The Awakening

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 1:00:41

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa

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

For those of you who listened to my earlier talks, I'm following the life of the Buddha and we got as far as his enlightenment and then we went into details about Mara, the evil one. I had only meant to take one talk over the hindrances, but I ended up taking two, and I haven't finished them yet. I don't want to overplay that, so I'm going to leave the other ones—aversion, doubt and all that, which I'm sure you know anyway.

I wanted to move on to the question of: so what was his awakening? What was it that he discovered? And how did that translate into practice? I'm not going to say anything which is going to surprise you, but at least it's just an occasion to reflect on what his awakening was all about.

If we go back to that point where he's sitting by the roadside and the rice pudding turns up, and this enlivens him and fills him with great glee—as you know rice pudding does—he went off to make the great determination to sit beneath the tree, saying that he would not rise from this posture even if he were to die. So he sat there, and he went to sit, remember, with that memory of the child—the child who was watching his father doing the ploughing ceremony.

The ability of the child just to receive, especially around about the age of one onwards to about six, just that ability to let the jaw drop and the eyes wide open. And just that entire receptivity with no mentation at all. There's nothing guarding anything coming in because there's not enough history, there's not enough experience to block or to play around with.

So seeing his father doing the ploughing ceremony was a surprise, it was a joy for him. And with that, what we now understand to be *sati*, that awareness, *satipaññā*, with intuitive intelligence, just that receptiveness—which is the definition of equanimity, remember: the ability to receive without reaction—he went and sat. And luckily for him, and for us of course, he finally cracked the puzzle, his koan: Is there an end to suffering?

The context of his awakening—it's the normal one that's, shall we say, accepted—was his insight into past lives, his own past lives. His insight, or his being able to see how people were reborn according to their moral or immoral actions. And that he knew that the *āsava* were completely destroyed. The floods—we'll come back to them.

So there are these three things that he understood. The first one: when he was able to review his past lives and understand how he got to where he was then, it became a personal understanding, you might say a personal law. But when that ability to go beyond himself, to see other beings arising and passing away according to what became the law of *kamma*—what had been a personal law then becomes a cosmic law. And that's what he taught. He taught the law of *kamma* and the law of rebirth.

And the *āsava*, these floods, as they're called—there are three of them. Normally there are three, then somebody added a fourth one in the later scriptures. The first one is, of course, the flood of desire for sensual pleasure. Here, "sensual" you have to stretch out a bit to include emotional—emotional pleasure. It's the pleasure of the senses which includes the mind and heart, so it's the whole pleasure syndrome: seeking pleasure in the phenomenal world or in the transient world. And the second one is, of course, the desire to become, to continue, to keep reappearing as myself.

And the third one is ignorance. And the ignorance was then reinforced by the idea of this flood of wrong view. So in a sense, the wrong view is an expression of ignorance as to why they added on—I don't know. But those three were the basic *āsava* that he had destroyed.

These *āsava*, these floods—it's like the image that I have is of a painting, of a watercolour, where the artist first puts a wash across the back. Sometimes you get watercolours on a black background, don't you? Or at least I've seen them like that. They might use oil, I can't remember. But anyway, they put a wash on the back, you see. And this wash gives the whole picture a certain tone.

So if we look at our mind-heart complex, the psyche, then it has these three basic tones. It has the tone of seeking happiness in sensual pleasure, the tone of wanting to become, to become, to become, and the tone of that ignorance, which is that wrong relationship that we have with the world we're in.

Now, when he talks about the world we're in, he then talks about the Four Noble Truths. And these Four Noble Truths: the truth that there is suffering—just a straightforward statement—the cause of suffering, which is that desire for sensual pleasure in the phenomenal world, and that there is an end—so there's your prognosis, not bad, is it? That there is an end to this constant misery—and that there's a path which leads to that place.

And in the Four Noble Truths, you'll get one way he says it where he says "*loke*"—in this world there is suffering. When he then defines *loke*, he says "in this fathom-length body." So this suffering, this *kamma*, this onward going, this *saṃsāra*, is happening actually within us, within the mind itself. And what he discovered was that there was a position which lay beyond that. A position which lay beyond that.

I've got a couple of quotes, if I can find them here. So, one of them is, for instance: "There is a sphere." Now, a sphere, an *āyatana*, is a level of experience which don't overlap. So, for instance, through our eyes we see form and colour. Through our nose we have smell or aroma. And you can't see through your nose and you can't smell through your eyes. I mean, you can try, but it doesn't happen. And that's what he

means by a sphere.

