Deconstruction: The Five Khandhas and Dependent Origination

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 1:12:14

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sambha Sambhu Dasa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sambha Sambhu Dasa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sambha Sambhu Dasa

Homage to the fully self-enlightened one.

I've observed that laziness or sloth and torpor is a state closely related to one's intentions. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. There's a distinction between sloth and torpor and laziness to be made. It's a vocabulary distinction. Sloth and torpor are products of past laziness. Laziness as I see it is where you make a decision not to put energy into something, being lazy. That could come from just not caring or just because you're fed up or whatever, but laziness is more to do with an attitude. Rather than when we're talking about defilement, sloth and torpor, they're referring to the consequences of laziness. So that heaviness in the head and the heaviness in the body and all that. So when it comes to laziness it's definitely to do with your intentions. Don't be lazy.

Could you please say a little about developing equanimity? I find I can't let go and not react to things. Equanimity comes with an attitude from a position of not knowing, not wanting to engage. So when something comes up and you find yourself unable not to be drawn into it, try and sit back within yourself to see that resistance or the desire to engage. It's one of the two - it's either a desire to indulge or a desire to push away. Just try to get in contact with that. As soon as that becomes an object to you, it's more like an energy more like an energy than an emotion or anything.

As long as you can keep that there, you must have moved back into an equanimous position. It arises naturally. You don't have to worry too much about equanimity as such. What you have to be concerned about is being able to make that compulsive wanting, that compulsive indulgence, or compulsive rejection, the object. You've got to come back on yourself.

A couple of times I've said the body becomes extremely heavy while the mind remains completely wide and awake. Can you say something about this? These conditions just arise, that's it. So sometimes the body, that heaviness is in the body, which means that the mental state is in the body. And yet you're bright and awake. Now, you may find that even in the head, when you feel really dull, and it's like porridge in there, and you can feel yourself constantly falling into that sleepiness, and you don't feel you're awake within it. If you really make the effort to keep moving around and feeling it and feeling it and experiencing it, you'd be surprised. You'd wake up like a light bulb in the midst of that fog. But it does take that effort. Very good.

So, this evening I just wanted to talk about the way the Buddha deconstructs our experience. So I'm especially aware of people who are new to Buddhism, so I'll try and keep it fairly straightforward. The first thing is he talks about - the first thing he gives us cross-sections, so you take a moment and split the human being into various parts, and then he does that in two ways, and he does it in terms of a process. The process we call dependent origination, and the cross-sections are the *khandhas*, the aggregates, and the six consciousnesses. So these are three that we can look at.

When it comes to the *khanda*, which means a heap or an aggregate, or a mountain - see, a mountain is just a collection of stuff. So if you can imagine, there are these five collections. The first one is to do with the body. Now, at a gross level, it's the physical body that we've got. But at the more subtle level, it's how the mind contacts the body. And when the mind contacts the body, if you go right down into a feeling, you'll find some combination of these four great elements. So that's your earth element, fire, water, and air.

The earth element is the weight, the heaviness of it, or the lightness. The fire element is the temperature you feel. Cool all the way to boiling hot. The water element is the elasticity that you feel. Sometimes when you're watching the breath, perhaps you can feel an elasticity in it, a cohesion. So that's the water element. And the air element, of course, is movement. And when you go into something like a pain in the knee, for instance, when you go in there, you may begin to see that actually what you're experiencing are movements, little movements, fire elements, some heat. When you change your posture and you keep your attention in the knee, you might just find that stretching, that elasticity.

So any combination of these brings you a feeling. And it's understood that whatever combination it is, we then perceive it as pleasant and unpleasant. We give it a name. It gets a bit more subtle with the eyes, which would be seen as more of the fire element. The ear, of course, as you know, is just pressure. It's just the earth element. A movement. When it comes to taste, of course, it gets even more subtle in terms of trying to describe it with these four elements, but you can obviously feel the toughness of the food, the heat of it, the coldness of it, and so on.

So that's the body element, the body heap. And all that is a given. You're entirely dependent upon your body for what comes in through the senses. There's virtually no control over that process. I mean, you can guard yourself, you needn't put yourself too close to the fire, but the fact is you can't stop the body feeling heat as you approach the fire. It's just a given. That's not under our control. Now that's to be contemplated.

So think about your body. Do you know now what your liver's doing? Can you feel red corpuscles being made in the marrow of your bones? Do you guide them through your bones into the bloodstream? Have you any idea that as you grow older, the grizzle on the end of your nose is growing? I doubt you might. There's a whole load of stuff. When you look at your body, you presume that you are the body, that this is you. But actually when you investigate your relationship to the body, you find you know nothing. And you can't do anything about it. Not after a certain age, anyway. I'd have loved to have been tall, lots of hair. You're just given it, you may as well be happy.

So that relationship is to be - and what it does, of course, if you suddenly realize that, there is this consciousness, there's this awareness, and it's an alien within this body. Weird. So that contemplation around the body is well worth it. And of course, that takes you into the sickness of the body, how the body falls sick, whether you like it or not. And eventually it's death. Eventually it's collapse. So all that contemplation is all around the heap that we call the body, *rupa*.

