

Buddhist Theory of Mind-TMMC, Delhi 2018 - Glen Svensson

Good evening everyone and welcome here to *Tushita* and welcome to this evening's talk titled: "***The Buddhist Theory of Mind***".

So, why is it important to understand the mind? The Buddhist assertion, of course, is that the mind is the source of our happiness and it's a source of our suffering. So, if we want to overcome our suffering and we want to find genuine happiness, then we need to understand the mind. We need to understand it's nature, we need to understand how it functions and we need to know how to transform the mind - to eliminate the suffering and to find that genuine happiness.

And so that's what we're going to look at this evening, we're going to look at some of these points. And I think we've got about two hours and we'll have a little 15 minute break in the middle. So, these are sort of the main points I am going to go through this evening. First we're going to define the mind, what is the mind, the definition of mind according to Buddhism. Where does the mind come from? The origin? Some ways of dividing up the mind, looking at the mind from a number of different perspectives, then we're going to look at how the mind functions in a very general way.

Then, of course, the nature of the mind - what is the nature of our mind? Then we're going to look at how our mind is the source of our suffering. And then the potential of our mind in terms of how our ability to overcome suffering and find liberation from suffering and how to do that. And then some time for question-answer at the end. And included there we'll do a little meditation, observing the mind to become more familiar with the mind. But to start the discussion, I'd like to first briefly introduce another theory of mind. And then we can compare them.

Of course, there are many theories of mind in the modern world. One theory of mind that is quite commonly accepted in the scientific community, is what's called the 'scientific-materialistic theory of mind'. What do we mean by 'scientific-materialism'? Materialism is the view that the only thing that exists is: 'matter'. And we mean 'matter and energy' of course. And that if anything else such as mental events exist, it's reducible to matter.

And to describe that a little bit, I've got a quote here from a physicist Sean Carroll, who says, exemplifying this view, he says: "We are collections of atoms, operating independently of any immaterial spirits or influences. Under naturalism [- *which is another name for materialism*-] there isn't much difference between being a human being and a robot. We are all just complicated collections of matter, moving in patterns, obeying impersonal laws of physics, in an environment within an arrow of time".

And to describe this view in a little bit more detail, I'd like to read a little bit from a book by Alan Wallace, who's a long term Buddhist practitioner but also has done a lot of study in science. He's a PhD at Princeton, at Stanford in the US. And he says the following in his book called 'Tibetan Buddhism From the Ground Up', he says:

"Contemporary scientific materialism asserts that objective reality is composed entirely of matter and energy. And that reality has been that way since the origin of the universe. In this scientific system, awareness is an emergent property of the nervous system and the nervous system is composed entirely of matter and energy". (reading ends)

And here, there are three terms that when we talk very generally, we can use interchangeably, they mean the same thing. And the three terms are: "mind, consciousness, awareness". So, when we speak very generally, they mean the same thing. But what we need to be a bit careful of is, in when we discussing various Buddhist concepts, and we speak, we become very particular, sometimes these words take on a more specific meaning. But here, when we speak very generally: "mind, consciousness, awareness" means the same thing.

(Glen is continuing reading from Wallace): "Scientific materialism often offers quite a plausible account of the evolution from unconscious atoms and energy to the emergence of the human mind. This theory states that some point early in the history of the cosmos - if we accept the Big Bang Theory - atoms formed into molecules, these molecules had new properties, a molecule such as water, H_2O , for instance, has qualities not found in either of its atomic components of hydrogen and oxygen, either individually or collectively. To take some of its obvious properties, water is wet at 70 degrees Fahrenheit, it freezes at 32 degrees and salts will dissolve in it. These attributes not found in the individual atoms of the water molecule, are therefore called 'emergent properties' of these molecules. Organic molecules then combine to form single celled organisms as well as viruses, which cannot be classified with certainty as either be being living or non-living. In the former, life emerged as a property of the molecules that made up the cell. Eventually, the first cells with a neural system such as 'Hydra' evolved, and from this point, we may speak of the emergent property of primitive awareness. Human consciousness with all its complexity, the theory concludes, is merely an emergent property of a far more sophisticated configuration of matter and energy, the human body, which evolved according to the laws of natural science". (reading from Wallace's book ends)

So in this scientific-materialistic theory of mind, then mind is said to either be the brain, a function of the brain, or an emergent property of the brain. Meaning that, mind is reducible to the brain and therefore, thoughts and emotions and so forth, and nothing more than electrical signal and chemicals flow in the brain. That's all they are, they're nothing more than that.

So, to talk a little bit more about the implications of this view, Alan Wallace says:

"Now, let us return to the water molecule. If the configuration of its individual atoms is destroyed and the atoms separate, the unique properties of the water molecule do not go anywhere, they simply vanish. For the organisation of matter and energy from which they arose, is no longer present. This is equally true - according to scientific-materialism - of the emergent property of awareness, human or otherwise. When the 'neuro-system' ceases functioning, materialists say, awareness disappears without a trace.

The implications of this view concerning the nature of death are clear. Individual awareness vanishes and only a decomposing configuration of matter and energy remain". (reading finishes)

So therefore, the implications of this view is: that our mind begins at the beginning of our life, when the brain starts functioning. And that our mind will cease to exist at the end of this life, when the brain ceases functioning. And then just a little bit more, it says:

"The above theory is plausible and intelligently conceived. It's proponents go on to insist, however, that it is true, and that incompatible theories are unscientific. If we are to adopt that theory as objectively true, we should have a sound understanding of what is meant by matter and energy". (reading ends)

So this theory is saying that mind is an emergent property of the brain and the brain is matter and energy. So therefore, if we want to know what mind is, according to this theory, we need to really know what is matter and energy. And then he, Alan Wallace says:

"But here we run into problems. Nobel Prize winning physicist Richard Feynman, asserts that modern science has no notion of what energy is. And while scientists believe almost unanimously in the existence of atoms, their views vary widely as to what atoms are. Some noted physicists believe that they are mere properties of space. Others contend they are sets of relationships, and still others - included the noted physicist Verner Heisenberg - deny that they are material things at all. Particularly when venturing into the realm of quantum mechanics, we encounter statements by leading physicists that not only energy, but the entire array of elementary particles are simply constructs of our theories. Thus, physicist John Gribbin even suggests that subatomic particles did not exist until they were observed in this century". (reading ends here)

And so, of course, within this theory then there's always the difficult point of how to explain: how conscious experience arises from brain, how conscious experience arises from chemicals and electrical flow, electrical signals and chemical flow. And here I'd like to quote from a cognitive scientist, well known cognitive scientist from UC California, Donald Hoffman, he says:

"Now Huxley, (and he's talking about Thomas Huxley, the famous biologist from the 19th century) now Huxley knew that brain activity and conscious experiences are correlated, but he didn't know why. To the science of his day, it was a mystery. In the years since Huxley, scientists learned a lot about brain activity. But the relationship between brain activity and conscious experience is still a mystery." (reading ends)

It's the so called "hard problem" that it's always, it's often called the hard problem: How does conscious experience arise from physical basis? And some physicists actually go to the extreme to answer this question of saying: "There is no such thing as a hard problem, because actually, there's no such thing as conscious experience, it's an illusion, that we have conscious experience".

