New Year Revision of Buddhadhamma Theory and Practice

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 56:08

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.

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

There are a couple of questions here, but they take me slightly off what I was hoping to address. I'll come back to them this morning. This morning we talked about this business of creating our own suffering, and I just wanted to go into that a bit more deeply.

The Buddha uses the word which translates as "the world," *loke*. He says in this world there is this *dukkha* and the end of it. *Dukkha* is one of these very difficult words to translate because it has ideas which just don't make sense to us in terms of the word "suffering." "Unsatisfactoriness" gets close to it, but it's really the whole gamut of human misery which all of us I'm sure have experienced. So it's not only the existential despairs and deep depressions and death—it's also the suffering that comes from our indulgence with pleasure, the consequences of that, the addiction, and the grief when you lose somebody or lose something.

The attachment, the pain that comes from attachment, is always hidden, remember, because while you're actually enjoying something, it's heaven—not a problem. When I say "enjoying" here, you've got to be careful, because we can get into the mistake that therefore we're not supposed to enjoy life, we're not supposed to enjoy smoked cheese, which is ridiculous. It's trying to make a distinction between enjoyment and indulgence, which is very difficult for us because they're symbiotic. They arise together very closely.

Aversion is easy to spot because aversion immediately distances the object. It makes it an enemy. You want to push it away. So one is aware of any feelings of aversion, fear, and all that. But when it comes to indulgence, it's a close marriage. They're very difficult to distinguish. Even so, distinguish we must.

So this word *dukkha* is very wide-ranging indeed, and we're not completely free of it until we are liberated. That's what the word "enlightenment" refers to—the understanding, the clarity. But "liberation" refers to the liberation from suffering.

Now the way the Buddha uses the word "world" is referring to the five *khandhas*. These five *khandhas* are just a way of looking at the psycho-physical organism from the point of view of somebody who wants to become liberated. We have various models of a human being, and it depends what you're actually looking

for. If you're a Freudian, then you'd think about your superego and all that. But from the Buddha's point of view, it was trying to see the human being in terms of these five categories. We call them heaps or aggregates because they're all made up of bits.

The first one is all to do with the body itself—what we experience as sensation. It really is actually only talking about the body that we can sense, not the body in itself, because the body in itself we know very little of. Have you any idea what your liver's doing now? When you had your biscuits, were you directing the amount of enzymes that were going into your stomach to digest them? There's a whole—when you look into your body and actually ask yourself, "Is this me?" you find out you don't know much about it directly. We know from science, you can read about it, but in terms of our direct personal experience there's very little that we're actually directly in charge of.

Cells die, multiply—I don't know what they do. I haven't a clue. I breathe, but it's normally automatic, and something else takes care of this oxygen, carbon dioxide stuff. I wouldn't know it was there, frankly, if I hadn't been told.

So when the Buddha spoke about the body, although that's included, he's really talking about the sentient body—in other words, the body that we can sense through the five senses. So it's mainly feeling. There's also sight and hearing—direct contact. At the very base, remember, right here at the eardrum, all there is is pressure. There's no sound as such. All that's partitioned off to one side.

Then there's the next bit, which is to do with perceptions. I'll put them together—perception and feeling—because in Buddhist psychology they always ride together. As soon as you have a feeling, the mind, as it were, copies it, and you have a percept. It has some sort of mental image to go with it. And as these images build up, so you move into more of a conceptual mind. It can be concrete concepts, like "apple"—that can be anything, can't it?—or more abstract. But it all begins with these little percepts and feelings.

He splits into those feelings that come into the body through the senses and those feelings that come from the mind, from the heart. They include the whole feeling that we have within the body. The thing about *ve danā*—that's the word he uses, as opposed to the earlier feelings of the body—is that we distinguish them as pleasant or unpleasant. Up until then, sensations are just neutral, but as soon as we perceive them as pleasant or unpleasant, even neutral, then we move into that area of feeling-perception.

