20 THE ENDING OF EVERYTHING

7th December 2005

ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha,
tesañ ca yo nirodho
evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo

Of those things that arise from a cause,
The *Tathāgata* has told the cause,
And also what their cessation is:
This is the doctrine of the Great Recluse

This verse was the teaching that Venerable Assajji gave to Sāriputta:

When we went to India recently we saw that verse in all the ancient Buddhist monasteries. We saw it written on old seals, pottery, and in many other places. It was a very popular early teaching, almost a definition of the Buddha's teachings. Perhaps it was even more essential than the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path. It was a statement of the Dhamma of the Buddha, and as such it finds its beginnings in the words of one of the first five disciples of the Buddha

Before he became a disciple of the Buddha, Sāriputta saw a monk with such serene features that he wanted to ask who the monk's teacher was and what were his teachings. So he approached Venerable Assajji. That verse was the answer Ven. Assajji gave to Sāriputta. Those words were so powerful that straight away Ven. Sāriputta, with his great mind, was able to penetrate them and become a Stream Winner.

The subject matter of this evenings talk is the question, what does *ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha* really mean?

The Buddha taught the cause of all things, the way they originate, and also their ceasing. As a result of that Sāriputta attained the insight of all Stream Winners, *yāṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammanti*, whatever has the nature to arise, all that has the nature to cease. What does that actually mean? The reason I am talking about this now is because in some of the discussions I had on my tour of the United States there was much talk about such things. As many of you will know, the Christians in the United States have been forcing the issue of what they call 'intelligent design', wanting to explain the origin of this universe as 'God-caused'. Because they are running the debate in the U.S. and they have a huge influence there, they are deceiving many people. Because of that, as a Buddhist monk travelling in that country, I was often asked about the Buddha's response to this, and in particular people wanted to know the Buddhist view with regard to the origins of the world.

Christians are often very materialistically minded, only seeing nature as basically the four elements. The result of that is to not really understand or include the nature of the mind. So, often the debate is just on material things. But I'm going to extend it beyond that, into the mind, into the nature of the mind. As a physicist before I became a monk, the one thing that I do know is that the nature of form – what we call the four elements – is that it is empty of everything. As many of you would know, the mat that you sit on is not solid: it is made up of atoms and 99.9999% space – it's mostly empty. And if you could look inside that atom you would see that it is just this smear of potential places where electrons can be found. It is basically empty; there is just a tiny speck in the middle called a nucleus. When you look into that nucleus you find that it is full of holes as well. Basically there is nothing there except *fields of energy*. There is nothing really solid, just the emptiness of phenomena. Scientists would agree with that straight away.

The reason I bring this up is because when people talk about the creation of the material universe, they usually say, "How on earth can you create something out of nothing". It's a valid point, because in fact you can't create something out of nothing. That's why people think there has to be some sort of creator, a of 'God figure', to make that irrational jump from nothing into something. The point I am making is that because there is nothing in this material world to begin with, just these plays of energy, it's just an illusion. It is just a wrong way of thinking, a culturally induced

delusion, to think of things as being solid and to think that there is actually matter here. *The four elements are just ways of perceiving*.

As many scientists know, *suññatā*, the emptiness of any essence, of any solidity, or thing-ness in the matter which we see and feel, is an established fact of science. Because there is nothing actually here, the arising of this universe out of nothing becomes plausible. Sure, something cannot come out of nothing, but a zero sum (rise & fall) can come out of nothing and that is what this universe is. I use that as an example so that you can understand what that famous saying of Assajji means: 'whatever arises, that causal arising out of nothing, can also cease into nothing.

You realize there is nothing here to begin with. As you probe into it, you penetrate the illusion of a self, a soul, an entity, in the five *khandhas* of being, just as a physicist probes into matter and takes it apart, analyses it, and sees that there is nothing substantial there. The four elements are *anattā* (non-self). The sense of *attā* being an essence, a thing in itself, something persisting which is always there, *that is impossible*. It's basically a delusion to think that there is something in this universe which is solid and persistent, which will be there for ever and ever. Scientists have proved that again and again, and it's really irrational and untenable to believe otherwise.

