



# Sati Center for Buddhist Studies

## Gradual Training on the Buddhist Path (2 of 2)

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Speaker: Leigh Brasington

**Leigh Brasington 00:08**

So the abandoning of the hindrances is the next step.

**Leigh Brasington 00:14**

Sixty seven, endowed with a noble aggregate of moral discipline, restraint over this sense faculties, noble mindfulness and clear comprehension, noble contentment.

**Leigh Brasington 00:25**

So this is the, this is the warmup. This is the background, this is what you got to do before you sit down to meditate.

**Leigh Brasington 00:31**

One resorts to a secluded dwelling. Right and so here's a list of potential secluded dwellings, forests, the root of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a cremation ground, a jungle grove, the open air, a heap of straw. The whole idea is go someplace where you won't be disturbed. Right? So that's someplace where they're doing handicrafts, or cooking food, or selling things or playing a TV. Someplace where you won't be disturbed.

**Leigh Brasington 01:02**

And then, after returning from alms round. My understanding is that the Buddha and the monks would go on alms round, I don't know 10 or 11 in the morning, eat the midday meal. And then they would go for the days abiding. They would go into the forest and sit at the root of a tree and meditate until it got dark, which given this as India and it's close to the equator, six hours of meditation. I doubt they were doing 45 minutes sit, 45 minute walk. These people could sit cross legged. Right. So yeah, go and do a three hour sit, take a pee break, do another three hours, maybe something like that.

**Leigh Brasington 01:44**

And then we get the hindrances. In the first one is given in this sutta as covetousness for the world. In other suttas, we see it as something like the desire for sensual gratification. I translate it as simply sense desire. It's the wanting aspect of the mind. So when you're meditating, and you become distracted, it's very helpful to label your distractions. The first label that comes to mind is always correct. Spend zero energy trying to get the perfect label. And so wanting or any other possibility, if you say wanting, you know, it's the first hindrance, right.



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## **Leigh Brasington** 02:31

One dwells with a mind free from covetousness. One purifies one's mind from covetousness. For dealing with sensual desire, the best strategy I can give you is take a look at the limitations of whatever it is you're desiring. It's got limitations. It's impermanent. It's less than perfect. If it's a person that you're desiring, well, if you think they're Mr or Miss Right, they're probably not interested in you. I suspect Mr. and Miss Right have already hooked up with each other. And we're left with what's left.

## **Leigh Brasington** 03:19

Okay, so everybody is going to be less than perfect. I mean, if you're, if you're totally perfect, what are you doing here? You should be teaching the class. Right? So we all got our problems here and anybody that you're lusting after they have their problems, too, they're less than perfect. And that thing, it's less than perfect. I mean, if it's expensive, you're going to need to increase your insurance payments, or put a alarm in your house. Or I mean the list is endless of how things are less than perfect. So if you find yourself caught in a hindrance of wanting, examine what you're wanting and see it's less than perfect aspects.

## **Leigh Brasington** 03:59

Okay, if it's food, eat less food. You don't get to the place of not wanting food by eating more food. Right? You will temporarily, but it'll just come back and you'll want it again. If you can wean yourself to eating less and less food then food is not a problem. It's also helpful for overcoming sloth and torpor.

## **Leigh Brasington** 04:27

Having abandoned ill will and hatred. Okay, ill will and hatred. This is sort of the most egregious form of aversion, or not wanting. So the first hindrances wanting, the second hindrance is not wanting. He dwells with a benevolent mind sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings. He purifies his mind from ill will and hatred. The number one thing to do if you find yourself with aversion, ill will, hatred, anger, anything like that. Label it and then see can you drop it. Oh, and when you finish the label and you come back to your meditation object, like the breath, relax. Whatever that distraction was probably put a little tension in there. Yeah, just relax. And then back to your object. But if it keeps pulling you away, then it's aversion. The antidote is mettā practice. So drop the attention on the breath, or the body scan or whatever you're doing, and just start doing mettā. You don't have to do the mettā for the person towards whom you're having the adverse reaction. That may be too much. Do mettā for yourself, do mettā for your best friend, your significant other, the Dalai Lama. You know, just find somebody to do mettā for. And do it long enough so that it's mood altering. I mean, you can tell when you start doing mettā in an adverse state of mind, it's just sort of rote doing mettā. But eventually, hopefully, you get to where "Yeah, it feels different". You've got the mood altering part happening. So get to that point and do it some more. And then you can go back to your breath or your body scan, or you can just keep doing mettā. Mettā is a great practice. If I could only do one practice ... you know, they came to me and they said, you can only do one practice. I choose mettā. What a wonderful thing.

## **Leigh Brasington** 06:28



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Having abandoned dullness and drowsiness, one dwells perceiving light, mindful and clearly comprehending. Dullness and drowsiness is one translation, sloth and torpor is the usual translation. Yeah, it's too little energy. It could be physical. You didn't get enough sleep last night, and you sit down and meditate and you're falling asleep. Or it can be mental. "Yeah, I know it's time to meditate, but I just don't feel like it". Right? If it's physical, you can do things like pinch and pull your ear lobes. If you know where the acupuncture points are on the side of your ear, you can squeeze those really hard, rub your cheeks, you can stand up, you can open your eyes, look at the brightest light, you can see. Stand up is sort of like, okay, if nothing else is working, stand up. If you stand up, you can continue doing whatever form of meditation you were doing, breath, mettā, body scan. Or you can notice the subtle sensations in your feet if you keep your balance. It's very important when you do standing meditation to flex your knees. If you lock your knees, you'll pass out and fall and it will be unpleasant. dukkha. Right? So flex your knees. And I've meditated a lot by just putting my attention in my feet and noticing just the subtle sensations there. They're subtle, so you have to concentrate. That's good. And then if you feel like okay, you're energized again, you could sit back down and continue your meditation. Or, yeah, maybe you just continue to do the standing meditation to the end of the period. Okay. If it's more like laziness, meditate again. The best thing is some inspiration. There's a lot of little books out there, you know, each chapter is a page or two or three pages of inspiring stuff. Stuff from Jack Kornfield. I know he has a couple of those there around, you get yourself something you find inspiring. I mean, it can be a big, long, thick book and you just read a couple pages in it. Make it be a translation of the suttas. And you just read a sutta or two or three, right? Find something that's inspiring. And that can definitely help with "Okay, yeah. All right, now I'm ready to meditate". So find some inspiration. It's useful to have an altar that has, you know, picture the Buddha picture of the Dalai Lama picture. I mean, there's tons of inspiring people around. And so yeah, you sit down in front of them, and they're like, oh, yeah, they're all looking at me. I gotta do this. That can be perhaps enough inspiring.

## **Leigh Brasington 06:30**

Having abandon restlessness and worry, it's usually translated as restlessness and worry, but I looked at the Pāli. And remorse would be a much better translation. It's worry about what happened in the past. It's not worry about what might happen in the future. I would say worry about the future would actually go under aversion. Because generally if you're worried about the future, you're averse to something terrible happening. And that's why you're worrying about it. So I would put that in there aversion, but it doesn't matter. I mean, they're just categories to try and help you. But if it's worrying about I shouldn't have said that to that person. That was really kind of unskillful. Yeah, that's the remorse.

## **Leigh Brasington 10:14**

Okay. So having abandoned restlessness and remorse, one dwells at ease within oneself with a peaceful mind. Hence for that are much learning, asking questions associating with wise people, things like that. I would say that, if you sit down and you're physically restless, it may be better to like, go for a brisk walk. You know, something that burns some energy. This can also be useful if you're sleepy, go for a brisk walk and get your energy up. So trying to find that middle space on an energy. If it's in the mind, that's restless. Yeah. Find some something inspiring to read or something like that. Restlessness can show up in a lot of subtle ways. I noticed when I was spending a lot of time in the forest refuge and I was doing relatively long sittings. I mean, an



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hour and a half was pretty typical. Then at some point, I would start getting very restless. And I realized that actually, I was getting uncomfortable. But I was paying so little attention to my body, I didn't notice the discomfort. But my body noticed and it started showing up as mental restlessness. And so that's the thing to check. It's actually quite important that you meditate in a comfortable position.

## **Leigh Brasington** 11:56

Just above this, we had one sits down cross legged, holds one's body erect, and sets up mindfulness before oneself. I would say yeah, if you can sit cross legged, great. But we have these evil things called chairs. And they've screwed up our ability to sit cross legged. So sit in a chair, be on a bench, lie down if necessary. If you lie down to meditate, pull your knees up, so your feet are flat on the bed or floor or whatever you're lying on. And your knees are up making a little triangle bear with your feet and your point where your knees touch each other.

## **Leigh Brasington** 12:32

Okay. And then sets up mindfulness before oneself, so literal translation, one sets of mindfulness at the muktha. Muktha means mouth, but I think it's like the mouth of a cave, the opening, and I'm assuming that the opening at the nostrils. But yeah, restlessness, so in the 10 fetters, that bind us to the wheel of samsara. Restlessness is the last one of these hindrances to go. You know, as long as you're not fully awakened, there's a tendency for restlessness to be there. And if it's bodily restlessness, that can be taken care of with exercise, usually, if it's mental restlessness. Yeah, that's harder. You also might want to pay attention to your caffeine intake that can certainly lead to bodily restlessness as well as mental restlessness.

## **Leigh Brasington** 13:35

And then, having abandoned doubt, one dwells as one who has passed beyond doubt, unperplexed about wholesome states. The unperplexed about wholesome states appears to be something that's in there to counteract the Jains. The Jains were a different religion, tradition at the time of the Buddha. And they were making a big deal about finding wholesome states, the Jains were basically trying to avoid any negative karma. Because if you created any negative karma, then you're going to be reborn and have to do it all over again and they wanted to not be reborn, they had a craving for non existence, basically, vibhava-taṇhā. And they were really trying to figure out what were the unwholesome states, so they couldn't do that. So it's a big deal. And I think that's what prompted this to be put into this here, doubt about what is wholesome or unwholesome because the Jains are making a big deal about it. And what the Buddha is saying, Yeah, you can overcome the doubt. You know what's wholesome and unwholesome, you're practicing the precepts. But doubt can show up in other ways as well. And I think that's what's much more common. There can be doubt about the Buddha. Did he really know what he was talking about? Doubt about the dharma. Is this the truth? Doubt about the sangha. Did anybody else get enlightened? Can somebody today get enlightened? Doubt about the teaching? Is this really what the Buddha was saying? Is this accurate? Doubt about the teacher. I mean, today you're listening to a retired hippie computer programmer. You might have your doubts. Who is this guy? I have a degree in math. I didn't study this stuff. Right? And then the most insidious doubt of all? Yeah, what about yourself? I can't do this. This is too hard. This will really stop you on the path. But this is hard. I mean, if the spiritual path was easy, we'd have all gotten fully awakened a long time ago, right? Yeah, it's hard. It's gonna be a lot of hard work.



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But the rewards are immense, but you just got to put in the work to do it. And it's a slog at times. This is why, for each of these hindrances in the commentary to the commentary to the commentary. Yes, they have that. It says that noble friends and noble conversations are antidotes for all of the hindrances.

## **Leigh Brasington** 16:31

In fact, this is the story of Ananda coming to see the Buddha and saying, Venerable sir, I say that noble friends and noble conversations are half the holy life. And the Buddha says, do not say so Ananda, noble friends and noble conversations are the entire holy life. It's really difficult to do this by yourself. I mean, I totally admire the Buddha for pulling it off. I also know I couldn't do this without the support of my noble friends with whom I have noble conversations. I was in Jack Kornfield teacher training program. And each time we met, we'd meet for four days, four times a year for four years. And each time we met, we spend one of those days with some other teacher. And the best teacher that we spent time with was the late Yvonne Rand, who used to live out by Muir Beach, out there by the Green Gulch Center. And she said, two things that are really important. One was don't believe your own publicity. And two, you must have friends that will call you on your stuff. Anytime you do something stupid, you have to have friends that will tell you, that was stupid. Right? And this is so valuable. And I do have friends like that. And they are, they're worth much more than their weight in gold. I mean, all of us do stupid things. Come on, we're not enlightened, we do stupid stuff. And it's really important to get the feedback from your friends when you have a stupid idea, or you're going to do a stupid thing to help you stay on path. And having noble friends with whom you can have noble conversations really helps with the doubt. The doubt about I can't do this and your friend says yes, you can look at the progress you've made and they should point out to you what you were like five years ago when you are a complete idiot and how much smarter you are now with your behavior, or anything like that. So yeah, noble friends and noble conversations are what is needed for overcoming all of the hindrances and it's especially helpful for doubt.

