

Five Hindrances

Last night, we had Robert Cusick as our Dhamma speaker. Robert has been practicing Buddhist meditation since 1997. He is a student of Gil Fronsdal and was trained as a Buddhist monk at Pa Auk Forest Monastery in Burma. He also trained in the Soto Zen tradition at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in 2001. He has worked with Hameed Ali in the Diamond Approach (Diamond Heart Six) and is a certified Kripalu Yoga teacher. Robert participated in the 2nd Buddhist Chaplaincy training offered through the Sati Center for Buddhist Studies and completed the first Dedicated Practitioners Program at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in 2003. He subsequently served there in the role of Retreats Program Manager.

Before sitting began, we had three announcements.

- The Elders Council gave the go ahead for establishing a training monastery for the Siladhara (the nuns) in California. We are hoping the location will be in the peninsula/coastal area. <http://www.saranaloka.org/>
- Bhikkhu Bodhi (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhikkhu_Bodhi) will be speaking in Berkeley on April 16th. <http://drbu.org/index.php/Events/Master-Hua-Memorial-Lecture.html>
- Carla Brennan, one of our speakers, is leading a daylong retreat for women, *Reclaiming the Awakened Feminine*, on Saturday, May 2, 10am to 4pm at Vipassana Santa Cruz, 1010 Fair Ave, in Santa Cruz (<http://www.vipassanasc.org/>)

“Consciousness can be described as having both feminine and masculine qualities. To be fully human and fully awake we need to have both these aspects in balance. Our culture, over the centuries, has devalued both women and the feminine archetype associated with them. During this daylong we will go beyond the stereotypes and explore the feminine aspects of our consciousness and honor those qualities within us. There will be meditations, discussions and experiential exercises. Wear comfortable clothing, bring a lunch and bring an image of the divine feminine to place on the altar.

Teacher: Carla Brennan

Registration: no registration required.

Cost: There is no charge, dana accepted.

Robert’s Dhamma talk was on the Five Hindrances, which are referenced in the Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta (MN 27.18). Bob recommended Bhikkhu Bodhi and Bhikkhu Nanamoli’s translation of the Majjhima Nikaya (<http://www.amazon.com/Middle-Length-Discourses-Buddha-Translation/dp/086171072X/>)

The Pali word for hindrance is *nīvaraṇāni*, a term which means “careless attention” or “that which obstructs the eye of wisdom.”

The five hindrances are:

- Sensual desire: craving for pleasure to the senses.
- Anger or ill-will: feelings of malice or resentment directed toward others.
- Sloth-torpor or boredom: half-hearted action with little or no concentration.
- Restlessness-worry: the inability to calm the mind.
- Doubt: lack of conviction or trust.

In one of Gil Fronsda's Dhamma talks on Hindrances (http://www.audiodharma.org/mp3files/2004-10-24_GilFronsda_TheHindrancesIntroduction.mp3), he likens them to obstructions to seeing ourselves clearly, as we would see our reflection in a clear, still pond. The hindrances are distortions disturbing the pond (described in SN 46.55 in <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0861713311/>)

Sensual desire is like throwing dye into the pond; ill-will and anger boil the water; sloth and torpor cover the pond with algae; restlessness and worry churn the water like the wind, and doubt stirs up the mud so one cannot see.

The antidote to sensual desire is meditation on the body, its tissues, and bodily functions. The antidote for ill will is metta. Sloth and torpor is like being imprisoned in a cramped, dark cell. The antidote is light – think of walking in sunshine, watching a dancing fire, or the rousing energy of a beginner's mind. Restlessness and worry are conquered by serenity.

Doubt is being lost in the wilderness. The antidote is to find the way and resolutely follow it.