So that's how some physicists solve the problem. But I think it's a bit difficult to refute that we have conscious experience, because I think we have to have conscious experience to refute that, but anyway.... But of course, there are many physicists too, many scientists who do not accept this theory.

So, it's not like universally accepted in science. In fact, I've got a couple of quotes here from some very highly regarded physicists who don't accept this theory. First, quoting from John Wheeler theoretical physicist who was based at Princeton, he says:

"Useful as it is under everyday circumstances, to say that the world exists out there independent of us, that view can no longer be upheld. There is a strange sense in which, this is a participatory universe".

And then quoting from another physicist Andrei Linde, who's professor of physics at Stanford University, he says the following:

"The current scientific model of the material world, a bang laws of physics, has been so successful, that we forget about our starting point as conscious observers and conclude that matter is the only reality and that perceptions are only helpful for describing it. But in fact, we are substituting the reality of our experience of the universe with a conceptually contrived belief in an independently existing material world. Is it possible that consciousness like 'space-time' has its own intrinsic degrees of freedom? And that neglecting these will lead to a description of a universe that is fundamentally incomplete? What if our perceptions are as real, or maybe even in a certain sense, are even more real than material objects? The standard assumption is that consciousness, just like 'time-space', before the invention of general relativity plays a secondary subservient role. Being just a function of matter and a tool for the description of the truly existing material world. But let us remember that our knowledge of the world begins not with matter, but with perceptions. Without injury, introducing an observer, we have a dead universe which does not evolve in time." (reading ends here)

Actually, there's a thing called 'quantum-cosmology', where they apply quantum principles to the macroscopic world. It's called 'quantum cosmology'. And so, when they apply these quantum principles to the macroscopic world, they end up - as what he said here - with a what's called a 'dead universe', time drops out of the equation. That time only comes into the equation with the introduction of an observer. And so this is what he's saying here:

"Without introducing an observer, we have a dead universe, which does not evolve in time. And this re-emphasises the role of the participant in the 'self-observing-universe' of quantum cosmology. The universe becomes alive, ie. time-dependent, only when one divides it into two parts. A subjective observer and the rest of the objective universe. And the 'wave-function' of the rest of the objective universe depends on the time measured by the observer. In other words, the evolution of the universe and everything in it, including life itself, is possible only with respect to the observer". (reading ends here)

And then again, coming back to Donald Hoffman, this cognitive scientist, he says:

"As a conscious realist, I am postulating conscious experiences as ontological primitives, the most basic ingredients of the world. I'm claiming that experiences are the real coin of the realm. The experiences of everyday life, my real feeling of a headache, my real taste of chocolate, that really is the ultimate nature of reality. I believe that consciousness and its contents are all that exist. Space-time, matter and fields never were the fundamental denizens of the universe, but have always been from the very beginning among the humbler

contents of consciousness, dependent on it for their very being. While neuro-scientists struggle to understand how there can be such a thing as 'first-person-reality', quantum physicists have to grapple with the mystery of how there can be anything but a first person reality." (reading ends here)

And actually, Don Hoffman, if you get a chance, I really encourage you to look at some of his YouTube talks. He's one of those sort of true scientists who completely doesn't have an agenda, and is not biased. And he's very open minded. In fact, for many years, like many scientists in his field, were trying to understand how conscious experience comes from the brain. Unsuccessfully. So, now he's flipped the whole thing around. And now he's trying to prove the reverse. He's together with some mathematicians. And he's using a mathematical model of the mind in his approach. He's trying to mathematically see how quantum mechanics can come from the mind. So, that's what he's working on now. Very interesting. So with that in mind, let's go to the Buddhist theory of mind.

So, first, the definition, what do we mean by this word: mind? And again, remember, when we speak very generally: mind, consciousness, awareness mean the same thing. We have to be very careful with this word: "awareness", though. It's very heavily used in Buddhism. And in different contexts, it means very different things. So, we need to be very careful with that. But here, when we speak very generally: mind, consciousness, awareness same.

So, the definition of mind in Buddhism, is: "mind is clear and knowing". Or sometimes translated as: "mind has clarity and awareness". And in this very simple definition, two-word definition, the first word is describing the entity of the thing. The second word is the function, what does that thing do? For example, the simple definition of fire is: "fire is hot and burning". So what is the entity or nature of fire? It is heat. What does fire do? It burns.

So what is the entity or nature of the mind? The mind is clear, or has clarity. What does the mind do? What's its function? It knows, it is aware. So just to talk a little bit more about each of those two words. So, this first word: "clear" or "clarity", sometimes translators translate this as "luminosity". But here 'luminosity' doesn't mean some sort of light. So we need to be careful when we hear the word "luminosity" in Buddhism, with respect to mind. Luminosity doesn't mean: our mind has some sort of light, we're going to see some sort of light. No. The word "clear" or "clarity" or "luminosity" means two things or implies two things.

One is: the mind is not physical. So, the fact that mind is clear or clarity, implies: the mind is not physical. So, it's not the brain, it's not an emergent property of the brain. So, in Buddhist perspective there are two types of phenomena in the world, in the universe. There are physical phenomena: matter, energy, and there are mental phenomena: mind. Not everything is reducible to physical matter and energy. The second understanding of the word "clear" or "clarity" is: because the mind is clear or has clarity, it can allow things to appear in it.

Just like a mirror is clear, means: reflections can appear in a mirror because the mirror is clear. Because the mind is clear, thoughts, emotions, images, and so forth can appear in the mind. What does the mind do? What's its function? The mind knows, it is aware, the mind engages, it knows those appearances. So that's a very simple definition of mind.

Where does the mind come from? Remembering the scientific materialistic theory of mind, the mind comes from the brain, because it's just a property of the brain. And it comes into existence at the beginning of this life, it ends at the end of this life. Buddhism, of course, does not agree with that assertion. And to understand the Buddhist assertion, we can begin by understanding that, within classical physics one of the fundamental principles of classical physics is: conservation of 'mass-energy'. Meaning: you can't create mass-energy, you can't destroy it. You can simply transform it.

And similarly, we have a similar theory in Buddhism of conservation of consciousness. You can't create it, you can't destroy it, you can simply transform it. Which means, what is the implication of that is: again, if we go back to conservation of mass-energy, and we talked about the beginning of the universe, then often one of the most common theories is: 'Big Bang'.

But then if we ask: "When did matter and energy begin?" - then they wouldn't say: at the Big Bang. Because Big Bang doesn't mean the universe popped into existence from nothing. It was often described as some infinitesimally dense 'something'. So, even though we can talk about the beginning of the universe through 'Big Bang' or whatever, when we come to talk about beginning of matter and energy, according to classical physics, actually there is no beginning, (it's) beginning-less. And also endless.

