No Inherent Being

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 51:26

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma-Sambuddhassa (three times)
Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

I'm just wondering whether there's a question somebody has which I can hinge my talk on. It always produces a sort of dead silence. There might be something on somebody's mind that they're wondering about the Buddha's teachings.

Could you possibly speak a little bit about things not having an inherent existence?

Ah, the old inherent existence. This is very much a Mahayana way of expressing things. It's basically saying that everything is contingent, everything is dependent on everything else, or on something else, which is dependent on something else, dependent on something else, so that you end up with a world which is just completely interconnected. And therefore, nothing has its own being. Nothing can exist completely on its own. So you can't take anything out of this universe and expect it to exist. It'll just disappear.

And when we take that into ourselves, that's where it begins to undermine this idea of who I am. So just consider all your thoughts. Have you ever had an original thought, a thought which has never been thought before? I mean, occasionally you do get a human being who comes up with an original thought. Somebody must have discovered the wheel, I suppose, at some point. But most of our thoughts are just rehashing of thoughts that have been given to us. They do have, of course, a twist of our own personality and experience. But all our thinking is dependent on the language we've been taught. And through the language, whatever information has come to us.

So one of the conceits we can suffer from is that, you know, I've had this amazing thought and it's absolutely original. Nobody else thinks like me. And then you write your book and you find that lots of other people have written similar things. So there's nothing which isn't dependent on something else, which hasn't arisen because of some other influence.

Our emotional life is always dependent on something, isn't it? You're always happy about something or sad about something else. You can't have an emotion which isn't about something. Can you? It's difficult anyway. It's always dependent on some sort of stimulus, something out there, or some history within ourselves. We have a history within ourselves of experience. So when it comes back to us as a memory, it will bring up some sort of emotional sense.

The body, of course, is even more obvious. The body is entirely dependent on carrots, cabbage, and the air

we breathe. We're one breath away from death. So that sense of interdependency gets away from the idea that we often feel that I'm a very individual, distinct person, and I do my own thing in my own way, in my own time. Now that very sort of more American and European, I think, idea of that, the success that I've had in this world is all due to me. Mind all the workers and everybody who's put that input in. If it weren't for me, I wouldn't be a multimillionaire. I wouldn't be a billionaire. I did it all, all by myself.

What's the name of that woman that wrote something about that? She was into that sort of ideology. She was a Russian emigre in America. Ayn Rand! Because I saw a program, they interviewed people who had these big, very successful businesses, IT businesses in California. And there was one man who just felt completely empowered. And he was of the opinion that this whole empire that he built was entirely due to him. He'd done it.

So there's that sort of egotistical, very self-centered idea that we can suffer from when we don't see our interdependency. Another way of saying that we're interdependent is this business of inherent. We're not inherently independent. We can't exist on our own, full stop.

Now, all that is around the teaching of not-self. How does it happen that we end up with these sorts of delusions? Eastern people are still much more community-based. The Chinese, the Burmese, they still have a sense of me being part of a community, me being just part of something bigger than me. There isn't that severe individual separation between me and the rest.

Now this deep delusion as to who we are is the core of our problem in the Buddha's understanding. It's to do with identity, to do with really beginning to investigate this sense of I. In a sense you have to understand that what the I does mean is it creates a relationship to the world. So the desire for happiness is coming from the Buddha within. It's the Buddha within that wants to be happy. It's not a mental thing. It expresses itself as a mental thing because we express that desire for happiness in wanting things, in wanting fame and relationships and all that. But the deep desire for happiness is coming from this Buddha within. I say Buddha within because it's not quite the Buddha yet, it's the Bodhisattva, it's still deluded. And it's found itself in this psychophysical organism.

Now the Buddha doesn't go into the whys of that. He's not interested in why should that happen. He's not interested in some sort of metaphysics. He's only interested in how. How does it happen that we're unhappy? How does it happen that we are chasing these dragons that don't actually exist or at least won't deliver the happiness that we want? And it all comes back to this fundamental basic position of not knowing, not knowing.

