

**The Unsatisfactory Experiences of the Demi-gods and Gods;
The Root Afflictions – part 1 of 5** (lightly edited transcript)
by Ven. Thubten Chodron© at Dharma Friendship Foundation, Seattle. 21 Sep 92

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Unsatisfactory experiences of demi-gods and gods

We have talked about the human realm, meaning human life and what we have now. We also talked about the lower realms. Now we are going to talk about the unsatisfactory conditions of the realms that are higher than human beings. The Sanskrit term for these is 'suras' and 'asuras', which is sometimes translated as 'gods' and 'demi-gods', or 'gods' and 'titans'. They are also called 'celestial beings'. There are different ways of translating these terms.

The term 'gods' sometimes refers to the desire realm gods that experience super duper sense pleasures, but it can also refer to the gods in the form and formless realm who are born there by the power of their concentration. (The desire realms are all the realms where you are involved with your senses, where you have lots of desire for sense pleasures.) Therefore the word 'god' includes both the gods that have a lot of attachment to sensual things and the gods in the form and formless realm.

These beings are said to be higher than human beings not in the sense of their opportunity to practice the Dharma, because actually they have less opportunity than we do to practice. The celestial beings in the desire realm are higher in the sense that they have higher sense pleasures than we do. Those in the form and formless realms are considered higher because they have abandoned the attachment to the desire realm. They have temporarily suppressed those desires, but they have not gotten rid of all attachments. They still have attachment to the bliss of their concentration. Nevertheless, this is still called a higher realm from the point of view we are talking about here.

According to ancient Indian cosmology, we have Mount Meru in the center and the four continents around it. Human beings live in the continents and the gods and the demi-gods live on Mount Meru. There are some layers of settlements on the lower part of Mount Meru and some settlements on the top part. As usual, the ones on the top that have the better view have more status [laughter]. The ones on the lower part are the demi-gods and do not have quite as high status as the gods so they are incredibly jealous.

God and Demi-god Realms

Jealousy and Quarrelling

The god and the demi-god realms are like the people who live in Beverly Hills and the people who live around Beverly Hills. Beverly Hills is like the god realm and the others wish they could be up there but

are not. So, they are very jealous and compete a lot. The gods and the demi-gods spend a lot of time fighting and quarrelling. A lot of these fights are instigated by the demi-gods because they are so jealous. Of course they have very good reasons for this. Trees grow in the god realms and bear incredibly delicious fruit but the roots are lower on Mount Meru and in the land owned by the demi-gods. So the demi-gods say, "Look, the roots are in our place. We should get part of the fruit." The gods answer, "Forget it. The fruit grows in our place, so it is ours. Take us to court if you want" [laughter].

Thus the demi-gods spend a good deal of their life quarrelling. The gods do not suffer quite as much from the quarrelling because they have a better advantage point on the top of the mountain. But the demi-gods, even though they are in the upper realm and have so much more sense pleasure than we do, they are not as good as the gods and cannot even enjoy what they have, they just kind of burn with the fire of jealousy all the time.

Can you find that part of you that is a demi-god, the part that is just so jealous of everybody and everything, the kind of incredible jealousy that says, "They are more talented; they have a higher status; they get paid more money; they have a nicer house; they are more beautiful; they are more athletic." No matter how good things are, the demi-god part of you cannot enjoy it and you are always quarrelling with other people. Even though it is nice, the reason why we do not want to seek rebirth in a demi-god realm is that you are completely permeated by jealousy and though you have good things, you cannot enjoy them. You just have so much pain from the jealousy.

Warfare

The demi-gods suffer from jealousy and constant warfare, battle and bitterness. By sending their young people off to fight for the fruits of the trees that are higher up Mount Meru they, of course, get killed. The gods on the upper part of Mount Meru, they spend a lot of time fighting with the demi-gods too. Then as you go further up, eventually there are certain god realms that are above Mount Meru, that float in space. These are like the people who lived in the locked communities. Nobody can get to them and cause them problems. So, according to your level of good karma and your prayers, you get born either on the upper levels of Mount Meru, or in these god realms that float in space where they are not bothered by the obnoxious asuras who are always fighting.

Complete Sense Pleasure

They say that you have complete sense pleasure in the god realms. What everybody in America is trying to get, they already have in the god realms, except they have it better. There are beautiful parks and meadows and things like that. Food grows on the trees and is automatically prepared. The ground is made of jewels with golden sidewalks and everything is glittery, beautiful and harmonious. The wind blows through the trees and you hear beautiful music. Beauty is everywhere you walk and all the people are beautiful. Nobody is deformed. Nobody is handicapped. Nobody is ugly. Nobody has to dye his or her hair and nobody has to go to the gym [laughter]. Everybody is just completely beautiful.

