

THE VIPALLĀSAS¹

The distortion of view, perception and thoughts perpetuating delusion.

A talk given by Ajahn Brahmavamso
at Bodhinyana Monastery on 10th January 2001

(The *vipallāsas* are overcome by the teachings of the *Ariyas*² and *yonisomanasikāra*³
based on *samādhi*.⁴)

(AII, 52)

One of the monks requested that I give a talk this evening about the *vipallāsas*. So, not having any better idea I decided I would talk about them.

The *vipallāsas* are the distortion of views, perceptions and thoughts affected by either defilements or by the words of another. So my thoughts, perceptions and especially my views about what I should talk about tonight are an example of how these *vipallāsas* work, because a certain monk influenced them.

The *vipallāsas*, the perversion or distortion of the cumulative faculties of views, perceptions and thoughts form or are the Buddha's beautifully detailed explanation of a faculty which in Pāli we call *avijjā*⁵, variously translated as ignorance, delusion or illusion. Those of you who have heard me speak before know that I prefer the translation of delusion as being 'that there is something real which one is experiencing' but one gives it a meaning, gives it a quality that it does not really possess. It is called *avijjā*, delusion. It is because of such delusion that people go around craving for happiness in things that will only create suffering for them. They search for security in things that are of their very nature subject to change and disintegration. They have an experience, a feeling, or an idea of a self when there is nothing really there at all. All that is truly there is just an empty mirage and on top of that mirage we build up this whole idea of a 'me', a 'mine' and from that, time and

time again we create the world of *saṃsāra*⁶. We create the world of old age, sickness, death and rebirth.

The Lord Buddha realized that *avijjā* was the cause of this whole round of suffering called *saṃsāra*. Whether it's in the three root defilements called the *mūlakilesa* or it's at the beginning of 'Dependent Origination' or it's the 'Four Noble Truths'⁷, this *avijjā*, this delusion is the main root or cause. The 'Four Noble Truths' explain the cause of suffering as craving. Craving itself has a cause and that is *avijjā*, delusion. It's through the overcoming of that delusion and seeing things in a different way that we become enlightened.

When we see things for the first time in the correct way as the Buddha, the *Arahants*⁸ and the *Ariyas* saw things, then we become a 'Stream Winner' and that's the first crack in the veil of *avijjā*, or delusion. We've got a glimpse, a glance, a clear look at the truth of things. By cultivating that insight and the causes of that insight, we open up that crack more and more until our cognitive faculties will only ever see things in terms of the *Dhamma*⁹, 'not me', 'not mine', 'not a self'. Nothing belongs to me and nothing is really worth clinging to. That is seen when the *Arahant* is born. When the *Arahant* is born he or she knows that the causes for *saṃsāra*¹⁰ are completely overcome and that this will be his or her last life.

So it's the uprooting of *avijjā*, seeing through the delusion which is the core experience of the Buddha's path. When the Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree he called his experience Enlightenment because it was a 'breaking through' of delusion, a shattering of delusion, to see the truth. But the Buddha also said that the truth he saw was hard to see. It's not a simple thing to be able to break through that delusion.

The Buddha explained in the teaching of the *vipallāsas* how these perversions of the faculties work and why there is delusion in the world and in oneself. One is dissecting delusion, dissecting *avijjā* and understanding just what it is, understanding what delusion truly is and what its causes are, and why it is that people aren't enlightened. What does one have to do to gain those insights that are true wisdom? Understanding the *vipallāsas* gives one a direction, or a way to focus one's efforts and

energies in order to gain the same experiences as those of the Buddha. The Buddha described the *vipallāsas* from the three levels of cognition – views, perceptions and thoughts. Those levels of cognition should not be considered as one above the other. Instead they turn around in a circle, each one supporting the other. Thought is that which makes our view and we perceive in a certain way because of our thoughts and views. These three turn around each other. We think in a certain way because of our views and perceptions. There are many examples in modern psychology, in your own lives and in the world of the mind that will show you the truth of these things. Why do we have the view we have? Why do we even perceive and think the way we do? If any of these three is fundamental it is view. One’s world view, one’s understanding of philosophy and one’s religion – these views are what select the perceptions that come to face our consciousness.