Now, in Dependent Origination, which is the psychological teaching of the Buddha, it begins with that word, *avijjā*, not knowing. It's often translated as ignorance, which gives it a sort of culpability, like you're ignorant. But that's not the meaning of it. It's just simply don't know. And we're born into this form. When I say we, I mean that Buddha within is born into this form. And it's not surprising that it should completely identify with it.

So here it is, a screaming little baby, and it hurts, and sometimes it's happy, and there's an unexpressed and unreflective identity with it, and that stays with us for most people until they die. I am this body. If we understood, if we really, really understood that I am not this body, then we wouldn't be shaken by sickness or by death. So the fear of death and the anger around it and the grief around it are measures of this identity that we have with the body.

So once we have this identity of the self, once we have this body, this person that I am, which includes the body, the mind, the heart, the whole psychophysical organism, once I've identified that and I'm seeking happiness, then what is it that makes me happy? It's the accumulation of things. The more I accumulate, the happier I am. So to have lots of money makes me happy. But to have billions of it, really, that makes me feel very safe. I'd have to do something terrible to lose billions. I might not spend it. That's irrelevant. I can do anything I want with all my billions. But the fact is that makes me feel safe.

Now, that's the underlying psychology that subsists underneath all our gathering and acquisitiveness, our greed and lust and all that sort of stuff, is the fact that there's a deep sense of insecurity. That deep sense of insecurity manifests every time the body falls ill or somebody we know dies, and it cuts into us.

Now we have to cover that insecurity up because it's not a pleasant place to be. And we do it by accumulating wealth, accumulating friendships, accumulating spiritual highs. It's very comforting to think that I'm an amazingly good meditator. So any way that we can cushion ourselves against this whole business of insecurity becomes that acquisitiveness.

Now, once you've got something, you have to protect it. You have to protect it against enemies. Enemies who want what you've got. So we do it through aversion. We try to get rid of things that are threatening us. At worst, murder, of course. But simple things like jealousies. Jealousies, envies. Those little ways that we see that our fame or what we are, what we've accumulated isn't as good as somebody else's. So we're constantly trying to make myself feel more and more safe. And anything that threatens me, anything that threatens my accumulations, I see them as enemies and I have to get rid of them one way or the other.

If, of course, it all gets too heavy, if the enemy is right on top of me and I can't escape the enemy, then my escape route is to turn inward with the hatred and I end up committing suicide. So these two poles of the enemy create both the aversion and the fear.

So there we have it. That's the basic platform of our delusive relationship to the world, coming from a wrong identity of who I am. I'm trying to accumulate things to make myself feel safe. I'm averse to anything that threatens that sense of safety, which is created by these accumulations. And when it gets too much, I'm going to run for it. I'm going to hide. I'm going to find a cave, somewhere to disappear into.

Now, that basis then, what it does is it begins to manifest in the way we think, in the way we speak, in the way we act. And that's when the ethical life comes into existence. So just to separate out morality from ethics, morality meaning these basic rules that presumably most of us in this room now generally keep,

like not murdering and stealing. Ethics is a much broader concept of relationship. So what is our relationship to other human beings? What is our relationship to the animal world? What is our relationship to the world of plants, even to the world of minerals? That was the old medieval, wasn't it? Minerals, plants, animals and human beings. There's your four kingdoms, as they were called.

So what's our relationship to that? And when we begin to investigate that, we find that it's really all there to serve me. Because I'm constantly trying to feel safe. And I feel safe by making myself happy. And it's me who defines what makes me happy. So it might be riches. It might be fame. It might be anything which draws me into my happiness and makes me feel safe. So that's what happens when this sense of I, this sense of me being a person, an individual in the world. That's how we begin to relate to it.

Now, our personalities and characters are not all like that. Part of it, of course, is driven by love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and all the rest of it. And it's beginning to realize that actually that's where our true safety lies. Our true safety lies in really facing up to the reality of life, which is about growing old and sick and dying and all that, and to begin to relate to people in a slightly different way. And that different way is this business of interconnectedness.