So there are six spheres, the sixth one being the mind itself. And now he's saying that there is another sphere—there is a sphere which is to be experienced, direct experience, where the eye stops and perception, and the perception of form fades away, or disappears. And that perception is the mental noting.

So there's a sphere where form and perception disappears, to do with the eye. The same with ear and sound—they disappear. The perception of sound disappears, like "that's a bird" or "that's pleasant." The nose and smells, aroma. The tongue and its tastes. Body with its sensation. And the intellect with its mental objects, so the images and the thoughts. All that disappear. And he says this sphere should be realised.

So there he is pointing to something which goes beyond this body, this mind, this heart, the five *khandhas*, the five aggregates, and as he uses them here, the six spheres or the six avenues of consciousness. So we can only know the world through these six consciousnesses. We can only see it, smell it, hear it and so on, and we can only know it as an internal image. So what he's saying is that there's a place beyond that.

Having stated that, he points out that this can't be got by a simple act of will. You just can't get there by saying, "Well, okay, let's take a rocket or something and get up to that sphere." It just doesn't happen like that. It's beyond the will. It's beyond the self. And if you remember his next talk—having laid out, at least this is in the mythology, the way the scriptures were later collected—he then talked about the self.

Now this sphere that is to be known, which is beyond all else, is beyond the dualistic world—it's beyond objects—and therefore it can't be known as an object. So it's something which is totally subjective experience and it cannot be known as an object. And therefore, somehow, we have to, as it were, approach it by some little trick.

So, what all the Buddha is saying is: all you have to do is look at whatever is arising and passing away and simply know that that's not me, not mine. So here, the knowledge comes into a direct practice. And that's what he means by this *satipaññā*, this awareness and intelligence. And he's saying that if we can take this position within ourselves of the observer, if we can find that observation post and begin to see things within ourselves as objects, then very slowly at least we'll be very clear as to what we are not.

And it's presumed that if we're very clear as to what we're not, then hopefully, eventually, we'll be very clear as to what we actually are. That's the idea, anyway, of the practice.

So how do we do that? What process do we use in order to access that vantage point? We can begin to investigate things so that it liberates. What's it liberating? It's liberating that which is this special sphere. And what is the content, or what is that made up of? It's the *sati*, it's the *paññā*, it's the awareness and the wisdom, it's the looking, it's the seeing, it's the looking and the seeing.

So he always says: first of all, you look and then you see. So if you take that into your life, in ordinary day life, you can see that first of all, you've got to look. If something goes wrong with the car, you've got to open the bonnet and have a look. And then when you look, you see. So it's the same with anything, that process of looking. But we're looking, remember, with that attitude of wanting to know. So that has to be there. There has to be that desire of wanting to know.

What is it that we want to know? We cannot know *Nibbāna*, we cannot know the end of suffering directly, we cannot turn round upon it and say, "Gotcha." It doesn't work like that. So, if you think of an archer—this is an image that works for me anyway—when they are firing the arrow at the distant target, they never point it at the target directly, they're always pointing it up in the air somewhere. And they know that if it travels at a certain speed and it passes through that point, it's going to hit the target.

So the Buddha shifts that sort of investigation away from *Nibbāna*. He says, "Don't worry about that." He says, "That will arise in its own good time." He says, "Just shift it towards the way you are looking." So this element that we have in us—in Theravāda, it's dryly referred to as the *Nibbāna dhātu*, the element of *Nibbāna*, which I think takes on a certain fleshy quality when you call it *bodhicitta*, the heart seeking enlightenment.

So when that arises, when we actually bring that forward by lifting this awareness to look at what is happening within the body and mind, he says, "Don't worry about *Nibbāna*." He says, "Just see how you're looking." And then he gives us these three vantage points: the *anicca*, the *dukkha*, the *anattā*—the sense of impermanence. Where is the suffering? Where is it? Where is it in this complex of the body, mind, heart? Where is the suffering? Where is it arising from? What's actually the cause of that suffering? And then the more subtle teaching of not-self.

So, he's taken our gaze away from worrying about *Nibbāna*, worrying about liberation, lots of stuff, and he says, "Why not investigate what you are experiencing from these three vantage points?"

So, when we're looking, and we take the vantage point of *anicca*, of transience and impermanence, we're becoming aware of that quality that everything is in a process of change. Now, if we centre simply on that, you see, then you'll find that the mind is very much aware of the beginning of things, but not the end of things. Because beginning—new for us—symbolises something exciting. Even if it's something horrible, there's still a sense of awareness that it is beginning.

