

Meditation: The Heart of Buddhism

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I want to talk in depth today about the nature of Buddhism. Very often I read in newspapers and books some strange things that are presented as Buddhism. So here, I will point out the heart of the real Buddhist teaching, not as a theory but as an experience.

What is Not The Heart of Buddhism.

Psychotherapy.

I know that some people still think Buddhism is some form of psychotherapy, some way of applying wise attitudes or skilful means in order to live more at peace in this world. Indeed, in the rich storehouse of Buddhist teachings there are many things which do help people to live life with less problems. Using wise attitudes and compassionate intentions, Buddhism teaches an effective way of dealing with the problems of the world. When these Buddhist methods actually work, they give people faith and confidence that there really is something in this Buddhist path which is valuable to them.

I often reflect on why people come here to the Buddhist Society on a Friday evening. It's because they get something out of this. What they get out of these teachings is a more peaceful life style, a happier feeling toward themselves and more acceptance of other beings. It is in that sense a therapy for the problems of life, and it does actually work. *However that's not what Buddhism really is, that's only one of its side affects.*

Philosophy.

Some people come across Buddhism and they find it's a marvellous philosophy. They can sit around the coffee table after I've given a talk and they can talk for hours and still not be close to enlightenment. Very often people can discuss very high-minded things; their brains can talk about and think about such sublime subjects. Then they go out and swear at the first car that pulls out in front of them on the way home. They lose it all straight away.

Ritual.

Or instead of looking at Buddhism as a philosophy, many people look at it as a religion. The rituals of Buddhism are meaningful, and they shouldn't be discarded just because one thinks one is above ritual. I know people are sometimes very proud, arrogant even, and think they don't need any rituals. But the truth of the matter is that rituals do have a psychological potency. For example, it is useful in society when two people are going to live together that they go through some sort of marriage ceremony. Because in that ceremony there is something that happens to the mind, something that happens to the heart. There is a commitment made deep inside which echoes with the knowledge that something important has happened. In the ceremonies and rituals

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of death, all of those rites of chanting, reflection and kind words actually have a meaning for the people involved. It does help them to come to accept with grace the passing of a loved one. It helps them acknowledge the truth of what's happened, that a final separation from that person has occurred. And in that acceptance they come to peace.

In the same way, at our monastery, in order to forgive another person and to let go of past hurt, a ceremony of forgiveness is often used. In the Catholic Church they have the ceremony of confession. The precise details of a forgiveness ceremony don't really matter, but what is important is that forgiveness is given, by some physical means through some ritual or ceremony. If you just say, "Oh I'm sorry", isn't that a lot different from also giving a present, or a bunch of flowers? Or isn't it different from going up to them and saying "look, what I did the other day was really unforgivable, but come out to dinner with me this evening", or "here have a couple of tickets to the theatre"? It's much deeper and more effective when you weave a beautiful ceremony around forgiveness rather than just muttering a few words.

Even the ritual of bowing to a Buddha has a great meaning. It's an act of humility. It's saying I'm not enlightened and yet there is something that is beyond me which I am aspiring towards. It's the same humility that a person has when they go to school, or university and they acknowledge that the lecturers and the professors know more than they do. If you argue with professors when you go to university, are you going to learn anything? Humility is not subservience, which denies the worth of yourself, But humility is that which respects the different qualities in people. Sometimes the act of bowing, if it's done mindfully, is a ceremony, a ritual that can generate a great sense of joy. As a monk many people bow to me, and I bow to many others. There is always someone that you have to bow to no matter how senior you are. At the very least there is always the Buddha to bow down to. I enjoy bowing. When there is a monk who is senior to me, bowing is a beautiful way of overcoming ego and judging, especially when I must bow to a really rotten monk (the good monks are easy to bow to). This is a ritual which if done in the right way can produce so many benefits. At the very least, as I tell people at the monastery, if you do a lot of bowing it strengthens your stomach muscles and you don't look fat! But it's more than that.

So these Buddhist rituals are useful, but *Buddhism is much more than that.*

Meditation and Enlightenment.

