Kamma and Free Will

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 51:09

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sambha-sambuddhassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sambha-sambuddhassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sambha-sambuddhassa. Homage to the Buddha, the blessed noble and fully self-enlightened one.

So this evening, well, let me tell you what happens tomorrow, and it makes sense. Tomorrow we carry on till lunchtime, and then because the weather should be fine enough tomorrow, by the way, it gets darkish and cold, we might do just a small sit at two o'clock, but then hopefully we will assault the mountain behind us. Not this one. That one. It's only 300 metres. It's nothing. Mark ran up and down it. He said, no problem. And then we come back and then in the evening, just questions and answers really, whatever discussion comes up. And then on Sunday morning, I do a little finishing ceremony, breakfast and then you can escape.

So this evening really it's just tackling this whole problem of daily life. How do we take this into daily life and just use various ways that the Buddha talks about it? First of all just to get a clear idea of what the Buddha's position is when we compare it to other systems.

If we look at Christianity it really centres upon the morality of things. The basic myth about Adam and the apple, and then because of that initial mistake everybody suffers and we've all got this original sin, this thing that has to be wiped. And then it's a very complicated story about the role of Jesus and all that. But the basic thing is that we're caught between the devil and God, and there's a lovely story of Job which all of you have read, of course, in which the devil says to God, this fellow Job, of course he loves you. You've given him everything he's got. All these wives and kids and all this land and cattle. He says, you've got to test him.

So God thought, hmm. So he began to test Job. And he killed all his wives and all his kids. Took away all his cattle. And he's absolutely devastated. And he can't understand why this has happened to him. So then we have these Job's comforters. They all come basically tell him he must have done something wrong. But he hasn't. And he can't think what he's done to deserve this catastrophe. But the one thing he doesn't lose is faith in God. The one thing he doesn't lose is faith in the goodness of God. And eventually God, of course, recognises this trust and gives everything back, a hundredfold and all that. If you like the Coen brothers, their film A Serious Man is based on Job and it's extraordinarily funny. Anyway, that's by the way.

Freud simply took that on to a psychological or psychoanalytic level. So for a Christian it's this trying to know what is good and evil, and this battle between the temptations of the devil and the invitations of God, that's the battle between good and evil. In Freud, you get a slightly different model where you've got

this poor little ego, but one minute is dragged down by this animal id and constantly castigated by the superego. And the poor ego has to weave a little way between these two opposites and try to find some sort of stability.

From the Buddha's point of view, it's a slightly different problem. Yes, all those things come up in his teaching. The decision about what is wholesome and unwholesome, what is skillful, etc. The id, these basic desires, not particularly basic, but our animal nature drawn to sex and lust and greed and then avarice and all that. All these things are in the Buddha's teachings. And the desire to seek happiness in doing something good, that's all there too. So it's not as though the Buddha would deny any of that. In fact, he would say that those who've understood that there is consequence for doing good and doing evil, in other words, the law of *kamma*, they're actually on the path. They're actually on the path. That's the basic understanding.

There were people in his time who would have said, it doesn't matter what you do, you can go down one side of the Ganges and do tremendous compassionate acts and come up the other side murdering and pillaging, won't make a blind bit of difference because your life is set, it's conditioned, it's fated. That would not be his understanding.

From the Buddha's point of view, the problem is at a slightly deeper level, you might say, as to why do we do these things in the first place. And there he came across this fundamental delusion about who we are. Remember that having decided, having believed that we are human beings, and heaven saying all want us to be happy, no matter how you might define it, if you ask any human being what they want they say I want to be happy, and they might define it in all sorts of different ways but that's what they want to be, they want to be happy. And that search for happiness leads to this acquisitiveness, remember, gathering things because the more you have of what you like the happier you seem to be. The more money in the bank you feel safer, etc. And anything that undermines any of that of course you want to get rid of, so there's your aversion. And if it's bigger than you then you run for it, there's your fear.

