

The Fundamentals of Buddhism **Ajahn Panyavaddho**

I'll start off with fundamentals. The fundamental nature of Buddhism is based on the human being, and what the human being is. The Buddha found there was one fundamental problem.... that everybody had. And that was the problem with discontent. Everybody is discontented, nobody is contented at all. Discontent is really our motive for doing things. We do things because we think it's going to bring us more contentment.. Sometimes discontentment becomes rank suffering, sometimes its just little irritations, but always it's there. And this, the Buddha saw was the fundamental problem that everybody had. And everybody is trying to overcome it all the time. Big ways or small ways. Everybody, it doesn't matter whether they are Buddhist or what they are. He saw that this was the problem.

Which is in fact: He analysed this problem and he saw that this problem came from craving. The wanting all the time. And with this wanting one's mind constantly goes out and searches for things. Then desire comes up and it wants to get that thing and goes out to grab that, whatever it is. And when it does that, then it tries to satisfy by that means this discontent. But when it goes out to grab things like that it also produces a state of attachment to the objects it grasps after. When it gets things which it like it wants these more and more. They get attached to them. When they find things they dislike they want to get rid of them. And then they get attached to not wanting those things as well. When we have this attachment, this keeps us going on in the way that we set up the situation in the past. In other words we've set up attachment to things; Those attachments come up time after time after time, and lead us in the same way.

This causes us to go, until we come to the end of our life. And when we come to the end of our life there is the remainder of what we've got within us; of the seeds of what we've planted by our actions. And that grasps at a new life. So we go on the next time. And the same sort of thing happens and we go on the next time. We go on and on and on like this.

Most people want endless life. But in fact if they realised the nature of it, they wouldn't. They would see that the only thing to do is to try and stop this. To try and get to some satisfaction. Something really satisfactory. The trouble is that we always want things based upon, (What we call the Kilesas) the defilements within ourselves.

These defilements are greed, hate and delusion. These are caused by fundamental ignorance. The ignorance in us doesn't understand what the right way of things are; doesn't understand what we are, why we are here, where we've been, where we're going to. When people don't understand this, then they *suppose* all the time. They suppose that this is the right way and that's the right way. They suppose that if they follow other people it will be right, because everybody's going that way. And they suppose that if they see something they want they should try and get it. Because they feel that that will make them happy. And they get it but that just satisfies them for a short while. But then the old habit of wanting comes back again. Very very quickly too. So they keep on going on doing the same thing time after time.

Now, when people have discontent and they search for the cure to it. They use a method of cause and effect. If somebody had discontent, if they feel bored; they think how can I get rid of this boredom. What will overcome it? And they think of something and they go and do it or they get it or whatever it happens to be. If they have wisdom, they understand the situation, then they do the right thing. And they will in fact bit by bit get rid of that discontent.

The problem is, people have this ignorance in them and they keep doing the wrong thing all the time. Because they don't know. This is what the Buddha saw, and he saw in His wisdom the correct way that people should act..... And how to overcome this situation. The right way is to get rid of this attachment and this craving we have within us. Because if we're attached we keep going on in the same old way. And once we have the craving we create that attachment. That attachment comes from craving. So what we have to do is get rid of that craving.

Now craving comes because of feeling. We get feelings, we feel discontented, we feel irritated, upset. When that feeling arises, then there comes the craving to overcome that feeling. And the person then acts in whatever way they think is going to cure it. And if in fact they had wisdom to see what is the right way, they could do it. But the trouble is, when it comes like that from feeling, feeling giving rise to the craving; immediately they're on the wrong path, they're going in the wrong direction to cure it. And this is the way most of the world is going. When most of the world is going like this one's bound to have plenty of trouble in the world. I don't need to tell you about that I think you know enough about it. The trouble in the world has always been there one way or another. And it will continue. Because these Kilesas, these defilements, are there in people. And if they're there in people, there's bound to be trouble, the whole time.