Now the next bit he calls *saṅkhāra*, which are those things that we compound, we make up by ourselves. The core ingredient of this is will. Now it separates all this to point out that it's at this point that the creation comes in. The will that's creating these *saṅkhāra*, these habits—emotional, mental habits—that's our inner atmosphere. Whatever you're feeling now in your general inner atmosphere, whether it's peaceful or unpeaceful, whether it's beautiful or unbeautiful, that's been created by acts of will. And what we are experiencing is the conditioning of it. So the mind is always producing this mental stuff.

And the final one is consciousness. Consciousness here—not to be confused with this pure intelligence of *paññā*, the Buddha within—we're closer to it when we think of it as like a screen upon which things are thrown. So it's like a television screen. You've got all this input coming in and it throws it onto a composite picture. And that basic knowing is what the Buddha is referring to as consciousness.

Now he says that this is the world. But when he's talking about the world, he's not talking about something objective. He's not talking about something out there. One of our Western fallacies is to presume that we can know the world as an object, something quite objectively outside ourselves. So that when we look at a tree, we actually believe that the tree really looks like that even if I weren't looking at it. That would be true, wouldn't it? One presumes that the tree you're looking at and you see is what everybody else is seeing. When you taste a bit of cheese, you presume, "Well, this is how the cheese really tastes, completely independent of my tongue's ability to taste. This is how the cheese tastes."

That fallacy really came up with our scientific revolution. Of course it brought about huge scientific and technological advantages, but it's left us in a bit of a delusion in the sense that we have this idea that the world and consciousness are two different things. That's where the delusion lies.

So the world as we know it, the world as we experience it, can only be experienced by us. It can't be experienced by anybody else. And that's the world we are actually living in.

Just a simple instance of this room. It's not as though Buddhism would deny the existence of this room—if we all left and disappeared, it would still be here in some way. But our experience of the room as we come in is individual to us. For some it might be a very pleasant room. For others—I remember when I was at the Vihara once and somebody came to see me who was a very strong Christian. When he walked—when I took him into the shrine room—you definitely got the feeling that he was walking into the devil's den, and there was this shock, horror, and a moment there of resistance. But he did give in.

So people have different ideas of how a room feels. They have a different experience of the feeling of a room. When you walk in, what did you see? Some people are very perceptive immediately. They see the pictures, they see this and that. But other people don't. They walk in the room and they walk out, they can't tell you what the hell was in it. But they've been there. They can't tell you what the wallpaper was or anything. It's just the way they are. They're not particularly interested, we could say.

So even though there are, I think, eleven of us in this room, there isn't a single room in terms of our personal experience. In other words, as the room exists for us.

If we take that proposition, if we realize that the world I'm living in is actually being manufactured by me, dependent on, of course, the stimuli coming in—for instance, a sound, I might hear some dogs barking. The actual sound that's hitting my ears is always dependent upon my eardrum. So obviously if I haven't got very good hearing, I'm not going to hear the same barks as you. But the barks that come to me will be the ones that I personally hear. And at that perceptual level it's all very neutral. I can look at something—I

can look at a bird—and at the point of perception it's just neutral. It's just a picture in my mind which I then project onto that bird.

You've seen that, haven't you, on these science programs, how when they study the eye looking over a picture, it's darting all over the place. We're completely ignorant of that. And all the time it's picking up these little pixels and throwing it back into the brain, the brain-mind complex. And then the mind picks up an image, it finds the image, and it very cleverly projects it back on the picture. It's quite amazing.

So we're not looking at the picture at all. We're just looking at what we're making out of the picture from all these little pixels coming through the eyes. It's the same with hearing. All we're getting is little pressure points, and then the mind, the brain-mind has to take it in and make something of it, and then very cleverly projects it back onto the bird. So we actually believe that we're hearing the bird. But what we're hearing is what we have made up from these little sounds.

Once when I was in meditation, I started getting this tinnitus. And I would sit, and my mind wouldn't be quite so steady, and suddenly there'd be this tune—lovely little tunes going on, very creative, wonderful. And then when my attention went to the actual tinnitus, it became a drone again. It was really weird. And I kept playing around with this. One minute it was just a plain, dead sort of drone, and the next minute it was playing these amazing Mozartian tunes, which I've failed to write down, of course.

