Questions & Answers about Papañca 2

Joseph Goldstein · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Joseph Goldstein · 1:09:50

It's very interesting reading the many questions you sent in. It's interesting because they just touch on so many different and often disparate aspects of the Dharma. So it'll be fun to try to respond to the variety of them.

The first question: "Regarding the self, the sense of self is a hard-earned miracle. I understand seeing through the sense of a solid unchanging separate entity, but why do we say there is no self? What does Buddhism consider this essence to be?"

And then there was another related one: "I understand your point about there not being a non-changing ultimate self, or us not being our thoughts or emotions, but what about the strong sense of self that although we can't really point to, we just instinctively feel? Is this feeling of self based in delusion, or is there some kind of self that we just don't fully understand?"

And the last one in this category: "You talk about conceit and wrong view in describing a feeling of and a belief in self. But don't you agree that something is happening to something in this world? When we experience a witness in mindfulness, even though that witness seems not to have qualities or cravings, isn't that a something that things are appearing to?"

So this question of non-self. The last holdout really of the sense of self is our usually unconscious and deeply habituated identification with knowing. Because even as we can see that the body is changing—the different elements and bodily sensations and thoughts and feelings and emotions—we can see relatively easily that that's all in a process of change. But still we have the belief or the felt sense of, "Well, I'm the one knowing it all," right? So in that identification with knowing, we're creating the sense of a witness or an observer.

The challenge then is how do we cut through this very subtle and hard to see identification with consciousness itself—the identification with knowing so that it creates a knower?

I want to offer a few different approaches to investigating this issue, ways of possibly beginning to cut through or to see through this identification with the knowing or with consciousness.

The first way has to do with how this process is understood in the Theravada teachings. And I'm going to talk about a few different ways of cutting through with other traditions as well. But in the Theravada way of understanding this whole process—this mind-body process—what we're calling self is the pairwise progression, moment after moment, of knowing an object. Knowing an object, knowing an object, knowing an object. And the objects can be any one of the six basic elements I spoke of the other day:

knowing a sight, knowing a sound, a smell, a taste, a sensation, knowing some mind experience.

Consciousness is actually arising anew with each moment, with each new object of awareness. It's not the same consciousness that is carried through. There's one discourse in the texts where the Buddha was very explicit about just this point—that consciousness itself is arising and passing in each moment.

In the course of vipassanā practice, as the mind settles and we become a bit more concentrated and go through various perspectives, and we could say stages of understanding, there's a stage—and this is not a super advanced stage; it comes just sort of in the beginning of our practice once the mind has settled down a bit—we begin to have the experience of this pairwise progression: knowing an object, knowing an object, knowing an object.

At a certain point, once we see that, that is really the first real glimpse of selflessness. And it's interesting that this stage of understanding is called "purification of view." So it's just the beginning. It's the beginning of our understanding of it, but we're beginning to see or have an understanding of the basic framework of how our life is unfolding. It's just these moments: knowing an object, knowing an object, knowing an object, knowing an object, arising and passing.

As the practice continues, at a certain point, we also begin to emphasize—and this just happens naturally, it's not a decision—we begin to see more the disappearing aspect of objects. So rather than just seeing everything arising, arising, arising, we're seeing the falling away, falling away, falling away of this pairwise progression. And so then we're really seeing the dissolution of consciousness itself moment after moment.

This is a powerful cutting through the identification with consciousness as being self, as being "I." And so it's no longer a knower, but simply knowing. No witness, but rather witnessing.

So this is one way that we cut through this identification with knowing. Another way, and this is something I mentioned in the last couple of days, is using the passive voice construction—things being known. And this can be done in a very simple way. You know, just going for a walk and feeling the sensations of movement or the sensations of touch. They're just being known, being known, being known. Through that linguistic frame of reference, changing our usual way instead of "I'm knowing" to just "things being known," we're taking the self out of the process. And we have the direct experience of it.

If, at a certain point, you get comfortable in that mode, even for relatively short periods of time, and just settle into that frame of things being known and experiencing them in that way, then it's a very interesting question: known by what? So that's a kind of turning the mind back onto the knowing itself, trying to really get an understanding of the nature of this knowing mind. The passive voice construction is another way of cutting through the identification with consciousness.

The third way I'll mention really comes from the Zen tradition. There's this Zen story of Bodhidharma, who was an Indian adept who brought the teachings to China. Out of his teachings, the whole tradition of

Chan and later Zen developed. So a seeker came to Bodhidharma and said, "I'm suffering so much. My mind is in such distress. Can you please help me?" And Bodhidharma says, "Show me your mind and I'll help you." And the seeker says, "I've looked for it everywhere and I can't find it." And then Bodhidharma says, "There, it's already pacified."

