BDSM B4 Theri 4

- **"I actually think that none of the teachings are that difficult"**
- **What the Buddha is dealing with is really the pathology of desire.**
- Paticca samuppada (D.O.)
  - in ordinary life, this stuff is going on so quickly. I don't about you, but I don't often see the desire for a piece of chocolate arising in my mind. I find myself eating a piece of chocolate. You know, it's not this kind of, "oh, yes, I see it. Yes, desire desire." It's a very quick process. So what we're actually engaged in [when we practice meditation] is beginning to slow down the process, beginning to see a lot more clearly. And then when we begin to see more clearly we know when we can intervene.
- why practice meditation?
- Not this week
  - Emptiness (participant question)
    - what's the Pāli?
    - paticcasamuppada (dependent origination) is the model for emptiness.
    - Nāgārjuna goes on and says, Dependent Origination is dependently originated, therefore empty.
    - P thinks "emptiness" is a "very negative term"
      - "it gives people a wrong impression of what the teaching is about."
      - why concentrate on the "nothing?
    - Pāli: suñña or suññatā actually means "nothing and everything".
  - papañca
    - thought gone rampant
    - etymologically "spreading out"
    - also etymologically linked to impediment, that which blocks the path.
  - Evolution of G's ideas? (PQ)
    - he never claims he's had access to revealed truth. It's not a revelation from on high. He's just claiming to discover something.
    - P believes "the Bodhi tree experience" took place over time.
    - the words def'ly change.
    - G's conception of what he's doing changes from the earliest strata of text "that we can tell"
    - the way the sangha is evolving changes.
      - he had no idea of settled monastics in the beginning.
      - Ananda, weren't things better in the old days?
    - But it wasn't compiled chronologically. so we can't say for sure.
      - it's a huuuuuge body of texts.
    - There are certain teachings that are emphasized again and again and again.
      - Bhante V says "Metta" is one of these.
      - paticcasamuppada
      - tilakkhana
      - khandas
  - this was enculturated.
    - it was necessary to study to renounce. otherwise you were busy farming.
      - listening, practicing, thinking about the dharma, these were luxuries in ancient india.
      - When G spoke to laypeople, it was mostly about ethics.
        - because that's all they had time for.
        - you still see this in contemporary Buddhist cultures.
      - cultures now known as Buddhist cultures, China, tibet, korea, japan, were rather subsistence economies.
    - socio-historical conditions
      - sri lanka and burma
        - in colonial countries you had the first lay people meditating
        - sri lanka, late 19C under british rule
  - is there a role for monasticism today?
    - 1. it's not monasticism, but a renouncer tradition.
    - In 1971 when HHDL came to europe, P asked about monasticism, he said yes. in about 1981, P asked again. HHDL said absolutely not necessary.
    - it's very new that so many laypeople practice
      - and that we have access to so many forms of Buddhism, and that the different forms are talking to each other.
    - There are advantages and disadvantages to both lifestyles.
      - **Saint Benedict: monks shouldn't hit each other**
    - there has been a tradition of practicing monks (forest) and scholar-monks (urban)
  - Very important to know what is the teaching and what is cultural in the traditions.
    - most Buddhist cultures are heavily enculturated.
      - they're influenced by previous indigenous religious traditions
      - as are we (Christio-Judaism)
  - Karma (participant question)
    - "It's an important one"
    - it's related to paticcasamuppada "because the other word for this, sankhara, is karmic action."
      - not sure what he means here.
    - the word literally means "action"
      - "I think there's a lot of wrong-headedness about karma"
        - it almost ends up being Hindu fatalism.
          - which is not what Gotama intended.

Paticca samuppada (D.O.)

