

2003-11-24 Satipatthana Sutta (Week 11) The Six Bases

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SPEAKERS

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Okay, so we are making our way through the Satipatthana Sutta. And we're getting near the end to the climax. And we're in the fourth foundation of mindfulness, which is the foundations of mindfulness of the Dhamma. So dhammas and usually translators will translate this is the mental quality or the mental content, content is of mind, the Dharma. In this context, it's so clear what Dharma means in this context, but it doesn't really matter so much. What matters is that is the particular exercises that are given in this section of the text. And the text gives five different exercises for developing mindfulness are ways of establishing mindfulness by focusing on five different areas of our psychological life. And more much more so than the earlier sections which are much more Matter of fact, kind of bear attentions, notice things how they are. Here, there's actually much more of a, of a process orientation where the person is to understand understand not only things as they are in the moment, the larger process of their part of psychological process, in particular, those processes that either lead to greater suffering, or keep us in the cycles of suffering, or those processes lead us to liberation. And to there's five different areas that the text talks about here. The five hindrances, the five aggregates, which we talked about last week. Today, we'll talk about the six basis for the six senses. And then next time we'll talk about seven factors of awakening. And then the last section is the Four Noble Truths and it's really amazing selection in this category are dhammas of some of the central teachings that the Buddha taught through his life. Essential categories of ways in which the Buddha wanted to look at and understand the psychological life that is aggressed through practice. And he gave teachers in each of these five, many different ways. And then here in this text, all five are brought together and held together as part of the process of developing mindfulness, as mindfulness leads towards liberation. And you can maybe understand that, that if you want liberation, if you want to be freed from the cycles of suffering, to understand something about how suffering comes into play, and some psychological forces that that are responsible for suffering, and you need to have some perception understanding of those forces that come into play as we get more liberated, become free. So the seven factors of

awakening have to do with those psychological processes that come into play as liberation happens and the foreign truths have to do with the insights that the person either sees or uses as part of the process, the path of liberation. Today, so section is on a five basis. This is Part Six spaces, the Latinas and they are, it's probably the part of the Satipatthana Sutta. That's least talked about of all the different sections of the text, even the corpse meditations are talked about sometimes in talks and but the six bases hardly ever talked about. So, in a few moments, I'll read it, that whole section. The six bases are there's there's two categories under the six internal basis and the six external basis and the internal basis are the six senses Because in Buddhism, there are six senses. There's normal five that we have. And then there's a sixth sense, which is that sense, sense store that sense apparatus that perceives or understands what's going on in our inner life. Like our thoughts, we can see that we're having a thought. There's a sense perception going on, if we have a feeling and emotion or an intention, in order to be perceived that the existence of that Buddhist will say there's this sense store the sense that's, that's aware of that. So there's six sense stores. So the door of the eye, the door of the ear, the door of the base of the year of this of the eye, the base of the ear, the base of the tongue, the base of touch, the tactile thing, the base of smell, and then the base of the mind, mine, Oregon, the mind sense that's those are the six internal basis, the six external basis are the objects of those senses. So, if you're looking at something, that any any form that you see in the world, any color that you see in the world champion seeing the world is the is the external sense base that corresponds with the eye. And when an external form somehow comes in contact with the eye, then seeing happens. And so the sounds is the external sense, base for hearing and same for smells, and for tactile experiences as we get touched in serious ways. And the food tastes come in, and then the thoughts, the feelings, the intentions, we have that The mind door picks up so it's a little bit of Buddhist psychology kind of how the Buddhist kind of traditionally divided up the Mott there, the census. Now what is crucial now in this section here is a talk about paying attention to these six internal bases and six external bases and paying attention to the knot that can arise in between them, or the yoke or the entanglement is usually translated as the fetter. So I might see something the eye makes contact with an object out there. And then there's some entanglement that arises at that same store. I want that or I want to get rid of it or something. So you know, some kind of grasping some kind of clinging comes into place. And that has this very technical technical term called a nut. Which probably in English, my more understandable to call it an entanglement, we get entangled in that thing, the mind somehow gets entangled. So if you're sitting here and example like are the bell and you see this beautiful bell that we have, and you think, you know, I want that bell, and you start sending spending next five minutes imagining how you might get that bell, you are now entangled in that sight object. So it can happen in any of the six stores and stores. And in order to understand this entanglement, because the process, the path of practice is one that leads to the disentangling from all these knots, so that we can just see a bell and there's no entanglement where there's no stickiness to it. There's no complications that we have in relationship to the bell. Mind is free in relationship to the bell, see the bell and I spell. Maybe the thought arises be nice to have it. But nothing happens. The mind does not entangle, not caught. There's no Velcro in the mind around the bell. So that's the kind of the background for this particular section. And here is the paragraph. And this is the Newser because translation. I usually been reading from Wikipedia body's translation, but that particular text is in a box in the back