When we begin to recognize that the world we're living in is the one we're creating, then the question has to come: how is it I'm not blissfully happy? How is it that I've not found a way of creating a world which is full of peacefulness and joy?

When the Buddha gets to his liberation—or a more telling story really—somebody says to him, "This training to become liberated is very difficult, very hard." And the Buddha says, "Yeah, of course it is, but when you get there, you get to *Nibbāna*." And the questioner says, "*Nibbāna*, so what?" He says, "Well, when you get there, you are contented and with it happy."

Contented and with it happy. So the contentment is the manifestation of no wrong desire. To be content is to be at one with what there is, even if it's not particularly brilliant. And happy is the general state of mind. Now this happiness can be translated into all sorts of facets, all sorts of modes. So it might be love, it might be joy, it might be just peacefulness, but the point is that it's happy.

So that's the proposition. The proposition is the world we live in is actually being created by us, and something is going wrong in that creation which is not making it contented and with it happy. And the Buddha is saying that that's a possibility. And his whole teaching is to try and get people to move from that position of being uncontented and unhappy to being contented and happy.

In the five *khandhas*, in the five heaps that we've just described, that's like a slice in time. If you were to just stop a human being and slice right down there at that moment in time, you get this congregation, this aggregation of things. But when it's in process, then it becomes dependent origination.

The point of interest for us is that point where the five *khandhas*, these five groups, have actually got to a point of producing a contact with the world. That's the moment. This world, remember, is both the outside world—something we hear and see—but also the inner world of things that we feel, emotional states, thoughts, images. All that is our inner world. All of them are objects to this consciousness.

So there's a sense base, there's the object, and there's the knowing of. Then at the next point, there's a sort of basic duality in the world that we experience it as either likeable or unlikeable. That's a given. Even the Buddha had a bad back and didn't like it. I'm sure he didn't like it. I mean, he was given food, I'm sure, that he didn't particularly like. But that's a given. I mean, the food that he ate that was supposed to poison him—he knew it was bad. One wonders why he took it, but anyway, he knew it wasn't so good, and he told Chunda, the person who offered it to him, to bury the rest of it, which leaves a question mark in his mind.

So that point of feeling, *vedanā*—the world splits into this likeable and unlikeable, but you can still remain at peace with it. That's the basic contentment.

But then something happens, remember, psychologically, which produces a relationship to this. And that's what we call this wrong desire. It's often translated as "sensual desire," which I think narrows it too much. It's just a wrong desire. We don't have, remember, a good word to translate this *taṇhā* with. *Taṇhā* is the desire arising out of wrong understanding, attachment and all that.

At that point, there's a habit of just trying to grasp the object, trying to hold it, trying to develop it, and there's that desire there. Nothing's happened at that point—that's why it manifests as an intention. It manifests as a desire, as an intention. I was saying that if we can just remain at that point, to hold that point, to hover within that point, and recognize that movement, that desire, as being unwholesome, and just wait for the energy of that to dissipate, to just blow itself out, we're destroying that conditioning.

We're destroying that conditioning. And if it's, of course, a wholesome thing, then you empower it, you do it. Just that very simple way, you just change yourself completely. All that negativity that we have begins to blow out, and all the positive stuff within us begins to grow. Very simple.

Now, at that point, when that intention arises, nothing's happened. It still remains at the level of potential. That's the important thing to grasp. So if we have a desire arise which we see is positively evil and terrible, and "How could you?" then you don't get into—and guilt arises, or this huge thing about "I must be a terrible person"—then you also note that as a judgment, because nothing's happened yet.

Now, you might have murdered somebody in the past, but that's irrelevant now. At this present moment, the desire to do something evil may arise. And if you just stay with it, nothing's happened. It still remains as just a potential, an idea. And that's really important, because if we start getting guilty—you're sitting here in meditation and suddenly you're throttling somebody, and you start getting guilty about that—then you're going to create all sorts of psychological problems.

