Vipassanā and/or Therapy

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 50:37

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhassa. Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhassa. Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhassa.

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

Every so often I hear about somebody who, just out of the blue, is hit by a mental disturbance, a storm, which drives them to taking tablets. I mean, it's that bad — some mental illness which seems to arise and then just pass away. Thinking of a friend who just suddenly out of the blue experienced a deep depression, took about six, nine months and disappeared. Still hasn't returned.

Whereas others, just in the middle of life, even after years of what you might call ordinary neurotic living, suddenly they're struck with this really painful mental state, deep anxiety that seems to be uncontrollable. And if we haven't got a model of how the psyche works, then of course it can add to it an enormous sense of despair, panic — what to do?

And these days we have various models coming from the psychotherapeutic tradition, which is helpful, no doubt about that. And there was a time when taking drugs was a real no-no in the Buddhist society because it wasn't facing up to your *kamma*. So I think people have relented on that a bit and decided that skillful use of drugs can steady somebody. But even then, it doesn't always work.

I'm just thinking of a friend who was an occasional student. Again, somewhere around his forties, suddenly struck by depression. And the psychiatrist told him it was a type that would recur, which didn't help. And eventually he got into this state. When I went to see him, there was no humour in the man. None whatsoever. And he was in the habit of, when he was talking to you, I was always filled with this profound disgust.

And so I said to him — now he's a committed Buddhist, he practiced quite a bit, and he understands that, or I think he held the belief, because he used to say to his sister, that there would be a future life, future *ka mma*. So I asked him, I said, are you contemplating suicide? He said, no. Then, of course, a few days later, I hear that he has actually killed himself. And he downloaded a little mechanism from the websites that creates carbon monoxide and put it in his car, drove out to the countryside, set it going, and they found him in a peaceful place.

And obviously things had got to the top of him. He was taking drugs. They didn't help. And he had about six people constantly visiting him. All the support services came to help him. His sister was everywhere. It just became unbearable. And I think in those times, unless your practice has grounded you in a

psychology, in a model of the mind that allows you to see hope, then it looks pretty dark.

And really that's what we're discovering. We're discovering that no matter how much physical pain or mental pain there might be, if we can just hang on in there it will dissolve or it will kill us. But for it to kill us is not the same as for us to kill ourselves.

Just to give you one example of where — I mean it's a bit dramatic and it's not the best of examples, but I remember reading in this manual of what happened at the Mahāsi centre while Mahāsi Sayadaw was teaching. And there's a man who went along with stomach cancer, pretty advanced, they'd given up hope on him, and he stopped taking all the drugs and began to meditate. And as he expressed it, there was an explosion. I disappeared. So this would suggest that the cancer had been caused by a mental imbalance, not by some chemical state.

So our aim really is in the long term to take from the Buddha's teaching some model of the mind which allows us to see this liberation. And there's, you might say, three parts to the process. One part is how to deal with all the stuff that comes up which is painful, both physical and mental. The other part is how to develop a beautiful mind. And the third part is how to liberate us completely from the possibility of suffering, from the possibility of suffering — and that's his message.

Nibbāna isn't a peaceful wonderful state so long as that doesn't happen, so long as this doesn't happen. It's complete liberation from the possibility of suffering.

Now the Buddha himself didn't have an easy time. I mean, apart from the early part where he's left his family — I mean, that can't have been very easy. Then all that training. And then there must have been a joyous period where he's teaching and people are gathering around him. And then towards the end of his life, things go all upside down.

Devadatta tries to kill him. His two big mates who'd supported him all his life, the two kings of Kosala, Pasenadi and Bimbisara of Magadha, which is around modern day Varanasi, died. And their sons weren't particularly — I mean, the son of Bimbisara had been in cahoots with this Devadatta and he killed his own father. He starved him. Starved him to death. You can go and see where the building is, if you want, in Rajgir. At least that's what they say it is.

