Free Will

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 40:03

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa

Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

I thought I'd tackle the problem of free will. How does that come up in the Buddha's teaching?

This idea of free will has been with us for a heck of a long time. Even going back, were we at the mercy of the gods or could we instruct the gods to do things for us? So in terms of polytheism, that's how it began - this idea that there was some controlling deity or deities, and the idea was to get them on your side, sympathetic magic, things like that.

Then somehow it corrupted into the idea that if you actually did the ritual perfectly, you could then control. And that was when the Buddha appeared. So the Brahmins there, who controlled the whole business of sacrifice, they knew the specific words, nobody else could learn them, and they knew the specific action, exactly what to do, and this would bring about the desired results. So there's some sort of free will thrown in there with some sense of control. That's what we want, isn't it? Control.

I think in the West we've cornered ourselves into a very sharp individualism. We don't really see ourselves too much as social beings, as social will. We tend to see ourselves as very little individual pods who demand to do what we want to do. So the idea of free will, especially from the Enlightenment, is something that's core stuff for us. And it comes out, as you'll see when I talk later, in capitalism, the idea of freedom, freedom of choice, all that.

The other thing is that with the Enlightenment - that's ours, 18th century, which I totally believe in, the idea of rational - so free will is to do with something about thinking about it and about coming to some sort of philosophical conclusion that we have or we don't have free will.

But there's a very interesting discourse here, or at least there's a part that really interests me, from the Brahmajāla Sutta, the opening discourse, actually the longer discourse of the longer discourses. And he lists quite a huge amount - I think 64 different speculative views. Some of them you'll have heard of: whether the cosmos was infinite or finite, whether the enlightened person was born or died or what not. And everybody has a view on these things. And this is what he says: he says all such views are merely the feeling of those who do not know and see, the worry and uncertainty of those immersed in craving.

And what catches my attention is "merely the feeling." We tend to be up here, and if we can work something out logically, it separates out from feeling. Therefore you believe in free will, whether you actually feel it or not, or rather you discard feeling, you push it away, on the understanding that there is free will. Even if I don't feel free, so long as I say to myself I am free, I go around thinking that I am free. I don't know if that makes sense. Hopefully, as we go on, it will get more obvious.

If we take another discourse, which the Buddha actually called his honey bowl discourse - it's a delicious sweet you can still buy in India. And he gave a cryptic teaching there, and all these monks who were listening to him didn't ask him anything about it. They went off to this other monk called Mahākaccāna, who was very good at expounding the short teachings of the Buddha. So they ask him, and he says to them, "Why don't you ask him?" And they go, "Right then." They say, "Well, whatever." So he gives them the longer teaching, and then they go back to the Buddha and say, "This is what Mahākaccāna said." It's funny, isn't it? And the Buddha says, "Well, if you'd have asked me, I would have said the same thing." A roundabout way of getting there.

Anyway, the core of it is this. What we counter-know is dependent on contact. That's the part of the Wheel of Dependent Origination, contact. So if it's something that's visual, there's got to be contact at the visual base, the retina. But remember there's also the sixth sense in Buddhism, which is emotion, thought. So something must arise into the mind to make contact - your stimulus. So that's, for instance, when you wake up in the morning. The first thing that comes up, you don't beckon it, it just arises. So much of our day is just stuff arising, either coming from an outside stimulus or from something inside us.

And then he says that upon this, feelings arise, feelings and perceptions. Now, in Buddhist psychology, feeling and perception arises at the same time. And all a feeling is, is a distinguishing in the mind between what is experienced as pleasant or unpleasant. And that's your perception. So whatever feeling arises, as it arises, it's always experienced as neutral. But as soon as you flip into a perception of it, it immediately cuts the world up into likeable, unlikeable.

So, for instance, in your meditation, you might find some emotion arising, which you describe or which you label as, or at least your attitude towards it is unlikeable. It's a bit of depression or something. Now, if you take your attention away from the emotional value of it to the sensation value of it in the body, and you get down to just thick feelings or those feelings that come up with depression, whatever - heat, whatever it is - then you'll see as you move towards that base, the idea of like and dislike begin to fade out a bit, until you can get to a point where there's just sensation. And at that point, you're at the point where the stimulus comes in. So you've gone back on it.

