Dependent Origination and the Quality of Right Awareness

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 53:05

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arhato Sama Sambuddhasa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arhato Sama Sambuddhasa Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arhato Sama Sambuddhasa

Homage to the Buddha, the Blessed Noble and fully self-enlightened one

There were some questions that came up during the interview, so I'm going to wander around one or two of the questions that arise around the Buddha's teachings—the ones about *kamma*, maybe a little touch on rebirth, the problem of free will or the lack of it.

The easiest place to start really is dependent origination, which we chant in the morning. The Buddha there starts with this word *avijjā*, which they translate as ignorance, which really has a feeling that we shouldn't know. But it's a pure not knowing. And that not knowing, when it comes across information, presumes that the information belongs to it, or that it is that information. That's just modern speak for identity.

What I'm saying is that when we're born, we don't know anything. We have potential, but we don't know anything. And as the information comes in, we experience it as me. So there's no separation between the information coming in and the me. It's all me. So there, right at the start of our lives, is the fundamental problem to do with identity: Who am I?

Remember that this *avijjā*, this not knowing, then produces acts in the world, which is translated as *saṅkh āra*, which we can translate as habits, our habitual way of saying things. And it would seem that even before three years old, we've got settled attitudes to life. We've got an attitude.

So, with our distorted view of the world and as to who I am, and all this information coming in from society and parents and all that sort of stuff, we end up with a body of habits—habitual ways of thinking, habitual ways of seeing, habitual ways of understanding things. You can see it most vividly between cultures. But even between individuals within society, they live in different worlds. We live in very different worlds sometimes.

So these worlds are constantly created by us within ourselves from whatever information comes through our senses. One of the obvious ones would be sight. So if somebody's color-blind, they obviously live in a different world of color to people who have ordinary sight. And they might not know it for years.

When I went to an optician once, the glasses didn't seem to fit straight. So when I went back, he told me I had astigmatism, which distorted things like a wave on glass. I didn't know I had that. To me, the world looked perfectly alright, except when I put these glasses on. And he'd forgotten this astigmatism—that's what he had. He hadn't actually done the astigmatism. That's a really good example of ignorance.

Not knowing that I had astigmatism, I presumed I was seeing the world as it really is, or as it really ought to be, or I was seeing it from a sight point of view, that is the way it is. But I wasn't. And it was only through the clever work of an optician that I could see the world more clearly. But it's that point that you don't know. The whole point of our delusion is you don't know where you're deluded, or else you wouldn't be deluded. It's a paradoxical definition.

So that's a double bind, isn't it? I don't know where I'm deluded. How the hell am I going to find out where I'm deluded? It puts you in an impossible situation.

But whatever the situation is, we've ended up with these habits. They're not all horrible and terrible, of course. Some are beautiful.

And then, we enter into, with that as an underground, with this distortion, the distorted way of seeing the world and what it creates—all these habits running underground—there are moments of existence, you might say, momentary existences. And it's in that moment that the rest of the middle part of the Dependent Origination was clearly seen by the Buddha.

First of all, you have consciousness, and then the body and mind. He separates consciousness from body and mind. Consciousness from body and mind—*nāma-rūpa*. So he's making a distinction there, because what he's saying is, without the act of consciousness, *nāma-rūpa* is a waste of time. You may as well be dead. And consciousness is a waste of time unless there's something to be conscious of. And they both arise at the same time. You can only be conscious of something as it arises and passes away. And that's your momentary existence. Your consciousness is basically, in Buddhist terms, what we experience.

Now, if I were to give an analogy of that: If you take a monitor or a television, there's all this information coming in, and it has to be put onto a screen—all these percepts, and all these emotional stuff. All that. It has to be put somewhere where it can be cognized, where it can be seen. That's the act of consciousness. And the awareness is what knows what's on the screen. I'll come to that in a bit later.

So then he splits up this *nāma-rūpa,* the body and mind, into its various faculties—what he calls the six senses, the sixth one being the mind-brain complex where everything is sorted out and you end up with a point of contact.

So that point of contact, which means this present moment, the point of contact in the present moment, must have an object, it must have the consciousness, and it must have a sense base. So if any of those are missing, then you can't be conscious of something. So when you're asleep, you're not conscious of small sounds, because there's no consciousness there, there's no awakened consciousness. If you've lost your

hearing, then you don't hear anything. And in a very silent room, you normally don't hear anything, at least out there. So these three things have to come together—what the Buddha called this point of contact.

