

Il Buddha lodava molto l'amicizia. C'è un dialogo curioso nei Sutra dove Ananda, il servitore del Buddha, gli dice: "Penso che le buone amicizie siano metà del cammino spirituale" e il Buddha risponde:

"Non dirlo, Ananda. Le buone amicizie sono l'intero cammino spirituale".

L'amicizia con esseri senzienti che ci sono di sostegno, comprensivi ed utili è molto importante. Nella nostra vita mentre seguiamo questo nuovo cammino spirituale, queste persone ci verranno incontro.

Saranno attratte come magneti.

Do we realize how much we live our lives through our minds?

**Everything we see, everything we say, everything we do,
is directed by our minds, our thoughts, our feelings,
our memories, our concepts, our judgments**

We are so caught up in our heads. Some neurologists say that nowadays we know so much about the brain, but we still have not found the mind. In Asia the mind is not up in the brain.

The brain is the computer, but the source of the mind is somewhere down here (in the centre of the chest).

It is very interesting that when you first start meditating, you are meditating in the head.

There is the mind thinking and the meditation practice you are trying to do. So it is like they are both facing each other. It is you and the practice. This dualistic approach which we start with is up here (in the head). The brain is trying to meditate.

Once the meditation really kicks in and the mind really goes into a state of meditation, the meditation itself goes down to here (in the centre of the chest). Then there is no meditator and no meditation.

You become one with the practice. At that time, things start moving. This is something you experience.

It is not something you think about. As long as you are thinking about it, it stays up in the head.

When you become the meditation, it moves down to the centre of the chest,

as all religions have always known. **It's a heart which thinks "May you be well and happy" and not "May you make me well and happy".**

Things can change. Things are changing moment to moment.

We can change. And if we change ourselves, everything changes.

Everything changes.

"In order to receive any genuine transformation we have to transform everything we do, everything we say, everything we think, to the utmost of our ability, into a Dharma practice."

It is actually better on the spiritual path to be a tiger than a rabbit

So, is not our emotions, even our negative emotions, which are the problem. **The problem is whether they control us or we control them.** The best way to control is through seeing and the best way to see is through developing awareness.

Once we are conscious and aware of our emotions, of our motivations, then we have the wish-fulfilling gem in our hands and everything can be transformed. As long as we are unknowing, as long as we are identified with our thoughts and emotions, as long as we are controlled by our thoughts and emotions, we are slaves.

Most of us are complete slaves to our emotions and thoughts. When we are angry, we are the anger.

When we are jealous, we are the jealousy.

When we are depressed, we are the depression. We are complete slaves to our desires, our angers, our aversions, our jealousies, our hopes and our fears.

**..during the day, as much as you can,
try to bring the mind back into the present and
try to see things as if one is seeing them for the very first time...**

After all, if all the problems come from the outside, or if all the problems stem from our infancy, which, after all, is gone and irrevocable, then there's not much hope. But if the real answer lies in the present, right now, within us, then there's enormous hope. Therefore Dharma practitioners should always be very joyful and not look so solemn!

We are always going to meet people who annoy us. We are always going to meet situations that don't come up to our expectations. This is the way things are. And if we hope that we can somehow create an external environment which will always come up to our expectations, then we are always going to be sadly disappointed. But we don't need to do that because if we learn how to tame and cultivate our own mind, then we can deal with everything outside.

**So the Buddhadharma says that all things are mind.
What it means by this is not that there is no external reality, but that
we cannot know that external reality except through our minds.**

**How something is and how it appears to us are two different things. Therefore we
should learn not to take things so concretely.**

This is me. That's why people are suffering.

**Even when we remember something that happened when we were children and caused us a lot of
distress, we totally identify with it - even to the present day.**

We cannot drop it. We think this is me, this is who I am. And it causes us so much grief. Presumably many of you have realized this and that is why you are all sitting here now because we realize that the mind, untamed and untrained, is causing at least 98 percent of our misery.