Of course, when we start looking into our mind at the five *khandhas*, emptiness is what we are also expected to see, and it is something Sāriputta saw straight away. Origination from nothing is just an empty process, and because it is an empty causal process it is also subject to cessation, to disappearing, to vanishing – to going back to an original source, if you want to say that. Emptiness to begin with, emptiness in the end – anything else becomes completely irrational and untenable. Even the idea of an eternal 'consciousness' that doesn't change, is tantamount to being no consciousness at all. *Viññāṇa* or consciousness needs change, needs some contrast to give it life, as any psychologist would know. This is rational. You have to know from your own experience that whatever is stable disappears: you cannot see it, perceive it, or know it, because the nature of knowing is contrast or discrimination.

Now, this might just be words, but the practice of our meditation reveals the truth of what I've just said. To see things disappear is the very heart of the meditation process. When we say to 'calm' things, it means to calm things to the point of disappearance. The Buddha once said that *Nibbāna* is *sabbe saṅkhāra samathā*, 'the quietening of all the formations', that is, the calming all of the movements and all of the makings. Everything is calmed down to absolute stillness. Of course, people might have some theories about what stillness is, but the experience in the *jhānas*, when the mind starts to experience deep states of stillness, shows that stillness means that things disappear.

As many of you here know, I learnt my first Pāli from the Vinaya and I value that study. I was forced to do it because in the early years of our tradition very few monks knew the Vinaya and there were some silly things being done by us. We thought we were being strict according to the Vinaya, but in fact we didn't really understand what we were doing and we had no real guidance. The book available at that time, the 'Vinayamukha', was a brave attempt, but it was written by a prince of Thailand who in fact got many things wrong. And since he was royalty, no one was willing to question it, and so the mistakes lasted for over a century and they are still there. I learnt to read Pāli from the Vinaya. That's a wonderful place to start to learn Pāli, because in the Vinaya you see the common usage of those words in the down to earth practical actions of life, which is what the Vinaya is all about. It's not theories, it's what people actually do, and there you have the ground of language. All language starts with the world of seeing, touching, hearing, smelling, and tasting. It then gets adapted to the metaphysical world of thoughts and theories, ideas and philosophies, even religious philosophies.

When you ground your understanding of language in the physical world that is where you find the deeper meanings, and then you can apply those meanings to the metaphysical stuff. In the Vinaya I came across the seven *adhikaraṇa samatha dhammas* at the very end of the Pātimokkha rules, and I gained the understanding that to *samatha* things means to deal with them and settle them so that they are not business anymore. They are dealt with and they disappear from your agenda. They literally vanish; they are not there anymore. That's how I understood the word

samatha and also the word *upasama* because the two are used synonymously in that section of the Vinaya. That understanding of the meaning of those words in ordinary usage gave me the insight into what the path of meditation is. It is to calm all the business down, to settle it, so that it all disappears.

You can see that the idea of settling things into disappearance, into *Nirodha*, into cessation, is the whole theme of our monastic life. Sure, we build huts in order to settle the problem of accommodation, so the problem is finished, dissolved, and we don't have to do that anymore. We build our halls so that we don't have to do that anymore. We eat our one meal of the day so that for the rest of the day we don't have to do it anymore. It's all about calming, settling the business of our lives, so we can all disappear, so that we have no business to do. When we settle things down, it means the business disappears.

I spend a lot of time settling other peoples business. I settled some funeral business this afternoon. A person dies, we do the ceremony, and then we don't have to think about it any more. Unfortunately, some people create business. As a monk I try not to make more business, but often other people make that business for me. So settling business is my duty as the senior monk. But I look to those early years when I made very little business – the years when I could just sit down and meditate without having anything to think about or anything to worry about. I understood what progress I could make in my meditation by doing hardly anything at all: by living simply, not making business, doing projects, or writing letters. I even neglected my family; the first time I visited them was after seven years as a monk. I didn't write to my friends, except maybe once a year at Christmas. Simplifying my life meant I was *samatha*-ing, calming, lessening, and quelling all the business of my life. I understood that the path of being a monk was that of a renunciant, living outside of the world, not worrying about what other people think of you, not even your family. That's not what should run your life as a monk. What runs your life as a monk is something else: it is the ability to leave the world and not engage in it, not to make your life more complicated but to simplify it. This is one of the things that I stress to each one of you. If you live in this monastery your life is only as complicated as you make it. And your success in meditation will be inversely proportional to your complexity.

How many things are you doing and what do you spend your time on? Because we take on responsibility some of us have to deal with complexity. Many of you do not; you make it for yourselves. Be careful, *samatha* things. End things, don't start things.