Spin Doctors of the Mind

People very often say that we see things the way they are, but that phrase, “Seeing things the way they are” is fraught with danger because we do not see things the way they are. Only *Arahants* see things the way they truly are. What people see is just the way they want things to be. We see according to our views and those views are so strong that they even filter out change and warp the very perceptions that first come to our consciousness. When Krishna Murti spoke about ‘choiceless awareness’ that awareness was already bent and deformed by what he wanted to see. He had no conception of the *vipallāsas* and therefore really missed the point. Just bare attention, just bare perception, is not enough. The defilements have already been at work and that’s the problem. We cannot trust even the first experience that comes to our senses.

Even what I am saying now – you’re already filtering it. What gets to your ears and how you understand it is as though it has been bent by your whole system of views. That’s why the Buddha could give a great discourse and sometimes many of the listeners would become enlightened, whereas we can read that very same discourse today and no one becomes enlightened. They are the same words but those monks who were listening then had a ‘view system’ that didn’t filter and bend what was being said. That’s the problem and when you actually perceive how insidious that bending and warping of perception is, you soon come to the conclusion that you don’t

know which perceptions you can trust and which you can't trust. You don't know what truth is or what truth is not, because you can't see the workings of the defilements. The defilements are like the spin doctors of the mind. They take the truth and they massage it. They filter it. They stop you being conscious of things that you don't want to know and they put things forward in the way you want to experience them. By the time the spin doctors have done what they do in the silence of the hidden corners of the mind, what you actually see, what you perceive, is already far from the truth of the matter. How often have you had disagreements with people about what both of you have seen? How often have you had disagreements about what is truth, or about what is real? And really all you are doing is acknowledging that because of different 'view systems'. Our very perceptions of the same event, the same truth, are just so different from one another.

Basically this shows you that you cannot trust your perceptions. Whatever you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch with your body, whatever you perceive with your mind, all of those perceptions have already been bent and distorted. You cannot trust any of it. To be frank some of the perceptions that we take to be pleasant are not really pleasant. What is pleasant? How many of you have actually seen something that you thought was beautiful and later you see that same thing and you wonder what you saw in it that was beautiful? How many of you have listened to something that was very delightful, some very fine music for instance and later on listened to it and thought what did I really like in that? How many of you have changed the sorts of things that you like to eat? The tastes you once thought revolting, now taste beautiful. It's amazing the different diets I've had in my life as a monk. I was a meat eater growing up and I liked just ordinary English food, then I became a vegetarian and I couldn't stand the taste of meat. I went to Thailand and had to eat disgusting things. Now I am in Australia but I can't trust my tastes about what's nice and what's not nice any more. When you're full the most delicious foods don't taste good at all. When you're sick delicious food has no taste whatsoever but when you're hungry the most disgusting food always tastes delicious. This is just an example of how the bare perception of what tastes nice and what doesn't taste nice can be completely affected by so many different factors.

You cannot even trust the feelings in the body. What is pleasurable and what is not pleasurable? I think you all know about a certain group of people called masochists. I think it was Venerable Amaro who told me that there are some places in the United States where people brand themselves for the sheer pleasure of it. That's really weird. Why is that supposed to be pleasurable? It's painful! The reason is that perception does weird things like that. Even the most wonderful experiences, please excuse me for being gross but even things like sexual intercourse – are they really pleasurable or not? People assume it is, because of the public relations job that has been done on it. If you think it's going to be pleasurable then it will be. I remember an occasion when I was a boy of about seventeen or eighteen, one of my friends was experimenting with drugs (it was in the nineteen sixties), and someone said that if you put a banana peel in some particular liquid for a few days it turns into LSD. So he did that. He said, "Wow, this is amazing!" He really felt tripped out. Afterwards they found out there was no possibility of anything like that happening at all but because he wanted to have it happen, it did happen for him. You cannot trust perceptions because of your views. If you think it's going to happen it does happen.