It is just all wonderful in the god realms and they say you can have all the girlfriends and boyfriends you want. Nobody is going to write an article in the newspaper if you sleep with somebody else's husband or wife. Everything is just wonderful and everybody looks great. They have long life spans too. Nobody has to take lots of vitamins [laughter] to stay young.

Seven Days before Death

The problem is, while it is wonderful while you are alive, seven days before you die, everything all of a sudden starts to deteriorate. You live this incredibly long life where everything is magnificent and perfect and then in the last seven days, they say that the mental pain experienced by the gods is worse than the experience in hells. Imagine living in this wonderful lush way, then seven days before you die your body starts to deteriorate. All of a sudden you get old and wrinkled and your hair turns colors and falls out. Your body starts to smell and you are laying in bed totally ugly. All these people who love you so much, who thought you were so marvelous and fantastic and wanted to be around you, all of a sudden they do not want to come within two feet of you. It is too frightening and too scary for them.

You experience a sense of isolation from the people you were close to. All of a sudden you are cut off when you are dying and need them the most. So you experience the mental pain of rejection and the pain of watching your own body decay. Your own body that you are so attached to because it was so wonderful, it all of a sudden decays and you experience the mental pain that brings.

Rebirth Visions

Then you have karmic visions of your next rebirth. Since you spent a whole life in perfection, the next rebirth is not so good. Imagine going from a perfect life, then seeing that in a few days you are going to be reborn as a pig, it just totally freaks you out. They say the pain from all these things such as the rejection from others, the deterioration of the body and the karmic vision of one's future rebirth is worse than being born in the hells. And all of this happens simply because of how one lived one's whole life style.

Reevaluating Our Desires

I find this really helpful and something to consider whenever our mind gets dissatisfied and we start wanting a god realm in our human realm now. I am speaking about the mind that says, 'if only I had a nicer house'; 'if only I had a nicer car'; 'if only I had a nicer bike'; 'if only I had a nicer boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife, and cat'. This is the mind that is always wanting more sense pleasure.

We might think about having been born in the god realm before, not just once but many times. Imagine this incredible place with its surroundings and think about how you must have felt, then think about the incredible suffering at the end of life in these realms and how it all just ends with a crash. That can really wake our mind up and make us question, "What am I doing craving all these things anyway? Even if I get them in this life, they aren't nearly as wonderful as in the god realm. I'm going to have something like a mini god realm death when I separate from these things or when people ostracize me after I lose them. Then I will look back at my life with regret about how I spent it because I have an intuition about my next rebirth and it isn't good."

Why We Study These Realms

Thinking about this helps to cure a very craving mind. It also helps when our mind sometimes wants just a better rebirth in samsara and is content just with that, "I want to be reborn in the god realm. That would be O.K., I will aim for that." Seeing the disadvantages of these realms helps us to generate the wish to be free even from those upper rebirths. That is very important.

Going through all the different sufferings and unsatisfactory circumstances in all these different realms helps us see that no matter where we might get reborn in samsara, there is no lasting happiness. By eliminating one realm after another as a possible haven and a possible desirable place to be reborn, eventually we come to the conclusion that there is no desirable place. Therefore, we want to get out of cyclic existence. We want to determine to free ourselves from this mess, because wherever we are reborn, it is very unsatisfactory. It is the pits.

Dedicating Merit for Upper Rebirths or for Enlightenment

It might seem funny to you that people who are doing a lot of virtuous things, why in the world would they want to be reborn in the god realm, why would they not just aim for full enlightenment to start with? But look at our minds, look what we usually pray for and look at what we usually want. When are our most sincere prayers? They are when we are sick, or poor [laughter], or when something rotten is happening at work and so on. Then, all of a sudden, our prayers become really powerful. This is because our minds are still very worldly. We have to completely see through that facade and not dedicate merit just for upper rebirths, but rather dedicate it for full enlightenment. If we dedicate it for full enlightenment, then a good rebirth where we can practice the Dharma will come along as part of the package. This is important to think about.

General Disadvantages of Samsara

We have also talked a little bit about the different levels of concentration, the four dhyanas, or concentration, or form realms and then the four formless concentrations. The beings there might have a lot of concentration and in the lower form realms they also have bodies of light and it is all very beautiful and so on. Still, you are born in that kind of situation as long as you have the good karma but when the karma is exhausted, where do you go? You most likely get reborn in the lower realm again.

