

Concerning Buddhist Psychology (Geneva May 2006)

Bhante Bodhidhamma · International Talks · 46:00

Namo tassa bhagavato arahatto samma-sambuddhassa. Namō tassa bhagavato arahatto samma-sambuddhassa. Namō tassa bhagavato arahatto sammāsambuddhassa. Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

Yesterday, I focused on the principles of meditation. Today, I will expand on the hindrances and on dependent origination. If you have questions during the session, you can put them here and leave them behind the door. From 4 o'clock, we will have a question and answer session.

In our human condition and in our existence, for the moment, it is not knowing. Sometimes this is translated by the term ignorance, which has a pejorative connotation. This term implies a fault on our part for not knowing. This state of not knowing, *avidyā*, is a state of innocence. When we are born, how can we know? Not much, right? And then we begin to learn, to receive information. And as children, we are not in a position to criticise or question this knowledge. So as children, we absorb all the illusions and delusions of society.

It is only when we are capable of thinking for ourselves around the age of sixteen that we investigate the knowledge we have received. However, the tools we have at our disposal have been given by the culture in which we live. It is very difficult to be able to analyse. We are confined in a box. We cannot be outside the box to notice that we are inside the same box. This is the position of the Bodhisattva before his illumination, before his awakening.

When he became aware of human suffering - sickness, death - he tried to find a solution to the human condition. And for him, the question was: why do we suffer? Now this, of course, was a very powerful question. And this is a very powerful investigation by the existentialists. You should know the works of Albert Camus. He wrote "The Myth of Sisyphus." Sisyphus was condemned to hell because he committed a fault which the Venerable does not remember. So he was condemned to carry a rock up a mountain so that afterwards the rock would roll back down again. And he must start over again and again like this, without even having time to have a cup of tea.

For Albert Camus, this is a metaphor representing the human condition. Life becomes absurd if you are confronted with death. So when a rich woman dies, people ask the question to the lawyer or notary: how much does she leave as inheritance? The lawyer replies: everything, she leaves everything. That is the problem. We work hard all our lives and then we die. The problem is that we have worked hard all our

lives and when we die...

The Buddha was also confronted with this problem and this question: why do we suffer? He himself was confined in the box of society. And he went to seek the masters who taught him. But the next day, he woke up even more depressed. So these magnificent heavenly states where there was no suffering also seemed to suffer from the problem of impermanence. The heavenly states that he attained suffer from the same handicap of suffering, of impermanence.

In despair, he abandons his companions. You remember the story that the Buddha was sitting at the crossroads, unhappy, and that a lady called Sujātā came to present him with a bowl of rice porridge. Only the British know this. Only the British know the enlightening effect of rice porridge.

So when he ate his rice porridge, he was invigorated. Then at that moment, he remembered that as a child he had attended the ploughing ceremony that was performed by his father. The way he observed his father ploughing the field gave him the confidence to find the solution to the cessation of human suffering.

Before that, it is assumed that you could create a heavenly state by creating that state within yourself. It is as if when you are unhappy you could buy an ice cream and at that moment you will be happy. From loving-kindness meditation you could feel very happy. Despair came.

Now when he was sitting under the Bodhi tree, he began to practice a method that had never been taught before. And what he did was, instead of trying to do something with the head and heart, he observed them. By observing them, he began to realise how he had created his own suffering. By observing his heart and mind, he saw how he had created his own suffering. By seeing how he had created his own suffering, he could now untie them.

Something magical happened: he found that if he observed all these states, these mental states cured themselves. When he just observed anguish, the anguish died. He did not need to do anything. He did not need to intervene. He did not even need to go seek therapy. It is very cheap.

He discovered two things. The first thing is that by observing the mind, the mind calms. The heart heals. By discovering a new relationship with his mind, he discovered a state of permanent calm. This mind, these emotions and this mind are not me, not mine. Not me, not mine.

Someone complains to the Buddha that the training is very hard. And he said, yes, that is true. But at the end of this training, you will obtain *Nibbāna*. And the questioner said, "*Nibbāna*? So what?" And then *Nibbāna*, and then what, and then what? And when you reach *Nibbāna*, you will be content and happy. And then he begins to describe his own experience. He is content and with that, happy. This state of contentment is a state where there is no desire.

It is a particular type of desire that is based on the self. The sense of self is based on a feeling of insecurity, and insecurity comes from the fact that there is death. And insecurity comes from the spectre of death. So

we find in our life that there is always a basis of anxiety.

Because of this anxiety, we must make sure that we feel secure. What do you demand of your government? Security - security against enemies from outside, security against economic crises, correct? After that, one can become rich. It is not worth being rich if you are going to be attacked. We have the feeling that the more we possess goods, the more secure we feel. We feel much more secure if we have a million francs in our bank account than ten francs.

Our life driven by fear, by anxiety, consists of possessing goods. Not only material goods like television or money, but also friends. Many friends make me feel secure. Much power secures me. The rich, the famous and the powerful - this is what we like to be. And then we will feel secure.