So there's your three basic attitudes of acquisitiveness, aversion and fear arising from the idea that as a human being I can achieve happiness, permanent happiness. You can achieve it in little bits but then it always lets you down, doesn't it? So although there is at that level of working with what is unwholesome and wholesome, virtuous and otherwise, at a deeper level it's cutting through the very delusion that's causing it. That's a slightly different model. So the accent is on an investigation as to how these things happen, as to how we behave the way we do.

He wouldn't deny the role of guilt and shame. He would deny the existential guilt that might be felt within the Christian, Judaic and Muslim tradition where you are fundamentally evil and you can only be saved by God or Jesus or whatever. That wouldn't work from his point of view. But what does work is that when you do something harmful, then you dread consequences. And there's your dread. There's your guilt. Fear of being caught. And the shame. Shame is just not living up to your own standards, feeling belittled by

your own behaviour. And seeing yourself belittled in other people's eyes because of your behaviour. So those two things the Buddha actually calls guardians, guardians of society. He's not saying they're wholesome, but it does stop you doing things.

So you've got this model where on the one part it's an investigation as to our true nature and what should our relationship be to the world. And on the other part, it's dealing with habits that we've accumulated, developed because of past wrong understanding. And even present wrong understanding. And we're still deluded. Remember that the definition of deluded or delusion is that you don't know where the delusion is. If you knew where it was, you wouldn't be deluded. So we've talked a lot about the hindrances and all that.

So maybe it's also time now to talk about these *pāramī*. *Pāramī* means to be on the shore. It's translated as perfections, but basically it's the virtues that we need to take us across the water to this island. The island the Buddha often uses as an image for *Nibbāna*. It's something beyond this present life form.

So let me read through them first, and then afterwards I just want to talk a little bit about commitment. So we have ten qualities. Now, in the Mahāyāna they have five, but in Theravāda they have ten, which proves that we're better. Actually, these were compiled later out of the scriptures. I think as a challenge to Madhyamaka. Anyway, these are the purifications, ten leading ones. So there's the giving, or liberality, generosity. There's morality, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, resolution, loving kindness, and equanimity. So obviously it doesn't include every virtue there is, but at least it gives us some sort of platform.

Giving is really the basic virtue the Buddha points to as a starting point because he points out that even thieves can be generous with what they've just taken from you. They can be very generous to their friends and family. So generosity is probably one of the easiest things that you can do because it's a matter of giving. And he always starts his talk to lay people with *dāna*, with this idea of giving. And then he talks about the good life, and he talks about being reborn in the heavenly realms and all that. And when he's got his audience, then he hits them with the Four Noble Truths. He wheedles his way in.

So I want to latch together these three great virtues: gratitude, generosity and renunciation. When we consider what we've received, gratitude arises. And it's a lovely feeling, isn't it, gratitude, thankfulness? And if you go through your life and instead of thinking of how horrible everybody's been to you, a terrible society and all that, and instead you go through and make a list of all the things that you've been given, even this life by our mothers, then very slowly the balance moves, generally speaking, towards gratitude rather than grudge.

And what gratitude does, of course, it fills a heart with the desire to repay, to do something in return. And often you can't do it to the people who've done you good because either they've moved on or you've lost contact, etc. So therefore you move it towards an attitude of giving. And it might not be giving what you received, but it's just knowing that gratitude impels you to be generous one way or the other.

And generosity is either of our wealth or our time. Now, the interesting thing is that every time you give something, you're giving something up. Because you could have used it for yourself. So when you make a donation to a cause, you could have used it to have a good time. And every time you give your time for the benefit of somebody else, well, you could have used it to have a good time. You might have had a good time helping them, but it wasn't for you. So there's that renunciation.

And sometimes when you give, you can sometimes push the giving just a little bit so that it hurts a little. Because that little bit of hurt means you're stretching your idea of renunciation. I think parents with children obviously have a wonderful opportunity because it's just like you've got to keep stretching, they demand and you've got to keep stretching out towards them, giving more. So these three virtues are intimately connected: gratitude, generosity and renunciation.