somewhere, because they packed up the library for part of this, because they're going to put in the new floor in the library too. So I came down here thinking, I'll just get this book off the bookshelf, and it wasn't there. But this one I did find, so it's a little bit different way. Words. Furthermore, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in and of themselves. with reference to the six internal and external Sense Media, and how does he or she remain focused on mental qualities in and of themselves, with reference to the sixfold, internal and external Sense Media, There is the case where he or she discerns the eye discerns forms, sight objects and discerns the fetter that arises dependent on them. He or she, he or she discerns how there is the arising of an unresolved fetter and he or she discerns how there is the abandoning of a fetter once it has arisen and he or she discerns how there's no further appearance in the future of a fetter that has been abandoned. And then the same formula is repeated for the remaining Sense Media. here knows Tom tongue, body and mind And then there's their refrain that appears at every of these sections, that in this way, he remains focused internally on mental qualities in and of themselves or externally on mental qualities in and of themselves. And you and he or she remains independent unsustained by not clinging to anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in and of themselves. So, it's pretty bare bones, the description, but it, but it's a very fascinating practice that the text is encouraging us to do. And that is to stay attentive at the sense doors, to stay attention attentive at the primary place. We pick up our experience of the world and by paying attention there Pay attention to how the mind gets entangled with the world, how it gets caught by it in various ways. Now, it doesn't take a lot of analysis to realize that people don't spend a lot of time at the sense stores in a very kind of careful, direct way. We get lost from it very quickly, we spend a lot of time lost often in a world of abstractions, thinking about the future, thinking about the fact of the past, planning, worrying, having conversations having fantasies. And, and it might have been stimulated by some initial contact with the world. We'd be driving down one on one and you see a billboard for some wonderful product. And maybe they have billboard for a PDA so they call me and, and, and you miss your exit because you're fantasizing about how your life will be all better if you could organize it on your palm. And you know, so there was an external contact with a sidearm object and then the mind got entangled with that and got lost got carried carried away into that. And people will spend many, many minutes. I mean, innumerable minimum number of minutes, sometimes lost in worlds of abstraction. And they kind of aware of the world. I mean, they don't go bumping into walls and tripping into cars or something they kind of know. But the primary place where people's awareness is residing, is not in the world, but rather a little bit, you know, caught up in the inner world of other thoughts and abstractions. And then we have, you know, for example, in western psychology now, the idea of projection, which the Buddhist equivalent would be this term papañca. And if the idea of projection is right, and you think some young some Yogi and psychologists believe that, that's all we ever do is go around and constantly projecting that we see everything through projections. I don't know if it's that much, but I hope not because a whole Buddhist endeavor would be kind of undercut them. But But you know, so it's the degree in which we do kind of see people through the filter of our bias through our images through our memories to all kinds of projections. We're not seeing people directly as they actually are. We're not seeing that the primary kind of sense contact and a sense that we're seeing in through the filter abstractions. So we're also kind of somewhat removed from our senses. Some people are much more removed than others, I've