When you do something like that, you begin to realise that it's our definition of things. It's our definition of things which is the core problem, because it comes from our view, our view of something. So, for instance, if we're conditioned to be racist, as soon as we see somebody of another race, unpleasant feelings arise. It'll just happen naturally. If you're not conditioned that way, it doesn't arise. So these feelings that we get

are also based on our views and opinions. And they arise with feeling. So the heart-mind work in unison. It's we in the West that have split these two up. If you go East, for instance, to Thailand, when they say - I can't remember what their word is for mind, something like *citta* or something - you'll see they're not actually pointing to the head, they're pointing to the heart.

Then he says, as soon as we perceive something, we'll start thinking about it, and then you get that proliferation.

So now, at the root of this feeling perception is the me. That self-awareness. When you're in meditation and you get that very strong feeling of being an observer, you've distanced, shall we say, so much away from your body, your feelings, your sensations, that you get this feeling of the watcher. Turn on that. Where's that coming from? If you're aware of the watcher, you can't be the watcher. As soon as you make something an object, you can't be it. So, if you're observing and there's that feeling of watching, of a watcher, just shift your attention and try and catch where that feeling's arising from.

So now, as it's most deluded, this me thinks it's this body and mind. And what's its purpose? What does the self want? It just wants to be happy, doesn't it? I want to be happy, full stop. So, in order to be happy, it has that feeling, that need to control. If something painful comes up in the body, it wants to get rid of it, so you take a tablet. If emotions come up that it doesn't like, it just suppresses it. And underneath all that, remember, it's always afraid of the body falling sick, the body dying, the body growing old.

So this business of always wanting to live in a pleasant atmosphere, in a happy atmosphere, is, shall we say, the motivation behind the self. But it's coming from that root misunderstanding that we are this body and this mind and this heart, and the happiness of this body, heart and mind is also dependent on the world. So good food makes me happy. So I want to control my food. I want to be able to cook beautiful things for myself.

So this, of course, the Buddha points out in the second sermon that he gives to these five companions who deserted him because he'd gone a bit soft eating rice pudding. And he points out, he says, "Well, if the self were the body, it'd be able to say, 'be like this, be like that,' be able to control it." He's not talking here about simple movements of lifting something. He's talking about what we really want, which is not to grow old, a bit more beautiful, a bit more handsome, and definitely not to die.

So that we have, that wanting to control is, I think, what we mean by free will, the desire for free will. That's actually what I think we mean at the root of it. Because, if we're to receive what we desire, then we need to control the source of pleasure. Full stop. Simple as that.

Now it's because we fail to do that, in the West anyway, we have these three ideas. They split into fatalism, libertarianism and determinism. So you can read all these philosophers and they'll slot into one of these one way or the other.

So fatalism is just that understanding that actually you don't have any free will at all. In fact the self is

utterly impotent. So acts of free will don't have any effect. We don't really have any control over our lives. Anything that happens to us was previously ordained, it's going to happen. So now if on Thursday I'm driving into Newton Abbot, it doesn't matter if I go fast or slow, whether I take this turn or that turn, if I'm going to have a crash, I'm going to have a crash. Full stop. It's bound to happen. You get this view from people who believe in the stars, don't they? And then you get that psychology of self-fulfilling prophecy. So if the stars say, "You're bound to fall in love," then they'll find anyone - a chicken, a horse, whatever - they'll fall in love. It's got to happen.

And when you think about it, the really important things of our lives, well, it's difficult to say we've got any control at all. For instance, we didn't choose to be born. We definitely don't know the hour and day of our death. We didn't have a choice in cultural conditioning. What about things like economic, social, cultural? We just ended up with that. And then there's the elements - mercy of the elements. We don't even choose to fall in love, now that I've mentioned it, actually. And I suppose there's a bit to do, I suppose, with the personality as well. If you're a fatalist, that hopeless resignation. If you're that sort of person, you tend to be one, I think. Or the other side, sanguine optimist or something. I suppose at best it might build up a stoic patience, a fortitude, a stiff upper lip. On with the British.

So this whole idea that we don't have choice, everything's predestined. I mean, it comes up in the spiritual literature too. So in terms of the Buddha's day, there was a Makkhali Gosāla. And all he said was, if you went down one side of the Ganges, doing great acts of compassion and huge donations and he came up the other side murdering and pillaging, it would make a blind bit of difference because the whole road of *kam ma* was set. Every soul that was born would have to go through the whole process of karmic refinement and in his case it did actually lead to some sort of heavenly state. But of course it undermines any morality because it doesn't matter what you do in the end because the universe is so manufactured through *saṃsār a* that it'll push you to that definite end - a sort of absolute fatalism.