## **Leigh Brasington** 18:52

And then what follows is the similes I gave you, the being in debt, being physically ill, being in prison, being a slave, and traveling through the desert. As similes for wanting, not wanting, too little energy, too much energy and doubt.

## **Leigh Brasington** 19:14

Questions? Comments?

## **Questioner** 19:27

Hi, Leigh, lovely to see you.

## **Leigh Brasington** 19:29

Good to see you. Are you coming to us from Australia?

## **Leigh Brasington** 19:33

Yeah, of course. I got up early. I often get up early to attend these things. And it's really lovely to hear your stories and connect with you again. I just had a ... was it's a bit of an intellectual question. When you spoke about restlessness being the last hindrance to disappear. I'm also



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aware that the fetters went up and were that the theater of māna or the conceit of I Am as being the last fetter that will disappear, which disappears in arahantship. Can you make a comment about that when all the hindrances disappeared, that means we're awake, right?

**Leigh Brasington** 20:15

When the hindrances disappeared temporarily, we're set up for doing the concentration practice. When they are uprooted completely, you're fully awakened. Right. And the last hindrance really is, as you said, the conceit, the conceiving of a self. If you have no self, there's nobody to get restless. So that takes care of the restlessness at that point. And that's it, arhantship. The doubt goes at the first stage of awakening. And the greed and aversion are weakened at the second stage and uprooted in the third stage. And the the sloth and torpor isn't ever mentioned. The commentaries, plug it in there somewhere, but I don't remember where because, yeah, the Buddha didn't talk about it.

**Questioner** 21:11

Thank you very much. Lovely to see you and hear you again. Great.

**Leigh Brasington** 21:17

Victoria.

**Questioner** 21:19

Thank you. This is actually a question I had before. So it's a little bit out of off topic. But I forgot what my question was. So put my hand down before lunch. Just now came back to me. It's kind of a fraught question. I know quite a number of prominent Buddhist teachers, I won't name them of course out of discretion, but who maintain what I view as a very well judgmental. I view as a kind of hypocritical stance insofar as they are very dogmatic about being atheistic, no beliefs. Buddhism is not a religion, it's a practice blah, blah, blah. And yet, in the creation of their altars in the way that they also sort of practice in the way they encourage others to practice. It strikes me as as a very ... they're very religious. So they're kind of talking out of both sides of their mouths. And it just it was, so I'm just, I can't remember why it came up this morning. But I'm just concerned about, like this idea of the altar, like, how far do you go with that? Because I know in other religions, there's that whole issue of graven images, worshipping them, like in Judaism, et cetera, et cetera. And so I feel like like, for example, the Tibetans, that, at least the ones I've encountered are very straightforward about that. But it seems like in the western sort of Vipassana tradition, it seems very muddled. And I just wondered about your take on that. Because while I think it's, you know, fine, either way, it's just what disturbs me is when one hears contradictions all the time from the same people. Yeah.

**Leigh Brasington** 23:09

So setting up an altar can be inspiring, but it should not be worshipped, right? That's very clear. And how or if it's inspiring is up to each individual. Maybe you don't have an altar, that's fine. Maybe you can't relate to it. Maybe you have a very elaborate altar, because when you sit down in front of it, it puts you in the mood for doing your practice. So I'm going to look at it more from a practical standpoint of if you have an altar, is this helpful? You should not imbue your altar with anything that is going to on its own change you. Right, it's gonna inspire you perhaps, but you





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know, having a statue of the Buddha is not going to make you enlightened. Right, you got to do the practice to get there.

## **Questioner** 24:10

I guess what I'm aiming at is kind of, that's why I came up this morning when you were talking in the sense of craving. That it seems to me that the more one invests in the material world, the more one is prone to craving. So in that sense, I almost wonder if it can serve as a hindrance. I mean, I'm an art historian professionally, so I have nothing against beautiful things at all. But it's that it's a fine line between appreciating and coveting, yeah, or clinging or making it a crutch, that you need it in order to practice that without the altar. You feel bereft in some way.

## **Leigh Brasington** 24:58

Yeah. And you don't want to go to those negative places. I mean, if you find the altar inspiring, great, have an inspiring altar, but don't get attached. That's always that's always the rule don't get attached, whatever it is.

## **Leigh Brasington** 25:14

And the teachers who are more teaching from a materialist perspective. Yeah, they might still have an altar because they find it inspiring. You know, it's a reminder, oh, yeah, there's something better than just what I'm doing here in my regular life, I can actually up my game. And I got reminded because I looked at the altar, and I've got the Buddha and I've got the Dalai Lama, and I've got my teacher and I got this other teacher.

## **Questioner** 25:43

I just wondering, like Christians say, What would Jesus say, I always wonder with this altar business, what would what would the Buddha say? Like? Did he want to be worshipped? I mean, it's, it's human nature to want to put on the pedestal everything that we admire, and that we aspire to. So I see that in general as in human nature as a hindrance, this transference and and worship.

## **Leigh Brasington** 26:09

Yeah. And originally, there wasn't a representation of the Buddha, the Buddha was represented as a pair of footprints. Okay, he's gone to, you know, gone to awakening, and occasionally a few other things, but it was not a human representative. The first Buddhist statues come out of Gandhara, which is where Alexander the Great left some of his generals to form kingdoms. And they were influenced by Buddhism coming in from Kashmir, in northwestern India, into what is now Afghanistan. And these are Greeks. So of course, they made statues because the Greeks make great statues, and they made the first statues of the Buddha. In the San Francisco Art Museum, which is in the old library downtown San Francisco, definitely worth going to see there's a lot of Buddhist statues there. And they have a gandharan statue. And if you didn't know any better, you would look at it and go, Yeah, this is obviously Greek. It looks like Apollo because it was modeled after statues of Apollo, but it's the Buddha. So, yeah, this is a later thing of having statues, and of course photographs and all this sort of stuff. Originally, it was maybe a pair of feet. And for the dharma, a wheel with eight spokes, right. That was that was the representation, the art was available. But if you find some useful, go ahead, use it.



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## Questioner 27:56

Don't Yeah, it's no it's not. It's not about my own practice. It's more that I, maybe because I'm an art historian. I feel like there sometimes there's an ambiguity in the way that Westerners teach. Practice that they're they themselves are unclear on the that that fine line? Yeah, so maybe I'm being too judgmental, but I felt safe with you to bring it up.

## Leigh Brasington 28:21

Yeah. Since this is being recorded, I'm not going to discuss what I find wrong with other teachers. Okay.

## Questioner 28:29

Well, I didn't mention any names anyway. Thank you. That's a lot to think about. Thank you. Right.

## Questioner 28:37

Thank you very much. I appreciated your comments about the restlessness and remorse being more about remorse and regret. So the kind of worry fits with my own experience. I had a question about something more global. What if you have a sense of regret or remorse about yourself? What about, I guess in the old days, they would call it an inferiority complex? It's a kind of global sense that you're not good enough. And I wondered, would it be possible to consider that as like a lack of sympathetic joy? Or maybe a lack of mettā? You know, would these practices address that problem? Anyway? I'll take my answer. Thank you. That's my only question.

## Leigh Brasington 29:29

I appreciate it. Yeah, so definitely mettā practice for yourself will help. When Ayya Khema was first teaching me to do interviews. She said, ask them about their mettā practice. And ask them what it's like to do mettā for themselves. And you must press upon them the importance of doing mettā for themselves. Because yeah, When I started teaching, it was very disheartening to find out how much self loathing even, let alone low self esteem there is in our culture. I wasn't totally shocked because I remember going to James Bariz's Thursday night class, which I did for over a decade, and him asking how many people have low self esteem. 95% of the room raise their hands. How many people have high self esteem? Three of us raised our hands, I was one of them. There were probably 60 to 80 people in the room. Three people with high self esteem. Yeah. The thing I can recommend, okay, I have to get on my website again.

## Leigh Brasington 30:53

Okay, I just put a link in there in the chat. So it's a recommendation, which basically is every time you have a thought of low self esteem, "I always screw up. I'm no good", anything like that. You have to blow it up with TNT. That's not true. You say to yourself, that's not true. And then you find a counterexample, actually find two counter examples. So yeah. The greatest failing of Western civilization is the epidemic of low self esteem in the culture. And so take a look at this. Remember, this is my invention. I'm a computer programmer. I'm not a psychotherapist. But you may find this useful is to use your mindfulness. And every time you encounter a negativity about yourself, blow it up with TNT. That's not true. And to prove it's not true, you find counter examples. This this is really, really important. And yeah, doing mettā for yourself, I mean, one





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round of mettā for yourself, it's not going to fix it. Doing mettā for yourself for years will definitely help.

## **Leigh Brasington 32:31**

Sharon Salzberg talks about that at one point she had very low self esteem. At one point, she was in the bathroom and she dropped a glass jar of something and it broke. And she said to herself, you're such a klutz, but I love you anyhow. And that was a true breakthrough for her. She actually could feel the love for herself. And that's where you want to get to, where you can feel the love you have for yourself. Love for yourself doesn't mean you're perfect. Love for yourself means that you recognize you like to be happy. Yeah, like to be happy. Well, that's loving yourself recognizing that you'd like to be happy.

## **Leigh Brasington 33:18**

Okay. All right, so no hands up on the hindrances.

## **Leigh Brasington 33:24**

So when one sees that these five hindrances are unabandoned, he regards that as a debt, a sickness, confinement in prison, slavery, a desert road. But when one sees these five hindrances have been abandoned, one regards that as freedom from debt, as good health, as released from prison, as freedom from slavery, as a place of safety. And then comes a very interesting first, this is number 76. The commentaries go completely off track here, I think. Verse 76, is what I call the jhāna summary. When one sees that these five hindrances have been abandoned within oneself, pāmojja arises, it's translated here as gladness. Ayya Khema translated as worldly joy, some pleasure. When one is gladdened, rapture arises. Rapture is a translation of pīti. Rapture is a common translation, euphoria, ecstasy, delight, interest. My favorite translation is glee. It's a physical, uplifting, energetic response. When one's mind is filled with pīti, one's body becomes tranquil. Tranquil in body one experiences sukha. That can be translated as happiness or joy. Being happy one's mind becomes concentrated, samādhi.

## **Leigh Brasington 34:59**

This is the jhāna summary, find something pleasant. How about a mind it's free from the hindrances? Enjoy that pleasant mind state or some physical pleasure, like smile. No? They tell you to smile when you meditate. Well, if you smile, when you meditate, there's your pāmojja, your gladness is here. From that you can set up a positive feedback loop by focusing on this pleasantness. And pīti will arise. When the pīti arises and then when it calms, it'll leave you in a tranquil state where you're very happy. And you can ride that happiness into concentration. That's the jhānas.

## **Leigh Brasington 35:49**

Now, of course, this may not appear to you to be the jhānas, unless you have a deep understanding of the jhānas. So guess what comes next. I suspect number 76 is a later insertion. I do not think it was in the Buddha's original talk. I think it got inserted into the gradual training because it sort of interrupts the flow here. But it's good. It's good dharma and that same thing shows up in numerous places in the Aṅguttara Nikāya as well as several other places. And in the footnotes to my book Right Concentration, I enumerate all the places that it shows up in the chapter of the jhānas summary if you want more on that.



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## **Leigh Brasington 36:35**

But the jhānas. Quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, in other words, the hindrances; when enters and dwells in the first jhana, which is accompanied by vitakka and vicāra.

## **Leigh Brasington 36:52**

Vitakka means thinking and vicāra means examining or pondering. The applied and sustained thought that you see on your screen is translated via the Visuddhimagga. And yeah, they got it wrong. They got it wrong, because in the Visuddhimagga, the commentary from like eight centuries after the Buddha, they were describing very different states from what's being described in this sutta. Unfortunately, Bhikkhu Bodhi is a fan of the Visuddhimagga, so he translated it as the Visuddhimagga translates it, initial and sustained attention to the meditation subject, basically. Which, yes, that happens. But that's not what those words mean, vitakka and vicār mean thinking and examining.

## **Leigh Brasington 37:42**

This is background thinking. When the first jhāna comes on, well, it's filled with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. So this physical rush of energy, as well as an emotional sense of happiness, and there's probably going to be the thinking, "Wow, that's pretty amazing. What's this?" Or after you've done it a lot, "all right, here we go". So there'll be some background thinking. You won't be thinking about your trip to Hawaii. Okay, it'll be commenting on the experience. So that's the vitakka and vicāra.

