

Knowing Without Creating the Knower

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[00:00] Happiness and Dhamma to you this morning. We drive (the Dhamma) home, we remind, so that it does not fade, so that it is not forgotten and we do not go astray. Listening to the Dhamma (the teaching of the Buddha) is practice too. It is one of the ways by which this mind can become free. Study, reflection, recitation, listening, practising concentration (samādhi): these are the ways that lead to reaching the truth.

[00:42] Let us not look at the Dhamma as something mysterious. For the Dhamma is in fact the truth, which we must learn and understand so as not to get lost and cling; and in the very end, so as to let go. Even this "knower" that teachers speak of among meditators, this searching for the knower, this creating of a knower, is still something the mind creates (saṅkhāra). In truth there is nothing to create and nothing to search for. It (the mind) just knows, by itself. There is no knower, there is only knowing. If there is a knower, that is simply deluded knowing.

[01:32] It depends on what view we hold towards that doing (the practice). The most important thing of all is the view. That is why the noble path begins with view, with correct view (sammā-diṭṭhi), the right, the accurate view. When the view is correct, thinking goes in the correct direction, and action and speech go in the same direction, because the start is right.

[02:09] So we must understand that the teaching of the Buddha is not merely a set of beliefs, and the Buddha did not teach us to believe. It is going in and proving the truth of what the Teacher said. When we study and practise in earnest, the result shows itself, step by step; wisdom arises step by step.

[02:44] In the language meditators use, the word "the knower" is used. That is still something concrete, it is still a self (attā), there is still a someone. If we really look at the teaching of the Buddha: mind and body (nāma-rūpa): feeling, perception, what the mind creates, consciousness, that is, the five aggregates (khandha). There is form, there is feeling, there is perception, there is what the mind creates, there is consciousness. So where does this knower come from? Where does this "heart" (citta, the mind) come from? When one is lost, it is there. It is stuck, entangled: that is why it is called citta (in Thai, "stuck", tit, sounds like citta).

[03:41] Citta, mano, viññāṇa (heart, mind-sense, consciousness). Mano is the leaning towards, the aiming at something. Viññāṇa (consciousness) is the state of clear knowing: when something strikes, when something comes and touches the senses, knowing arises. But because it clings to form, it gets stuck in that knowing, and that is then called citta. So it goes round in circles. Because one cannot put the knowing down, that is why it is tension, stress and suffering (dukkha). One does not let go of the knowing, because one does not know how. If it gets stuck in the knowing, it is gone, it falls out of the truth, out of the present. It gets lost in the knowing, grabs the knowing, and out of that comes "I know". That is being lost.

[04:52] So in order to understand, in our study we have to go back to the sense bridges (āyatana). In the language of the Pali: elements (dhātu), aggregates (khandha), sense bridges (āyatana). That is study in forward order, from cause to effect. But in practice one has to go in reverse, from the effect back to the cause, in order to destroy the cause, in order to clearly know the origin (samudaya), the cause of suffering. So one comes in and guards the sense bridges. Whoever does not yet catch the sense bridges in time is still far from the teaching of the Buddha.

[05:47] When we guard eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind: that is the study of the Dhamma. One studies the truth that arises. There are no words for it. Guard the sense bridges so that you catch them in time, and then you understand, then you can take apart what the aggregates are: the aggregate of form, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of perception, the aggregate of what the mind creates, the aggregate of consciousness. Those are still heaps (khandha means heap). Looked at more finely, they are elements of form and elements of mind, merely

elements, nothing more. They arise, persist and pass away, only according to causes and conditions. And the teaching of the Buddha points exactly here. This is where we are to come in and study.

[06:57] So if we do not catch the sense bridges in time, we do not see the striking, the contact (phassa). To come in and guard here, there is only one way in: developing the noble path, that is, the four foundations of mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna). That is the open way. Mindfulness (sati) dwelling in the body, so that one knows the body all round, clearly knows feeling, clearly knows this "heart", that is, the one that gets lost, the one that knows in a deluded way. Only then does one understand the Dhamma, the truth. The Dhamma is the truth. It is not a self, not a person, it does not stand permanently. The Dhamma too is impermanent; nothing is permanent. So there is no reason to hold on to anything. All things are not worth holding on to.

[08:11] So this is where we come in and study. We see the various movements (of the mind), instead of being lost only in the outside. The four foundations of mindfulness, that is developing the noble path. Let us not get lost only in the matter of concentration. There is plenty of concentration that leads astray. One sits and sees images (nimitta) and gets lost in the images, without knowing that one is being pulled out of concentration into wrong concentration (micchā-samādhī). Powers exist, miraculous powers exist. But that is not concentration on the way the Buddha taught. But he said that they exist, and they really do exist.