And it's then you see that we make this dual world, because what we experience is then separated into two types—either it's pleasant or unpleasant. There's a whole lot of neutral stuff, but when you look into a neutral feeling, you go really towards it, you'll find it splits ever so gently either into what is unpleasant or pleasant. So that's the natural duality of the world we live in—it's either pleasant or unpleasant. And that's given. And everybody has their own way of experiencing the world as pleasant or unpleasant, and a lot of these things are culturally bound, as you know—say food. You tend to like this food more than that, et cetera, et cetera.

So all that is, shall we say, a given from every moment, conditioned from the past. It arises. I shouldn't say conditioned from the past entirely, because it's conditioned also by the present incoming stuff. Then, that's the point of *vedanā*—feeling.

And then there comes this reaction, which now links into this underlying stuff, this not knowing and these habits, whereby we have a reaction to something. So obviously when we don't like something, there's a reaction to get rid of it. When we like it, we want to indulge it. So that's the greed and the aversion. Aversion splits into two, of course—fear if it's too big. So those are your basic attitudes to the life that we're living in terms of coming out of ignorance: greed, aversion, and fear.

And again we go back down to this point of ignorance. And what it manifests—delusion. So the ignorance manifests as delusion. And the delusion is the sense of identity: I. I am. When you finish that sentence, that's where the delusion is—the I with the object. So "I am a man"—well, that's fine conventionally speaking, I hope—but it's the business of the sense of I being this particular being. And of course it gets undermined with serious illness and death and all that sort of stuff.

So you have that underground ignorance beginning to manifest as a reaction to what we're actually experiencing. It's coming out of these habits, this group of habits. So obviously, today, as soon as we see the soup or something, there comes a natural habit of feeding our appetite. But there's also within there the habit of indulging. So that pops up. That pops up out of this quagmire that exists underneath the present moment. And it's like a little button that comes up, shoots up. And that's the greed coming.

So then, now that point, the next point is you put down the grasping of it. And what this means is the sense of I comes in. This is really quite crucial and an amazing discovery by the Buddha, because if this wasn't discovered, there would be no escape. The fact that the desire comes first and then the identity means that you can stop the process. If the identity came first, you wouldn't be able to stop it.

In other words, in the process of soup, you like—that's the *vedanā*—like, want soup. "I like want soup." That's the normal way. If the I came in first, how could you stop that process? Because you're identified with it. Identity means absorbed. You're it. That's it.

Now, that's our speech that betrays us, because it tells us that the I comes first. So if I say "I am depressed," that's it, isn't it? I'm stuck. I am depressed. So what the Buddha discovered was that it's actually the other way around. It's soup, like, want, I. And it's because that process is before the absorption that through awareness, we can stop it right there, and let the wanting—the wanting that we don't want, that is—begin to express itself and die away. Otherwise it would be impossible.

Now that's what we're doing when we sit. We're stopping that formation of *upādāna*, of the grasping of the identity. So when you sit and you can see there's a pain, and then you see the reaction—"I don't want the pain"—and the desire to move, but you don't do anything, that means you've not identified with that process.

In not identifying with that process, what are you identifying with? Because there's definitely a sense of I still there. So somehow, somehow, through the process of *vipassanā*, we begin to realize that there's a different position which is above the normal physical, psychological processes and can actually view it and see it and feel it and know it and eventually, of course, understand it.

And the other thing we realize is that there's no suffering until the identity comes in. That might be difficult to grasp when your knee is exploding, but if you look very carefully, you've got to ask yourself the question after the experience—don't think about it. You're looking at pain, for instance, in the knee, and then you see the reaction that you don't want it, and then you see that desire—desire of wanting to move, shift. And there's a difficulty because there's a leakage, there's a leakage of identity into that process, and it feels uncomfortable.

But when you finally abstract yourself from it and make it really an object to observe, there's a separation, isn't there? And the observer is no longer suffering—they're just with it in that equanimous way. The equanimity is the measure of non-attachment.

And it's catching that process which establishes in us that inner experiential knowledge that this body is not me, not mine. And what that's doing is it's ricocheting down through all these habits down to this fundamental ignorance, this not knowing. And the view from not knowing is slowly being turned, slowly being turned. So the way we're looking at the world is slowly being turned, and that slow turning is developing a new relationship with the world, and it's taking us out of suffering over a period of time.

So what you're saying is that the desires or the things we don't want are not ours either?