This is going back to what we were talking about with the general disadvantages of samsara: changing status, going up and going down, going up and going down. Even though in these concentration realms you may have bliss, or equanimity, or whatever, still in the end it does not last long. Your mind is still under the influence of karma and afflictions [['Afflictions' is the translation that Ven. Chodron now uses in place of 'disturbing attitudes' or 'delusions'.](#)] and you crash down again after you die. Understanding this,

we will not be content with just a good rebirth, but to really determine to free ourselves from cyclic existence.

**Becoming convinced of the nature of the path to liberation:
Thinking about the causes of suffering and how they place and keep us in cyclic existence
(Second Noble Truth)**

Now, when we determine to free ourselves from cyclic existence, what is it that we are trying to be free of? Obviously the unsatisfactory conditions, but we also have to look deeper and want to be free of the causes of the unsatisfactory conditions. So it is not just that we want everything around us to be wonderful and leave it at that. We want a route out and to eliminate the causes for all these unsatisfactory things so that they can never re-appear again. This moves us into the next part of the outline, which is the causes of the unsatisfactory conditions. We are also moving from focusing on the first noble truth, that of the unsatisfactory conditions, to the second one, the causes.

Actually in your Lamrim outline, the overall heading is 'Becoming convinced of the nature of the path to liberation' and within that, the first heading is 'Thinking about the causes of suffering and how they place and keep you in samsara'. This is just recognizing what the causes of suffering or unsatisfactory conditions are and how they function, how they keep us trapped and how they keep us bound. This is important because instead of the cause of our pain and suffering being external, we are at this point ready to admit that the principal cause for everything lies within our own mind.

How do the negative mental factors in our own mind keep us continually befuddled and confused so that even though we want happiness, we continually create the cause for more problems? We have to come to a real clear understanding how these afflictions* work, how they create karma and how the two things (afflictions* and karma) together generate one rebirth after another rebirth.

How the afflictions* develop

Under this we have the next point in the outline: 'How the afflictions* develop'. First we have to recognize the afflictions*. The reason they are called 'afflictions*' is because they disturb the harmony and tranquility of the mind. Whenever these things arise, they make the mind off balance and bent out of shape. When you feel bent out of shape and you are not really there and something is bothering inside, that is the meaning of the term afflictions*. They disturb the peace of the mind. Within the afflictions*, of course, there are different classifications. There are the root afflictions* and then there are the auxiliary afflictions*. There are six root afflictions*. These are called the root afflictions* because they are the root of cyclic existence and the root of samsara in that they are the principal causes of samsara. They are also the root of the auxiliary afflictions*.

Some time later, we will study one text called Lorig; it means mind and awareness. It goes into great detail about all these different mental factors; about the six root afflictions* and twenty secondary afflictions*, the eleven virtuous minds and so on and so forth. Right now, we will be taking some of the material about the six root afflictions* from that text. I will not be going into it as much in depth as I will later on when we actually study this text, but it will get you going. Actually Geshe Rabten did a book called 'Mind and Its Functions' and the second part of it talks about some of these different mental factors. It is a book on Buddhist psychology and is quite a bit of fun to study.

The Six Root Afflictions*

The six root afflictions* are: attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, doubt and wrong views. Then 'wrong views' is actually broken up into another five. Sometimes, they just say ten altogether, but sometimes they just say six and the last one is broken into five. If you are wondering why they do not say eleven, it is because when they count ten, they do not count 'wrong views' as one of the ten; they just count each of the five within. Let us start going through these.

1. Attachment

Attachment Exaggerates and Projects

The first root affliction is attachment which is our favorite one. This is a mental factor that when referring to a phenomena, exaggerates its qualities, or projects qualities that are not there. Then it exaggerates

the attractiveness of that phenomena and wishes for it; takes a strong interest in it; clings to it; craves for it; is stuck to it. This mind is really the elephant glue to samsara. It functions to produce continued discontent and continued suffering in samsara.

When you have attachment you never have enough, or you never have it good enough. There is always discontent and dissatisfaction. This is helpful to know during those days when you are sitting at home feeling discontent, dissatisfied and ruminating. During those moments just recognize, "Oh, there is attachment functioning in my mind right now".