The Buddha spoke of craving, but it is more in the sense of acquisition, of possession. Craving manifests only when we do it at the expense of someone else, of others. The more insecure we feel, the less generous we are. That is one aspect.

The other aspect is that for me to feel secure, I would have to get rid of my enemies. Lack of money, lack of friends who don't like me, who suddenly don't like me, who begin to hate me. Everything that sabotages or undermines my security, my possessions, are considered my enemies. If I can get rid of them or annihilate them, then I will do so. And if I cannot manage it, then I run away. And at that moment, I am in contact with my fundamental fear.

And when we take the aspect of the body, we care a lot about our health, an obsession for our health, legitimately spending millions and millions of francs on vitamins, creams, alternative medicine - me too - to keep myself alive. When for example I am threatened in my health or threatened in my physical integrity, someone who attacks me, my attitude will be aversion, rejection, fear. This attitude comes from the delusion of self that perpetuates throughout our entire existence.

And all this is based on not knowing. Through the *vipassanā* method, that is to say penetrating and analytical vision, we will know what is, how things are. If we apprehend, truly understand impermanence - impermanence in the external world, impermanence in ourselves - at that moment we can see that there is nothing that deserves that we cling to it. What do we cling to? There is nothing in the world that deserves that we cling to it. This is what the Buddha says. There is nothing in the world that deserves that we cling to it. We should repeat this to ourselves all the time.

If someone steals your car or your television or something else, there will be a feeling of anger that someone dispossesses us. In addition, there is the sadness of losing the object. After that, there will be anxiety, worry if we can recover the thing or be compensated by insurance. We do not know how attached we are to such and such a thing until the moment we lose it. You can tell your friends that you could live without your car. But when someone steals it, at that moment you cannot live without your car.

To understand this delusion of possession, of property, one must understand that property is a legal

concept. But when the thief takes possession of my car, it becomes his car. If I can understand that possessing something is an illusion. The only thing I can do with an object is use it. If someone steals something from me, I should have offered the object to him with full compassion. Perhaps he needs the object more than I do.

There is the story of a Zen master who sits alone on a rock. And a thief comes and strips him of all his clothes. And when the thief left, he looked at the moon and said, "Ah, if only I could have given him the moon." When the thief left, the master contemplates the moon and says, "If only I could also offer him the moon."

If we understand how things are, at that moment we can diminish our self. This sense of my possession, we must integrate it in ourselves. This car, these emotions are neither me nor belong to me. We must stop possessing these mental states.

How does possession manifest with these mental states? When superb mental states, like pleasant love, arise in our mind, we grasp them. And when something bad appears, something like depression, anxiety, then we want to annihilate it. So our problem is how to be with what is beautiful in a non-attached, non-grasping way.

The problem is how to be with beautiful things without grasping them, without desiring them. It is not because we want to destroy what is beautiful. We do not want what is beautiful to cause us suffering. What causes us suffering is the way we relate to these things.

On our side, we want to eliminate suffering from pain. Pain is natural, a natural state for the body. As long as we have, we possess a body, we have... So what we try to discover is a relationship with pain that does not cause suffering. And when it comes to emotional pain, it is the same thing. It is the same with emotional pain. How can we treat mental states like depression, anxiety, in a way that we do not suffer from them? This is what the method of penetrating vision will teach you.

At that moment we can integrate it into our daily lives. Slowly we can see this transformation. First, the dark side will disappear because we stop indulging in it. And the bright side will develop because we do not indulge in it. For example, love will develop naturally when we do not want to possess it. Love is an open heart where we care for the other. As soon as we love, but we only want to make ourselves happy, at that moment we are putting a barrier around love.

My love for others must not depend on my sympathy towards them. Our appreciation of someone must not depend on whether we like or appreciate the person or not. Love must be an attitude that must not depend on whether we like the person who loves us.

In the wheel of dependent origination, we start from this basis of not knowing and we make an error. The first error, the fundamental error, is to think that we are human beings. At that moment, we build a whole world around us to justify this assertion. We do this through identification and possession.

When we return to this process and we begin to destroy the error, this is why all feelings of guilt and shame will disappear. Because having made errors based on not knowing, in reality we are innocent. It is because we made errors that we committed offences against others.

The process is to go from not knowing to delusion. From delusion, we move to unskillful actions, then we create this suffering, and at some point in our lives we ask ourselves why we suffer. And this is why we commit to meditation or certain forms of spiritual practices. And at that moment, we will enter a process of untying this whole procedure.

And instead of being ignorant, we will become wise. And instead of being in the not knowing, in the innocence, we become pure with wisdom. And with a pure heart, we will manifest our compassion for others. That is our destiny. But we cannot hope for notable progress in a period of twenty-five years. Twenty-five years? Or more! I hope that I am someone of help to you and that you will be liberated sooner rather than later.

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