For ourselves, we've learned to search, to some extent, for a cure to this, for the right way. Because we've learned the right way we can see how to do things properly. So we can slowly learn to undo this situation that we've got caught. Because we are caught in a situation. We're caught in a sort of repetitive process. Where the results of what we've done in the past, keep doing those things which bring us back to those same things in the future. And we just keep rolling along like a wheel, going along all the time on the same path. Sometimes veering this way sometimes veering that way. The whole this is we're going along on that path the whole time. And the wise person, when they see this and they realise this; they want to do something about it; they want to get free from the situation. The Buddha taught: when a situation is caused such as this, then if you stop the cause then you can stop the situation. It may not stop straight away; but you're going towards the ceasing of that situation.

And he taught that if one stops this craving, then one can slowly undo the situation. The results of what one's done in the past will come out and the whole situation become weaker and weaker. Then one then comes to a satisfaction and a contentment, which one has never had before. The path the Buddha taught for doing that (which again is a cause thing). If one wants the cessation of discontent one had got to produce the causes for it. And the causes are what the Buddha called the Path, the Eightfold Path. The path one has to do to overcome this situation. It's basically made up of moral behaviour, mental training (to control one's mind) and wisdom. Those are the three things that are necessary. It's the wisdom that overcomes these defilements within one.

But in order to have the wisdom that will do that, one must have the mental training. One's mind has got to be trained up and sharp. It's like, if you want to cut a tree, you have to sharpen up the axe first. When the axe is sharp then you can cut the tree. If you do it with a blunt axe it's difficult. And so one has to train oneself, one has to practice these ways, and slowly if one does that, one will get results.

Firstly morality: morality in Buddhism concerns only speech and action; not thought. Because thought is subtle. Thought is difficult to control. Morality in Buddhism is: our relation to the world. We have to set up our relation to the world so there are no attachments. So that we can feel free from the world. So that we don't feel there is any guilt anywhere, or anything pulling us in that direction. If we've done bad things and we're still doing those bad things, then when one sits down to do one's meditation practice, inevitable those things will come up and cause some trouble. So in order to do the meditation practice properly, one has got to be free. Free from these guilts and things within one. Because of that the moral practice is absolutely essential.

In the way of the world there are the normal five moral precepts, which we use. These are the minimum behaviour necessary to make the human being. It is said that if one keeps these five moral precepts: the precept not to kill, steal, indulge in wrongs sex, use wrong speech (bad speech) and finally to take drinks and drugs (which dull the mind). If one trains oneself to keep these, one will retain one's status as a human being. It is said that if one doesn't keep those, to that extent one is going below the human level. It is also said that if one trains oneself in higher things than that, one goes to a higher level. The moral training is very important in that respect. In addition if one practices morality, this will bring one a certain degree of contentment. It brings one satisfaction of knowing that one hasn't done anything wrong, that nobody can rightly claim that one has done something wrong; and one feels a freedom from that.

And the contentment that one knows that 'one's all right where the world is concerned'. And at the same time there will be within one, a certain restlessness, a certain hankering for things, wanting, craving; in other words the discontent is there but in a more subtle manner. More subtle than the discontent of bad morality. To overcome that discontent one has to train the mind. One trains the mind by putting one's attention onto a single object or a single phenomena. Usually we use the breathing at the tip of the nose. Some people will use the word 'Buddho.'

If one does that and one keep one's attention on that (and the important thing is to keep one's attention.) then steadily the mind will become more and more...xxxxx...The distractions which one usually has, tend to die away. When I say that it can take quite a long time depending on the person. Some people can do it very quickly. With most people it's quite a job to control the mind. It's a very long time in which it has learned to go the wrong way, in which it's been distracted, thinking about this, thinking about that, wandering all over the place. And it doesn't readily give way to the meditation practice. The reason why it doesn't give way is because of these defilements within us.