The next is to do with feeling. So from the body we get these feelings. And feeling is a point where we determine something to be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. And there are two types of feelings that we've experienced. The first one is coming from the body. So obviously, pain in the knees. And the other one is coming from our mind, the heart. In Buddhism, the body and mind are not the same. They suffer from the same qualities. They are impermanent. They're insubstantial. You can pull it all apart. They're just energy forms. But they're two different energies. And although it doesn't fit in with our modern materialist science, at death they separate. And whatever is separated out as the mental part, that is the bit that goes on to be reborn into the next moment, whatever it is. Luckily you don't have to believe this to become fully liberated. So don't make it a clause.

So, feeling, when we experience feeling, that also is a given. You know power over changing a feeling as it arises. You can make yourself feel things, you can stick a pin in your hand if you like doing things like that. But it's not as though you can stop feelings and sensations arising. That's also a given. And it creates a heap, you can say, a heap of all sorts of different types of feelings and sensations. Some coming from the body, some coming from the heart.

When I say heart-mind, unfortunately in English we've lost this word which connects them. The old word was soul. The old split, the old way that we looked at human beings was soul. Body, soul and spirit. But now soul has become spirit. And since our wonderful enlightenment. And we moved into the mind. And we lost in a sense contact with the heart. We now have to say heart mind. But when you go to the east. And often when they talk to you. And they say what do they think. They point actually to here. They don't point up here. Whereas for us the heart is something else. But I am here. I think, therefore I am. That's a bit of a problem for us.

So we've lost that, I mean it's good to have lost that connection in a sense because it allowed us to make all our discoveries and technologies all come from that objectivity. But unfortunately we've lost contact with the fact that the heart and mind are actually one and the same thing. The one is firing off the other all the time. So the feelings that we experience are determined by the body itself, over which we have no control. The body will give us these feelings when we do these sorts of things. And the heart will give us these feelings when we act in a certain way.

The next one is all to do with perception. Now, perception is this amazing ability of the mind to make photocopies. And what we do is we see something, like an apple for the first time, and it registers. It registers as a perception. And then, as we eat more and more apples, our definition of apples grows. So

some are red, some are green, some are soft, some are hard, some are sweet, some are not so sweet, etc. So that by the end we end up with a concrete definition, concept of an apple. And all these belong to our memory. And these perceptions, of course, become very fine in terms of our freedom and democracy and all that. All these are perceptions which have grown into conceptions, our concepts. And all that is another heap, another collection of bits which are all to be separated. They don't all form one composite. One thought comes. It disappears. Another thought comes. It disappears. That's another heap. And they're not the same as feelings. And they're not the same as the body. These are three quite distinct heaps.

Now the fourth one is *Sankhara*. Which translates as volitional conditioning. That would be the old regular way of translating it. Other people have tried various things like concoctions and stuff like that. But I think we get close to what we mean by that when we talk about habits. Now this is where - the Buddha's trying to separate out for us where the problem lies. Remember he's only - his only concern is to teach suffering and the end of suffering. That's it. When he's asked what does he teach? Does he teach about God? Does he teach about the universe? He says, no, he says, I only teach about suffering and the end of suffering. Unsatisfactoriness and the end of unsatisfactoriness.

So, the reason why we are deconstructing ourselves is not just for the fun of it, it's to find out where the problem lies. The problem lies right here in *Sankhara*. *Sankhara* means volitional conditioning. So, it's the volitional bit which is the important bit. It's the bit where we're making decisions based upon wrong understandings that are causing *Sankhara's* habits. Causing certain habits which include both the emotional feelings and the thought feelings. And it creates a habit. A way of expressing ourselves. And some habits that we have are beautiful and some are not so beautiful.

But the important thing about this particular heap that's in us is that it is being created by our will. This is what we can take control of. When we say we can take control of it, the bit that's already been created, you can't do anything about. That's what we're suffering when we sit here. All the sadness and the anger and occasionally a bit of joy. So all that stuff that's come up, that's a consequence of past decision making and all we can do with that is bear with it and make sure we don't indulge it because every time we indulge it we empower it again and that's the process of will.

So when you're doing your standing meditation for instance and you're standing still and you're saying to yourself intending to walk intending to walk - stay there for a while with that intending which is another way of saying desiring. So intending to just feel the energy there. Feel the energy and how the body wants to move. And then suddenly there's a decision and the foot moves. What is it that's brought something out of potential into an actual? That's the will. And you can't separate the will from the action. So the Buddha says, what I call *kamma*, an act, is the will. It's a bit like, as far as I know, and I stand to be corrected of course, it's when you throw a stone into the air, you can't separate the force from the stone. And what is it anyway? You can't separate force from the object that is moving. Interesting. Am I right? Is there a scientist amongst us? If I've made it up, forgive me. I read it somewhere years ago. The thing is in science it changes so much you don't know where you're at.

So you've got that *sankhara*, that heap, that aggregate. The last one is consciousness and consciousness is the ability of the mind to hold an image for us. That's what consciousness is, like a screen and it holds the image and that image is multi-dimensional and that image holds feelings, it holds everything and it holds it long enough for it to be registered. If it's not registered, we hardly know it, we hardly see it, we're hardly aware of it. But when it registers, it's there for the moment, and then it passes away. And consciousness is arising at tremendous speed, and it's giving us the impression of continuity.