I remember Ajahn Chah always said he liked the ending of things, never the starting of things. So see if you can end as much as possible. Don't end one project and start two; end one project and start none. Be a simple living person who does very little. The only project that you have to do is to come out in the morning, do your chores, eat, and then go back to your hut and literally end things. That is the path of being a monk. When you find that path and you practise this idea of *samatha*-ing things, quelling things, renouncing things, you find that things disappear. You are experiencing a vanishing in your life, a vanishing of concerns for the world.

Often people are too concerned with their families. That is an attachment, an obstacle. It's okay to look after your families to some extent, but in your early years, try to move away as much as possible, to cut them off; in other words you say 'no' for a while. I have done that for many years, and it's wonderful to be free of my family. Even when I visited them there was no attachment for my mother, or my brother, or anybody else. If they die tomorrow my faculties will not change. If they died right now I would never be sad. This is detachment. And it is wonderful to be able to see that in a person. When I went to visit them recently, I was at ease with these things. They have lived good lives but they are going to die one day. So, there is a quelling and calming of the business of your family duties. There is a quelling of the other things you want to achieve in life. What do you want to achieve but calm, peace, emptiness, stillness, and things disappearing; because if the objects of your mind don't disappear you won't disappear. You are what you do. You are your projects. That is what makes this idea of a 'self' and gives rise to more *saṃsāra*, more wanderings, again and again and again. If you want that you are just asking for *dukkha*, again and again and again. As the great *Arahant* said, 'it's only *dukkha* arising and *dukkha* passing away'; nothing more than that. Don't add more to what the great *Arahant* said, because that's all there is: *dukkha* arising and *dukkha* passing away, nothing more. See if you can allow *dukkha* to finish once and for all, so that there is nothing left: *aparisesa Nibbāna – Nibbāna* with nothing remaining. I am just

quoting the *suttas* here; they are the final reference of our tradition. We understand this because the more we follow the teaching of calming things down, of simplifying, the more things vanish and the more peace and happiness we experience.

There is a beautiful quote from the Jātaka Tales that, although it is found nowhere else in the suttas, fits in so well with what the Buddha said elsewhere, as well as fitting one's experience. The Buddha said that the more you abandon the five senses the more you experience *sukha*, happiness. If you want to have complete *sukha* (*ekantasukha*) you have to abandon the five senses completely. What the Buddha is saying here is not just about subduing the senses when you sit cross legged, it's actually about 'letting go' of the these things at all times in your life, disengaging from the world of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. What other people say is only sound, that's all. No need to argue with it, no need to get involved in it, no need to think, 'that's a nice sound'. The correct Dhamma is that it's just sound and that's all. Please let it go; don't involve yourself with that world. Don't involve yourself with the world of tastes: beautiful coffee or tea, too hot or too sweet, nice food or not so nice food. It's just a lot of suffering.

What's the point of trying to find the nicest food? It just leads to a lot of suffering. You put it in your mouth and eat it, gobble it down. If you have a choice that's fine, but if you haven't any choice just eat what you've got. It's only a couple of seconds of taste and then it's all gone. What's the big thing about desiring food? The desire for food lasts for such a long time before you eat it but the actual experience is just a few minutes, and then it's all gone. It's all just delusion, make-believe, and anticipation – that's all desire for food really is. It is the same with the coffee afterwards – in fact you do not really taste the coffee anyway, you are all talking to each other. So what's the point: you could have rubbish coffee and you wouldn't know. You're not mindful of what you are drinking.

The point of all this is that we should try to abandon this sensory world. Even the jokes and all the talking is just sound, that's all. Someone tells a funny story or a lively story but it's just sound. The more you abandon the five-sense world and the body, the more happiness you get. What we are doing is calming the five-sense

world. When we are speaking we don't speak loudly, or harshly, or hurriedly. We speak softly, calmly, almost to the point that sound disappears. We move softly, calmly, and slowly, so that we almost disappear. The whole monastery goes calmly and slowly, so there is nothing left. We've built our huts and our walking paths and now they disappear. That's what they are there for. As it says in the reflections on using your huts: it's just for the enjoyment of solitude (*patisallānakamyatā*), solitude and calmness for the practising of *samatha*. Eventually, sitting in your hut, your hut just disappears from your consciousness. You are not there to look at your hut and make it look beautiful; you just have to keep it clean enough for it to disappear from your consciousness. You eat enough for the idea of food to disappear from you consciousness. You wear robes or a blanket if you are cold, so that the whole idea of clothing disappears from your consciousness. You do it for the sake of disappearance. That's what we mean by the path of calming, the path of emptiness and disappearing.