So when we talk about interconnectedness at a heart level, all we talk about is love. Love, which is friendship. Compassion, which is that movement in the heart which wants to help somebody who's in some sort of difficulty or pain. And compassion itself is not a painful state. I was at this center and they came up to me and they said, we've decided that the Buddha couldn't be compassionate. I said, oh, I said, why is that? Because he'd be suffering. If he was compassionate, he'd be suffering.

That's a complete confusion between compassion and grief. Grief is when we have pity on somebody. Grief is what we feel when we've lost something personal, when it's some attachment that goes. But compassion is a joyful thing. Compassion raises great joy in the heart when you're helping somebody. So when you're helping somebody and you feel some sort of grief for them, that's coming from that sense of pity.

So all these beautiful states like love, compassion, sympathetic joy, they're in us too. And as we move along the spiritual path, part of it is the happiness, the ordinary human happiness. So the Buddha talks about going from darkness to light. And part of the training, half of the training, is to do with ethics, is to do with developing the beautiful side of our personalities. And in so doing, we find ourselves much more at home in the world, much more connected. And in that, of course, the safety. The safety, the lack of the fear of insecurity comes because we accept the insecurity of life. But once you accept the insecurity of life, you undermine the fear of insecurity. There is insecurity. There's not much you can do about it.

So part of our spiritual life is the cleansing of that, the purification of the heart, based on the wrong understanding of habits that we've developed because of these wrong understandings. Unwholesome habits. So this word *akusala* translated as unskillful, unwholesome. But the other side is the development of the beautiful heart. And it's slowly moving in that direction which is part and parcel of the process.

Now when it comes to this identity, the self, it's much easier to drop the self when the heart is pure than when it's not pure. If you're very angry with somebody, it's very difficult to say, well, I'm not angry, there is anger. But when you're actually moving from the position of love, it's easier to let go of this self-centeredness because the other is your center of attention. It's much easier to let go of me, me, me all the time when you're in a compassionate relationship with somebody who's suffering because they are the focus of your attention, not you.

So that whole movement away from what is negative within us to what is positive is something that we can actually do, that we can actually practice. And by simply every day just giving ourselves a little task. For instance, there was an occasion when the Buddha visited his monks. There were three arahats, mind you. There were three fully liberated people. And he asks the chief monk there, how do you live in harmony with each other? And he said, well, every day when we wake up, when we get up, we say to ourselves, why don't I put aside what I want to do and do what the others want to do?

Now, frankly, that only works if everybody says that. Otherwise, you tend to be abused. But you can see how that attitude to go to work, for instance, and to have more of an attitude of service, not like, what does the company owe me? But more in the sense of, what can I offer to the company? That doesn't undermine your rights. It doesn't allow you to be abused, but it's your attitude of service which undermines a lot of negativity you might have around work. It's the same with relationships.

Love is putting the other one first, but it's not forgetting oneself. That's the important point. I'm often asked that about, well, if somebody is being abused either at work or in a personal relationship, should one stay there? Well, it's up to the person to decide, but at some point, when the abuse becomes to a level which makes no sense, and you can't get through it, and you can't get the other to see what they're doing, then often it's the best ploy just to move out. Or murder them.

So we've got this basic position of what the Buddha called delusion. The delusion lies in an identity. The identity is this body, heart and mind, this psychophysical, this human being, conventionally a human being, and we're trying to seek happiness. And we're seeking happiness in the world. And it can't deliver. It can't deliver because it's impermanent. Every time you get something which you really want and you've always wanted, the thing begins to corrode, corrupt, disappear, or somebody else nicks it. So we're forever chasing a dragon that doesn't actually exist.

And what it leads us into is frustration. All those things that we talked about this morning, the pleasure, the frustration, the grief of loss, the fear of loss, and boredom, boredom that arises, and addictive behavior. So our practice is now to go back on that, to go back on that process. And the way we do it is both by developing what is beautiful in us through the practice of *mettā* meditation, through actually looking at our lives and what we do, and beginning to see it as a service.