That's right. Nothing belongs to an I because the I is fabricated. It's fabricated by this delusion that begins at birth that we must... Because we have no reflection, we've got no language, we can't think about things. There's just that presumption. I feel uncomfortable in my tummy, so I start crying. It's me. I don't say this is my tummy, I'm just in pain, and I just start screaming until mummy comes. There's no... That early consciousness stage, so they say, about four months, is completely wrapped within a two-dimensional world of just sensations. It's only when you see babies reaching out for rattles that it seems that's when

we're creating the three-dimensional world. Otherwise it's flat on you—your face is right in the screen.

Now, the next point is, what happens when we identify? Now, there's a very... just as an aside, this process, up until the desire, the wrong desire, is exactly the same for an enlightened person, for the Buddha. He has a body, and he's hungry, and he has to make decisions. It's time for going out and around. So there's nothing inherently wrong with all that. But what he lacks is the next stage of this grasping nature or the aversion nature. But he still has to make a decision, which is the next step.

So the next step is having identified "I want the soup," there's the action—there's the empowerment of that desire, which is the becoming. So in here he talks about it as the becoming because he uses that word because it's the becoming of the I. The I is creating itself all the time, a sense of person. So this person now that I am now is completely refabricated in the now. In the now I do something stupid, and that disappears, that person disappears. But the next person that comes up has to carry the tag. That's the process, right?

I can say truly, I think, that at this moment, I did not overeat at lunch, because this I didn't exist. But the I that did have lunch did overeat a bit. So I was suffering after lunch from a slightly heavy stomach. You see what I mean? It's not as though... It's the problem of responsibility. The problem of responsibility arises because you end up with the consequences of what this other person did a couple of hours ago. And it's your problem in the present moment. It's my problem now.

So that's why he uses *bhava,* becoming, because it's the I constantly recreating the sense of I. We're constantly recreating the sense of I, which includes everything I'm experiencing now in this present moment.

Now in that *bhava,* in that becoming, to do that there has to be an act, and that's what he calls *kamma*. And the consequence of the *kamma* is a *vipāka*. So at that point, something has to take something potential and manifest it as a word, an action, a thought. Something has to manifest. Now what makes it manifest he calls *cetanā*—that's the will.

Now the important thing to really grasp here is that nothing's happened at the point of desire. There's no *k amma* and therefore no consequence so long as something remains as a desire. But as soon as you empower the desire into a thought, a pattern of speech or an action, then it's processed. You've had it. It's committed. And that's the becoming. So the becoming has both a reinforcement of a sense of I, but also a consequence because of the content of the act.

I always give an example out of the Vinaya at this point, concerning thieving. Some of you might have heard it. Has anybody heard it? Oh, it's new, isn't it? Very good.

For instance, if I wanted this bowl here, this gong, I passed it by and I saw it and I thought, "Well, that's a nice gong." And then there was this desire came up: "I'd like that." Nothing's happened. Nothing's happened.

However, if I pass the gong a second time, and I say, "Oh, it's a nice little gong," and I go over to it with an intention of, shall we say, somewhere in my mind that I might just borrow it for a little while, then I've actually done something. So this is called a *dukkaṭa*. This is a small offense.

On the third pass, I'm slightly overwhelmed, and I actually touch the gong. I actually touch it. So this is called a *garu*—this is a heavy offense. I'm very close to losing my robes there.

On the fourth pass, I really cannot, and the desire overtakes me, and my hand shoots out to the bowl, and it moves a nano-centimeter. And I think, "No, no," and I let go, and I run away. I've had it.

I've committed theft. At that moment, even though it moved only a nanocentimetre, the theft was committed. I lose the robe, and I don't even get the bowl.

So that's a lovely way of pointing out just there in an action how the intention grows and grows and grows and finally commits a real act. Of course, on the other side, there's all the loveliness where you might think of helping somebody and then you go a bit closer and then finally you actually commit to helping somebody. Then, of course, you get the benefit, the beauty of compassion and love.

So that business there - if we can clearly understand what the Buddha's talking about when he says *kamm a*, he's talking about an act, a desire which is empowered. In our language now, we say "it's your karma," and what it means is your consequence. But actually, strictly speaking, in the literature of Buddhism, you'll see that *kamma* is one thing, *vipāka* is the consequence of it. So there's your *bhava*. And the end of the process is the beginning of the act, the whole process of the act, and the completion of the act. That's the life, that's the birth, decay and death - that's at the end.