## **Leigh Brasington 38:15**

And then one drenches, steepes, saturates, and suffuses ones body with this rapture and happiness born of seclusion, so that there is no part of one's entire body not suffused by this rapture and happiness. All right, that's the advanced practice. The first thing to do is get the pīti and sukha going. And a way to get it going is get to what's referred to in the commentaries as access concentration, sufficient concentration to give you access to the jhānas. And we can define that as being fully with the object of meditation, for example, your breath, and if there are thoughts they're wispy and in the background, and don't pull you off into distraction. Okay, so you're just there. And you know each in breath, you know each out breath. And after you stabilize that, to then focus on something pleasant, like your smile, or the warm tingly glow in your hands, or something. And if you can stay focused on something that's much more subtle, without getting distracted, and it's also pleasant, then you'll set up a positive feedback loop of pleasure and the pīti and sukha will arise. It may be only upper torso, neck, head at first. But over time you get skilled enough so that you can spread it through your whole body that's the drenches, steepes, saturates, and suffuses part. Okay.

## **Leigh Brasington 39:44**

And then we have the simile of taking a metal basin and pouring in water and soap flakes and mixing it together to make a ball of soap. You didn't go to the store and buy a bar of soap. You had your skilled bath attendant make you a ball. Right? So this is the water, which is the pīti and sukha, mixing with your body. Which is the soap flakes till you're totally permeated. But this is an advanced practice. The first thing to do is to get in the first time, the next thing to do is to get in



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the second time, and to get in multiple times and sustain it. And then you can try spreading it to other parts of your body by simply moving your attention from wherever. The piti sukha, say around your face feels strong, just move your attention, not the piti sukha. You don't know how to do move that, you do have to know how to move your attention. And it'll spread through the rest of your body. But you got to have stable first jhāna before you can try that. Because otherwise you start moving and you just fall out of it. Right? And this is the first visible fruit of the spiritual life, more wondrous and more sublime than the previous.

40:56

Okay. Second jhāna,

## **Leigh Brasington** 40:59

The subsiding of vitakka and vicāra, the thinking and examining. In other words, your mind gets much quieter. On a 10 day retreat, you're probably not going to get to the point where all the thoughts disappear. I mean, remember this, this is the curriculum for the monks and nuns, people that are on permanent retreat. Okay, even in a month long retreat, you're probably not going to get a lot of points where there's no thinking, but the gaps between your thoughts become larger. Okay, the thinking recedes even further into the background. One enters into and dwells in the second jhana, which is accompanied by, it says internal confidence. A better translation would be inner tranquility and unification of mind. This is the one pointed mind that really coalesces around the 'filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration' that follows. And in a sense, what you're doing when moving from the first jhāna to the second jhāna is a foreground background shift, first jhāna, the pīti, the physical component is going to dominate and the emotional, the sukha, the joy and happiness, is going to be in the background. Take a deep breath, let the energy calm down. And now the emotional is going to predominate and you focus on that. And there'll still be some physical energy in the background. But instead of your hair standing on end, or vibrating or a hot flash or anything like that. Maybe some rocking or some swaying, you know, it's a lot less energy.

## **Leigh Brasington** 42:39

And again, one has to fill the whole body. First you got to get to second jhāna. You got to get there regularly, you got to get there so you can still sustain it for a while. And then the same thing. Wherever it feels the strongest, which for many people is the heart center, then you just move your attention to some other place and feeling of happiness will follow along. And the simile is of a lake. And there's no streams or rain coming in but a spring at the bottom. And the upwelling of this spring water fills the whole lake. This is a absolutely brilliantly accurate simile for the second jhana. The second jhana feels like out of your heart, you have this wellspring of happiness, which is just filling you. Whoever came up with this, the Buddha, whoever, really did a brilliant job of capturing what the second jhana feels like. And so now you're just happy for no reason other than you have a concentrated mind. Normally we get happy because some external circumstance. Somebody says, "Oh, you did a great job on that. We're gonna give you a birthday present", or whatever. And your happiness is triggered by something external. But notice your happiness is triggered: the happiness isn't in the present, or in their words saying you did a good job. The happiness, like everything else you experience is just a bunch of neurotransmitters in your brain. What you're doing with the second jhāna is learning to trigger those neurotransmitters with your concentration without an external circumstance to trigger.



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## **Leigh Brasington 44:29**

Third jhāna. With the fading away of pīti, one dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending and experiences happiness with the body. By this point, the body is receded into the background. It's not as prominent. It's certainly not like it was in the first jhāna, where it's completely taking up the foreground. But it's in the background and I noticed my posture just automatically gets perfect when I'm in the third jhāna. Don't try to do anything but yeah, just everything is just perfect. The body is really contented. Thus one enters and dwells in the third jhāna, of which the Noble Ones declare one dwells happily with equanimity and mindfulness. The noble ones are the awakened ones, the enlightened ones. So is the state of mind of the third jhana a foretaste of nibbāna? A state of happiness, equanimity and mindfulness. Well, I can't tell you because I still got work to do. But, you know, I don't know any place else where the noble ones are declaring, one dwells happily with equanimity and mindfulness in regard to anything else. So maybe the third jhana, hanging out in the third jhana is what it's like to be fully awakened. I don't know. You'll have to do the work and then you can let me know. All right, counting on you. And once again, one drenches, steeps, saturates and suffuses one's body with a happiness free from rapture.

## **Leigh Brasington 46:27**

And the simile now is a lotus pond where the lotuses come out of the mud, but don't come above the surface of the water. They're not waving in the breeze, they're not bobbing up and down on the surface. They're underwater, okay, and they're filled with water from their tips to their roots. This points to some one of the feeling of isolation you get into third jhana. When you're that well concentrated, you're just not really aware of the outside world like you were when you first sat down to meditate. Or even when you got into the first or second jhana, there's a real sense of the outside world is further away by this point.

## **Leigh Brasington 47:09**

And then the fourth jhana. With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and grief. Now, this doesn't mean there was pain or grief in any of the previous jhānas. But there was pleasure in the first three jhānas. The rapture, pīti, that's pleasurable. The happiness is pleasurable. The second jhāna, you still got pīti and sukha, that's pleasurable. Third jhāna, you just got sukha. It's more like contentment than happiness. Right. It's more like a sense of deep satisfaction, but it's pleasurable. And previous passing away of joy and grief in the first and second jhānas, you have joy. Sukha is quite strong. One enters and dwells in the fourth jhana, which is neither pleasant nor painful. It's an emotionally neutral mind state. It contains mindfulness fully purified by equanimity. This is often referred to as the jhāna of equanimity.

## **Leigh Brasington 48:14**

When I'm teaching jhānas, I don't say focus on equanimity, because that's a little hard to know what exactly to focus on. I say focus on quiet stillness, because that's what you find in the fourth jhana. If you focus on quiet stillness, you will be focused on equanimity. Right. It's a it's a deeper state by noticeably quite a good bit. Very peaceful. Very pleasant to be there. Very emotionally neutral. Ayya Khema and talked about the third jhana being like sitting in the mouth of a well. Fourth jhana, you drop down to the bottom of the well. It's not a freefall, but there is a sense of



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drifting down. And as you enter the fourth jhana, and the drifting down can last 20 seconds, a minute. And people get it even for five minutes before it settles into quiet stillness. And by that point, you have a mind where mindfulness is fully purified by equanimity. You've got a really supremely concentrated mind at that point. You've got mindfulness, it is of the highest quality. The simile is of a guy covered with a white sheet completely covering him. First I didn't understand why it was a white sheet. When I would get to the fourth jhāna, my eyes were closed and it was black. Right. It says a pure bright mind. There was nothing bright, there was black. What's going on? I talked to Ayya Khema. She asked me to describe fourth Jana. I described. She says its fine, don't worry about it. So I had to put in the I don't know bucket for 16 years. And then I went on retreat with Venerable Pa-Auk, who's a jhāna master from Southern Burma, who teaches Visuddhimagga jhānas. And he was having us sit in access concentration. Just following our breath for three or four hours in a sitting. I was getting more concentrated than I've ever been before. And sometimes I would fall of that out of that into the jhānas that I've learned from Ayya Khema. I never got anywhere near the Visuddhimagga jhānas on that retreat. And when I would hit fourth jhana, it would be bright white. It was like I was sitting in an open field on a bright sunny day with a white sheet over me and my eyes open. Just like the simile. This pointed out to me that the Buddha and his monks were experienced levels of concentration much deeper than I had been experienced prior to that, which makes sense. You know, they weren't doing 45 minute or an hour sitting. Yeah, they go sit for three hours, take a pee break, sit for three more hours. So they're getting supremely concentrated. And if you get supremely concentrated, you get visual whiteness that will remain through all of these four jhānas.

## **Leigh Brasington** 51:20

Okay. So what I teach on retreats, because I'm teaching lay people who are on a 10 day or two week retreat, is not the same depth of concentration that the Buddha and his monks were experiencing. But what I'm teaching is what the students can experience. And what they experience does give them sufficient concentration to enhance their insight practice, which is what comes next. But I'm going to stop here and see if there any questions on the jhānas.

52:00

Sorry. Okay, so on the jhānas, I have been to a couple of talks by some monks, Buddhist, they'll remain nameless, who really kind of poopoo the jhānas. As if that's something you shouldn't do, that's something that should be avoided. And it's not necessary. Just go right by those and go right to, and it's insight. And so the thing that struck me that when I would hear that is I would go through and I've got several of the nikaya books and I would go through, and I would count how often the Buddha would talk about the jhānas. And how often he would talk about vipassana. And he seemed to spend a lot of time talking about the jhānas. So I thought there must be something more to this. And so I being a little boy, and my mother telling me don't have a cookie, I would immediately go to the cookie jar looking for a cookie. So that's kind of like where I'm at now.

## **Leigh Brasington** 53:06

All right, so a history of the jhānas in the West. Because you're not the first person to basically ask the exact same question. So over time the understanding of what constitutes a jhāna changed. You can actually see this through the literature. There's the jhānas that the Buddha





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and his monks were doing, which is what I just described to you. Then there was the Abhidhamma. The Abhidhamma was composed, let's say starting about 200 years after the Buddha's death. And you read that and there's a deeper level of concentration there. Okay. They're getting stronger. In fact, they've gotten so much stronger, that the vitarka-vicāra as thinking and examining doesn't fit their experience anymore. So instead of going "oh, we seem to have strayed off course", they just changed what vitarka-vicāra meant and changed it into initial and sustained attention to the meditation object. Okay. And then you get to the Vimuttimaggā and then eventually to the Visudhimaggā. These are commentaries centuries after the Buddha's death. And by then in the Visudhimaggā, the understanding of the jhānas was that these states were so deep, that only one in a million people who came to meditation could enter the first jhāna. It literally says that into the Visudhimaggā. It's not phrased like that. It's those who come to meditation only 1 in 100 to 1 in 1000 can get to a preliminary nimitta, a circle of light you're supposed to have appear. And of those who get the preliminary only 1 in 100 or 1 in 1000 get the full on nimitta. And those who can get the full on nimitta, only 1 in 100 or 1 in 1000 can get to first jhāna. Let's take the most optimistic. 1 in 100 times 1 in 100 times 1 in 100, is 1 in a million. And so of those who come to meditation, one in a million people get to the first jhāna. This is clearly not what the Buddha was doing because everybody's doing jhānas as you found all over the suttas. So they had changed it. Unfortunately Theravādan Buddhism is Visudhimaggā Buddhism. They may claim that they follow the suttas, but they're following the Visudhimaggā. Rather than looking at what the Buddha had to say, they're looking at what some editor put in a book nine centuries after the Buddha's death in a completely different culture. Okay. And that's what Theravādan Buddhism is. And so they understand the jhānas as these unattainable states. So now our teachers go to Asia. Hippies from America coming over and they want to learn to meditate. Are the monks in Asia, who probably can't do the jhānas either, gonna teach the jhānas to these Westerners? Well no, of course not. Only one in a million people can do it. They're going to teach them following the breath and some mettā and send them back to America. And that's what they teach us. Well, now people like you come along and say, "Well, what's this about the jhānas?" And "oh, don't get don't do that you'll get attached. You'll go down the wrong track." Anyone who has actually seriously practiced jhānas. In any form. Whether it's the Visudhamanga, or sūptā jhānas, or what I'm teaching, or anything, will realize that this is actually a very valuable tool. And will want to share it with other people who can possibly learn it. But if you don't know the jhānas, then all you know is what you've heard about the jhānas. And you heard your teacher say, "Oh, don't do that. It's a waste of time", because their teacher told him "no, don't do that. It's a waste of time". There also seems to be, if you're pursuing the Visudhimaggā jhānas, a tendency to spend all of your time trying to get there. Never doing your insight practice. And if you do get there, spend all of your time hanging out there, and never doing your insight practice. But what I'm finding, I mean, I've taught over 150 retreats now. So I figure I've had over 1500 students I've taught jhānas to now. Not everybody got into the jhānas, but at least I was attempting. And a bunch of them did get into the jhānas. Yeah, at first it's a new toy. And you're totally fascinated with it. But we're Westerners, we have our famous short attention span. And so you get high, it's wonderful. You get high, it's wonderful. You get high. Okay, been there done that. What's next? What's next is insight practice. And so yeah, people do tend to become a bit of a jhāna junkie when they first learn them. But my job is to keep an eye on that. And as soon as they are good enough at the jhānas to become a jhāna junkie to push them into doing insight practice. And once they start getting the insights, it's far more interesting than just getting high.