When you ask what Buddhism *really* is, it's a hard question to answer in a few words. You have to come back to *this process of meditation because there is the crux, the fulcrum of Buddhism, the heart of Buddhism.* As everybody who has ever come across the Buddhist teachings would know, the Buddha was a man who became enlightened while meditating under a tree. A few minutes ago you were doing the same meditation for half an hour! Why were you not enlightened? That enlightenment of the Buddha was actually what created this religion of Buddhism. It is its meaning, it is its centre. *Buddhism is all about enlightenment;* not just about living a healthy life, or a happy life, or learning to be wise and saying smart things to your friends around the coffee table. Again *Buddhism is all about this enlightenment.*

First of all you have to get some feeling or indication of what enlightenment actually is. Sometimes people come up to me and say "I'm enlightened", and I sometimes get letters from people saying "thank you for your teachings, please know that I am enlightened now". And sometimes I hear other people say of teachers or gurus "Oh Yeah, they are certainly enlightened" without really knowing what that means. The word enlightenment stands for some opening of wisdom, *some understanding which stops all suffering.* The person who hasn't abandoned all suffering is never enlightened. The fact that a person still suffers means that they are yet to abandon all their attachments. The person who is still worried about their possessions, who still cries at the death of a loved one, who is still angry, and who is still enjoying the pleasures of the senses like sex, they are not enlightened. Enlightenment is something beyond and free from all that.

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Sometimes when a monk talks like this he can very easily put people off. Monks seem like "wowsers" [1], as they say in Australia. They don't go to the movies, don't have any sex, don't have any relationships, don't go on holidays, don't have any pleasures. What a bunch of wowsers! But the interesting thing which many people notice, is that some of the most peaceful and happy people you meet are the monks and nuns who come and sit here on a Friday evening and give the talks. Monks are quite different from wowsers, and the reason is that there is another happiness which the monks know and which the Buddha has pointed out to them. Each one of you can sense that same happiness when your meditation starts to take off.

Letting Go.

The Buddha taught that it is attachment that causes suffering and *letting go is the cause for happiness and the way to enlightenment*. Letting go! So often people have asked how do you let go? What they really mean is, why do you let go? It's a difficult question to answer and it will never be answered in words. Instead I answer that question by saying "Now is the time to meditate, cross your legs, be in the present moment," because this is teaching people what letting go is all about. *Moreover, the final moments of the meditation are the most important*. Please always remember this. In the last few minutes ask yourself, "How do I feel?" "What is this like and why?" "How did this come about?"

People meditate because it's fun, it's enjoyable. They don't meditate to "get something out of it," even though when you meditate there are a lot of good benefits to be had such as health benefits or reducing stress in your life. Through meditation you become less intolerant, less angry. *But there is something more to it than that – it's just the sheer fun of it!* When I was a young monk that's what made me become a Buddhist. It was inspiring to read the books but that was not good enough. It was when I meditated and became peaceful, very peaceful, incredibly peaceful, that something told me that this was the most profound experience of my life. I wanted to experience this again. I wanted to investigate it more. *Why? Because one deep experience of meditation is worth a thousand talks, or arguments, or books, or theories*. The things you read in books are other people's experiences, they are not your own. They're words and they might inspire, but the actual experience itself is truly moving. It's truly earth shattering because it shatters that which you've rested on for such a long time. By inclining along this path of meditation you're actually learning what letting go really is.

Acknowledge, Forgive and Let Go (AFL).

For those of you who have difficulty meditating, it's because you haven't learned to let go yet in the meditation. Why can't we let go of simple things like past and future? Why are we so concerned with what someone else did to us or said to us today? The more you think about it, the more stupid it is. You know the old saying, "When someone calls you an idiot, the more times you remember it, the more times they've called you an idiot!" If you let it go immediately, you will never think about it again. They only called you an idiot at most once. It's gone! It's finished. You're free.

