

Ajahn Anadabodhi , January 6, 2010.



Ajahn Anandabodhi, currently in residence at the Aloka Vihara in San Francisco (<http://www.saranaloka.org>) offered us her reflections on the Dhamma. She noted that it is their practice and her preference to speak from the heart and in the moment, rather than from any prepared script.

Notes on the Dhamma Talk¹

Ajahn Anandabodhi began with the traditional chant before a dhamma talk, Homage to the Buddha:

“Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa “ (repeat three times)

(Homage to the Blessed, Noble, and Perfectly Enlightened One)

http://www.buddhanet.net/mp3/mbdc/01_mbdc.mp3

The Buddha grew up in a privileged household, the son of a king. His family had a palace for each of the seasons, and there were distractions and entertainments at all times. He had a life of luxury, and the finest things were his to use.

We in the developed world live in a time of comfort. We have air conditioning and heating to protect us from the variations of the seasons; we have hundreds of channels on satellite TV for entertainment; and we drive automobiles far superior to the most luxurious chariots of kings. We have hot and cold running water, indoor plumbing and refrigerators. We can go out to eat in a restaurant, or order in. The luxuries we take for granted rival those reserved for royalty in the Buddha’s time.

The Earth is struggling under the weight of our luxury. We are being exploitive in what we are taking. One of the precepts, one of the monastic rules, is not to take more than is given freely. Yet, in the modern culture, renunciation is not valued; we are encouraged to take all that we can in order to live a life of luxury and comfort. We are encouraged to take more than the Earth can offer.

¹ All errors and imperfections are those of the scribe, not of the Dhamma or the speaker.

The Buddha taught us to simplify our lives. Although we can gain some satisfaction from physical comfort, it is limited and does not last. The Four Noble Truths (<http://www.buddhanet.net/4noble.htm>) reveal to us, that no matter how much luxury or wealth we accumulate, it is never enough. We become attached, and we suffer when we lose what we have, and we suffer when we cannot gain more than we have. Nowhere is there contentment where there is attachment.

Following the Fourth Noble Truth, i.e., the Eight Fold Noble Path, we can achieve freedom from suffering. The Eight Fold Noble Path is not a path achievable only by the most devoted and most holy; it is a path that anyone can follow. It takes effort, but it is within reach of all.

Renunciation is not a joyless path. Haven't we all, at some time, experienced the joy of giving something up, or the joy of freely giving to others? The path of generosity and giving is a path that rewards. Think of the rewards for acting out of compassion for a struggling planet.

There is contentment also from non-harming. Pay attention to intention. When we are free from harmful intention; when we are not directing ill-will towards ourselves or towards others, how do we feel? Do we notice that our suffering and burdens lighten?

The core of suffering is attachment. If we embrace things as they are, and relax the grip on the negative, suffering relaxes its grip on us.

We create suffering in ourselves through the fear of letting go of the things we are attached to and the things we love. If we hold something very tightly in our hand, our muscles begin to ache and our arms shake. If we were to open our hand, so that the thing we were holding so tightly rests lightly in our palm, the stress and anxiety, tension and pain, diminish and vanish.

The path to freedom is to simplify; but, our minds are complicated. The path to enlightenment is right here; it is not far off or unobtainable. It is right in front of us. With practice, any of us can achieve it.

Keep enough awareness to prevent unwholesome intentions. Developing awareness is the path to freedom. Counter ill-intentions with wholesomeness:

1. Metta: loving-kindness towards all; the hope that a person will be well; loving kindness is "the wish that all sentient beings, without any exception, be happy."
2. Karuna: compassion; the hope that a person's sufferings will diminish; compassion is the "wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering."
3. Mudita: sympathetic & altruistic joy in the accomplishments of a person, oneself or other; sympathetic joy, "is the wholesome attitude of rejoicing in the happiness and virtues of all sentient beings."

One does not have to be perfect in following this guidance and get it all right the first time. Follow the path patiently and steadily, a little bit at a time. See The Story of a Brahmin (<http://www.tipitaka.net/tipitaka/dhp/verseload.php?verse=239>)

Once, a brahmin saw a group of bhikkhus re-arranging their robes as they were preparing to enter the city for alms-food. While he was looking, he found that the robes of some of the bhikkhus touched the ground and got wet because of dew on the grass. So he cleared that patch of ground. The next day, he found that as the robes of the bhikkhus touched bare ground, the robes got dirty. So he covered that patch of ground with sand. Then again, he observed that the bhikkhus would sweat when the sun was shining and that they got wet when it was raining. So finally, he built a rest house for the bhikkhus at the place where they gathered before entering the city for alms-food.

When the building was finished, he invited the Buddha and the bhikkhus for alms-food. The brahmin explained to the Buddha how he had performed this meritorious deed step by step. To him the Buddha replied "O Brahmin! The wise perform their acts of merit little by little, and gradually and constantly they remove the impurities of moral defilements."

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

Verse 239: By degrees, little by little, from moment to moment a wise man removes his own impurities (moral defilements), as a smith removes the dross of silver or gold.

A Goldsmith removes the impurities in gold a step at a time. Each time the gold is melted in the crucible, a small amount of impurity is left and is discarded. So we, too, can remove the impurities a little bit at a time, until what is left is pure gold.

Ajahn Anandabodhi concluded with chanting:

Jayanto bodhiy m le Saky na nandi-va hano
Eva tvam vijayo hohi Jayassu jaya-ma gale
(Victorious at the foot of the Bodhi tree, Was he who increased the Sakyans'
delight. May you have the same sort of victory, May you win victory blessings.)