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**Questioner** 58:11

Can I ask one more question? Is it possible for somebody to experience these jhānas without having had these instructions?

**Leigh Brasington** 58:25

I did. So, so do about 10 to 20 percent of the people who come on my retreats, this is the natural way the mind tends to go. If you get quiet enough, and you focus on some pleasure, it's quite likely, it'll take you into the first jhāna. That's how I got there the first time. If you do metta meditation for a long enough period of time, it's not surprising that that beautiful feeling of mettā takes you into the first or even the second jhāna. So as I say, yeah, about 10 to 20% of the students on my retreats, found their way in with no instruction. Basically, I'm not putting the jhānas in my students mind. I'm just telling them to stop doing this stuff that's covering it up. It's in there, and all you've got to do is stop covering it up with all of your distractions, all of your hindrances. If you stop doing that, then the natural mind shines forth, and what's your natural mind. Oh, a gleeful, happy, contented equanimous mind. Yeah. So I mean, the fact that I am just a retired hippie computer programmer, the fact that I can teach this stuff isn't about me. It's about the fact that I'm teaching humans who have this capacity. And yeah, people do stumble in all the time. Raj,

**Leigh Brasington** 1:00:01

yeah, a really interesting discussion, I think I think there's a lot of debate around what some samma-samādhi is and what these jhānas are about, I think we, I think you've made a great point there in terms of the depth that is involved in practicing these jhānas. So my question is, in the night of the awakening the Buddha, or the Siddhartha at the time, he was thinking of what to do and how to attain awakening or enlightenment, but what what directed his mind was towards his childhood, of childhood experience of entering into the first jhāna. And, however, he had two teachers that he went to the Alara Kalama and Uddaka Rāmaputta where he developed the jhānas, and he attained, I think, the sphere of nothingness, and then under Uddaka Rāmaputta nirodha, samādahati. But his mind didn't think of those jhānas that he developed under those teachers, but what his mind went was his to his childhood experience. So does that mean that there was a difference in those two? So what was the actual jhānas that he practiced the night of awakening? Is that some of these jhānas, when you go so deep into them to the exclusion of everything else, that you lose complete awareness of your surrounding that you don't hear sounds and everything, and then there, it doesn't allow for insight practice? Or when you get into the forth jhāna does it or should it still allow awareness, maintaining awareness to practice insight?

**Questioner** 1:01:44

Okay.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:01:48

So he stumbled into the first jhāna, as a child, sitting under the rose apple tree. So Wayne, there's somebody else who stumbled out on their own without instruction. And then he eventually goes and studies with the two teachers. The first teacher says that the seventh jhāna, the realm of no thingness is the goal of the path. Once you get there, there's no dukkha, right?



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But the Buddha comes out, or Siddhartha comes out and goes, "No, man, I come out and the dukkha's still here, this ain't it". So he leaves. He studies with Uddaka Rāmaputta. And he's teaching, neither perception nor non perception, not cessation. And he says, that's the end of the path, or he says that Rama says that's the end of the path. And the Buddha comes or Siddhartha comes out and goes, no, there's still dukkha. So he leaves that, and he begins practicing austerities, probably, under the Jains. The austerities, practices he undertook are also austerity practice for the Jains. And he does that and after six years, and we don't know how much time he spent with each teacher in austerities, maybe it was two years of each or whatever. He's like, "no, none of this is working. It's got to be some other way". And so now he's thinking, what, what could I do, and he remembers the incident from his childhood. And specifically, he remembers that pleasure there was not sensual pleasure, it was a pure form of pleasure. Could these jhānas be the way to awakening? In other words, could these be a means instead of an end, which is what his teachers had taught him? Could I use the mind state generated by these jhānas as a pathway as opposed to a destination, and then he realizes he's so emaciated he can't do jhānas. So he starts eating, his five friends leave him, he gets his strength back and at some point, and we don't know how much long later, I would guess a few months later, he sits down under the Bodhi tree on his birthday, full moon in May, and wakes up, but he practices the jhānas. And then does insight practice. He doesn't do insight practice in the jhānas. And we'll get to that in the next section. After we answer a few more questions.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:04:11

I've just got a quick question on my experience. A recent experience, and you were just explaining it. And that's when I realized it's about this piti building up in the head and around the neck and the cheeks. And at one point, it grew so strong, and I had not followed any instructions, or I hadn't heard this. It was so strong, I thought, Okay, I'm going to run my mind down the body. And then the next second, I know, it's just spreading so fast. Initially, it was very weak, and then it started to grow very, very strong throughout the body, like you're just immersed in it. And I did not know that was leading to the first jhāna or whether it is the first jhāna. So I just suddenly stumbled upon it. So it's really great to hear that, you know, sometimes we do get into these states, and we don't know where we are. But one of the questions I had was, sometimes I feel that we have kind of unresolved issues in the past popping up. And that can really drag you down. How do we manage that? Yeah.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:05:26

So when your unresolved issues come up, if you can just set them aside temporarily, that's the thing to do. But often you can't. And so now you're going to need to work on it. And basically, the spiritual path is probably not going to be the most useful thing other than to see the impermanent nature of whatever happened in the past, it's gone. To see the dukkha nature of it. Yeah, that's there. To see. I'm clinging to something from the past. Why? You know, what I usually recommend is okay, Western psychotherapy is really good for dealing with unresolved stuff. And so that's what I recommend, rather than trying to do it on the cushion. In addition to doing what you do, on the cushion, find a therapist, a good friend, somebody to talk to about it, rather than trying to use a spiritual thing. Because often what happens if you try and use a spiritual practice to handle an unresolved stuff, you wind up spiritual bypassing and that's that's going the wrong direction.



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**Questioner** 1:06:37

Thank you.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:06:38

Sure.

**Questioner** 1:06:42

Yeah, I, I happened on a real strong meditation I was driving at first I listened to like three hours of dharma, something about don't look down on your defilements, they'll laugh at you. And I said to myself "ah, I'm doing this all wrong!" And by the time I got back home, I had this feeling of like, 100% belief that, like, I knew that I put on my EEG headset, that it's going to be a strong meditation. And I got into this three hour meditation that I lost track of time, it was so stable, no thought that I could get hit by a truck, and it wouldn't knock me out of it. But it got to a point where I was sort of concerned that I wasn't breathing enough that I was gonna run out of oxygen. Yeah. And then I got to a ceiling after a while and there wasn't anything else I could, it just got to a ceiling, I saw this image, it wasn't imaginary. It was like a, somebody put a picture up on the ceiling. And it was geometrically spaced like fuzzy stars. And it was, may have been pulsing, but not very much, it was just there. And I found that two different times I meditated. And I haven't got to that since but I didn't know if that that image that I saw identical twice. That wasn't imagination, if that's characteristic of anything.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:08:28

Yeah. So as I mentioned, for the Visuttimaggā jhānas, you have to get the nimitta. The nimitta is usually described as a circle of light. There are other nimittas, but that's the common one, sort of like you're looking at the full moon or a search light, okay, on the way to getting there, one of the things that can show up is a diffuse white light. Alright, and so it's just, it's got bright behind your eyes, like somebody's inching up a dimmer switch in the room, or the sun has come out from behind the clouds, something like that. What you got was in between, what's going on is good concentration. In other words, your mind is getting quieter. When your mind gets quieter. It's not that the neurons stop firing. It said it becomes more random throughout your brain, including your visual cortex. And random firings in your visual cortex that first show up as just a diffuse white light. And as you get quieter, the random firings become more and more proportional to the density of the neurons, including in your visual cortex in the center of your visual cortex is a circle of very densely packed neurons. That's why you know, if you want to read something, you've got a look at the word you can't really read with your head twisted off a little bit to the side, you got to really look at, okay, that's the center of your visual cortex. But now it's firing more than other parts of the visual cortex. And on the way to turning into like a spotlight shining in your eyes, you get the, what you just described- a pattern between the diffuse white light and the circle. And yeah, so it's a sign of good concentration. What should you do with it? It's just a sign? I mean, when you drive into town and it says, entering Oakland, that's where I am entering Oakland, I want to get out of my car and uproot the sign and put it in the trunk. I just know where I am. When you see that you just know, yeah, we're pretty concentrated right now.

**Questioner** 1:10:35

Okay, I guess the only thing that's holding me back from getting there is just a distant tinge, like a subtle tinge of trying, like, effort, like wrong effort or something. That and it feels like I'm falling



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back in a chair. And I have to catch myself and hold on, you know, to keep from falling. And that's, those are the two things that are stopping me right now.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:11:07

Yeah, the body distortions, like thinking you're falling back when you're not actually falling back. That's a sign of good concentration, the effort? There's got to be right effort, right? Not too much, not too little. You still got to do the work, but you can't at all be focused on something down the road. You can't be focused on the point. You got to just be doing the thing that is necessary to do.

**Questioner** 1:11:34

Thank you.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:11:35

Sure. Bill?

**Questioner** 1:11:39

This is not really a question about jhānas. But an interesting observation in working or watching the work of Peter Levine, working with people that have post traumatic stress disorders presenting as sort of rigidities various kinds of rigidities and postures and in movement and during his work with such people. One of the signs that he notes for freeing up these rigidities is what I've heard described as being piti, the bubbly, sparkly, sort of phosphorescent or, but just in terms of a sensory experience, energy moving through a limb or something like that, that seems to be preceding or part of the first jhana. Yeah.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:12:52

Yeah. Piti shows up in a lot of different ways. I mean, can be minor glee, it's probably the same neurotransmitters, it's piti. It's the same as Kundalini energy. It's the same as the Tibetan TUMO energy. It has some similarities to sexual energy. So yeah, I mean, everything we know is neurotransmitters. And so how it gets triggered and what you do with it is what matters. And for the jhānas you trigger it with good concentration and then you use it to build even more concentration. And you take the even more concentration to do your insight practice, which we'll get to right after Victoria's question.

**Questioner** 1:13:39

I just did a workshop last weekend with Nikki Mirghafori. I don't know if I'm pronouncing her name right, on the white kasina. And just what you just said a minute ago, talking about this white, the white light and everything because she people were asking you why that particular kasina meditation, etc, as opposed to the others. And so I wondered, because the whole day we just looked at this white disc, like we walked around with it, we sat with it, we lay down with it. So I'm just wondering how that connects with this the suffusion of white light.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:14:16

It's an attempt to get there. Okay, the disc is an attempt to get there, this comes out of the Visuddhimaga. This is not described in the suttas, okay? It's listed in a later sutta. Okay, but it's not described or anything like that. And I suspected it was inserted quite a bit late. But in the in



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the Visuddhimagga it talks about this. And so the idea is you stare at a disk and then say, it's a red disk. If you stare at it, say it's the size of a dinner plate and it's across the room, and then you close your eyes, you're gonna get a green after image. Now is your concentration good enough to sustain the green after image that's red kasina if you stare at a white disk, you close your eyes, you're gonna have black after image, I don't see that working really well. But if you stare at a white disk long enough, apparently, you can start generating what I talked about the diffuse white light and so forth. But it's due to the concentration. And you're sort of I guess you're fatiguing the, the visual field around that some way, I'm not sure exactly how it's supposed to work I figured out how they were doing it to generate the kasina in talking with a number of other people, including consciousness researchers, and neuroscientists and so forth. But I'm not quite sure how the white kasina is supposed to, the white thing that you're looking at is supposed to give you a white thing when your eyes are closed. I have no clue about that. You'll have to ask Nikki again about it.