Because one of the theories accepted in physics is: 'Cyclic Big Bang', that the universe will collapse. Some say that is going to keep expanding. But either way, according to classical physics, matter and energy, will never finish, will never have an ending. It'll transform, maybe it'll collapse into something dense, maybe it will keep expanding. But there's no beginning, no end. Similarly, in Buddhism, similar theory with conservation of consciousness. When did our mind begin? Well, we can say at the beginning of our life, because before that we didn't exist.

When we say: "our mind", meaning: "me", "this me". But if we talk about beginning of consciousness? No beginning, conservation of consciousness! Which means, that an implication of this view is, that consciousness didn't begin at the beginning of this life and it won't finish at the end of this life. Which means: previous existences and future existences. Just like in classical physics, in terms of matter and energy, same principle.

But here, we also need to understand consciousness. Because often, in this context, when we start to talk about the fact: "Well, therefore, an implication of the Buddhist theory of mind, there must have been previous existences and future existences." But then often people say: "Yeah, but what goes from life to life, then?". And people say: "The mind goes from life to life".

But that's a little bit awkward to say that, because this word "go" sort of implies: it's a thing moving through time. You know, this thing "mind" that goes from that past life to this life, to the next life. But that's not correct. And again, to understand that, we go back to classical physics. From a classical physics' perspective is there anything, any "thing" that moves through time? Superficially, it seems like this cup is moving through time. But is there a thing moving through time, a static thing moving through time? No! Because if we look very closely here at the atomic level, there's constant change, isn't it?

That in the physical world (of) matter and energy, there's no matter and energy that's static. (It's) always changing. So there's nothing moving through time. There's just a flow of change, a flow of changing matter, a flow of change of energy. And in that continuous flow, to make sense of it, we create objects. And because we can't see it at the atomic level, it seems like there is a static thing, this cup moving through time. But there is no such cup. Is there? Because it's just a flow of change.

So similarly, if we don't look closely at the mind, it seems like there's a thing, a mind moving through time. Just like there seems to be like a cup moving through time. But if we look closely at the mind, just like there's no static thing here, is there: "mind"? - there's constant change, constant change of mental experience. There's a continuum. So just like we see a continuum of matter and energy, we see a continuum of mental experience. And to make sense of that, we give it the name: "Mind". Just like we give this name: "cup" - to make sense of it.

But there's no thing: "mind" that moves through time. There's a continuum of change of mental experience. So actually, technically, what goes from life to life? - the Buddhist answer is: nothing, Because nothing moves through time, physically or mentally. But within that flow, then we can say something. But...., and to just to highlight that, I read a little bit more from Alan Wallace, he says here:

"According to Buddhism, consciousness is regarded as an event or continuum of events, rather than as a thing moving through time. Energy is also best understood as an event, and even matter, which appears to us so 'thing-ish' dissolves into a matrix of events, when these are closely examined. So, Buddhism is not arguing that the mental realm is just as real and tangible as the physical world appears to be. Rather, it asserts that the substantial appearance of the world of physical things is deceptive and that both physical and mental phenomena are best understood as inter-dependent events. This implies that no phenomenon exists with its own intrinsic, independent identity because each phenomenon depends on others. In Buddhism, this is a key concept." (reading ends)

So, a little bit later in the presentation, we're going to look at the nature of mind. And we're going to touch back on to this point here.

So the next point is: 'divisions'. How to divide up the mind? And we can divide up the mind in many different ways. But I just want to talk about two ways that can be very useful. And the first is, we can divide up mind in terms of 'objects'. With our mind we can experience six types of objects. We can experience visual objects, we can experience, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations, the so called: 'five sense objects'.

But also of course, with our mind we can experience mental objects, ie. thoughts, emotions, memories, mental images. So, since we can experience six types of objects, the five sense objects and mental objects, we can talk about the six types of consciousnesses. The five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness. But of course, here we're not talking about six separate minds. There's only one mind. We're talking here about six 'aspects' of that one mind. The aspect of our mind that perceives visual objects, is called 'visual consciousness'. The aspect of our mind that hears sounds, is 'auditory consciousness' and so on.

And the aspect of our mind that perceives or knows thoughts, emotions, memories, and so forth, is 'mental consciousness'. So, our sense consciousnesses are 'non-conceptual', meaning: they observe their object directly. The visual consciousness 'knows' visual objects: colour and shape - directly.

Whereas, when we go to mental consciousness, it is conceptual. For example when we look at this cup, our visual consciousness simply sees a collection of colour and shape. But then our mental consciousness goes: "...ah, I know what that collection of colour and shape is. That's a cup." So we know this through concept, the idea: cup. So that's mental consciousness. So all of our mental consciousness is conceptual: thinking, emotions, memories - all conceptual. We know everything through concept. So that's one way of talking about the mind.

Another one is, in terms of 'levels'. We can talk about a number of 'levels of mind'. And often within Buddhism, we identify three levels. But we shouldn't think (that) these are very discrete things, we're talking about a whole gradient. And within that whole gradient, we can sort of, sort of break that gradient into three levels or stages, even.

So we can talk about what's called the 'coarse mind'. The coarse mind is the mind that is active now, the mind that sees things, is thinking, is remembering, has emotions, this is all 'coarse mind'. This would be more or less equivalent to what's called in psychology, the 'psyche'. And within that 'coarse mind', of course - from a psychology perspective - we can talk about conscious and subconscious - or conscious and unconscious. Because there are even within here, there are many levels. And now, if our mind is not very well trained, we're only aware of very superficial level of mental activity. There's a lot of mental activity going on in the coarse mind that we're not aware of. It's like below the level of our radar-threshold, because our mind is not very trained. This is what's called 'subconscious, unconscious'.

But all of that low level mental activity is still within the coarse mind. Then, that threshold between conscious-unconscious, that can shift depending on how well we train our mind. Particularly from a Buddhist perspective, if we engage in the what's called: the Shamatha practice - developing single-pointed concentration - our mind becomes more focused and clear, that threshold can go way, way down. Meaning a lot of things that we didn't notice before, we will start to notice. But this is all within (the) coarse level of mind.

Then we can talk about 'subtle mind'. 'Subtle mind', sometimes called 'substrate consciousness'. In here, in Sanskrit, this sometimes is called, they use of the term: 'Vijnana'. This, the subtle, is 'Alaya-vijnana', meaning: the Alaya' the foundation, the basis of 'Vijnana'. So, 'Alaya-vijnana' is the foundational basis for the coarse mind.

So, the subtle level of mind or 'substrate consciousness' is the level of our mind that is the ground state of the coarse mind, the psyche. It's the level of mind from which all of our thoughts and emotions and so forth, emerge and dissolve back into.

But because this is a more subtle level of mind - and is the source of all of this - actually, at this level, this level of mind is no longer "human". It's no longer male, female, and so forth. Because we're beyond that, that's all here. But that's emerging from this level of mind.