If they weren't there it would be easy. We've got these defilements, they are within us and they keep coming up all the time. They act like demons. They cause one trouble the whole time. So one does the meditation practice and it's quite hard work for quite a long time, but steadily the results come. Bit by bit they come. As they come one gets more calm more contentment. One gets a feeling of confidence that one's on the right path. And when one gets that feeling of confidence, it makes one want to do it more and more the whole time. The practice gradually improves. As one's practice of controlling one's mind, one becomes more focused more concentrated and the practice becomes easier. Until one finds that one can get into the practice quite easily. When that happens the mind is well tamed, well controlled. Then it is time to turn and develop wisdom.

One develops wisdom by first of all calming the mind with the practice of calm, the practice of holding the mind there on that single object. Then once it's calm one turns and one investigates. First of all one's own body: What is this body? Who's it? Where did it come from? Where does it go to? Is this what I call me? What sort of thing is it? Is it pleasant, unpleasant? Is it a joyful thing?

We have to look for ourselves and see; find out for ourselves what the situation is. When we do that we come to see: this body isn't me, it isn't mind, the body belongs to the world, it's part of the world, it's made up of the world. It's made up of food. We take food and it goes into the food goes into the body and it replenishes the body. So we find out that the body is in fact something separate from me. When one can see that, can see that the body is something separate; then one finds that the concern about the body diminishes. One is not so worried about death, one is not so worried about the possibility of getting disease or getting pains and aches. This itself is again where one decreases the discontent, The discontent is gradually dieing away.

As one goes on at this, one comes finally to realise in full extent, that the body is completely separate from me, it's not me, never was me, it belongs to the world. When one's got to that realisation one's really far into the practice. Not many people get there. One can then look at the mind and ask oneself what is the mind.

The mind in Buddhism is made up of four things: feelings, memory, thought, consciousness. Those four! All four of these come from one basic thing, we call the *Citta*. The citta is the (how can I put it?) it's the underling thing that's within one; it's always there. One way we put it: we call it '*the one who knows*'. 'The one who knows' is the citta, it's the central theme. And the one who knows is the one who's been trapped. It's been trapped by turning itself into consciousness, into thought, into feeling, into memory. The whole thing comes from this 'one who knows' This 'one who knows' is not free and is always causing us trouble. It's causing us trouble because it's got these defilements within it.

The defilements are within one's own heart, and the 'one who knows' is within the heart and the Dhamma (the right way) is in the heart. Both of these are in the one who knows. If you want to know who the 'one who knows' is you will have to ask yourself how you know things. And look and realise that when you see things or hear things you know them. No question about it! And if you see, for example, the colour red, you know that perfectly well for yourself. You know what it's like you know the experience. But in no way can you tell anyone else what that experience is. There just isn't any way you can tell them. You use the word 'red' and you rely on the other person's experience. You rely on the other person having an experience similar to yourself. Really speaking, you don't know if they see it in the same way as you do or not. The way on the one who knows is like that. If you hear something, you know what you hear, but you don't know if anybody else hears it the same way as you do or not. All you can say is, that by physiology, that the mechanism of the body is similar in both cases. That doesn't mean that the experience is necessarily the same. If you try to explain to somebody what a sound is or a particular colour is or anything of that sort, any experience you get, you find you can't do it. You have to refer that that person's experience is the same thing. So if you get somebody who has been blind from birth, you can tell them as much as you like about seeing but they won't understand. There is no way they can. It's the one who knows these things is what we call 'the one who knows'. That is the one which can become free.

That thing is not physical; it's not a thing of the world. It only becomes a thing of thing of the world because of these kilesas, these defilements. The one who knows is infected by them. When it's infected by them it's got ignorance in it. When it's got ignorance in it, it hasn't got confidence in itself. When the one who knows has got no confidence in itself, then it has to grab hold of things to have confidence in. So that we have to have things about, we have to have other people, other objects, sensations, all sorts like that. We have to have about us to give us confidence of our own existence. Our existence is something that we make up by relationship to all these things that we xxxx that we know.