You've heard me tell many stories. One was about a prisoner a hundred years ago, who was condemned to death by hanging. They went to his cell the night before he was due to be hanged and said, "You're not going to be hung, you are going to have your throat cut". They let him think about that all night and in the morning they put a blind fold on him, tied his hands behind his back and took him to the prison execution area. There they drew the blunt side of a straight razor across his throat and at the same time one of the psychologists who had arranged this macabre experiment turned on a tap. Because this poor man believed he was going to die and had been thinking about it all night, the thought had created the view that he was going to die. So when he felt the cold steel of the razor blade across his throat and he heard the sound of liquid he thought he'd had his throat cut. That perception came up, that thought came up and he died. He fell to the ground and died because of that. There was nothing else wrong with him. That's just how powerful perceptions and thoughts can be. They completely delude you.

What is pleasurable and what is not pleasurable? The Buddha said that what the *Ariyas* say is pleasure, the world says is suffering. What the *Ariyas* say is suffering

ordinary people say is pleasure. The *Ariyas* say that one is in the power of the defilements when one engages in activities like sexual intercourse, watching the T.V., earning a living, having kids, gaining lots of possessions, and following one's attachments. That's not freedom. It is suffering. They say that happiness is being free from the power of defilements, free from possessions, greed and lust. But of course because the world doesn't view things that way, people don't perceive things in that way. That is the difference between the world of the ordinary people, the *puthujjanas*¹¹ and the world of the *Ariyas*. Our view is that pleasure is experienced with the body and that there is something to be gained by listening to fine music, seeing a good movie, having relationships or gaining wealth and status. The person who holds that view will find his or her view justified. When they gain those pleasures, possessions, or wealth, because of view the perception will be bent to justify that view and they will delight in those things. There will be real pleasure there or at least a perceived pleasure and they will think how wonderful and successful they are and how much better off they are than those stupid baldheaded idiots at the monastery, who are giving up so much – for what?

The problem with the world is that whole cycle of cognition. I'm sure you will be able to understand by now that because of your perceptions you think in a particular way. Perceptions are like bricks and the house is made of those bricks. This is actually how the edifice of cognition comes into being. From thoughts, come views and self justification, continuing the delusion of life. In particular the Buddha said that there are four main problems with these *vipallāsas*. The four conclusions of the level of view, perception and thoughts, which cause the continuance of *samsāra*, are the view, perception and thought that what is impermanent is permanent and the view, perception and thought that what is suffering is happiness. There is the view, perception and thought that what is empty of a 'self' is a 'self', that there is a 'me' and there is a 'mine'. There is the view, perception and thought, that what is disgusting and ugly is in fact beautiful. So we get it all wrong!

Breaking the Cycle

When the Buddha taught the *vipallāsas* as a way of describing, detailing and analysing delusion or *avijjā*, he also taught how to overcome those *vipallāsas*, how to actually

set them straight. It's hard to understand how you can break into that cycle. You break into that cycle first of all by listening to the words of another, by listening to another view, another perception and another type of thought. This is one of the two causes for becoming a Stream Winner. It is called *parato ghosa* 'the words of another'. But they have to be the words of an *Ariyan*, someone who has seen the *Dhamma* for themselves. They have to be words that come from that pure view, that right view, that view which is in accordance with reality. Having that input from outside is the seed. The other cause for becoming a Stream Winner is *yonisomanasikāra*¹², the work of the mind that goes to the source of things. That's only achieved through the practice of *jhānas*¹³. I say this because the Buddha also mentioned the nutriments or the fuel of these *vipallāsas*, the food of *avijjā* as being nothing other than 'The Five Hindrances'¹⁴.