And on the negative side, to begin to undermine it through this process of not indulging those desires, which we see at the present moment. And we've learned the trick. The trick is to be fully aware, to let the

desire come up with all its energy, and just to stay with it and wait for it to exhaust itself. It's as simple as that. But of course the difficulty is that you have to keep doing it, and that's the meaning of renunciation in Buddhism.

So again we make this distinction between self-mortification and renunciation. Remember when the Buddha joined, he practised seemingly as the Jains do. It was more a matter of getting rid of this physical world, getting rid of this body in order that the soul might be released. He didn't find that particularly helpful. But he didn't give up on the idea of renunciation.

So renunciation is giving something up to see how attached to it we are, to see how we become emotionally attached to something. The normal thing I say to people is, everybody has a favourite programme on telly and you get your mug of coffee and your biscuit and you sit in the chair, and you don't turn the TV on. You just look at the screen. And you know it's the last of the series. That's a good one. It really is a fantastic one to try on yourself. You don't want to get too masochistic. But what it does, what it manifests for us is this incredible attachment. And remember that we don't actually know the strength of these attachments until we lose them.

So this whole business of identity is undermined through beginning to understand that we are constantly in relationship, we're constantly moving in relationship with the world around us. The practice of *vipassa nā* is really to dig deep down into that point of identity, and that's what I was saying this morning about making everything an object. So when physical pain comes, when any emotional state comes—happiness, unhappiness, physical state of pleasantness, pleasure—it is to actually begin to look at it closely.

And to begin to sense that there's a separation there between the knowing, between that which is doing the investigation, investigating, and that which is being investigated. And to recognize that the perceiver, that which is perceiving, can't be that which is being perceived.

Now, as that gap becomes much more clear to us, as we begin to feel that gap more, the separation between the knowing and what is being experienced, it's as though the knowing is beginning to understand its own quality, its own peculiar being, you might say.

Now, for those of you for whom that's clear, remember, the sense of self-awareness, the sense of the observer, the feeler, is still something that you're perceiving. You can't be that either. And it's turning towards the feeling of the observer. The feeling of it. The feeling of presence.

And the peculiar thing is that it's pointing in the right direction. It's just like when you look into a mirror. You're looking at your face in the mirror. And we delude ourselves in thinking that's how people see us. You've all done the two-mirror trick, haven't you? No, you've not done that? You get a mirror and you look into the mirror that you're holding to see which is giving you back the image from the original mirror. So when you look at the mirror, you're looking at your face the other way around. So to turn it round and to see how people really see you is a real shock. You didn't think your nose was quite so bent. So it's really

worth doing.

And what that's telling us is, in this observer, that the feeling of the observer is a sense of presence, but it's a mirror image of the Buddha within. And so it's actually looking in the right direction. So that sense of presence is telling us that there is something which is permanent, which is not born, not dying, doesn't die, and all the rest of it.

Now, it's a bit unfortunate these days because, especially with neuroscience—I'm sure you've come across, some of you know what's happening in Buddhism—there's this whole movement of secular Buddhism. A lot of it is based on neurobiology, which in a sense reduces everything to the brain, reduces everything to neurons and ultimately to subatomic particles, I presume. And as you see the brain working, even though the neurobiologists can't feel what you're feeling, so if you feel angry, certain parts of the brain light up, there's a presumption there, which is a leap of faith, that actually what you're measuring or what you're seeing is an emotion. Whereas in Buddhist psychology, what you're seeing is the effect of the mind on matter. The mind in the Buddhist teaching is something separate from, but still has the quality of impermanence, but can actually exist outside this physical frame.

And that is, what you get is a disbelief in that completely, and the body and mind are all based upon the brain and that therefore consciousness itself is just an emergent property. So there's a lot of people who are now in Buddhism who take that as their basic understanding, but it's very difficult to hold that position if you read the scriptures.

