

NOURISHMENT

93. Tibetans have a word 'cha' which means 'a share', or 'a portion'. It indicates what our slice is. Our slice of the world is revealed to us through our participation. We get what we get, and working with what we get keeps us alive and connected with what is vital. Imagining that we should be getting something else, something even better, means that we don't see what is on our own plate. To be always looking at somebody else's plate is not very useful.

94. The purpose of eating is to satisfy the sensation of taste in the mouth and the sensation of hunger in the stomach thereby ensuring that we take in enough nourishment to sustain body and mind. The purpose of meditation is similar. First of all, it has to please our mouth: we have to actually enjoy doing the meditation. For myself, I don't like broccoli. I avoid eating it, so there would not be much point in me praying to the Broccoli Buddha. It is important to find a practice that tastes sweet on our tongue and gives us increasing clarity. It is not enough to do it just because somebody told us to. We need to check into our own experience, our own sensation. 'How is this affecting me?' Buddhism is pragmatic in orientation, the methods being designed to give specific results. We don't do practice for the sake of just doing something to pass the time. Our practice is grounded in our intention and this intention needs to be heartfelt if it is going to be sustained.

95. If you have a cup and pour water into it, it will fill up. Even something as big as a football stadium will fill up once a hundred thousand people are inside. Think of all the experiences you have had today. How come you are not filled up? Sometimes we do feel overwhelmed and all we want is for people to back off. We seem to have reached the limit of our capacity. This is because our mind's surface has become sticky and events then become agglutinative. We are filled up with sticky rice. It all feels too much. But if the next moment we are offered an experience we find pleasurable we take a big bite! We have suddenly found some more space! The mind's nature is space, it is ego's involvement that limits our capacity to be available. Relax and release! All arisings are self-liberating in the infinity of awareness.

96. In our lives we each build up, layer by layer, a great lasagna of meaning, and as we know, lasagna is very heavy. A great deal of our suffering arises because our experience of ourselves and our environment is mediated through our habitual stories. These stories have a tilt or bias and this generates a selectivity in our attention which blocks many of the other possibilities that we might entertain. The purpose of meditation is to put our assumptions into question so that narrative can be connective and communicative rather than self-reflexively reassuring to our anxious ego

97. The tradition has general guidelines on when to use each of the practices, and we have to remember that each of these practices is a method. Methods are situationally,

rather than intrinsically, valid. Take potato peelers, for example. Their function is to remove potato skin and they do that very well. I enjoy peeling potatoes but if I have beautiful small, new potatoes I wouldn't want to peel them. No matter how efficient my potato peeler is, it is unhelpful in relation to new potatoes. The Tibetan tradition has many different 'potato peelers'. The question is, *'What kind of potatoes is life giving us at the moment?'*

98. If you are used to eating food with a lot of garlic, salt and chilli, but for some reason you have to eat plain white rice and steamed vegetables, the food will not seem very tasty. You will be yearning for the stimulus that comes from the intense flavours of garlic, salt and chilli. This is our situation. We are addicted to conceptualisation and when somebody has an addiction, whether it's tobacco or alcohol or to any kind of activity, they find themselves returning to that activity because it seems to provide something important. We go back to the familiar because it generates a sense of belonging and competence and pleasurable familiarity. This is why meditation has to be done again and again. We are in the process of getting used to what is actually there. This fresh flavour of the moment may seem bland and boring when we are used to the spices of anxiety, fear, hope, excitement and so on. These tasty supplements are produced by our own mind. When we chase our thoughts and emotions we over-stimulate our palate and then the simple taste of life-as-it-is eludes us. Through practice we relax and come to see that less is more.
99. When I was a child if I did not eat what was on my plate, the meat and the vegetables, I would not get the dessert. Working with energy is the dessert. First you have to digest the main course, which is awakening to the natural state. If you only eat pudding all the time your teeth will fall out and you will get a lot of pimples.
100. In order for the new experience to come, the old experience has to go. Otherwise the new experience would be mixed up with the old experience and the resulting mélange would be neither old nor new. If you go to a restaurant for lunch, if when they bring your food, you notice that the edge of the plate has old dried food on it, you would not be pleased. You might even say to the waiter, *"I'm not happy about this. I want a clean plate for my fresh food."* In the same way when your mind is open, available and free of the past you can enjoy the fresh food of the present moment. However, if the plate of your existence is piled up with an accumulation of old experiences, this will contaminate whatever happens now and the sad mix will not refresh your jaded palate.
101. The complex is actually simple because we experience it as just a moment in time. We build complexity by linking one simple moment to another and another and another as thought follows thought. This linking across time creates a sense of density, of solidity, of complexity—so that each moment feels more like a multi-layered club sandwich. This seeming complexity is produced by our mental activity, our conceptual elaboration. By relaxing our own habitual effort each moment is a simple non-fattening snack!

Excerpts from Transcripts