It is these five hindrances which keep this cycle of wrong views, wrong perceptions and wrong thoughts turning around on each other. Letting go of the five hindrances has always been the way that you can uncover delusion. You can break that cycle of *vipallāsas* by taking in the words of another, together with the abandoning and overcoming of the five hindrances. I've already mentioned that the *vipallāsas* are at work once one has a view and then one perceives just what one wants to perceive. That is where craving, delight and ill will come in. These force the perception to come into line with your wrong view which sustains the wrong thoughts and fulfils your wrong view. Craving and ill will are the first two, and the greatest of the five hindrances.

As they say in the *suttas*¹⁵ the only way is to see things as they truly are, *yathābhūtañāṇadassana*¹⁶, is as a result of *samādhi*. Only through *samādhi*, through the *jhānas* can you see things as they truly are because the job of *samādhi* and the *jhānas* is to overcome those five hindrances, to overcome the desire and the ill will, the restlessness, the sloth and torpor and the doubt. Then you can actually start to really see things as they truly are instead of how you want them to be so that they can fulfil your comfortable world view.

Understanding truth takes much more than just courage, most people prefer just see things as comfortable, rather than see them as they really are. For most people the very idea of the Four Noble Truths is completely repugnant. The whole works is suffering. There is no one in there and the goal of this existence is just to end it all, to come to the cessation of all body and mental processes and to allow consciousness itself to cease. For most people that's a repugnant idea. What's the point? The reason it is repugnant is because of something called *bhava-taṇhā*, the craving 'to be'. This craving 'to be' and craving for sensual pleasure are what distorts the whole process of cognition and the craving to 'be'.

These are two of the three cravings that bend views, bend perceptions and thoughts so that we can't even accept the *Dhamma*. We have to creep up on the *Dhamma*. We have to subdue what we want and don't want and also subdue our fears in order to see things as they truly are. Desire and fear are two of the great obstacles to gaining deep meditation. They are two of the obstacles to 'letting go', because craving comes from a sense of 'self' and what is 'mine'. I crave for what is my responsibility, what is my property and what is under my power. We think our body, mind and thoughts are ours and therefore we can control and protect them. We start to feel very insecure when our sense of control starts to disappear. In deep meditation you have to 'let go', which means letting go of controlling and desire, and come to the understanding that these things aren't your property. This body and this mind don't belong to you. They're part of nature, and function according to processes. You have to let go of craving, of control and of desire. That's what meditation is training you to do. You also have to let go of fear, the fear that you're not controlling these things. The fear that if *cetanā*¹⁷, the doer, the will, completely disappears what on earth will happen? Who will be there to protect me? That *cetanā* has to be abandoned because it is that doer, that craver, which bends perceptions, bends views and even bends thoughts. By subduing thinking in meditation, by getting beyond the perceptual world of thoughts and by stilling the mind you are allowing perception the chance to be accurate.

I have previously mentioned the simile of holding up some sort of object and asking, "What is this?" and going deeper and deeper into its properties. I have mentioned the simile of walking up the hill to this monastery and seeing so much more than when

you drive up the hill. But when you stop walking you see even more. The only way to get enough data, enough perception to be able to see things truly is to let go of all thoughts, all desires, all craving, all doing and all of the will. To also let go of all ill will, and all fear, so you're not afraid to see the truth. So you have no vested interest in what you see, and no craving to see this or that. You're just completely empty and you are still for long enough to see the truth, that's called *jhāna*.

Going to the Very Heart of Things

Samādhi is sustained attention, thoughtless, still and clear. It's the ability to maintain your attention for long periods of time without being distracted and disturbed by the irritation of the five senses or by the demands of the body. *Samādhi* is being still, one pointed, serene and thoughtless, no desire, no wanting, and the five hindrances have completely gone. That's how you can get enough pure perception, pure *saññās*¹⁸ to be able to break this whole cycle of *vipallāsas*. In those deep meditations when there is that stillness and freedom from the five hindrances, you have a chance to see 'what' is going to the root of things. *Yonisomanasikāra* is the work of the mind that goes to the root of things.