So, for instance, when we are watching, say, a film or something, we can hear the conversation, we can see what's going on. We're drinking coffee and tea, or popcorn, or whatever it is, and we can taste it. All that seems to us to be happening at the same time. But in Buddhist psychology, what's happening is, moment after moment, consciousnesses are arising at some tremendous speed, and it gives us an experience of continuity and the closest we can as a good image for that is the old film where it was 26 frames or something or 25 frames a minute and it gave us the impression of continuity. And as soon as it slowed down you realise actually it was just these moments of flashing images on a screen and that's how consciousness works.

Now, when you pull yourself out into the position of the observer, all that is becoming an object. Before we came to meditation, before we came to this, we would have just presumed ourselves to be this human being. You wouldn't have made an object of yourself. You'd have been aware that, for instance, you've got a pain in the knee or a pain in the head, but there wouldn't have been that separation of the knowing from what's being known. And there would have been a real attachment to your body in terms of its illness and whatnot.

Now, in the meditation, what we're doing is, we are pulling something out of these five aggregates. And we're making these five aggregates objects to observe. That which is pulling out is your intuitive awareness. Now that doesn't mean to say that once we've begun to practice this and see this that suddenly we become totally equanimous and content and you can stab me in the back and I'll be fine. No it's not. But at least there is within us this inkling of a knowledge that there is something which doesn't belong to the five *khandhas*. That is this human being. So that's one way that the Buddha deconstructs our experience.

I'm going to connect all this to Dependent Origination. Oh heavens, it's ten past seven. I've only just started. I might have to... I'll finish with this because I hate going on and on. And then tomorrow I'll sort of go into dependent origination. Yes, that's what I'll do.

The next way that he deconstructs our experience is looking at our sense bases. And the sense bases in Buddhism are six. The five that we obviously know, and the sixth is the mind.

In the psychology of Buddhism, when you hear something, actually what is being received at the sense door is pressure. There is no sound, right? There's no sound in the universe, okay? And there's no light in the universe, right? You have to have these senses to hear something. And you have to have these senses

to see something.

So when the air waves begin to touch upon the eardrum, they are little messages, little stimulus going in. And that's all the ear actually does. From then on, it's taken into the mind, and there's a process of recognition. So, bell. Yeah, bell. Just the sound of a bell. Then when the process of the bell is completed, there's the understanding of what a bell means. Right? Then the bell is put into a time slot where you understand that it's an awakening bell. And then, only then, at the end of that process, does the mind come in and say, I've got to get up. Right?

That whole process is one after the other. And believe it or not, you can actually experience that. That can be experienced, but you've got to... you've got to really get down to your meditation today. You've got to be really on the ball. But that's how deep you can go. You can actually see these momentary consciousnesses and how the mind actually creates everything from this original, very simple stimulus.

Now it's the same with seeing. I'm sure you've seen these diagrams which show you that when we look at a picture, the eye is darting all over the place. It's never still. It's quite amazing to see how the eye is just moving. But we don't experience that. What we experience is the picture. And of course we can focus on different parts of the picture. And we still are not aware of the fact that even then the eye is moving at tremendous speeds all over it, picking up little pixels.

And even that can be seen. Even that, you can actually be looking at something and it all frazzles up into a sort of... you know these pointillist paintings? You know these where they paint with little dots? Shimmering like that in front of you. And then it congeals into a picture. And that means that this mind, the actual perceiving mind, is right up against the sense door.

Now, the purpose that the Buddha again points this out is that each sense door is individual and discrete. You simply cannot smell through your eyes. And therefore, the way that we experience the world is in these discrete moments: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching. And somehow the mind, at a deeper level of its processing, can put it all together into an experiencing.

Here we go. Say your prayers. It's just pressure. Just pressure. Yes. It's just pressure waves.

So that's a specific way that the Buddha also deconstructs our experience. So here we have two ways of deconstructing. And what's the purpose of it? It's to take away the sense of substance. It's to take away the sense of me. Me.

And again, in that process of observing what's coming in, of actually being at the process of hearing. So when you're outside, just to stand there with that spacious awareness, putting your attention entirely upon one of the ears. You see? And just hearing, hearing. And just keep it there, steady. When you're looking, just keep your eyes steady on the flower and just watch the perceptual process. Watch the eye doing.

So you're always, as it were, standing one step behind yourself to see process. Nothing remains. Remember that. Everything's in a process. Everything's changing. And it's to be able to stand still enough to be able to see that. And in our meditation, we're trying to constantly access that point of stillness within us. The observation post, the observer, the knower. See, so that constant effort to come off the thinking mind and to bring ourselves back to the direct experience at the sense bases of this particular moment. Always feeling, always in the body. Ground yourself in the body.

And in this way, the sharpness, the discriminative faculty of this intuitive awareness becomes finer and finer. So, in a sense, if you really want to deepen your practice, you've got to make that effort of continuity. So you can't be... you have to give up cups of tea for a start. You've got to make the effort to, from here to the walking place, right? There's your objective. Your objective is the walking place. You bring yourself back here and every footstep is known. Every footstep is felt.