- 1. avijjā
  - First link in 12 step, not in 10.
  - ignorance, delusion, confusion
    - Confusianism
  - "this is the fundamental ground on which we walk."
    - "where does avijjā come from? G doesn't say"
      - **evolutionary psychology!?!**
  - **not just not knowing, not wanting to know.**
    - a teacher can come along and say "everything is impermanent" and we sagely nod our heads. but some part of us won't let us live with that impermanence. we try to force permanence, **safety**.
      - **through the history of Buddhism, you've got more scholars than you have awakened practitioners**
  - **it doesn't start with avijjā. avijjā is almost like a backdrop. everything takes place on the backdrop of avijjā.**
  - it's not our fault. the information we have is confusing.
    - our parents were confused.
    - our societies proffer us ways of getting through life which actually exacerbate the problem rather than helping us to overcome the problem[s that we] experience.
      - Western materialistic societies often offer out materialism as being the end of all meaning and the goals that we have in life. And when that is seen as failing somehow then existential depression arises, lack of meaning, boredom, all sorts of things which I think are rampant.
        - and he said this in 2011. It's 8 years later and we're so much worse off.
    - **we do our best**
      - we don't often mean to be hurtful/malicious/whatever. it just arises out of conditions. the fundamental condition of being confused.
    - like being dropped by parachute into a strange land
      - you don't have a map, neither do the locals. they only know their little bit. (they're your parents) they don't know the wider landscape.
    - **if I'm confused, well I will go searching for happiness in things that actually don't give me happiness. But I'm still under the delusion or the confusion that they will. And I keep on doing it almost out of the sheer disbelief that it's not actually given me what I want. Does that ever occur to you? When you engage in a habit, doesn't ever occur to you, I keep on doing this but I don't want to do it. But it's almost, I can't really not believe this is not gonna give me what I want. So I'll give it one more go.**
  - composed out of the āsavas
    - main meaning "flowing out"
      - the sense of incontinence
      - effluent
        - sometimes also "outflow".
        - a sense of what is flowing out of us. I can't keep it to myself.
        - or sometimes "inflow" which is very wrong. that's from Jainism and is not the way G talked about it.
        - sometimes "cankers". Norman and Peacock think this is a very bad translation.
    - 3, sometimes 4 of them.
      - the roots of all unwholesome psychological behavior.
        - a synonym for Buddha or arrant is "khasava". someone who has brought an end to the āsavas. literally "ended the āsavas".
      - avijjāsava (the effluent of confusion)
        - I like to spread my confusion around. Why keep it to myself?
      - kāmāsava
        - desire for sensuality
          - includes experiences
        - we think sensuality will get us what we want but it doesn't (confusion)
          - like a dog gnawing a bone with no meat left on it
      - bhavāsava
        - the craving for continued existence
          - **Survival Bias???**
        - I prefer Akincano's explication, though the above actually ties in with this, the craving to become something in particular. not enough. I need more fame/love/ whatever. not a craving for sensuality, but for abstract things more linked to the upper levels of M's Hierarchy???
        - bhavatanha
          - clinging to a sense of self
            - wanting to be "me" forever
      - sometimes also diṭṭhāsava
        - opinions/views
      - I'm not satisfied with this phrase. avijja is "composed out of" the asanas. is that canonical? If not, I say don't use it. avijja is a factor of our evolution
        - maybe better "expressed via the āsavas"?
  - this ignorance/confusion/not wanting to know blocks us from direct insight into the three characteristics (tilakkhana)
  - the confusion leads us to misplace our search for how to solve our existential angst.
- 2. Saṅkhāra
  - habits
    - would it be interesting to talk about the evolutionary psychology of habits? Jud Brewer's work, among others?
    - evolutionary psychology
    - default options. when the going gets tough, your frontal lobe shuts down and you go to your default options.
      - military - you don't rise to the level of your aspirations. You fall to the level of your training.
      - it's easier because I don't have to think about it.
        - even if the result is further misery
        - the brain is a hungry organ
    - pictorially described as a potter molding pots over and over again. we make our habits.
    - the creation of neural pathways.
  - saṅkhāras, in a sense, become us.
    - misquote of Aristotle, we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit. (Confirm quote from Durant's _The Story of Philosophy_
    - The poet Rilke once said, in his Duino Elegies, he said, here is the habit that moved in and didn't leave.
    - when we break a habit, it feels like we've lost a little of ourselves. even a bad habit.
      - personal examples
        - took a while to accept the second precept. because I identified as a person who kept their hand in. If it wasn't nailed down...
          - not even out of malice or greed (most of the time). Often just because the object was not nailed down.
    - **always molding our lives. always shaping our lives.**
      - often only shaping one thing over and over and over
    - related to saṅkhata "formed and forming"
    - the word literally means "remolding".
  - he says "The other dimension to this is, of course, that these are narratives. These are also narrative structures, stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves. And who we are."
    - **does he mean that saṅkhāras are narrative structures?**
- **avijjā and saṅkhāra are the dominant framework for most of our experience.**
  - **"these two are literally the roots of samsaric experience. When we're embedded in these we experience unpleasantness. Unwholesomeness. Something not being quite right. A sense of lack."**
  - Samsara starts to unfold: this feeling of circularity and entrapment starts to occur almost as a natural unfolding of certain conditions being there.
    - this is just how it naturally starts to unfold with certain things being in place.
  - no moralistic finger wagging.
    - these are outcomes from dealing with the problems of life.
  - Mahanidanda Sutta "Great Teaching on D.O."
    - Digha Nikaya (long discourses)
      - it's the classic.
    - interestingly, only 10 links, not 12.
      - other two probably added as an after thought.
      - akincano says that it's different in different places
        - in our retreat, he said there are always 4 parts, he listed up to 7 that he said are very prevalent.
      - what did brasington say???
    - G and primacy of direct experience
    - G tells Ananda it's "profound", ie difficult.
      - **not difficult intellectually, but experientially.**
      - **how do we get it? through the laboratory of our meditation practiced.**
  - It's not linear.
    - it's very complex
      - We're dealing with lots and lots of interdependent dimensions of experience, all which mutually support each other. In other words, self reinforcing
      - which is why it's so difficult to unravel our experience
    - the word "dependent"
    - it's not A causes B
      - corn stalks or rifles leaning up against each other
    - it's not causality.
      - **we're not saying that avijjā is going to cause sankharas. It's saying that: dependent on avijjā being present, sankharas will arise.**
      - **necessary but not sufficient?**
        - "not causation, but chains of dependencies."
          - this is how we create the mess.
  - According to P, probably the most important teaching in the Pāli Canon.