Now, renunciation mustn't be confused with self-mortification. In self-mortification, what we mean by that, in Buddhist terms, is that you believe the body is at fault. And you're almost denying the body its desires because the body is leading you into wrongdoing. So you blame the body. So, for instance, if you had a problem with alcohol, you're blaming the body. So, it's a case of recognising that that's not what renunciation is. Renunciation, in Buddhist understanding, is to give something up to see your attachment. And you don't know how attached you are to something until what you have is gone. And then there comes all these things that we've talked about with attachment, the grief and all that.

So whenever we're generous, that's an opportunity to reflect on, you know, to actually make it a pure act of generosity. So sometimes we, there are all sorts of reasons for giving. You might give, I mean, you might do something for a business reason. That's fine. There's nothing wrong with that. You buy somebody a drink so that they will sign the contract. Well, what's the problem with that? But it's not generosity in a spiritual sense.

We buy presents at Christmas for each other. A bottle of wine and somebody buys you cheese. Or a pair of socks for heaven's sake. And it's just an exchange of goods. I mean, this goes back to ancient times. Kings exchanged goods as a way of just creating a certain friendship. But that's not generosity in the spiritual sense. But there's nothing wrong with it. It has its purpose in our relationships.

The generosity we're talking about is giving for the sake of the other, not for any reason, not for any purpose of return. So we have to be careful when we give something, and this is why this reflection is important. So when you give something, you give it for the benefit of the other. And when that suffuses your heart, when that suffuses your intention, your intention is complete and whole. That's what's in your mind, you're giving it for their benefit. That's when you give. So that the action supports the intention and that's your conditioning. And we're conditioning ourselves to just give, to just give.

Now you have to be careful because after you've done that you see these little voices come up: "You're truly a generous person." So you point to that and you say, ah, no, no, no, Māra, no, you weren't there, you weren't there. Or one of these little underlying things, it's too much, give me some back. All this,

sometimes you don't reflect upon somebody asking you, like, you know, decorations, you had all this decoration, it went on forever. Days and days. And if somebody comes along and says, we'd like to, oh, yeah, I'll come along. And then they go and think, I don't want to decorate. And then they phone up and say they're not feeling very well. And, I mean, you can't blame people. But it just shows that often we give without a certain reflection.

But often, and we're coming to truthfulness, it's defined as doing what you say you're going to do even if it hurts, because when you do something that you said you were going to do, and then you didn't want to do it, and you make yourself do it, it teaches you. Next time you'll be just a bit more careful before saying yes. You'll make the same mistake again.

So this whole area of giving, it's reflecting on it, and you give it. And of course, you can do that with Christmas presents. Even though at the back of your mind you know that if you didn't give it, that would be the end of your friendship. The fact is that you can put that to the side and give something for the person's benefit. So remember that intention is crucial. Your intention is crucial. And the purer it is, the better.

And of course, don't forget, you can be generous to yourself. We have to also learn that I am also worthy of generosity. And sometimes you have to look after yourselves. So the Buddha did. I mean, here he is. He's liberated from suffering. He says he doesn't suffer. And yet he goes off into the forest to meditate. And so they ask him, why do you do that? You're liberated now. He says, no, I do it with my own quiet abiding and as a good example to others. But notice, the first thing is my quiet abiding. Like he's had enough of all these questions and driving in potty. So he's going, so he's offering a bit of peace and quiet. And he does it also to show, to be an example to others.

When you feed yourself, when you eat yourself, really acknowledge that this is for our benefit. I'm eating this for my benefit so that I can continue to live and live the spiritual life. So you've got to be careful that you don't get into this thing about helping others and leave yourself out. Because eventually it works against you. I mean, you get this burnout business. And giving somebody who's a do-gooder. See, that's the other side of it. So a do-gooder, in my definition, is somebody who does you the good they want to do you. Whether you want it or not. And people like that come from a good heart. But they're not really standing in your shoes. They're not really looking at the world from what you want to do. They think, well, this is what's good for you.