kind of lost from their senses entirely, not much in touch with their body or touch with what's going on. It's relatively common for people to give Dharma talks. I've heard a number of them emphasizing that everything that we know about the world begins at Since contact, and everything else after that is something that's built and constructed on that is it you know, but everything our experience of the world is at the sense doors. There's a idea in Buddhism that the mind is solitary. Our minds are solitary, cave dwelling, solitary creatures. And the explanation for this wide mind is solitary is that minds cannot touch each other. With the mind gets touched, we touch each other through the media Taan Geoff called a tennis shoe because of the Sense Media, through the media through the medium of our senses, we say something and there's all this understanding what people are saying that arises that touches us in some way. Or we touch each other and physically and that touches us in some deeper way. And so that can be very great intimacy. See that rises, but in the minds don't touch each other, ever so that minds are solitary. But everything our experience of the world happens through our senses. And so that's what's also considered most real, is what we experienced directly through our six senses. The world of abstraction that we build based on the senses, may or may not be real, may be quite fantastical. phantasmagoria is a wonderful word, the world that sometimes we live in, where we imagine all kinds of things of what's out there. And so in relationship to the six senses, a very classic and central practice, taught by the Buddha is a practice it's usually the description is usually described in English or translated into English as the guarding the sense doors. And I don't like to translate it that way so much because the idea of guarding the sense doors seems to suggest to me a little bit into others the idea of kind of being uptight and kind of closed off and you know kind of like you know cautious excessively cautious and kind of you know held holding off kind of distant removed you know, you know guarding the sense doors like as if sense experiences are bad or not, you're not supposed to have them or something and so, I don't know if that connotations arises for you when you hear but you should, you should sit guard your senses guard the guard the sense doors, but the sense of it I have is, is a little bit different. And so I translate a little bit differently and that is, I translate like translating is safeguarding oneself at the sense doors. So safeguarding, the inner the quality of our hearts qualities are mind the good quality good of our mind, the good quality of our hearts that so that when we're going around the world, and some stimulus comes, that we don't get entangled in that stimulus and the mind doesn't get lost, contracted, uptight, afraid, ambitious, you know, all kinds of ways which the mind gets caught or entangled, we stay there, the sense stores attentive to what comes in to us. Take responsibility for how we react to that. And then try to stay unintentional say try to maintain a good quality of mind. So one of the ways of doing this, there's two that I find very fascinating time is, after your meditation, meditate in the morning, and to some degree, your mind might be calmer than usual. It might be more settled and might feel a bit more higher quality of inner life than it had been if you've just been running around, doing all kinds of things. And so you want to safeguard that nicely. Quality, that sense of well being. And so one of the ways to do it is to stay attentive at the Sixth Sense stores to see what comes in to the system. And then how you react to that. So, you know, you might finish your meditation had a lovely meditation in the morning. And the first thing you notice after you open your eyes, is you notice the clock and the time now that's an innocent enough thing. Time is an abstraction that human beings have created to some degree. And, and it's arbitrary a little bit how we say it is because we have daylight savings time and not, you know,