This is more than just a clever Zen story. This is pointing to a direct way for us to investigate. It goes back to the question: things being known, known by what? And then when we look back, we see there's nothing to find—and yet the knowing is happening. So that's the great mystery of consciousness, and another way of understanding the selflessness of knowing is this quality of its unfindability.

One way to experiment and investigate this for yourself—and sometimes I just play with this in my own practice—I'll be sitting and maybe sounds are arising, and the sounds are being known. And then I'll ask the question in my mind: can I find what's knowing the sound? Can I find it? And then I'll look, I'll look to see, and realize I can't find it—and yet the knowing is happening. So that's the great mystery of this whole process, how the knowing is going along without a knower, without being identified with it.

This is important, and it addresses that question of how, even when we notice that so much of our experience is changing and passing away, we still carry this felt sense of someone here. I think it really has to do with this process of being identified with the knowing. That identification is creating the sense of someone there, of a knower. So I just encourage you to explore and investigate this in some of the ways I mentioned.

Okay. Regarding desire: "Are you saying that desire is the same thing as craving or clinging? Would you say that without some kind of wholesome desire, there may not be a Buddha? Is there a desire, a life force that is the fuel for our spiritual seeking so there's no more need to seek?"

This question comes up quite a lot because the word desire in English has so many different meanings. If we're not clearly defining which meaning we're employing, it can get confusing. One meaning of desire could be an aspiration—an aspiration for enlightenment, for awakening, to be more compassionate. Or it could be a desire just to fulfill basic needs, a desire to eat when we're hungry. Desire in these examples is not involved with greed. It's not involved with clinging. But another meaning of desire is associated with greed, with clinging and grasping.

Just as an example of how you might experientially distinguish the two—and this is something that I'm sure will be very familiar to all of us—when you're hungry, there's a desire for food. That's just a natural phenomenon. It's appropriate to eat. But then when we're full, when we've really eaten the appropriate amount, we're nourished, our bodies and lives are sustained...

And then we want more. "Oh, that was delicious. Let me have more." And we overeat, we overindulge. So that's the desire of greed. That's the desire of clinging, the desire of grasping. Two very different mind states, even though we're using the same word.

So I would just check: when we say "I have a desire for something," check to see whether it falls on the wholesome side of things—an aspiration for something beneficial, either as a natural process like sustaining our body with food, or along the spiritual path, a desire to become more loving, more compassionate—or whether the desire carries that greedy quality of mind. It's not that hard to see the difference.

Question: When you mentioned that there can be a state of tranquility, is there a way to realize that it is tranquility and not sloth and torpor?

I really appreciated that question because it gives me a chance to talk more about sloth and torpor. There is a way of distinguishing calm from sloth and torpor. With sloth and torpor, it's usually associated with sleepiness and a quality of dullness in the mind—where things are not clear, dull, and maybe we're nodding off a bit. Whereas calm or tranquility is very clear. When the mind is calm, there's clarity. Calm is actually one of the factors of enlightenment, and I think in our practice it's an underappreciated quality, something to develop. Calm provides a quality of ease in mind and body that allows us to see clearly.

So you want to really examine: Is there dullness in the mind? Sleepiness? Or is it tranquil and peaceful with clarity?

But here it can get interesting, because there's actually a connection between calm and sloth and torpor, which I found really useful in working with sleepiness. I'm sure you've heard the many remedies—opening the eyes, standing up, putting water on one's face. But one thing I began to notice is that within a state of dullness or sleepiness, there is a thread of calm. When the mind is sleepy, it's not restless. Calm is the opposite of restlessness.

So even within sleepiness, where that's the predominant state, I found that if there's enough energy to be interested and to investigate, it's possible to find the quality of calm within it and then focus on that. It's like pulling the thread of calm out of the sloth and torpor and really energizing that particular thread. That would be an interesting way to practice when sloth and torpor is present.

And also, when the mind is generally in a tranquil state, acknowledge that and understand this is a wholesome state of mind. It's a factor of enlightenment. You want to cultivate it—not get attached to it—but it is something to develop.

Now there's one other aspect of sloth and torpor I want to mention because it's not usually talked about this way, but I found it highlighted an arena very applicable in my practice. Another meaning of sloth and torpor, aside from sleepiness and dullness, is that quality of mind which retreats from difficulties. In the face of difficulty, we just retreat. We don't want to deal with it. We don't have the energy to deal with it.