Actually, that's not quite right, because if you're already imagining throttling them, you've already

potentiated that initial desire. And although it remains only in the mind, of course everything begins there. There's nothing in the human world that the human creativity didn't start in the mind, whether it's the atom bomb or whether it's jet planes — it all began in somebody's head somewhere. So that initial desire arises. Now the next step, remember, is the grasping of it, and that's the point where we identify, where the want becomes "I want".

Now, something happens there. Something psychological happens. You lose control. That's the real bad thing. You lose control because now there is anger. Now I am angry. There is a feeling of depression. I am depressed. At that point, you've sold your soul to the devil. You can't get out of that anymore. You've identified with it. Of course, you can jump out quick and say, "Oh, don't stop," — no, there, there's depression, not me, not mine. But for that moment, you've lost it. And that identity now is very difficult to stop. Sometimes you can — you have to be really, really, really awake to stop the next step, which is to empower the desire. And so that energy comes in and that's what the Buddha calls *cetanā*, will.

Now, it's only at the point of identity that the suffering begins. That's what we've got to really grasp. When you're there and there's a desire — when you walk into, say, your kitchen at home and there's a desire for that biscuit — if you remain there and just hover over it and wait for it to pass, there's no suffering. But as soon as "I want the biscuit" and there are no biscuits in the tin, then there's suffering. So that point of suffering, the actual suffering doesn't begin until the identity. So long as we're saying to ourselves, "There is anxiety, there's depression, there's grief, there's all this awful stuff" — there, it's not pleasant, nobody says it's pleasant, but it's not the same as "I am".

As soon as the "I am" comes in, that's what the Buddha means by *dukkha* — that's the dukkha of the dukkha, that's the suffering of suffering. And as I say, at that point it's very difficult not to reinforce, not to put energy into that original desire. And that energy is the will, and the Buddha says will is *kamma* — that's your act. It's not been an act and therefore there's no actual consequence until something is empowered. And as soon as it's empowered, the "I" is reproducing itself, and that's why he uses the word *bhava*, becoming — I'm constantly becoming this "I".

So every time — like for instance, somebody's played a little trick on you, and you've seen the irritation come up, and you've been very mindful. It's there, it's very strong in you, this irritation, but you don't join in. And then there's just a little slippage, and before you know it, you've manufactured this little daydream of telling this person exactly what you think of them. Now, at that point, there was, first of all, the desire — the irritation coming up. Then there's a moment where there's a loss of mindfulness, and that means there's a becoming of the irritations. As soon as you become the irritation, it slips up into this wonderful intellect we have, this imaginative intellect, and produces something.

Now, in our meditation, what that's pointing to is to be very much aware of what the mind's thinking about all the time. Because unwittingly, it's developing these conditionings. That's why in our meditation we're always taught very quickly, as soon as you come out of a fantasy, whatever it is, you note what the

attitude is. Not concerned at all with the subject matter. That's irrelevant. It's just this emotional state, this conditioning, grasping hold of something in the memory and making something of it to develop that mental state.

So if I'm angry, if there is anger in me, the desire is to develop the anger. It might be righteous anger. That's the best of them all, righteous anger. You can blow the world apart with righteous anger. And what you're doing is you're creating this imaginative world in which this anger is developing.

Now, that's the sequence. You have the contact. A feeling perception arises, which you, in this case, in this negative sense, you perceive as unwholesome. And then there's this reaction of wanting to do something with it, either to develop it or to get rid of it, if you don't like it. Wanting, not wanting. There's a sudden falling into an identity — "I want," "I don't want" — and then "I do," or "I don't do." There's your sequence. And once that's done, once the doing is committed, whether in the mind — I'm just talking about the mind at the moment — that reinforces the whole of these conditionings, these *saṅkhāras*.

Now so long as it stays in the mind, in a sense it's only doing us harm. It's only creating an inner environment which is not very pleasant. But it's very difficult once you've established a mental attitude not to begin to launch it out onto an unsuspecting world. So what was angry inside your own heart, your own mind, suddenly begins to manifest in the way you speak and in the way you act. So the outward flow of the mental states is very difficult to stop once you've actually begun it, once you've actually started developing this mental state.