But in Buddhism, we can talk even about a more subtle level than that, called: the 'very-subtle level of mind'. And sometimes called 'primordial consciousness'. Actually, this level of mind has many names in Buddhism, many names. But this is the ground state of consciousness in general. And this level of mind is 'atemporal' and 'non-local'. Here, we can talk about: "my coarse mind". And we can talk about "my subtle mind". But actually, it doesn't make any sense to say: "my very-subtle mind", because it's not individuated. Because actually, this is beyond time, and is non-local. It's not like: "my subtle mind", "your subtle mind" - it doesn't make any sense. So, time and space emerge from this level of mind.

And the reason we introduce this, of course, is that - from a Buddhist perspective - the deeper the level of mind we can gain access to in meditation, the more powerful! Meaning: if we can gain access to this level of mind, that mind is much more stable, more clear, more focused. We can use that, in our practice to move to liberation from suffering. But if we can gain access to this level of mind - and that's what we do in Tantra or Vajrayana practice - this is even much more powerful. We can greatly accelerate the spiritual path, but very difficult to gain access to, it's very difficult. And it's only in Tantra or Vajrayana, that there are practices to describe, to be able to gain access to this. In the normal Theravada Buddhist traditions in the more normal Mahayana traditions you'll never see any discussion about this and you'll never see any practices about gaining access to this. Because it's not possible. It's only in Tantra, Vajrayana that we develop that ability to do that.

So therefore, in Theravada Buddhist traditions, in Mahayana Buddhist traditions, we talk a lot about gaining access to this (the subtle mind) - through Shamatha practice. When we achieve Samatha - we're here. We've moved from coarse to subtle. So that's a little bit about divisions.

There are many other ways of dividing up the mind. But just to keep it a bit simple this evening, they're the two. So let's now look at 'function'. How does the mind function in our experiences? And here, we divide the mind up into two. Into what's called: 'primary-mind' and 'mental factors'.

And in our experiences, primary-mind is the aspect of mind that simply engages in the raw experience, the raw object, contacting the object. The 'mental factors' is, what fills in the experience, which determine the type of experience we have of that object. So, of course, these are not two separate things, you can't have main-mind without mental factors. There's only one mind experiencing objects. But in that experience of objects, we can look at that experience from these two aspects. Primary mind is just the raw experience, 'mental factors' is filling in all the details. And in mental factors - and this is really Buddhist psychology - often, we have a presentation of 51 mental factors. And I've broken down the 51 very briefly there.

26 are 'mental afflictions,' - like: anger, jealousy, craving, anxiety, and so forth,... resentment. So it seems like in the functioning of our mind, more than half the mental factors are mental afflictions. So it seems like we have some problems in our experiences, some difficulties. We're not functioning very well. Because a lot of emphasis is on a lot of things (that) are describing how we don't function very well - these mental afflictions, like: anger, craving, jealousy, anxiety, resentment, all of these things.

But then, of course, there are eleven virtuous mental factors, so sometimes it's not so bad in our experience. And then there's what's called: the five 'universal mental factors'. And these are five mental factors that are present in every single experience. Because a lot of these other mental factors may or may not be present, you know, we're not always angry when we experience an object or a person. We're not always having faith, for example, and so forth. But there are five mental factors that are always there.

And they are: what's called 'contact', and that's actually just contacting the object. 'Feeling' - which is experiencing that object - is either: pleasant, pleasant, unpleasant, unpleasant, neutral. 'Discrimination' or 'discernment' - distinguishing the object. Then, there is what's called: 'intention', which is directing our mind towards the object. And 'attention' is the other one. So, these are always present. Then there are what's called: the five 'object determining' mental factors. And when these are sort of steady, then we have certainty about the object. And so here included are things of course, like: mindfulness, aspiration, conviction, and concentration and wisdom.

And then there are four 'changeable' mental factors which, depending on the context can either be virtuous or non-virtuous. And in here, we have things like: regret, investigation, analysis and sleep. But anyway, I just wanted to briefly mentioned those. This is a whole huge topic in Buddhism, in Tibetan Buddhism, called: 'Lo-Rig' - 'minds and awareness'. And if you're interested in learning a bit more about Buddhist psychology here, (there's a) very good book called: "Mind and its Functions" by Geshe Rabten - very well described. And also all these mental factors, described in quite a lot of detail in a book called: "Meditation on Emptiness" by Jeffrey Hopkins - they're all listed and described very clearly. So they're to reference materials you can look at.

So, that's very briefly how we look at....., how the mind is functioning in terms of these various mental factors. And then lastly, before we take a break, is....., ah... when we mentioned one or two things here,..... first.... We mentioned here, one of the 'object determining' mental factors is: 'mindfulness'. And mindfulness is very 'key' - from a Buddhist perspective. And mindfulness now in the modern world has become quite popular, even somewhat trendy. And unfortunately, how mindfulness is presented in some modern traditions, is not very useful.

Often, these modern mindfulness traditions have taken mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective. And mindfulness here in a mental factor, in Sanskrit, of course, the word is "Smṛti", in Pali it's "Sati". And both of those words literally mean "memory", "to remember". So mindfulness, within the Buddhist perspective, is our ability to remember the object. In other words, it's our ability to hold the object without forgetting it, without becoming distracted.

But what we find in a lot of modern mindfulness movements, is they have redefined the word "mindfulness" to mean something else. And often in a lot of modern traditions it's defined as something like: "a non judgmental awareness of whatever is arising in the present moment". Okay, good, good. That's a good thing to do. But this is not how the word 'mindfulness' was originally defined. So we need to be aware of that, otherwise, it can be a lot of confusion. So remember how mindfulness is used in a lot of modern traditions and how it's originally defined in Buddhism, often doesn't match. So we have to be aware of that.

And also, the thing that I find a little bit unfortunate - okay redefining, but as long as you're clear about how you're using the word, that's okay,you know. But what I find unfortunate, actually, in some of the modern mindfulness movements is, they look at Buddhism often - that's often their source for the mindfulness - like: "Oh, yeah, that 'mindfulness' very good".

And they say: "Yes, we like that. But now all that other stuff? That's, that religious stuff. We don't want any of that. Love and Compassion, all No, no, no, no. Ethics? Oh no! Morality? Oh, that's all religious stuff. Get rid of that. You know.....and all this sort of emptiness stuffoh no, no, throw that out".

So basically, they throw out everything else. And then they give you 'bare-mindfulness'. And they often present it as like the 'magic pill of mindfulness'. "Here, take this magic pill of mindfulness, and all your problems will go away".

They're not going to go away. In fact, that could get worse. Because, if we have no framework around mindfulness, not only is it not effective, it can be harmful. Because if we have a dysfunctional lifestyle now, and we simply add some mindfulness, we may just get better at being able to cheat and deceive people. And then we're going to have more problems and more suffering. So therefore, if we want mindfulness to be effective, we need a framework. I'm not suggesting it has to be a Buddhist framework, but there needs to be a framework around 'mindfulness'.