Then as it begins to end, our attention really goes to what is the next beginning. So we always know who the new film star is or pop star, but we never actually know what happens to them. They've disappeared. They just fade away from consciousness, from cultural consciousness.

So by putting the attention on the ending of things, on the ending of things, we begin to see that actually this process, this process of change is not a continuum. There is an actual stopping. There is an actual stopping. The image there is of a row of billiard balls. So they're all joined up together but they're actually

all separate. Usually that's explained as showing the difference between the Buddhist position on this and the Hindu position which says that there's something which continues through the arising and passing away of things. So it's like a row of beads with a string through it. But the Buddhist position is radical change. It's actually something completely finishes before something else can begin.

And that radical change, as we get into it, you see—so as we get into it, there's a seeing of it from the point of view of the intellect, the point of view of actually understanding things arise and pass away. But it's actually at the emotional level, it's at the heart level that it begins to strike home.

So even though in our school we go for the minuscule, we go for the actual seeing of things in the minute, watching the rising and falling of the breath and even eventually the rising and falling of a sequence of sensations, at the heart level, it doesn't have to be that particular find at all. Somebody close to us who dies can hit you just as hard as watching the arising and falling of the breath. And it's hitting at a point of attitude. And when that attitude is broken—this assumption of continuity—when that attitude is broken, it reverberates back onto our understanding.

So there's always different ways in which the quality of transience can strike us, and it's constantly putting that attention there that there is this slow beginning to understand what's happening. Now what is it that's arising and passing away?

So remember that the Buddha's teaching is that everything is mind. Our knowledge of the outside world is totally dependent upon the senses that we have. So even though we're in this room together and nobody would dispute that this meditation hall actually sort of exists when we go away—in other words our mind is not actually creating this hall—the fact of the matter is all of us have walked into it, we all have a different view of it, a slightly different feel of it and so on.

So in a sense our experience of this hall is all varied, individual, and that's true for everything we experience. It's only through language and general communication that we can get across to people that we generally see the world as they do—and of course some we don't—and therefore you get this image of parallel universes. We're all sort of running parallel to each other in some way, sometimes we sort of crash a bit. But the idea is that everything that I know is within my mind.

So all these stimuli—the light, the smells, the touch and all that—they're all being brought into this central box which we call the brain. But there's also, in Buddhist understanding, a mind-matter there, which is a more subtle form, which produces for us a picture. Now we know that from our own knowledge of how the brain works. This picture that we get is, shall we say, that act of cognition. And there's something that knows it. There's something that knows, that has a double take on it. It knows it knows.

And that picture, as it were, is arising and passing away, holding an image for us so that we can grasp it and then it disappears, and the next image comes up dependent on the stimuli coming in from the outside through the senses or from the inside through our memories.

And when we see that the world is arising and passing away, I think personally it would be truer to say that what we're watching is our minds arising and passing away—the actual act of cognition. Now to see that, of course, undermines the idea that I can be that.

So *anicca*, the quality of transience, does refer back to the self. And this is what the Buddha said if you remember in the discourse that I read: is something which arises and passes away to be understood as me, mine and so on? So that quality of radical impermanence does reflect back to the not-self. And in so doing, of course, it ruptures a type of relationship that we have, which is a holding on.

Remember that the self is constantly trying to build a world of comfort around itself, a sort of castle, so that it doesn't shake, it doesn't fear anything, it doesn't fear death. But to see that *anicca* quality, that real radical arising and passing away, reverberates back onto the self in its relationship to the world it's in.

Now, there I said the relationship of the self. That was wrong. It's a relationship of this *satipaññā*, of this *b odhicitta* or this *nirvāna dhātu*. It depends what school you're in and what expression you feel happy with.

So now we're getting this idea that there is something within us, this awareness, this very basic intuitive intelligence which is at the root of our being, and it moves into every moment with some sort of wrong view, and that not knowing. It comes from the position of not knowing is the basis of, the beginning of, the wheel of dependent origination, which is how the Buddha explains how we come to suffer.

I think I said before in an earlier talk, when I was answering a question, if we go back to our little origins in this particular life, remember that we became alive as just a bundle of cells. So in that bundle, what did we know? And it's only through the growth of the senses that we come to collect, as it were, enough information. And then finally we find ourselves out in the open world and gasping for a bit of breath. And then we grow up. And all the time there's this presumption, which is gained right back there in the womb, that this must be me, because this is what I experience.