So if we're clear about that, then when we're sitting, that's our purpose, is to get down to the heart level of attitudes, the felt level of an attitude, and to stay with it and allow it to burn out. And that demands, of course, a growth in patience, a forbearance, which is really difficult to be with. If we suffer from anxiety, fear comes up. Fear of fear — that's your panic, isn't it? And just to be able to stay with that, not to move — be like a mountain, just not to move and just wait for that, wait for that nausea and awful feelings just to pass away. And of course the more you do it, the more you grow in patience and the more you grow in courage to turn into these inner demons. And that constitutes the purifications.

So when the Buddha says that he's got rid of all desires, that's what he's talking about. He's talking about exactly what we've been describing. Got rid of all that negative desire stuff. And remember, when we talk about this, although we always talk about, or generally speaking we talk about things that are quite negative within us like anxiety and anger and all that, it's also — remember all the indulgences we have, all the lusts, all the desires, all the griefs which we experience as rather pleasant when the mind is dreaming away on it. These things also become very obsessive. The lust for power — nothing like it.

So that's all how to deal with — the Buddha is saying you've got to be at that level where the *vedanā*, this mental state has arisen, and the reaction to it, the desire. If we can stay with the desire to develop, to indulge, or the desire to reject long enough and let it just die away, we're actually allowing this original stuff to blow itself out. That's all.

Now to see that is to see this sequence of events of the desire and how the "I" comes in. So even at this point we're also seeing the impermanence of these states. But we're also seeing this business of the "I," this self that the Buddha keeps talking about — this idea that the self is the deeper root cause of our problems.

Now if we go back to the beginning of that dependent origination, he always starts with this word *avijjā*, which translates directly as not-knowing. Sometimes you get it translated as ignorance, and that in a sense gives it a twist which is not there. It's not that you should know, you're ignorant — it's not that. It's just not-knowing. And because of this not-knowing, we presume to be what we experience. That's about it. We presume to be what we experience.

So we experience ourselves as human beings and therefore we presume that's what we are. Conventionally speaking, we know we're human beings, but in any ultimate sense, then it doesn't have any substantial meaning to it because this me is constantly in a process of change, constantly changing its parameters, constantly changing its understandings, constantly changing its experiences.

But somehow, within the whole of this life experience, there seems to be this centre point which never changes. Have you noticed that? This me always is there. It doesn't matter what happens on the outside. I can lose both arms and both legs and my nose, but me, I'm still there. I can change all my opinions and do all sorts of things, but this me remains completely constant. It never seems to move. The sense of this deep inner sense of presence. Correct?

Now, the Buddha says this is the root. This is the root cause of all our problems. This very sense of self, this very feeling that we have of being me. Now the fact that we are aware of it, the fact that we actually know it's there, tells us immediately we can't be that. You can't be something that you know as an object. Being, to be something — it's like, for instance, they say very well in the Mahāyāna, the eye cannot see itself. But it does perceive. But it can't see itself. If it could see itself, that would be really interesting, wouldn't it?

It can see itself by way of reflection. We can see our faces in the mirror and we can fool ourselves to think that that's how people see us. But we don't, do we? They see our faces the other way around. It always comes as a shock when you use two mirrors. Because you never thought your nose was quite that twisted. It's like your voice. You hear it on voice. It's only when you hear it coming out from a loudspeaker or something that you think, "God, that sounds terrible." We have this view of ourselves. It's always very, normally speaking, fairly positive, I think. And we think that that's how actually people experience it. But they don't.

So the eye can't see itself, the tongue can't taste itself. Even here, within our experience of this body, we're being told that you can't be something you're aware of. If the basic sense of your tongue was curry, how could you ever enjoy ice cream? It'd be difficult. Everything would be a lovely taste of curry. So it's the fact that the tongue is empty of taste that it tastes. It's the fact that the eye can't make images that it sees images.

So there's something within us which is beyond the phenomenal world and yet able to receive it. That's the proposition. When the Buddha talks about in that victory verse, he uses this little phrase *cittaṃ asaṅkhataṃ* — this word *citta* translates as a consciousness, a knowing which is not conditioned.