## **Questioner** 1:16:01

Yeah, I have no idea. It was more I was curious more about the not not the optical effect, but more the symbolism of the white as a kind of, you know, like, the ultimate, like, containing all colors or something like that. I don't know. I didn't I didn't get it. So I just It says that what you said about the white reminded me of that. Yeah,

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:16:22

Actually, the Visuddhimaga makes a big deal about using a brown kasina to start with.

## **Questioner** 1:16:29

So I guess it was advanced practice. That's why I didn't get it. Okay, thanks. Sorry, I did lead you down the garden path I it just, it's fine. Thank you.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:16:40

So the next thing is insight, but we've been here for an hour and a half. I think it's time for a break. So it's the bottom of the hour. Let's do a 10 minute break. So 20 minutes before the hour. We'll start in on insight and how jhānas and insight fit together.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:17:03

Okay. Before we start on insight, there are a couple of things in the chat. Where does Samadhi fit in with the jhānas? So I'll give you a quote from the Maha-Satipatthana Sutta. You've probably heard of the Satipatthana Sutta. I hope so. "And what Oh, monks is right concentration? Sama Samadhi. What, oh, monks is samma-samadhi? Secluded from since desire, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, one enters and remains in first jhana, second, jhana, third jhana, fourth jhana This is right concentration, Samma-samadhi". So the jhānas are right Samadhi, appropriate indistractibility.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:17:53

And then someone wrote about experiencing a jhāna just after coming off retreat, and it faded. Yeah, that's pretty common. What you probably will need to do is go back on a retreat and practice jhānas, during the retreat to such an extent that you're really clear about what's going on, getting in a couple of times is probably not good enough. But if you can get in multiple times



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over multiple days, then you get a real sense of what's going on. And then you can come home and keep them for a while, keeping them is dependent upon how well you know them, and how good your daily practice is. And so going on a retreat and practicing jhānas takes care of the 'how well do you know 'em' part, and then coming home, hopefully that will inspire you to have a really good practice and you can keep them going.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:18:50

Is nirodha sampatti useful in the Path of Awakening? So this is the state of suspended animation basically, where you just gone, you checked out. Supposedly Mahā Moggallāna, who was the Buddha's left hand disciple reached awakening by coming out of that state and watching his sense of self reassemble. Okay, and the Buddha used it at times to escape from his bad back. The Buddha had a bad back, I think, probably most people are aware of that. Anyhow, right towards the end of his life. It was so bad that if you really wanted some relief, he'd go into the state of nirodha where he was just checked out and it didn't bother him until he came out of it. So I'd say probably not really all that useful.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:19:47

Can you explain why body distortions are a sign of good concentration? Why would that be the case? When you're well concentrated you are so much paying attention to one thing, that you're not processing the signals from the rest of your body in the usual way. And this leads to distortions. So many people reported this. It's quite common, I would say pretty much every retreat I've ever taught somebody comes to an interview, and says something like, my hands felt like they were big as baseball gloves. Or I thought it was sitting upright, but I was leaning over, or I thought I was leaning over, but I was sitting upright, or yeah, all sorts of things, these these are very common is just a sign of good concentration. And I believe that is because you're just not processing the signals from your extremities in the normal way. Most of us are not bilaterally symmetric, in other words, not ambidextrous. So your right hand, your right side of your body is more sensitive than your left hand, the left side of your body if you're right handed, okay, and so you start picking up those signals more than the ones from the left side of your body, and you're just not processing in the way to give you the equal feel. And so you think that whatever is going on the right side of your body, it's making you lean or whatever. I'm just guessing here, I'm not a neuroscientist. But it's it's a very common thing. I feel like when I sit for meditation after exercise, a 30 minute brisk walk on a treadmill, it's much easier to concentrate, is there a correlation? Yeah, if you're doing exercise, generally, you've got enough energy going into doing the exercise that the usual sort of distractions are just sort of out of the way; you sit down to meditate, they haven't had a chance to get back, this would be my best guess of what's going on.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:21:59

Is the description of the circle and field of white light, from the view inside? When you see people glowing with white light are they in a state of concentration? No, this is totally to do with your visual cortex in the back part of your brain, and how it's responding to the signals that it's receiving. When you see somebody glowing outside? Yeah, you're gonna have to talk to somebody else about that. I don't know anything about that, I'm afraid. Okay.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:22:33





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All right. So, on to what follows the fourth jhāna.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:22:49

When one's mind is thus concentrated, pure and bright, unblemished, free from defects, Malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to imperturbability. One directs and inclines it to knowing and seeing. This is what the jhānas are about. They are to generate a mind that's concentrated, pure and bright, unblemished, free from defects, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to imperturbability. Samadhi is usually translated as concentration, I want to translate it as indistractibility. The ability to not become distracted. All right, so that's the concentrated part pure and bright.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:23:33

If you're in the jhānas, yeah, nothing else going on. You definitely feel like you have a pure bright, mind unblemished, no defects, malleable, wieldy. Steady. It's the kind of mind that can learn things. It's open, it's not full of all sorts of other ideas, obscuring the view, and attained to imperturbability. This is really important. Some of the insights we get on the spiritual path may be experienced as a little bit disturbing. I mean, when you actually deeply experienced that everything in the universe that you were counting on for your security is impermanent, you might become a bit perturbed, right? In fact, it might be so perturbing that you don't even see it. But if you have an imperturbable mind, you can see it and begin to integrate that because as it turns out, the truth is, all the things in the universe you were counting on to provide you security are impermanent, okay, but when you first really get that it can perturb you. So the imperturbability allows you to gain deep insights into things that you might have just looked away from at some other time.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:24:53

So one then directs and inclines it to knowing and seeing. Directs and inclines it to doing an insight practice, one understands thus: This is my body, having material form, composed of the four primary elements originating from mother and father, built up out of rice and gruel, impermanent, subject to rubbing and pressing, to disillusion and dispersion. And this is my consciousness supported by it and bound up with it. So most of the stuff on your body is pretty obvious: the four primary elements, earth, water, fire and air, right? Don't take it literally. Take it as solids, liquid gases and energy if you want. They're aspects of reality, aspects of physical reality. You don't have to discard your chemistry. Born of mother and father, built up out of rice and gruel, impermanent. Now that may be perturbing your body is impermanent, does that perturb you?

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:26:03

Subject to rubbing and pressing to disillusion and dispersion, subject to dukkha. And this is my consciousness. Consciousness is the word *viññāṇa*. *Viññāṇa* is used in many different ways in the suttas, it's not a well defined term. Here, it's actually used as a synonym for mind. So we can translate, and this is my mind. Okay, this is my mind supported by my body and bound up with my body. So this would indicate that your mind is dependent on your body. And so if you're counting on your mind going on to another incarnation, if your body doesn't go along, I don't think that's going to work. Right? So yeah, people have their immortality projects, they're looking for some way so that when their body dies, they don't really die. Okay, and here's one that's



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hinting that, yep, it's not going to work with your mind because your mind is definitely supported by your body and is bound up with your body. Okay. So, yeah, maybe there'll be questions about that, we have a simile and this is" Suppose someone were to take a beautiful barrel green gem, "barrel" is a gem or actually a crystal, that is very clear, they actually used to make eyeglasses out of barrel before they could make really high quality cheap glass. And so, if you had a high quality pair of glasses, they were made out of barrel, they allow you to clearly see, and through that gem, there are threads and a man with keen eyesight looks and he can 'in-see' he can see in, he has in-sight into what's in the barrel there because of the clarity. Okay. So this is a simile for insight. So basically what the Buddha is saying is after you have your mind, concentrated, clear, sharp, etcetera, direct and incline it to investigating mind and body.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:28:29

Now, if you're familiar with the four establishments of mindfulness sometime translated the four foundations of mindfulness. The first one is body. Oh, that's one of the things mentioned here. The second one is vedana, vedana is your initial categorization of sensory input, and that's in your mind. Oh, that's mentioned too. The third one is mind states. Oh, yeah, that's definitely mind. Right. And the fourth one is dhammas, which could be best translated here as phenomena. And what are the phenomena discussed in the satipattana sutta to be investigated? Well, most of them are mind, except for a few of them that are body. So basically, the idea behind the jhānas is to generate a mind that's most suitable for doing insight practice, most suitable for investigating, well, the four establishments of mindfulness: mind and body, right.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:29:28

And so there's 13 different practices given in the Pāli version of the Satipatthana Sutta. Right, and they're all about investigating mind and body. So the purpose of the jhānas is to generate a mind that will turbocharge your insight practice. Normally, when we look at the world, we're looking at it from an egocentric perspective. I mean, it looks like the world revolves around me. I mean, if I go outside, and I turn in a circle the world just revolved around me, obviously, right? The world revolves around me. Well, turns out, that's not really the case. If you really want to see what's going on it's much better to look at it from a less egocentric perspective. Normally, we're looking at the world in terms of, can I eat that? Or will that eat me? We get a little more sophisticated, but it's, is this something I want to get? Or is this something I want to push away? Right, am "I" gonna get it, "I'm" gonna push away. I am the center of it. And so if I'm examining the world, from this egocentric place with me at the center, it's less likely that I will see what's really happening, because turns out the world doesn't really revolve around any of us. And so once you have a mind that's that concentrated, it's like your egos gone, sit in the corner. And now you can see the world from a less egocentric perspective, which is going to give you a much better chance of seeing what's really going on. It's often talked about as knowing and seeing things as they are. But to me that's a little too static. And I would prefer to translate it as knowing and seeing what's actually happening, cause it's a happening world. And so you want to see what's actually happening.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:31:25

In the Tibetan tradition, the bodhisattva of wisdom is Manjushri. And he's usually depicted with a sword in his hand, which he uses to cut the bonds of ignorance. jhāna practice is just sharpening Manjushri sword. Right, not cutting any bonds of ignorance, yet, you still gotta go



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wield a sword. And you don't want to make the mistake of just sharpening, just doing jhāna practice. Because if you do that, eventually you got no sword. The whole idea is you sit down, you get your mind as concentrated as you can. Four jhānas, eight jhānas, the eighth jhāna aren't talked about in most of the graduate training, but it's as sharp as you can. And then start doing an insight practice, start investigating reality. Get your mind indistractably less egocentric. And with penetrating insight, investigate mind and body. This is what insight practice is all about. And it works so much better with a turbocharged jhānically, concentrated mind.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:32:36

Not a lot to say, there's a lot to do, because the insights are what are going to set you free. You can practice the jhānas every day for three hours, and you're never going to get enlightened, you're never even going to get to stream entry, you're only going to get there by getting enough insight that you let go. Remember, letting go. liberation in the palm of your hand. The only way you're going to let go is when you get enough insight so that you can see there's not only nothing worth hanging on to, there's nothing that you can hang on to. And so if you're willing to let go notice let go doesn't mean throw away. Right? It just means that you recognize the impermanent, unsatisfactory empty nature of everything in the universe.

1:33:27

Any questions?

## **Questioner** 1:33:33

Yeah, the so with insight practice, when you experience stream entry? Is it kind of like a momentary experience? Or does it occur over a period of time with multiple insights arising over that period of time? What's the experience like?

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:33:49

Yeah, so it does vary from person to person. For in general, you get a number of insights along the way. It's sort of like, it's not Pokeman, it's insights. You got to collect a bunch of them, you don't have to get them all but you've got to get enough insight so that you are willing to let go and let go in such a profound way that you have an experience without an experience-er and that's the moment of the arising of stream entry, where you have actually experienced for yourself that the idea of someone having the experience is an optional thing but not really accurate about what's going on, the experienced was experienced but there was no-body there experiencing it. But the only way to get there is to do enough practice to get close such if you let go enough that you have that experience

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:34:44

Because the the reason for that question is I've heard certain people explaining their experiences something just magical and something blew out into the air and then here you go. They've had stream entry experience. So but they don't talk about this accumulation of insights and having enough of them to finally let go of the concept of self.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:35:09



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Right. Not really the concept of self, let go of everything. But yeah, the experience is profound enough that if someone's got to talk about it, they got to talk about that rather than all the lead up to it.

**Questioner** 1:35:22

Right? Okay. Yeah.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:35:24

When you walk over to the edge of the Grand Canyon, you don't really talk about the highway that got you there. You had to have that highway. And you had to make the turns at all the right places and everything else. But you know, you look over the edge, and it blows your mind. Same thing with stream entry.

**Questioner** 1:35:42

Thank you.

