

Ajahn Sucitto 1988-05-07 1:13:12

Insight Meditation Society - Retreat Center : Monastic Retreat

<http://dharmaseed.org/teacher/9/talk/36826/>

Suggested title: Why meditate?

Summary: The phrase “the way it is” offers a snapshot of the changing experience of the mind as it considers basic questions of existence. Meditation offers a way to be with body feelings and reveals the steady and tranquil energy there. Meditation also reveals the compelling and default practice of the mind that is always identifying a “self” which creates anxiety, nervousness, trying too hard and judgements. Seeing this default mind process we see the Buddha’s concept of “suffering” and this leads in turn to comfort and confidence with understanding the statement “the way it is”. We can recall the Buddha said that nibanna is in fact realizable here and now, in this life.

The talk paraphrased:

The traditional way of offering the dhamma pointing, orients the speaker and listener towards the contemplative mind as it considers basic questions of existence and “the way it is”. The phrase illustrates the changing experience of the mind in the moment and the realities it creates. This creation is “the way it seems to be” rather than the way it *is*. What is pleasant in fact, covers only 1/3 of all experience – that which is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

9.00 Looking at the conventional world sometimes seems like some kind of joke – our roles and responses are only relative and are more like suits of clothes that are put on us by the momentary circumstances we face, the current milieu. Sometimes those roles and responses are essential to the moment and sometimes completely superfluous and quickly forgotten.

15.00 Projected externally, they create the world around us and projected internally they create a “self”. At the same time, the two work to define each other. The two structures (internal and external) help us to define and reveal the 4 foundations of mindfulness, including the body as we feel it, as changing and un-owned.

21.00 This is the teaching on non-self – *anitta*. Non-self is not to be taken as a dismissal or a lack of care of our lives, but rather an invitation to pay deep attention to the experience of the physical form. If you can watch it and observe it, is it really “you”? This experience of paying attention (call it meditation) is both tranquilizing and gives us insight/ peace. It’s a good way to spend time.

31.00 It also reveals the compelling and default practice of the mind - always identifying a self that is present and involved and how that in turn creates anxiety, nervousness, trying too hard, judgements. Seeing this default mind process can reveal the Buddha’s concept of “suffering” and this leads in turn to comfort and confidence with understanding the statement “the way it is”.

38.00 We can see that “reaching the end of the world”, recommended by the Buddha as the only place to see the release from suffering, can only be achieved here *in this body at this time*. We see it is not something that we need to hold on to. In meditation, we contemplate where the holding is taking place and we let it

be as it is. We see what we like and dislike and see there is no need to annihilate it, but respect and honour it without idealism or aversion.

Consider the 5 sense organs. They are designed to hold on to the sensations they specialize in and report to the brain. If they report something pleasant, the response is "More please". But with the presence of mindfulness, there is no need to indulge in/ listen to / be carried away with this dialogue. The brain keeps recreating the pleasure through memory and interrupts us with a flow of messages, recreating the images and notions that we are drawn into. We can see this process and realize it is not necessary to get involved.

Desire only works if you don't have it. The movement of desire is always the setting up of something that "might be". When things are "as they are" you are not creating descriptions. And getting annoyed with it is not a solution either - it is just another desire - "I don't want this". This is just the way the senses operate and if you want to manage the challenge you need to limit, restrain and contain them / their functioning with understanding, love and compassion. This is the middle way. All this that runs through the body is "the world" and is a place / opportunity to practice dhamma.

51.00 What we essentially look for is happiness and peace. Treating others as objects to have or avoid, never fulfils us. Nor does complaining and demanding they should be the way you would like them to be all the time. Seeking happiness like this never works. But if we stop asking for this... and practice accepting the way it is, we begin to see the freedom that is available there. We see the possibility of using this to offer and to give without asking for something. It becomes unnecessary to demand self importance or a permanent identity.

59.00 What we can offer is acceptance, joy, humility, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, enjoyment, equanimity as the circumstances require - offering something that is beautiful.

1.01.00 to .54 (approx) break in audio

1.03.00 With meditation you can sustain an intention towards being with the body feelings. There is a steady and tranquil energy there and a sense of offering. Observing the body's changing needs and its nature provides constant opportunities to cultivate relinquishment. Its opposite - "not knowing" our body /its needs, creates complacency and dullness. With that non-holding and non-expecting we come to experience joy, gratitude and wonder at being alive. By contrast, being up in the mind constantly is exhausting.

1.12.00 It well worth the effort to bring the dhamma into our lives. We can recall the Buddha said that nibanna is in fact realizable here and now, in this life.