The Mind Gets Stuck

Then you have to ask, what am I attached to? What am I discontent about? Explore your own mind. You might be discontent because you do not live in a nice enough house, or because not enough people like you, or because you do not have a high status in your career, or because you do not like the way you look, or something like that. The mind is stuck; it is exaggerating something and then craving for it, clinging to it, being tremendously dissatisfied because it does not have it. Often when we can recognize that we are dissatisfied, identify what we are attached to and recognize that there is no sense in being attached anyway, then at that point we can really let go of the attachment and also the dissatisfaction.

Attachment Keeps Us Enmeshed

I explained before how attachment is the driving force behind cyclic existence. It creates attachment, creates constant dissatisfaction. It also creates constant rebirth in cyclic existence. We arrive at the time of death and what do we want? We want another body. We want more pleasure and we have got to have another body, got to have another rebirth. Then we get that rebirth and body and think, "I've got to have this, I've got to have that and I've got to have these other things." You get all those things and you are still not satisfied; you always want more and better. So the attachment just rolls on and on and just pushes forth one rebirth in samsara after another. It functions to keep us totally enmeshed in our difficulty.

We Are Taught To Crave Things

The thing that is so tricky about attachment is that it looks like it will bring us pleasure because we are taught that we are supposed to want things. Especially in America, we are supposed to want all these things and we are supposed to want them because they will make us happy. We are taught that to be a good child and a good citizen, it always means wanting, wanting, wanting. But we cannot blame it on society. We cannot say, "Oh, society taught me to have so much craving". Society has its thing, but there is something in us that resonates with it.

There is something in us that, from the time we were born said, "I want! I want! I want!" If you look at babies, they want. They want a lot of things and then, of course, what we want becomes more sophisticated as we grow older. There is a perpetual seeking as if there is a hole inside of us and this feeling of being empty so we are always seeking something else from outside to fill it. We spend our whole lives like that. Even though we get many things, it never fills the hole.

[Audience:] Sometimes I find it hard to make myself practice, is attachment somehow involved when we are resisting practice?

So the question is about resistance to actually practicing. That part of our mind that cannot get itself on the cushion, or cannot do whatever is necessary to counteract an affliction when it is coming up.

It is different in each case. Sometimes the resistance is a very active attachment and is like 'I don't want to sit because I'd much rather read a magazine.' It is not that reading a magazine is so wonderful, but somehow I am attached to the idea of sitting in a chair and relaxing and just spacing out. To turn on the TV, read a magazine and just space out at some level feels very desirable even though intellectually we know it is a total waste of time. So, underlying that, there is some kind of attachment that is finding something desirable in that.

Attachment and Resistance

Sometimes resistance is like that. We much rather do something else, "I'd much rather go to the movies; I'd much rather go out to dinner; I'd much rather call up a friend and talk; I'd much rather do something fun! But meditation – my legs hurt, my mind is wrestling, it is not fun! I want pleasure!" So there is a very

active attachment to some kind of pleasure, even though it might not be real specific as to what we want. But we will think of something pretty quick.

Sometimes the resistance is there because of habit. It is as if we can look and know that something is stupid – 'I sit and read one magazine after another, I watch one TV program after another and I know it is not getting me anywhere and I really don't want to do it', but there is a force of habit at work. We are very much creatures of habit and we have to break one habit by making new habits. So it takes some level of real understanding that something does not make us happy now or in the future. It also takes a little bit of discipline to get us to shift gears, but we cannot be militaristic about this whole thing and say, 'I'm never going to do this again. I'm just going to practice'. If you try and squeeze your mind and you do not have very much understanding, then you are just going to get real tight and not get anywhere in your practice. You have to gently nudge your mind.

Talking To Your Mind

I have one friend who has a very good technique. When she wants to meditate and her mind is being resistant and thinking of all these other things that she really should do which, of course, she does not want to do, she says, "Yes, I know it would be nice to do that, but that is not what we are going to do right now" [laughter]. She actually talks to her mind as she would talk to her child, "Yes I realize that is what you want to do but that is not what we are going to do now. We are going to sit and meditate." She says talking to herself and acknowledging that there is a part of the mind that wants to do something else, but also saying, "That is not what we are going to do now; there is something else we are going to do," works quite well.

Attachment and the Three Characteristics

Permanence

It is very interesting how the attachment functions because it is based on a whole lot of other pre-conceptions. Remember we talked before about the three characteristics of transience, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness? What attachment has underlying it are things that are the opposite of those three. What underlies attachment is a mind that sees things as permanent. So whatever it is that you are attached to, you are seeing it as lasting, as permanent, as if this relationship is here and it will always be here. As if it is always going to be and will never change. So there is this underlying feeling of permanence, of lastingness in something.