I found this very illuminating. When I recognized that this was also an aspect of sloth and torpor, then when I found myself pulling back from engaging with difficulties—whether difficult physical sensations or difficult mind states—I'm sure you're familiar with the feeling: "I just don't want to deal with this," and

pulling back, not engaging. It was helpful to recognize, "Oh, that's sloth and torpor. That's the working of those mind states." Just recognizing that inspired me to make more effort, to bring more energy.

At times I found one mantra particularly helpful, though it has to be used judiciously because it's not always appropriate. My mantra in these situations was: *choose the difficult*. Because my general inclination, both in meditation and in life, is to choose the easy. I noticed that pattern in myself. But there are times when choosing the difficult is actually what raises energy and enables us to engage in a really productive and fruitful way with whatever experience is in front of us.

So you might see for yourself at those times—either because of an inclination toward the easeful, or a certain sense of laziness, or sloth and torpor retreating from difficulty—you might try out this mantra: "Choose the difficult." Go for it. See what happens.

Of course, if one is over-striving, getting uptight or whatever, then "choose the difficult" is not the right approach. That's when we need to relax and settle back. But it can be used in a judicious way.

In a previous session, moods were mentioned—specifically, like waking up on the wrong side of the bed. There's also non-clinical depression in others. It's like the brain is telling the mind, "You think you're in charge? Guess again." Is there any way to work with these moods?

This is a really interesting question. There is a psychologist, Paul Ekman, who made an interesting distinction between moods and emotions. He said that emotions are like singular events, usually quite strong, and we usually know the cause of them. We feel angry or we feel excited or something like that. The emotion is clear, it's strong, and we can often trace back the cause for that emotion to arise.

Moods are much more subtle, much more diffuse. It's like in the question—waking up on the wrong side of the bed. We don't quite know why we're in a down mood. We don't necessarily know the causes, but it's just a kind of background pervasive feeling. This can be challenging to work with, so I want to suggest a few ways.

First, I had a very humorous experience. At one time I was on retreat—this is in terms of whether we can recognize the causes of our mood or not. Sometimes we miss, a big miss. So I was on retreat, just doing walking meditation and feeling world weariness. The world felt so heavy, and I felt weighed down and burdened by it. This was not how I usually feel, so it was quite striking to me. I began interpreting it as, "Oh, this must really be an insight into dukkha, into the First Noble Truth, just the pervasiveness of the unsatisfying nature of things. Maybe this is a deepening insight." I was walking and feeling this way and reflecting on it in this way, and then after a few minutes I burped, and the whole mood dissipated. So all my big understanding of world weariness and the truth of dukkha was a bit misplaced.

This is just by way of saying we often don't know exactly the causes of why we feel we're in some mood. But regardless of whether we do or don't know, the question is: how can we become mindful of them? So we're not lost, we're not caught up, we're not identified, we're not drowning in our moods.

First, it's to understand that they're not clearly defined objects. They're not like a sensation or a sound or even a thought or strong emotion, which we can recognize pretty easily. Not that we always do, but they're usually pretty well defined. A mood is much more amorphous. There's a gossamer quality to it. So we have to employ our mindfulness in a very particular way.

It's not like strongly directing the mind towards the object, because we'll probably just direct it right through it. There's nothing substantial enough to work with in that way. What I've found helpful when there's some kind of mood—or even simply as a way of checking to see if there's some mood going on, perhaps very subtle, not even aware of—is more a settling back. Becoming very receptive, very open, letting whatever's there in. We're not narrowing our attention onto some specific object.

We're just settling back, opening up, and getting a feel for it—simply being receptive in that way. And then very often we can come to an awareness of what it is that we're feeling. In that awareness, being mindful of it—mindfulness meaning, again as a reminder, that we're aware of it without identifying with it, without claiming it as being our own. Rather, we recognize that the mood arose out of conditions, whatever the conditions may have been, even if we're not aware of them. It's another passing state.

So we can be receptive. It's very soft—a very soft quality that's needed to become aware of moods. But it's very helpful to do, because if we're not mindful of them, it's like they become the filter through which we're looking at all of our experience. It's like putting on a pair of colored glasses and not even realizing we're seeing the world through those particular lenses. When moods are there and we're not aware of them, not mindful, they are really conditioning our experience and our perception of the world. So this is an important, somewhat subtle aspect of our practice and mindfulness. And as I just mentioned, even if we're not aware that a particular mood is present, I find it helpful just periodically to check in. You know, just going along and asking, "Oh, is there some mood present? Am I feeling something?" And that sometimes can reveal something that's going on that we weren't even aware of.