**Questioner** 1:35:45

So in concentrating, first starting to meditate, it's a gradual process of calming. And then at some point, with me anyway, it's like, instantly, like a light switch has been thrown where everything suddenly shifts, and everything feels good, and it's instantly calm, just like, is that a state that is normal? That a light, like a switch. Like instantly.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:36:19

Yeah, it's the entry into access concentration, sufficient to give you access to the jhāna. But I wouldn't try and jump into the jhāna immediately. Let it build and there is a sudden shift. So I was being interviewed by someone who was writing about the jhānas for his PhD thesis. And I said, yeah, when I get to access concentration, it's like the, it's like, it's a thunk, and it drops into this state. And he started laughing. He said, Yeah, I was interviewing Richard Shankman last week, and he described a thunk of falling into excess concentration. Now, this is not always happening for everyone. Okay? A lot of people get access concentration, no thunk, no shift, no light switch, anything. Sometimes I get there and there is a very definite thunk. Sometimes it just sort of gradually eases in, the better my daily practice and the more frequently I've been getting there, the more likely I will get the thunk. Right. If I'm, you know, been kind of goofing off, then it's gonna be more gradual.

**Questioner** 1:37:28

For me, it's like right view, like, right attitude, right view, like instantly. And it's, it's great. feels wonderful.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:37:39

Yeah, I mean, the distractions are gone, your mind has settled. It's a great place. Yeah, the hindrances have been abandoned. I mean, a hindrance is a distraction. You just abandon the hindrances. With the abandoning of the hindrances, pamojja arises. You got the pamojja. Right. So let it build for a while and then find something pleasant to drop the breath if that's what you're using, drop the breath and find something pleasant to focus on, like the smile or the tingly glow on your hands or whatever, and see what happens. Other questions about insight?



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**Leigh Brasington** 1:38:19

I kind of figured there wouldn't be a lot of questions here. But just because there aren't a lot of questions, I don't want people to get the idea this is not important. This is the most important thing. All right. You got to get the insights to make the deep progress. Okay, you got to do all this other stuff to be able to get the insights. But you got to get the insights. That's where it's at. Wayne.

**Questioner** 1:38:59

When I'm practicing, and I go through what I think is like the jhānas. And I get to this state where everything is just really just, I just feel calm. Everything is just calmed down. There are some thoughts but they're like way wispy off in the background. And they're thoughts like I think of them, like little bubbles in the beer, but they just rise and burst, you don't connect to create thinking. And then I will have kind of a thought come. That's almost like an aha type of moment. It's almost like oh, okay, I get that. But then, when after I've completed my meditation, you know, my time timer goes off. Okay, we're done. I don't always remember what that was. Yes. Is that possible?

**Leigh Brasington** 1:39:51

Yes, it's possible and it's not useful to not remember.

**Questioner** 1:39:56

Yeah, so that's what I was afraid of. Yeah,

**Leigh Brasington** 1:39:59

You want to try and keep your insights available? Okay? You get an insight and you know, you forget about it, and then you get it again. And you go, Oh, yeah, I knew that I forgot. Now it's back there with your high school Spanish. You know, you go to Mexico for two weeks and your high school Spanish starts to come back. Yeah, what do you get an insight and if you don't keep it fresh, it goes back there with a high school Spanish until you get it again. So yeah, you get an insight like that, an aha, it's often good at that point to just say to yourself, in words, I mean, to actually deliberately think, Oh, I see that "blah, blah, blah, I mean, blah, blah, and blah", interesting. So you're imprinting it more than when your timer goes off? Think, did I get any insights? And if you did, what were they say them to yourself. If they seem really important, go write them down. If you go to my website and click on the essays, a lot of those essays were written, because I had an insight and I wrote down some notes, and then later I flesh it out into an essay. Okay. So yeah, if you read my book, dependent origination and emptiness, yeah, a lot of insights there that, you know, made some notes, or it was so profound, I knew I would never forget it, and then fleshed it out into a book. So but that's a lot of insights over a number of years. But yeah, you want to keep them fresh. And one of the things to do is when you have one is to articulate it to yourself with deliberate thinking, so you've got it clear, and then go back to doing whatever your insight practices are.

**Questioner** 1:41:43

Thank you. Thank you,



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**Questioner** 1:41:51

So I expected the three characteristics to show up here. As the things to have insight about, yes. Seeing how suffering is working and not-self. Yeah, yeah. And impermanence. And an impermanence is mentioned, of course. And I'm really interested that you're talking about insight in a broader way that this capacity of seeing how things are, can be expanded. To look at more things,

**Leigh Brasington** 1:42:28

Right. But when you look at them, what you see that's going to be the most transformative is one or more of the three characteristics of a annica dukkha anatta. If we go through the list, this is my body, having material form, composed of the four primary elements. Oh, it's not a solid thing. That's beginning to get towards annata there. Originating from mother and father. Oh, yeah, that's a little bit more towards annata. Built up out of rice and gruel. Okay, so the body is becoming more and more anattā. Impermanent, Oh, boy. That's annica. Subject to rubbing and pressing to disillusion and dispersion, that's dukkha. Right? So it's anata, anicca, dukkha. And this is my consciousness, supported by it. Okay. It's not an independent thing. Right. So that's kind of annata, bound up with it. And that's more anattā. So they're in there. I didn't specifically mentioned them. But yeah, the most important insights are going to be the insights into three characteristics, annica, dukkha, annata. Impermanence or inconstancy, unsatisfactoriness, or my favorite translation: "bummer." And anattā, which is literally not-self, our core-lessness or emptiness. So those are the most important insights, but they could be personal insights along the way, psychological insights that are very important. In fact, often the personal insights are in the way of seeing the real insights. And you've got to get the personal insights out of the way so you can see the deeper insight. So any insight, any aha, that's congruent with reality is very useful, but the ones that are about the impermanent, unsatisfactory empty nature of reality are going to be the most transformative ones.

**Questioner** 1:44:28

Right, thank you for painting that picture, right.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:44:35

Thanks for the question.

**Leigh Brasington** 1:44:38

Okay, so now we get to stuff that people wanted to talk about earlier. Besides jhānas, the various psychic powers, so again, when once mind is concentrated, pure and bright, etc. One directs and inclines it to creating a mind made body. From this body one creates another body having material form mind made complete in all its parts not lacking any faculties. So that would be cloning yourself. It sounds like, it's material right? And it's identical. I know I never managed to pull that off. In fact, I don't even see how you could pull that off. Maybe it means something else. Wait, there's a bunch of similes. Suppose a man were to draw a reed out from its sheath.. You would think; this is the reed, this is the sheath. The reed is one thing, the sheath is another. Or a man were to draw a sword out of a scabbard; he would think, this is a sword, this is a scabbard. They're different things, or pull a snake out of its slough; he would think this is the snake, this is the slough. Therefore, one creates a mind made body. Is everybody clear on that? No. Right.





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## **Leigh Brasington** 1:46:04

So what's going on here? I've heard it explained as learning to do out of body experiences. Right? Okay. You know, I read this, it was like, this is some sort of psychic thing I don't understand. So let's just set it aside for a moment here. And then we get to the knowledge of the modes of super natural powers, with one mind is thus concentrated etc. One exercises the various modes of supernormal power: having been one, he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears and vanishes he goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as though they were space. He dives in and out of the earth or water. He walks on water without sinking as if it is Earth. Sitting cross legged he travels through space like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes the sun and moon so mighty and powerful. He exercises mastery over the body as far as the Brahma world. Yeah, okay. I have never seen anybody walk on water. Well, one time in Sweden I did in the winter. Okay, but I don't think that's what they're talking about. I sometimes walk through walls, I use this trick called a door. And I don't think that's what they're talking about. This is magic. Right? Okay.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:47:36

So I was in Portugal, and staying with a student I had became really good friends with. And he was very interested in lucid dreaming. And we were talking, he mentioned, wake Induced Lucid dreaming, w-i-l-d wild. And he said that it's possible to go from a normal waking state of consciousness directly into a lucid dream. So of course, I immediately look it up in Google and read all about it. And the mind state you're to produce is very much like what you produce coming out of the fourth jhana. And now in a lucid dream, this is a dream where you know you're dreaming and you start trying to do various things, right, like, fly through the air, or walk on water. Oh, is that what's going on? Is the mind made body learning the Wake Induced Lucid Dreaming technique? Because what you're doing is you're creating another body, right? And then you go walk on water, fly through the air and all the rest of it. This makes more sense to me. I mean, I have a background in science. Yeah, if somebody can really walk on water, I'd love to see that. You know, all you got to do is give a demonstration that got San Francisco Bay just a couple of miles down the road here, you know, walk over to San Francisco. Yeah, I believe you when I see it. Right. So I'm thinking that that's what's going on here. That this is basically learning to do wake Induced Lucid dreaming.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:49:17

Now you might be thinking, Well, do you have any other evidence for that? Well, actually, I do. In the Anguttara Nikaya, Book Three, sutta Number 60. A brahman is having a conversation with the Buddha, about miracles. And the Buddha says, well, there's three miracles. One of the miracles is these various things walking on water, flying through the air, another miracle is knowing the minds of others, and the brahman says, Yeah, but those two only benefit the one who does them. It's like a private event. If you're having a lucid dream, it only benefits the one who does it. It's Like a private event, so that matches as well. There's the third miracle. And that's the miracle of instruction. And actually, that is pretty miraculous. I'm sitting here in Oakland, California, I'm exhaling and flapping a loose piece of flesh in my throat, making some compression waves in the air, that go into a microphone, get turned into digital stuff, go over the internet, come out with the speaker on your computer go into your ear. And hopefully, the idea had in my mind when I exhale to make those sounds appears in your mind- that seems really



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miraculous that seems even more miraculous than walking on water. And Digha Nikaya number 11, the Buddha says, What is the miracle of instruction? And he gives the gradual training without the supernormal Powers. Okay, so yeah, this is what's going on here. All right.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:51:04

So that's what I'm going to say is going on with this, the first two of the six psychic powers are learning the Wake induce lucid dreaming technique and then applying it. The next one is the knowledge of the Divine ear. When one's mind is concentrated, etc. one hears both kinds of sound, the divine and the human, those which are distant and which are near This is clairsaudience. You know, people have ESP, they can hear things far away, that's what's being described here. It's a well known phrase, we have a term for it clairsaudience, modern sciences, they can't detect it. But you know, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. All right. We don't know what's going on. But certainly, it's reported enough that it got its own name, right. And then the next one is knowledge of encompassing the minds of others.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:52:09

One directs and inclines it once it's concentrated, one understands the minds of beings and persons having encompassed with it's own. And he understand it's a mind with lust without lust, with greed, with hatred without delusion, etc. The list actually is taken out of the satipatthana sutta, and is jammed in here. I don't think it was originally there. But this is mind reading. This is ESP. And we have the phrase "extrasensory perception" so this is another well known thing. Well, interestingly enough, if you get well concentrated, and you have a least bit of talent for any of this, that talent is enhanced. Okay. I can't, I can't claim that, you know, I go on retreat, and I do the jhānas. And I know what we're having for lunch. No. But I have had experiences. Now whether it's just me, misjudging the arithmetic around probabilities or picking up subtle cues. But I've had experiences that would match ESP, and I have them more frequently on retreat when I'm doing a lot of concentration practice. We don't have to know what ESP is scientifically, to say that it is a phenomena that gets reported and whatever that phenomena is; whether it's scientifically valid or not. And I'm not saying one way or the other. It does seem to be enhanced by a concentrated mind. And it can show up as clairsaudience, or as clairvoyance, knowing the mind of others. Okay. And whether it's scientifically true or not, yeah, we'll leave that to the sciences to find out.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:54:01

And then there's the knowledge of recollecting past lives, with the mind thus concentrated etc. one directs and clients it to the knowledge of recollecting, well, it actually says, previous dwellings and then it says, One recollects 1 birth, 2 births, 3, 4, 5, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 100, 1000, 100,000. Many aeons of world contraction, many aeons of world expansion, many aeons of world contraction and expansion, recollecting: there I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance, such is my food, such is my experience of pleasure and pain, such my lifespan, passing away from that state, I rerose there, there too I had a name, clan, etc. Okay.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:54:56

In the first watch of the night, on the night of his awakening, the Buddha stepped through the first four jhānas and then, in some of the suttas it `says he really recollected his past lives. Now,



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as a mathematician, I always want to run the numbers. Okay, so, the first watch of the night; this is India, this is on the equator. So night and day are the same length 12 hours, three watches of the night, right? So four hours, in four hours, the Buddha was able to remember 100,000 past lives it said. So do the arithmetic, you can do this in your head, I'm sure divide 100,000 into four hours. You do that, right, y'all got it? Seven tenths of a second. And not only that, in seven tenths of a second, the Buddha has to remember name, clan, appearance, food, pleasure, pain, and lifespan. That's eight things in seven tenths of a second. One 56th of a second to remember each one of these. 56 different things a second, non stop for four hours. I don't think we should take this literally.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:56:13

There's a passage in one of Stephen Bachelor's books that I'll bring up and read to you in a moment when my Kindle comes up. But before that happens, we can take a look at the next one which is the Divine Eye, which is with ones mind thus concentrated etc. One directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings. He sees beings passing away and reappearing inferior and superior beautiful, ugly, fortunate and unfortunate. He understands how beings fare according to their karma. Thus, these beings who are endowed with bad conduct of body speech in mind, who reviled the noble ones held wrong views undertook actions governed by wrong views, with the breakup of the body after death have reappeared in a plane of misery, bad destinations that are or realms in hell, but these beings who are endowed with good conduct good speech mind who did not revile the noble ones held right views undertook actions governed by right views with the break of the body have reappeared in good destinations in the heavenly world. Okay, so the night of his awakening the Buddha supposedly in the second watch of the night, watched beings dying and reappearing, passing and rearing.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:57:46

So for four hours, the Buddha's sat there, and he's looking around going, like I just died. Oh, this couples having sex, oh, it's going to be their baby. That guy just died in Oh, he was bad. Oh, that couples gonna have a miserable existence. So you're thinking the Buddha's sitting there for four hours watching people die and other people have sex? I'm not buying it. Okay, it just, it just doesn't fit with my picture of what was going on.