[09:00] Like the ascetics and forest hermits who practised these things even before the Buddha awakened: the various levels of deep concentration (jhāna) existed then already. One directs the mind at this or that and can know it, if the power of the mind is enough. But it does not lead to the ending of suffering, because it is knowing that goes outward. That is the cause from which suffering arises, the origin (samudaya).

[09:27] Now, developing the four foundations of mindfulness rests at the start on training mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati). Mindfulness of breathing is, at the start, a training. Because this mind of ours strays outside. It does not know where it lives, it has no home. So one has to train it, educate it. The hardest part is exactly this beginning. Because a mind that has never managed it has no familiarity with it. One wants to tame it, and it will not be trained. So one has to subdue this mind first. If one uses the word "heart" (citta), that means it is still lost. One subdues it by tormenting it, but without letting it die; one does not kill it.

[10:24] Like when we have caught an animal and want to tame it. At first we have to lock it up. We do not let it run free. It has strength and power, so we cut down its food, so that it grows tamer. Only then can it be trained. A mind that is not trained is like an animal, like a wild animal: it follows its instinct. It goes with delusion, ruled by delusion (moha), that is, ruled by being lost.

[10:57] So coming in to know the breath is the first step, and the hardest. But we need patience, we need belief, faith (saddhā) and energy (viriya) in the practice. One just keeps training. There is no need to want to know anything. Train to be mindful, to remember and know at the breath, until the two stay firmly together. Whatever the mind then sees, whatever it knows: pay no attention, do not take it up. That can deceive. Illusions are built to deceive. It is something the mind creates.

[11:47] When one knows firmly at the breath and it no longer swings outside, this mind becomes calm at the start. That is called samatha (calming). Samatha is what makes the mind calm, lets it know at a single object, that is, fixed on a single object. What one sees then is therefore called jhāna (deep concentration): a seeing by staring. It is not yet ñāṇa (insight-knowledge), not yet an instrument of knowing. One still has to direct the knowing deliberately.

[12:24] Right here, when one gets here, there are lures, all kinds of images. And meditators get lost: they see an image and think they have attained the Dhamma, have got the Dhamma. So they deceive each other (teacher and pupil). As long as there is still an intention in the doing, one has not yet arrived at insight (vipassanā), not yet at the four foundations of mindfulness. One is still stuck in calm, stuck in the various worldly levels of deep concentration. That is exactly how people come to imagine themselves arahants (fully awakened ones). They know in a deluded way. The one who is one, isn't; the one who isn't, is (whoever thinks he is one, is not).

[13:17] So in training mindfulness of breathing, when we know as we follow the breath in and out: look right here. When one clearly knows, follows in, follows out, follows in, follows out: short in, know. Short out, know. Long in, know. Long out, know. In Pali the words are vitakka, directing the mind, and vicāra, examining, reflecting. Doing it like that, what one gains is nothing one sees (no image) and nothing one becomes.

[14:07] The growth of mindfulness develops into correct mindfulness (sammā-sati). For only when it is correct mindfulness does correct concentration (sammā-samādhi) arise, and only then does wisdom arise. Otherwise it is still wrong concentration. And if we go back here and look again: when one just keeps on merely knowing, the "being me", the view that there is a me, the view of self (sakkāya-diṭṭhi), gradually comes to an end. Form is not me. There is no more view that this form is me. There is no more "I know, I see".

[15:00] Those who are lost sit and see themselves as a body of light, a transparent body, they see themselves as crystal, as a bottle, they see this, that and the other and think they have seen the Dhamma-body (dhammakāya). There is no such thing. It is something the mind creates. Among the teachers who teach concentration, most are stuck right here. They teach their pupils: he has attained, she has attained, he has seen, she has seen. You have seen hell, and then what? Can you take it out and show it to your friends? You have seen heaven, and then what? Can you bring it down and show it to your friends?

[15:44] What one sees: where does the seen come from? Think carefully: where does what one sees come from? From perception (saññā). Everything one sees is a place one has been before. Without a cause it could not arise. We have been born in every realm, in many realms, many lives; we have been everywhere, from the lowest hell right up to the Brahma world. This mind has to wander like that. There is only one place it has never been: the pure abodes (suddhāvāsa). Because whoever goes there does not come back. Of all the Brahma realms, only the pure abodes belong to the Buddha's teaching; all the rest are Brahma realms outside the teaching.