And then you stop and you do your walking meditation, right? And you might start with a bit of an exercise, just going up and down quite rapidly to get the energy up and just to relax. And then slower and slower and slower, you see? Very, very slow, watching every movement, you see? And then when the bell goes, to come in at a speed where you don't lose that collectedness.

Now there's the true meditator. This afternoon I walked out there and there were two meditators sunbathing. I thought, well that's the pits. They're obviously not suffering enough. Because if you're suffering enough, you want to get rid of it.

So I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. I will, of course, carry on deconstructing tomorrow. And by your fierce and determined effort, I'm sure you will make plenty of insights that will bring you to your liberation sooner rather than later. So if you'd like to take a break.

I have to apologise. Yesterday, when I looked at the clock, it was ten past seven. And I should have gone on, it was nearly quarter past, and I should have gone on until half past. But I was working on the time that we keep at Sati Panya, where everything's half an hour early, and where we rise at 3:30, which is the proper time. So, I've got... I got confused, so maybe I'll just extend a little bit if I don't finish what I need to say.

So we were talking about this whole process of deconstructing. Remember that even in objects, you take a car. When you're driving, for those of you who drive, there are times when you and the car are one. You don't experience yourself as separate from the car because you're totally involved or absorbed into the action of driving. Especially when there's a tricky corner or somebody's doing something nasty to you. And then you wake up and there you are in the car. And you still think you have control over the car. And then suddenly it stops. And then you realise that actually your control is superficial. You can move it this way and that way. You can back it up and back it into somebody. But you can't actually do anything about the inner workings of the car.

So that's the situation that we find ourselves within this body. We can move our arms about and wave them and all that. You can't make your arm grow any longer. You can't do much with the body as it is. And when we look into the workings of a car, especially a modern car, it's quite mystifying, at least to me. I once thought of myself as a bit of a mechanic because I pulled engines apart. And about four or five years ago, a friend of mine stopped. The car just stopped. And I was with him. And we opened the bonnet. And I said, oh, it sounds to me like it's the distributor. And I pointed to the distributor, you see. I said, you know, we'd better call the RAC.

So the RAC came over, and he looked in, and it was just a fan belt. And mysteriously, the distributor had moved to the other side of the engine. So I don't quite know how that happened. Anyway, so you see how delusional he is.

So it's that business of recognising that we're in this very strange situation of being in the body, but not of the body. And what is it that's in the body that's not of the body?

So through the process of deconstruction, the Buddha's trying to make us investigate the way it really is, not the way we presume it to be, through our delusion. The delusion is, I am this person, I am this body. Now, as I think I've mentioned before, you know how deluded you are about your body when the doctor tells you you've got six weeks to live. Then there's freak out. And that level of paranoia and fear around death is the measure of our identification with the body. See?

So, in these five aggregates, these five heaps, he's trying to separate out, and he's telling us, in a sense, what's the given. The body's the given. Perceptions are given. It's part of that whole psychological process. Feelings are given. But in the *saṅkhāra*, these conditions, here we have a measure of control.

Saṅkhāra are conditions, and they are conditioning. So when you have, shall we say, the habit of getting really excited about something, as soon as that something that you get excited about comes up, the excitement will come, because that's how you've trained yourself. You've trained yourself to be excited. But in the coming up of the excitement, the excitement itself is developing itself.

So all these habits that we have, whether it's the fear of things, anxiety, depression, joy, falling in love, all that is something that we've conditioned ourselves and when it becomes active, it is conditioning. So conditions are not stable. And our understanding is to catch where the intentionality is because it's at that point we still have a choice. We can either indulge it or let it go. Or, in some cases of course, develop it. If it's something beautiful, then we should develop it.

So he points to the *saṅkhāra* as the place where we have to really look as to where suffering arises. Pain arises in the body. Pain arises from the *saṅkhāra* in the body. That's where you get emotional disturbances within us. That's a given. But what do we mean by suffering? Suffering is our relationship to what's happening. And that's all within the *saṅkhāra*.

When these *saṅkhāra* go into the memory, *saññā*, that's when they produce this lovely word, *papañca*,

proliferation. The Buddha points out when these *saṅkhāra* arise, they go into your memory and they start producing a story. And it's through the story that they develop themselves. That's why in *vipassanā* we're constantly coming off the mind. Coming back into the body.

And the final one of course is this consciousness. So there's your five *khandhas*. And then we talked about the five sense bases. And how each consciousness is confined to a sense base. In Buddhist understanding, an eye consciousness arises. And that's all. And then a hearing consciousness arises. And that's all.

So although we... because of the speed of these consciousnesses, we get the sense of it all being one. And all being continuous. That's the delusion. So in our practice, we're constantly moving down deeper and deeper. What we mean by deeper here is less and less time slot.

How long is a moment in time? How long do you experience a moment? Interesting question, no? I mean, how long is it? Is it half a second? Is it a second? How long is a moment, you see?