And one book that you might like to get, you can get a PDF of it—you might be able to get a copy. So you get a PDF of it and put it on your e-reader. It's a book called *The Island*, which is a collection of quotes from the scriptures put together by Venerable Ajahn Amaro, who's the chief monk now at Amaravati, and Pasanno, who's the chief monk in America, at Abhayagiri in California. And they were tackling this problem of really, from one point of view, of undermining the teaching of the Buddha about there is something which is not conditioned. And I can't see how they get themselves into that position, frankly, even in my lack of knowledge about the scriptures.

So, in that process of *vipassanā*, we are beginning to distinguish between that which is arising and passing away, that which is moving constantly within that inner vision, and something which is observing it.

Now, there comes a point when you are close enough to that process, where what you begin to see is that consciousness itself, the process of being conscious, is not continuous. It arises and passes away, just like that. So then you realize that the world we're living in is completely being manufactured by us on minimal data coming in from the world.

So if you've seen these pictures, if you've seen how the eye moves around the picture that we're looking at, how it picks up, how it's constantly moving, and we're completely unaware of it. Because as the eye moves quite automatically around, picking up this, it's coming into this brain-mind complex. And what we're

seeing is put on a screen. That screen is consciousness. All this information is, to me, it's virtually like a television or a monitor. All that information is coming through the electrics. And what we're aware of only is not all the stuff that's going on behind there, but only what's actually on the screen in front of us.

And when you begin to recognize that, then you realize that the world that we're actually living in is the world I'm manufacturing. When I say I, I mean this psychophysical organism.

So in the universe, there's no light. There are photons, but there's no light. You have to have a retina, you have to have a sense base in order to perceive light. There's no sounds in the universe, completely silent. You have to have the mechanism of hearing in order to hear. And that's our sensing body. And our sensing body is limited. We don't have the sense of smell of a dog. We don't have that clarity of hearing that some of the animals have. Our range of perception is limited by our sensibility. We can't see ultraviolet rays. But some animals can. Some animals have that magnetism in their head that they can actually feel where they are. In fact, some human beings have that.

I met a man who came to help us. Just out of the blue, he came to help us put up a kuti, this hut that we have. And no matter which way you twisted him, you could turn him in any way you wanted to, eventually he would point to north, magnetic north, within a degree. Figure that. Now I know that when I go out walking, it's always the opposite to what I'm thinking I'm doing. Pathetic.

So these sensibilities are entirely dependent upon this body, heart and mind. And when we begin to realize that, then, of course, you take an interest in yourself. You take an interest in your psychology. You begin to realize that, actually, you're the only one who's going to take any real interest in your psychology. And that you're the one who's creating the mess, and you're the one who can get out of it.

Remember that the Buddha said that he was completely liberated from suffering. He wasn't liberated from the body. He had a body and he suffered. And he died of gastroenteritis or something. So because he did it, he then, as it were, in the phrase of the scriptures, opened the gates, the gates of the Dhamma wide open. And so it means that we ourselves now are in the process of reaching that particular liberation, that Nibbāna.

Now, Nirvana, in the East, you don't get much talked about Nirvana. It's presumed. Nobody really talks about it. You only talk about the path, about the practice, about the teaching. You never talked about the ultimate. In a sense, because in the culture, it's just presumed. But for us, it can be a very strange understanding that there is a level of being which has nothing at all to do with this phenomenal world, completely outside it. It is completely unconditioned. It is inherent. It has its own inherent, to go back to the original question, it has its own inherent existence and is not dependent on the world. That's the teaching.

Now the Buddha wouldn't go beyond that particular statement. He wouldn't get into metaphysics. He wouldn't infer that therefore there must be some sort of big being. So there's no creator God. There's

nobody who's judging us. All that's done within us. And the process of liberation is entirely up to us. Not that people can't guide us and help us, but eventually it's us that has to sit on the cushion. We have to do the work. And the process of liberation comes about through our own particular effort. That's all. Nobody can do it for us. So, like they say in Zen, the Buddha can only point to the moon. He can't get you over there.

