Dukkha: Unsatisfactoriness and the Path to Liberation

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 50:49

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.

One of the phrases that the Buddha uses is "In this world there is *dukkha* and there is the end of *dukkha*." And this word *dukkha* is difficult to translate well—difficult in the sense that there's no single word that covers its meaning. *Dukkha* in itself just means a hard place, so we're in a hard place.

It also seems to have been used at the time for various ways of describing things. But one of them was an axle in a cart which didn't quite fit right, and so it scratched and made noises and went along. And that's an image of the way we are in the world. We haven't quite got it right.

This *dukkha* is not only described as just the ordinary pains and suffering of life—all the stuff that we experience here, for instance, the emotional stuff—but also remember the suffering that comes from attachment. And all that he calls *dukkha-dukkha*—that's the unsatisfactoriness of ordinary suffering, ordinary pain, ordinary unsatisfactoriness.

And then there's a suffering that comes from the idea of impermanence, the fact that we can't hold on to anything, that everything is disappearing, a lack of control. With certain things it doesn't really matter to us, but when it comes to our bodies, old age, sickness and death, then it gets a bit close to the bone, as you might say. So there's a whole suffering around impermanence simply because we prefer things not to change, especially when you've got it just right. You know, the perfect day, ice cream, it's all there and you just don't want it to move.

And then there's the more subtle suffering that arises because things are compounded. And what the Buddha means by that is that nothing has any self-reality, nothing exists of its own. Everything is dependent on something else. And that's this interdependency.

So even here now, we're breathing, we're dependent on the breath, we're dependent on the air in this room. And when you actually begin to just contemplate how dependent we are on the world around us, not just simply in terms of food and air and stuff like that, but companionship, relationship, transport—every part of our lives is always something dependent on something else. And that dependency shows that actually what we experience ourselves to be, how we define ourselves, is always

in terms of a relationship, a relationship with something else. And that's the part of it that is compounded.

It goes deeper than that in the sense that everything within us is also compounded. There's parts of our body that give up before other parts. You'd think the whole thing would just go all together but it doesn't, so then you realize that actually parts of the body also have their own little life form and are doing their own little things. When you look into the body and you ask yourself what is it you know of the body, I think it can be quite surprising how little we actually know of the body.

Just, we've been talking about air and breathing. Have you ever experienced the exchange of oxygen for carbon dioxide? If nobody told you that, would you know? Skin—all the cells in the body have their own little life form and they're all dividing and dying and whatever. Do we ever experience that? Have any control over it? Your toenails, what about that? That's growing, it's growing right now. You have any idea it's growing? You have any idea what your liver's doing?

So there's a whole—once you begin to ask yourself, what do I actually know about the body as an organism? Quite surprising, we know very little. We can move it about. You've got to go up and down, smile, make it laugh, all that. But actually what we know, what we directly experience with the body is quite minimal. And it's minimal because the only thing we can know is through the mind.

Now, that goes back to this earlier statement: "In this world there is suffering and the end of suffering." So what the Buddha is saying is that this relationship that we have, it can be straightened out. We can actually get to a point where we don't suffer anymore. There's always going to be pain. The body's always going to deliver pain. But it's not going to make us suffer.

Now, this word that he uses, "in this world"—when he defines "in this world," he defines it as the five aggregates. And that's the way he split up the organism that we experience. So first of all there's the body, and we'll come back to that because it's not the body in the way that we just explained it. Then there are all perceptions, all the perceptions that we have. Then there are all the feelings that we have. Then there's what he calls these *saṅkhāra*. *Saṅkhāra* are the emotional and thought life that we experience. And then there's cognition, the act of holding something to know it, an act of cognition.

And the reason he splits it up like this is because he's always pointing to where the problem lies. The problem doesn't lie in the body. The body does its own thing. It's an organism, it feels, it sees, etc. It doesn't lie in perception. Perception meaning those first things that we cognize in the mind. So color, shape, sound, before it takes on a particular meaning. So when I look at the statue, what I see as the beginning percepts are just its shape and color. And it's an internal process that tells me it's a statue and it's a statue of the Buddha. What he's talking about when he talks about this perception process is just that beginning process where the mind is like a sense base.