Why is it that we imprison ourselves with our past? Why can't we even let that go? Do you really want to be free? Then acknowledge, forgive and let go, what I call in Australia the "AFL Code" [2] – Acknowledge, forgive, and let go of whatever has hurt you, whether it's something that somebody has done or said, or whether it's what life has done. For instance, someone has died in your family and you argue with yourself that they shouldn't have died. Or you've lost your job and you think without stop that that shouldn't have happened. Or simply something has gone wrong and you are obsessed that it's not fair. You can crucify yourself on a cross of your own making for the rest of your life if you want to; but no one is forcing you to. Instead you can acknowledge forgive and learn in the forgiving. The letting go is in the learning. The letting go gives the future a freedom to flow easily, unchained to the past.

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I was talking to some people recently about the Cambodian community here in Perth and, being a Buddhist community, I have had much to do with them. Like any traditional Buddhists, when they have a problem they come and speak to the monks. This is what they have done for centuries. The monastery and the monks are the social centre, the religious centre, and the counselling centre of the community. When men have arguments with their wives they come to the monastery.

Once when I was a young monk in Thailand, a man came into the monastery and asked me "Can I stay in the monastery for a few days?". I thought he wanted to meditate, so I said "Oh you want to meditate?" "Oh no", he said "the reason I want to come to the monastery is because I've had an argument with my wife." So he stayed in the monastery. Three or four days later he came up to me and said, "I feel better now, can I go home". What a wise thing that was. Instead of going to the bar and getting drunk, instead of going to his mates and telling them all the rotten things that he thought his wife had done thereby reinforcing his ill will and resentment, he went to stay with a group of monks who didn't say anything about his wife, who were just kind and peaceful. He thought about what he had been doing in that peaceful, supportive environment, and after a while he felt much better. This is what a monastery sometimes is: it's the counselling centre, the refuge, the place where people come to let go of their problems. Isn't that better than lingering on the past, especially when we are angry at something that has happened? When we reinforce the resentment, are we really seeing what's going on? Or are we seeing through the perverted glasses of our anger, looking at the faults in the other person, focussing only on the terrible things they have done to us, never really seeing the full picture?

One of the things I noticed about the Cambodian community was that these were all people who had suffered through the Pol Pot years. I know of a Cambodian man whose wife had been shot by the Khmer Rouge in front of him, for stealing a mango. She was hungry so she took a mango from a tree. One of the Khmer Rouge cadres saw her and, without any trial, he pulled out his gun in front of her husband and shot her dead. When this man was telling me this, I was looking at his face, looking at his bodily movements, and it was amazing to see that there was no anger, there was no resentment, there was not even grief there. There was a peaceful acceptance about what had happened. It shouldn't have happened but it did.

Letting go of the past is so we can enjoy the present, so the future can be free. Why is it that we always carry around the past? Attachment to the past is not a theory, it is an attitude. We can say, "Oh I'm not attached". Or we can say, "I'm so detached I'm not even attached to detachment," which is very clever, and sounds very good, but is a lot of old rubbish. *You know if you're attached if you can't let go of those important things that cause you to suffer, that stop you being free.* Attachment is a ball and chain, which you tie around your own legs. No one else ties it around you. You've got the key to free yourselves, but you don't use it. Why do we limit ourselves so and why can't we let go of the future, all the concerns and the worries? Do you worry about what's going to happen next, tomorrow, next week, next year? Why do you do that? How many times have you worried about some exam or some test, or a visit to the Doctors, or a visit to the Dentist? You can worry yourself sick and when you get ready to go to the dentist you find they have cancelled your appointment, and you didn't have to go anyway!

Things never work out as you expect them to. Haven't we learnt yet that the future is so uncertain that it doesn't bear worrying about? We never know what's going to happen next. When we let go of the past and the future, isn't that being on the path to deep meditation? Aren't we actually learning about how to be at peace, how to be free, how to be content.

These are indications of what enlightenment means. It means seeing that many of our attachments are based on sheer stupidity. We just don't need this. As we develop this meditation deeper, we let go more and more. The more we let go the more happiness and peace it gives us. This is why the Buddha called this whole path of Buddhism a gradual training. It's the path that leads one on, one step at a time, and at every step you get a prize. That's why it's a very delightful path and the prizes get more delightful and more valuable the further you go. But even on the first step you get a prize.