We do reflections on the body, 'the body contemplations'. Why? Why is that an important meditation? It has a purpose. The purpose is for your body to disappear, so that it's *samatha*-ed, so that it's not a problem any more. In fact it just disappears from your agenda. That's the purpose of doing body contemplation. If you can't sit down and get into *jhānas* – which are the sign that the body has disappeared with its five senses – there is still some holding in there. You are still attached to the body; you still can't let it go.

It's fascinating to see why you can't get into a *jhāna*. It's not through lack of effort; it's not through not putting in the hours. The hours are important but that's not the crucial thing. Sometimes people can meditate for their whole lifetime, eight hours ,or ten hours a day, and still not get into these states. Why? It's because there is still something they are unwilling to let go of, unwilling to renounce, and because they are unwilling to let go and renounce it, it never disappears. They just cannot *samatha* it; they can't calm it down into disappearance. So, this is why the more we understand the emptiness of these phenomena – what we call the material world – the more we see that there is so much that we add on to what we see, so much we add on to what we hear.

I was talking earlier this evening about the cultural conditioning that we have, because I have received a paper from some scientist about the nature of what used to be called *deva* lights. They have a scientific explanation: they are just phenomena with causes and effects, they are not *devas*, they're not heavenly beings. But it's amazing how people want to add on these heavenly beings. I was reading newspaper while waiting for the funeral this afternoon. I only half read the article, but some scientist had with great effect been debunking all these 'weeping Virgins' and 'blood coming out of statues' in Catholicism, by finding a good explanation for it. Nevertheless, even though there is a fascinating and good explanation, if people want to believe, they will add on to the experience what they want to see. This is the problem: our attachments to ideas and views stop us from seeing the truth.

There is a famous story from the early years of Wat Pah Pong, when Ajahn Chah was a young monk. On the day in the week when everyone goes to the monastery, this man was coming to the monastery in his car but the rain was pouring down and he got stuck in the mud. He was worried about how he was going to get to the monastery because it was raining so hard. He wasn't willing to get out of the car and get wet himself, but then he saw Ajahn Chah coming out of the forest. Ajahn Chah, this great monk with such humility, got behind the car and pushed it out of the mud. Ajahn Chah's robes were all wet and muddy, and his face was splattered with mud. He thought, 'Ah! That's what you call a great monk. It doesn't matter how much respect he's got in the neighbourhood, he is willing to give an ordinary layperson a push in the mud, even though he is going to get all wet and dirty. That's a real monk, not like some of these monks who sit up there and expect to be treated like kings or royalty'. This guy was so impressed. When he got to the hall just one or two minutes later, he saw the Pātimokkha being recited with Ajahn Chah sitting in the middle, dry with no mud on him. 'Wow!' he thought, 'psychic powers, and I've seen it'. Of course many of you know what the true story was. Ajahn Paitoon, a relation of Ajahn Chah who was a novice at the time, looked very similar to Ajahn Chah, and as a novice he wasn't in the Pātimokkha recitation. He had seen this man coming and being a kind monk he pushed the man out of the mud. But because of his physical resemblance to Ajahn Chah, in the dark and in the rain, it was enough for this guy to say, "No, that was Ajahn Chah". And no matter how many times Ajahn Paitoon has said, "That was

not Ajahn Chah, that was me", this guy never accepts it, and he will never admit that he was wrong. He wants a miracle so much and that's the miracle he has. That story went all round Ubon. I think it's still part of the history of the great teacher Ajahn Chah.

We make so much of things that aren't really there, simply because of belief. That's why in regard to views, no matter where we hear them, we always have to doubt them and challenge them. It doesn't matter which monk says these things, don't believe them. The only thing you can trust is either the *suttas* or your own experience – not other monks, not me, not any other Kruba Ajahns, nobody, just the *suttas* and your own experience. If you really want to challenge things you have to be courageous and iconoclastic. Iconoclastic means challenging sacred cows, no matter where they come from. This is how we deepen our experience. When we see what we are attached to and what those things are, they disappear, they *samatha*. They only arise from a cause. The causes are delusion, our sense of ego and self, and that's what we protect. When people are challenged they get defensive and angry. That's a sign that we've added a 'self', a 'me', to that idea. We've formed the 'I believe' connection that's the cause of so many arguments and of so much obstruction on the path to things disappearing and settling.

