

2. Nāma-Rūpa: Body-Mind

Bhante Bodhidhamma · DhammaBytes · 7:20

So carrying on with these words, look at these two words called *nāma* and *rūpa*. *Nāma* refers to mind and it comes right through to our language through Latin, *nomen*, *nat*—the word name actually comes from the word *nāma*. So it's basically referring to the mind. And *rūpa*, actually its definition is really more to do with form, appearance, but basically it's the body. And it's understood that these are two different energies, two different forms of energy we can say. So that in later works it was said that in one material moment the mind arose 17 times. So there were 17 consciousnesses within the arising of one particular material moment. But we needn't worry too much about that.

It begins in the dependent origination as you know. As we go through it, the first of coming into this life is this *nāma-rūpa*—there's a split there, it's the body and mind. And in terms of the process of insight, in terms of the process of awakening, remember that the Buddha's main technique is this process of deconstructing what we are. It's looking at our experience and trying to find out its components to see whether any of these components or parts actually constitute anything real, anything substantial, something that doesn't arise and pass away basically.

So the first thing in our meditation is to make this distinction between this is the body, this is the mind, and to see them as two very separate perceptions. So when you're watching the breath there's the rising and falling of the body—the abdomen is rising and falling, that's physicality—and the actual naming of it rising and falling or the seeing of it is to do with the mind.

When you actually look at the breath a bit more closely, you may find that the mind is also constructing the whole process. So there's an image of the stomach in the mind for a start. If you're watching it there, if you're watching it at the nostrils, it's the nostrils. And there's also this whole idea that something's rising and falling. So where does that come from? It comes from the mind actually contacting the body and through its own processes, feeling that rising and falling process. But actually what's coming from the body is just sensations, just sensations.

So it's when you look at pain, so you might feel discomfort in your sitting. What part of it is the mind and what part is the body? So as you contact it and you're saying, pain, pain, the very word pain is coming from the mind. So as you go into the pain, you begin to discover its various constituents. It might just be heat, it might be pressure, it might be some other things. So you recognise that the pain is a mental construct. What the body is giving is just sensations. And when you react to pain, you're not reacting to the body, you're reacting to your concept about what the sensations are. So it's that breaking up of our experience to trying to find out whether there's anything substantial. Where's the self? When I talk about

me, where is it?

When we're eating, you see. So to make a distinction between the actual taste coming from the tongue and the delight that arises in the heart. Most times when we eat, it's just all one experience. So as you put the food on your tongue, there's sensations arising. But then somehow when these sensations come into the mind, the mind immediately distinguishes it as pizza or something. But actually the taste has nothing to do with pizza. The taste is either salty or tomatoey or whatever it is. But it's not pizza. The mind says it's pizza. I mean, it's seen it, of course, but I'm just saying if you hadn't seen it and just put it in your tongue, then the mind would recognise these things as pizza. It's coming from its own memory bank.

But more than that, it's reacting. So I don't know about you, but if I eat pizza, I feel delightful. It's just a natural occurrence. Because in the past, I've always had this pizza and it's always made me delighted. It's very simple. But the delight is nothing to do with the pizza. It's to do with my relationship with the pizza. If I didn't like pizza, I wouldn't feel happy.

So it's making that distinction, it's actually pulling things apart that we begin to realise that this whole experience that we're having is not a me, it's a construct, it's a compendium of things that we put together into a concept, an actual experiential concept, and then we make the mistake of taking it as me.

Now there are two distinctions to be made. Once we've separated out this body and mind, once we've become clear that there is the body which is offering sensations, full stop, that's all it can do, and this is the mind which is interpreting it and reacting to it and has a relationship with it, it's then recognising that there's some relationship going on, that the one arises dependent on the other.

So when you put food on the tongue, the mind reacts. If you don't put food on the tongue, the mind doesn't react. It just doesn't happen. When the mind moves, the body moves. So as soon as you get an angry thought, there's something happens in the body. It reacts with heat. As soon as you have a fearful thought, it reacts with certain sensations, a wobbliness or a weak at the knees or nausea or whatever.

So it's also catching that relationship between the body and mind that they are two separate things and yet you cannot actually separate them because they're both firing off the other at the same time. And this insight is the beginning of the process of investigating this human phenomena to see whether there's anything actually substantial within it. So in terms of the process of insight through the vipassanā these are your first two insights and it's this what raises the curiosity to go into it more deeply.

So *nāma-rūpa*, this body and mind, are really the beginning of your practice. That's what you're asked to do. The beginning of your practice is to make this very clear distinction in ourselves.

I can only hope that this little homily has brought amazing insight. May you be liberated from all suffering sooner rather than later.

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