And what we're doing is, we are bringing our attention slowly and slowly. See, there's a noting and the attention. The noting of the attention. And then we're locked into the moment. The noting stops. That's if you develop that concentration well enough. And then in that moment, it's as though time collapses into that actual present moment. And that's when you realise that actually these moments are infinitesimally small.

Even there, even there, will have some measure because you're not actually seeing the arising and passing away of individual consciousnesses, see. So that's our practice is to... the Theravāda approach you might say is not so much the spaciousness but the minuscule, you know. What is it? The universe in a grain of sand. It's actually going down to the minuscule moment. And that's where we're constantly driving the attention. Okay?

Now, those two ways of looking at this deconstruction process are cross-sections. You can take any moment in a human being's life, draw a line, and you'll find the five heaps, the five aggregates, and the five consciousnesses. One or the other, I mean.

Now, when he tries to deconstruct the timeline of how we create suffering, that's what he's interested in, remember, just suffering, we have Dependent Origination. And this seems to have been completely new to the age. There's nothing like it, seemingly, before the Buddha. This is what the academics tell you. So it's a real deep insight into how we create the world that we're living in and where the mistakes come.

Now, if you look at that chanting sheet, you'll be able to follow me because I'm just going to go through the Dependent Origination. So that's in the middle of the *pūjā*, middle of the *pūjā* sheet, the morning *pūjā* sheet, that's what you want. And it's in the middle of it. And you'll notice that it starts off with the Buddha's victory verse.

Victory verse, you see, he says, let me get my goggles on. Can't wait for summer when I get my other

operation. I'll be able to see anything.

Now then, he says, "Seeking but not finding the house builder. Okay, so this house builder is this I, this self. I have travelled through the round of countless births. How painful is birth over and over again. Oh house builder, I have now caught you. I shall not build a house again. Your rafters have been broken. Your ridge pole demolished."

Okay. So there he's talking about this self, this construct of a person. And what does he come up with? What does he attain through that? He attains a consciousness which is unconditioned. We should go into that a bit later. And all craving, all the defilements have gone. So that's the process that we're into now. We're into this process of finding out who the house builder is, what the house builder is, getting rid of it, destroying the house, and ending up perfectly happy and wonderful. It's worth it, isn't it? All this suffering.

So it begins with this word *avidyā* and it's often translated as ignorance. But it's not a culpable ignorance. We've just landed into a place of not knowing. So if you think of a baby, you see, when we're born, there we are, we scream a little bundle of cells. What do we know?

So go back to that moment of being born, you see. We don't know anything. From then on, the information starts coming in, and we start building up the world.

As you know, well, some of you might know, the wonderful worker Margaret Mahler, who was a student of Freud, studied children up to the age of three. And later studies, of course, confirmed her findings. For up to the age of four months, all we experience is a bath of sensations. There's no depth to it. There's no 3D. That's why you see children reaching out for things. They're actually creating a 3D world.

And then from four months onwards, it seems, the first object, something looms out of this... this... I mean, there's no concept of me, this me that I'm experiencing, and it's usually your carer, your mother, usually. And slowly, that outer world gets pushed out. And it's not until the age of three that you're actually clear that I am me and everything else is not me. I'm a boy, I'm a girl. You know, that's the moment, round about three. That's how long it takes to separate the outside world.

Now, all we're doing is the same inwardly. We're just pushing the inner world out to make it an object. Now, the ignorance is to think that we are this inner world with its emotions, thoughts, etc., etc.

Now, that *avidyā*, be careful, it's not a culpable ignorance, right? We're not guilty, right? Which is a relief, I think, for all of us. We're not existentially guilty, right? We never did nothing wrong before becoming ignorant. We just didn't know. I did find a word which means not knowing. The word is nescience, but nobody knows it, so I don't... I only point out that there is a word for not knowing.

So this *avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārā paccayā* — so all he's saying is: be out of this, out of this position of not knowing, we've created these conditions. These habits, right? That's all he's saying.

And then, *saṅkhārā paccayā viññāṇaṁ*. Now, it's out of the body-mind complex — remember — there arises this ability to hold things on a screen. Now, if there was nothing there to be held on a screen, there'd be no screen. So, for instance, when in deep sleep, there's no obvious consciousness because there's nothing coming up, awakening, as it were, on that screen. But it's because of these *saṅkhāra* that the screen is, shall we say, brightened up. And this screen is consciousness.

And consciousness — remember — English words don't really catch it because these days academics and scientists are studying consciousness. I mean, that's the end of clarity for about a hundred years. So it's basically... in Buddhist understanding, if you think of consciousness like a three-dimensional hologram which you can see, and in it there are feelings, images, thoughts, the whole damn thing is there, can be held within that consciousness.

So it's not to be confused with *sati*. See, this is the important thing. That there is something which can see what's on the screen of consciousness. And that's what you're experiencing every time you see a pain in the knee and you say, "There's a pain." The pain must be held somewhere for us to be able to acknowledge it, to see it. And there's something that acknowledges it. See, that's separation.