He starved his father so he could become king and the thing was that Devadatta would get rid of the Buddha and he'd become head of the order and there'd be peace and harmony. And after all that, when he'd killed, he had a remorse, he had a great remorse, and he went to apologize to the Buddha, confess to him, all that stuff. But there's nothing else in the story that I could perceive anyway, that he became as devoted a supporter of the Buddha as his father had been.

And the same with Virudhaka, who was the son of the king of Kosala. The story there is that he'd married into the Buddha's clan. And because they thought that he was of a lower caste, he wasn't really up to the Sakyas, they palmed him off with a servant girl of a lower caste. When he found this out, he was

justifiably enraged. And he got his army together, got on his elephant, and off he went to destroy the Sakyas.

So the Buddha went out and had a chat with him. And he went back. But as it happens, it builds up on the mind. So he got on his elephant again and rode out with his army. And the Buddha again went to have a little chat. And he saw the senselessness of it, so he came back. And off he went again, got on his elephant, off he went again.

In one part I read it was the third time the Buddha said, I can't do anything, that's it, the *kamma*'s too great. It might have been the fourth time, he said. But anyway, there was a point where the Buddha knew he couldn't stop it. And so he did. He killed a lot of his people. They moved capital.

So there he is, this old man. I mean, he's in his seventies now. He died at eighty. He's got to handle all this stuff. And his family's being killed. And his supporters are going. And his cousin, Devadatta, whom he's given all this Dharma to, wants to kill him. It's a heck of a way to end your life, isn't it?

So he wasn't immune from the vicissitudes of life, but nowhere do we get the impression that he's perturbed by it. It's like this is the way it is. And he does his best to try and cure the situation. Like when Devadatta takes off a load of monks, he sends his two chief disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, to talk to them. And they bring most of them back. But Devadatta continues. He continues as a monk.

So it's this ability to remain equanimous. That's probably, well, according to Nyanaponika, on the heart of Buddhist meditation. Well, actually, no, it's in his later book, *The Vision of the Dhamma*. So Nyanaponika was a German monk. He started off the Pali, the Buddhist Publication Society, up in Kandy. And he wrote two very good books, one of which, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, is still probably a classic on it. And very luckily he practiced the Mahāsi system, so I was pushed off.

But in *The Vision of the Dhamma*, he goes on about equanimity being the primary virtue, because it's equanimity that keeps everything in control. So when love comes, it stops it going into attachment. When compassion comes, it stops it going to grief and so on.

So what was this model that the Buddha offered us? There's a few ways of looking at our experience which gives us an angle. The one is the most static experience. If you were to slice one moment of life, then you'd end up with what he called the five *khandhas*, five aggregates, five heaps. It's a still. And what he's doing is deconstructing everything, not simply for the joy of deconstruction, but to show us exactly where the problem lies.

So when it comes to the body, it's a given. What the body offers us is within the construct of the body. It has its own intelligence, you might say. All these millions of cells that we've got, they all know what to do, don't they? We don't have to get in there and educate them, train them, breathe. It's like they know. And what we come to recognize about the body is that our knowledge of it is very superficial, isn't it? I mean, direct knowledge. We know from diagrams and all that about what's happening in the body. But as a

direct experience of the body, there's very little we know, isn't there?

I mean, have you any intimation at this present moment that the marrow in your bone is creating white blood cells? I haven't a clue. I haven't a clue what my liver's doing, but it feels alright. All these synapses in the brain which work at, so they tell us, quantum physical level — I haven't a clue. All I know is my memory's going. That's for sure.

So it's recognizing that we're aliens in this body, strangers within our own body. And it's a vehicle, isn't it? It's a vehicle that we're in. But we are aware of the sensations it gives us. We're aware of sensations that come from it. We're aware of the light that hits the eye and creates pictures for us and the sounds that strike the ear. We're aware at that point where the body comes in contact with the mind or the other way — the mind comes in contact with the body.