Unsatisfactory-ness

There is also a feeling that it is going to give happiness. Underlying attachment is the view that this thing is not unsatisfactory by nature but rather, it is pleasurable by nature. So I want it. It has pleasure in it. It has happiness in it. When you look at chocolate cake, it has happiness in it, does it not? You try to put that happiness of the chocolate cake in your mouth. When you eat it you are trying to put happiness inside of you.

Attachment is why you want to be with your friends. They have happiness inside them and when we get them close to us, we are getting that happiness. Underlying the attachment we are seeing the people and things as permanent and not as changing in nature. We are also seeing them as pleasurable in nature and not as unsatisfactory. So when you are attached to a person, you have a lot of desire for that person coming up. You are not looking at that person's body and saying, "This is a bag of flesh and bones". Rather the mind is seeing it as something pleasurable, something wonderful.

You are not looking at the person's mind and saying, "This is a sentient being that has ignorance, anger and attachment". Rather you are looking at that person and saying, "This person is wonderful and fantastic. They are so sensitive and intelligent." So with attachment we are seeing pleasure inside things that really are not like that at all.

Selflessness

Also underlying the attachment we are seeing things as being solid and concrete as if they had a self and as if they had an essence and identity and something that is 'them'. So because there is something that is 'them', there is definitely something there to be attached to. I am not attached to empty space. I am not attached to illusory-like things. I am attached to this body - this is real! So you can see that underlying the attachment, there is the grasping at permanence, the grasping at pleasure and the grasping at self. When you really look at it, you can begin to understand how attachment is totally

inaccurate and how when we are attached, we are hallucinating in abundance. You do not have to take any drugs to hallucinate. As Lama Yeshe used to say, you hallucinate all by yourself [laughter], most of the time we are hallucinating in this way.

Identifying Our Own Attachment

It is really important to begin to identify what is attachment and not just identify intellectually that attachment is a mind that exaggerates, projects and so on. But rather we need to ask, "What in my mind is attachment? When am I attached? What does it feel like when I am attached? What are the things to which I am attached? When I am attached to something, what happens afterward? When I am attached to something, what happened before that made me attached? When I am attached, what does it feel like?"

We need to identify this part of ourselves, that is why we keep coming back to the idea that these teachings are not just intellectual material, but are things that are pointing ways for you to understand yourself. What you are getting in the teachings is just the basic tools, but then you have to go home and think about it. You have to discuss it with other people. You have to meditate on it so that you can really start getting to know yourself better and understand how your own mind works.

Understanding Our Attachment Explains Our Unhappiness

I think the more we understand our own attachment, the more we will understand why we get so unhappy and confused. Sometimes unhappiness and confusion just seem to come out of nowhere. But the more we understand the attachment, the more we begin to see our mental patterns and mental ways of conceiving things. We begin to understand why different things arise in the mind. We begin to also be able to see through them and not take them so seriously and not buy into them.

By the force of habit, the mind might still say, "You really need to get this; you really need to do that." But because we have thought about it enough and the wisdom is strong, the wisdom could say, "Oh yeah, this is attachment, isn't it? It is habitual attachment. There seems to be pleasure in this thing but actually I know now, that even if I pursue this thing, it is not going to bring any pleasure. I am going to create a lot of negative karma by how I act and think if I do that and I am going to be left with sand having fallen through my fingers at the end of the day and nothing to show for it. So your wisdom becomes quite powerful and it does not buy into the story of the attachments showing.

We Learn, Understand and Change In Degrees

Of course this change does not happen all at once. Do not expect yourself to hear this teaching, go home tonight, identify all your attachments, understand completely how attachment works and by the day after tomorrow at the latest, abandon all your attachments [laughter]. I wish it were like that. It does not work like that. All these teachings are things that you are going to understand in degrees. That is why it is important to hear the teaching, but also to do purification practice and to also create a lot of positive potential because those enable your understanding to deepen and deepen and deepen.

Attachment and Love

In terms of personal relationships, differentiating between attachment and love can be quite confusing for us. One part of our mind tends to say, "This teaching is ridiculous. I don't want to hear about attachment because if I have attachment, I have to give up attachment, then I won't have affection for anybody anymore". So the mind pushes away the teaching. Then another part of the mind really buys into it, "Oh yeah, everything I feel towards every person is attachment. Therefore, I just have to completely isolate myself from all these people because they all bring up my attachment". So, we kind of tend to blame the people that we are attached to. "You make me attached, so go away." It is very easy to do that.