So, this Nirvana that we're moving towards is described in various ways. Now, the usual way that he expresses it is negative. It's not born, doesn't die. And the word he uses there is a Pali word which translates as exists. There's another Pali word which is like our "is", like "this is a statue." So the "is" there has virtually no meaning. But if you say that statue exists, that gives it a different twist. There exists that which is not born, doesn't die. And he says, if it did not exist, there'd be no escape from what is born, dies, is created, is conditioned. It's quite clear.

He talks about an *āyatana*. Āyatana here is the word that means a sphere of experience. So we have six āyatana. The sphere of seeing. Can't be confused with the sphere of hearing. They're two different ways of experiencing the universe. Then there's tasting, smelling, and all the mental formations that go on. Then he says that there is a sphere where there's none of it, where there's no moon, there's no sun, there's no coming, there's no going, there's no staying, there's no time. Very clear statements.

And then when it comes to a more positive way, he's got something like 32 adjectives trying to point to it, such as refuge, a home, an island, an island that you cannot go beyond. So the island is something completely separate from the landmass. And that's it. You can't go beyond it.

How can we get a glimpse of that in our practice? How can we begin to see it? Because this is what we're supposed to be. Not becoming. The I is always becoming some other person. Even during the day, you might change from being a mother, a father, to a workmate, and so on and so forth. So your personality, your person, your personhood is constantly shifting and changing. But here's something which doesn't do that. It's beyond change.

So, in our practice, when you're observing things and you get more and more a distinct sense of being the self, being the observer, being the feeler, and making that clear to yourself, and sometimes perhaps turning into that sense of presence that's there. Especially when everything's calm, everything's peaceful. That's the time to do it. You can't do it when you're raging. So when you're calm, when you're peaceful.

This is what I mean. The more beautiful we become in our ethical life, the more beautiful our hearts become, the easier it is to drop the self. So when everything is peaceful, it doesn't have to be in a sitting posture. You could be sitting in an armchair at home. You could be walking in nature. But as soon as you get that sense of being within yourself, being the observer, the one who knows, just stop for a moment and just feel that sense of presence because it's a mirror image. It's a mirror image. And just see if you can—what's the knowing made of?

Now as far as we're concerned as human beings, we're made of three things. We're made of the mind which expresses itself in thoughts and images. We're made of a heart which is expressed in emotions and moods—I'm using it as an emotional heart—and we're made of the body, and the only thing we know of the body is sensations and feelings.

Can you find any of that within the observer?

So these are things that you can actually begin to question when you're in that very clear state of the observer, the feeler, the one who knows. And what that's beginning to do for us is to clarify, is to begin to clarify for us where this state that the Buddha's talking about, this nirvanic state is to be found. And the more we'll be drawn there, the more that we'll be drawn there. And the more you're drawn there, the more you're drawn to silence. The more you're drawn to peacefulness.

Of course, you have to be careful that you then don't get into a quietism where you just want to sit there, anonymous under a tree or something. It also has to be that outflow of wisdom. And that's exactly what happened to the Buddha. So he attained this state, and it must have been quite amazing to him. He must have thought, what is this? I mean, he had to investigate the state that he'd actually found himself in, this liberation. He hadn't come across it. Nobody had talked about it. He didn't know anything about it. He had to actually investigate this state of being in Nirvana.

And it's when he investigates that, and he investigates how he used to suffer, and how he overcame that suffering. And that's the psychology that we call dependent origination. And as soon as that happened, as soon as he gathered that, the desire to share it was quite natural. Because it's no longer about him.

So then he thinks, the memory of his two teachers come up. And they both died. So there's a sense of sorrow about that. Do not confuse sorrow with grief. Sorrow is a very pure state where you're resonating with somebody else's suffering. And the sorrow has to express itself in some compassionate way, even if it's only sending a good wish.

Otherwise it remains unrequited and can slip into a sense of grief, a sense of unworthiness because you didn't do anything. So you have to be quite careful about that.