That's taking the understanding of dependent origination as a moment-to-moment phenomenon, which is understood these days much more clearly than it would have been not so long ago, because there they would reinforce the three-life theory. In your previous life, you built up this sense of not knowing, this ignorance, which has created all these habits, and when you're reborn, you're born with it. Then you get the whole run of this, and then of course life is beginning of life, decay and the death of it.

So it can be taken both as a minute thing, as a string of things that happen within a given time slot, or it can be taken as one life, as a lifetime teaching. It doesn't really matter which way you take it, except the moment-to-moment one you see now.

When the Buddha acts in his life, what's missing is that little bit about the grasping nature or the aversion nature. But there's still an act. And in later literature - we call it the Abhidhamma, this later work - they try to give it a new word. So it's an action coming from the self - is either good or bad. And it has consequences. The consequences are outward, of course, but they're also inward. They're also inward.

We don't know what the consequences of an act will be. You might hope that they will be such and such, but you don't know, because when you act, the force of your action goes into a matrix of relationships.

And the interesting thing is, it also goes inward into a matrix of relationships, into your psychology. So you don't know how life-changing a small little decision can be, and then you're amazed how you've ended up in jail. "But I didn't do anything!" And the opposite, of course, is true.

This is very similar to what scientists call chaos theory, where a given condition with surrounding supporting conditions can blow up into something awful. I mean, they always have these doomsday views, but it's also nice to think that a small act of kindness somewhere towards Syria is a kernel point where the conflict is healed.

So now, if we talk about what is coming at us now, it is given. We already have a structured personality full of habits and ways of responding. So where's free will?

Now the idea of free will is a very Western thing. It really came about through Christianity and, as far as I understand, through the work of particularly St. Augustine, a philosopher. It was basically an argument about the relationship between a human being and God. So God creates a human being and he wants a relationship of love towards this creation. But if that creation is so constructed to love him, then that's not much of a love, is it? If you create an object to love you, it might feel good, but you know it's not real. It's not real love. So therefore, it had to be argued that there was free will that was beyond conditionings, which could freely, out of an act of understanding and love, be a free act of love.

And what that's translated to for most of us, I think for most of us in the West, is this idea that free will stands outside the conditional world. Now, when you walk into a supermarket and buy chocolate biscuits, this was an act of real free will. You went in there and decided freely that "Yeah, I know about the adverts, but I have decided I am going to buy chocolate biscuits." And this tremendous sense of selfhood, of separation, of an entity completely enclosed within myself. I mean, I see all you people, but you're completely separate. There's no real connection with you in terms of my free will. And it doesn't matter that there's a special offer on chocolate biscuits. I happen to have bought it out of my own personal free will.

So this idea of free will standing outside the conditioned world is something that I think belongs mainly to the West. In the East - and I'm thinking of Hinduism and Buddhism and places like that - there's not that sense of the free will being outside the process. It's more in the sense of you're making decisions about a situation within given parameters with so much information and from your point of view you're making a decision, and it's conditioned both from the conditions you're in and from your point of view. Now that might strike us as a loss of free will.

So all of you had various reasons for coming here. So there were reasons for coming here, and there was your own personal connection with those reasons, and then you ended up here. So looking back on that decision, was it an act of free will, or was it just something that was empowered because of the conditions you found in yourself and what you know of Satipanya?

When it comes to choice - I mean, this is what the consumer society, the religion of the consumer society tells you, that you have a choice. But choice is only there when there's confusion, when there's not knowing really what you want to do. So when you walk in the supermarket and there are - you know, you only normally eat one type of biscuits, and suddenly you're struck with "As well as chocolate, there's fig biscuits." There's a moment of confusion, is there not? Now you could just swear and pick one up, which is absolutely stupid. In which case there's definitely no free will because you didn't make a choice. Or you sit there with the confusion, arguing with yourself as to which one you might prefer this week. And then you have to look deeply into your heart and think, "Fig biscuits is what..." And then the choice is made, and one feels, "That was a good choice. I really made a good choice there."

And of course it's all been manufactured by my habits and the fact that maybe I got fed up with chocolate biscuits for the moment and I need a change, and by the loss leader that the supermarket has given me on fig biscuits. Who knows? So it's a moot point, isn't it, whether we have this free will? And yet there's something in us which tells us that I am making decisions. I am making decisions. So there's definitely an act of will.

So if we go now back to the original state and just ask ourselves, what is it we all want? Fundamentally, right down there, even before we exist, what is it we want? We just want to be happy. Am I correct? We just want to be happy. And each of us will have a definition of what that happiness is. And that's what we're chasing. We're chasing the dragon, the dragon of happiness. We just want to be happy.