What we have got to understand here is that giving up attachment does not mean we push other people away. It does not mean we isolate ourselves from other people. It means that we give up the fantasizing mind that is making stories where there is nothing. That gives us the space to really see people for what they are, really become fond of them and have love and compassion for them without this sticky, clingy, wanting mind. It takes some time to do this. It takes years to differentiate between love and attachment.

In many of our relationships, we might have a lot of love and attachment mixed up together. It might be a ratio of 90:10; it might be 60:40; or it might go to different balances at different times. It is not a thing of just being able to look at attachment, draw a little line around it, isolate it and think we have everything in

our relationships figured out. We have to give ourselves a lot of time and energy to understand how attachment works and all of its different aspects.

Attachment Is Very Partial

Attachment tends to be very partial. Attachment is towards a limited number of beings. "I am attached to you, you, you and you. Who cares about everybody else?" But love is something that is much more wide spread and can go to many more beings. Attachment only goes to a few. Love can be much more impartial. Attachment is also contingent on how the person acts and what they have and what they do, whereas love is not contingent upon how they act toward us, what they have, what they do, or anything like that.

Attachment and Aversion

Attachment arises usually because we see certain aspects in people, over estimate those aspects or the importance of them and we cling to the person as being unique, desirable and we have to be with them. And as long as they have those attributes, that is the case. But then when they do not have those anymore, when they get ugly, when they lose their job, when they become senile, when they lose all the things that made us attracted to them in the first place, then all of a sudden we do not want to be around them anymore and we do not see anything desirable so instead of attachment, we now have aversion.

Attachment is Conditional

Attachment tends to be very conditional – as long as people are a certain way, there is an attraction towards somebody. As soon as they are not that way, then we drop them like a hot potato. Attachment tends to have a lot of expectation with it because it is conditioned; we love people because they have 'x', 'y' and 'z' qualities. Then, we have a lot of expectation that in the future, they are going to continue to have 'x', 'y' and 'z'. When they do not live up to our expectations, we get very upset and very disappointed. We feel betrayed, lost, disillusioned because here was this wonderful person and they were this, this, this, and this and they were going to bring me all these happiness and now look what happened...

[Teachings lost due to change of tape.]

...But with love, even when a person changes or acts differently, the love can still remain because we are not expecting them to be something for us.

A Needy Mind

Attachment often comes with a very needy mind. I need this and you kind of fill the job qualification. We are not quite that gross, but at some level we almost are that gross [laughter]. It is as if we hire somebody because they have the right qualifications and then when they do not have those qualifications anymore, we say something like, "Excuse me. I expect to have a lot of pleasure from this relationship and I am not getting it. So, what is happening?" That is an outcome of attachment, when we get to that point.

Positive Feelings

However, we do not want to make the mistake of thinking that every time we have a positive feeling towards somebody it is attachment. That is very easy to do and I have done it myself. I have seen other people do it too. It is as if we do not want to get too close to people because we will just get attached. So, we pull away thinking that then we will not be attached.

We think that every time we have a warm feeling it is attachment. It is not helpful to get into that kind of cold, aloof stuff. If you look at the meditations on bodhicitta, it is definitely about a warmth and an openness and an engagement. We should not use the teachings on attachment to develop our American extreme of isolation, alienation and individuality. It is very easy to do it. It is incredibly easy to do that. We can take the Dharma and turn it around so that it actually fits our afflictions*.

Look Deeper

[In response to audience:] Transience, un-satisfactoriness and selflessness are the three characteristics of phenomena in cyclic existence. But our mind perceives the opposite of those three and that acts as the basis for the arising of attachment. So it is good when you notice that you are attached to something and notice how your mind is thinking of it as permanent. Of course your intellectual mind will say, "I am

not thinking that Arthur is permanent. I know it is going to end". But look deeper [laughter] and look at what is really going on in your mind.

Look at how on one level, if we are really truthful in our hearts, the way we are seeing it is that it is not going to end; it is always going to be like this. We might intellectually say, "Yes, it is going to bring pleasure" and then when we look deeper we say, "Yes, it is going to bring pain." But when we look even deeper there is actually part of our mind that is convinced it is going to bring pleasure. Again it is a matter of going beyond just words to understand and look at what is happening inside of us and not just intellectualize about it. We need to give ourselves time to understand ourselves and put in the effort. But we also need to recognize that this effort has to be put in for many, many years.