And unfortunately, a lot of the modern mindfulness traditions have no framework or virtually none. And that's why now we're starting to see - now that these modern traditions have been around a few years - and we've seen some negative impact. Now, I recently read an article that said: "The Dark Side of Mindfulness".

There's no dark side to mindfulness. There's a dark side to using mindfulness without a framework! But it's presented as the dark side of mindfulness: "Oh, mindfulness is not all it's cracked out to be. Maybe you shouldn't do the mindfulness thing".

Maybe we shouldn't do the mindfulness without framework. Yes, I agree with that. But what they're saying really is, they're throwing out the baby with the bathwater. And so, instead of trying out the mindfulness, we just need to add a framework - then it can be very effective and helpful. Then there's no 'dark side'. So I just wanted to mention that because, unfortunately, I see a lot of this happened.

Right, last point, before we take a break. What's the nature of the mind? Here actually, we can talk about: 'nature of mind' at two levels, or from two perspectives. We can talk about the 'conventional nature' of the mind. And the 'conventional nature' of mind is basically just what we saw in the definition of the mind. You know, what's the conventional nature of fire is, that fire is hot and burning. That's its conventional nature. What's the convention nature of the mind? Its: the mind is 'clear and knowing', it has clarity and awareness.

But often within a Buddhist context when we talk about 'nature of the mind', often we're emphasising or we're talking more about the second nature, the ultimate nature. The ultimate nature of the mind is "how" does the mind "exist".

And the Buddhist assertion is that the mind is....., the ultimate nature of the mind is 'emptiness'. In other words, the mind is empty of being independent. Meaning: there's no independently existent mind.

Of course, the Buddhist assertion is: nothing exists independently. And we'll look a little bit more about that after the break. But it's important to realise the ultimate nature of the mind. Of course, it's important to realise the conventional nature the mind. And see, the thing is that... a lot of.... there's a lot of interesting theories about mind and other things, you know, that philosophers come up with. But unfortunately, many of these philosophies or theories that philosophers come up with, there's no way to test them. Either you look at them and go: "Well, that makes sense, I believe that" - or you don't believe it. But actually, often with these theories that philosophers come up with, there's no way to empirically test that theory.

At least, when the Buddha came up with his theory of mind and theory of reality, he said: "This is the Buddhist theory, or this is, this is what I believe, or actually, I discovered, but this is how you test it". So, not only do we have a Buddhist theory of mind that says, that: the conventional nature of mind is clear and knowing and the ultimate nature is emptiness. But then there - as we're going to see after the break - then there's a method to test that. Because if we can't test it, it's just another theory - which may or may not be true, may or may not be useful. If we can't test it, it's just a theory. But fortunately we've got a way to test it.

How do we test the conventional nature of the mind? How do we come to directly realise that the mind is clear and knowing? How do we do that? We look at it. I mean, in science if you want to understand something better or well, what do you do? You observe it. If you want to understand the galaxies and cosmos, what do you do? You look at it, you observe it more closely, more and more closely. If you want to understand the material constituents of a cup, what do you do? You look at it, you observe it more and more closely. And then you come to directly see: it's made up of all these atoms.

So, if we want to know the mind, it's conventional nature, we look at it, we observe it. But of course, what modern science has done over the last 400 years, is in all other areas they do that, they observe the phenomena they want to know better. They observe it directly. And they've been very good at that. Except, when it comes to mind. They have no method to look at the mind. What they do is they go: "We think everything's matter and energy. So therefore to know the mind, let's just study the brain".

Studying the brain is great. They've learned a lot about the brain, synapses, neurones and so forth. Fantastic. But then they say: "Well, that's understanding the mind because we're looking at the brain". But it's actually interesting, is like, you know, we talk about these emergent properties. All the emergent properties of all physical phenomena, the emergent properties are always physical. Except, when they come to the mind. Here's the one case where the emergent property has no physical characteristics.

Doesn't that sound a bit odd? Maybe that's a reason to question something. Every other physical phenomena: the emergent properties is physical. But here, they say, well, actually here, "...the emergent properties of the brain, this mind, actually is not physical." Or there's no physical properties we can see. There is no physical characteristics in a thought, or an emotion. But yet, they still say, "well, it's an emergent property".

Maybe we need to look at that. So anyway, here, how to be an empirical scientist, to see for ourselves that the mind is clear and knowing, of course, if we don't run the test, it's just another theory (that) might sound reasonable. How do we test it? We do Sharmata practice. We observe the mind like an empirical scientist, we look directly at the mind, we just look at it. And if we look closer and closer and closer, like they do with the cup, and go down-down there find atoms, is the atoms. We look at the mind closer and closer and closer, will come to see: the mind is clear and knowing, has clarity and awareness. That's how we empirically test this.

How do we empirically test the theory that the ultimate nature of the mind is Emptiness? We investigate. Again, the mind - and we do that in Vipassana practice. So, Shamatha practice will lead us to see directly the conventional nature of the mind, the Vipassana practice, will directly get us to see the ultimate nature of the mind. So, on that note, let's take a short 10 minute break, we'll come back (and) will be an empirical scientist, and will observe the mind in meditation. But first, tea break.

----- tea break time -----

So, we're going to do a 15 minute meditation now. And again, what we're going to do is: to know our mind, we're going to simply observe our mind. And for this practice, just a couple of comments, and then we'll do it. For this practice, when we say "observe the mind", we're talking about observing the mind and whatever is arising in the mind. And for this practice, we're only interested in the mental events. Because remember, we saw earlier that (with the) mind we can experience mental events such as thoughts and my memories, mental images, but also we can experience sensory events, we can hear sounds, see objects, sensations in the body, and so forth.

So, in this particular practice, meditation practice, we're not interested in any sense objects. Of course, sounds will arise and sensations, let them be there. We're not trying to block them. But we're just not paying any attention to them, we're not interested in them. We're only interested in mental events. So, we're only observing any thoughts, emotions, memories, mental images that appear. And of course, when we say 'observe them', it means to simply observe them as they arise and pass.

Now of course, when something comes up in our mind, we tend to do one of two things. If some thoughts or emotion or memory comes up, the most common thing is: we latch onto it, and off we go on a story.

Or if it's something unpleasant, and we don't know what to do with it, we sort of do this, try and stuff it back down. So, in this practice, we are neither following, nor suppressing, we are simply observing. Observing thoughts and other mental events as they arise and pass.

And in this practice of observing the mind, we're not trying to do anything with the mind. We're not trying to make the mind still. That's not....., you can't do it anyway. But that's certainly not this practice, if you've ever tried to make your mind still, you know it doesn't work.

The goal of this practice is: simply to become familiar with our mind. We're not trying to change the mind, we're not trying to make it still, we're not trying to do anything with it, except look at it. That's it, just look at it. And whatever is there, just watch it, without getting caught up in it, without trying to change it.