And at that point, there is the body, there must be some feeling at some sense door, whether it's sight or touch. There has to be some perception. So the perception is the mental image that we have of what's happening and it creates our memories and goes on to create our concepts and thought patterns. So those are all separate heaps. You've got all this stuff coming from the body, a sensation. Then you have it defined by the mind as being pleasant or unpleasant. Those are how we define it. And then you have these perceptual faculty going on.

All that, you might say, is all a given. It all happens in one single moment. And then there's these *saṅkhāra s*, which are the mental stuff that comes up, the thought and emotional life we have. And the reason he separates that out is because this we have power over. This is where our power, in terms of how we, the atmosphere within us, what we call our emotional life, states of mind — this is where we can do something, at our *saṅkhāras*.

And then there's this magic of the mind which creates a picture for us, the cognition, the act of cognition, like a television screen. So that, in a sense, gives us a slice, but it doesn't tell us the movement, it doesn't give us a timeline of how these things come together. And that's what he does with the dependent origination.

So, using the *khandhas*, using these five different types of experiences, using these five categories, that's also a way of undermining the idea that what I am is some entity, some wholeness — not a composite. As I look deeply I see what I'm experiencing is a composite, it's made up of this and that and this and that. And that undermines the idea of this body being a me or a self. It undermines the idea that the mind with its thoughts and emotions is a me, a mine or a self. In itself it's not a self.

Now why would you want to do that? I mean it was pretty miserable before and now that I've discovered I'm not what I'm supposed to be or I appear to be, it's even more miserable. What's the point of doing that? So the whole point is that we are taking our identity into a higher place. So I'm using identity now in the sense of realizing who we really are or what we really are.

So it's a case of stepping back from everything, pulling ourselves out of everything to be able to say well I'm not that, I'm not that, I'm not that, and eventually you see you come to realize who you are. It's like walking backwards to a cliff — at some point you're gonna fall off. That falling off is the liberation from what you thought you were.

When we're in meditation when we're looking at what's coming up, the looking is looking at what it's not. As soon as you're looking at something, at something, it can't be that what's looking. It becomes an object. Not too mystifying — be an object.

If you go back to childhood, to our early months, we're told that the first couple, two or three months, four months or something, it's just one bath of sensations. There's no objectivity in it. And then out of that looms our first object, mother. Something looms out. And then, over a period of time, the whole world becomes out there, and I'm here. And I associate entirely with this body.

So that process of separation, all we're doing is taking that inward. It's a slow process of separating from everything.

Now, in dependent origination, the psychology which produces the suffering in our lives — when I say suffering, remember, I'm really pointing to anything which is a slight discomfort to the most existential angst you can think about. It's the whole gamut of human misery — that's *dukkha*, wherever you find misery or unhappiness or even the slightest discomfort like when you're watching TV and you've got to shift your position because you feel slightly uncomfortable. That's *dukkha*, the whole thing is *dukkha*. It's a big word and it's his core concept. He says eventually, remember, all I'm teaching is *dukkha* and the end of it is *dukkha*.

So in dependent origination at the point of, shall we say, this moment, you find these listed. So the body and mind. These are two different things. The body is not the mind, the mind is not the body. And yet, are completely dissolved in each other. They only separate at death. This is the theory. They only separate at death.

And the mind which is in the body can only know what the body offers it at this point of contact. The mind has the body, the mind and body, and there's the six senses, but this includes the mind, as a sensing organ. And then you have, with the body-mind you have consciousness, this ability to create pictures in the mind, whole pictures. You've got consciousness, body-mind, the six senses, and then you've got this contact.

The contact needs an object, so the senses have to have an object — that's why you can't see in a dark room. At the point of contact there's no suffering. Point of contact there's no suffering. When it comes to the next point where you discern something as being pleasant or unpleasant, just that point of seeing unpleasant, pleasant, just at that point — so now there's just sensation, just contact and then there comes this pleasant, unpleasant — there's no suffering. There's no suffering at that level.