And then there's feeling. Feeling, as we discover in our meditation, is just sensation. In his language, there's only one word for feeling. We've got sensations, feeling, emotions, moods. But as far as he's

concerned, it's just all feeling. This word *vedanā*—and these feelings he splits into two kinds: they're either pleasant or they're unpleasant. There is a neutral—he also points to neutral feelings—but when you actually really go into a neutral feeling you'll see it sides slightly with being unpleasant or slightly with being pleasant. And there's a further split in the sense that he says that some of these feelings are coming from the body, what we would call sensations, and some are coming from the mind, what we would call emotions, emotional feelings.

So this *vedanā* is simply telling us that those first three are telling us that there's a contact with the physical world, and this physical contact allows us to create percepts in the mind. These percepts are also memory—it's a memory bank as well—and it creates a certain feeling tone to the world, pleasant and unpleasant. All that is given. That's part and parcel of being a human being. But as you know, depending on our faculties—if we're blind, that's one avenue of experience that's not open to us. And we can develop certain senses. A painter, an artist would develop the sense of sight, a musician, a sense of sound, of hearing.

The fourth one—these *saṅkhāra*—he separates that out as the point where we create, because in the midst of that *saṅkhāra* we have this power called will. And the core thing about *saṅkhāra* is will, *cetanā*. Now will is not intention. So this is something that you can investigate yourself when you're doing standing meditation, for instance. Just to stand still and establish that stillness, and then allow the intention to arise.

Sometimes when I say intention, people think it has to be some big emotional thing, like intending to walk sort of overpowering me. But actually, it's just an intention. It's just like, I want to open the door. It doesn't have to be a big emotional explosion. And you know it by simply saying "intending to walk"—that's the intention. So when you say to yourself "intending to walk" you can feel a push in the body as it were, you feel a certain energy coming up: intending to walk. But nothing happens. Just try it yourself. You can stand there forever saying "intending to walk," nothing ever happens. And then something quite magical moves you—something happens, the foot moves.

So something has brought an idea, a wish, out of potential into the actual. It's actually produced an action. Now that power is what the Buddha calls the will. And it's through that power that we create these *saṅkhā ras*, which is our emotional thought life. And he equates this will with *kamma*, with action.

Now, I'm not using the word here as it's normally used, in the sense of karma, like your comeuppance. This is what you deserve. *Kamma* here just means an act. And the technical word for the comeuppance, for what you get as a response to what you do, as a consequence to what you do, is *vipāka*. Those are the two words. So it's cause and then the effect or the result.

And then there's this act of cognition, which you can take to mean—the way I visualize it or the way I understand it is all the electrons hit the screen of a television. Before it hits the screen of a television it's completely nonsensical, but when it hits the screen of this television you've got a picture. So all this information is coming into the brain mind complex and it's somehow being held as a picture which we

then know. So when you are—when in your mind you're seeing these images—though to see them, that primary knowing of those images, that's the act of cognition.

Now this is where we begin to understand the Buddha when he's in the opening verse of the *Dhammapada* . So the *Dhammapada* is a little collection of verses which is like a—in the Buddha's Bible you can say—that it's something that everybody reads. They're just little verses pointing to certain truth. And the first one is that everything is mind made and mind is the forerunner.

Now what this means is in the Buddha's understanding is that everything we're experiencing is created by the mind's contact with the outside world and of course with what it has engineered within itself. So you have to be careful here because Buddhism isn't an idealism. It moves towards that way in later Buddhism in the sense that nothing exists, it's all in the minds of people as it were. The Buddha doesn't deny the reality of the trees that you're looking at. What he's saying is you can only know the trees in your way. You can't get beyond your own consciousness. It's you who are actually creating the tree that you know.