[16:48] So the power of deep concentration can send one there. But without the power of wisdom, one keeps going round and round without end. Not to mention concentration (alone). So seeing things is nothing essential. Do not get lost in it, do not rejoice in it. That is exactly what leads astray. One sees crystals, bottles, streams, light, colours. All of that can be seen. But it has no importance at all.

[17:21] Going beyond that, some may come to hear people's thoughts, hear the thought-voices of this person and that. Images come: one sees far, sees near, sees events in advance. That exists, it is quite normal. It is nothing superhuman, it is merely worldly deep concentration. Do not take such things as important. But all the famous magic masters die right here (get stuck here). They have not even arrived at the way of the Buddha's teaching, and then everyone rushes off to consecrate (amulets), to conjure magic diagrams (yantra), to create this, that and the other. Do mental powers exist? Yes, they exist. It is not that they do not; the Buddha did not say they do not exist either. But they are not the way to get out of suffering. With them one is still not out of the lower realms (apāya).

[18:23] So put those things down. The moment you see something, return to the old place, the breath. Return to the truth, return to the present, return again and again. In the end it (the mind) puts down the present, puts down the breath, puts down the knowing, puts down the breath. It no longer carries the knowing around. It no longer stares. But mindfulness is ready, it stands ready. Then, when contact arises, when feeling (vedanā) arises: now one has entered the study out of which wisdom arises.

[19:04] Because there are sense bridges, there is contact. Because there is contact, there is feeling. When mindfulness catches it in time right here, it dams the stream, and it does not flow on into craving (taṇhā) and clinging (upādāna). Look back into the wheel of dependent arising (paṭiccasamuppāda: when this is there, that comes; when this stops, that stops): with not knowing (avijjā) as condition there is what the mind creates, there is consciousness, mind and body (nāma-rūpa), the six sense bridges, contact, feeling. Cutting off becoming and birth, one cuts right here. This is how one cuts. Cutting off enmity and kamma (cause and effect), one cuts the same way. When one catches feeling in time, one sees it fade, sees it cease, and one does not flow after it. So wisdom arises. Wisdom and mindfulness go together, they support each other.

[20:03] Without wisdom one cannot let go. Letting go is a matter of wisdom that catches things in time. It is not that one sets out to let go, has a craving to let go, an intention to let go and put down. When mindfulness catches things in time like that, it sees feeling. The more often it sees it, the more the intensity of the feeling recedes, its power falls back, back, back. Why? Because mindfulness becomes more complete and wisdom more thorough.

[20:48] And what one sees first is the side of the feelings that are suffering. That side can be let go of first, the side of unpleasant feeling. The side of pleasant feeling is suffering just the same, but there is still liking in it, so one cannot let it go. One knows one likes it, and still will not let it go, because one sees it as good.

[21:17] So, in real terms, in someone who comes into the training, aversion (dosa) must gradually decrease. Aversion grows weaker, until it is like this: when something strikes from the unpleasant side, irritation arises, annoyance in the heart, a ripple. But one catches the rippling of the mind, the annoyance, in time and can settle it right there. It does not develop into anger, because wisdom catches it in time. That is to say: the anger does not arise at all.

[22:03] But what I am describing here is already the four foundations of mindfulness, already the section on feeling. Here we have already crossed over into the study of the Dhamma. Why? Because one puts down the body and therefore sees the mind. One puts down thinking and therefore sees the truth, the Dhamma. One studies this very dependent arising. Not just concentration with eyes and ears shut: no wisdom comes of that. Bringing out deep concentration and this and that, talking about it and using it to put each other down: that lets nothing go. With the power of deep concentration one can hold it (the anger) down. But as soon as the power to hold it down runs out,

[22:46] it is like a branch we bend down. Much strength, bent far down. But the moment it slips from the hand, the further it was pulled down, the harder it springs back. When a meditator gets angry, it is more frightening than when someone who does not meditate gets angry. When he gets lost about himself (overrates himself), it weighs heavier than with someone who has never meditated. Like the branch that is pulled down and springs back: as far as one pulls it down, that far it springs back.

[23:20] But once wisdom has arisen, the displeasure is the first to decrease, little by little. Aversion is let go of, that is, it no longer arises. That is the real meaning. Look at the discourse that is the mirror of the Dhamma: the factors of stream-entry, the qualities of one who has reached the first noble fruit (the first stage of awakening). Such a one is no longer angry. But there is still irritation in the heart, there is still regret and longing. Yet anger has grown weaker until it is gone. Next the irritation too comes to an end. Then the mind reaches the next level, called sakadāgāmi (the second stage of awakening).