In Christianity you've got Saint Augustine of course - he started the one about predestination. If God knew everything, he knew whether you were saved or not. And at worst that was Calvinism and Scottish Presbyterianism - you're predestined. From that there came the Protestant work ethic, of course. So that even though you couldn't tell whether somebody was going to go to heaven or hell by their earthly deeds, you can understand that one presumed that if you were successful in business, basically you had to go to heaven. So then you get that work ethic, and people who are rich get to heaven, and people who don't, well, they don't go to heaven. They go to hell.

Islam is also fatalistic. It's all written on the tablet, this original tablet. Your life's written on this tablet. And there was a lovely case I heard of where a friend of mine was working on an oil rig out in the Middle East. And two people fell off the rig, two Westerners. And the current was taking them away, and they were shouting for help. And there were two soldiers just standing there watching them. And the manager came rushing down and threw out the lifeboard, pulled it back in. And he said to these soldiers, "Why didn't you do that? Why didn't you help him?" He said, "The will of Allah." Heavy, isn't it?

And in our existentialism, we've got Albert Camus. He's the one who wrote the myth of Sisyphus. Now, Sisyphus ended up in hell, if I remember rightly, because of avarice. And his job, if you remember, was to roll a boulder up a hill, and then, of course, it would go down the other side, so he had to go back down and roll it back up. And for Camus, that was the metaphor of life. Every morning, you roll this thing to the top, and overnight it fell back down again. And when he came to make a judgment about what was the point of having a consciousness which suffered? What was the point of that? It's absolutely absurd. Take God away, take any ultimate freedom away, take the idea of salvation or *Nibbāna* or liberation away. What's the point of being conscious when it's such a misery? So his idea was that a human being, really to maintain his dignity, he only had one choice, which was to commit suicide. Luckily he was saved, the consequence of his own philosophy. Died in a car accident. One wonders whether he'd have carried that one through, actually.

So that's all there's been to fatalism, and definitely the Buddha wasn't into that. Predestination, everything's set.

The opposite of that, of course, is libertarianism. And that, I think, is definitely the fruit of our enlightenment, 18th century enlightenment. Here, of course, it gets corrupted when a person says they want to do their own thing in their own way in their own time - a teenage rebellion. But the idea is that we do feel empowered to make choices. And when you look back, of course, you do see that you have made certain choices. I mean, you could think that those choices are conditioned, but from a libertarian point of view, there's this bit of rationality come in. So that things just don't happen, you can stop, you can think about whether this is good or this is bad. And those decisions, a libertarian would say, are not random, and they're not predetermined. So there's a sense of freedom, a sense of being able to guide one's life. And you can choose - the idea of choice - and thereby we affect our decision-making.

So that view went on to support things like individual rights, freedom of speech, freedom of voting, and indeed the capitalist market, because it's the individual now who has to make choices for themselves, and they build up their own wealth. I mean, that's at its most painful, you might say. On the other hand, it does make an individual entirely responsible for their actions. So if a person ends up a robber, you can't suggest mitigating circumstance. Poverty, it's their choice. It will be a robber, so we'll hang them. Get on your bike when there's unemployment. You blame the worker for lack of skills because they've not got jobs and stuff like that. It leads, doesn't it, to a dog-eat-dog society, if you take it to an extreme.

But the idea of that at a spiritual level, unfortunately from a Buddhist point of view...

Unfortunately, it does give the idea of something inside us, this little person, that is a sort of rational self, detached from the world, able to see things from this vast, indifferent plane, and make decisions about it. Now, from the Buddha's point of view, that's the source of our misery, actually.

So if you walk into a supermarket with the idea of buying biscuits, and you're walking down the aisle, you come across a brand you hadn't seen before, Goblet or something. You pick it up and it says, "Goblet

makes you happy." You look at multi-flavoured biscuits. Then you think, well, in my mind I'm going to buy my favourite figs. So there you're stuck between a so-called choice. Well, you can always say, well, all that's heavily conditioned, but there's some sort of rationality there. Do I want this? Do I want that? Feeling.

See, that's the problem with libertarianism, it lifts choice, it lifts freedom into this idea that it's up in the head somewhere. But actually you can see, even on a simple thing like choosing a biscuit, or making a vote, making a vote which we call a freedom of vote, but actually it's your feeling, isn't it? When you see certain politicians, you feel sick. When you see others, you feel happy.