What's at the root of all this? It's not the body; it's the *citta*, the mind. You'll find the root of all this within that *citta*. There you'll find the root of delusion, the will and the consciousness. You've got to go deep inside and together with the 'words of the other', then you have a framework for perceptions to find out that this thing we call a mind is not happiness. This thing called a mind is not permanent, is not beautiful, and is not a self. Go right to the very heart of things. If you see the mind as 'mine', as consciousness or as the knower or the doer, and then see that as empty, that's where you start to get the enlightenment experiences, 'the jewel in the heart of the lotus'. That's one Tibetan phrase which I really enjoy because as you go deep, deep, deeper inside, you go through petal after petal of the lotus, until you come to the very centre of this lotus, 'the jewel in the heart of the lotus', the *yonisomanasikāra*, the womb of all that there is. That's what *yonī* means, the womb, the origin and you get to the beginning start of everything and you see the jewel. And what is that jewel? Complete emptiness, nothing.

What a con this *samsāra* is! All the time you've been thinking there's something at the heart of this, something wonderful and beautiful, some wonderful soul or a God or cosmic consciousness. Actually it's a much greater relief to see that the heart of the lotus is completely empty. The heart of the *citta* is just an empty process. You see that *anattā* (no self) is the core of all of the three factors of existence, *anicca*, *dukkha*¹⁹ and *anattā*, impermanence, suffering and non self. Non self is the cause of all this, and you see this through the factors of *jhāna* and the reflecting consciousness after a *jhāna* that develops insight.

Once Seen Never Forgotten

This is tied in with the words of the *Ariyans* who say, that that the *citta* is completely vacant of a 'self', it's just an empty process. That which knows, consciousness, is just empty. That which does is just conditioned phenomena. Seeing that has a profound effect on view, perception and thought. Once seen never forgotten. Once you see the emptiness of all this it's quite easy to understand why it's all *dukkha*. The only reason we try and bend our perceptions, thoughts and view is to find some happiness. We think that there is some happiness in there because the illusion of self demands happiness 'to be' and it can only be sustained if we are happy. 'To be' means to be happy; otherwise there is no point to being. We want to find somewhere, some place, if not in this life, in some heavenly life and if not in some heavenly life, then in some metaphysic cosmic consciousness or some pure land where we'll be happy ever after. We want to find some little aspect, some part of self, where we can be secure and happy and have no problems. If you can see that there is no self, you can accept and understand why the Buddha said that the whole of five *khandhas*²⁰ and the whole of *samsāra* are *dukkha* through and through. There is no part of *samsāra* that is not affected, not soaked and saturated by *dukkha*. There is no place where consciousness can find a footing that isn't *dukkha*. There is no experience that is beyond *dukkha*, except the ending of experience. That's what *Nibbāna*²¹ is, complete cessation, the going out of the flame, the ending of everything. Only when you see *anattā* can that really help and then you see how thoroughly the world is *dukkha*.

When the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths he really meant it completely. The five *khandhas* are *dukkha*, it's not just when you are attached to a *dukkha*. That

which attaches is the five *khandhas*. You can't think there is something outside of these five *khandhas* which does the attaching. The whole process is just the five *khandhas*. If you see the mind clearly enough you can see the stupidity of those people, even monks, who try to think that there is something beyond the five *khandhas*. The Buddha said very clearly that consciousness and all the other *khandhas* are suffering. When one actually sees this and accepts this, one understands why the Buddha said *sabbe sankhāra dukkha*, all formations, all things are suffering. The *Arahants*, people who are enlightened would describe their experiences as an *Arahant* as suffering arising and suffering passing away. If you want to know what it's like to be an *Arahant* that's the description, suffering and more suffering, suffering arising and suffering passing away. That's the summation of the life of an *Arahant*. Only the *Arahant* knows that the suffering arising and passing away is limited. Like the workman waiting for his wages in the *Therāgathā*²², the *Arahant* knows that he hasn't been paid yet. At *Parinibbana*²³ the last suffering passes away and *samsāra* is ended.

