Aging with Compassion and Wisdom Session 5, November 2, 2026

Thank you all for practicing together in this group, and for your dedication!

Here are some closing home practices and notes.

Practice:

- Continue a regular sitting practice and a mindful movement practice such as walking meditation, yoga or qigong.
- Reflect frequently on these themes through reading or chanting the Five Remembrances. They are a dharmic treasure.
- Note the connections to the remembrances that you find in daily life, for example, as things change or as aging, by necessity, results in not being able to do a certain action or activity that you used to be able to do. What understanding, compassion and wisdom can you bring to that moment?
- Pay attention to the small selves that are born and die throughout the day. (see notes below)
- Can we see actions of body, thought and mind, and their results, not from a lens of fault or blame, but rather from an understanding of a natural lawfulness. This is a path to equanimity.

Some Final Notes:

The basic difference between the last remembrance and the first four is that the first four describe our basic human condition: that we are subject to aging, sickness, and death, and in the fourth remembrance, that the basic things which we find pleasing and bring us great joy and pleasure will change, including our bodies, our sense faculties, and our ideas about ourselves and our roles in the world - that all will become different.

The last remembrance says that within this reality, this Dhamma, there is lawfulness to the way change happens. Things arise in the world when the conditions are in place for them to arise. They stay in place as long as the conditions sustain them, and if those conditions cease to exist, these "things" will also cease to exist. They will pass out of existence.

The last remembrance: I am the owner of my actions. I am heir to my actions. I am born of my actions. I am related through my actions, and I am supported by my actions. All that I do for good or for ill, to that I will fall heir.

We hear "I am the owner of my actions. I am heir to my actions", or we hear "all that I do for good or for ill, to that I will fall heir," and it's easy to see this as mainly negative. When I make a mistake, I own that. I am the one who must live with the consequences. So, we look back at the mistakes that we've made in our life,

> Oh boy, I've got to live with those mistakes and those poor decisions. I hurt some people by what I did or said, and I wish I hadn't done that. But I can't undo it. All I can do is apologize and try to do better. Also, I never learned discipline. I think maybe I'm kind of lazy, *and* I could be way more generous. Do I really need to buy a new car? This one still works ok. There are so many charities, worthwhile organizations, and worthwhile causes. If I don't buy a car this year, I can do some good with that money.

But looked at in perhaps a more positive light, without owning our actions, we could not learn new things: how to cook, how to write code, how to diagnose a disease, how to plumb a bathroom, how to develop meditation practice.

The **second statement** says, "I am born through my actions." We probably remember that the Buddha said he had gained knowledge of past lives on the night he fully awoke. He later said that this could be useful knowledge; it could bring you confidence. But if you ask many teachers, they will say I don't know about my past births or what will happen when I die.

Past births or future births? I don't know my past births over different lifetimes, but I can see that I'm at least a little kinder or more patient than when I was younger. Larry Rosenberg, his teacher Ajahn Buddhasdāsa, and many dharma teachers, including me, feel that the important births for the liberation of the mind are those that can happen again and again in a single day.

The Buddha's doctrine of dependent co-arising describes the sequence that leads from a single desire to attachment, to 'becoming ', to birth, to fading away, and to death of that relative self that we have become. The more often we are 'born' into a moment of greed, the more that conditioning can become part of our character. This cycle repeats again in what is called *saṃsāra*. In one moment, I can be born as a greedy person. If I keep watering the karmic seeds of greed, the fruit of repeated greed will create momentum that shapes my character for more than one moment.[i]

For example, if I shave the truth a little -let's say I can tell a good story about my experience, but the stories I tell are a little bigger than reality. And I'm sticking to the story because, in my version of what happened, I come off pretty good! "I was the one that told them blah-blah-blah, and look what happened. They should have listened to me!" If I do that, I'm going to be born an exaggerator each time I tell that story, and it will become a habit. The doctrine of no self doesn't mean we don't have a self. That's how we get around in the world. But that self, I like to say, our relative self, is changing and variable. It rises according to conditions. You may create yourself from your occupation. I'm a doctor. I'm a teacher. I'm an accountant. I am an activist. I'm a stay-at-home dad. And this is all normal. But the Buddha says that these selves aren't permanent, lasting, enduring, or reliable because they're always changing. Buddhadāsa, when talking about this process and how to avoid the suffering that springs from attachment, sums up the Buddha's teaching in this phrase: *Nothing whatsoever should be clung to as "I" or "Mine".*[1] We don't have a permanent unchanging me. That's the meaning of no-self. The view of a

[1] Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree, pg. 29 Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Wisdom Publications 1994

solid "me" is called personality view. Attaching to a personality view, *sakkaya-ditthi*, is considered the first fetter, or *samyojana* in Pāli, that keeps one tied to saṃsāra.

The **third statement** says We're related through our actions. This can mean human relationships. Who are the people in your life and how did they come to be in your life? Have you ever felt like life situations led you to meet someone? It doesn't have to be "The person" but just someone who turned out to be significant as a teacher, a friend, a mentor, etc. Relationships also refer to how we spend our time. That includes the friends or family that we spend time with, but also our relationship to things like movies, gaming, hobbies, sports, or entertainment. How much time do we spend on that? If we take on the self of becoming a meditation practitioner, we will more likely spend more time in practice.

The **last statement** says I am supported through my actions. This is literally true, emotionally, financially, and otherwise. If you work a paid job where you, the karmic result, or fruit, is that you will get paid. Even unpaid internships can sow seeds that lead to great karmic fruits, through your well-being and happiness, your accumulated experience, or your relationships. If you worked in the past where you accumulated some retirement benefits, maybe you or your organization put away something for retirement. Then, literally by the time you reached retirement, we were supported by your past actions.

Of course, of great significance is that we are supported by our Dharma practice day to day, accumulating skill, compassion and wisdom to help us navigate the ups and downs of life. …and as we age, we do come closer to death. We will meet that moment with whatever we're bringing to the table. Based on what we've learned. Will we meet that moment with fear, anxiety, or will we be able to meet that moment with some calm and some understanding?

Housekeeping

- In our last class, I forgot to show the info about the free introduction on November 4th to a Tricycle online class, "Preparing for Death and Dying, Naming Fears, Finding Peace." I don't know this teacher, but in general, I have been pleased with Tricycle classes I have taken in the past. I hope you get this in time to at least explore the free intro.
- I mentioned helping you connect to form KM groups. I will ask the office to send an email asking for your contact info, your location, and whether you are interested in an online or in-person group. Participation is completely optional, and it may not work out that everyone who is seeking a group will find one through this avenue. But, we can try! Any information you send back will only be used for the purpose of helping to connect you with other yogis.

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[i] Some schools of Buddhism say that all our actions create karmic seeds that are stored in a kind of seedbed. They sprout only when watered by similar actions. For example, a wholesome present action can activate latent wholesome seeds, leading to a greater "fruit" or harvest in the present moment. The same is said to be true for unwholesome seeds.