So this business of capitalist freedom of choice, you can definitely argue that it's just juggling with conditioning. And it's based on this immediate fix. See, it's very interesting because before the war, if you look at the adverts before the war for products, they were very centred on the product and very pragmatic. And people only bought what they needed. That was the idea. You only bought what you needed. So if you were selling a clock in an earlier advert, you would simply point out that it has an alarm. It's got red lighting so you can see it in the night. And you'd buy it if you needed it.

If you do it these days, because this was Freud coming through, you've got to put a naked woman next to it. And the desire that comes up is immediately latched onto the clock so you buy it. It keeps you awake.

So that business of a sort of separate rational self, that won't work in the Buddha's teaching. Because that's also embedded.

And the third position is this determinism. So now, here there's the idea that the personal self, that the self does have a choice and it does affect things. So it's unlike fatalism. But unlike libertarianism, even the choices you make are determined. So whatever's going to happen is going to happen. Now, if you think about that, if everything is just cause and effect, cause and effect, as a sort of sequel from the past, it's very difficult to imagine anything but a repetitive universe. Where does the newness come in? Where does something stop this chain of cause and effect? How is it that we have actually a very creative universe? So it can't be just as simple as a direct historical cause and effect.

The Jains seem to have held that in the Buddhist scriptures. Now, you've got to be careful here because this is Buddhist propaganda. There's a man called Upali, for instance, who was a great supporter of the Buddha, a very rich person. And he told the Jain leader, Nigantha, some teaching about what the Buddha had given. And the Nigantha sent him, delegated him to go to the Buddha to prove him wrong. So, of course, Upali gets up to the Buddha there and starts his discussion. And by the end of it, he becomes a follower of the Buddha.

So he wants to become a follower. He says, you know, and I shall leave the Nigantha. This is where the Buddha's magnanimity, one of the little examples of his magnanimity, is, well, don't. Don't stop supporting your other teacher. You can support me, but don't stop supporting him. Anyway, Upali returns back to the

Nigantha and tells him that he's now been converted. And the Nigantha, it seems, is so angry that he spews blood and dies. So it's that sort of tale which makes you think, well, when they're talking about Jains, maybe it's a bit of propaganda. I think he died in the Jain way, starving himself to death.

And what the Buddha points out about the Jain theory, which was some idea of predestination, you had to stop. You had to stop doing. So you stopped killing, and eventually you stopped eating. The idea was just to draw *kamma* to an end. So the Jain saint actually dies of starvation. You build up your courage for it, I suppose. What the Buddha points out is that even that decision is part of kamma. That actually won't end the sequence of cause and effect. It's like when we don't do something has an effect.

Even if you take this gathering now, we've all come from different paths to create this particular situation. And in this situation, hopefully something creative is happening. Only because we've all come here from different places. So there is something about the way the universe works which is about different lines of cause and effect meeting at a certain point to create something new.

So we see that these three perspectives, fatalism, determinism, libertarianism, I think we might argue that if you look back in time, you might just get the feeling that everything has been predetermined. Your life's actually been fairly set, and you didn't have much of a choice, and you've ended up where you are because... But when you're actually stuck in a present dilemma, when you're actually stuck between this and that, it definitely feels like you've got a choice. So again, it's to do with feeling. It's to do with the way we're looking at something as to which side of this business you tend to fall on.

Anyway, you might be relieved to know that from the Buddha's point of view, we're simply asking the wrong question. So you can now forget the first part of this particular essay. Because this whole business of free will just arises out of this profound delusion beneath us, this nebulous idea of me, me in control. So as the self discovers the world, there's pleasant, unpleasant experiences, so it wants to create something out of it, this dualistic world. So all things are over there as rivals or this side as accomplices. It's just driven by greed, aversion, indulging, accumulating, rejecting, annihilating. And it's this way that the self gains this idea of power. It's just a little game it's playing.

So obviously the right question is, how do we put an end to suffering? Remember that the Buddha always reduced his teaching to a very simple statement, suffering and the end of suffering, full stop. So the question is, how do we end suffering? And how do you get down to really cut the root?

The first thing is to understand this business about conditionality. And as we've already said, it's a concurrence of past events meeting present situations, which allows us this feeling of creativity, something new all the time.