And through our experience of life, we begin to realise that some things make me happy and some things don't. And as we deepen our meditation and we get to this point of identity, we realise that maybe something is wrong around that area. And we begin to realise, I think, that my happiness depends a great deal upon the motivation, the intentions with which I do things. And when I look into my intentions and motivations, they're all about some form of relationship to the world. I may call it wanting or not wanting, but it's about a relationship to the world.

When we talk about relationships, we talk about ethics. We talk about how do I treat somebody, or how should somebody treat me. So life now moves towards an ethical basis. And this you might say was the great shift in human consciousness. Somewhere around the time of the Buddha, this business of "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." That was the great teaching both of the Buddha, of Moses, Socrates. That business about relationship and about ethics.

And it moves religion from a power struggle with the gods, where you are appeasing gods to get your way through sacrifice. The big moment in the Bible, of course, is - who nearly sacrificed his son? Abraham. Isaac, excuse me, Isaac. That was a crucial moment in human understanding, that God didn't want sacrifice. And then it moves to Moses where he wants ethical living, he wants harmony, he wants peace and joy and all that. And that was the real shift in human consciousness there, I think.

So now, the problem isn't free will, is it? It's actually more to do with right understanding and following

the right understanding, because you know that will lead you to happiness. And if you're following a right understanding that leads you to unhappiness, then there must be something wrong with the right understanding. So it all comes back to the way we're actually seeing things again. This all comes back to this point of view of how we're relating, how we're seeing things.

So the spiritual path, as opposed to the path of the consumerist, is delineating the path. And as you walk along the path, because you don't know where the end is - in Buddhist terms it's this foggy place called *Nib bāna*, or foggy state called *Nibbāna* - and you're making your way over there and you're happy with this present moment because you can see it fairly clearly. As you move along the path, decisions come up, forks appear in the path which seem inviting, and these are points where there has to be some discernment. So you have to go in - well, you have to look at your maps and you have to get your compass out and your GPS and all that. And you have to work out where you are in the middle of this place that you're walking through. And then you make a decision and you stay on the path.

And as you go along the path, there's always going to be a doubt: "Well, is this the right path?" So it's through that process of investigation, discernment, that we find slowly this path. But the path is already delineated for us. The Buddha's written it very clearly.

I know that they always talk about the Buddha's freedom of religious thought. And they always quote the Kalama Sutta. So the Kalamas were a group of people who were very confused. They said to the Buddha, "Look, this guru comes along and he says this. And this guru comes along and says, 'That guru is a load of rubbish. It really is all about this.' And we're completely confused."

So the Buddha says, "Well, you have a right to be confused. Don't believe anything because the person's famous or because of tradition or because it's written in a holy book and all that. Don't believe anything. But do what you know to be right for you."

But then, people forget, he then went and hit them with the old Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path. I mean, it very clearly delineates the line, which he says, "Now, this is the truth, no matter all these other gurus." But he does say, "And it's up to you to discover whether this is right for you." So he throws it back to us to actually investigate what he said. He doesn't put it to us as a belief system.

So as we move spiritually, what we find, I think, is that everything we do, from the moment we get up in the morning brushing our teeth, to the work we do, to the point where we fall asleep, everything is on that path. Everything has to be part of that path. And if it's not, it shoots you off somewhere else. And it creates a ricochet, it creates a disturbance.

So our effort is not so much about free will, it's about right discernment. Because as soon as you discern something to be right, what's the point of free will? You've just got to do it. And it's only in those times in our lives when we know that we're doing exactly what we want to do that we feel most happy. And that was this meaningfulness that I was talking about the other night, this deep sense of happiness, a deep

sense of connection that we have with our deepest motivations and the connection of that with the world. Even, as we know with some people, it ends them up being tortured and jailed and awful stuff. But they're connected to this much deeper path of meaningfulness within them.

And then just as a final addition to that is the whole process of that becoming. When it's perceived, when it's understood, there's - remember in our meditation also - a recognition that there is something within this psychophysical organism which is the discerning faculty, which is an intelligence, an intuitive grasp of things. And it really is a case of - I keep repeating this - but when you're in that state of the observer and everything's fairly clear and whatnot, and you come out of that at the end of a sitting or something, one of the reflections is: What is the observer made of? What constitutes the observer?