Now, that delusion stays with us all the time, and it's only through meditation, by taking this objective position in ourselves, that we begin to break through that delusion. And the process and nature of transience, of impermanence, is coming from a slightly different angle, which is saying that even if you hold on to it, it's going to disappear. Nothing stays the same. Everything is in a state of radical change. So that even the effort to try and hold on to something, to maintain a comfort, is a non-starter. It's not going to get you anywhere.

So watching *anicca*, even at the breath, is a constant undermining of that wrong view. A wrong view, remember, that has not come from a position of stupidity. That's the unfortunate thing about this English word ignorance. There is another word, nescience, but nobody knows it, so there's no point in it. Only the dictionary knows that word. And it means a simple don't know. Don't know, you see. And from that don't know is a frightening place to be. So one throws oneself into something, defines oneself as something.

Now this has happened to you all, I'm sure, at a time when you've been in a strange hotel or in somebody's

house and you've just woken up and you don't know where you are. And there's that sudden sort of rush of panic as to who you are. And it's only when you remember that, oh, you're in this hotel, that you can breathe again. Now that panic, you see, is the self. At that moment, the self can't define itself. So it's rushing around like a mad fool, trying to work out what the hell it is. And so when it grasps it, fantastic, then it's happy. Oh, it's me again.

So that sense of transience, really seeing transience, is not only coming back to the idea that nothing in this world is worth holding on to – that's a direct quote from the Buddha – but the fact that if it's transient it can't be me, because it's arising and passing away. So as we're watching it at all levels, remember at all levels, whether it's right there in the minuscule arising and passing away of a sensation, or whether we're just watching these leaves fall, and just watching the change of leaves, and just catching our feeling towards it.

Sometimes if you stand by a river, just watch the river coming at you and just catch your feelings that come up with that coming, the newness. And then turn around and watch it flowing away and just catch how your feelings are at letting something go. If there's a puddle around or a pond, look into that and see how you feel when there is no flow. So it's not as though we have to do this meditation in order to break through these things. All this meditation is doing for us is making more and more clear to us what this *sati paññā* is.

So if we sit with the idea that right now I'm going to crack it, I'm going to really break through this sitting like the Buddha did, you can try it. It usually ends up with severe frustration. So if we see our sitting simply as training, all we're doing is we're just training ourselves to constantly lift ourselves into this position of at least the objective observer.

Now, from this position of not-self, we've created these delusions. The fundamental delusion is that I am this person. That's the fundamental delusion. I am this personality and I am this body. And those we call our *sankhāras*. And a *sankhāra* is all those things that we've been able to create through an act of will. So once you've got a body and you've got an eye, the eye will see, that's not a *sankhāra*. Whatever's coming into the eye is a given. What we do with that which comes into the eye, or with the image that comes, that's our *sankhāras,* because there comes that intention into what we're doing. And that's building up a mood, it's building up an attitude, and it's building up a whole series of thoughts, it's building up a history.

These intentions, remember, at all levels in all areas of our lives turn into an action. So you have an intention, it turns into an action. When you've got similar actions going on, you've produced a habit. And once you've got a compendium of these habits, a collection of habits, that's your personality. And once you've got a personality, it just drives you towards your destiny, until, of course, you come to meditate. And then you can reverse some of it, and hopefully end up with a decent destiny.

So, here we are, with this *satipaññā*, this awareness, this *buddho* within ourselves, and then we're born. So that's the next stage, *nāmarūpa*, you're born. And with that being born, there arises these acts of cognition.

So this body-mind complex and the act of cognition rebound off each other. The one can't arise without the other. You can't cognize something if there's nothing there. So there can't be a cognition unless there's something coming in through the perceptual faculties, the eye and so on.

So once that's started, once you've got that, once you've got the consciousness and the basic body, which has these six senses, so that's your next step, the *salāyatana*, the six sense bases, then finally you can have some contact. And that's your next stage, your contact. At the point of contact, there has to be these three things. You have to have a sense base, you have to have something that stimulates that sense base, and you've got to have that consciousness.

Once that arises, then the mind, the perceptual faculty comes in, which knows what it is, but then that quality of judgment – now this isn't a judgment to do with good and bad and all that, it just experiences what comes in as pleasant or unpleasant. It's as simple as that. So sometimes we get a sensation which is pleasant, like when we're eating, and sometimes we get something which is unpleasant, like when it's getting cold. So whatever sensation comes in, after the contact, there is this relationship built up with it. So the relationship is, like it, don't like it.