So what we call that one who is relating to these, we call my self. But this self that I've got is a changing thing, it's not the same thing from one moment to the next. It's really an impostor, making out that it's something that it isn't. The idea of self is the idea of some entity within one, which is permanent fixed there. But that idea is wrong. The way people use the word self is a way which sometimes it's body, sometimes it's feeling, sometimes it's thought. You get somebody who says 'I'm going to a door???' When they say they're moving their body to a door. So it is body there. If a person says "I'm tired" or "I don't feel happy" it is feeling. If a person says "I think it's like this or like that" That's thought. All the time it is different things-this self. Never one thing, it's constantly changing about all the time. When it's changing about you can't say what it is because it's a changing thing. When it's a changing thing, it doesn't deserve the name of the 'self'. Because the idea of self is something that is permanent.

So we say in Buddhism that this self is not a true thing, an impostor, and it's the training of the Buddha to realise the nature of the self that it's not a true thing at all. By overcoming that self one can get back to the one who knows, it's true nature, but it's difficult. Because we haven't got the faith in the one that knows. And you can't just have great faith in it like that, you have to build up faith. To build up faith in it we've got to have knowledge, understanding. We've got to be able to see it with insight into what we are. The way we work. And gradually by cutting off the things that we're not we come to what we are. What I mean by that is, if we cut off the body we see that this isn't me. Now that one's gone so I don't need to worry about that. Then if I cut off the feeling, we see that that's not me. By cut off I don't mean you get rid of it, you're removing it from the idea that 'I am that'. And similarly with the other things the thought, memory, consciousness. One sees that I am not these things here. When one sees that one slowly gains confidence in this one who knows. And when one gains confidence in the one who knows one can then make the jump, and become that, entirely. That's the final result. A few make it not many, it's a very difficult thing to do.

But there are people who have and it's worth trying. In fact when one comes to it really, there is nothing else to do. Whatever anything else one does in life is like playing. So we like children playing with toys. The only way is, to try and find the way out of this situation. And then by example to attract other people. That's about all one can do. 29'08

Q & A

Question:every still according to.....Something about memory and permanence.....

Yes but it requires the ignorance also to be deluded by this memory. So if delusion is not there the memory doesn't matter. If the realisation is there of what the nature of memory is, then it's not a hindrance at all. The thing is there is nothing wrong fundamentally with the body with the feeling, with memory, with thoughts, with consciousness. They're just phenomena, they're part of the world, part of the way things are. That not where the fault lies. The fault lies in ones own heart. Because in ones heart there is what's good and what's evil. And evil is these kilesas. And that's where the fault lies. You can say if you like, 'the devil's in the heart'. that's where is really is.

Outside there its just all phenomena. In people for that matter. In fact my understanding is the meaning of life is this 'one who knows' Where that is not, there is no life. Animals have one; these chickens have 'the one who knows' there too. It's a bit dim but it's there. And the thing to realise is, whatever happens, the one who knows is there. If somebody get Alzheimer's disease the 'one who knows' is still there. 'The one who knows' still knows. If the person's got brain damage the one who knows will still know. But what it knows is just its situation, it can't reflectively know the situation. But there's knowing there. All the time it knows.

One can think back how, when one was very young, one new things. One may not of understood them much but one new them, just the same. And when you were older one also knew things; in the same way. And as grown older and older there's knowing in just the same way; it's always there.

Philosophers throughout the ages have always had a lot of difficulty with knowing. How we know things? There's always been a problem. And the problem is there because they are looking at it in the wrong way. Because the philosophers for the first part have kilesa (have defilements). And having defilements they really can't see the situation When they can't see their own situation, they can't realise what knowing means.

Memory is very important. Before this world view is very important too. Because this is the thing that traps it, so much. We have a view or the world that of that everything that's learned. Whenever we see anything or hear anything we refer to that view and see where it is. Where in my past have I seen something like this? Most of the things we meet, of course, are things that we are familiar with (around us). Familiarity means that we've got a view of them. And that we've got a plan inside of the situation. Wherever we've got a plan, we usually go to, this part is there; from memory. The trouble is, when we've got that plan; if that plan's been build in cohorts with the defilements (the kilesa), the plan itself is distorted. When the plan is distorted, the tendency for us to understand this is distorted. And then it's difficult to understand the truth, because the truth is then distorted by this plan that's wrong inside.