And it can be a real pain. So the example I give is that somebody's ill, so you take them grapes and soup or something, and they say, thank you very much, but I really couldn't eat this soup, you see. And inside your mind you say, I've just spent two hours making this bloody soup. They say, you could do something for me. Oh, yeah, very good. Could you clean my toilet? I think I'd better clean your toilet. I came here to offer you soup. So you can always catch yourself when you're doing this good and then you find actually you're being a do-gooder.

So how do we get beyond that? It's very simple. You ask the person what they want. You don't presume on anything at all. So giving itself is really... Generosity is really crucial in our practice. And it's a form of love, of course. Generosity is just there. And it's lovely when you see these... What do they call it? Sports for... Sport relief. Yeah, sport relief and comic relief. They raise masses of money. And it's really quite... Well, it's quite uplifting to know that people are prepared to give for these causes. Really wonderful.

So that covers three of them anyway. So it's the giving and the... I mean, gratitude isn't mentioned here, but it's definitely something. Meister Eckhart, whom some of you might know, the thirteenth century mystic, who's very close to Buddhism. If you read his stuff, it's very, very close to the Buddha's understanding. He says, if you were to say thank you all the time, that would be enough. That's how important he thought gratitude was. Brian does it, doesn't he? Just for today I will be thankful. Even he's caught on to it. So it's something to reflect on.

So we've done the renunciation. Renunciation is just catching yourself these sneaky little selfishnesses. Where you take just the bigger piece of cake. You know what I mean? You take that extra toffee and just catch yourself. And then you hate the person who gets it, of course. So, renunciation.

Morality, well, we've talked a lot about that. It's again, morality here, the Buddha's actually meaning just the basic things that you determine not to go there, that's all.

Wisdom, well, we've talked about that. So this is more of a mental, of a mind. So a lot of these are heart things, like giving. And renunciation and patience. But wisdom is coming from this wisdom within us. This understanding. The faculty of wisdom. Which is not to be confused with intellect. Remember.

There's a lovely story. I always forget the name of the monk. But in those days remember, they didn't write things down. They remembered them. And this poor monk he said, when he learnt a new stanza of the Buddha's teachings, it would knock the one he'd just learnt out of his head. So his brothers advised him to leave the monastic life said you know you're not going to get anywhere. So the Buddha hearing this went to see him and he gave him a very simple exercise of rubbing a piece of cloth and wiping his face with a clean cloth and just saying impermanence, impermanence, impermanence. And he became fully liberated just like that. It didn't work for everybody. It didn't work for me.

But it's a different faculty. It's not the intellect. It's not about understanding something. There's one man called Puttaka. What's his name? Empty Puttaka. There's another monk and he can explain the Dharma wonderfully. But the Buddha calls him Empty Puttaka. Empty. Because he's not coming from experience. He's coming from his intellect. He's coming from understandings. And people like that really have a big problem because they really believe that because they've really understood something that therefore they've actually truly experienced it. So that's a lot to do with our honesty as well, you see.

There's another little story about a teacher and all his students become fully liberated. And he isn't. And he thinks, oh, I can't understand this. And so he goes off and he asks them, do you think you could help

me? And what the student realises is that his teacher's very conceited. So he says, well, I can't really help you. Why don't you go and see somebody else? Eventually, one of his students tells him to go and see this little boy. So you can imagine that's a bit humiliating, how to become liberated.

So the little boy takes him off to an anthill. Now, in the east, when the ants have left, it's often the abode of a snake. And so the little boy says, if a snake lives in that anthill and there are six holes, how do you get him to come out? And he said, well, you just stop up five holes and he'll come out through the sixth. He said, that's what you've got to do. In other words, through the senses, the six senses, by stopping five senses and just watching the mind, then you begin to understand, you see. Well, of course, as all these stories go, in no length of time, the teacher was fully liberated.