Now everything in the phenomenal world is conditioned in the sense that it depends on something else. Everything that everything you see in this world is leaning on something else, is dependent on something else, is in relationship with something else for it to be. I mean, we take so much for granted, but we know that we have four minutes if we don't get air. That's not very long, is it? Four minutes. Nine days without water. I think it's two months or three months without food. And we forget that dependency. We forget, in fact, that this body is like a fountain. There's stuff coming in and stuff coming out all the time. It's a double-headed fountain there. And in the process it changes.

So there's something in us which is receiving all this material, knows all this material, feels all this material, experiences all this material, and yet is not of it.

Now this process that we go through in *vipassanā*, it's about turning the inner world into an objective world in the same way that the young child around about the age of four months or something begins to externalise the world that it experiences as totally me. I think in psychology they call it the first object relation — your mum usually. And that's the first — out of this massive of sensation, it's difficult for us to imagine, isn't it? But it's just all sensation, and you can't make sense of it. All you know is pleasant or unpleasant. When it's unpleasant, you scream. The world's coming to an end.

And then, suddenly, this thing separates out. Sometimes you see little children, where they're trying to make a go at some rattle or something. And what they're doing is — that's what they tell you anyway — is they're building up this three-dimensional world. Before, it's just presumably flat, and suddenly they see this thing and they're reaching out for it and they're creating distance. They're creating this three-dimensional space. And at some point or other they become quite aware that there's a world out there — might not be conceptual, don't have words for it — but there's something out there and there's something here, quite separate.

And all we're doing is taking that process inward. That's all. So whereas we have bathed ourselves, confused ourselves with all the inner world that we experience — our thoughts and imaginings, our feelings, our bodies and all that — as soon as you sit in meditation and these become your objects, they become the other world. You're dis-identifying with them.

And that little distance that you feel between the knowing and what is being known is — we can call it a Nibbānic gap. Don't quote me. It's a Nibbānic gap because somehow we've pulled out and it can no longer affect us.

When we're sitting in meditation and perhaps we're dealing with a very pleasurable feeling, a very joyous feeling comes up in the body, and it wants to attach itself to something. So it begins to think about this

planning, this business you're going to set up, which is going to conquer the world. And you stop it doing that and you still stay with this sense of excitement, a slightly excited sense of joy. And as you separate from it and it's there, it's got no power, it's lost its power. It can't get into the mind, it can't begin to create. It just remains as a lovely little feeling. And then slowly it passes away.

If there's a grasping after it, if there's a wanting it to stay there, then we haven't distanced enough, we haven't let go of it. It now becomes that connection which we might not have perceived while it was there, but as it fades away there's a desire to grasp at it. That little connection — that's the *taṇhā*, that's the beginning of suffering. But if we're just there absolutely equanimous — the Buddha's always got his left hand resting equanimous — and it fades away and there's no reaction, there's only an interest in that process of fading away, then it's not touched us. It's not grasped us — or rather, we've not grasped it. But that's how the feeling is, that it's not taken us. We're not being hijacked by it.

So all these things that come up in the meditation, pleasant or unpleasant, and neutral — we'll come to that in a minute — are all points where we can begin to experience this distance. And every time we pull ourselves out from that relationship, we are unwittingly establishing a different relationship. And that different relationship is taking us to a place, slowly but surely, which is completely in the world — the Buddha didn't exit the world once he was liberated. He didn't just disappear or something — and yet untouched by it, unaffected by it in any negative way.

Now as you — we can get so far, remember, with our acts of will. When pain comes, for instance, in the knee. So the normal thing is, the first sensation of it, you might just get that feeling of just not wanting it. So there's your desire, right? But it's not big enough yet to grasp you. So you just stay with it, and you wait for that to pass. If the pain gets really bad, then you get a deeper sense of aversion towards it, a fear that your knee's going to explode, all that stuff. And you're just watching it. You never get involved. You're just feeling it.