Now, once the self grabs hold of that as a position, pleasant, unpleasant, you see, then it has to take a position. Now, its position comes from that fundamental misunderstanding that this is what it is. And it knows there is suffering. It's not happy. Now, what is it that's not happy? See, what is it that's not happy?

So we started off way back there in the womb, being this, shall we say, this *satipaññā*, this Buddha nature. And it's formed a relationship. So when we talk about the self, we're not talking about something, we're not talking about an object, we're talking about a relationship. We're talking about a relationship.

So, when we're suffering, what is it that's suffering? If it's not this very nature, which is our essential nature of the Buddha. That's what's suffering. And it's suffering because it's formed this wrong relationship. So when we say the self, you see, there's a tendency to substantiate it. There's a tendency to think that it's an object. But we're much closer, I think, to understanding what the self is when we realize it's to do with our relationship.

So when this perception comes, that this is pleasant and unpleasant, the knowing, which is ignorant, which is creating the delusion, says to itself, I've got to make myself happy. This is where happiness is. I've got to make it now or else I've had it. So whatever it sees creates a certain state, a mental state, which is happy, it'll want to grab it, hold it and develop it. And once it's into that relationship, that's when we get that greed in all its forms. It doesn't matter what it is, power, sex, drugs, rock and roll. It doesn't matter what it is. The fact is that the more I can have of it, the happier I will be. It's as simple as that.

Having built that little castle, that little place of joy, now, of course, it has to protect it. So anything which it sees is not pleasant, then it'll want to destroy, want to annihilate, get it out, push it away. And whenever that is too much, when it's overwhelming, then it runs. It runs for it. It picks up its bags and goes for it.

So there we have the fundamental psychology which arises out of that wrong perception of the self. This is me. This is mine. So you've got on one side the attachment, the holding, the developing, and on the other side, the protection and the pushing away. And the running away. That's all included in that word aversion.

So having got to that stage, we then very quickly can move into immoral action, which is basically doing harm. It's doing harm to others and doing harm to myself. And then once I've started doing harm, I'm into the second level of emotions to do with shame, guilt, horror, all that sort of stuff, remorse, regret. All those flow in once I start doing something which is unwholesome.

And of course, there are those, there's that side of the development which we take pleasure in, but which are horrible. So, you know, we like getting angry at people. It's a relief. We like banging the door. We like being cruel. We like stepping on people's toes and doing things like that. And saying that little sentence which really digs them. And like cruelty and then not being generous, being selfish, you see. All these things can be very pleasant. So there's a whole area of unpleasant behaviour which we enjoy, and that of course is creating further psychological problems for us.

Now all that, all that is included in those three little steps after *vedanā*. So the *tanhā*, the *upādāna* and the *b hava*. So the *tanhā* is that movement from the self moving towards it because it likes it, it wants it. So having perceived something as likeable, it now moves towards it as wantable. I want that. Just a minute. Want, want that.

Once that want has come, and this is the sequence of psychological events, according to the Buddha, the I comes in. See, the I doesn't come in first. In our language we say, I want that. But it's not, it's want I. First the desire arises, and then there's the association with the desire, there's the identification with desire, and that's the *upādāna*, that's the grasping.

Once that's happened it's very difficult to stop the action coming in which is the will. And the reason is this – because that delusion of I, I want is coming, remember, directly from the Buddha. The Buddha within which is deluded. And with it there comes the power of the will. And that's also coming from that centre. It's also coming from that centre. So immediately we say I, it's very difficult to stop the grasping, the actual going for the object. And that's the *bhava*, that's the becoming. At that point we've created an act. And that act now, as I say, repeated, becomes a habit.

Now what we're trying to do in our meditation in terms of seeing the path through understanding *dukkha*, understanding how we create this unsatisfactory situation for ourselves, is to put our attention right in between that which we perceive as likeable and unlikeable – and of course neutral – and to catch that relationship of wanting, not wanting and ignoring. Not wanting, just simply ignoring it, simply not knowing it. And if we put our attention there it can't go, it can't move anywhere else, it can't go into I. Why is that, you see? It's because the awareness, this intelligence we have, this Buddha nature within us has taken a completely different position. It's now become transcendent to the whole psychological process.

It's now above it or beyond it, and it's watching it from above.

So, if we stay in that position, it can't go into that identity. It just can't do it. So, in that position, we're actually snapping the idea of me or mine. As soon as you see a desire and let it go, you're destroying constantly the idea that desire is me. I am the desire. And it's through that process of seeing that that we can find this realization through just understanding how we create suffering for ourselves.