Now when we take this into the problem of suffering, the problem of unsatisfactoriness, the problem of a certain lack, a certain existential angst, whatever we're suffering from. When you take that into—then you realize that actually it's not being created by the world. It's being created by the way we are relating to what's coming in and to our lives. So all our suffering is made by us. Nobody can make us suffer. So this is a real breakthrough when we actually realize that nobody can cause us psychological pain. They can give us a hell of a lot of physical pain, but they can't actually cause the psychological pain. That psychological pain is being produced by an internal mechanism which we have learned within ourselves. We've probably been taught how to do it by our parents etc., but it's something that we're creating in ourselves.

From a process of awakening point of view, if we weren't creating our suffering and it was somebody else who was doing it, then you'd have to get rid of that somebody else. And if there was anybody in the world whom you thought was creating suffering for you, before your suffering would end you'd have to get rid of them. So there'd be no way really to full liberation until you annihilated everybody. If somebody out there can cause you suffering, then there's always that potential of suffering.

What the Buddha is saying is that he attained a state where, as he puts it, the world argues with him, he doesn't argue with the world. He's not in contradiction with the world. It's not that people didn't hate him. Devadatta, the dastardly fellow who was a monk, he went to the Buddha and thought he was getting a bit old and he was getting all loose and losing his grip. So he said, what we need to do is get back to the originals, back to the original order—living in a forest, vegetarianism, just rag robes, sleep under a tree, back to the old hard stuff, because they've all gone soft. So the Buddha actually allowed it. He said, well, if you want to do those—they're called *dhutaṅgas*, those extra special exercises like never taking a lying position—he can do it. But I think Devadatta had in his mind that it was his time now to take over the order. He was a cousin actually. So he tried to kill him, didn't he? Three times, for heaven's sake. Rolled a boulder down a hill, caught his toe.

So it wasn't as though the Buddha didn't create enemies, but his relationship to Devadatta, we can presume, was not angry, hateful, vengeful, etc.

So, if we now take the position that the world I'm experiencing is the world that I'm creating—the world I'm experiencing is the world that I am actually creating—this allows us now, gives us a way of, if I'm creating this world and I'm not experiencing happiness, I'm not experiencing peace, then I must be doing something wrong. So we then have to look at the mechanisms within our own psychology to see how is it that we're creating this suffering. And that's what we're doing with *vipassanā*—that's the purpose of *vipassanā*—is to see how we create suffering and how we begin to undermine that suffering.

And there's two ways in which we better our situation. The first one is dealing with the suffering that we have, and the second one is increasing our bank of joy, love, compassion and peacefulness. And the two go hand in hand.

So what we're practising is allowing any feelings that we perceive as being unpleasant—downright painful and horrible—we're allowing them to just manifest. When they're mental feelings we can begin to realize that just in their manifestation, just in their expression, is their healing. And this is a real radical way of looking at therapy, because normally speaking we would be trying to do something about our psychology. Whereas what the Buddha says, all you got to do is endure it, all you got to do is sit in the midst of the flames and have the patience to allow them to burn out.

Now if it were just that, it would only be psychology, it would only be something that might help people to become a bit calmer, less stressful, all the usual stuff. But in seeing the mechanism, in actually perceiving how the flames were built in the first place, allows us to undermine that whole process of continuously making further flames, further bonfires for ourselves. And that process is this business of desire.

Now it's sometimes translated as craving, which is sometimes a bit over the top. Desire—in English, of course, has a good meaning. The desire to be compassionate, what's wrong with that? So this *taṇhā* is the desire which is coming from a wrong understanding of seeking happiness in the wrong place. It's a specific desire. It's a desire based on believing that we can create some sort of permanent happiness—permanent emotional thought happiness—by using the world around us: tea, biscuits, all that. And that desire is coming from this misunderstanding—a misunderstanding of where we can seek this happiness.

And what that does is, the misunderstanding creates the idea, creates the notion of a me. So this is where we get a bit—shall we say, it confuses people, this teaching about not-self. And often people turn it into a metaphysics like there is no self. But the Buddha never says that anywhere. He's simply using it as a tool, as a way of exploring what is real about what I'm experiencing.