So there you've got your *avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*. So dependent on these *saṅkhāra*, this consciousness arises. And depending on consciousness, the body and mind. So here he's, as it were, taken consciousness out of those five aggregates that we talked about. So *nāma-rūpa* — body-mind — he's taken it out and he's pointed out that these two things are like — in those days — two sheaves of wheat leaning against each other. You can't have consciousness — you can't have that ability of consciousness — without the body-mind complex, and without consciousness you wouldn't know that there was a body-mind complex.

So the two come together. But what he's saying here is that these are two different processes. That's the point. Constantly deconstructing. Constantly deconstructing.

Now when it comes to the — where are we now? So now we've been through the five heaps, which is the consciousness and the body-mind. The next step is to see that actually the way we contact the world is through the six senses. And that's your next thing. Dependent on this body-mind complex, the six sense bases arise. So that's the five that we obviously know. And the other one is where the brain and mind contact to create the inner percepts and then eventually concepts. See? So that's the point where the ability to contact the world out there and the world in here arises at the six sense bases.

So when an image comes, it's on the sixth sense base. When an emotion comes in the mind, it's on the sixth sense base. And then dependent on the *saḷāyatana*, we have this *phassa*, we have this contact.

Now, contact is the moment where we experience something. What has to be there? There has to be a sense base. There has to be some sense base. Either the five or the mind. Emotions, thoughts, okay? There has to be an object which is being sensed. And there has to be this consciousness. That's the moment of contact.

Now, when I describe to you what to do with pain in the knee, and your first noting is "pain, pain," and all that, and "aversion, aversion," and then you get that equanimity with it. I say go into the pain. And that's when you go beyond the concept of pain. Into where the mind and the body meet. And that's when you're noting changes to things like heat. Pressure. Stinging. All that — which is the four great elements that we talked about. The fire, earth, water and air. Which stand for pressure, temperature, elasticity, cohesion and movement. So you're right there at the point of contact. When you get down there, you can't go beyond that. That's it. And it's upon those sensations that we're building the world. See?

Now dependent on *phassa*, *vedanā* arises. So what's *vedanā*? *Vedanā* is the five feelings. The five feelings of painful, pleasant — painful and pleasant physical feelings, and painful and pleasant mental feelings, which we would call emotions. And neutral. Neutral feelings, both physical and mental.

Now what's happened there? We have defined what we're experiencing as either pleasant or unpleasant. And that's when you get the concept of pain. See? Now the world lives — we have to live in that dual world. Because everything we experience will either decide it's pleasant or unpleasant. Right?

Now at that point, something happens. Something happens which is arising from this fundamental base of ignorance. Now, that not knowing, it's produced a delusion. What is the delusion? The delusion is, "I am a human being." What a terrible delusion. I am a human being. And therefore, we are seeking happiness in the form of a human being.

Seeking happiness in the form of a human being manifests as acquisitiveness, because I want to feel safe. Greed, acquisitiveness. The more I have, the safer I feel. It manifests as aversion. Anything that threatens what I have, I want to push away and destroy. Murder. And if it's too big, I run for it. At worst, suicide.

So there's my relationship to the world from the position of delusion. The delusion is, "I am this human being. I want to be happy. This is what makes me happy." And I collect all the money, all the friends, all the whatever. And anybody who takes anything from that is my enemy, is my rival, and must be destroyed. And if the rival and the enemy is too big, I've got to run.

So those are my attitudes that are arising from this delusion of thinking, believing, identifying with this psychophysical organism. That fundamental delusion is running underneath every moment we live. Okay?

And when something comes into consciousness which we perceive as pleasant, we'll immediately go up and grab it and try to hold on to it and try to develop it. And if in consciousness something unpleasant comes — that arises from this delusion — the desire to get rid of it, to destroy it, or to run for it.

That's the point of *taṇhā*. That's what we're doing every time we fall into the error of — it's translated as craving, but you can see that word doesn't capture the meaning of it. It's the desire, it's the greed, it's the hatred, it's the aversion, etcetera. And the anxiety — that's coming from the pressure of not being able to handle a situation. And that's when it arises.

So everything up to now has been a given. Even the Buddha experiences that. He experiences sensations coming in. He experiences them as pleasant or unpleasant. He experiences emotions. He experiences the four great *brahmavihāra*. Love, compassion, joy and peacefulness. He's not a callous and cold heart and pure wisdom. I mean, it's like the wisdom and compassion arises naturally, is it? He's huggy-wuggy. Out of compassion. "Whatever a teacher can do out of compassion for his students, I have done for you." He doesn't say out of wisdom, he says out of compassion.

So up until then, it's natural to all human beings. But from an enlightened point of view, there's not this other relationship because that fundamental delusion about who we are has disappeared.

Now, every time we make in our meditation an object of what we are experiencing, we're undermining that delusion of a self. Because this self is saying, "I am this body." So when you get a pain in the knee and you say, "There's pain," you're undermining that delusion that I am this knee, or this knee is mine. Every time you have an emotion — anxiety, depression — every time you push it away inside, creating an outer world of the inner world, and you say "There's depression," you're undermining this fundamental delusion about who you are.

And that's the release. That's the process of liberation. That's the process of awakening. Same with thoughts. Thoughts are a bit quick, but definitely with images. You can hold an image and say, "Well, there's an image." And in that way, that objectification of the inner world is the process of liberation.