So in that sort of investigation, we're getting close, we're beginning to perceive what the Buddha means by it. And when you're in that state, you begin to perceive it as a better state to be in. A better state to be in awareness than to be in non-aware. Even though it's creating an enormous pain in the back, in the knees, in the neck. All this stuff's coming up. There's a sort of feeling that, well, even in this horror, it's better to be aware than to go around like a monkey.

Let me just see. Can you turn the lights on? I'm beginning to talk to the darkness.

I just like to end by pointing out something that's been happening, I think, to a lot of people. All this business around ISIS and the Islamic thing and all the horror stories that are coming out today and how

people can feel overwhelmed by the horrors of it. Remember, you have to be careful with yourself. Not go beyond what's possible.

Remember that there's two rings of power around us. The first one is what I can do. Very little anybody can do about what's happening in the Middle East, either around Palestine or around what's happening to ISIS. Very little that you can actually do. The next part is the influence, what you can get other people to do. And it might be writing letters, whatever. There might be something that can be done there. But beyond that, if you try and get beyond that, all you're going to do is exhaust yourself. You're just going to get yourself into an absolute state of feeling disempowered and all that sort of stuff.

And the fact is that you think that that's false, but you are disempowered. You can only do certain things. So the final thing you can do is at least send good wishes. Now, it might be that you don't believe that your thought patterns can actually help other people in other places. But at least it's doing something within you to create a proper relationship to the situation that you find yourself in.

Just on that note, I have a friend in Alabama who teaches dowsing. And one of the things he does is he gets two people on both sides of the room to send a thought to each other, a blessing or something like that. And they all douse that line, that energy line. And he says they can douse it for six weeks. They can feel that energy in the line for six weeks. It's an Aboriginal song line.

So without getting too mystical about it, there is a point where you can say to yourself, well, I know enough about this situation. I don't have to keep feeding it with these images. Sometimes you can turn the news off. Just keep feeding the same old bad story. Well, we know what's going on, and what can we do? Well, at least I might be able to write a letter or send goodwill or do something. But just to find ourselves completely disempowered is just overreaching what we can do. And in a sense, it's a lack of humility, isn't it? You can do more than you can. There's a sort of pride in it.

So just in case you found yourself being quite upset about things that are happening around the world. The Pope's called it Third World War. He's close on the beginning of a Third World War. It's pretty miserable.

So on that happy note, remember that there's two sides to our practice. There's the side which is to do with ethics, which is to do with relationships, which is to do with letting go of all that selfishness and anger, and really a positive effort to develop goodwill, compassion, joy. And as we're doing that, we're doing this investigation into impermanence, into the process of this wrong desire, really begin to see that. And the fact that when it remains only as a desire, nothing's happened. It has to be willed. There has to be an action which takes it into a pattern of thought, or a pattern of speech, or an action. And this business of not me, not mine. So that's not a negativity. There is nothing. It's actually a way of investigating this whole problem of identity.

So I'll leave a piece of paper there. Might be time to ask some questions, clarifications tomorrow

afternoon. I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. May you, by your fierce commitment to the practice and devotion to love, compassion, joy and peace and all the rest of it, attain full liberation sooner rather than later.

So use this, just see what your state is, whether it's just a matter of relaxing and breathing in the night air and doing something like that, or doing some walking meditation. And then we'll come back and do the last session of the evening. But the important thing is to get in the habit of not allowing the mind to wander. There's no rest. You can't take a holiday in the spiritual life. You can't say, well, today I'm just going to go berserk. Sex, drugs and rock and roll. It's like once you're in there, you're in, you're locked in. And not to expect big things, not to expect some huge out-of-this-world bomb that's going to break and suddenly become floating angels or something. The process is very slow, and the Buddha's call is about gradual, a gradual training.

It ruins the sex, drugs, and rock and roll, doesn't it? It sort of ruins the sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Well, this is it. It takes the joy out of life. Very good.

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