

*working with the experience of fear using views of no beginning no end and no experience ever repeats*

[00:01:13] We'll have now another period of meditation... with a few instructions. ... I think from my own side, that the experience of *fear*... is one of the most interesting experiences to have. Whether it is just a small fear, like you can't find a parking space or something else which is small. A fear, a disappointment, a projection of something that is fearful... these things are most interesting. When I look for myself, I realize that... I rarely see the fear. I experience it like it's something that *happened* to me, rather than *seeing* the fear. Kind of like a cold or a warm breeze blowing by suddenly and then it's gone. It just happened... to me or to you, But we didn't actually *grow up* any in that experience. The fear becomes something to get rid of, rather than to see it. Seems to be, the kind of frustrating intention that we have.

[00:04:26] So in the context of our meditation practice, whether it is shamatha or some advanced practice, if you don't see the experience, you have missed the gift. You have to see it. Which doesn't mean see it with your eyes but to see it through your experiential aspect. Like something rubs against you. Or maybe yesterday you were angry and then today there was some residue, but you actually can't place where it started and ended. So one of the *great* teachings on meditation, one of the greatest, is that that experience that you have, which feels like it came and went, like it had a beginning and it had an end... so one of those great teachings is that the reason... that you *don't* experience it... is because there was not a beginning nor an end. No beginning, no end. No experience repeats itself *ever*. ... I don't need to ask if anyone has ever had the experience of something that had no beginning or no end. It is highly probable that no one will say, they've had the experience of something that had no beginning or no end. But that experience occurs regularly. And it just flies by and we don't see it. Because we don't see it, we don't experience it, Or we experience it so... *faintly* that it doesn't help having seen it. From the fundamental teaching in Buddhist practice, one of the most profound teachings, is this business of no beginning, no end.

[00:07:29] I mean we are culturally... profoundly connected to the conceptual. We're really good at it... conceptualizing. And we can even take our feelings and conceptualize them into... a kind of alternative anger. Or if that doesn't quite work then we'll say, righteous anger or, my anger's better than yours! ... But we still may not have seen it through all of that. We are just subject to it but not quite clear about it. ... To see the experience, and if you have the... practice to do it and the ability and more importantly, the willingness, to look at something like anger or really strong fear... maybe you're going to lose a friend, someone is going to die that you know and you're aware of it happening and you have some deep grief. ... So we can ask the question, "Have we *looked at* that fear? Or is it just another thing that we would like to avoid and get rid of?" And so mostly it's pretty easy to avoid and get rid of. ... And sometimes we'll say, but it keeps coming back. Which is another one of those things that we have to look at and recognize that it doesn't keep coming back because there isn't any *'it'* there. No beginning and no end. No two experience are ever repeated. This is a very fundamental underpinning of the entire Buddhist traditions. Experiences arise... and they dissolve. And they have no beginning and they have no end. And they *definitely* do not ever, under *any* circumstance, repeat themselves.

[00:10:52] I don't know about you but I have this sense that... in anything, whether it's nuclear physics or meditation or whatever it is, that there are always certain things that are more important than other things, that are kind of foundational understandings. Understanding

something at its base, its core. And one of those is that... there is no beginning and no end of *these experiences*. If you pay attention while something is happening, and you pay attention to the experience that you are having, without judgement, without trying to get past it or over it or under it or something, just paying attention. Like being very still but wide awake. Then you can see that fear. ... Kind of like when you look at the sun, you can't really tell where it came from, but it's *there*. In the same way our fear has that sense that when we are afraid... we know that it's there... but we almost always, try to get rid of fear. But the fear is one of the most ubiquitous things that we have. ... It's there in almost everything that we do. I wish that this instruction was finished. I'm afraid that it will go on into the afternoon. ... And, macabre jokers like myself think, maybe we'll do that! [laughter] So, paying attention to the experiences as they come and go... is critical.

[00:13:25] And in the practice of shamatha... shamatha is really a practice of being still. But not just still with the body, but still with the mind. But you have to also take into account a rather interesting statement by the old but renowned teacher, Kalu Rinpoche, in 1973... remarked to somebody's question that "*You cannot still the mind. The mind itself...*" I don't know if the translation was right but it was said, anyway, "*...the mind is an experience machine. It generates experiences day and night, all the time, whether we are awake or asleep,*" and he added, kind of frosting on the cake, "*dead or alive.*" This is a fundamental proposition in the Buddhist tradition. I think we could say across all of them. There is no *end* to the mind's activities. And *dead or alive* was not a joke, though I took it as a joke, so many years ago. It was really a teaching on the *no beginning - no end*. ... We are conceived and born, but that was not the beginning. There was a beginning before that and a beginning before that. And we all know that at some point we will not be living in *this* body anymore. But is that the end? So, a *fundamental* teaching in this tradition is that, that is not the end nor is it the beginning. ... If you hold that position, kind of look at things through that lens... kind of like we do, we can do this, we're good at this. ... I have a disagreement with somebody, maybe I come to think that I will make my best effort to see that situation through that person's eyes. Because I love them and care about them and they're my friend or, they're my mother and father or something. I want to see it through their eyes so I understand and they feel heard. ... And when we do that we can have the experience of no beginning and no end. I care now. Like I cared then. And I will care in the future. That sort of thing.

[00:16:46] If we approach our fears, whether they are little fears or big fears., like we had a bad diagnosis of a bad disease or something... most people are afraid of that situation. And I think most people are afraid of it before it happened. And so they sort of get into the fear state before there was even an object to fear. Fear is so *ubiquitous* that it grinds us in ways that we almost *invite* it to do it. And then of course we want to get away from it. So *in* the context of our meditation, if we could look through the experiences that come to us, without our calling them at all, they just arrive... we could look at those things through the lens of no beginning, no end. The joyful experiences come and go and the unpleasant ones also come and go. ... And so as we sit together for a bit more, if you can allow your mind to become aware of all the experiences that you are having, just this morning, as they unfold. The ones that unfolded a moment ago, we're not interested in those. We're interested in the one that is happening right now. And when that one is done, we want to place the awareness on the one that just now arose. ... If you look carefully, without even trying, just bring your awareness, kind of generally to your body and your experience, you will see, there is never a break. It goes continuously.

[00:19:27] That lens provides an opening into *insights* about the nature of mind, the nature of living, the nature of dying, the nature of pleasant human relationships and negative ones. It

provides an opening to understanding our *own* relationship to our own experiences, which are in fact the most important... to begin with. So as we sit together... quietly, mostly still... let your awareness move from one experience to the next. And if you see *fear* of some experiences, try to bring your awareness to *that* experience as opposed to trying to figure out how to get rid of that experience of fear. ... We say, the biggest obstacles to spiritual understanding and awakening are hope and fear. But in a certain way it's just the left hand and the right hand. We want to *see* the experience. And if you *watch* the experiences come and go over time, your fear will disappear. Just dissolve. And if it doesn't dissolve, you will come to know exactly what you need to do. Which is to... open your eyes, so to speak, and just see what it is. See what it is and sit down again. ... So let's try that now for a bit and then we'll come to where we have an open conversation in about half an hour.

[00:21:48] *[period of meditation]*

*Sangha [00:51:02] dedicating the merit*