2. Anger

An Exaggerated State of Mind

Now we can go on to the second affliction: anger. Anger is a mental factor that exaggerates the undesirable qualities of someone or something. Then it agitates the mind through being unable to bear that person, or that object, or situation. It also agitates the mind through wanting to harm back or reject, or in seeking to dispel something. So it is an exaggerated state of mind.

Recognizing Anger

Both attachment and anger definitely cause physiological changes in the body. This is something that comes up when I talk to professionals. They say, "No, anger is not a state of mind. Anger is a feeling in your body." That is the way many people actually experience anger. It is like they are not in touch with themselves. So the way they first experience anger is through recognizing that their body is agitated.

Sometimes we will notice that our stomach is tight, that our breathing rate has increased, that there is a lot of tension in the muscles, or that there is a lot of stiffness in the neck. This is the way we actually recognize our anger. We recognize it first through physical symptoms. But it is not that the anger, or the attachment for that matter, is the physiological state of the body. It is the mental state that then has a physiological affect on the body.

So if you can catch the attachment or catch the anger when it is small before your adrenaline gets pumping, it is going to be much easier to control. But if you cannot identify the anger when it is small and the only way you can identify it is after the adrenaline has gotten going, then you not only have the big mental factor of the anger, but you also have your physiological reaction to deal with. That makes it doubly hard to control the anger. That is why it is always good to catch it when it is small.

Manifestations of Anger

[Audience:] Where does resentment come into all of this?

Actually, we will get to resentment when we talk about the auxiliary afflictions*; resentment comes in there. You see, attachment, anger and these things are not monolithic because when you start to dissect them, there are always different manifestations. With anger, what do we have? We have irritation, annoyance, resentment, holding a grudge, hostility, belligerence and rage. There is an incredible dimension of different feelings, but they are all rooted in anger. Anger is unable to bear and wants to push away, or harm, because it has exaggerated the negative qualities.

Similarly, with attachment, when you look closer, there is also its ramifications. Attachment is like an octopus with different tentacles going out; there is sexual attachment, lust, emotional dependence, a subtle kind of stickiness and grasping, fantasizing and day-dreaming. So again there are all these different aspects of how attachment works. Anger is the same in that respect.

Anger functions to make the mind disturbed and rough; I think we know that. It is the basis for tormenting our own self and others. When we are angry, we not only feel tormented by the heat of the anger inside – we are very unhappy when we are angry – but we also inflict a lot of pain and misery on other people when we are angry. So it is the basis for torment both internal and external.

It can be a basis also for a lot of misconduct. A lot of our negative actions arise out of anger. So it is the basis of the creation of a lot of negative karma. We can be angry at a number of things. We can be

angry at people, physical objects, situations, or at ideas that we do not like. We can be angry at being sick, or at the situation of being sick. We can be angry at an inanimate object like a telephone, or a car when it does not work. We can be angry at the person who harms us and we can be angry at an idea that does not agree with our ideas.

Individual Anger Responses

[In response to audience:] Different people have different ways that the anger comes out. Some people are very patient with other people, but with objects and situations – they cannot handle that. Other people, if their car does not work, they are fine and if there is a traffic jam, they are fine, but as soon as somebody criticizes them, they are gone. Other people might be very good at handling criticism and react very well if they lose their job or something like that, but when they get sick they fall apart.

Just as different people have different things that they are attached to, we also have different things that we get angry about. And the things that we are angry about, there is a linkage with the things to which we are attached. That is why the people we 'love' the most, sometimes become the people we hate the most. The people we are attached to the most may later become the people we hate the most. This happens because we are so attached that we expect a lot from them. They gave us so much pleasure in the past that now, when they are not giving us pleasure and living up to our expectations, we become enraged and feel betrayed.

"Reasonable" Anger?

[In response to audience:] In America righteous indignation is like a cornerstone of our culture. After all, it is in the Bible, isn't it – to be morally indignant, self righteous, take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and all this kind of thing? If somebody is breaking God's laws, 'By god, you have to go in there and do something about it!' So, we take this and use it as a justification for our anger. 'I am not being unreasonable. That guy is being an idiot! My anger is quite reasonable, quite rational, quite justified, it is good that I am angry.' [laughter]

Being "Honest"

[In response to audience:] Sometimes we have this big thing about "Let's be honest." I think it is great to be honest, but we use honesty as an excuse for dumping our anger onto somebody else. You want me to be open and honest. Well, here I am [laughter] and I am going to tell you off [laughter].