we see this time and but we see see this time, and then the mind thinks about all the things it has to do during the day. And somehow the mind has been knighted up in seeing that. But if you hang out if you don't take responsibility, if you don't pay attention to there at the moment, then pretty soon you're entangled and lost the entanglements. But there's an opportunity there as you come out of meditation has relative sense of well being, to notice that initial impulse to get entangled in that idea of time. And then the backup little bit, start over again, just close your eyes or, or take a deep breath and realize what happened. And see if you can just let go of that in order to maintain that good feeling that good mental quality, that good sense of well being that might have been there as part of meditation, you safeguarded as opposed to realizing Oh, time to get started and that big agenda. So we dash off the cushion. We run into the kitchen, we turn on the coffee, we turn on the radio, we turn on the television, we put the food in the toaster, and and while we're smearing you know, butter on the bread, we're pulling on our socks and trying to drink the coffee through some other orifice. I don't know how to do it all and, and, and rushing, you know along. That's been a Wednesday. But that doesn't seem doesn't feel like it's gonna maintain much good quality of inner life, right? So and partly opportunity, not exercise of paying attention to how we get entangled as we leave meditation is that you can also look at the values, the beliefs, and the they come into play that gets you to think, Oh, it's important now, to run around like crazy doing all these things in order to get all these things accomplished. Who says that there's no manual that goes along? You know, a human being says, Thou must do four things at once having breakfast so you can get on with your life and do 32 things in one day. There's no yeah. So on what's the belief systems that come into play that is triggering you to get entangled? That can be a very fascinating study to make as you leave meditation, so safe guarding ourselves at the census is a classic Buddhist practice. Now one of the senses, of course, is the mind. And so we have to safeguard ourselves what we do with what arises in the mind. So we're sitting there minding our own business and our mind as a thought. Innocent thought about what it says and if you hadn't had an innocent thought today that you got entangled with. So you're sitting there and thinking about what paying debts, it isn't enough thought, you know, that's, I'm in debt. And then for the next 24 hours, the mind is entangled with thoughts about death, then All the associated thoughts around that and, and you know, how could ever got myself in debt and Why didn't my parents give me better financial education growing up and, and they didn't have economics and I was in high school and that's, you know, my school system really sucked back then because they should have taught us about credit cards and all these things and I wasn't you know, no one ever talking about credit cards. And so the mind you know, card starts getting lost this inner world that it's constructing and making and inventing and reacting to, and there could be a lot of contraction, a lot of, we get entangled to our entanglements. But initially, it was just a little simple thought, Oh, I'm in debt. And maybe not so innocent, but, but we have to pay attention there also to the thoughts that arise and not to be taken our thinking as some for granted or thinking that thinking that that we can think whatever we want that there is way which we react to the thoughts that arise. So I like to distinguish between faulting and thinking. And I'm the only one I know who says uses the word thought thing. But it's my idea that the mind or the mind does it thoughts and just produces these thoughts. And you can't be you can't control what thoughts Your mind is going to produce next. But you do have some control over the train of thinking of trade, that chain of thoughts that the mind gets involved in. And so you don't have to start

making a chain of associations and you know how to get caught up in in thinking. Sometimes you don't seem to have much choice, but there's times it's very clear, you have choice. So I don't want you to think about that. Or I now I think you need to start thinking about something else now. It becomes April 13. And it's useful sometimes to think I need to think about paying my taxes. How am I going to do that? Where do I get those tax forms and Where do I get my documents? And all that? Little bit later than it? Probably but, yeah. But you know, it's possible to, you know, take responsibility a little bit for how we're thinking, how we're reacting, the intentions that arise, you can't control necessarily attention the intention that arises, but you can consider how you relate to that intention. So Tanisha Bhiku be translated this version here. He has this wonderful analogy for the mind that the mind is like a board meeting. And, and there's all these directors of the board sitting around the table. And, and however, you're the CEO of the board, and you have no control over the other directors. They do whatever they do. I mean, you can't control what they say, or what they don't say they just say what they're going to do. However, the CEO Has veto power. And so nothing happens. There's no act that's made without the CEO agreeing to go along with it, because the CEO will say veto power. So you won't say anything, you won't do anything. Unless, you know, no other CEO has advised in. So that I think there's a nice analogy of how the mind is, you know, you can't control your mind hundred percent and all this stuff happens to mind, but marvelous, you know, how the mind creates thoughts and ideas and images and the mind can be phenomenally creative. Event mind has a mind of its own. But you have some choice about what to do with what arises in the mind. And if nothing else, you have the veto power. No, I'm not gonna say that. No, I'm not going to continue that train of train of thought, No, I'm not going to act on that. And, and I think it's very empowering, very helpful to realize that these two things that that you're not gonna know, and you're not going to Charge of what arises pops up in your mind. You're in charge of what pops up in your heart, necessarily. But you have this power of veto. You don't say, Oh, no, I'm not going to do that. I know that I felt sorry for being very comfortable. at meetings I used to go to a lot like when I was at Zen center, at spirit rock, various places where there were a lot of contentious things being discussed. And when I realized that we basically were operating under a consensus model. And if I said, No, I don't think I want to go along with that. Then everybody stopped, the whole process kind of stopped or whatever. And so I didn't have to rush in and say what I thought immediately. I could just watch the conversation for a while and I didn't have to feel tight or upset about it or tense about what was going on, in my opinion, and when was heard, and I could just wait and when it's time set, time was right when there's a pause in the conversation next The only you know, I don't think I agree with that. Anyway, so I hope that the analogy is helpful for you guys in your minds that you have the veto power. So our whole experience of the world begins at the sense stores. And pretty much everything else is an abstraction based on that. And it might be a relevant or accurate abstraction of sorts. But but it is an abstraction. So what happens if we come down as our living much more at the primary level where life is initially initiated, where life has begun at the experiences of the senses of the world? Now that comes very close to or maybe the same thing as the common instruction. Be in the present moment as you practice mindfulness. Be in the present, be in the present, notice what's going on, the wind blowing as your cheek or the sounds of the car driving by Or, you know, whatever that whatever is going on experience of your breathing as you breathe. But practice that kind of sense sensory awareness exercise. I like to think of mindfulness as a sensory