## **Leigh Brasington** 1:58:23

So this is from Steven Bachelors "After Buddhism": "This critical assessment of the doctrines of rebirth and karma risk overlooking a crucial important role that they have played in historical Buddhist cultures. To dismiss them as an unverifiable metaphysical beliefs of a former age fails to recognize how they serve to situate human life within a vision of the cosmos. Rather than conceiving of one's life as a brief flicker of self interested consciousness on the surface of the earth. People with these beliefs could see in the mythic language of their time, how all living beings are intimately connected to a complex series of causal conditions that preceded their existence, as well as to a seemingly infinite unfolding of future consequences for which each was in some small way responsible in providing a sense of humility, connectedness and responsibility. This worldview, encouraged people to consider the significance of their existence in the selfless context of the immensity of life and not reduce it to the surface of their egotistical greed and hatred. So that's going to be my interpretation of these last two. So these six



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supernormal psychic powers, I'm going to put in three categories. Wake induced lucid dreaming, extrasensory perception, and a way of expressing the interconnectedness and giant unfolding of the human process over time in the mythic language of the time of the Buddha.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:00:33

I'm sure there are going to be some questions. What do you got?

**Leigh Brasington** 2:00:39

Josh, you're still muted?

**Questioner** 2:00:54

You're a fabulous narrator, as well as explainer. So thank you. I've heard Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg, Jack Angles, Joseph Goldstein all talked about being with Deepa Ma. And seen her in more than one place at one time, all kinds of things. And I don't know she holds a potato and it would get hot in her hand. And I guess what she used to tell them is don't get caught up in this stuff. This is something my teacher taught me. I think it was Mundira in Myanmar, but he taught me because I was able to understand that, but don't like think that this is anything that you need to do

**Leigh Brasington** 2:01:46

Yeah. I've heard these stories as well. I haven't seen any demonstrations yet. You know, I've heard a lot of stories. I've heard a lot of stories. Okay. I mean, that's how I got to be a storyteller. I heard a bunch of stories. Right? So I'm a scientist I want to see for myself. So if you can cook a potato in your hand by holding it, please do so for me. I can find videos I'm sure on the internet of people walking on water and flying through the air. Yeah, I just I just want to see it in person. That's all I'm asking. I can't say what Deepa Ma was up to. I can't say I can't vouch for the veracity of what Sharon and Joseph and Jack, were saying, I just can't because I wasn't there. I'm getting it third hand. And? Yeah, I don't know.

**Questioner** 2:02:47

I'm just suggesting that there is a different way to see some of these powers.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:02:53

And I'm suggesting there's a different way to see them than the usual interpretations. I don't think you could find another teacher on this planet that wouldn't interpret these six things in the way I just interpreted. But I'm going to stick by my interpretation until somebody can give me a better demonstration. It's just as simple as that. It fits my understanding of reality. And I don't, I don't have to invent any magic. I know people want a magic Buddha. Now I've actually had teachers basically tell me that, they didn't use those words, but that's what they were saying; they wanted a magic buddha. I don't want a magic Buddha. I want a human being who was able to wake up, because I'm not magic. I'm just a human being. I want a path that a human being can follow. If waking up involves me walking on water I ain't going to get anywhere. So yeah, I can do the jhānas I can do insight practice. That's where I'm most interested. As for Deepa ma saying don't get lost in this, there is a story about a Tibetan who studied with his master. And, you know, after some years, his master says okay, you got it now go off and practice. So the guy goes off finds a cave, and practices for 20 years. It was not too far from a village where there



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was a river between his cave in the village and over the 20 year span he learned to walk on water- shortcut into town. So it goes into town one day, and he hears his teacher is coming and he gets really excited. So it goes back to his cave and it does whatever you do when you're gonna have guests come to your cave, fix it up; and pretty soon this teacher shows up a couple days later. And they have a joyful reunion and eventually his teacher says What did you learn? And he stands up all proud and he walks across the river and he walks back and he comes back to his teacher smiling big, his teacher looks at him says you just wasted 20 years of your life, there's a bridge quarter mile upstream. Yeah, don't waste your time with these things, but do look at it in the mythic language of the time to situate human experience in a much bigger picture than your own self interested existence. I think Stephen Batchelor nailed it.

**Questioner** 2:05:12

Yeah. Can you imagine the shape we'd be in with this culture today if people had godlike powers? So. So you know, the precepts. You talked about the precepts, how hard would temptation be, if you could be some place in your mind that you're not supposed to be? That you knew everything that was going on in people's heads? You know, the question for me is I, I believe it's possible. And I've seen glimpses, but where's the need? Beyond self? Right? So if there's, if there's no need beyond self, you know, you can't, you can't get anywhere. But I would say the easiest thing, what I think of supernatural powers, I think of things that I or people would know, you don't know where the information comes from, you just know something's true. And then it happens to be true. And I know that cultivation, of in access concentration you can cultivate, right? Or you can cultivate to know the difference between yes and no answers. So do I turn right on the path? Do I turn left on the path to get water? You know, without knowing physically, with any physical cues, you can have the gut tighten, or release? And you can cultivate that and over time, know right and no answers. I do know that.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:06:59

I've tried that practice. And yeah, wasn't very good at it. But if you can do it great, because that way you won't go thirsty.

**Questioner** 2:07:08

Well, it takes belief, and it takes a need. So a need beyond self. So if you're practicing it, the need beyond self would be to help others. Right? Or to help yourself so you could help others. Yeah, to get further on the path and so forth.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:07:26

Right? Yeah. Yeah, there's a lot out there. You know, science doesn't know I don't know, we don't know how to tap into and everything else. Yeah. Just make sure you don't neglect the parts of the path that we know work. Get your mind concentrated, investigate reality.

**Questioner** 2:07:47

Are these divine powers, supposedly, the result of jhāna concentration, or ...

**Leigh Brasington** 2:07:57

Of jhāna. When his mind is thus concentrated, pure and bright and unblemished, free from defects, malleable, wildy, the same sort of stuff. One directs and inclines it to exactly whatever



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the divine power is, walking on water, etc. So it's a result of jhāna. Supposedly the Buddha's evil cousin Devadatta, he's never referred to as a relative of the Buddha in the suttas. But nevermind. He was a master of the jhānas, learned all the divine, all the supernormal powers and you know, use them to impress Prince Ajatasattu into becoming his follower. And yeah, the Devadatta story is interesting. If you go to my website and click on essays, I have an essay on Devadatta. But yeah, supposedly he do all this evil stuff, because he was good at the jhānas. I suspect that if you have evil intentions, you're not going to be good at the jhanas. But that's my guess.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:09:00

Catherine?

**Questioner** 2:09:07

I just wanted to comment. I'm sort of understanding these last verses about powers. Kind of like that was what they thought then about powers, which could be described as hyper natural, or? Yes, sort of. And one thing left out, is how meditation makes you smarter. And having a concentrated pure and bright mind is like a smarter mind. So I think would be great if humanity evolved to be able to have this kind of mind. And then we could take care of each other better and have a better planet. So So there are powers or abilities that accrue I believe with with concentrated meditation practice sustained meditation practice, and I can certainly see it in my life.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:10:17

Yeah, very definitely. I mean, if you get a well concentrated mind, you can more clearly see what's going on. That makes you smarter. If you have a well concentrated mind, your ego self has been quieted. So now you can operate with not quite so much ego in the world. You learned that that actually works better. So yeah, definitely.

**Questioner** 2:10:42

These are kind of miracles really? Yeah, I mean, yeah, superpowers. Really?

**Leigh Brasington** 2:10:49

Yeah, it they're absolutely amazing. I'm doing my best to teach them. But it's hard. Yeah. So but yeah, I mean, it would be great if, if this was taught in school, if everybody could learn, you know, these jhānaic states, that would be fantastic. But you know, they can't even get mindfulness in some places, because that's too weird. And there, there's definitely a lot of people in this country in particular, who do not want smarter people. I mean, the Republican Party in Texas, back in the 1990s, I think it was had a platform plank, opposing teaching critical thinking. They wanted stupid people so they could do the stupid jobs.

**Questioner** 2:11:36

Manipulate them. And that's why they also want to get rid of public education.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:11:43

Course, some of them. Yeah, it's really got quite a mess here. But I can't solve all the messes, but I can share with you a little bit about the gradual training.





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## Questioner 2:12:01

Thanks. Thanks, Leigh. I've met Deepa Ma, and I practiced with people that seem like they've read my mind. But I've never really worried about whether, you know, you can get divine eyes or walk on water or anything like that. Because for me, it's all about just being free from suffering. So I know Stephen Batchelor, I've read Stephen Batchelor. I've read other people. Alan Wallace, for example, is kind of diametrically opposed to Stephen Batchelor. I've practiced with Alan. But, I'm wondering a bit for me, it's, I just kind of take it as it comes. So what I experience myself is what's most important, as I'm concerned, and but I'm wondering, why did the Buddha put it all put all these things in this sutta? Why did he talk about it? Was it about kind of setting the king straight about Devadatta? What was his motive for doing this? Because it's not even that important. It's part of the gradual path to awakening he's talking about here. So why did he, What are your thoughts on why he put it in there?

## Leigh Brasington 2:13:15

Okay, two possibilities. One, it wasn't in the original. And it was inserted later. Because, of course, if you're a real spiritual teacher at that time, and even later, then, of course, you can walk on water and fly through the air. I mean, it that's, that's what it means to be real spiritual teacher, in the minds of a lot of people. And so as Buddhism was competing for support, they had to prove that the Buddha was the real guy, because he could walk on water and fly through the air and all this other stuff. So a lot of the miracle stuff was inserted later. Was this part of what was inserted later? I don't know. But the king wants to know, what are some of the visible fruits of the spiritual life. And so the Buddha puts this in, because this would impress the king. He's trying to help the king get a good night's sleep basically. Right? And if the king gains faith in the dhamma, the Buddha figures, all right, this is going to bring some peace to his mind, which is what he's looking for. Right? And so the Buddha puts this in there. Yes, you can learn the Wake Induced Lucid Dreaming technique and in your dreams walk on water, you know. The king is not going to learn that and walk on water or anything like that. But it will impress the king that this is a path that actually has a heart. It really does have amazing fruits. And so maybe he actually did put this in this one just because it would be useful as a pedagogical device for helping the king to understand, but I can't say whether that was why or whether it was inserted later. It certainly it's interesting because, you know, there's the Pali canon.