Secondly, the aim is not concerned with freedom of choice at all. The aim to end suffering is not to do with choice at all. It's to do with clarity. It's to do with seeing where the path is. It's to do with investigation and exploration of our lives and the way things are and how it is that we keep falling into suffering.

If you, like for instance, if we set out for a walk in the country, you've already decided where you want to go. It's not random. You've decided where you want to go. So in one sense, you want to be happy. You want to find this happiness. And you've got your map. You've got your compass. When you come to a fork in the road, you don't choose, well, shall I go down this one or shall I go down that one? You already know where you're going to go. And all you've got to do is consult the map and make the right decision.

So in the Buddha's path, the path is already delineated. So this choice, this feeling of choice that we have, turns out to be nothing but a doubt. It's not actually... See, the self lifts it up to the idea of, well, shall I do this or shall I do that? But actually, if you know all the facts, you wouldn't have a choice. The path would be just directly in front of you. Spiritually speaking, especially.

So, there's two types of doubt when I say doubt. There's what you might call honest doubt and sceptical doubt. So, honest doubt is just coming from that business of not knowing. And it comes from, shall we say, a sense of a grounded humility. Like, I don't know. I really don't know. Accepting that. And it's a very difficult place to be, isn't it? We like to know. That not knowing can cause us extreme anxiety. Like you don't know whether you're going to have the job next week. You don't know whether the cheque's going to come. It creates anxiety.

But if we can sit patiently, if we can sit calmly within that not knowing and accept that state and then just keep looking, keep observing, then the path manifests. It either manifests because somebody's pointed it out to us or because our own experience manifests. One of the points in the process of these vipassanā ñāṇa, the vipassanā understandings, is the business of what is the path and what is not the path.

And it's a very simple thing, most of you have probably been there, is that in your meditation you'll suddenly start maybe getting these beautiful states. They're very peaceful, very spaced out, very lovely and joyful. And of course there's the self immediately wants to get in there and say, well this is it, finally I made it. I remember one man told me he had this, quite deluded really, he had this amazing experience while sitting on the toilet. Now that's not relevant. You can have these amazing experiences anywhere. Remember that Luther had his great breakthrough while he was sitting on the toilet. It's faith only.

But he absolutely insisted. He said it was Nibbāna. And just what he was describing was just amazing. A blissful state, really. So, knowing that whatever nibbāna is, it is not felt. Whatever nibbāna is, it is not an emotional state. Whatever nibbāna is, it cannot be described. Immediately, it takes you off that indulgence. That's a correction. That's a correction to that not knowing, that doubt which comes up from, shall we say, this desire to seek the end of suffering. That's a wisdom thing. That's coming from something deeper than the self.

When you get the doubt which is really a sceptical doubt, a doubt which is a mental illness in the same way that sloth and torpor and all these hindrances are, then of course there's something else going on there, and that's usually a fear of commitment, usually a fear of giving yourself to something because you don't know what's going to happen, but that fear stops you committing and therefore stops you

meditating.

One of the people who used to organise the meditation group, his father, when he was a young child, put him on a table and opened up his arms and said, "Jump, son." And he jumped and he moved away. Splat on the ground, he said. And he says, "That'll teach you. Don't trust anybody." You can imagine, yeah? So when he came to the Buddha's teaching, it was quite amazing that he should actually put his heart and soul into it.

So, just to be aware of that, that the path isn't about, shall I do this or shall I do that? And that's one reason for a schedule. You set your schedule down, a schedule that you know you can follow, and you just do that religiously. You don't let this little self come in and say, "Well, shall I do it? Can't do it? Maybe a little kip. I'll go for a walk. Don't feel like it." And all the time you're just feeding the self.

When it comes to joining the order, you say, look, I don't get up in the morning and say, shall I wear blue? It doesn't occur. Even the idea of what shall I eat? What am I going to eat? So it's taking out all that edge around where the self can manifest. It doesn't mean to say it doesn't manifest in very peculiar and staged ways, but at least you try and draw a circle around what you can do, what you can't do. And then you liberate. That's the benefit. You then liberate this wisdom factor, this paññā, this intuitive intelligence to investigate.

If this intuitive intelligence gets locked into what the self wants to do, then it's just taken all over the place. Fine, you feel nice when you get out for a walk, but has it helped you overcome suffering? Not at all. All it's done is it's given you a greater addiction to walking the countryside. Just deepening your attachment to the country. Which I've learnt since coming down to Devon, by the way. Terrible.