But whenever we fall into this *taṇhā*, we've lost it. We're back into the delusion. Now, that's the point of desire. And that's what we're doing all the time in terms of noting intentions. Some intentions of course are powered not by ignorance but by wisdom, so they're obviously ones to be developed. But when it's coming from this centre of a self, then, of course, you have to be careful. Then it becomes something which is negative, undermining.

But at that point, remember, nothing's happened. That's what we're trying to really grasp by noting intentions. Nothing happens at the point of intention. Now, the next step, as you'll see, is... what is it? Where am I? Oh, dear me. *Upādāna*. *Upādāna* is the actual holding of the grasping. And that's the point where you say, "This is me." That's the identification.

Now, you can catch it in your meditation. You can be there, holding that pain separate. And you're noting "pain, pain, pain." And then it just gets a bit too much. And then you say, "I can't stand it." At that point, you see, the identification's gone in. And that's the point of suffering.

So long as you can hold in your attention pleasant, unpleasant feelings as objects, you're not suffering. Make sure you can clearly see that. The separation of the consciousness, of that awareness from what it's being aware of, should be clearly acknowledged. There's pain — fine — but there's not suffering. Then this aversion comes. "I don't want it. I don't want it." Making that your object, making it very clear, you're still not actually suffering. It's not a pleasant place, but you're not suffering. And as soon as you say, "I can't

take it," that's it. You're in there, and you're suffering. See?

So the point of suffering, as the Buddha points out, as opposed to pain, is at the point of identification. Now, the next step is the bit where the horror begins. Because *upādāna paccayā bhava*. Now, *bhava* is the point where you act. That's the point where the will goes in. And you create an act dependent on the delusion.

Now, he uses the word *bhava* because *bhava* means becoming. What's becoming? The self is recreating itself all the time. The self isn't static. It feels static. You know, you wake up in the morning and you say, "Oh, it's me again." Or, "Oh, not me again." It's one or the other. So it's like you wake up and you suddenly realise, "Oh, it's me." You wake up to yourself. That me, that me, you see, is the essential delusion that's underlying all this. And as it comes up and identifies, it empowers that intention.

And so the *bhava* is referring to a few things. It's referring, A, to this self reproducing itself as the one who's doing the action. It refers to the act of will that has gone into that process to take it from an intention into an action. And it's produced an act. See?

And that's the next bit where he says, from that point of becoming, that's the point of the birth of your action. And from the birth of your action, you complete the action and it comes to the end. So that birth and death refer to the process of the action that you've determined. And you can't stop the consequence once you've put that out into the universe and into the inner universe. You can't stop what's going to happen. You can ameliorate it, you can mitigate its effects, but you can't actually stop that energy from flowing outwards and inwards.

So for instance, if you're sharp with somebody, you can't stop the effect of that. You might have lost a friend forever, even though you might apologise. Inwardly, you've developed more of that nastiness.

So that's a run-through — dependent origination. The underlying ignorance about who we are, creating certain attitudes — the acquisition, the aversion, the fear — and how it manifests in a process, which is completely opposite to our language. So, "I want, and I scream, and I buy it." But the psychological process is, "I scream, want, I buy."

Now, if the I was first, there'd be no escape, would there? If the identity came first, you'd never be able to break through the process of desiring. It's the very fact that it comes after the process and therefore you can see the process of desiring that you can break the chain. You can see how amazingly deep the Buddha's insight was into our psychology. He saw exactly where the problem was.

And it's like anything... when somebody climbs Everest... like it's done... it's possible... up until then it's not possible... and then somebody climbs Everest... and every man and his dog can get up there... you see what I mean? It's like he's opened the gates of the deathless.

So that's dependent origination. Now... on the way back... whenever you stop... that process of wrong

desire... unwholesome desire... the end of that process doesn't happen. It just fizzles out right there at *taṇhā*, at desire. And that's the cure. That's the emptying of those *saṅkhāra*, those conditionings which are running underneath every day of our lives. And underneath that is the ignorance.

So you've got this underlying energy of the not knowing, the essential delusions and all the habits that we've created by it, just running underneath every moment. Every moment there's some stimulus — a greed, something that we greed for, or hate, or afraid of — and it comes into our consciousness, and something from below rises up to grasp it. If we can catch that rising, it'll just go and then plop, and that's the end of it. It just disappears. And that way we empty these *saṅkhāra*, that way we undermine this fundamental delusion.

That's the point of escape between *taṇhā* and *vedanā*. *Vedanā* and *taṇhā*. That's the point of escape. And every time we're pushing something away to make it an object, we're actually cutting deep down into that sense of self. And there will come a time, be assured, when that sense of self is completely cut and the whole house of cards completely tumbles. And that's the point of total liberation. Maybe by Saturday noon. We'll have a bit of luck.

So that's the process that he's pointing out when he goes backwards on it. It's not so much backwards, it's more like the negative qualities. Undermining that *avijjā*, undermining that wrong understanding, the whole thing starts to collapse.