## Leigh Brasington 2:15:05

Did you know there are four versions of the Pali canon, they're almost identical. But there's the Sri Lankan version, and there's the Burmese version. And there's the Thai version, and one of them has a second version. I don't can't remember whether it is the Burmese or the Sri Lankans. So there's actually four different versions, and they're pretty similar, you know, it's mostly typos is to what's different. But for the Long Discourses, the supernormal powers don't show up in all of discourses 2 through 12. In some versions, there are some versions without, some of the suttas between 2 and 12 don't have the supernormal powers. And in some versions, all of the suttas between 2 and 12 have supernormal power. So clearly, inserting supernormal powers was the thing they did. Now, when did they get inserted? Who knows? I mean, maybe at the time of the death of the Buddha, there was no magic no supernormal powers anywhere. Maybe there was some, the 24th sutta in the long discourse is a monk comes to the Buddha and says he's disrobing because the Buddha never performed any miracles. And the Buddha



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says, "Did I ever tell you is going to perform miracles?" the monk goes no. Well, he didn't describe how the world ends, or begins! "Did I ever to say I was going to describe how the world ends?" ...no. So the monk left anyhow. But it's a poorly composed sutta. It's one of the most poorly composed suttas in the thing. But here's the Buddha not being said he never performed miracles. Right. And yet there are other suttas where he's got fire and water coming out of your hand and all sorts of stuff. So I'm most interested in trying to figure out what's there that doesn't have any of the magic. It doesn't have any supernormal stuff. What's the teachings when we remove all the stuff that's a bit unbelievable. And that's what I'm basing my study on. Mike?

## **Questioner** 2:17:12

I think just to sort of comment on this, I think this kind of relates to the teachings of the hindrance of doubt that I heard from Bhante Gunaratna that's slightly different than the way you presented it, where he was saying that there's things that we can know from our own direct experience. And there's things that we can know from speculation. And so if we, things that are speculation, if we put a belief in those things, and all of a sudden, we find out that, oh, maybe it's been proven that nobody can walk on water, that nobody can do that, then that's just gonna cause us to doubt the things that we actually also know from our own direct experience. So like, I know, in the morning, when I get up, and I scroll on my phone, I'm looking at memes and stuff like that, usually, by the afternoon, I get grumpy state of mind. And I know that from my own direct experience, but you know, but I don't know. You know, I've got a friend who's a flat earther. And I think the world's round, but I've never flown up and looked at it, like all the science suggests that but if I found out that the world was actually flat, that would cause me to doubt whether or not scrolling on my phone makes me grumpy in the afternoon. So it waters the seeds of doubt, for your own direct experience when you place too much sort of like faith or hope into things that are just speculation, and being able to draw the distinction between what's actually speculation and what's actually your own direct experience. And so to me, all of this stuff about like, you haven't seen it. So it's just speculation. So I don't think there's really much use in a hard core belief until it is your own direct experience, which I believe the Buddha said is your truest teacher.

## **Leigh Brasington** 2:18:46

Yes, exactly. No, that's very great point. But I can guarantee you that the Earth is round because I've been around it twice.

## **Questioner** 2:19:02

Hi, first of all, today has been terrific. Thanks so much. I really appreciate hearing your, your voice and your stories again. And I see that that day is kind of approaching the end. And I wonder if you could say something about the word gradual. How gradual?

## **Leigh Brasington** 2:19:26

So it's sometimes translated as graduated. And it's like a set of stairs. It's gradual in the sense that each depends on the previous one to really get it fully, fully in there. How quickly can you go up it? Yeah, you can certainly get up to the abandoning of the hindrances in fairly short order. It's going to help if you go on retreat. That's, you know, really get some serious meditation time. You can get enough concentration to abandon the hindrances almost everybody can get there. And it doesn't take long. You know, couple retreats, I request that people who come on my



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retreats have done two one week or longer residential retreats, or Zoom retreats that are that length, then I figured they're prepared enough that I can attempt to teach them the jhānas. Now, how long does it take someone to learn the jhānas? Some people stumble in way before any instruction, they're quite good at it when they come on my retreat. Some people never get there. And it varies from person to person. And I couldn't tell you what all it depends upon. I know people with really deep practice never got to the jhānas. I know people that yeah, just breeze right in. Insights, yeah, it's possible to get the insights without getting the jhānas. Once you've gotten the hindrances out of the way examining reality, you will get insights it won't happen quite as fast as with a jhanically concentrated mind might not happen as deep as fast, either, but you can get them I doubt you can walk on water. Okay, so think think of it more like a set of stairs. And it's, it's just easier to get to step number two, if you do step number one, first keep the precepts then you can guard your senses better. And with guarded senses, you can be more mindful. And if you're mindful, you realize you can be content with little and with being content with little makes it much easier to abandon the hindrances etc.

**Questioner** 2:21:33

Great, thanks so much.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:21:35

Okay, so the last two questions before we wrap this up, Victoria?

**Questioner** 2:21:45

Yeah, thanks. No, I lost the whole window for a second because I looked up a word. Well, I guess this is going to be an endless, endless pursuit for me. But I, this whole thing of the walking on water and all these things, I think about the other the other, you know, major world religions and this whole issue of faith and what the word faith means in Pāli? Well, that's why I'd rather hear you say, rather than, than Google. But the but the sense, it still brings me back to what I asked before about the, you know, what would Buddha say in the sense of, and you said, a lot of the supernatural attributions are later brought in later. So that makes me wonder, you know, the, what would Buddha say thing that Buddha's whole point was to help, you know, the end of suffering, he teaches dukkha, you know, suffering and the end of suffering. So if we keep going back to that statement, and that that goal, it seems to me that all these other things are distractions in a way. And I don't know how electricity works. I mean, I so like, for me, the important thing is to try to try to become enlightened and like all these to me, everything's a miracle, like just the fact that I can, like have food on the table that I didn't create myself. That's already... So do you feel like that's all connected in some way? Like the this? Again, the tendency in human nature to like, have something to worship or something outside of oneself? Do you see that all is connected with these, these last sort of supernatural things that we study?

**Leigh Brasington** 2:23:38

Yeah, I think that's there people. People want a magic Buddha, they want one who can walk on water and fly through air. So they stuck into the suttas. Or it was just part of the culture. If you are a real teacher, then you had to claim that you did that or nobody would believe you. I mean, if the Buddhist started explaining quantum mechanics, nobody was going to pay any attention. So you had to explain things in terms of Oh, yeah, there's 31 realms of existence. If you're bad, you wind up in hell and if you're good. You wind up in the deva realm, but the deva realm is too



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pleasant, you'll never practice. So you might, and you'll die. And you'll be back here, he might as well practice now. He's just trying to convince people to practice. As for the word saddhā, which gets translated his faith, I prefer to translate it as confidence, I found a path that I am confident is going to lead me to a better place. And that's why I'm going to follow it. And that's what this gradual training is, it's a path that I find worth following. And when Ayya Khema first how to do me, it was like, it was like, I went into that retreat with a bunch of sticky notes with all these ideas from Buddhism. And when she finished teaching this, I knew where to stick each sticky note, this is sila. This is Samadhi. And this is Pañña. Yeah, these are practices that are aimed in this direction, it all started making a whole lot more sense. Once I got a sense of, this is what the Buddha is trying to teach. And he's trying to teach it to help us get out of dukkha. Yeah.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:25:14

All right Margarita and we close this out.

**Questioner** 2:25:19

And thank you, Lee for this wonderful day. And so could you explain what the experience or the Insight provides us to awaken that is not found in other parts of the practice.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:25:39

So, in order to awaken what the Buddha's strategy is, is to uproot the sense of self. The reason for doing that is so that we uproot the Craver and the clinger. Remember he said, dukkha arises dependent on craving and clinging, okay. And, you know, he says, don't crave or cling, but we all still crave and cling, right? So we got to uproot the Craver the clinger. In other words, we've got to penetrate deeply enough into the nature of reality, so that we don't conceptualize someone who's going to get something or who has gotten something. And in order to do that, we need to really deeply understand the nature of reality, in particular, in the three characteristics of everything is impermanent, changing, is going to eventually disappear, nothing is going to give us lasting satisfaction. And everything is arising dependent on other things. By gaining that deep understanding. deep enough, it loosens the tentacles on the sense of self. Hopefully enough eventually that yeah, you stop conceiving of a self you. I mean, I grew up believing in Santa Claus. And then one day, I got incontrovertible proof that there was no Santa Claus, who was just mommy and daddy. And, you know, there was no more guy living at the North Pole, and I didn't conceive of it anymore.

**Questioner** 2:27:14

This is a part that I don't understand. Because I know quite a few people who consider themselves materialists, they're no spiritual interest whatsoever, they don't practice. They know very well that the self that they have is a representation based on matter or what have you, but that doesn't stop them from craving and wanting. So it seems there are many different Buddhist schools that have different presentations of understandings of what Sunyata shunyata is, or self not-self or no self. It's a bit fuzzy to me what is meant by this?

**Leigh Brasington** 2:28:13

Okay? What it's meant is that you have no more basis for selfish action. Right? So if you think that the earth is flat, and if you go six miles out to sea, you fall off the edge of the world, you're not likely to go for a ride on a fringed sailboat, you're making a decision based on an illusion. If



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you find out that the Earth is round, they take you up in this SpaceX capsule and you see it's round explain gravity, you go back to the beach, it looks the same, but you no longer conceive the edge of the world and you're no longer afraid you'll fall off. We're trying to do the same thing with the illusion of self is penetrate that illusion well enough so that we don't do any more craving and clinging. And this practice as it takes us in that direction, then yeah, I've got enough saddha enough confidence in it. I'm certainly not as selfish as I used to be. So okay, I'll keep going on it and see what it will do for me. And yes, it's possible to get to the intellectual understanding of not-self but not the felt experience, and the felt experiences what's required.

**Questioner** 2:29:28

Okay, thank you. All right.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:29:33

Allrighty, So the last little bit here. The knowledge of the destruction of the asavas. The word asava gets translated here as cankers. I've seen taints, influxes out fluxes. It literally comes from the secretion of a plant. Okay. Think of a poppy plant if you cut it with a razor blade What comes out, that's a, that's an asava. But what happens if you put that asava on your tongue you become intoxicated. And so that's how it's being used here. So, when one's mind is concentrated, etc, one directs it and inclines it to the knowledge of the destruction of the intoxicants. One understands it as really is, this is dukkha. This is the origin of dukkha. This is the cessation of dukkha. This is a path of practice leading to the cessation of dukkha. One understands as really is: these are the intoxicants. This is the origin, this is the cessation, this is the path leading to the cessation of these intoxicants, knowing and seeing thus one's mine is liberated from the intoxicant of sensual desire, the intoxicant of existence and the intoxicant of ignorance.

**Leigh Brasington** 2:30:56

So I heard a talk by Eric Colvig, one time and he said, samsāra is not a wheel. It's a drunken party in a casino. Our job is to sober up, find the exit, and get out. And what are they serving in this drunken party at the casino? Sense desires: becoming, ignorance, sense desires Well, that's pretty obvious, I think we all know what sense desires are. Becoming, can be becoming in this world, I want to become rich and famous, or whatever other crazy thing we want to become or could be becoming in a future world. I want to become a deva, or want to be reborn in a family with a Mercedes Benz, or whatever fancy becoming, you want to make up, and we get intoxicated by that. And ignorance, we're not intoxicated by pursuing ignorance we're intoxicated out of ignorance. Okay, because we're ignorant, we're intoxicated. And our job is to overcome the asavas. And the way to do that is to clearly see what's going on. Remember, if we remove the supernatural powers there, we have the insight, one directs and inclines knowing and seeing this is my body, etc. This is my mind, the insight into the three characteristics as related to body and mind. And then this is what follows if you leave out the supernatural powers, the overcoming of the asavas. And having overcome the ignorance of the fact that the self is only illusion and not the most important person in the universe, then that allows you to overcome the tendency for craving and clinging, and thereby putting an end to dukkha. And this is, this is what we're after on the spiritual path. And this is the ultimate of all of the roots of the spiritual life, there is no greater fruit of the spiritual life than overcoming dukkha.



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**Leigh Brasington** 2:33:07

Any questions about the asavas?

**Leigh Brasington** 2:33:16

Okay, so a couple of things before we close this out first. Heather Sunberg and I are doing a three day weekend retreat, the 19th 20th and 21st of May, May 19, 20, 21, is on my website on the schedule on emptiness. Heather is a very brilliant emptiness teacher, she teaches emptiness from the Thai Forest Tradition, which you might not be familiar with. And I'm going to do what I can about teaching emptiness from the suttas. Right and how they sort of blend together. So I think that will be a very interesting weekend, long weekend. This is the weekend before Memorial Day. So invite all of you to come for that, it'll be online. And yeah, so want to put that out there. And I want to say that they say that teaching the dharma is a good way to make good karma to make good merit. So may any merit from today's teachings be for the benefit and liberation of all beings everywhere.