When I was in Thailand, I did a tour of all the different techniques. The Thais are very creative, you know. And I went down to a place called Boon Kanchan around, which is on the bay around Bangkok. And when I got there, the teaching, I'd heard about it. She had died. She's obviously a very good teacher. But the instructions are very simple. You don't stop doing what you're doing until it hurts. Really hurts. Really, really, really hurts.

So you sit and it starts to hurt. And you're not supposed to do anything until it really, really, really hurts. And then, when it really, really, really hurts, and you can't handle it anymore, you then change your posture. But you do it very, very slowly, and all you're looking at is, as the pain arises, as the discomfort arises, you're just watching your reactions to it. And as it gets to the point where you can't take it anymore, and you're shaking with it, you just watch your reactions to that, you see? And then when it comes to a point where you really can't take it anymore, you say intending to change. And as you change, you watch very carefully how the physical body, the physical sensations are changing and how the mind is changing. And then you come back to a state of comfort. So from walking you might go to sitting, to lying down, whatever you're doing, but you keep doing it until you get to that point where you're able to see that change.

And in seeing that change, you're seeing the distinction between pain, which is both physical and mental, and how you can take a position to it whereby you're not actually suffering. And by observing that process, you're actually undoing the idea of a self. Because the self is always identifying with that process. It says, oh, it's pain, I'd better go and get an aspirin. It's always moving off it. It's unable to stay with it. So even by going through this process of understanding *dukkha*, of understanding how we create suffering for ourselves, we again undermine that wrong relationship which lies at the base, which is the idea that this is me, this is mine.

Now, when that is finished, of course, you're also cutting the end of that process of the wheel of dependent origination, which is birth, aging, death, or arising, decay, death, arising and passing away.

Should we say, the traditional teaching is three lives, but the other teaching which is right there in the scriptures and is right there in the commentaries is of course moment to moment. So as we see something which we like and we indulge in it, then we become the indulger, and that arises and passes away.

So with every sequence of actions in which we've indulged or which we've pushed away or which we've run away, we've become somebody and there was a beginning, there was a middle, there was a decaying

and there was an end. So not everything we do is part of the wheel of dependent origination. Not everything we do is continuing with the self, because for instance just some simple action like opening a door, there's not a moral problem there. It's only where a moral and ethical situation arises of greed, hatred or aversion that wheel can actually turn. So when we do something out of a correct intention, when we eat in order to nourish the body, we eat to live, not live to eat. When we eat to nourish the body, then we're not turning the wheel. In fact, we're going backwards on the wheel.

Now, why is it that the wheel doesn't come back on itself? So you start off with not becoming, and then you go down to not grasping, no I, then you come back to desire. No, the Buddha starts the negative side of the wheel, the wheel which is drawing us to enlightenment, back at ignorance again, back at the point of this wrong view. And the reason he does that is because when we're meditating, we're always correcting that view. And whenever you correct a view, whenever you correct the way you're looking at something, the whole castle of cards that we've built on that wrong view simply collapses. You don't have to take everything apart. As soon as you see transience, the whole thing that you've built on transience completely collapses. And that's why these insights are immediate.

Not all these insights, of course, have a colossal effect on us. We don't jump up and down and all that. But they're little. They're slowly just cutting away at the delusion. Slowly cutting away at the delusion. And that's why the whole of the Buddha's teaching is concerned with right view. As soon as you see something, everything corrects itself.

There was a friend of mine who was going to pick me up and we were going to go for a walk and his car broke down. And it was parked by the road there, so I, being an expert mechanic, said, "Well, open the bonnet." So he opened the bonnet, and he told me what had happened. The engine just cut. So my immediate diagnosis was, "Well, it's electrics." So we opened the bonnet and I tried it and I said, "No, it's either, it'll be the dynamo," I said. And I pointed at this part of the machine, I said, "It'll be the dynamo."

Anyway, the AA, I don't know what you call it in America, but the mechanic came. And he opened the bonnet and he immediately saw that the fan belt had broken. And what he pointed to as the dynamo seemed to be different from my own description of a dynamo. Now, if my friend had taken my advice, of course, the car would have ended up in a scrap heap. But luckily, somebody who knew came along and saved the day. So you can see how wrong view can end you up in a hole.

So there we see, this mechanic came along and that was it. As soon as that right view was there, the whole problem disappeared and I felt a real idiot. But there we are. So that's why the wheel starts again with ignorance, and that's why the whole force of the Buddha's teaching is right view. To see things as they really are, to understand, to know and see things as they have, if you want the direct translation, as they have come to be. To see the process. It's often translated as to see things as they really are, but it's not. It's to see things as they have come to be. So it's always catching that process in which we create the world we live in.