So all he's saying is whatever arises and passes away necessarily can't be a self, because what we mean by a self is something substantial, something that continues, something that doesn't arise and pass away, isn't

born, doesn't die. It's the same definition as somebody might call a spirit or a soul.

So in our meditation, when we are looking at what we're experiencing and we're creating that distance and we're seeing that it's arising and passing away, whether it's an intellectual reflection or not, we're actually experiencing the process of not me, not mine. As soon as you distance from something, as soon as you make it an object that you're looking at, then it can't be that which is looking.

And that distance, that separation is a liberation, no matter how small it might be. It's a liberation at some point from the notion of the self as feeling, the self as an emotion, the self as thought. I think therefore I am, I feel therefore I am. Every time we say something like "Oh, I'm really depressed," you're lost. You are depressed. What can you do about it? Now you're in there, you've defined yourself as being depressed. But as soon as you distance from it within yourself and you say "there is depression" through this technique of noting, just being able to distance yourself from it, you're liberated from it. That doesn't mean to say it's not painful — it's still depression — but there's something missing from "I am depressed."

The I that identifies with something falls into a hell state, and that's what, if you define a hell state, what is it apart from thinking that you are the suffering you're experiencing? When you come out of that and it becomes an object and there is depression, then we can say that's purgatory. I've always believed in Catholic doctrine. Hell is hell, whether it's a place or not, is immaterial. Hell is a place where you don't see an exit. That's it. If you get completely panicked, that's it, you're in hell. Whereas purgatory is where it's all very painful, but at least things are going to come to an end.

So our position in *vipassanā* is to allow things to arise, but also to create that distance so that we know that this is not me, it's not mine, and itself is not a self. An emotion is not a self. Does an emotion know itself? I mean, does an emotion go around saying, "I'm depressed"? Does a knee know it's hurting? Does a knee know anything? My knees don't know anything at all. So there's something in us that knows this stuff and then makes this wrong relationship.

So at fundament, you could say, the basic position is that our relationship to the world is wrong. It's all to do with relationship, and what I discovered is that everything that I'm creating now, no matter what it is, whether it's beautiful or sad or whatever, is actually being created by me. And if I can get that relationship right, then I should end up somewhere different. I should be experiencing the world in a different way.

So that's what this whole process is about — it's about changing our relationship to the world. And when the Buddha awakens from that delusion, his first thought is "Who can I help? Who can I tell this to?" — the good news. So it's not as though the meditation, this process of purification, the process of insight, is actually isolating us. It's not that it's drawing us into this little cave where we can be happy by ourselves. We're a horde of little peanuts and things like that. It's something which immediately reconnects us with the world. And this is really important for us to do because that's the practice of *mettā*.

And the *vipassanā* has a danger to it. The danger is that in finding this position of the objective observer,

that objectivity which in its virtuous form is equanimity — it's the ability to receive, to bear without reaction — turns easily into a sort of disinterest. I'm looking for the other word, not callous. No, no, you're jumping ahead of me there. Indifference. Thank you very much. It's an indifference.

And I always like to tell the tale about these two little experiences I had. I was in one monastery with this monk, and there was a cat, and it was playing around with a mouse, which it had obviously killed. And I just said, "Didn't you stop that?" And he said, "No," he said, "cat karma and mouse karma. I mean, it's just the way it is, that's life, you can't stop it." So I said, "Fair enough."

And I was in another monastery where we were sitting on a bench, a couple of monks, a few monks. And suddenly this cat jumped out and jumped on this bird. And this monk, a flash of lightning, got up and gave this cat one hell of a kick. And got hold of the bird, but its lungs had been punctured. And very, very beautifully, he just held it up with its wings sort of splayed out, and chanted the verses that we do when somebody dies: "All compounded things arise and pass away."

So he didn't believe in cat karma and bird karma. And the distinction there was of course the relationship, that connection, that connection which comes through love, compassion and joy.