Comment: Wrong programming!

It is yes. The only thing is that one mustn't think that memory in a human being is like memory in a computer. It's not the same thing. I would say that a human being has got a similar type of memory, which is a store. But mostly the memory in a human being is an active memory not a passive. In other words; it rather like a line of soldiers. And the sergeant major say "Who can play the piano?" Then somebody comes "I can" . "Alright you peel the potatoes." 34"33 That's the way they work. But the thing is there; he finds out because there's a response..... with memory you call for something and the response must some from memory, now complete with out feelings. Sergeant major relax!

Question: Sometimes I wonder when I.....That one comes back to the way of wanting to get of.....defilements.....Are we

The thing is, one must realise that in the heart, it's not only kilesas there's also Dhamma. There's two there. And it just depends on which ever.... Comes up the most. One has the defilements which have built up this view and memory from the past. So to an extent on is looking at things form the wrong view point; which has been built up in the past; this is the world view I talk about. They give us a view of the world, and a view of things, and it it's not correct. When one's got the memory set up like that one tends to have a fundamental wrong view of most situation one is in. To an extent there is always a wrong view in the normal person. It's where everything is seen wrong. Because the plan has been built up in the past, based on these kilesas, on these defilements. Because that plan has being built up buy them, the way one looks at things tends to be in terms of that plan. In other words, we don't go to the evidence. We don't look for the evidence for things. Because we don't look at the evidence we accept things as the plan tells us.

Comment:book about read aboutdieing
It seems to me thatbring the Dhamma with them

Yes to some extent its there in children, but the thing is the kilesas are also there from the past. They don't come completely brand new.

Comment: And then they get all the.....

But really the Dhamma....., the world is something the mind catches onto. It grasps at the world. A child will pick up the world in its natural way. And its natural way depends on its past. It picks up the world in this way, and that way. You can see here being born as an animal; then they can only pick up the world in the way of that animal. They can't pick it up in the way a human being does. Even though they may have human characteristics from the past.

Because the basis..... And that can only see things from the viewpoint of an animal.

Comment:I think they have a sense of a human being in them. Like they used to live in a home before.

I don't know about that. but when Bikkus go into the forest to and live in the forest and practice; the animals come. I think they feel a certain security. That's probably what it is.

Comment: My memory is telling me to avoid that poison plant. And my memory is also telling me to avoid that person. That person hurt me last year.

But if you look in yourself; when you look at a poisonous plant and you learn to avoid it; there isn't the same attitude. Quite a different attitude! When you meet a person, who has harmed you or done something wrong; the attitude doesn't look. When you meet the plant you know it's inanimate. You know perfectly well it doesn't intend to harm you, you just have to be very careful not to touch it. And that's all, that what it comes to.

When you meet person, one feels that person should have characteristics similar to oneself. And one expects of them what you would expect of yourself. And of course the other person may not quite see it like that. That's the trouble.

Question: Would it not also be wisdom to avoid that person?

If one can't overcome the situation by any other way, it's best off to avoid. If you see that person and hatred arises. Hatred itself is damaging. The best thing is then to avoid meeting the person. Anyway until you overcome the situation in yourself. When you overcome the situation it doesn't matter.

To overcome the situation it's really a matter of practice; meditation practice; watching one's own thoughts. Then one may develop some control of one's self there. Until the whole thing just disappears. There's no longer that much potential to bring up any harm. One has to see that the unpleasant sensation that comes up when one meets that person; there is nothing wrong with that, it's just a result from the past. What is wrong is the thought. When the thought comes up: "I don't like that person" this, that.... That's what's bad. Because that's making Karma; producing seeds for the future.

Comment:It might often be wise to avoid that person.....

Yes, if one feels.....

Yes to avoid the person, that might be an expedient method.