It's important to have some degree of right view in order to attain *jhānas*. Without right view it's difficult to get *jhānas* simply because there is something that one keeps holding onto, that one attaches to as 'me', as 'mine'. Because of that one is unwilling to abandon and let go to the point of entering *jhānas*. A lot of times the attachment comes from wrong view: there is an 'I' in there somewhere, a 'self', a 'me', holding on to something. I've explained before that attachment is like a hand. The hand has two ends to it, the end which grasps and the end which initiates the grasping. One of the greatest insights that helped me on the path was not to look at the end that grasps, but to look at the end that initiates the grasping. That is, not to look at what I was grasping but at who or what was doing that grasping. When you look at that, then you can actually unravel grasping. It's always the mind doing this, the 'me', the 'ego', the 'self'; it is the mind that wants to exist. The craving 'to be', *bhavataṇhā*, is holding on to things and making things exist. When you strike down that idea, that view, the

opposite is true. The less 'self' you have, the more things are allowed to disappear. The more you can renounce, the more things disappear.

The *jhānas* are the first stage of disappearance. It's tough to allow things to disappear. People just don't want to let go of their bodies, thoughts, or hearing. Why is it that sound disturbs you in meditation? As Ajahn Chah famously said, "Sound does not disturb anyone, you disturb the sound". That's a powerful teaching. What it means is that the 'self' wants to hear and that's why it literally goes out and looks for sounds. The mind wants to have a body to cling onto and that's why it looks for feelings in the body and won't allow this body to disappear. The mind gets attached even to the breathing and that's why it won't let the breath disappear and vanish. As soon as the breath vanishes you think, 'Ah! I'm not breathing', and you want to breathe again. Even when nothing is happening and you get into a sense of stillness, the mind freaks out. You think if nothing is happening it means that you are about to disappear. This is the fear, the movement, the trembling, that causes the five senses start again and this body to exist. It is the attachment of this mind to the body, the delusion that this is mine, and if I let these things go, 'Ah, what will happen?' It's fear of the *Dhamma* or fear of meditation.

Samatha gets you past these attachments through two causes: either through understanding or through the sheer pleasure of it. The understanding allows you to see that there is no one here, so you just let go naturally. The pleasure, the bliss of the deep meditations, can be so peaceful that – even though you don't agree with this, even though it doesn't make sense, even though it scares the shit out of you –the attachments don't matter, its just too joyful and too blissful, so you just go right through. This is actually where the mind can disengage from the body. When the mind disengages from the body, the body disappears. That's called *jhāna*. When I say it disappears, I mean not just the body but also the echoes of the body, the echoes of the five senses. Things like space and time are all connected to this body. The body moves and thus creates space/time. The mind moves because of craving craving, craving for something in this five-sense world. You're disturbed by sound because you are interested in sound; you are actually attached to hearing, that's all it is. You're attached to feeling, to the body; you're attached to the breath. You see

these things disappear, you've *samatha*-ed them. At last you don't have a body: you can't feel it, it's gone. You can't hear sound, and you can't even think. The mind has become so still, its ability to control the world through thought has disappeared and vanished. You've *samatha*-ed it. When you've *samatha*-ed it the body vanishes from your existence.

Samatha-ed means that it has *Nirodha*-ed temporarily – it's gone. People say, "But it's still there". That's not the point. If you are not observing it, it's gone. That's basic quantum theory if you want to be scientific about it. You need an observer to create reality. That's the experience you have in the deep meditations. The body simply is not there and you don't give a damn about it. If you can achieve that state you know that 'body contemplation' has done its work. Its purpose is to let go, to allow things to vanish, to see a world, *kāmaloka*, disappear. You've heard me say before that it's very important to experience things vanishing and disappearing.

To understand this, the best simile is the simile of the tadpole leaving the water as a frog. Only when the tadpole has left the water as a frog can it really know what water is. Before then it may have had theories about water, it may have heard about water from this monk or that monk or this Kruba Ajahn or that book or whatever, but it will not know what water is. When the tadpole becomes a frog and leaves the water, it knows from its own experience, not just from beliefs or theories. It now sees what it's like when there is no water left. It's a powerful insight which changes the whole way the frog looks at life. This is what happens when you gain the *jhānas*. You've *samatha*-ed the body and the five senses and they've disappeared. You know what *Nirodha* means now; you know what the body is. You won't understand the body by just contemplating it up and down if it hasn't yet disappeared; all you will know are the changes of the body, not the essence of a body. In the same way the tadpole might know the colours in the water and might know the cold or the heat in the water, but it won't know the essence of the water until it's disappeared.