So, don't get confused with understanding. The Buddha actually talks about three levels of understanding. The level of just hearing something, being inspired by it, understanding it, but unable really to repeat it because it's not become your own. Intellectual knowledge and then once it has become your own understanding you can talk about it. But then at a deeper level it has to be realised. So you can talk about impermanence till the cows come home, but have we actually experienced it at the level of me arising and passing away? So that's the wisdom bit.

Energy, energy, what's the other word, effort. Yeah, you've got to be careful with this effort business. Remember that, normally speaking, our effort is in trying to do something, trying to achieve something, which is perfectly alright in the world. But when we come to our meditation it's important to realize that the effort is just to be aware. Once you start looking for something or trying to attain something then you normally end up in a hole, because even if you're not fully aware of it there is some concept at the back of the mind driving this sense of wanting to achieve something. So be careful with effort. Just keep reminding yourself. My teacher used to say, your job is just to watch. Your job is just to be aware.

Patience. The Buddha says this is the highest form of ascetic practice. So if you think of ascetic practice as fasting for long times, or in certain practices, you've seen these ascetics in the east, even the early christian desert ascetics, like for instance just holding up their arm in the air till it withers. You've seen that one have you? Yeah. So these heavy ascetic practices. He says actually the greatest of all ascetic practices is patience. So patience is just a willingness to bear forbearance, not only just our own internal pains and stuff, just not to get angry with things, not to be irritated, but of course with situations and other people. So that patience is one of his great virtues.

And he gives the example of someone who says, if bandits came along and cut you from limb to limb, if at any time you felt hatred or a grudge against them, you would be no disciple of mine. That's a bit tough, isn't it? When I told this one, somebody said, yeah, the Buddha had a great sense of humour. But patience is just a great virtue, isn't it? Patience.

Truthfulness. Here it's defined as, if you say you're going to do something, do it. But I mean you can stretch that also to being careful as to what you say. Even exaggeration is a small level of untruthfulness. It's not

being absolutely correct. Exaggerating both negatively and positively.

And then there's resolution. So that's what we were doing today, resolution. Resolution is just that real commitment. In the Buddha's life, it manifested in his resolution to sit under the tree and work the problem out, either to the point of death or he'd actually work it out. So you have to be pretty resolved to do something like that.

What I normally say is that, say a course, you come on a course, that you commit yourself to that course completely, right? Accept in emergency or extraordinary circumstance. And of course you're going to define extraordinary circumstance in all sorts of ways. But the problem with making too hard a decision is that even when all the signs are you should stop, you don't. And then you do yourself damage, you see. I know somebody who kept sitting and sitting with knees, you know, with these knees business, you know. And the teachers, my teacher actually, the Burmese would just say watch the breath, you know, sit, just watch this, you know, watch the pain. Unfortunately she damaged her knees. So you have to be slightly careful. You have to really suffer if you want to damage your knees by the way. It doesn't come with just a little bit of pain. You've got to work at it.

Then there's loving kindness, *metta*. The Buddha often uses *metta* to mean all forms of love, which includes compassion and sympathetic joy. Remember, rejoicing in someone, others, good fortune or success as our own. Don't forget, all these things have to be also directed towards ourselves.

And then equanimity. All these virtues do have their obvious enemy, their straight enemy, and their subtle enemy. So with love the obvious enemy is hatred, but the more subtle enemy is attachment. And you can always tell when you're coming from attachment because you tend to be not listening to the other person or not taking their view or their desire on. And then you tend to get upset because they're not doing what you want to do. You get irritated, you get bored with them, all that. Or whenever you feel negative about somebody whom, especially if you have a close relation to them, then you know that's a sign of our attachment. It's always coming from me rather than them or us. It doesn't mean to say that... You've got to be careful with that because you don't want to get abused. You've also got to take yourself into account. Anyway, it's a tricky area. I haven't got time. I can go on and on about that one.