Impermanence – Nature Owns It All

Isn't it wonderful when a baby is born? It has all these experiences in front of it. Poor thing! There is so much suffering in front of it. Isn't it wonderful? You can go off and tour around, see a great movie or listen to wonderful music, enjoy great relationships and have sex, and goodness knows what else you can do in this world. Isn't it wonderful these days with technology? You can do so much. That's just stupidity. That's what is disgusting. What is conducive to suffering we take to be beautiful and what is impermanent, the will, consciousness and the five *khandhas*, we think is permanent can somehow be there for us forever. It's all going, it's all fading away, and everything that we think we possess will soon be gone. We forget about impermanence.

Understand that all of your money, all of your houses, your clothes, your cars, all of that is impermanent. It is fading away. Even now our monastery is being destroyed by time and our bodies are being destroyed as we speak. If we really owned all this we would be able to stop the decay. You will not be able to stop decay. This body, your bank account, your houses, your clothes, everything you think is yours belongs

to nature. It does not belong to you. That's what impermanence tells you. You use these things like a person who is renting a house. You should never think they are yours. When the owner wants the house back you have to give it back. You have no wealth at all, you have no body. All this is just illusion through the *vipallāsas*.

Once you have all of these things you're very concerned about losing them, especially your body. When you start to get sick and someone says you have to give up your body. You say, "No way! I want to live. I'm too young to die at seventy or eighty. I'm still too young to die. The person next door is eighty five. Can't I be as old as them?" You're not ready to give up because that's wrong view, wrong perception and wrong thought. *Anicca* means there is no owner but rather nature owns all of this, which is what impermanence tells you. Wouldn't be it wonderful if you could only get that degree of right view into your conceptual framework? It would mean that you'd no longer be worried about your possessions. It's the old saying, 'You don't own your property; your property owns you'. Isn't that the case? What burdens property gives you! Property demands you look after it. It demands you give it attention and give it so much time.

The less you have the less demands by your property and your possessions on your time. If you can, imagine you have nothing whatsoever. Even you monks who carry around just a bowl and robes, they don't belong to you. Regard them as belonging to the Buddha, not nature. Your bowl and robes belong to the Buddha, so look after them; you're just borrowing them from the Buddha. They're not yours at all! So when you wear the Buddha's robes wear them beautifully in a way that the Buddha would be proud of and when you use the Buddha's bowl to beg for alms to eat, remember that bowl comes from the Buddha, that's the Buddha's bowl. So, please do it beautifully out of respect and out of gratitude, knowing the sacredness of the bowl and the robes. This body of yours is just here to be used for fulfilling the holy life that's all. Don't give it too much attention; it's not your body. You have had so many bodies already and now you've got another one, good bodies, bad bodies, mediocre bodies, male bodies, female bodies, Asian bodies and Western bodies, there are so many bodies. This one is not yours, it belongs to nature.

When these things are seen for what they are and *anicca* is teaching you they don't belong to you, why are you so concerned about them? There's a beautiful simile in the *suttas* (MN 22.41). The Buddha asked the monks, "If people carried off the grass, sticks, branches, and leaves in this Jeta Grove, or burned them, or did what they liked with them, would you think: 'People are carrying us off or burning us or doing what they like with us?'"

"No, venerable sir.

"Why not?"

"Because that is neither our self nor what belongs to our self."

"So too, bhikkhus, whatever is not yours, abandon it; when you have abandoned it that will lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time. If the five *khandhas* were to be burnt, destroyed, thrown away, would you be concerned."

"No, venerable sir.

"Why not?"

"Because that is neither our self nor what belongs to our self."