The Buddha mind lives at that level. It's not that he doesn't have unpleasant feelings or pleasant feelings,

sensations in the body. The heart's purified. I mean, that doesn't have depression or your usual stuff. The mind, the heart now is full of joyous, beautiful states. He says that himself. But the body still gives pain, but it's still at the point of contact. It's seen as pleasant or unpleasant. No suffering. No suffering.

Then something happens of a relationship to that which we are experiencing.

And we call that this craving, this thirst, desire, but desiring coming from the misunderstanding that you're going to be happy by devoting yourself to either getting rid of what's unhappy or indulging what is happy.

So you can see that, can't you, in meditation. A bit of pain comes and you can immediately feel you want to push away, you want to push away. If you're experiencing *tanhā*, so the word for that is *tanhā*, the word is that craving, there's no suffering there. Then something happens. It becomes me. Then there's suffering. At the point it becomes me, we're in pain, we're suffering, we're running from it. Or we've thrown ourselves straight into the cheesecake. We become a cheesecake. And create the relationship with cheesecake which is forever a source of suffering, because you can't get enough of it.

It's interesting, isn't it? Because in our language we say, "I want the cheesecake." But actually, psychologically, cheesecake wants I. And nothing is suffering until there's that point of identity. When we grasp it. At that point of identity the desire which was beforehand is then empowered and it's virtually impossible to stop that in my own understanding. Perhaps you can to a certain point, but once you've identified with your desire, there's almost immediately afterwards an impulsion of energy which we call will and it manifests. You can't stop yourself eating that cheesecake. At least not the first bite. You have to spit it out. You can't stop it. That's the becoming. You've become a self. You're becoming a self. The self that enjoys the cheesecake.

That point of empowerment by the will is the point of *kamma*. It's an action and the result will follow because it has an effect, and the agent that does it is the will.

"Excuse me, may I just ask something? You're implying a time lag there. Are these time lags ever in fact perceptible?"

Yes, but you've got to be right on the ball for that. You've got to be really on the ball. It's so automatic. That's right. So that's why you see you have this given. You've got the cognition, the ability to cognize, to know, a primary knowing. That arises at the same time as the body and mind. They can't arise separately. There you've got your five, six senses. And then you've got your contact. All that arises in one solid block.

Once the contact's made there's a perception of it as being pleasant or unpleasant. Once that's done you have a relationship with it of wanting it or not wanting it. Once that desire arises there's a grasping of the desire and it's "I want." And as soon as you've done that it's virtually impossible to stop the energy going in to produce, to manifest the desire, to take it out of potential into actual. At that point you've created a *kam ma*, you've reinforced the idea of a self, and the consequences will be dire. There's no way you can stop

the consequences.

Apart from doing something to counterbalance it. So for instance, if you've said something nasty to somebody, you know to be comfortable you're going to apologize and that assuages that karmic line in that action. So it's not as though you're helpless. You can do something. So what the Buddha is pointing out is that if we want to change ourselves, the point of change, you've got to be there at the point of intention. If you're not there at the point of intention, you'll be dragged off by the old conditioning. And that's what we're watching every time you sit here. You see these intentions keep coming.

You know, you want to move away from pain. Something pleasant comes up that you want to think about. The holiday you're trying to prepare. Before you know it, off you go. It's like you're constantly developing this self through dream work. And every time you dream, it's an act. It's an act of becoming. So there are three ways in which we become. Through action, which is pretty straightforward. Through speech we become. And through thought patterns.

So every time an emotion arises, a mental state arises, it'll want to create a certain storyline around it. And unwittingly, we're developing that attitude, we're developing that state. And remember that is coming from a deep ignorance, a deep not knowing. And that runs concurrent under everything we're doing. That's running concurrent. And it's creating these, it's manifesting through these conditionings that we have in the past, these *saṅkhārās* that we came across with the five aggregates. They're running underneath, like programs on a computer. And as soon as you press the right key, this program arises. It'll catch you.