Last point, then we'll do the practice, is: for this practice its very much recommended to have the eyes open, either naturally or partially. Now, if you never meditate with your eyes open, for this evening you can just meditate with your eyes closed. But the reason in this practice..... or there are a number of reasons why it's encouraged, or it's very good to have the eyes open.

First: with eyes open, some light coming in, much better for clarity. Eyes closed, very easy to drift into dullness. And if we drift into dullness, it's hard to see anything, it's not good to observe the mind if we're half asleep. Second reason to have the eyes open is, that with the eyes closed it's much easier to drift off into the past and the future. Because here we're just looking in the present moment. With the eyes open, it's a lot easier to stay in the present moment. So, that's another reason.

And another reason why having the eyes open is very helpful is, that we also would like to be able to observe our mind in daily life without getting caught up in things, without suppressing. And generally in daily life we're walking around with our eyes open. So, if we only do this practice with eyes closed, it's going to be harder to do it in daily life, because we're not used to observing our thoughts with eyes open, only eyes closed. Whereas if we meditate now with eyes open observing thoughts and emotions, we can transition that into daily life, much easier.

And the last reason that we have the eyes open is: with the eyes closed, there's definitely a strong sense of 'me in here' and 'world out there'. There's a very strong sense of duality, subject-object duality. And when we go into investigating the mind to realise Emptiness, we're actually realising: there's no subject-object duality. So therefore, to help facilitate that, if now we're doing this practice with eyes open, that false sense of duality breaks down. Because with the eyes open there's not that strong sense of 'me in here' and 'world out there'. So that's going to be helpful later when we come to realise there is no duality. So these are the reasons for have the eyes open.

But again, if you never meditate with your eyes open, you can do it with eyes closed this evening. But if you have, then do with the eyes open. So let's do that practice, 15 minutes, and then we'll continue discussions.

(gong sound)

We begin by preparing the body, sending the body into a state of relaxation, stillness, and vigilance. A vigilant posture is to keep the back nice and straight. And at the same time, allow the entire body to become completely relaxed, completely at ease.

Using the out-breath to relax and release any tightness or tension in any part of the body.

And allowing the breathing to settle into its natural rhythm.

Not trying to control or regulate the breath in any way.

Simply allowing it to flow naturally and effortlessly.

And then preparing the mind, setting it into a state of ease and relaxation. Simply allowing the mind to come to rest in the present moment. And simply becoming aware of the rhythm of your breath. Noticing if it's long or short, deep or shallow, fast or slow,

Without trying to modify it in any way. Simply becoming aware of the rhythm of the breath.

And allowing your eyes to be at least partially open, resting your gaze in the space in front of you. Keeping the eyes soft and relaxed. Blink as often as you need.

And now bring your attention to your own mind. And observe your own mind. And whatever is arising in the space of the mind.

Thoughts, emotions, memories, mental images. Simply be like an impartial observer or witness, observing any thoughts or other mental events as they arise and pass. Without grasping to them, without becoming distracted.

If you get caught up in a thought and get carried away, remember, the first thing to do is: simply relax. Then release grasping onto that thought, very gently return to observing the mind. So relax, release and return. Each time you get distracted, get caught up and swept away.

If you becoming frustrated at not being able to observe your thoughts, observe that frustration. Whatever is arising, observe it. In particular, observing any reactions to anything pleasant or unpleasant that appears in the mind.

(meditation ends)

Let's briefly now look at how mind, our mind is the source of our suffering. A Buddhist assertion is that now, we have what's called this 'ignorance'. And ignorance here is with regard to the nature of reality. And it's not simply a matter of not understanding the nature of reality. But ignorance here is an active misunderstanding of (the) nature of reality. And that is: that, now we believe that there is an independent 'me here' and an independent objective 'world out there'.

And we're grasping on to that reality that there's independent me here independent world there. And that's ignorance. And so seed of ignorance here is: seed means 'habit'. We have the habit of believing or grasping onto independent me, independent world. And from the Buddhist perspective, we've had this habit since we were born and well before. And when we look out on the world, everything appears to us to exist completely independent of us. So we're having what's called 'dualistic appearance' - there appears to be subject-object duality.

And the view of reality in Buddhism is saying: things are not existing as they appear. So, this appearance that we're receiving, is deceiving us. It's called 'mistaken dualistic appearance'. Now, everything has always appeared to us in this way. We've never seen anything in any other way. So, there's no reason for us to question these appearances. Because if we ask anyone else, everyone else will agree with us. And so, since we have the habit of believing this, and we're always seeing this, we never questioned, we just accept. And this accepting is not intellectual, it's instinctive.

That's step-two: 'ignorance'. We're instinctively seeing 'independent me', 'independent world'. And every time we experience something, we have this mental factor of 'feeling' - that I mentioned earlier. And the word 'feeling' in Buddhism doesn't mean emotion. 'Feeling', the word "feeling" in Buddhism means: experiencing something is either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Neutral means: just not pleasant, (nor) unpleasant.

So let's say we're looking at these flowers here. They appear to exist independent of us. We have the habit of believing that, we just accept instinctively, there's 'flowers there', 'me here'. And let's say, when we're looking at these flowers we're having a pleasant experience. That pleasant experience together with the belief that those flowers exist independent of us, will naturally lead us to assume there must be some attractive quality there, that's causing my pleasant experience. So we'll see these flowers is inherently attractive or attractive from their own side.

And from a Buddhist perspective, this is a misconception. Similarly, for having an unpleasant experience when we see these flowers, together with that belief that flowers are independent of us, will naturally lead us to assume: there must be some unattractive quality there that's causing my unpleasant experience, we will see them as inherently unattractive.

Or having a neutral experience: inherently neutral. So, once we get to step-three, step-four easily follows. So again, let's say we're looking at the flowers, we're having a pleasant experience. I like pleasant experiences, I want pleasant experiences, those flowers seem to be causing my pleasant experience, I want those flowers: 'attachment'. Or if having an unpleasant experience. I don't like unpleasant experiences, I don't want them, those flowers seem to be causing my unpleasant experience, get them out of here: 'aversion'. Or if we're having a neutral experience that will simply reinforce our mistaken belief that they are independent, which is 'ignorance'. Often here we have the word 'confusion'. But here the word confusion is just another word for ignorance.

These are the three main mental afflictions, all other mental afflictions like: jealousy, craving, anxiety, and so forth, come out of one of them or a combination of them. They are what's driving our behaviour.

And the Buddhist assertion is: every action we do based on a mental affliction has a result, a consequence and the results of our actions, is: our experiences. And the Buddha used the word: 'Dukkha' to describe our experiences, usually translated as 'suffering'. So, this is how our mind is the source of suffering, (in) particular, the mental afflictions in our mind, more specifically, our fundamental ignorance is the root source of all of our suffering.