The *khandhas* belong to nature. This body, these perceptions, thoughts, feelings, pleasures and pains don't belong to you so why are you so concerned with happiness and suffering, with pain and pleasure, with nice food and rotten food or nice sounds? Someone says something nice to you and you get really high. Someone says something mean to you and you get upset. They're just words. They're a just sound, that's all, thoughts in the mind, nice thoughts, rotten thoughts, they are just thoughts that's all. They don't belong to you. Anything that arises in the mind, any mood, emotion, idea or thought, is not yours. So then you won't think or worry so much and you won't get depressed so much. You know that I don't really care about what you think. I don't even care what I think, so why should I care what you think?

So, in this way you can let go of things, you can be free from things, you can be at peace at last knowing you own nothing. There is no owner in here either, to own anything. There is no one at the shop counter and there are no customers, so how can there be any interactions? When you see that all this buying and selling, these transactions in life, these comings and goings, come to an end, then at long last there is freedom and peace. This is how the *vipallāsas* are straightened out through the

words of another and by seeing through them and going to the source of things, to the *jhānas*, the *citta*, into the *yoni*, the womb of all of this.

There you will actually see *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* and also *asubha*²⁴. Everything, the whole works is impermanent, it doesn't belong to anyone, it just belongs to nature. When you can say, "At last I've got rid of all my possessions", then you really are a homeless one, an *anagārika*²⁵, one who has gone forth from possessions and doesn't own a house, bank accounts, a bowl and robes or a *kuṭi*. One doesn't even own a body or one's thoughts. We talk about relinquishing and we don't even own our own minds. Just throw away the whole lot and have no possessions at all. All the thoughts, the experiences, the great *jhānas*, the rotten meditations, none of them are 'mine', its just nature doing its thing. There is no one in here to own anything, to experience anything, to do anything. As for all of the great talks, I haven't even given one good talk, nor will I ever give any talks and I've had no great meditations because there is no one in here to do anything. None of this belongs to me. By seeing that *anattā*, as soon as you try and own things, do things; want things; create things; you see that you are just making suffering in this world. You've already made too much suffering in your journeys through *samsāra*. Enough of making suffering, every thing that I thought was worthwhile, happiness and useful has just been a complete waste of time, just more suffering in the world. Why do we always keep on doing all this?

The Last Right View

The Buddha said, "House builder, you've been seen. Your rafters have all been taken out. You will not build any more *samsāra*". The Buddha meant that once you've seen this last right view come to fruition, you see things according to the way the Buddha saw them and you see things the way the *Arahants* see them. There is such a thing as right view. It's the 'Four Noble Truths', seeing impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, real suffering, non self and emptiness. As soon as you see this your perceptions start to change. What before you thought was a beautiful perception, you realize is just a perception that's all and nice sights that you used to like seeing, such as sunsets – who says they're beautiful? It's just perception that's all because you've been told they're beautiful. Right view sees that it's just the irritation of the eye sense. It's much better to close the eyes and have no eye contact happening at all and go into a *jhāna*. All the

beautiful music I've heard in my life, from going to the Albert Hall to seeing great musicians, all of that is just a complete waste of time. The world still celebrates sounds and you have to pay a lot of money to go and see some of these so called, great musicians. They are great fools, fooling others into delighting in the sense world. There is no sound as beautiful as silence, the deep silence of the *jhānas*. There is no taste, no smell in the *jhānas*. There is no physical feeling as great as bodily tranquillity, *kāya passaddhi*, where the body just disappears. And of all the physical pleasures that I have had in my life, *kāya passaddhi*, when the five senses, especially the physical sense of touch, completely disappears, that's the best. That's when I can completely relax and not be irritated by this sensitive body. Seeing pleasure and pain, heat, cold and all of that, you acquire right views and right perceptions. You acquire right thoughts, thoughts in accordance with the true *Dhamma*, the way the Buddha thought, the thought to end *samsāra*, to end the five *khandhas* and to bring as many people with you as possible in the time you have left. So this is what the *vipallāsas* are all about. This is what *avijjā* is and how it's overcome. This is how delusion manifests, and how delusion is overcome. This is how the Four Noble Truths and the Three Characteristics of Existence all work together and how it's all based on the Eightfold Path, the way out culminating in the *jhānas*.