So to be actually right there with the arising of a program and to see it and to catch our relationship of wanting or not wanting is the practice we have to take into our daily life. And to do that, you've got to be calm, you've got to be equanimous. Now frankly that sounds dull, because I want to be happy. I want to jump around and get excited. I don't want to be calm all the time. And that's of course what draws us, because this conditioning beneath us, this deep identity, this deep mistaken identity is telling us that the real happiness is to be found in the world. Fame, riches, power, sensual pleasures.

So you've got these two ways of looking. One from a static perspective: in any given moment you can deconstruct what's happening in terms of the body and the sensations, the raw sensations. The feelings as they manifest by way of perception, whether pleasant or unpleasant. That perception of the feeling, which is like that perception of it being pleasant or unpleasant. See, they both come together. You can't split them in Buddhist psychology. The feeling and the perception arise at the same time. And then you have these *saṅkhārās*, these things that we call our emotional thought life. And then you have this cognition, this active cognition.

On a timeline, you can see how you begin to create it. So now, if we want to reverse that process and stop creating any further problems for ourselves, we've got to be alert to stay at the point of intention. At the point of intention, we have a choice. We can see that the intention is either wholesome for us or

unwholesome. And it's a case of renouncing, letting go of those intentions we see as unwholesome, which can be painful because you're renouncing it, you're letting go of an old habit, and reinforcing those that we see as wholesome.

And in this way, the contents of this bag of *saṅkhāra* start filling up with good stuff. And that's why we do the *mettā*. Every time we do *mettā*, we empower the thought of goodwill. So it's affecting the mind. When it affects the mind, it'll affect the way we speak. Speech becomes more gentle, more kind, more compassionate. It affects what we do. So it's systemic. That's the good thing.

The bad news is that we've got all this other old *saṅkhāra*, all this huge bag of rubbish that we've collected over who knows how long. And that's our *kamma*. People in, shall we say, popular Buddhism would say that what happens to you on the outside is your *kamma*. But what happens to you on the outside is governed by all sorts of laws. Things like the earthquakes and the tsunami, a terrible tsunami. That isn't your, that isn't personal *kamma*. That's just part of the general *kamma* that you get when you're born in a certain place. When you're born into a culture, a language, that's part of your general *kamma*. But it's not your personal, you didn't create it. You didn't create the language, you didn't create the culture. You just slot into it.

What is your real *kamma* in terms of liberation, in terms of freedom from suffering, is always internal. If this were not so, then we'd have to change something out there. We'd have to change the culture, go somewhere else, go and live in India or Sri Lanka. And if my liberation were dependent on somebody, I'd have to get rid of them. Can't be having that. So whatever liberation is, whatever this *Nibbāna* is, its attainment is not dependent on what's happening outside of my mind.

So now I sit, I come to sit and I'm assailed by all this stuff coming up, the grief and the anxiety. Dreams of greatness of discoveries that will change the world. The mind creating vast compassionate scenarios where finally I'm given the Nobel Prize. The ability to create an inner world is wonderful. So here I am sitting with this stuff and I've got to go into it and what I find is that I have no option but to suffer it. There's my *kamma*.

So what is the virtue that the Buddha points to as being the greatest of all virtues? He says, the greatest of all ascetic practices is patience. Patience, endurance. And in a sense, we won't want to sit with this stuff unless we feel it's actually exhausting itself. If we feel that we're just sitting with this stuff and nothing's happening, it's just going to be misery all the time and there's no end to it, it just keeps coming up, then well, you may as well not do it. What's the point? I wouldn't do it. Definitely not.