So you must make sure that whenever you do *vipassanā*, there's always some point at the end where you reconnect with the world. And that's in the Eightfold Path. So the right understanding begins with reflecting about our lives, and the *vipassanā* takes it into an experiential understanding of the way things are. But somehow that has to reconnect, and that's done through the second of the Noble Eightfold Path, which is this right attitude. And you build up your attitude through your intentions. So as soon as he'd understood what he'd experienced, the intention arose just naturally: "Who can I help? Who can I teach this to?"

So if we can do that at the end of a sitting and translate what we've understood into an attitude, then it's easy for it to be translated further into the next three steps of right speech, right action and right livelihood.

Now what we find is that these steps also, as it were, turn back on themselves. So what in *vipassanā* we come to understand — this relationship, this interrelatedness of things — so long as it stays as some sort of understanding, even at an experiential level, although you can argue that once it's become experiential it's got to move into an attitude. The Zen would say that: with wisdom, compassion arises naturally. You don't have to play at it. You don't have to work at it.

But even so, if it remains at the level of just an understanding of interrelatedness, it doesn't actually affect the world. But when it moves into the heart, the expression of interrelatedness is love. That's what love is. It's knowing that interrelatedness. And when that attitude is set, then it moves easily into right speech, right action and right livelihood.

Now having said that the world we experience is within this little bubble that I call my awareness, the fact

of the matter is that this little bubble does have a relationship with all the other bubbles and with the big bubble that we call nature. There's some connection there which we have. So that when we look into ourselves and want to know what our karma is — meaning what is our conditioning — that conditioning manifests in us as emotions and thoughts and feelings. But of course this resonates back out into the world, and that's why the world begins to mirror back to us our conditioning. So if a person is an argumentative type, then he shouldn't be too upset if people don't go near him. If a person is a loving type, then she shouldn't be surprised that people congregate around her. And that's pretty straightforward.

But you have to be careful here, because once we put an action into the world, it doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to have the effect that we wanted it to have, because it goes into a set of situations over which we have no power whatsoever. So even though you might do something out of the greatest charity of your heart, don't be surprised if somebody hates you for it, because in doing so unwittingly you've stood on their toes.

Because what we're doing is we're putting an action, we're putting an action of thought — even of thought actually — but especially of speech and action into a situation over which we do not know the consequences. So it wouldn't be right to think that things that happen to us are entirely to do with our karma, are entirely to do because of my past actions. But we can say that the way I am inside myself is the product of my own karma, is the product of my own manufacturing.

When the Buddha talks about "in this world there is suffering, in this world there is the end of suffering," he's actually talking about the karma which is to do with our state of happiness or lack of it.

So I turn the light on and begin to talk to ghosts. Now I think you have to press one of those, the middle one. The middle one. I sit and turn it. Hey. Enlightenment. Just like that.

So we started off by understanding that the Buddha has defined or deconstructed this human being into these five different areas, three of which we have no control over because it's a given. So the body is a given, and our contact with the body is a given. You can't do anything about that. It's the way that the mind contacts the physical world. So for instance, even when as you go around you might hug a tree — now the feeling that you get of a tree, the feeling you get of wood, is something that the mind is making up from its contact with wood. It's not necessarily true that the wood actually feels like that. Somebody else might come along and think it's soft or hard. It doesn't really matter. But even in basic percepts, we're always creating the world that we are living in. And somewhere along the line we're making this mistake.

And we create these conditionings within ourselves, this emotional thought life. And then we project this onto the world. And that's where our contact is. And because we're projecting it onto the world into an unknown, we don't know the consequences of what will happen if we do something. What comes back to us may seem to be unjust. Or it may seem to be just pure luck. Like when you buy a lottery ticket. I mean, why should you win? Why you? Why not me?

So you don't know what the effect of an action will be, but you can know about it within yourself. And that's the important thing, because it's within ourselves that we either create this happiness or unhappiness. If we move from an intention which is wholesome, it will have a wholesome effect upon our inner life. And that's the important thing. And if we move from intention which is unwholesome, it will have an unwholesome effect upon our inner life. And it's our inner life that we're actually experiencing. It's our inner life which is either causing us pain or causing us joy.