[24:22] In checking the teaching of the Buddha, one has to check it by proving it. The various teachings serve as a frame, as a guideline, as a hypothesis. We have to study Buddhism, the teaching of the Buddha, on principles, systematically. Not superstitiously, not just believing what the books say; that will not do. We have to turn it into principles and practise on correct principles, with a clear method. Only then does one see the real result.

[25:01] For Buddhism is a science by which one proves things. It is a theory the Buddha wrote down so that we take that theory into practice ourselves. Only then does one see the result, even though in the theory the summary of the result is already written down. As long as we have not seen it ourselves, it cannot be believed; this mind will not believe it, because it does not believe anything easily.

[25:35] So in the practice, mindfulness is the leading figure. But do not forget: mindfulness too is impermanent. It arises and passes, arises and passes. It is not something permanent that stands there like one long line. So all we can do is create the cause for that mindfulness to arise more often; create the cause. That is why one says: develop mindfulness, make mindfulness into correct mindfulness, let mindfulness become more complete.

[26:14] That is why in the teaching the Buddha gave, in the principles of real practice, the word mindfulness is there from the beginning, in three stages. Mindfulness at the beginning is training mindfulness of breathing. Mindfulness in the middle is mindfulness in the four foundations of mindfulness. Mindfulness at the end is mindfulness as a factor

of awakening (sati-sambojjhaṅga). The readiness, the completeness of mindfulness has different levels. So there is nothing at all that we gain in the practice; being lost just gradually comes to an end.

[27:01] Here one comes in and studies. When one catches feeling in time and sees it more and more often, it fades. Feeling grows less, grows less. It is wisdom that lets go. Letting go through wisdom. Then one sees it more quickly. From studying in the wheel of dependent arising, one sees the striking. From seeing the ripple one comes to see the striking.

[27:39] Like when we watch water when something falls in: there are waves, rings spreading outward. We learn our way inward, ring by ring by ring, until we see the point where something strikes the water and sets off the ripples. From seeing the ripple one comes in to see the striking. One comes in and studies what strikes and what is struck. That is studying in reverse (paṭiloma).

[28:26] And then one studies what is struck, the mind. It is this very "heart" that is struck. Because there is a me, there is contact. Where there is a screen and light, there is a shadow. Because there is a me, there is contact, there is the one that gets lost. Then one sees: what is known, and what comes in and knows, are not the same thing. The object is not the mind, the mind is not the object.

[29:03] That is studying in reverse: aware of oneself, awake, knowing, knowing. As soon as one knows fully all round, one puts the knowing down. Knowing without letting go, or letting go without knowing: there one is still lost. Most get stuck in deluded knowing, because they cannot put the knowing down. But when wisdom arises, when mindfulness is complete and wisdom arises, then it is merely knowing, merely knowing, merely knowing. Just knowing. One knows and has not grasped from the very start. So nobody has to let go. Where there is no arising, there is no dying. The cause of arising is finished; it ceases at feeling.

[30:03] Only then does one see clearly how it arises, how the five aggregates work; not from the book. The eye strikes form. One studies it from the sense bridges: eye and form, the six sense bridges. From that, eye-consciousness arises, seeing. The seeing: consciousness has arisen, depending on form. Consciousness arises, consciousness at the eye, consciousness at the ear. The stations of consciousness (viññāṇaṭṭhiti), the places where it stands: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind: the six kinds of consciousness.

[30:55] Now, when we study well, we see how the five aggregates work. Depending on form, eye-consciousness arises: seeing, at the start just seeing. Once seen, one recognises what is seen, that is, one remembers and recognises it: perception (saññā). Perception arises. Once recognised, what comes next? A thought comes up. Liking comes up, disliking comes up. Do you see? Perception, feeling, what the mind creates.

[31:54] A thought, a liking; what the mind creates and feeling can change places. But it begins at form and goes to consciousness. Consciousness, which stands last of all (in the list), comes first (in the process). Form is old kamma (the effect of earlier causes), you see? As soon as there is a cause, a striking, consciousness arises, perception arises. The working of the five aggregates has run its full round. Liking arises, disliking arises. The round is complete.

[32:39] This is coming in to study the stream of its arising. Whoever does not see it like this should not say they see the Dhamma, should not say they have attained the Dhamma. Seeing images: those are children in concentration, little kindergarten children. For in the Buddha's teaching, reaching the Dhamma means that suffering grows less. When one knows and understands, one is not lost, and then there is no suffering. No delight, no aversion, no dread, no chasing, no wanting.