And do remember that often because of the way he would explain things, it came out quite negatively. And so he was accused of annihilationism. So there's the not born, the not dying, the unconditioned. We say some of these things in one of our pūjās. But he said, no, he said the only thing that's annihilated is this — is this acquisitiveness, aversion and fear. Everything else is given back, renewed.

So remember, once he was fully liberated, there immediately arose within him that desire to help other people. It's not possible for wisdom to arise without that connection, the connection with other people. And as he is teaching, his teaching grows. There are early parts of the scriptures — some of you might know the Nipāta Sutta — where he's getting his thoughts together, because it's conversations with people. Then the middle part, it's all been formalised. Four of these, ten of those, twelve of them. He goes on like lists upon lists. And it's like he has to learn how to teach.

I think I mentioned it on Saturday, where he rises from his seat with the idea of offering people this teaching, and he meets an ascetic on the road who says that, you know, "You really look brilliant, you look absolutely shining." He says, "Who's your teacher?" And he makes this amazing declaration: "I need no teacher, I am the fully liberated one," and all that, you see. And the fellow says, "Very good," and walks off.

Which you would do, wouldn't you? Somebody stood here and said, "I am the great guru, I am the cosmic Buddha." So I think he learned that you don't quite approach the process that way.

So the last thing I want to add to it is *kamma*. *Kamma*. By the way, I've done the dependent origination as a

moment-to-moment process. Remember that there's also the teaching that this refers also to lifetimes. So that when we come into this life, we bring with us our past delusion and bad habits, our potentialities, and depending on the situation we're in, they'll be somehow developed.

So we know this from children, that early childhood, often a child will react to things which are completely innocuous, but because of the delusion or unresolved feelings in them, they'll see it in a certain way, and it becomes possibly a trauma. And then there's this business of false memory syndrome, where you get false memory and all that.

Well, just to reinforce that, I had one myself. Because in the early part of my meditation, when I was practising Zen, I was just resting and I lay on the bed and this huge fear came up. Every cell of my body was electric with this fear. And a very clear image that I walked into the room to my grandfather. And I mustn't have been more than two years old because he died shortly after that. And I shook him and I said to myself, he's dead, they've killed him. They happen to be my parents.

I went to my father, luckily he was still alive, and I said to him, "Dad, I found grandfather dead in the front room." He says, "No, he died in bed, I was with him." Now, if he wasn't there, I'd go around telling everybody, you know, I had this terrible trauma, caught my grandfather dead in the chair. Now, the point is, it's true, in the sense of that's how I interpreted what I saw, but it wasn't true historically.

Now, the interesting thing about that particular experience was that when it came up, I had a backflow, a forward flow of all my relationships to show me how that particular trauma had cancered every relationship. And from that moment on, my relationships changed. That's how deep our delusion can lie. Not everybody has these things, by the way. It's not necessary to have a trauma.

So that for me was a great teaching about karma. So somehow, I put credence in the whole idea of past lives, but even if you don't, just the idea of a young child who is feeling vulnerable. So you know children react. They think that if the parents are arguing, they're the problem, etcetera, etcetera. So whatever that decision was, remember the child is filled with that complete delusion that I am the body. And so that remains in the system. And you can see the karmic flow of it.

So karma, in terms of—I'm using karma in the more common sense of, you know, your comeuppance. Karma is to do with your inner world. It's not to do with your outer world when it comes to the process of liberation. And when something happens to us, there can be a multitude of reasons for it.

In Buddhist understanding, there are five laws. Most of them equate to our own modern laws. The first one is known as the law of heat or energy—that's all the physical laws. So these poor people in Nepal, I mean they've had another terrible earthquake up there—that's not because in their past lives they crushed a hundred thousand ants to death. I mean, it just happens because you happen to be on the earth. So you can't say that an earthquake or a flooding is your personal karma. It's ridiculous.

So it's the same with *bija*, the seeds. That's our genetics. You can't say the body, you know, you deserve the

body you've got. It's a given through that whole genetic line. So that's not your personal karma. It's not the karma that you're looking at when you want to be liberated.

Then there's the whole law of psychology, the *citta*. The whole psychology, which includes our perceptual process, etcetera, etcetera. And a lot of that is dependent upon the brain that you were given. And then number four is karma, which is to do just that point of willing things and creating habits. There's your karma. And it's that karma that will make you do things which then reverberate back on you. Like just getting angry with somebody, then you find they're getting angry with you for heaven's sake. So it's that understanding that it's really only around ethics that we have personal karma.

And go back to the original experience of the Buddha there upon enlightenment—those three knowledges that we talk about. The knowledge that he has no more defilements in him, that he sees all his past lives driven by his ethical decisions. And he sees beings being born from one realm to another also driven by their ethical decisions. So it's ethics.

And then finally, of course, there are the spiritual laws, which include the Four Noble Truths, etcetera, etcetera.

So karma, dependent origination and karma, are to be seen as one and the same thing. He's actually describing how we create karma for ourselves and how we can overcome it.

I can only hope my words have been of some assistance and it has not brought more confusion. And that by your careful investigation, discrimination of all your experiences, you may finally reach that pure liberation from all suffering, sooner rather than later.

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