We could almost say, if you really think about it, when have you been most happy? Isn't it when you've been doing exactly what you wanted to do? The actual doing of it. It's never occurred, has it? When you've been doing exactly what you wanted to do, it's never occurred, shall I do this or shall I not do that? And it's the same with interest. If you notice, whenever you're interested in something, do you ever have any problems with concentration? No. So a lot of our practice is giving up that choice, is raising the interest to discover the path. And all that stuff just follows naturally, the clarity and all that, and the energy and the concentration.

Now when it comes to will itself, there is will, there is will in terms of power. The Buddha equates that to action. So he states it quite clearly. Will I call action. So those of you who know the Wheel of Dependent Origination, there comes that point, so we say it starts off with that contact we talked about. It starts off with a perception feeling of being pleasant, unpleasant. It would then have that reaction of wanting, not wanting. That's your *taṇhā*.

Only then does this self come in. Which is very interesting because in language we say, "I want that." But actually it's, "that want I." That's how it happens in terms of psychology. As soon as that "I" comes in, you

can't stop it, you've empowered it. As soon as that "I" says, "I want," then you get that empowerment, that's the will coming in, and you have that next link, *bhava*, which is becoming. That's when you become, that's your act. Act of thought, word or deed.

So that's why in your meditation, when it comes to things like pleasant, unpleasant, you just want to keep the mind very close to that business of wanting, not wanting, liking, not liking, wanting, not wanting. And that's the way out to liberation by understanding *dukkha*, by understanding suffering and unsatisfactoriness.

So this power that we have is quite mysterious. It's totally neutral. It's not good or bad. It depends how you use it. It depends on your attitude. And you can't separate it from the action. You can try. When you do walking meditation, just stand there. Keep saying, "intending to walk. Intending to walk." And even though you're saying it and intending it, nothing's going to happen. And then suddenly the foot lifts. So what is it that has taken something out of a potential into an actual? That's what the Buddha's calling will. And you can't separate it from your foot. You can't say, well, that's it over here, and this is my foot over here. It's one and the same thing. It's within the structure of this whole becoming business.

But the power of that will is your conditioning. So remember, an action forms an intention, moves you to an action. And if that action is wholesome or unwholesome, then you're going to get the product of that conditioning. So if it's an unwholesome action, it moves you towards an unwholesome conditioning. This is inwardly. Remember, all kamma in terms of liberation is inward. It's not something to do with the outside world at all, actually.

And anything you do which is wholesome, it will produce that wholesome conditioning within you. And in Buddhist understanding, that's what's driving us to a particular destiny. And that's why, of course, in the Noble Eightfold Path, right view heads it. As soon as you understand, as soon as there's a seeing, as soon as there's a perception of the way things are, this immediately informs your attitude.

Of course, when it gets down into the attitude, you may find the opposite attitude to be too strong. So you might go down and you very clearly perceive that the body does not need tea. But that's not going to stop you doing it because of this huge conditioning to drink tea. But at least there's the perception that at this present time the body doesn't actually need tea, and it's hanging on to that and waiting for that to drop into the heart as an attitude. And then it balances up with the desire to have tea, and eventually because you're not feeding the desire to have tea anymore, that drops away, and the right attitude of seeing food and water and all that as nourishment for the body—not as a place for seeking happiness—begins to get the upper hand and lead you to the enlightenment. That's the one I'm struggling with!

So that's called *dhammachanda*, the will for Dhamma. And that translates into Mahāyāna as the *bodhicitta*, the heart seeking enlightenment. So eventually, that's the force. That's the force behind your drive to liberation.

And just finally, to end off with this lovely refrain: when anybody gets liberated, you always get this little refrain at the end of it. "Birth is destroyed"—now, this is the birth of self, remember. "The holy life has been lived. What had to be done has been done. There is no more coming into any state of self-existence." Can you feel the relief in that? What had to be done has been done.

So it's a case really of being clear that the path to enlightenment isn't a choice. It's not a choice. It's a discovery. What leads us to it is the general dissatisfaction about our lives. And once you perceive which way to go, then it's a case of building up that courage, that determination, resolution to follow it. And then, of course, you get the benefit of it.

That's the answer. That's what we have to do. So, what's the message? Abandon free will. Devote yourself. Surrender to the path.

May these words have been of awesome help to you in your path to liberation. Thank you very much.

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