Gee, can't stop talking. Then there's the final characteristic of *anattā*, not-self. So we've talked about that from the point of view of *anicca*. If something arises and passes away, it can't be me, it can't be mine. And we talked about it through seeing this *dukkha,* through seeing that, in fact, if I can take this transcendent position, this transcendent position to this mental process of greed and stuff, then unwittingly I've snapped the self, I've broken the self, as soon as I'm in that position.

There's a lovely little quote here actually to do with *anicca* which I'd forgotten to read out and it's William Blake and I think he puts it in a beautiful little poetic way. I'm sure most of you know it. "He who binds to himself a joy does the winged life destroy, but he who kisses the joy as it flies lives in eternity's sunrise." So that's a lovely expression of how to, well, it's the Buddha mind. That's how we're supposed to be.

Now, *anattā*, the doctrine of not-self, is just getting that position where, instead of within yourself, when you're watching something, you see, and you turn it into an object that you're looking at, you see, it's catching that little distance. Although I talk in terms of space, I mean, it just feels that you're looking at something.

Remember that we're told that a child up to about the age of four months doesn't have that distance. Everything is me. It doesn't matter what it is. It's all me. And only slowly, after four months, does this object arise out of this bath, which is me, and his mother, isn't it? And that object now, as it were, becomes something in the mind of the child, something that's not me, just the beginnings of a perception. By the age of three, the child is very clear, this is my body and I'm not that. They're very clear about what their boundary is.

All we're doing is continuing that process inward. That's all we're doing. We are slowly deciding, or rather we're slowly realizing that within us all these things that I thought were part of me is actually an object. And one of the things that the Buddha talks about when he talks about not-self is this idea of control. If the self can't control it, how can it possibly be that? The whole idea of being a self is that you're in control. This is me. This is mine. I do what I want. I do my own thing in my own way, in my own time. And of course you can't.

So there's a constant destruction of this idea of a self every time in your ordinary daily life when you can't do what you want to do. If you can't do what you want to do, then you're not in control. Therefore you can't be the self. And that's the logic behind that.

So here you see, as we go into the body, I mean even the body itself, I mean, we cut ourselves. What do we do? You keep it antiseptic, but who mends it? You're not in there telling the cells to do this and do that. The body just gets on with it. When you breathe, what do you know of your body? Even when you go into yourself, what do I know? Do you know the marrow of your bones? I mean, we're told we've got them, but can you perceive it? Can you know it's there? The brain, we can't even feel the brain for heaven's sake. At least I can't. Perhaps I need a cat scan. And then the whole system, how it's working. We're breathing. I have no control over it at all. If I stop breathing, I panic.

The digestive system, I haven't a clue what goes on there. I mean, I'm told about enzymes and all that, but I don't feel anything at all. I just feel good. I haven't a clue what's happening. Even now, you see, if you look at me and your whole vision is filled with my face, right? This isn't an ego trip. If you fill your whole vision with my face, right, where's yours? Where's your face? It's just there in your imagination, isn't it? You haven't a clue, have you?

And when you look in the mirror and you look at your face, you think that's how people see you. At least I do. But it's only when you take another mirror and have a look at what's in the mirror that you realize that you didn't know your ears were that big. And you catch your face from the proper way that people see it. But normally that's not our vision of ourselves. So we walk around with this enormous delusion of either being ugly or beautiful, and it's completely our own idea of ourselves. So when you meditate or when you rather contemplate on these sorts of things, then again it's destroying this idea of who am I?

Emotions. We know what control do we have over our emotions. You don't go to bed thinking, "Well, tomorrow I'll wake up depressed." You just wake up depressed. Tomorrow you say, "I'll wake up happy," and you do, and you think, "Oh, I've got some control." But you haven't a clue how you're going to wake up. You might not wake up. Heavens. I mean, take that, you see. We go to sleep with a sheer presumption, a sheer presumption that tomorrow we're going to wake up. You go to bed, you feel absolutely comfortable, you're all curled up and it's all nice and warm, and there's just this underlying presumption that I'm going to wake up. Now, if the doctor said to you, "You fall asleep, it looks like curtains to me," you'd be there with pins in your eyes and pulling your nails out. Anything to keep awake. But we're quite happy to lose the self for 8, 10 hours. Some people 16. As long as we're absolutely certain within ourselves it will reappear.