awareness exercise, because such a huge part of mindfulness is to stay there at the level of the senses, and experiences what's happening at the felt sense of our experience, what's happening at the sense point of all our experiences. So we have a strong emotion that arises difficult emotion, perhaps. And then the task of mindfulness, the primary one is to be with a felt sense of that difficult emotional, strong emotion. What is it like essentially, the sense level, as opposed to spending a lot of time analyzing or thinking about why it's there, just kind of be there for how it is in this moment. Now, at the six senses includes also the mind, which, you know, a lot of things could be happening there, but, but staying there as it's unfolding in the present, A moment in the present moment, as experienced at the Sixth Sense doors and then becoming aware of the fetters of the knots, some you Jenna, the entanglements that arise and, and then learning how to let go of those entanglements, learning how to untangle yourself, so that our experiences or the census or experiences of the world and experience of an inner life is one that is unentangled. unencumbered, unobstructed, just kind of a clean, clear relationship to how things are happening in the present moment. The classic definition, one of the most classic definitions of what happens to a person when they get liberated in Buddhism is a description of absence. What is where the person is free from There's very little, there's little bit hints there, here and there. But there's very little description in the classic Buddhist texts of kind of positive expectancy, the, the, there's very little description or definition of enlightenment, in terms of what is present. Like you have some great experience. So this experience of oneness with nature or, or self, you know, no self or, or, you know, infinite consciousness. So there's all you know, all kinds of ways which we will define in life. Maybe they're all fine and wonderful. But the Buddhist tradition doesn't define hardly ever enlightenment from the point of view of what is present, but rather does it from the point of view what is absent. And it does primarily then through the classically, through the app, the 10 knots, attend entanglements that a person's become free from and just Word some you're gonna attend fetters and have a go through the list. Maybe they don't make complete sense to you. But just keep it keep it may be there in the back of your mind to seed. The first fetter. First way we can tangled unnecessarily with the world is by taking things personally. I've heard that before. It's called the personality view having the personality view, kind of the view that you know that there is a kind of person here that you can define by your experiences in some way. And the second is the entanglement of doubt. And it said that until you really had some real taste of liberation, it's a little hard to really know for sure what isn't, isn't the path of practice, and so that the mind will have almost naturally have a little bit of doubt, and said that that better of doubt to vanish at some point. The third fetter is that fetter entanglement of believing that rites and rituals in themselves or virtue in and of itself will lead a person to liberation. And often people say it's like the leaving that's simply chanting a mantra or going through certain kind of rituals or carrying crystals or something is going to kind of do what it takes to become enlightened. That may be a wonderful thing to do. But the tradition says that if you believe this is what's going to get you ultimately liberated. That's an entanglement and entanglement you become free of when you really understand the nature of the practice with the practice what it takes to become free of the tangles. The fourth fetter is the fetter of sensual desire. And it doesn't take a lot of thinking to realize how much we can we get human being Occasionally at least, get entangled to sensual desire all kinds. The fifth is the fourth, the fifth is the tangle of ill will, of resentment of anger, of bitterness of hate aversion. And that's a place people get entangled with their