So, it's not that guy at work, that is the cause of my suffering. They are simply a condition. The cause? We say: "that person made me angry". Not true. What made you angry? It's your habit of anger that caused your anger, they (the others) were merely a condition. So, the source of our suffering is not that person. The source of our suffering is our habits, particularly a distorted view of reality. But the good news, of course, is that the Buddhist assertion is: these mental afflictions are not part of the nature of our mind.

A number of modern philosophies say, the basic human nature: is greed, is anger, is jealousy. You're stuck with it, get used to it. At most, you can maybe reduce it a bit, but tough luck. That's it. That's the human nature. Buddhists would not agree with that. Yes, we have very strong habits. We can have very strong habits of anger, jealousy, craving, but they're not part of the nature of our mind. In fact, our mind is naturally pure. That's the nature of our mind. And that's often called 'Buddha Nature' in Buddhism. But of course, that purity is obscured now by the mental afflictions. So, the mental afflictions are like dirt covering the surface of our mind. So, how do we get rid of this dirt, the mental afflictions. - is three core areas of practice, called: the 'Three Higher Trainings'.

And this is in all Buddhist traditions: ethics, concentration, wisdom, or in Sanskrit: Shila, Samadhi, Prajna. In Pali: Sila, Samadi, Panna. In all Buddhist traditions, so the basis is ethics, meaning: avoiding harmful behaviour. On that basis, we engage in the concentration practice, 'Samadhi' in Sanskrit - to develop single-pointed concentration. In some Buddhist traditions that practice is called 'Shamatha-practice'. And in the Theravada tradition it is often called 'Jhana-practice', single-pointed concentration. And then on that basis we engage in the Wisdom-practice, in Sanskrit: 'Prajna', in Pali: 'Panna'. Sometimes this Wisdom practice is called in Sanskrit: 'Vipashana' and in Pali: 'Vipassana'.

And so here, we are gaining insight into the nature of reality. In particular, what we just saw: an insight into the fact that there's no independent me, no independent world. This is what this word: 'Emptiness' means or in Sanskrit: 'Shunyata'. We come to realise: there is no independent me, no independent world. If we eliminate that, if we realise emptiness, we eliminate the seed of ignorance, therefore eliminate these misconceptions, mental afflictions, actions based on mental afflictions and therefore eliminate suffering. And we can achieve liberation from suffering. So, that's the potential of our mind.

One more point, then finish on that, is this idea of: 'Buddha Nature'. We can look at that at least from two perspectives. And to understand those perspectives, we can use an analogy of a window: let's say we've got a window, and there's some dirt on it. We can look at that in at least two ways. We can say: "There's a dirty window, I need to put some effort, make some effort to produce a clean window". And that's often the perspective we have. No? Valid, correct. But also equally valid, we could say: "Well, actually there's already a clean window there, we just need to remove the dirt to reveal the clean window that was always there". Also valid. No?

And so 'Buddha Nature' can be looked at in both those ways. And both of those perspectives have their own advantages and disadvantages. The way of looking at Buddha Nature in the way like the first way, that: "There's a dirty window, I need to put a lot of effort to make a clean window". That perspective with Buddha Nature is: 'Buddha Nature is a potential for enlightenment'. But then we need to put a lot of effort to achieve that enlightenment, a lot of effort to make a clean window. The disadvantage with that is, we go: "Oh, so much work, so much practices, too much, I can't do it, I give up."

The other perspective, the one that: - there's a clean window already there, we just need to remove the dirt - is the understanding of Buddha nature in terms of: not Buddha Nature of being a 'potential' for enlightenment, but actually there is a Buddha within already, we just need to discover the Buddha that we already are. The disadvantage with that is: "Oh, I'm already enlightened, I don't need to do anything. There's already a clean window there. Why do I need to put any effort? It's already a clean window." No?

So, both have advantages and disadvantages. So we can use either or (a) combination, depending on our disposition. So, you'll find that in various, particularly Tibetan Buddhist traditions, when they talk about Buddha Nature, they often use one or the other of those perspectives. And then people go, people think that they're arguing: "No, I'm a Buddha already! No, you're not! Yes, I am! No, I'm not".

Its the same argument with the window: Is there a clean window there already or not? It's two perspectives of the same thing. Its not two different things. So, I just wanted to mention that. So we've still got some time left. So that's all I really wanted to say. So, we've got 10 minutes for any 'question-answer'.

Student: When you talk about the function of the mind, and there are five universal mental factors.... (rest inaudible)

Glen: Yeah, what's a simple example.... Like, for example, the first two is: contact (and) feeling. So we see in the twelve-links, that: 'contact leads to feeling'. And so, a particular contact will lead to a feeling but while that contact is happening, there's already feeling present. Isn't there?

Student: An intention? Attention?

Glen: The same, same with that, there's....., of course, each one of those can lead to a change in another mental factor, a particular contact could then adjust (or) change the mental factor of feeling. No? But when that contact is happening, there is feeling already there. So they're simultaneous, but a particular contact will provoke a change in feeling, that feeling can provoke a change in intention. But when there's contact, intention is simultaneous. So you're talking about a specific contact, like in the twelve-links, causing a feeling, that's sequential? Sure. But when that contact is happening, there's already feeling happening simultaneously. And that contact will then mean that that feeling in the next moment will probably - depending on what the contact was - will change.

Student: So, the moment we say next moment.... (rest inaudible)

Glen: So, what we say is a particular feeling, the basis of that is the previous moment of contact. So that's sequential fine, but that at that moment of contact there is already feeling present. So they're simultaneous.

Student: I need some more clarity on 'Substrate Consciousness'..... (inaudible section here)and could you give an example of substrate consciousness? I mean, what would be a subjective experience of substrate consciousness?

Glen: It is when you're experiencing Shamatha, when you're meditating you're in Shamatha, you're in actual Shamatha. Remember, coarse mind has many levels. So if we're doing Shamatha practice, this threshold between - you know, psychology talk about conscious-unconscious or subconscious. Now, there's a lot of subconscious, unconscious stuff, but that's all coarse. If we're doing Shamatha practice, that threshold goes down, down, down, down to the point where we actually achieve Shamatha, we move from coarse to subtle.

Student: And that's a non-conceptual state, or slightly conceptual?

Glen: Slightly conceptual. When you're in this state, see....., both of these are what's called 'conditioned consciousness'. And here, this is called 'conceptual', and often this is said to be 'non-conceptual'. You know, it said that when you achieve this state in Shamatha, your mind is clear, non-conceptual and blissful. That's you know, the three qualities. But actually, if you read the fine print on non-conceptual' here, it says: no 'coarse conceptuality', right? Because here, there's still a sense of an agent. If you're resting in Shamatha, there's still a subtle sense of being an agent, a 'me' that's experiencing this. Whatever you call it: observer, agent, whatever, person. But of course, down here, we've gone beyond all of that. This level of consciousness.....