So there's got to be in our meditation a feeling that something is being released. Something's just moving out. And I think that comes with the practice. Over time, sometimes we expect, I mean this is another problem we have. In a society where pain can be got rid of, you can get rid of pain quite quickly with aspirins and stuff like that. Sometimes with the use of drugs you can get rid of painful mental states. There's an expectation that spiritual practice will just sort of zap everything and sort of lift one to the

seventh heaven in one of these balloons.

Unfortunately, we find that it's not like that at all. It's quite hard, constant, dogged work to just sit with the stuff that we've created. That's the other thing. This psychology that the Buddha's pointing to is telling us that none of the suffering and the joys that we experience has been created by anybody. It's all been created by us through our relationship to contact with the world. When we say the world we don't just mean objects, we mean people, we mean our history, our language. That's the contact we have and how we relate to that has been the cause of both our joys and our woes. Internal joys and woes.

So that's the other part. The other part is bearing, enduring, sitting with the stuff. Now we don't have to push it. If we want to understand the Buddha's psychology, so long as there's a self, there'll be an existence. We're never going to be short of time. There'll always be time, so long as there's a feeling of self. So it's not a case of having to do it all in one weekend. It's a case of recognizing that there's probably a lot of work to be done, of just bearing with the conditions that are arising.

And that's what's difficult for us, because we always want to do something. So this mental state arises, and we want to do something about it. Immediately we want to engage in a way which is actually going to create more turbulence. You're trying to shift something, which all it wants to do is liberate itself. And you have to have patience for that, you have to just be with it. And to perhaps have an image of being a comforter to yourself, being a nurse to yourself.

Now if you go to somebody with something on your heart, you want them to listen, don't you? It's just that witness of being with you, which is the solvent, you might say. So in a sense we've got to be able to be a comforter to ourselves. And that's the *mettā*. So when you're looking, when you're mindful within yourself, when you're doing your *vipassanā*, you can flavour that with kindness. Put a sort of flavour to it. And then it's sort of bearable.

If it gets unbearable, fine. You just put it to the side for a while. Go for a walk, read a book, turn the TV on, do something. Just to give yourself a bit of time to regain the courage and the determination you need to go back into the fray.

So there are these two sides. There's the side which is developing beautiful states of mind through practices, through an act of service to our society through the work we do. And that creates joy through practices like *mettā*. So you're constantly building up conditioning. There's no limitation to the development of mind. We call these states illimitable. Mind isn't confined by the body. You can be as joyous as you can make your mind full stop. There doesn't seem to be a limitation to it. That's one side of it, which you practice concurrent with every so often, allowing the steamy stuff to come up.

If you do that as a balance, it doesn't seem so bad. If you just go for the heavy stuff all the time, well, it's miserable, isn't it? You've got to get a bit of froth, a bit of lightness. And then running concurrent with that is this process of growing wisdom, of growing liberation. So through the practice of *vipassanā*, there's this

regaining of a different, you're relocating your identity. You're relocating it.

When you trap your finger in a door, just for that one second, you are your body. There is nothing else in your mind. I mean, you suddenly shoot out and kick the door. But for that one moment of delicious pain, there is only body consciousness. And when you're very happy and jumping up and down and all that sort of stuff, you're emotion, aren't you? When you're lost in thought, even if it's good thought, you become your thinking, you become a thinker.

In meditation we've relocated this sense of self to this point of the observer, where we are, as it were, above the manifestations of the body-mind complex. But that's not the end game. Even that self is a false self, but at least it's a damn sight more peaceful. If we can hang on there, no matter what's happening down here, there's not that much suffering going on. In fact, if you maintain that clarity, again, we find there's no suffering. It's unpleasant. It may be unpleasant, but there's no suffering.

And that's the reason why we need to continuously bring ourselves back to this position of the observer. Now when we're actually in the process of action, when we're doing something, having put the right intention into the work, whatever work you're doing, having put the right intention into the work, and then devoting yourself to that task, just to doing that task fully, body, heart and mind, there may be moments of self-awareness, me doing something. But that's a false state, in the sense there's a split there. There's a moment of doing and a moment of watching myself doing. That's not meditation in action. I mean, it'll do, not a bad place to be, but it's not meditation in action, not the clarity of pure meditation in action.