Here one has to use wisdom and adapt to circumstances. The way of wisdom here is accept: 'well I don't think I can control myself, and it may bring me more harm if I meet that person, best thing is to keep out of the way.' That's all! This is the way wisdom.

Comment:knowledge as apposed to the conceptual....

....another person might think 'That person's done me harm. I want to meet him because I want to bonk him one!

This can happen to. He wants to settle the thing. but in the wrong way.

The difference between those two is the wisdom. The person who goes out to have a go at the other person; that's his own hatred. It causes more problems, because it doesn't really deal with the situation inside.

All these problems come because of attachment. Attachment fundamentally to self. Self is the problem. Self is the thing, time after time that causes the trouble.

I'd like to comment on self. Everybody knows that selfishness is a wrong thing. Yet if self is the truth, and real, then selfishness is the highest virtue. But it isn't.

When one has self, one attributes value to that self. Then when somebody says something to one which diminishes self; up comes the hatred to try and reclaim the value of self. This is because one's got the idea of self and the value of self. Though at the same time one must realise how much of a problem it is, because the self is one of the last things to be gotten rid of. The idea of self! Attachment to self! It's very persistent and very difficult to overcome. You can overcome it in certain respects here and there, but fundamentally the real overcoming of the whole thing doesn't come until right at the end.

In the world the self is very important. What we think of the self. Because we have interest, and rely on it. Social position! Pecking order in various situations. The relationship; who shall be the boss, from the government down. Who is prepared..... It all involves the idea of self the whole time.

One sees people in the world, how so many of them are in a helpless situation. They're helpless because they're not interested to do anything about it. The lack of interest makes them helpless. If a person's got interest, they want to find out what's wrong, they want to cure themselves; then there is some hope there. But for people who don't care; and they absolutely disinterested. Their interest just goes out into the world all the time; very difficult to do anything!

It's because of that that the Buddha said that he said only a few with little dust in their eye. Not many, a few!

Question: ...you said the idea of the self is one of the last things.....but how come in the path its the very first thing that one should get rid of?.....

But the fundamental idea of self is the relationship to other people and things. With comparison. and those go on and on and on. Whether it's the self or whatever we call it, it's the fundamental thing that's there. The relationship: me here, that one there! It the dividing out into this and that! And then the suggestion there, is the word *viññāna* the suffix *vi* means to divide into two; and *ñāna* means to knowing. A divided knowing, in other words the 'one who knows' divides. There's a subject/object. That's where *namarupa* comes up. Because it divides! When you've got those two then everything goes from there.

Question: Does it operate that way in *vibrdhahana*?

The *vi* suffix isn' t always a suffix. Sometimes it's part of the word. Ajahn Chah puts it nicely *bhavatanhā* is the wanting of life. Or really the wanting to remain. Want this to go on. *vibhavatanhā* is wanting it to change.

Continues with a discussion on some Pali words.

Comment: ...that's the fundamental problem we divide into.....when we see red.....

As far as colours are concerned, for example we see red. That's just a bare experience. And the bare experience is the first stage in the division. Because, the me seeing that. I see that. The separation is there. But then one goes on to think about it. And then one makes comparisons. To make a comparison, one's got to retain that in memory and then consider a different colour. And then we bring to two together in memory. It's a mental thing, it's not external at all. It's inside, it's in the mind! A comparison! It goes back and forth, a feeling of this was pleasant or that was pleasant. And then the decision is made, 'Oh I like this one better' Very complex!

Comment:memory is an illusion.....

It's hard to know if one should call it illusion or delusion. I don't know!

Comment:deception is probably a better word.....

Yes, there is deception there, but what I'm not sure about is whether there is another way of knowing the nature of this world, and bodies and things. What we know from our own body, we know it by feeling. Feeling is the main thing! We can see a little bit of it, but feeling is the real matter. What we know is feeling.

When we come down to what actually is the physical body; I don't really know. It talks about the four elements in the Tipitika. But when ask what are these four elements. And how does one know these four elements, then one doesn't really know it's not that simple. There are some problems there.....LAUGHTER.....

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