Body contemplation reaches its fulfilment when the body disappears; that's its job. Its purpose is to get you into *jhānas*, nothing more than that. When the *jhānas* happen then you will have an opportunity of knowing what the body is and what the five

senses are. Before that it's just theory and beliefs; it's not substantial, and it will never get you anywhere. It will just make you argue more with other people. That's what is meant by being attached to views not experience. When you get into *jhānas* they will be the foundation that gives you the data for Enlightening insight. At least you've known that what arose from a cause has now ceased. The body has gone, you understand that. That is how the Buddha taught, and you gain incredible faith in the teachings of the Buddha, faith based on your own experience. When you see your mind disappear you understand what the teachings really mean. You understand that the whole purpose of going through the *jhānas* and the *arūpa* (immaterial) attainments is to see the whole world of the mind disappear.

In the medieval period of Christianity, long after the time of the Buddha, some of the Christian ascetics started to talk about union with God. What does that mean? If any of you experience a first *jhāna* you'll understand what that means. Many of us were brought up in a Christian tradition and can look at the experience of a first *jhāna* and understand why anyone from that Christian tradition would interpret and perceive that as union with God. That union is *ekaggatā*, the oneness of mind. The God perception is the incredible *pītisukha* of that state, the incredible power and bliss. I remember as a young man how I used to go to rock concerts. There was this guy called Eric Clapton playing for 'The Queen'. People would shout, "He's God. Eric Clapton is God. He's God. He's God". The reason they would say that is because they developed incredible bliss. You can really get high on that music. This is an example that 'God' is what gives you enormous happiness and power. It's very easy to see why Christians and even Hindus take those experiences as ultimate reality: the same consciousness, unchanging, and pure and blissful.

If you experience those states and you know them from your own experience, you'll also understand why those states that occur just before the *jhānas* were called *pabhassara citta* by the Buddha. The five hindrances have been overcome and the mind is incredibly radiant. That's the *nimmitta*, brilliant and bright. You may even apply that description to the first *jhāna*. You still have a bit of a wobble there, enough to see or get a handle on the mind state, on the object of your mind in that experience, and it is *pabhassara* (very bright, radiant) for sure, powerful and pure. The great thing

about these experiences is that when you come out of the meditation you are able to understand the framework of the incredible teachings of the *suttas*. You understand that the *pabhassara citta* – so pure, so still, so powerful – is also subject to change. It arises from a cause and is subject to an ending. People who don't understand that – like the Christians – will take those experiences to be the ultimate. This is where people get the mistaken idea of a persisting consciousness. They have the experience of those *jhānas*, but they do not have enough understanding of the Dhamma to really penetrate and understand that this too will pass, that this too is a causal thing, this too is just made up of elements which are of the nature to cease.

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha tesañ ca yo nirodho, the first lines of Venerable Assajji's statement, 'All those *dhammas* that are of the nature to arise, or come into being, the Buddha taught their cause and he taught their ending, their cessation, their going out of existence'. In *jhānas* you have the experience of things ending, of the five-sense world and thoughts ending. You understand what the Dhamma is. One of the greatest experiences from calming down during the *jhānas* is the ending of 'will'. What a powerful experience that is: to see that this part of the mind that has always been there – the potential to will, to choose, to argue, to make your own decisions, to move the mind whichever way you want: that potential which creates the words that come out of your mouth, which creates the movement of the body, which is the driving force of your life, that whole movement that is so essential to your perception of a 'self' – completely disappears. Will goes when you see that happening. You can never again think that an *Arahant* after *Parinibbāna* can move to do anything. Doing is suffering; moving, speaking, going, coming, and all trembling is suffering. I don't mean trembling out of fear; I mean the trembling that moves you out of stillness, out of this wonderful nothingness – that is suffering, *dukkha*. When you see in this way that all the arising of comings and goings and speech or whatever is all suffering, it is because you've experienced the second *jhāna*. You'll know for sure what the end is: it's the end of will, the end of craving. The end of doing things means that the world stops. Not just the external world but also the internal world. The mind stops. The mind is that which moves, it is the house builder.