[33:21] In study, then, one sees it just like that. Whether one sees it faster or slower, whether one is more or less lost, depends on the completeness of mindfulness. Once mindfulness stands ready at all times in all four foundations, body, feeling, mind and Dhamma: what one sees then follows no fixed order. Whatever comes, comes by itself; we cannot dictate it. But when mindfulness becomes more complete and stands ready at all times, it is given, from the four foundations of mindfulness on, a new name: mindfulness among the seven factors of awakening (bojjhaṅga).

[34:08] That is the way to true knowledge (vijjā), to liberation (vimutti). Whoever does not walk this way cannot reach liberation. As there is no footprint in the air, so there is no noble one outside of Dhamma and Vinaya (the teaching and the discipline). In short, the real core of Dhamma and Vinaya is the noble eightfold path. This is where one comes in and studies.

[34:35] When mindfulness stands ready, we look at the words of the Buddha, at the teaching of the Buddha: bojjaṅgo satisaṅkhāto, equipped with mindfulness at all times; mindfulness stands ready. Looking into the Dhamma, investigating the Dhamma along the stream, dhammānaṃ vicayo tathā, "the Dhamma is so". Then the effort, the energy (viriya). Then joy (pīti) arises. Then calming down (passaddhi). From that comes concentration, comes equanimity (upekkhā). That is developing the noble path.

[35:34] Bojjaṅgo satisaṅkhāto, dhammānaṃ vicayo tathā, viriyaṃ pīti passaddhi, bojjaṅgā ca tathāpare, samādhupekkhā bojjaṅgā: concentration and equanimity; one dwells in equanimity, mindful, and looks on. Satte te sabbadassinā, muninā sammadakkhātā, bhāvitā bahulikatā (these seven, rightly taught by the all-seeing sage, developed, practised often): ready at all times, looking into things at all times. And then comes the word abhiññāya, the higher knowing, higher and higher. Then follow abhiññāya, sambodhāya (to higher knowing, to awakening), relying on the power of mindfulness as it grows more complete.

[36:35] So what we see in images is all mere illusion. Do not get lost in delight over it, do not wallow in it. Those who imagine they have attained the Dhamma quarrel with each other without end, because they cannot put down the Dhamma they attained. They cannot put down the knowing, and so they suffer because of knowing. Knowing without letting go: that knowing is not empty.

[37:00] So what we do is develop mindfulness. Concentration is a result of mindfulness. It has to be correct mindfulness, then it is correct concentration. If it is wrong mindfulness, it is wrong concentration, and that leads to perversion (vipallāsa). Merely seeing images, and the perversion is there: perverted perception, perverted view, and that leads to a perverted mind; one goes mad. So the way the Buddha teaches is the safest way. Do not step off the way the Buddha has drawn.

[37:55] Mindfulness of breathing. Do not be in a hurry to want the four foundations of mindfulness. Do not study the four foundations of mindfulness yet. As long as you do not know mindfulness of breathing, you can read the four foundations day and night and there is no way you will understand them. All the more the stream of dependent arising: it is not that you can recite it and then it is there. You have to understand its process deeply, like a scientist who has done the experiment and sees the processes by which things change, how they arise, how they develop. It is the same with our mind, with the moods, the movements. If we study well, we see it. Once one knows clearly, there is no more doubt.

[38:45] So suffering, happiness, all the moods: what is there is there because one is lost. What ends, ends because one was lost. Lost in getting, lost in the good, lost in having, lost in being, lost in being born, lost in dying, lost in happiness, lost in suffering. If one is not lost, there is nothing at all: emptiness (suññatā). Things are there, but nobody takes them as significant. Merely elements as nature has them. No taking things as significant, no me, no you, no arising, no dying. That is all. Where would suffering come from? If one is not lost, it does not happen. Where would happiness come from? Once one is not lost, it does not happen. Because not knowing (avijjā) fades and ceases, nothing that the mind creates appears any more, no consciousness appears, no mind and body. From the very start there is nothing at all.

[40:00] So this is where one puts it right. The way out of suffering is developing mindfulness. Concentration is one part, but not the whole. So do not get lost and stuck in concentration, do not get lost and stuck in your own thoughts and views. Practise according to your strength. Check: one sees the fading. Where one once was lost in thinking oneself important in this way or that, it gradually decreases. The ego, the self (attā), gradually grows smaller, grows lighter. Self-importance in all its forms grows lighter. In the end nothing at all is left.

[40:47] For the practice, I want to leave you with this, a few small things. And I stress: I say it for you to listen to, not for you to believe. Go and practise, and check yourselves as you go. Do not walk head down without ever looking back. When stepping forward, look back at the old. Look well at where we come from, how we live, where we are going. A clear and certain goal, a correct path and earnest walking: then in the end one reaches the other shore by oneself. For this morning I will stop here. Blessings to you.