But equanimity, of course, its obvious enemy is confusion, just to get lost in something. But its more subtle enemy is this indifference, where you're standing away too much. You're standing away too much. There was a woman came to see me. She said that every time she came out of meditation at home, her partner accused her of being cold, you see. So I said to her, well, do you do any *metta* when you finish your practice? She said no. I said, well, that's what you've got to do. I said, you know, when you sit, you want to be cool. You want to be equanimous. You want to be distant. You want to be able to investigate. But somehow you've got to re-engage. You've got to re-engage with the world. And you do that through the practice of *metta*. Anyway, she didn't come back. Either he gave up on her or she practiced a bit of *metta*.

So let me read out the way that it says in the commentaries. As a great being, so that's often a synonym for

somebody who is attempting to become fully liberated. Or an enlightened being, yeah. Are concerned with the welfare of living beings, not tolerating the suffering of beings, wishing long duration to the higher states of happiness of beings, and being impartial and just to all beings. Therefore, they give alms to all beings so that they may be happy without investigating whether they are worthy or not. By avoiding to do them any harm, they observe morality. In order to bring morality to perfection, they train themselves in renunciation. And in order to understand clearly what is beneficial or injurious to beings, they purify their wisdom. For the sake of the welfare and happiness of others, they constantly exert their energy. Though having become heroes through utmost energy, they are nevertheless full of forbearance towards the manifold failings of beings. And once they have promised to give or do something, they do not break their promise. With unshakable resolution, they work for the welfare of beings. And with unshakable kindness, they are helpful to all, and by reason of their equanimity they do not expect anything in return. There we are. That's a nice little standard for us.

So that's just the little reflections on these *paramis*, these virtues or perfections that we ought to develop. And the other thing is commitment. It really is a case of committing yourself to a daily practice. Morning. It's important because that sets the weather vane. It reminds you the level of awareness and consciousness you want to try and maintain throughout the day. And then to practice that loving kindness to re-engage with the world straight after that, you see. So that's important.

And then in the evening, that's the other time, really. Specifically when you come back from work or definitely before you eat. After you eat, you just fall asleep. And the reason there is really to just sit. And remember, you don't always have to sit in posture. It is a good thing to sit in posture because it does help the awakeness. But there, you're just letting the day come through. So irritations and anxieties and all this stuff. Things that have been happening during the day just let them arise and pass away. So let them pass there's all the cleansing you see. And then preparing for sleep, that's also important. Rather than just coming straight off Facebook, launching yourself onto the pillow or some exciting horror movie and then...

I mean, you've got to prepare for sleep. I always think you need a half an hour where you just slow down, you can listen to beautiful music, you can practice *metta*. It's just something just to bring everything down so that when you sleep you actually have deep sleep.

And then of course there's many times during the day when there's nothing to do, you're not doing anything in the sense of you're walking upstairs or you're waiting for some transport, the bus or the tube, or you're hanging around waiting for a friend or there's nothing to do, you're just sitting there. And often what we do is we just let the mind wander. It's wasted time, whereas there are beautiful little opportunities to practice *metta* or to have some positive thought or thinking around the dharma or a particular issue or something. But not to let the mind wander. That's the awful thing. Letting the mind wander. It's alright when you're in a daydream. But when you come out, we have to say to ourselves, now what have I been developing there? What horrible state of mind have I been developing in that ten

minutes, half an hour? When I first began sitting, I'd sit for a whole hour going through one fantasy after another. It's unbelievable. It hasn't got that much better, but I mean at least it's recognizing that the mind when you let it go, it just is messing you up, that's all.

And um that Plum Village, which is a monastery in France. It's the main center for Thich Nhat Hanh, who's a very famous teacher in the Zen tradition, Vietnamese. They have this practice of having someone ring a bell anytime. Absolutely, just out of the blue, just ring a bell. And even when the phone goes. As soon as you hear a bell, you have to stop. And you have to wait for the sound of the bell to disappear. It's a really interesting little practice. And it's just bringing somehow that into our lives. If you do work on a computer, you can get the mindfulness bell. You can download the mindfulness bell. And you can set it for every twenty minutes, half an hour. We can also set it at random. It annoys me terribly, but I keep on doing it.