The last thing I want to say about working with moods—and what I'm about to say is applicable to everything, but specifically with moods because often we forget to do it—especially with a strong one, where we're feeling down in some way, or frustrated, or there's some mind state that's really influencing our experience. In doing and practicing, trying to be mindful in the ways I just suggested, it's also important to remember that it's going to pass. Because we can get so enmeshed in our stories of things, so caught up and identified with how we're feeling. Even though we know better, there's often the feeling that this is going to last forever. Intellectually, we know that's not true, but we're often burdened in the experience of it, and it somehow feels that way.

So it's very helpful, as it just gives us perspective, which allows us—especially if it's some kind of unpleasant mood or experience—to be with it with greater ease, knowing this is going to pass. And it's going to probably pass much more quickly than we think. This is an aside, and I don't remember whether I mentioned it in this course because it's one of my favorite reflections that I talk about often. But

whenever I'm caught up in some difficulty or conflict, some kind of suffering, I like to change my time reference. Instead of being so caught up in what's happening right now, when I'm feeling stuck and caught, I just remind myself to take more of a historical perspective.

Just one example of this: quite a few years ago, I read this biography of Genghis Khan. He was thirteenth century, something like that. He ruled a vast empire—most of Asia, and I think even perhaps some of Europe. He was the big man in those days. So I'd like to ask you a question: How many of you today thought of Genghis Khan? Probably unless you were reading the book, you probably have not been thinking of him, right? So here's this figure who was a world figure, a world-dominating figure. But in the long sweep of history, Genghis Khan had all this influence and then passed away. If that's true of somebody like that—and you know it's true of everything—when I put my own particular situation, whatever it might be, into that context, I realize it's not even going to take four centuries to have this recede. It may take a few days or weeks, but it happens. It weakens or loosens the intensity of the dukkha and involvement in it. So I just offer that because it's been very helpful for me—just bringing in this time perspective as a reminder of the truth of change.

A question came in: "How do you work with perfectionist tendencies in this practice? My lifelong habit of wanting to do this perfectly or right shows up in my body and mind during practice as tightness, gripping, laser focus instead of soft focus, et cetera. It's been hard to stay motivated to practice because the approach itself is so unpleasant."

This is really important. How we practice will very much influence, as the question indicated, the quality of our experience. This perfectionist quality of mind obviously involves a lot of grasping and wanting a certain outcome, wanting it to be a certain way. If this is a strong tendency, strongly conditioned for whatever reason, there are ways of countering it. So I'll just mention a few. It's a gradual deconditioning of that kind of grasping approach to practice, that wanting it to be perfect. There's a way of gradually deconditioning that habit and coming to practice in a more open, relaxed way.

One approach might be, in the beginning of each sitting—and maybe for some time, perhaps for the first five minutes, or even the first ten minutes—just practice hearing meditation. Simply sitting and listening to whatever sounds may be coming.

You're not looking for any particular sound—you're just sitting, and whatever sounds happen to appear, you receive them. It may be loud, very particular sounds. It may be some kind of background sound. It may just be the ambient sounds in the room. Maybe it's the sound of silence, where there's no particular sound, but you're tuning in, hearing the silence.

For most people, hearing is very effortless. Sounds arise and we don't have to make an effort to hear. So if we just start with hearing, it's really a way of settling into letting the mind become very open, very spacious. It's like sitting in space, and the sounds are appearing in the space. Hopefully you get a sense of the easefulness of awareness—that we don't have to be making this intense effort to be aware. Basically,

we just have to remember. Can I just sit here and know what's happening?

This ties in to the whole discussion on the passive voice framework. We're just sitting, sounds being known. That's all. Sounds being known.

Let me offer a little hands-on experiment illustrating the easefulness of using this passive voice. If you're willing, simply move your arm and feel it moving. It's just moving and you're feeling it moving. That's all. You're feeling the movement, and as you're feeling the movement, it's just being known. Does that take any effort at all? No, you're just feeling it and it's being known. It's quite effortless.

You might practice doing things like this, or in walking meditation. Instead of the sense of "I've got to be perfect in it," it's just taking a step and feeling it.

One change of language, which reflects what I've just been talking about, and I may have mentioned this on the first day: so much of meditative language that we use is watching language—watch, notice, observe. When we use that language to describe our practice, it can sometimes be problematic because it implies a kind of tracking of experience. Moving the arm and I have to track it, right? Using that observing language might be contributing to this whole sense of "I have to do it perfectly."