world with themselves. So that fetter dissolves. The six is better is the attachment or clinging? Actually, the sixth and the seventh, both of them are clinging to particular deep states of meditation. And I like to think of it as being clinging to spiritual experiences. There's no spiritual experience, which you're supposed to cling to in Buddhism. And it's like, maybe one of the reasons why enlightenment is divine. defined by the absence of something, you said we don't confuse enlightenment by some spiritual experience, some experience is going to be the thing. So that Feder of clinging to spiritual experiences after all these years of spiritual practice, I finally got this great experience of oneness. It's, I got it. Don't hold on to it. Don't cling to that. And then so then there's this seventh one is the seventh way in which we get kind of entangled with the world is conceit. All the ways in which we compare ourselves to others or to certain standards, and better than and worse than all kinds of things conceit. Then, nine, is this is a very interesting one, and is restlessness. I'm not sure exactly how that works myself is considered to be a very high. I understand restlessness is being full of suffering. But how it actually talks about is an entanglement or restlessness kind of, I think there's kind of can be a kind of very deep seated restlessness that keeps us always going and wanting and so it you know, it's a fuel for being untangled like a workaholic. But you don't have like, you know, workaholic, I mean, our poor minds even if you're completely, you know, mind sometimes work overtime even if we're not working. And then, but you can see that you sit down and meditate and you sit to sleep sometimes you sit very quietly meditation, and you sit from a retreat maybe for many days, and you and there's still kind of agitation deep down very deep layer agitation, that keeping the mind going, keeping the mind spinning out into scar. concerns, even though there's a lot of relaxation, ease that's happening, that agitation is still operating. And perhaps, you know, that's what keeps us is that agitation that keeps us entangled, keeps us involved or caught by things. And then the 10th entanglement is the entanglement of ignorance of, of ignoring of not understanding, specifically not understanding the Four Noble Truths. So if you don't understand the Four Noble Truths, then it's really hard to understand where to find the path of practice. Go part of the function of the Four Noble Truths is to help us find the path to liberation. And so if you understand your experience through the three four noble truths, you find the path to untangling. But if you understand if you ignore your experience, if you ignore the Four Noble Truths as an orientation, for understanding your experience, then you'll stay untangled. Especially eight was conceit six and seven, I lumped together six and seven lumped together as attachment to spiritual experiences the two different categories of spiritual experiences just lump them together so the entanglements so stay close at hand with your sense experience. And notice how you get entangled. Notice how you get caught. And then see if you can uncocked yourself and catch yourself using yourself and all that. And and, in any case, it's really healthy and really beautiful and wonderful to live in our senses and commend it to all of you. And I hope that it helps you in the wonderful practice of safeguarding your sense. You said safeguarding your safeguarding yourself at the same stores. So we have about four minutes. If anybody would like to ask any questions or make some comments about this should be a good time. Yes. You say that this, these things aren't normally taught. Why is that? I think maybe it could have been so easy to talk about in a way that you know, is compelling or you know, I don't know exactly how many there see the list of six. I mean, you know, this kind of dry I don't have a good answer for you. Sorry. Yes, sir. What is real is what you can perceive, says Oh, so what's empirically real? So I mean, I mean, see the, the first of all that, you know, this

ancient Buddhist tradition was 2500 years ago that they were considering this. And what they're concerned about is really understanding our own empirical experiences. Because that is where that's where that suffering and freedom of suffering will occur. And so, it doesn't really matter, you know, what is real beyond our sense experience, is is kind of for the, for the purposes of liberation is not that interesting. So ultraviolet light is not so interesting, for the purposes of the of personal liberation of freeing yourself from these fetters these tangles so so I probably spoke not so well then because I said what is real but what's real for the purposes, which which relies on empirical experiences that belong to the domain of our, you know, how we suffer and how we create our world. It begins at the sense doors to help it all spiritual experiences, okay? So that the, what they're what these they refer to the eight, eight jhanas, eight absorptions that people deep concentration work. So there's two categories of these there's the first four, which is called the absorptions on form. And so that's better numbers. And then this is Feder number seven is the absorption in the formless realm lasted for jhanas. So then the plan is for next week to talk about the seven factors of awakening. And it turns out it's pretty much a coincidence. But in December we have a Dharma practice day. We Which is these days on Friday, we can look at some subject in Buddhism. And the next one in December, we're going to talk, we're going to look at the seven factors of awakening. So you could hear the lecture of the talk next Monday and then you could, if you're interested to go further with it, you can come to that Dharma practice day in December. So thank you.