But as you keep devoting yourself to the task, there's a loss of a sense of self, and that is just the doing. And then one finishes the task, or one wakes up again to this self-awareness, and there's been a time when there hasn't been that self-awareness, and there's been a time when there's been no awareness of time. So time is a concept that arises with the self. That period has been a period of liberation from suffering. These are all little indications, little touches upon the Nibbanic mind, upon the Nibbanic consciousness.

So it's not as though *Nibbāna* isn't there. It's not as though you're trying to achieve it. It's not as though it's like you're going from here to Dublin, and Dublin manufactures itself as you're going towards Dublin. *Nib bāna*'s already here because what *Nibbāna* is is a different relationship. It's a relationship which doesn't have this split of a self. So there's your contrast between *saṃsāra* and *Nibbāna*. To do with our relationship to the particular life we're leading and to what happens within that life and to what happens within us. And the process of liberation is to change that relationship.

So when this man says to the Buddha, "This training you've given us, it's very hard, it's a bit tough," he says, "Well, it is. But in the end," he says, "you achieve *Nibbāna*." And the questioner says, "Yeah, *Nibbāna*, so what?"

He says, well, when you get to Nibbāna, you are contented and with it happy. Contentment is the state of

no desire. There's no false desire, a place of absolute contentment and with it happy. And happiness can be described in its various modalities of how you relate to what's happening. So sometimes it's love, sometimes it's compassion, sometimes it's joy, sometimes equanimity, and there's a whole gamut of mental states that arise.

So in the process, what we discover is that the only thing that's lost, the only thing in the Buddha's words that's annihilated, is this greed, hatred and delusion. And all the energy that was once malevolent within us—these anxieties and excitements and all that—they're all transformed. All that energy, it's not lost.

So probably in his early life the Buddha would enter into all sorts of discussions, which seems to have been the pastime of the day, about philosophy and moksha and liberation and all that with passing ascetics. And when he went out to practice, he came to the point where he dropped his mind, the thinking mind. But that wasn't the end of his thinking mind. As soon as the liberation came, the awakened mind came, he had to work it out. He had to tell himself what he knew. He had to describe to himself what it was, how it was before, when he was deluded. And that's the wheel going one way. And what you do when you want to be undeluded—let the thinking out. And then he starts teaching.

So the very same faculty of thought now becomes a servant to the Dharma. He's not lost anything. If anything, he's gained clarity. So you don't lose anything by the process. Everything is purified, clarified, and the heart begins to live in a deeper peace, deeper happiness. And that's it.

We've made it! So you've got these three things that we have to be working at. The first is to spend some time, if we can, every day just letting the heart speak its problem—just sitting with it patiently. The other bit is to develop the beauty of the mind, how beautiful the mind can be, through the practice of *vipassanā*, through the process of work as service. All that reflects back on the mind. I mean, you've got it there in the Eightfold Path: Right Livelihood. Apart from obvious stuff like trafficking human beings, virtually all jobs that society offers us are fine. It's to do with our attitude to them and how we use them to develop goodwill.

And then there's this other bit of undermining our essential delusion through the practice of vipassanā. And he does that by giving us these models of how to look at our experience, which may be different from Western models. So it's beginning to see our experience through the Buddha's eyes, through the models of these aggregates and the Wheel of Dependent Regeneration, that we're tackling this problem of suffering.

It's not a total psychology. There's no developmental psychology there. It's concerned entirely and solely with this problem of suffering. It doesn't deny other psychologies that have their truth in themselves. It doesn't deny therapies that are of assistance. But it's very arrow-headed towards this problem of suffering.

I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. May you be liberated from all suffering sooner rather than later.

Vipassanā and/or Therapy

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