If you change the language from observing or noticing to feeling language—you're just moving the arm and feeling it—that makes all the difference. The feeling is from the inside. It's not like we're up here trying to keep track. It's just feeling it. It's like doing yoga or tai chi—so simple. You're just feeling the movement. In that, there's nothing to perfect. It's already here.

One other example of this: Sayadaw U Tejaniya speaks about this a lot when he's emphasizing the effortlessness of awareness. I think it's an important reminder. He says, if you sit for a moment with your eyes closed and then you open your eyes—does it take any effort to see? I don't think so. The seeing just happens. We open our eyes and we're seeing, we're aware. This highlights the fact that the capacity for awareness is already here. It's more a question of just remembering, so we don't get caught up in extraneous patterns of our meditation practice.

I remember one time I was on retreat and I found myself caught in the striving mode. I just had some idea of real goal orientation. Having a goal is fine as an aspiration, but as an expectation, it can become very problematic. When I saw that I was striving in some unwholesome way, I used a phrase that reminded me of what I just was talking about in terms of the effortlessness of seeing or hearing. The phrase I used was actually two different phrases. One was: already aware.

Already aware or already here. I don't have to get someplace else. It's already here. And just reminding myself of that, it totally cut through that striving mode. I was just back, aware of what was arising in the moment.

So these are just different ways of beginning to decondition this perfectionist conditioning, this striving

and wanting, and reminding oneself in this variety of ways that we can be receptive and more relaxed and trust that awareness will be there.

Here is an interesting question: Can you talk about how to remove the personal nature or conceit when judgments about others arise? For example, a friend sent me a photo of her and her four kids on an airplane, not wearing masks. I instantly felt judgmental, angry, and fearful. How can I remove the "I" in that type of experience?

This is an important question because the judging mind is so common. I see it in myself a lot, and I've been working with so many meditators over all these years. It just comes up again and again—how the mind can so easily drop into this reactive judgment.

First, I'd like to speak about working with judgment in general, and then talk more specifically about that particular example.

I've developed a few techniques in working with the judging mind. One is this: when this pattern was running rampant at a particular time, I just started counting the judgments. Every time I became aware of a judgment in my mind—judgment one, judgment two, judgment fifty-six, judgment five hundred and ninety-eight, judgment three thousand. And it was kind of interesting to see how high a number I got to.

But what happened, just by doing that simple exercise of counting the judgments, was that at a certain point I just started to smile. Because it was obviously so ridiculous. It was just one of these ridiculous patterns of mind that we get caught in. And by the time I reached some rather high number, the ridiculousness of it became so apparent that I just started smiling.

This is the key to freeing ourselves from being so caught by the judging mind: not taking them seriously. Really seeing them as just empty thoughts in the mind coming and going. So it's a question of not believing them, but also not having aversion to them. Because if we have aversion to the judgment, that also strengthens them. That's feeding them. It's actually giving it an importance which, in its essential nature, it doesn't have. It's just another empty thought coming and going.

Having a sense of humor about one's mind and the crazy things it often does—a sense of humor is so helpful in terms of just lightening up about it all. It frees us from a lot of our reactivity.

Another technique that was very instructive, and relates somewhat to the specific question, comes from a retreat I was on at IMS many years ago. I remember walking into the dining room and having a judgment, a comment, about almost everybody in the room. Judgment about what they were wearing or how fast or slow they were moving, how much food they were taking. Again, totally ridiculous, but that's what the mind was doing.

At a certain point I just became interested. Why is this happening? And I realized that all of these judgments had their root, their source, in the fact that I was seeing unmindfully. I would come into the

dining room and I was seeing all these different people, but not mindful that I was seeing. And therefore it just triggered this whole train.

So then I started noting "seeing." As soon as I would walk into the dining room—seeing, seeing, seeing, seeing, seeing—all the way to getting my food, sitting down at the table. It was amazing. By being mindful of that sense contact right at the sense base, by being mindful rather than unmindful, ninety-nine percent of the judgments were gone.

That was really interesting—seeing, okay, what's the underlying cause of the pattern?

Now, with this particular question, when there's a judgment that involves strong reactivity, so this person saw this picture and it triggered anger and fear and different emotions and they got caught up in them—when there's that strong reactivity in the mind, even after one has noticed, "Oh yes, this was a judgment," but then we're really reactive, it's really helpful to investigate the nature of that reaction and our relationship to it.