As Māha Mogalāna said to Visāka, "Through the words of another and the work of the mind which goes to the source, through hearing the *Dhamma* from *Ariyans*, and through getting into *jhānas*, you have the opportunity to break the whole cycle through Stream Winning and the inevitable unravelling of the *vipallāsas*". So may your *vipallāsas* be unravelling even now and may *samsāra* be ending for you. May you be deluded no more in the ways of the world? May you find true freedom and true peace through true cessation? So that's the end of this evenings talk on the *vipallāsas*.

¹ *Vipallāsa*: Perversion or distortion of perception, thought and view – taking what is impermanent to be permanent; what is suffering to be happiness; what is empty of a self to be a self; and what is not beautiful (*asubha*) to be beautiful (cognitive distortion).

² *Ariya*: A Noble One, a person who has attained to one of the four stages of Enlightenment.

³ *Yoniso manasikāra*: Literally, "work of the mind that goes back to the source (*yonī*)". Sometimes translated as "wise attention" or "careful consideration".

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- ⁴ *Samādhi*: Sustained attention on one thing.
- ⁵ *Avijjā*: Delusion or ignorance (of the Four Noble Truths).
- ⁶ *Saṃsāra*: The round of rebirth (Literally: ‘wandering on’).
- ⁷ Noble Truths, The Four
The truth of:
1. Suffering
 2. The cause of suffering
 3. The cessation of suffering
 4. The path leading to the cessation of suffering
- ⁸ *Arahant*: A Fully Enlightened One.
- ⁹ *Dhamma*: The teachings of the Buddha; the truth; the Norm.
- ¹⁰ *Saṃsāra*: The round of rebirth (Literally: ‘wandering on’).
- ¹¹ *Puthujjana*: Ordinary person, in the sense of not having yet penetrated the Four Noble Truths and attained one of the four stages of Enlightenment – as opposed to the *Ariyan*.
- ¹² *Yonisomanasikāra*: Literally, “work of the mind that goes back to the source (*yonī*)”. Sometimes translated as “wise attention” or “careful consideration”.
- ¹³ *Jhānas*: The deep meditation states of letting go.
- ¹⁴ Hindrances, The Five:
1. Sensual desire
 2. Ill-will and anger
 3. Lethargy and dullness
 4. Restless and Remorse
 5. Sceptical doubt
- ¹⁵ *Sutta*: Discourse of the Lord Buddha, or one of his chief disciples, as recorded in the Pāli Canon.
- ¹⁶ *Yathābhūtañāṇadassana*: Seeing things as they truly are, as opposed to seeing things as they seem to be. Such insight only happens when the five hindrances are abandoned, usually after a *jhāna*.
- ¹⁷ *Cetanā*: Will, or volitional activity.
- ¹⁸ *Saññā*: Perception.
- ¹⁹ *Dukkha*: Suffering and unsatisfactoriness.
- ²⁰ *Khandhās* - Aggregates. The 5 groups into which the Buddha has summed up all the physical and mental phenomena of existence (modified from “Buddhist Dictionary”).
1. That is body, *rūpa*;
 2. feeling, *vedanā*;
 3. perception, *saññā*;
 4. mental formations, *sankhāras*;
 5. and consciousness, *viññāna*.
- ²¹ *Nibbāna*: Literally; “Extinction” (as in the going out of a flame). The supreme goal for Buddhists – it is the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion – thus, the end of all suffering.
- ²² *Therāgathā*: Hymns of the Elders.

²³ *Parinibbāna*: Complete Extinction – usually refers to the termination of the life-span of a Buddha or *Arahant*.

²⁴ *Asubha*: Not-beautiful (sometimes translated as repulsiveness, or loathsomeness). The perception of impurity, loathsomeness and foulness. The contemplation of the 32 parts of the body.

²⁵ *Anagārika*: Literally: “Homeless One”. In Western Theravada Monasteries this is taken to mean someone who keeps the eight precepts and is in training to ordain as a novice monk.