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I still remember the first time I meditated. I remember the room. It was at Cambridge University, in the Wordsworth Room at Kings College. I'd never done any meditation before, so I just sat down there for five or ten minutes with a few of my mates. It was only ten minutes but I thought "Oh that was nice", I still remember that feeling. There was something that was resonating inside of me, telling me that this was a path which was leading somewhere wonderful. I'd discussed over coffee and over beer with my friends all types of philosophy, but the "discussions" had always ended in arguments *and they never made me happier*. Even the great professors at the university, who you get to know very well, didn't seem happy. That was one of the reasons why I didn't continue an academic career. They were brilliant in their field but in other ways they were as stupid as ordinary people. They would have arguments, worry and stress just like everyone else. And that really struck me. Why in such a famous university, where people are so intelligent, are they not happy? *What's the point of being clever if it doesn't give you happiness?* I mean real happiness, real contentment, and real peace.

Real contentment and peace.

The first person I saw who had real contentment and peace was Ajahn Chah, my teacher in Thailand. There was something about that man! I saw what he had and I said to myself, "I want that, I want that understanding, that peace". People from all over the world would come to see him. Just because he was a monk didn't mean that everyone was subservient, obsequious and always praising him. Some people would go and argue with him and try to catch him out or even shout at him. I remember a story about the first time he went to England with Ajahn Sumedho. He went on alms round in Hampstead and as he was walking on alms round, this was over twenty years ago, this young hooligan came up to this funnily dressed Asian and threw a punch at him just missing his nose. Ajahn Chah did not know this person was trying to miss. Then he tried to kick him and just missed. He was just trying to wind up this little Asian monk in funny clothes. Ajahn Chah didn't know when he was going to be hit. He never did get hit, because he kept peaceful, kept cool and never got angry. Afterwards, he said England was a very good place and that he wanted to send all his senior monks over there to really test them out. As for Ajahn Chah, he had equanimity in practice.

It's easy saying "I'm enlightened", but then something happens like that and you run a mile. Another monk in Hampstead at the time was just going for a walk in the afternoon when he passed a pub. He didn't realise at the time that there was a big soccer match between England and Scotland on that day. It had already finished and the Scots supporters were in the pub getting drunk. Around this period, there was a popular TV series about a Kung Fu monk who, when he was small, was called "grasshopper." These sozzled Scots soccer fans looked through the window of the pub and said "Och it's wee grasshopper," and this monk took fright. These were big Scotsmen and they were very drunk. So he started running away, and they chased him all the way back to the Temple. "Wee grasshopper" was running for his life. He lost it. But the sort of practical letting go that Ajahn Chah did in Hampstead is something which gives you a sense that you are on the road to enlightenment.

A Gradual Path.

The Heart of Buddhism is a gradual path, one step after another step, and you do get results. Some people say you shouldn't meditate to get results. That's a lot of hogwash! Meditate to get results! Meditate to be happy. Meditate to get peace. Meditate to get enlightened, little by *little*. *But if you're going for results, be patient*. One of the problems with Westerners is that when they make goals, they are not patient enough. That's why they get disillusioned, depressed and frustrated. They don't give their practice enough time to mature naturally into enlightenment. It takes time, maybe a few life times even, so don't be in a rush. As you walk each step, there is always something you get out of it. Let go a little and you get freedom and peace. *Let go a lot and you feel bliss*. This is how I teach meditation both at my monastery and here. I encourage meditators to aim for these stages of letting go, these bliss states called *Jhana*.