Because there is a difference between discernment and reactivity. We might have seen that picture of the woman and the children on the plane without masks, and that could have been discernment.

Oh, that's not skillful, you know, and that would be a wise discernment, but that would be free of that anger or the fear or whatever the emotion was.

So when the reactivity is there, then that becomes our responsibility—that no longer has anything to do with what that woman and her children were doing on the plane. If we're caught in a strong reactivity, which is different than simple discernment and wisdom, that reactivity is up to us to explore and understand.

So one of the things, and I think this was an example perhaps, but it certainly is generally applicable: Why do we get so caught up in angry judgments or angry reactions? The Buddha had a very incisive little phrase. He said, "Anger with its poison source and honeyed tip." There's something very seductive about this feeling of anger in so many situations. And it very often is tied to the sense of being right. There's often this quality of self-righteousness in the anger. "Well, I'm right." And it's the dubious pleasure of being right, that honeyed tip. And we miss the poison source of it—the anger itself, which is a state of suffering.

We could justify it to ourselves in all kinds of ways. "Oh, I should be angry," that feeling of self-righteousness. But meanwhile, we are the ones who are suffering. So again, wise discernment does not require self-righteousness. It doesn't require attachment to being right. And yet, those are the feelings that very often solidify this reactivity, and we're caught by that.

I want to read something related to this in terms of reactivity. This is a teaching from the Buddha, and it had to do more with when we're reactive to how people are speaking to us, but it could relate to any way

that people are impacting us and we have this strong reactivity. I'll just preface it by saying this is a very high bar that the Buddha is laying out, but I find it very inspiring because it points to a direction and can become an aspiration for us to practice.

This is what he said: "There are five courses of speech that others may use when they address you. Their speech may be timely or untimely, true or untrue, gentle or harsh, connected with good or with harm, spoken with a mind of loving kindness or with a mind of inner hate." So these are all the ways people might address us. "Here you should train yourself thus: Our minds will remain unaffected. We shall utter no unskillful words. We shall abide compassionate for their welfare with a mind and heart of loving kindness."

Just imagine the situation. Somebody's lying to you and speaking angrily and harshly and all of that, and the Buddha is saying our minds, we should train ourselves, our minds will remain unaffected. We shall utter no unskillful words, abide compassionate for their welfare with a heart of loving kindness.

So again, it's pointing to this very important basic Dharma principle: how we feel and how we relate to others, even more importantly, that's totally up to us. If we can at times, even in the moment of having unpleasant things come at us—whether it's through words or through seeing something that we think is wrong—if right in the moment we can remember this and again be in this space of discernment rather than reactivity, that would be great. Then it would be easier to maybe find that place of compassion.

But even after this—that would be an advanced practice—but even if we find ourselves having become reactive, if we remember this as a teaching and as a training rather than just stew in our own reactivity, attached to being right, having that be the cause of our stuckness—if we can remember this teaching and say, "No, I can free my heart from this. I can free my mind from this," and we go to the place, even retroactively, of clear discernment, then our hearts are at ease. And in fact, our response, if there's some response possible, will be much more skillful.

There were quite a few more questions, but just as the last one, because the schedule is a little different today—I remember the question. There was somebody who was interested in exploring the classical texts but didn't know even where to begin, because there are so many. I mean, there are many, many volumes of the Buddhist teachings. We'll put this on the resource page also.

But one place to start, I think, would be a book by Bhikkhu Bodhi called *In the Buddha's Words*. It's an anthology of teachings from the Pali Canon. Bhikkhu Bodhi is a wonderful translator of the texts, and really, reading anything he's written—he writes very clearly. His translations are very clear, and his own exposition of the texts is very clear. So I would really recommend that you look for things he's written. And this book in particular, in terms of reading the texts themselves, is a very good anthology.

Just a word about the value of study. Our practice, our own meditation practice and experience, is always limited. We have limited experience. And by studying the Buddha's teachings, it really is a chance to

enlarge our understanding. If we read, as I've been talking about over these days, if we take the teachings and read them as instructions to us, sometimes we'll just come across one phrase or one particular teaching that really speaks to us. And we can then put it into practice, take it as an instruction.

For me, this has been such a valuable way of deepening my understanding of the depth and breadth of the Buddhist teachings. And it has really been transformative. For those of you who might be interested in exploring this, I would highly recommend it.

Well, it's really been great. Even though we're doing this virtually, it's been a pleasure to be with you all.

Let's just sit for a minute or two and let it all settle.

May all beings be at peace.

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