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THERE ARE GODS BUT THEY HAVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS

CECILIA: I was thinking about restlessness and fantasies. We are always somewhere else. How come we are so restless and what to do about it?

UPUL: Yes. The first thing is that we are living in a restless society, a restless environment. The whole of humanity is restless: in our towns, in our villages, in our offices, and even in our houses. Even on TV, everybody is restless. So the restlessness comes into our mind, and it enters our life. It's all very normal, because we are just one cell of the whole society. We have to accept that – the nature of the society and its influence on us.



There are two kinds of restlessness. The first comes from the society – if we are in the middle of the crowd, and if the crowd is restless, then we are automatically restless. There is no reason to be restless, but it happens automatically, mechanically. So we can be aware of it and see: “This is useless restlessness. I don't have to do anything. There is no hurry, so why do I become restless? Why am I running? Why am I doing things quickly? I am not in a hurry.” So if you don't have any personal need to hurry, you can try to calm down.



And the second is: “I have to do so many things.” There are targets, goals, things to achieve, and always when we see the clock, the timetable, the diary or the calendar we are running after time. And so the restlessness is an automatic reaction to that competition between time and ourselves. The restlessness comes because we are fighting against time. We try to overcome time.





I have met so many people who have watches on their wrists; if you look closely you can measure the seconds. And if I ask them: “How many times do you need to measure the seconds in your life?” they say: “Never”. Nobody needs those seconds to be exact. Maybe to catch the train in the West, but normally we don’t need to measure them.

So that is what is happening in our modern society: we are dividing up time. What is time? Time is a concept. So we create a concept which is not very important, but finally we become victims of our own concepts.

If you can arrange your activities for tomorrow, what you have to do: what is the first thing, the second thing, the third thing – what are the priorities you have to do? If you can make a schedule, you can think about how much time approximately you need for task number one, two, three, you can make a good plan. But don’t forget: this is just a plan and reality is a different thing. The unexpected can happen. Or sometimes we have to do things again and again. So please make some space for the unexpected in your program, your schedule, your agenda. Nothing has to happen according to your wishes. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don’t.

And we should do only one thing at a time. Either thinking, talking or doing something. So if you do just one thing, there is no need to be restless, no need to be stressed. But what is happening is: yes, I am reading a book or an article, but I’m thinking about how many articles I have to write, or how many books I have to read, or how many jobs I have to do today, or this week. If you think like that, then all the pressure piles up on writing this article. But this article is a simple thing. Not heavy. Just a job. But we can’t experience that lightness. We can’t do these things with a relaxed mind and a relaxed body because the waiting list is there. That’s why being present is





very important. “Yes, I’m doing this article now. I’m doing this job now. I’m cooking this curry now. It does not matter how many curries I have to cook, or the number of times I have to cook in my life. At the moment, I am doing this.” In this way I can enjoy what I do. I can give my full attention to it: “This is the only thing I have to do and enjoy at the moment.”

If we miss that opportunity, we can’t enjoy our life. And then we need something else to enjoy, because in our life there is too much pressure, too much stress. So then we have to go away somewhere different, where our life is not, to find joy.

And the third thing is; Yes, we can plan things, but sometimes we can’t fulfil our plans. That is the nature of uncertainty. We have to be open to uncertainty.

Another practical thing is: what to do when you know you are restless. Try to feel your breath and compare the difference: “How is my breath when I am calm? Now, I’m restless.” See the heaviness of your breath. Feel the deep breath, listen to it, rather than thinking about the external factors that are making you restless. So if you are with your own breath, the breathing will help you to calm down, to get rid of the surrounding stress. At least temporarily, for a few seconds. If you learn to train yourself to watch your breath from time to time – at least once per hour – then you can start again with a fresh mind. Otherwise we are carrying restlessness from early morning to the afternoon, from afternoon to evening, to the night, to the next day, to the next week, to the next month and to the next life.

CECILIA: I think the difficult part is to forget about the waiting list. All these other things that need to be done later. Also it’s more difficult to enjoy what you’re doing when it will take a long time to finish, and you know it will go on and on.





UPUL: Yes, you can worry, but there is no result to this. I know that the waiting list is hard, but it's just a list. It can't do anything. It can't increase your blood pressure. Is it your heart? No, it's just a list, a thought. But we forget this. We think it's real. We imagine all that work, we imagine how big it is and how much time it takes, and then it becomes real. Like a dream. So we have to learn, when the list is coming up, to know: This is just a list. So put it in the fire. And when it comes again, we know it's just a thought. We have to learn, we have to train ourselves. And it's good to have methods. It's good.

CECILIA: The first thing you said about living in a restless society... I think we are living in a society where we are constantly encouraged to grasp things, to want things that we didn't even know we wanted. Publicity creates a need, and then we think, "Oh, I must have this and this..." What attitude should one have to all these messages?



UPUL: Actually, if you ask somebody: "Why do you do this?" they say: "I want to do this, that is why I do it." "But why do you want to buy this?" "I buy – that is why I buy. I go there – that's why I go there."



We think that everything we do is because we want to do it. We think we are the person who makes the decision. If you look at it superficially, you can see it like that, but if you investigate it and analyze it, I would like to say that we are hypnotized. The media, the advertisements are hypnotising us. They say: "This is the thing you have to buy. This is the place where you have to go. This is the thing you need to wear. This is the way you should cut your hair, or style yourself." These messages are going into our unconscious minds, deep inside our consciousness. And when the right time comes, when we are going to the shop to buy soap or shampoo or whatever, then that suggestion is coming up and says: "Buy that one". I think that we





think we want to buy these things, but actually there is no “I”. It is the unconscious mind who is deciding. And it’s already decided what I am going to buy, what I have to do. So we are like robots in this society. We speak about independence, but we are not independent. This is the result.

If you want to be independent, you have to ask yourself each time: “Why do I have to buy this? Why do I have to do this? Why do I have to go there? Why do I have to say this?” We are not normally asking ourselves these questions. If somebody else asks us to do things, we ask them: “Why do I have to do that?” But when our unconscious mind tells us to do things, we are not asking questions anymore. Because we have 200% trust, belief – more than in God, more than in Buddha, we believe in our unconscious mind. Because the unconscious mind is more powerful than our consciousness. So what the unconscious mind is commanding: we do, without thinking. If you want to change that, you have to start asking questions. You have to challenge it. You have to argue with it. So when you start to argue with your unconscious mind, or the commands coming from the unconscious mind, you say: “No, first I need a reason. At least one. Or I want two, or three reasons before I follow this command.” Then you can’t find many reasons. Just emotions are coming. Just thoughts are coming. There is no background, no base. Nothing important, no good reasons.

So we have to learn to see the reasons behind, whatever we do. Then nobody can hypnotize you. Nobody can influence you. If you do something, you do it because you want to do it. You are the only person responsible for your life. That is the basic and principal teaching in Buddhism – the earth is the important place, and there is nowhere else we have to go. This is the important place and you are the important person. You are the master. You are the creator. You are the person who can make yourself happy, and who can make yourself unhappy. See your skills. See your position.