Jhanas

Everyone wants to be happy, and the Jhanas are how you can achieve happiness, I mean real happiness, deep happiness. The only trouble is these states don't last very long, only a few hours, but still they are very attractive. They arise through letting go, real letting go. In particular they arise through letting go of will, choice, control. It's a fascinating thing to experience a deep meditation and understand how it comes about. Through such an experience you realise that the more you control, the more you crave because of attachments, the less peaceful you get. But the more you let go, the more you abandon, the more you get out of the way, the happier you feel. Now this is a teaching of something very profound, much deeper than you can read in a book or hear in a talk and certainly much more useful than discussing these things over a coffee table. You're actually experiencing something. This is getting towards the heart of religion, that which people call mysticism. You're actually experiencing it for your self. In particular you are letting go of this "controller," this "doer." Now that is the prime problem for human beings. We can't stop messing things up. Very often we should just leave things alone but we can't, we don't. Instead we make a mess. Why can't you just relax and enjoy yourself instead of always doing something?

It's hard to stop in meditation, but the more you stop the more rewards you get, the more peace you get. When you let go in meditation, let go the will, let go of the control, when you stop talking to yourself, you get inner silence. How many of you are fed up yet with this racket that goes on inside your head all the time? How many of you sometimes can't get to sleep at night when there's no noise from the neighbours but there is something even louder between your ears. *Yak, Yak, Yak, Worry, Worry, Worry, Think, Think, Think!* This is the problem with human beings, when it's time to think they can't think clearly and when it's time to stop thinking they can't be at peace. When we learn how to meditate we get this sense of being more balanced, and we know how to let go. We now how to let go to the point where all thoughts disappear. These thoughts are just commentaries, they're just descriptions. The difference between thought and reality is the difference between, say, reading a book about New York and going to New York. Which is more real? When you're there, you smell the air, you feel the atmosphere, you sense the character, all of which are things you can't write in a book. *The truth is always silent. The lie is always with words.*

When the Body Disappears.

Remember "con men," "con women" as well. These con men can sell you anything! There's one living in your mind right now, and you believe every word he says! His name is Thinking. When you let go of that inner talk and get silent, you get happy. Then when you let go of the movement of the mind and stay with the breath, you experience even more delight. Then when you let go of the body, all these five senses disappear and you're really blissing out. This is original Buddhism. Sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch completely vanish. This is like being in a sensory deprivation chamber but much better. But it's not just silence, you just don't hear anything. It's not just blackness, you just don't see anything. It's not just a feeling of comfort in the body, there is no body at all.

When the body disappears that *really* starts to feel great. You know of all those people who have out of the body experiences? When the body dies, every person has that experience, they float out of the body. And one of the things they always say is it's so peaceful, so beautiful, so blissful. It's the same in meditation when the body disappears, it's so peaceful, so beautiful, so blissful when you are free from this body. What's left? Here there's no sight, sound, smell, taste, touch. This is what the Buddha called the mind in deep meditation. *When the body disappears what is left is the mind.*

I gave a simile to a monk the other night. Imagine an Emperor who is wearing a long pair of trousers and a big tunic. He's got shoes on his feet, a scarf around the bottom half of his head and a hat on the top half of his head. You can't see him at all because he's completely covered in five garments. It's the same with the mind.

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It's completely covered with sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. So people don't know it. They just know the garments. When they see the Emperor, they just see the robes and the garments. They don't know who lives inside them. And so it is no wonder they're confused about what is life, what is mind, who is this inside of here, where did I come from? Why? What am I supposed to be doing with this life? When the five senses disappear, it's like unclothing the Emperor and seeing what is actually in here, what's actually running the show, who's listening to these words, who's seeing, who's feeling life, who this is. When the five senses disappear, you're coming close to the answer to those questions.

What you're seeing in such deep meditation is that which we call "mind," (in Pali it's called *Citta*). The Buddha used this beautiful simile. When there is a full moon on a cloudy night, even though it's a full moon, you can hardly see it. Sometimes when the clouds are thin, you can see this hazy shape shining through. You know there is something there. This is like the meditation just before you've entered into these profound states. You know there is something there, but you can't quite make it out. There's still some "clothes" left. You're still thinking and doing, feeling the body or hearing sounds. But there does come a time, and this is the Buddha's simile, when the moon is released from the clouds and there in the clear night sky you can see the beautiful full disc of the moon shining brilliantly, and you know that's the moon. The moon is there; the moon is real, and it's not just some sort of side effect of the clouds. This is what happens in meditation when you see the mind. You see clearly that the mind is not some side effect of the brain. *You see the mind, and you know the mind.* The Buddha said that the mind released is beautiful, is brilliant, is radiant. So not only are these blissful experiences, they're meaningful experiences as well.