Your attention goes to the reaction. As the reaction dies away you're left with just this pain. You're equanimous with it. Not that we try and defeat pain—you never win on that one. But so long as it remains manageable, you then go into the pain and you come across sensations which constitute the pain.

So that's at the level of the first aggregate we're talking about. That's when you're experiencing pain not as pain but as tightness or heat or pressure. And at that level you notice there's no desire. It's a perfectly equanimous level to be at the level of contact. As you move your attention or it slips back into a step before that and the perception "pain" comes up, then you realize that there is no such thing as pain. That's a mental formation. What there is, is sensation.

Now that doesn't mean to say that it's useless, because if we don't recognize pain, then we obviously can do ourselves damage. But it's just knowing that pain is mental and not physical. And as soon as that word "pain" comes up, you've got this reaction. Just to observe that process is to observe how we create the world out of this, how we're creating that world around pain in just that little experience.

And you can do the same with an emotion. So when anger comes up and you feel irritated about something, you stop it from creating a world—this imaginative world—and you come back into the body and you may still feel it as anger. But as you go into it it becomes just heat, heat and fiery energy, and then you know that that's what it actually is and it's the mind that then conceptualizes it.

In this sense it's the other way around because the mind is full of this fiery stuff and it's affecting the body. And in some of your meditation sometimes you can see that separation that the mind with feeling separates from the body with feeling. And it's those sorts of little insights that make it very easy for us to understand how there are psychosomatic illnesses. Because the mind itself is making the physical part of our body sick—it's confusing it. So we pull out from the body with its sensations, pull out from the heart with its emotions, and when it comes to images we can also just note them. But you have to be very careful because in placing your attention on an image, it's often actually empowering it, and the image can take over. So again, you just note the image, come back to the breath.

And there comes that point where there's just this knower, just this witness inside you—the feeler, the observer, the one who knows, the experiencer, call it what you wish. And that's really the final point you can get to by an act of will in your meditation. And if you're very still at that point, occasionally it comes—turn your attention towards that, towards that feeling. Where's that feeling, that sense of a self being manufactured?

Now, on the positive side—that's all this negative stuff—on the positive side, remember that that whole process is developing very positive attitudes in us. It's developing that sense of discriminative inquiry. It's developing patience and forbearance. And also, remember, you can flavor your looking with kindness. So you're looking kindly upon yourself, kindly upon these things.

And the other thing it's developing is this equanimity, this complete openness to the way things actually are, to see and understand the way things actually are. That's the Buddhist phrase—it's translated literally "to see and understand the way things come to be," because the Buddhist question, remember, is never why we're suffering but how. He's not interested in metaphysics. He's interested in this process of how we create suffering, and in seeing it he's presuming that we'll see how to end it. So that's what the *vipassanā* is about. The *vipassanā* is about seeing this process, to see it as impermanent, to see it as not me, not mine.

But when you then come out of your meditation, there has to be a translation of that understanding into an attitude. And that's where the *mettā* comes in. So whereas intellectually or understandingly we might begin to experience or understand this idea of interconnectedness, it remains very dry unless it's turned into an attitude of love, of a quality of love, whether it's sympathetic joy or compassion or any other quality that you can think of which you would put under that large umbrella of good relations. And that's what the practice of *mettā* does.

Now, in some traditions, and you have to agree, it's not absolutely necessary because the wisdom would translate naturally into an attitude. But it does, I think, help to make that little effort to develop goodwill.

And then that's why every morning there's that point where I remind people to make an act of will for the day. What is your resolution for the day? It doesn't matter whether you keep it or not. What matters is that you keep, as the Buddha says, inclining to Nibbāna, just leaning in the right way. So if you lean far enough, you tend to take a step. So these little resolutions in the morning, which every time you lose it during the day you reinforce it, they have this effect of making you do it.

There's a rather nice passage in Joseph Goldstein's work, which he wrote about his experience right at the beginning, about the experience of insight. And if I remember rightly, he would get up very early in the morning to do this meditation and fall asleep. But he didn't say, "Oh well, I'm just too tired, it's obviously not working for me, I'll just sleep a bit more." No, he just kept getting up and going to sleep. And then one morning, I think two or three months on, he got up and he didn't. And that's it, that's how it works. You keep empowering your good intention and you keep tripping over and forth. You pick yourself up, you dust yourself off, you start all over again. And then one day, you're doing it.