See, thing is: we people often want to understand this, using our conceptual mind, and it is impossible. I mean, it's impossible, you can't. So we want to pigeon-hole it, you know. But here, course, we're talking....., this you know, from a Buddhist perspective, is the foundation of all of Samsara and Nirvana. Time-space emerge from this.

Student: So it's not clear like consciousness?

Glen: It is. (There) is another word for this: 'primordial', is 'clear light mind'. In some traditions, they use the word 'Buddha Nature' to mean this. In Mahamudra they talk about 'ordinary mind', in Dzogchen it's Rigpa, its Ground Luminosity..... 'Indistructible Drop'. Many names, it's given a lot of different names. So here this is, of course, then it's beyond individuation. And, you know, it's beyond existence or non-existence. So, we can't....., you know, we say: "it's beyond the extreme of existence, because you can't find it, you can't point to it. But it's beyond the extreme of non existence, because it's the basis of all of Samsara and Nirvana". Mean.... to try and say more of that is, you're trying to put it in a box. With that's its conceptual. So, yeah.

Student: (question inaudible)

Glen: No. Very subtle. From a Buddhist perspective, this only manifests at the time of death in a normal person, otherwise is dormant. So, we're not here in deep sleep. I mean, of course, there are some sort of parallels in terms of waking, dreaming, sleep. You know, because when we go from waking into dreaming, to sleep, we move through levels. But if we're not sort of going: waking, dreaming, deep-sleep,

Student: (unintelligible comment)-----

Glen: But see, 'collective' is dualistic thinking. See, the thing is that mistakenly....., you know, when we talk about this 'non-duality' that I briefly mentioned.... Often people mistakenly - there's a term in Tibetan for that - but often people mistakenly translate that as, "we're all one".

We're not all one!

One means: "identical". Are we identical? No! Are we identical to the World? No! So the word in Tibetan is literally: "not-two", meaning: non-dual. Non-dual, not-two doesn't mean: "one". "One" is dualistic. You can only have one if there's two. All you can say is: not-two. So the idea of a collective consciousness is dualistic talk.

Student: To get rid of suffering do we have to work on our perceptions?

Glen: Right. So, to get rid of suffering, do we have to work on our perceptions? That's a very interesting question. So, the Buddhist assertion is: to get rid of our suffering, we have to go back to the source, which is this which is our distorted view of reality. And we overcome this by gaining a correct view of reality through the the Vipassana practice to realise this non-duality, this 'Emptiness'. And if we realise that, we will eventually eliminate all of this, and then suffering.

But the Buddhist assertion is that, this mistaken dualistic appearance is very difficult to get rid of. So, someone who's got rid of this, and thereby got rid of this, and achieved liberation, in Buddhism, often called an 'Arahat', even an Arahat has this. So even an Arahat, when they look out in the world, the world appears to exist independent of them. But because they have realised emptiness, they know this is not the way things are. It's like being..... like a lucid dream. If you become lucid in a dream the world, the 'dream-world' still appears to exist independent of the 'dream-me', doesn't it? Same appearance.

But now because we are lucid, we know this dream-world is not independent of us, even though it appears to be. Same with an Arahat, because they realized emptiness The world is still appearing as if exists independent of them, but they know that that's not how it is. So, they never buy into it. So, it's never a problem. So that's in the Mahayana Buddhist traditions. This is how we move from liberation, from Nirvana to enlightenment. Is, we need to get rid of this. (In) Nirvana we still got this, we're an Arahat. Then we need to get rid of this. And (that's) difficult. We need Bodhichitta to help us to get rid of that, together with emptiness. Then we can slowly get rid of this and we can achieve enlightenment. An enlightened person does not have this mistaken appearance, this perception.

What that means, for us is unimaginable. We've never had that experience. It's like, we can't even relate to that. How is it possible to have perception that... where things do not appear actually to be independent of us? For us? That's just it's mind boggling, because we've never had that.

Student: Can you just Explain Bodhichitta?

Glen: So, Bodhichitta is just the aspiration for enlightenment. 'Bodhi' is enlightenment, 'Chitta' is mind - 'mind of enlightenment' is just an aspiration for enlightenment. So last question, then we need to finish, I think we run over time.

Student: So I listen to a lot of Ram Das..... (rest inaudible)

Glen: Sure, I think it is true that certain psychedelic drugs like 'ayahuasca', 'mescaline' and so forth, could have a very strong effect on the mind. And we could have some hallucinatory experience that may be helpful in us shaking us out of this belief that this is how things are. But personally, I've never met anyone who's even got remotely close to enlightenment, using psychedelic drugs. Personally, I've met quite a number of people who've tried to use psychedelic drugs, particularly 'ayahuasca' - now it's very popular - to use it as a spiritual path, and eventually have come to the conclusion: it's not going to get them very far.

And they've actually stopped taking it, now they're trying to meditate. So I've met a number of people who've done that. But I've never met anyone who's achieved any high level of a realisation using 'ayahuasca' or any other hallucinogenic. And unfortunately, of course, some of these hallucinogenics, long term use can really fry the brain and the body. And of course, if we're a little bit psychologically unstable, we can have a bad trip and do deep psychological damage to our mind. So, you know, it's sort of playing with dynamite.

So, as from my personal opinion, as maybe a door of entry, possible. But again, I wouldn't even recommend that. But I've found that a number of people have done that as a way of expanding their perception and thinking, "well, maybe things are not as I see, let's, let's investigate them in a sustainable way". And I think meditation is that sustainable way. So that's my perspective, and talking to quite a number of people who've tried to do this, the feedback that I've been getting from most people. Last question, then we need to stop.

Student: (question inaudible)

Glen: I mean, here we said: the three core areas in all Buddhist practice is this ethics, concentration, wisdom. And I mean, what you're talking about here is this practice: concentration. And to develop single-pointed concentration, we can focus on any one of many things. And in many Buddhist traditions the the main emphasis is the breath. So, if that works for us, good, use that. If you find the mind too difficult, stay with the breath.

You may find if you're working with the breath, and your mind becomes more focused and clear and so forth, and stable, and then you go to observe the mind, you may find it's going to be a bit easier. Now, of course, our mind is all over the place.

So, you may find if you use the breath for some weeks, months or longer and you really get a lot of progress, then you shift to the mind, then not only will you find it much easier to use the mind but you're going to find a lot of side benefits that you won't get with the breath.

Because if you use the mind as the object- particularly for us in the modern world- many of us in the modern world are the slaves of our mind. We're often tormented and overwhelmed by our thoughts, emotions and memories. If we use the mind as the object for the Shamatha practice, we're going to become the masters of our mind, not the slaves. And that is going to be one huge side benefit of using the mind. But if it doesn't, if you find it too difficult, then yes, start with the breath. Work with that, develop some stability and clarity and then shift to the mind and you probably find it will work a lot better.

Okay, we better stop there, we've run over time. So, thanks for coming this evening. And I hope you got something out of this evening and I hope to be back again, sometime next year.

Student: Thank you, please come back.

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