When I was a teacher, there was this great old teacher who taught me about stopping. You'd be surprised - that was one of the great effects that meditation had on me when I first started. I used to be a teacher, and you know, you'd go out of one classroom - I was in further education - you'd go out of one classroom and you'd take whatever you'd had in that classroom into the next one. By the end of the day you just felt ragged.

Once I began this meditation, I used the passage from one classroom to another as a way of just letting everything sort of subside. It was quite amazing. During lunchtime, instead of hanging around with staff just chatting away about nothing - I mean, obviously I did a little bit of it - but then I used to find a quiet corner. It was amazing. The amount of energy I ended up with at the end of the day was just... well, it was just different. My understanding of work changed completely in terms of draining energy. In fact, all I realised was that it was me draining energy. The work wasn't draining energy - it was just me not behaving in a wise way.

So this constant stopping after everything - after a phone call, so you just reflect on what the phone call was. You see, it only takes... It doesn't take long at all, you just stop. Then you see: was the heart brightened by it, which is a good thing? Did it become irritated? Were you anxious? You just stay there, just wait for that to fade a little. You don't have to wait for it to go entirely, but at least just acknowledge it and let it fade away.

So it's the same with meetings. Meet somebody. After a piece of work, so you just stop. After a meal, just stop. I think you'll be surprised what an effect it has - this constant reminder just to be back into the present moment.

How do you do that, remember? The body. Just go back into the body. Come off the computer, come off the mind, come off the texts. Just start coming back. What are you feeling? How do your feet feel? What can you see? What can you hear? That immediately brings you back into groundedness, you see. Then from there, you note your next intention. What you do feel is just... you know, you've got greater control over your life. Especially your inner life. Not so much the outer life - that's to do with being in that matrix of

relationship. But definitely your inner life can be quite radicalised by it.

So we've just recognised the Buddha's coming from a slightly different place than our Western traditions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and psychoanalysis. He's coming from a position that we're deluded and it's a mistake we're making. Therefore our effort really is to understand what our true nature is, and that's really the purpose of *vipassanā* - to see ourselves as we really are, and then to see the consequence of delusion. Even if we can't see the core of delusion - this idea of a self - at least we can see the consequences of it, which manifest in these attitudes of acquisitiveness and aversion and fear and all the rest of them.

On the positive side, to really develop the good heart - that's very clear. Don't forget that the ethical life runs in conjunction with wisdom. You can't separate them. That's one of the criticisms of the mindfulness movement, which I'm sure you all know about. Mindfulness is... you know, mindfulness and depression, mindfulness eating. But nobody ever talks about morality. It's all about mindfulness. I mean, sure, it helps. Sure, it helps. But it's like... and they won't go anywhere near self, not-self. I mean, that's taboo.

So it's basically pulling something out of its... it's like yoga - body beautiful - and forgetting that it actually belongs to a very deep and profound spiritual tradition. It doesn't mean to say that mindfulness won't help. It will. But eventually, the person will, if they want to move, they're going to have to seek something a little deeper than just mindfulness, you might say. Unless they have real insight. That's possible.

Remember that a lot of the mindfulness movement is about suffering. It's about physical pain, dealing with pain. It's about depression. It's about anxiety and panic and things like that. Well, there's no reason why they couldn't click in the midst of superficially, shall we say, dealing with an obvious problem, and then suddenly realising where the real problem lies. I wouldn't want to damn the whole process. It's obviously doing an enormous amount of good.

Mindfulness and CBT - cognitive behavioural therapy - about ninety-seven percent don't have panic again because they've seen that panic is the reaction to fear: fear of fear. That's an enormous success, isn't it? And sixty percent - that's the figure I remember - don't go back into clinical depression. That's fabulous.

And then, so, developing the virtues. To be actively involved in developing virtues. And then to organise our day around this whole idea of mindfulness and how we can bring that to bear. Bring it to a point where it feels that we're pretty mindful most of the time. That's a nice place to be. You must try it.

So I hope my words have been of some assistance. May you, by your commitment to the practice, soon attain the wonderful end of Nibbāna.

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