The Past

Anger can be about things in the past. Somebody harmed us in the past. Somebody disappointed us in the past. Or it can be about something that is happening now that we get angry about. It can also be about something that might happen in the future. Look at all the different dimensions our anger takes, 'I am angry because when I was five years old, they took away my teddy bear.' [laughter]

During Retreat

In the first purification retreat that I did, I remember I was sitting there trying to say Vajrasattva mantra. All of a sudden, I remembered being in second grade and I realized I was mad at my second grade teacher because she would not let me be in the class play. I was still mad at her because of that. She would not let me be in the play because I did not do my homework. The homework was so dumb and boring and I knew it already anyway, so who wanted to do it? I can even remember her name [laughter]. It is incredible. We have things from the past that we have decided we are going to still be angry about and that person may not even be alive. The situation definitely is not happening now, but all we need to do is to think about it and we are angry.

It is interesting when you start to do retreat. You start to see how powerful the conceptual mind is; all you need to do is remember something that is not happening now, that is no where existing, but still you can have so much incredible emotion about it. It is incredible how our mind works. Especially with a lot of past anger, we can immediately bring the image into our mind and we get angry.

Creating Anger

Or we can get angry at things that are happening right now. It is too hot; it is too cold; somebody is criticizing me; somebody is not taking responsibility blah-blah-blah. Or we can get angry about something in the future. I am angry at that person because I am sure that they are not going to come true on their side of the deal. I am sure that this other country is going to attack us and I am really ticked

off at it. It is like our suspicious mind makes things very solid and becomes indignant about things that are going to happen in the future. You can see how this is very much a manifestation of our own fear.

We can also get angry at people who harm us or at situations that harm us. We can get angry with people who harm our friends and we can get angry with people who help our enemies. There are all these different classifications of people to get mad at too. You start putting these three together and we can get angry at the people who harmed us in the past, who are harming us now and who might harm us in the future. We can get angry with the people who harmed our friend in the past, are harming them now and who might harm them in the future. We can get angry at the person who helped our enemy in the past, who is helping our enemy now and who might help our enemy in the future. We are so creative in the number of things that we can get upset and angry about.

Reflecting

It is good to look at this and look at all the different variations of anger. Of course, the really strong anger is very easy to notice. You might start by looking at the times when you have really lost it and the times when you are clearly angry. Look at those things and understand them.

As time goes on, begin to look at other kinds of anger. Look at irritation and when you just feel irritated, or feel like you are gritting your teeth, or just feel bugged, annoyed; start looking at that.

And then look at the patterns in your anger. Is there a certain thing, situation, or person? Are you the kind of person who gets mad at things in the past, or the present, or the future?

Why is that? How are you thinking? How is that working?

Our Inner Laboratory

His Holiness is always saying that our laboratory is inside of ourselves. This teaching is just a framework. It is just a tool. To really understand anger, you have your own lab right there with you and you need to do the lab work. Your lab comes around with you and you just explore in your lab. You do research about what is going on inside of you. It is quite interesting, because the more you understand your own anger, the more you are going to tune into where other people are at and how they feel and about what could be going on inside of them. The more you understand yourself and begin to have some compassion for yourself, the more you will start to have compassion also for other people who are just as uncontrolled.

Have Compassion

When you see how your afflictions* run your life, how out of control you are and how in control the afflictions* are, instead of getting angry and thinking, 'My mind is so uncontrolled, how can I be like this?' have, instead, a sense of compassion for yourself. We are trying to be happy, trying not to have pain, but look at what the mind is doing. It is just constantly creating the causes for more and more pain and confusion. This is sad, so have a sense of sadness and a sense of compassion for yourself and wish yourself to be free of that.

Have a sense of tenderness, understanding, and patience with yourself because you know you mean well, it is just that you get overpowered by the afflictions*. The more you can have that kind of tenderness and patience with yourself, instead of coming onto yourself with the judgment thing, then the more you can start to turn that same tenderness and compassion and patience towards other people when you see them being angry or acting destructive.

I think that is enough for tonight. Go home and think about all the different points. Do a review session of yourself. Work in your inner lab and notice what is there.

Let us just sit quietly for a few minutes and do some meditation.

This teaching is based on the *Lamrim* or *The Gradual Path to Enlightenment*. Please refer to the following web-page for its outline and other transcripts or to listen to the audio recording of these talks: <http://www.thubtenchodron.org/GradualPathToEnlightenment/outline.html>

*'Afflictions' is the translation that Ven. Chodron now uses in place of 'disturbing attitudes' or 'delusions'.