The mind creates; this is what it does. Sometimes we know things for what they are; sometimes we know things by their function. And that is what the mind does. In Pāli *citta* (mind) also means, variegation, colour, and beauty. It creates this world of 'beauty'. It's interesting to understand and get to the heart of the way words are used in Pāli. The original meaning of the word often reveals some deeper facets of what the word truly means. When the mind stops 'willing', when it stops moving, then the mind starts to disappear. The second *jhāna* is in one sense a very powerful turning point in the mind: because 'will' has stopped, nothing is moving. After a time the second *jhāna* settles down into the third *jhāna* and the third *jhāna* settles down into the fourth *jhāna*. Things change as the whole world starts to vanish, and space vanishes. The first *arūpa jhāna* is the perception of infinite space. In the second *arūpa jhāna* space vanishes. How do these things happen? It's just that the whole concept of space has no meaning anymore; the idea of a mind or body in some sort of space has no meaning anymore. Because the mind is still in the equanimity of the fourth *jhāna* and is completely one-pointed, that concept vanishes.

All that is left is consciousness. That consciousness has no bounds, no limits, and is infinite and nothing at the same moment, which is a sign that consciousness itself is on the edge of extinction. As consciousness extinguishes there is nothing left. The mind knows nothing, which is why the third *arūpa jhāna* is called the perception of nothingness. At this point the *citta* is vanishing. You experience this. It is no longer a theory that you argue about; you experience it from your own meditation. When you come out of that state afterwards you can see so clearly. The frog is now not just out of the pond onto the dry land, but it's jumping up into the air. Even the land is disappearing. With the consciousness disappearing you perceive nothing; because you perceive nothing, perception is dying. You can't watch nothing for too long before perception turns off. When you perceive the end of perception, this is what is meant by the state of 'neither perception nor non-perception'. You perceive the ending of perception that's why it's called non-perception. It just depends on what angle you look at it from. When you perceive the ending of perception, perception finally ends and the mind is gone, deceased, ended, poof, gone.

You understand that all these *dhammas* which arose from a cause now end in cessation. You understand those words of Ven. Assaji to Sāriputta and why Sāriputta understood it straight away. *Yaṃkiñci samudayadhammaṃ*, all these things that come from a cause, *sabataṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*, must one day cease. One day, sooner or later, it must happen. It's that acceptance and embracing of the possibility of cessation which shows that there is an ending and which makes *Nibbāna* possible. Like the shipwrecked sailor floating on the surface of the water, you can see dry land, the only place where you can be saved. Whenever there is movement, doing, speaking and existing, there is suffering. The Buddha said that even a small amount of shit on your finger stinks. In the same way just a small amount of existing is suffering: everything should be abandoned, should be let go of. When one understands this one understands the path to liberation, to freedom. Anyone who resists this sort of teaching and wants to keep something somewhere – a last piece of Dhamma, a last piece of being, whether you call it merging with God, original consciousness, original mind, or whatever, and I don't care what any other person says – that is delusion, wrong view.

When you see things ceasing, you see much deeper than that. You see the ending of things and the ending of things is the most beautiful experience. You can't get better or further than 'nothing'. Wherever there is something left, there is something more to do, something more to *samatha*, something more to bring to complete cessation and freedom. The reason people can't let go of the body is the same reason they can't let go of their minds: attachment, clinging. They Want to find some little corner of *saṃsāra* for existence where they can still become enlightened, enjoy it forever and come back to teach other people about it. That is wrong view. It's almost the same as the Mahāyāna concept about being a Bodhisattva and always being able to come back again to help other people. That's completely missing the point. The point is cessation, *Nirodha*, *Nibbāna*, the ending of things, the complete *samatha* of the whole universe, of existence. The Buddha found that out, and he said it was hard to see beings in this world, caught up in clinging and attachment, being able to see this deep teaching. It's true that sometimes we are not courageous enough. Sometimes we believe others too much, instead of suspending all of those views and just trusting in the *suttas*. Stop messing around!

Get into the *jhānas*, the real *jhānas*, not the fake ones. Even today there are many people who go around teaching and they know that the *jhānas* are important, but because they have not had that experience themselves, they are dumbing down the *jhāna* states of mind. States that are less than the full attainments are being called *jhānas*.