And it always begins, remember, in the mind, with intention. So these little resolutions at the end of a sitting—it can be specific to something you're going to have to meet during the day. It can be general. And it can be either a negative one, that you're not going to go down that road. I would always suggest that one. And a positive one, that this is the path you're going to take. And every time you know you've slipped, you reinforce your commitment to those resolutions.

And this immediately begins to have an effect on the way we speak. That's right speech. And then it affects how we just generally behave—right action. Which is always on an ethical basis. Because remember, the self is always self-endearing, it's self-protective. It begins not from the point of view of evil but from the point of view of delusion. And so it feels better if it's bigger, and it considers bigger being richer and more powerful and all that sort of stuff. So the more you have in the bank, the more happy you feel. You might not—I mean, it's like Spike Milligan said, wasn't he? He said, "They say money doesn't make you happy, but I would just like to have a go. I just want a chance to prove it."

So the self is always trying to substantiate its existence to make itself feel safe. Remember, that's the fundamental fear of the self, that it is not safe. That's why it can't handle sickness or age and death—it doesn't make itself feel safe. So everything you could say on a positive level, when we're working from this particular delusion, is just to make ourselves feel safer. The fact that it's at the expense of everybody else in the world is irrelevant. What is relevant is that I feel safer. And so all action in terms of this process of liberation is always around some sort of ethical basis.

And then there's right livelihood. Now, it's very interesting that the Buddha should put that there, because logically speaking, I suppose you didn't need it—it's included in right action—but he does. And there's your livelihood. If you think about what the virtues, the traits of your personality, which your actual employment is developing—so whatever we do for the better part of our lives, those eight or so hours a day, they're having an effect on us. So somehow we have to make sure that whatever we're doing is done

with right attitude.

So if you're doing a brilliant job begrudgingly, what's the point in terms of this process of liberation? If you're doing what seemingly might be to other people a menial job or something, not an important job, it is important to that person if they make the decision that "this is what I'm going to develop in this work."

I mean, the kernel experience in my life was when I was a kid and I went to work—I got this holiday job in this factory making cakes. And it was one of these old belts that came around, these cakes. And all the women were standing there. And they put me on the end of the line of these women. And for them, it was utterly automatic. My job was to put the cherry on top of this thing as it passed by. And of course, for them, they were yapping and talking, having a whale of a time. And they were just doing all this stuff just like that.

When it comes to me, I'm starting to put this damn cherry on. Every so often, I'd miss. And the machine had to stop. And the foreman would be shouting at me. They were all very kind, looking at this boy. "Oh, leave him alone." And of course, I remember thinking to myself, "What a dreadful, what an awful job these poor women have got to come in and do this all day for eight hours making these cupcakes."

Looking back now, of course, from the point of view of the meditation, what an amazing opportunity to develop concentration. Moment to moment, concentration on that cake. As it passes by, cherry spot on in the middle. Never missing. Eight hours. God, I'd have come out enlightened, I'm sure. I'd have completely liberated from all cakes anyway.

So it doesn't matter what you do eventually. It doesn't matter what you do. I mean, apart from the obvious unethical things that we can do, it's the attitude which you're doing it. It's your resolution as to what your work is that develops in you and to do it for that reason. And for doing it—when we do something for virtue it automatically benefits the other. You don't have to worry about whether it's benefiting the other or not. They might not receive it so well, but the point is it is to their benefit.

And that's how the rest of the path—right speech, right action, right livelihood—begins to recoil back into the mind. So where we started in the sitting posture getting that vantage point, allowing negative states to arise and burn away, beginning to develop that wisdom about who we are, what we are, as it moves into daily life it actually is developing these mental states so that our inner life becomes more and more joyful, more and more peaceful.

That's the theory. I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. May you, by your deep and profound commitment to the practice, move towards your liberation sooner rather than later.

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