So the meditation is actually taking us inward to find these mechanisms, to find the way that we're creating this world. And hopefully we begin to undo them. And the positive side is the development of the seven factors of enlightenment: the calmness, the steadiness of attention, the curiosity to want to know how things happen.

But you'll notice that in the seven factors of enlightenment, love is not included. Love is not, because love is to do with the secondary part as to the relationship the enlightened mind has with the world. In order to get that, there must be this purity. So that purity is partly to do with the state of the heart in terms of getting rid of all these impure emotions, allowing them to burn out. But it's also to do with the way we see things, to see things as they really are. And so in a sense you might argue that love or compassion for oneself underpins the whole process, because in a sense we're having compassion for ourselves in wanting to get out of suffering.

But it's not as though in order to be enlightened we have to develop *mettā*. *Mettā* is the word for love. That's something we do afterwards in order to cement, you might say, the new understanding we have into a new relationship.

So that's the process, that's the spiritual process. We are inwardly looking to see where we're doing things wrong. Part of that process is to bear what is already wrong, to allow it to burn out. And then when we come out of that, to re-establish or to try to refine our relationship with the world on a more positive level. As simple as that. Just like that.

If Buddha said that mind creates the nature of the world outside, what does Buddha say? Well, no. Now, the thing about the Buddha is that he doesn't get into metaphysics. So if you were to ask the Buddha, "Is the world eternal?" or "Is it finite?" or "Who creates the world out there?" — he's just silent, because it's not something that you can directly know. He's only interested in what you can directly know. Everything else must necessarily be inference. And remember that the Buddha's — the arrow, the point of the arrow of his teaching — is simply this word *dukkha*, this word that we translate as unsatisfactoriness. That's all he's concerned with. He's quite clear about it. He says in the Pali, in the language, he reduces his teaching just to three words: *dukkha*, *dukkha nirodha* — suffering, unsatisfactoriness, and the end of it.

So trying to — I mean in later Buddhism it does become a bit more metaphysical and stuff. But in the Buddha's own specific teaching, as it comes through in our tradition anyway, it's always grounded in individual psychology. It doesn't really move off that.

So even when he's asked what happens to him when he dies — what was known as the quadrilemma. In the West we only have a dilemma, but in the East they have a quadrilemma. So does he exist? Does he not exist? Does he both somehow exist and not exist? And does he neither exist nor not exist? It's a killer, isn't it? And he's silent. And wouldn't you be?

No, there's no God. He won't go into that. He doesn't answer questions like, "Who created the world?" No, he doesn't. No, there is mind. What are you going to do with it?

So does he see mind as separate to what is not mind? Well, now that is the question about what is the definition of *nibbāna*. And our tradition tends to be very coy in describing it. And he tends to follow the Buddha's pattern of saying what it's not. I think in the religious tradition it's called the apophatic. Not this, not that. So he's not born, he doesn't die, he's not compounded, and he's not conditioned. But what it is, well, who knows?

But he definitely says that is not annihilation. Now the Buddhist at his time — or his teachings was often confused with annihilation because there were nihilists at that time, there were materialists, nihilists. I don't know whether they were socialists, but there was all sorts of beliefs. And when he's approached, he says, "Well, you're just teaching a form of nihilism." He says, "No," he says, "the only thing that's annihilated is greed, hatred and delusion." And it must have got very confusing for people who listen to these other teachers who would either say "Yes, there is" or "No, there isn't." And the Jains have a lovely comment on Buddhism. He says, "Well, these people say that there is no soul and there is no afterlife, and we say there is a soul and there is an afterlife, and the Buddhists can't make their mind up."

So was Buddha alive around the same time as the beginnings of, say, Judaism, as an example? Yeah, Moses. Around the same time? I think it was Moses. I'm not sure what the right word is.

Well, it was the Axial Age, wasn't it? Moses, Socrates, Lao Tzu. Out of interest, what's her name, the writer? *The History of God*. Karen Armstrong. She's written a wonderful book on the Axial Age. It's worth reading.