The argument about the importance of *jhānas* has been won at last. Even in the United States, talking with people like Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein, I think that they now understand that you have to get into *jhānas* to get anywhere with your insight practice. So when I met them they were pumping me for information about the *jhānas*.

I have taught *jhānas* over all these years, keeping a consistent standard for what they are, never wavering in my description of them, explaining them again and again, and putting them in the context of the Dhamma. I have explained what they are for and why they are important. I have explained how they lead to the ending of all things, to *samatha*, bliss, and peace. *Anicca vata saṅkhāra*, impermanent are all these things; *uppāda vāya-dhammina*, even the *citta* will cease; *tesaṃ vūppasamo sukho*, there calming is happiness. *Vuppasama* is the same as *samatha*: the calming of all these things – the body, the mind, consciousness, perception, and will. When everything stops, vanishes, ceases, *samatha*, *Nirodha*, this is happiness, this is bliss. The reason they can cease is because there was nothing there to begin with. As the Buddha often said in the *suttas*, "Can the *Tathāgata* be regarded as any of the five *khandhas* or as the five *khandhas* altogether? Can you see a *Tathāgata* apart from the five *khandhas*?" The Buddha said, "No, you can't". The *Tathāgata* or Buddha is neither separate from the five *khandhas*; nor in the five *khandhas*. You can't see him anywhere. That's why you can't talk about a *Tathāgata* after *Parinibbāna*. *Anyone who starts to talk about anything existing or being after Parinibbāna has missed the point.*

When you develop the deep meditations, the *jhānas*, again and again and again, when you look upon them with your own wisdom, challenging every view, challenging whatever you have heard from any teacher, you will see just an incredible emptiness

of both body and mind and the whole universe. You see that because of that, it can finish, it can end. You see what a scientist sees: the complete emptiness of the material which makes up this cosmos, this universe of solar systems and planets and monasteries and whatever else. You can see it as all empty. All that is left is consciousness.

You see this physical world as empty and you know how it came out of emptiness. It arose because of a cause, which means that one day this whole universe will vanish in the same way. This mind comes from a cause and one day it too will vanish, but unlike the physical universe, it does not re-arise. Most minds take a long time, but as soon as you see the Dhamma and become an *Arahant*, you know why this mind will vanish after *Parinibbāna*. It says in the *Therīgāthā* , 'Your mind will surely vanish', *parābhavati*, (Thag, 1144) 'will disappear', *vidhamissatti*' (Thag, 184). I like to translate that as 'will be destroyed'. Why? Because the cause, the craving 'to be', has been destroyed. All those three cravings *kāmataṇhā*, *vibhavataṇhā*, and *bhavataṇhā*, have been destroyed. Craving for sensory pleasure is what drives worldlings; the craving 'to be' is what drives monks.

In the end all cravings, including the craving to destroy things, are nothing more than the craving 'to be'. The craving to destroy comes from thinking there is an existing thing that you now want to annihilate. Please understand the difference between annihilation and cessation. These are two different words chosen carefully by the Buddha. Annihilation means destroying something that is already there, *uccheda* is the Pāli word. *Cheda* means to destroy, to cut something to bits. You can't cut what wasn't there to begin with; you can't destroy 'nothing'. But the process, the empty process is different. The word for an 'empty process ceasing', for the whole universe to vanish, is *Nirodha*. This is what you experience little by little, little by little. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the experience that the commentaries call the ninth *jhāna*, as *saññā vedayitanirodha*, the 'cessation of all that is perceived and felt', That is, the cessation of the mind, is likened to '*Nibbāna* here and now' by the Buddha.

So this is what you can experience in this life, and it challenges all of your theories. You can see and understand the *yedhammā hetuppabhavā tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha*,

whatever things come into existence the Buddha taught the causes of that, and *tesaṃ cayonirodho evaṃ mahāsamaṇo*, the great teacher also taught their cessation.

You understand why that teaching was enough for someone who was as sharp as Venerable Sāriputta to become a stream winner, and you understand why those words were inscribed on so many tablets in early Buddhism, so long ago. So, it is not something that has been changed by monks writing or meddling with the *suttas*, but one of the earliest pieces of Dhamma inscribed in stone and clay which we have today. They are probably the earliest written words of Dhamma that we have available – beautiful teachings about cessation, the ending of everything. If you want something, if you want to be you, why only have suffering? When cessation happens, everything ends.