And there's a lovely poem here which comes from my favourite author. Some of you might know Samuel Beckett. He's known for his getting to grips with death. I mean, he's got one of his plays was just a mouth speaking. And every so often it would wake up, "Still here." That was one of the refrains. It would just stop. "Still here." And he's at the edge of death as to what happens when you die. And he's got this very simple but lovely poem. He says, "Just think, if all this, one day, just one fine day, just think, if one fine day, all this stopped." I like that.

So, going back now to the Buddha's original understandings, so he's had this experience. He now comes back on himself and he spends his time reflecting on how he got there. And he comes up with this wheel of dependent origination, which is the psychology of suffering. That's all it's about. It's the psychology of delusion. And he sees these three vantage points and that's what he begins to teach. That's all he's teaching. To get into this position, the *vipassanā*, to see things as they really are and to observe these three points of view.

When we finally make it, when we have the glimpse at least of *Nibbāna*, he also talks about it in this way. "There is a sphere where there is neither earth nor water, nor fire nor wind." Now you've got to be careful

here because this comes from a question as to where does the physical earth end? And he doesn't say the physical earth ends. He says there's a place where it finds no footing, which is very different. So the Buddha's enlightenment did not destroy his body. He just found a different relationship with it. And for the rest of his life, 40 odd years, he lived in what he called *Nibbāna*. And that's *Nibbāna* in this life.

"Where there's no infinite space, consciousness, nothingness, perception or non-perception," these refer to the four formless absorptions. He says, "No this world, no next world, no sun, no moon. There is, I say, no coming, no going, and no standing still." Now, we can understand in our meditation that the no coming and no going, because we can stand above in our meditation, things arising and passing away. But there's also no standing still. In other words, that's not a position in relation to what's happening. It's transcendent, completely transcendent. There's no passing away and there's no arising. It is without ground. It's without ground. There's nothing underneath it. There's nothing holding it. It's without foundation and it's without support. And he says, "Just this is the end of suffering. Just this is the end of it."

Now, I'm going to suggest to you that in your meditation, when you get at least the position of very clearly being the observer, an observer of pain, an observer of physical pleasure, an observer of emotions, an observer of thought, even though we can't say that's a pure *Nibbāna* because there's still the self there, at least we've got some idea there that there is no coming, no going, and there's no standing still within that process. And it's recognizing that that will draw your interest into really beginning to see that everything we experience is not me, not mine.

And then, in those quiet moments, when you're very still, when there's just the breath, and you get that very strong sense of being the observer. So now that's the subtlest of things that we produce. That's the subtlest of things that the delusion has produced, this idea of "I'm the observer. This is me." And that is a reflection in the mind.

So the image I use is when we watch TV. When you watch TV sometimes, you can see your image in the screen. Now you've got a choice. You're going to watch yourself watching TV or you're going to watch TV. If you watch TV, you then lose that sense of self which is in the screen. And that's what happens when in your meditation you feel yourself to be the observer and you're looking with interest at an object such as a feeling or a sensation and suddenly there's that collapse into it. That collapse into it is the loss of self.

And it's a direct perception by this *satipaññā*, this Buddha within, this intelligent awareness of exactly what's going on. And when we come away from that experience, whether we like it or not, or whether we're even aware of it or not, there's been some undermining of delusion. Those are the little power points. Often, when we're in that, there doesn't seem to be a comeback. We don't seem to have some understanding. But in time, remember, there's this subtle change going on with the way we're looking at things. And it's changing the level of consciousness we're at. It's a very slow process, that's how it feels, of this slow changing.

And every so often, there may an insight come in terms of words, a sudden understanding. You suddenly

find yourself behaving in a different manner. You're reacting to a situation in a different way than you did before. And all these are telltales.

So here, we enter into the Eightfold Path. So from right understanding, moving into right attitude, it expresses itself through right speech, right action, right livelihood. Now, this Noble Eightfold Path, remember, starts at any of those points. So when you make the effort to speak well, to speak truthfully and all that, when you make the effort to do something which is wholesome, when your livelihood has a wholesome effect on you, it reverberates back on your attitudes. It reverberates back on your understanding. So the whole thing turns upon itself. Turns upon itself. And in this way, over a period of time, we do feel a certain change within ourselves, hopefully for the better.

So I think that brings me to a sore throat. So I think I'd better stop before I die. So I hope my words have been of some assistance and I can only hope that in the very shortest length of time you will be fully liberated. Thank you.

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