And just go through the list. Are there any sensations in the observer? Are there any emotions? Are there any thoughts? That might be a difficult one because it so easily identifies with thinking. Are there any images? So how do we know? How do we know what's in the observer? We know what's in the observer by knowing what's not in the observer. And we know what's not in the observer because it's an object. Whatever is perceiving cannot be the perceived. And that's where we are, shall we say, rooting ourselves in something that really is our true nature.

So obviously in Theravāda Buddhism, they don't like to talk about *Nibbāna* in a personalised way. The Buddha, in the original teaching, was much more insistent on talking about an experience. It was only in later Buddhism that the question was asked, "Well, if there's an experience, there must be something that experiences it." And that's when you get phrases like Buddha nature, eventually just "the big self, which is not a self" - massive contradictions trying to express the fact that there is something in us which does not belong to this phenomenal world, to the world in which we actually live.

And yet, and this is the paradox, it cannot come to know itself without this world. And nor can it know what it knows until it tells itself through thought. And you've all, I'm sure, experienced that when suddenly you've said something enormously wise and wondered where it came from. And somebody said, "Well, that sounds very wise." And you say, "Well... I have this wealth of wisdom which occasionally leaks onto the world."

So it's really, that's our investigation. And I think it's much easier if you abandon the idea of free will and talk much more about what ought I be doing in order to develop my spiritual path. And then just abandon the idea, frankly.

So we've covered quite a bit of ground, really. I mean, books are written on this, aren't they? So, dependent origination. And it's for us to make that a personal, experiential knowledge.

Like, it's something we know through our meditation. We know the body and mind. We know the sense bases. We know the point of contact. That's when you're down in the knee and you're just feeling sensations. That's the point of contact. As soon as the word pain comes up, you're into *vedanā*. You're into

the point where you discern things as pleasant or unpleasant. And then you know this process of desiring, skillful and unskillful desiring. Remember, there is skillful desire. The desire to sit, to meditate, is a skillful desire. But even so, there's still an I that's doing it. The fundamental delusion is under there. But that fundamental delusion is... through doing what is intentionally wholesome is undermining itself. It's undermining that sense of self.

So one of the great ways of undermining that is through love, because through an act of love the sense of I becomes a sense of we. So you're undermining it. Even though we talk in a negative sense about the I, and get rid of the I and smash it up to pieces and all that, the I melds into a connection with all beings and with nature and everything. It becomes connected, interconnected with it. And in that sense, it's no longer self-seeking. It's no longer selfish because it sees that the happiness of others also is part of its own happiness. That lovely prayer of Saint Francis... may I love rather than be loved.

It's only when... I mean, one sign, one sign I think of our growing spiritual wealth is the joy of giving something to somebody is greater than the joy of receiving something from somebody. So when that joy is bigger, it's a little signal to us that actually, the release of the I into a we, into a connection, is part of that undermining of a sense of I.

So what does the Buddha say? The Buddha says, "Whatever a teacher can have done for his disciples, I, out of love, out of compassion, have done for you." And the word he uses is *anukampan*, which is moving towards, or giving towards. So that was, when you look at the Buddha's life, that's what he did. He became fully liberated. He didn't just sit there glowing in his liberation with a big sign, "Leave me alone." Because he actually gets up. There's a moment of doubt that comes across to whether people would understand what he's got, but he's quick to overcome the doubt when he thinks about his teachers and then his companions, whom he realised were very close to understanding.

And then we talked a little bit about this whole problem of free will and around *kamma*. And just the suggestion that whether we have free will or not, in a sense, is slightly off the point. Because from our point of view, we're coming from a position of not knowing. And this not knowing is causing us problems. So our aim is correct discernment, to seeing things as they really are. That's a very common phrase in the scriptures: to see and understand how things have come to be. It's normally translated as to see and understand things as they are, but it's not. It's the past pastable. It's how, in other words, process. The Buddha's very much into process. How did we get to where we are? And then you can see that process and correct it or reinforce it if you see it as beautiful.

And just a final little addition. When we see clearly what's happening in the present moment, there's no problem with understanding rebirth after death. It's catching exactly what's happening now that you realise the process is going to be endless. What confuses us is the identity with this physical form. That's what confuses us. So we think that when the physical form drops that's the end of it. But hopefully at some point you'll discern clearly that the mind is something other than the body. Essentially. It's also arising and

passing away.

I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. Not too confusing. May you by your sheer moment to moment commitment to mindfulness break through the delusion and arrive at that wonderful place of *Nibbāna*. Sooner rather than later.

Sādhu. Sādhu.

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