How many people may have heard about rebirth but still don't really believe it? How can rebirth happen? Certainly the body doesn't get reborn. That's why when people ask me where do you go when you die, "one of two places" I say "Fremantle or Karrakatta" that's where the body goes! [3] But is that where the mind goes? Sometimes people are so stupid in this world, they think the body is all there is, that there is no mind. So when you get cremated or buried that's it, that's done with, all has ended. The only way you can argue with this view is by developing the meditation that the Buddha achieved under the Bodhi tree. Then you can see the mind for yourself in clear awareness – not in some hypnotic trance, not in dullness – but in the clear awareness. This is knowing the mind

Knowing the Mind.

When you know that mind, when you see it for yourself, one of the results will be an insight that the mind is independent of this body. Independence means that when this body breaks up and dies, when it's cremated or when it's buried, or however it's destroyed after death, it will not affect the mind. You know this because you see the nature of the mind. That mind which you see will transcend bodily death. *The first thing* which you will see for yourself, the insight which is as clear as the nose on your face, is that *there is something more to life than this physical body that we take to be me. Secondly you can recognise that that mind, essentially, is no different than that process of consciousness which is in all beings.* Whether it's human beings or animals or even insects, of any gender, age or race, you see that that which is in common to all life is this mind, this consciousness, the source of doing.

Once you see that, you have much more respect for your fellow beings. Not just respect for your own race, your own tribe or your own religion, not just for human beings, but for all beings. It's a wonderfully high-minded idea. "May all beings be happy and well and may we respect all nations, all peoples, even all beings." However this is how you achieve that! You truly get compassion only when we see that others are fundamentally just as ourselves. If you think that a cow is completely different from you, that cows don't think like human beings, then it's easy to eat one. But can you eat your grandmother? She's too much like you. Can you eat an ant? Maybe you'd kill an ant because you think that ants aren't like you. But if you look carefully at ants, they are no different. In a forest monastery living out in the bush, close to nature, one of the things you

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become so convinced of is that animals have emotions and , especially, feel pain. You begin to recognise the personality of the animals, of the Kookaburras, (*Australian bird*) of the mice, the ants, and the spiders. Each one of those spiders has a mind just like you have. *Once you see that you can understand the Buddha's compassion for all beings.* You can also understand how rebirth can occur between all species – not just human beings to human beings, but animals to humans, humans to animals. You can understand also how the mind is the source of all this.

The mind can exist even without a body in the realms of ghosts and angels (what we call in Buddhism *Devas*). It becomes very clear to you how they exist, why they exist, what they are. These are insights and understandings which come from deep meditation. But more than that, when you know the nature of the mind then you know the nature of consciousness. You know the nature of stillness. You know the nature of life. You understand what makes this mind go round and round and round, what makes this mind seek rebirth. You understand the law of *Kamma*.

The Three Knowledges.

The First Knowledge. When the Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree, according to tradition he gained three knowledge's. The first knowledge was the memory of past lives. When you get close to the mind, there are certain powers that come with that experience. The powers are no more than an ability, a dexterity with the use of the mind. It's like the difference between a dog that has been running wild and a dog that has been well trained. You can tell the trained dog to go and pick up the newspaper. It wags its tail and goes and picks up the newspaper for you. Some people have got their dogs so well trained that they can actually pick up the telephone. Maybe they could answer the telephone as well, then that would really save you a lot of time!