Well, that's this business of rebirth. And yes, there's rebirth. We understand rebirth when you understand what's happening now. What's happening now is that we're being reborn every moment into the next moment. And we're not different from the past moment, but we're not the same. And all Buddhism says is that upon death it's just the body that goes and the mind gets reborn, seeks another place to be reborn. And from the Buddha's point of view, it's this rebirth, this constant going on, this *saṃsāra*, which is the product of this misunderstanding.

Buddhism does split off into two different ideas when somebody is fully liberated. In our tradition nothing is really said. It's more like nothing can be said. The *Tathāgata* - that's how he referred to himself - translates as "the transcendent," the one who's transcended. And he himself doesn't say much. There is a passage where he hints at what happens to him after death. Unfortunately, it doesn't come to mind, so I'll look it up one day. But you don't know. I mean, it's very nice to think about those things because it

comforts, but actually we don't know.

Well, the word soul has a lot of meanings. It's best just to think of it as mind. When we say mind here we mean the whole everything that we talked about - when I was talking about the five *khandhas*, how the mind contacts the physical world, percepts, feelings, our volitional conditionings caused by acts of will and cognition. All that's reborn. And it's being reborn now.

So mind in the Buddha sense is actually different to how we would describe it in the literal sense in English, in the sense that mind in English means brain, intelligence, intellect. It's the heart, it's the heart-mind, it's the whole psychic - it's the psyche. You see, in the old definitions, in the Greek definition, there was *soma* the body, there was *psyche* which did not split mind off from heart - it was one thing - and there was *pneuma* which was the unknown, it was spirit, the unconditioned. This was translated into Christianity as *corpus* the body, *spiritus* and *mens*, mind.

And it's only, I think I'm right in saying, Descartes who split the mind off from the heart. "I think therefore I am." And we've been stuck with that split. So often in the East, when somebody says to you, "I think this is so," they don't point here, they point here. They point to the heart. It's easy once you've separated the mind from the heart to realize or to begin to believe that animals who don't have a mind must be machines. You divest them of any soul, soulness or whatever. So that's how we got to this position with nature, you see, abusing it.

I was trying to say that it's a sort of tautology really, but you can only know what you can know. You can't go beyond your own awareness. So if you want to understand the result of hunger, you have to experience it. Really. Otherwise it remains a conceptual idea, doesn't it? Everything. And what we do is, we presume that because we have a concept of something that we actually know it. We often make that mistake. If you can describe it, if you can give it a sentence, you think that somehow you know it.

We do it on very basic things. Like you might pass, say, one of these flowers and you might name it Primrose. And you think that because you've named it, because you've recognised the Primrose, that you've actually experienced that Primrose. But you haven't looked at it, you haven't smelt it, you haven't felt it. So you haven't a clue what that Primrose actually is. You've simply deposited your concept on it and have been satisfied with that as an experience of that primrose. And that's why you'll find all Buddhist insight meditations are always trying to ground people back into the body. To re-contact our physicality.

Well, as I say, it remains in Theravāda Buddhism: *Nibbāna* is only described in its negative form. But interestingly enough you do find in our own scriptures a definition of something which is full of light, awareness, no boundary. And remember that although we talk about this experience as being full of unsatisfactoriness and that it's changing, and *Nibbāna* is described in the opposite - there is no unsatisfactoriness and there's no change - but it's still not a self.

That usually throws us, because we still think there's going to be some sort of being, some sort of

something that you can describe in *Nibbāna*. So, for instance, when Sāriputta is asked, "How can you talk about the bliss of *Nibbāna*, the joy of *Nibbāna*, when there's no emotions there?" He says, "Well, it's the very absence of emotions, which is the bliss of *Nibbāna*."

Now how can we begin to understand that? When you're in a good meditative situation within yourself and you've become the observer and you're observing emotions and you're observing thoughts and you're observing feelings in the body, and when everything drops to a calmness and you can still feel these things as objects - ask yourself what's the mood of the observer? What's the mood of the observer?

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

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