're not noticing time, but change, that bird is changing its place in the sky, that tree has changed to horizontal, you're not thinking of the past, you're not thinking of the future. And you're trying to totally see change, rather than time. There's actually not such a thing as time it's an emergent property of our attempt to measure change. Okay. And so, yeah, pay attention to what's going on, but try going for a walk someplace. And just yeah, don't think about the past. Don't think about the future. It's all the present, the ever changing present. And that's what you're noticing. That's a good exercise to get you into paying attention to what's actually going on in the here and now. But this is what mindfulness is all about. Pay attention to what's happening now. There's really great books on the Satipatthana Sutta. I would recommend both Bhikkhu Analayo's, which is a scholarly study of the sutta and Joseph Goldstein's book on mindfulness: really really great books. I don't think I'm gonna say much more about mindfulness other than that. But any questions on mindfulness?

Questioner 2:05:18

okay

Leigh Brasington 2:05:19

Contentment and how is one content? One is content with robes to protect the body, alms food to sustain the belly, wherever one goes one sets out taking only as requisites along with him.



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Just as a bird wherever it goes, flies with his wings as his only burden in the same way one is content with robes and alms food. Rock and roll has some really good dharma one of my favorites is "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose." Okay? We live in a culture that says, whatever you've got is not enough. You need this. It's on sale. Right? It's ridiculous. In talking about the eightfold path, the Buddha says that right intention is intentions of renunciation, non ill will and harmlessness intentions of letting go. Letting go is the essence of the spiritual path. There's a book in the Tibetan tradition called "Enlightenment in the palm of your hand", big old thick book, I read it, is good. But the title is the best part, oh, it's "Liberation in the palm of your hand" And we do have liberation in the palm of our hand, you can see it, make a fist, come on, everybody make a fist, I want to see fist in front of your face. Right? Now you want to see liberation. Look at the palm of your hand. That's how you get there is nothing to get on the spiritual path, there's everything to let go of. We live in a culture that teaches the exact opposite. Right, you need to be very aware of the fact that we live in a culture that teaches the exact opposite. In keeping the precepts: don't kill. Well, if you do what the culture says to do, you're going to contribute to well, global climate change, environmental destruction, right, that's going to kill. If you live lightly, you're not going to contribute as much. And I'm sure future generations have not given us permission to use up all the resources now. When we're using up all the resources, we're stealing from future generations, we're taking what is not given. So the first two precepts really involve living lightly, taking care of the planet, doing whatever you can do to reduce global climate change and environmental destruction. This is what's required. And the best way to do that is to not be a good consumer, you should be a total failure as a consumer, right, you get enough food to eat. Okay, sort of got to have a car in this culture in many places. All right, but you know, the greenest car you could possibly have is the one you currently own. Rather than buy a new one. Okay, you know, this lots of things to do. I'm sure all of you have heard these before. But everything to let go. Nothing to get on the spiritual path. This is what the contentment is about. Be content with little. In 2008 I retired as a computer programmer and set off to spend time at the Forest Refuge in Barre, Massachusetts. And eventually I was down to one carry on and one daypack. That was it. That was the only possessions I had and I traveled like that. It took me a while to get there. But I was doing that for eight years. And the last last four or five of that it was Yeah, just a day pack and a carry on you don't need a lot of stuff. Now, I had friends I was going to visit and so yeah, they would give me the spare bed and you know occasionally I rented a car and things like that. But we don't need what the culture tells us. Any questions on contentment? Being content with little.

Leigh Brasington 2:10:03

Any questions about anything we've discussed so far? Because we're going to take a lunch break in just a moment or two here

Leigh Brasington 2:10:22

Okay, so it's 20 past. 45 minutes okay? Everybody eat within 45 minutes. All right, so that's five minutes past the top of the hour. We'll start in on the abandoning of the hindrances and the jhānas. So enjoy your lunch. See you in 45 minutes.