When you get to these deep states of meditation often, the mind becomes well trained. One of the things which the Buddha did (and which you can do when you get into deep meditation) is tell the mind to go back to the past. What's your earliest memory? Go back further and further and further. Monks who do this get early memories of their childhood. They even get memories of the moment they were born. Sometimes people say that when you're born, you have no consciousness because the neuron's aren't developed yet, or something like that. But when you re-experience your birth, you know that that is just not true. When the memory of your own birth appears, it is just like you are there and you experience all feelings of that birth. Then you can ask yourself for an even earlier memory, and then you get back into your past lives. That's what the Buddha did under the Bodhi tree. Through meditation you know rebirth, you know your own past lives. This is just what happens with the mind and you know how it happens. That was the first knowledge that the Buddha had.

The Second Knowledge. The second knowledge was to know how you are reborn. Why you are reborn. Where you are reborn. This is the Law of *Kamma*. Someone was showing me a book today which, unfortunately, we had for free distribution but which I hadn't seen before. It had some really weird ideas in it about the Law of *Kamma*. I think what it said was that if you read one of the *Suttas* while you are lying on the ground, you will be reborn with a bad back, or something like that. Just stupid ideas! *Kamma* is much more complex than that and it depends mostly upon the quality of your intention. The movement of the mind itself is what determines the *Kamma*, *not just the act, but why and where it came from.* You can see this in meditation, but also you can see just how that mind gets fully liberated.

The Third Knowledge. The third knowledge was the ending of suffering. With understanding of The Four Noble Truths, you realise the Way and what enlightenment really means. *It means freedom! The mind is liberated, especially liberated from the body, liberated not just from the suffering of the body but liberated from the happiness of the body as well.* That means that there is no more inclination for sexuality, no fear of pain, no grief over the destruction of the body, no ill will and no fear of criticism. Why do people get worried about bad words that are said? Only because of ego. They *take* something to be themselves. Just imagine for a

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moment being free from all of those things. What would that be like, no fear, no craving, no need to move from this moment – *In other words nothing missing, and nothing left to do, nowhere to go because you're completely happy right here no matter what happens!* This is what we mean by enlightenment. *This meditation is the source of the Buddha's enlightenment and the source of every person's enlightenment.*

There is no enlightenment without that meditation. This is why Buddhism is far more than a psychotherapy. It's far more than a philosophy. It's far more than a religion. It goes deep into the nature of being, and it is accessible to all people. You know how to meditate. Teachers are giving all the instructions free without any charge. Do you want to do it? Usually the answer is, "Maybe tomorrow but not today." Never the less because the seeds have been placed in the mind, because the meditation has begun already, there is an interest. Already there is a sense of this enlightenment, a fascination for peace, and you will not be able to resist that path. You may be able to put it off for a while, maybe for lifetimes, but it's a strange thing that, as someone said to me many years ago, "*When you hear these teachings you can't discard them.*" You just can't forget them. They aren't telling you what to believe. They aren't giving you a theory which is merely rational. But they are pointing you to something which you can understand and experience for yourself, and you get intuitions of this the deeper you go.

The Buddha was a very remarkable person, his peacefulness, compassion and wisdom, were legendary. There is something about enlightenment that is very attractive. In the same way there is something about freedom that you cannot ignore. That is why little by little, you will understand what Buddhism is all about. You won't understand Buddhism from the books nor will you understand Buddhism from what I say. *You'll only understand Buddhism in your own experiences of peaceful meditation.* That's where Buddhism is taught. *So have fun with your meditation and don't be afraid of enlightenment.* Get in there, enjoy it, and you will have no regrets.

That's what Buddhism is. *That's it's heart, meditation and enlightenment. That's it's meaning.* I hope you can understand some of this. I can say no more because the time has gone. I'll complete my talk now.

Notes.

[1].Wowser: n. extreme puritan, kill–joy, teetotaler, spoil–sport."The Australian Oxford Dictionary" (New Budget Edition). Herron Publications: West End, Qld. 1998

[2].The AFL (*Australian Football League*) code is also the acronym for the most popular form of Australian football. "*Aussie Rules*"

[3].Fremantle and Karrakatta are the two main cemeteries/crematoriums serving the whole of Perth.