**How much exercise do we do for the mind? How much cleansing?
Do we adorn the mind with beautiful thoughts? If we could open up our mind, would it look like a
beautiful palace or temple, or would it look like a junk heap?**

And if we wouldn't want to live in a garbage site,
we should realize that as long as our minds are untrained, that is exactly where we are living
because the closest thing we have, **the only place where we can actually live, is within our mind.
That's our home.**

It doesn't matter if you're living here in Cambridge or if you go to India or Korea or Japan or wherever.
It doesn't matter what external environment you have,
the one thing you take with you is your mind.
How much attention do we give to that?

The essence of the practice is to develop a mind which is totally present, totally vast, spacious and
conscious, instead of our ordinary, untrained mind, which is just
chatter, chatter, chatter. **Unless you are really very well trained, normally what
happens is that when you are doing one thing you are thinking about a hundred other things. The
one thing you are usually not thinking about is what you are really doing.**

We identify with our memories, our thoughts, our feelings, our emotions.

We think this is me, and therefore we suffer. **We need to see that memories are just mental states, emotions are just states, feelings are just states, the thoughts that come into our minds are just mental states.**

They're like bubbles. They arise, they expand and they burst, to be replaced by other bubbles.

This is not who we are

If we realized that all the thoughts and emotions that come up in our minds are just the play of the mind and that the mind is a vast ocean, to use another metaphor, and that these thoughts and feelings are just waves that rise and sink back into the ocean again, **we would realize that we should not take them too seriously.**

Buddhahood consists of the unity of wisdom and compassion, wisdom and love.

Wisdom alone is not enough. It's like the two wings of a bird.

You cannot have one wing without the other wing. You need both wings in order to fly. When our minds become a little settled, a little more peaceful, a little clearer, then we are able to see things more clearly, with less confusion, with less self-reference.

We begin to see things as they really are. And when we begin to see things as they really are,

one of the first things of which we become aware is the pain of others.

Our practice has to be from the heart. **If our practice isn't from the heart, it has no validity.**

The head is the computer, but the genuine mind is at a much profounder level than that.

When we talk about mind in Buddhism, we don't just mean the intellectual side of it but the whole emotional part, the intuitive, the very deep level of our being which does not reside up in the head.

So if our sitting practice is all up in this computer part of the brain there will never be any very profound transformation. We have to bring our practice downwards. **It has to permeate through our whole body, every cell of our body. This is a very, very crucial point.**

It is very important that you realize that each person in front of you is unique and uniquely important because they are the one person in front of you. Therefore,

they are, at that moment, your Dharma practice. Where else is your Dharma practice?

When you are living with no external distractions, then that is the time you have to face so many things: the human condition, the mind, one's nature. Then there's no escape. Yes, people in the West think this sort of life I have taken to is escapism, but one can't escape. Those caught up in Western life and its many so-called attractions are escaping. As soon as there is anything that is uncomfortable or disturbing they have a drink, or turn on the TV, or go to see a friend, or just smoke a cigarette — **anything but turn inside and look at where the trouble is coming from.** All their senses are stimulated from the outside, everything is coming from the outside, and when it breaks down they become neurotic. There is this terrible fear in the West of being put into any sort of isolation — it is actually a form of punishment there: they think if you are alone for any length of time you'll go crazy. It's because they have no foundation, no idea how to look inside and learn from oneself. And they do everything in the world to avoid the one thing that is nearest to them — coming to terms with the mind.

As long as we are in the grip of our anger, our greed and our basic delusion we are imprisoned. And if we want to get free from that prison it's not going to happen by our just doing whatever we feel like – that is just bringing us into the enslavement of our ego. What we need is to go beyond the ego and to realise the genuine liberation of the mind. That is true freedom and if that requires that we follow certain rules and ethical conduct and discipline our minds so that we are not enslaved by our thoughts and emotions, then that is true liberation.