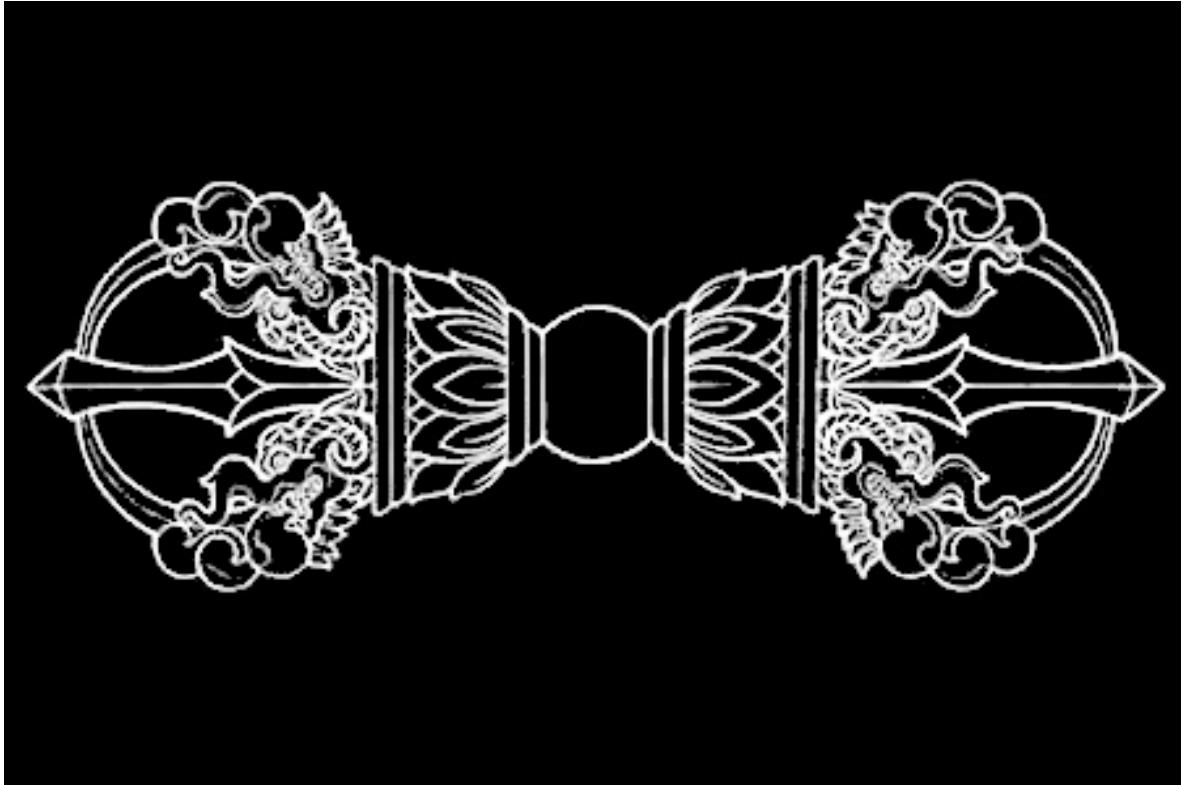


Treasure Trove Talk 2: Mind and the Five Omnipresent Mental Events



The plan this morning is first a talk from me, then a meditation practice, then groups, and then some discussion and we'll take it from there. Let's see how it goes.

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As we saw last night, our experience right now is the vajra of five skandhas and five wisdoms. The vajra represents the potential for full awakening that is inherent in our present experience, but unrealised.

Realisation comes from applying the methods of the Dharma.

In the Abhidharma, the skandhas are expressed a little differently though essentially they are still the same, as the five omnipresent mental events. If you take up your A4 sheet and look at the top row they're at the left.

1. **Feeling**, vedanā, feeling-tone. This is the same as the skandha
2. **Interpretation**, saṃjñā, recognition. Same as the skandha.
3. **Will**, cetanā, directionality of mind. Equivalent to the samskara skandha
4. **Sense Contact**, sparśa. This is the skandha of Rupa, form, but here it

is form as we experience it.

5. **Attention**, manaskāra, egocentric demanding. This is equivalent to the skandha of vijnana, sense consciousness, since here it is Manasikara (which is the mind, manas) which fastens our attention on to the particular object we are drawn to.

We'll look at each of these in more detail in a minute. These five mental events are all always present whenever there is mind. In a sense, they are what mind is. And this is perhaps the main thing I want to say this morning.

It is very important to understand that for Buddhism, mind is conceived in a radically different way. Because of cultural conditioning, we tend to understand mind as something, a definite thing, that is there in the background all the time. But for Buddhism, mind — at least the ordinary unawakened mind — happens only when there is a subject and an object. It is *simply* the relationship between a subject and an object.

This is also expressed in the five omnipresent mental events, because experiencing an object, and indeed the vast world of objects we encounter many times a second, always involves all of these five mental events.

So this situation of the five omnipresent mental events, Volition, Attention, Contact, Feeling, Recognition, is recreated again and again. When any one of them is missing, there isn't an experience, there isn't even a mind.

Can we get that?

This is the main thing I hope we can get our heads around today. Today I'm taking a lot of my material from Know Your Mind Ch.4, called appropriately, The Nature of the Mind.

Sangharakshita talks about the mind when it is awakened as nondual. By that he means not relating to objects in terms of subject and object.

You could tell I think from my descriptions last night of the five wisdoms, which describe the awakened mind, that the dualistic mind has totally gone with the realisation of sunyata. Subject and object are realised as inseparable, samsara and nirvana are realised as inseparable, body and mind are realised as inseparable.

This is how things really are according to the 'mind only' perspective of the Yogacara. What we think of as an outside world, the entire thing is happening in awareness and isn't happening anywhere else. This is a very

powerful teaching and is very persuasive when you start really considering it, even though I think for most of us it's hard to really fully accept because it is so radical. But it is equally hard to reject as well.

Luckily we don't have to take a position on something we can't be expected to know. We can take it as a method, as a means, a raft to reach the further shore. And we can meditate on it, as we do for example in sadhana practice.

So our experience seems to consist of a subjective pole, which we usually call 'me', and an objective pole, which is everything else, everything that seems independent of 'me'.

So there's two kinds of content in experience - objective content and subjective content. With enlightenment, one no longer identifies with the subjective content of the experience. It is still all there, but when the identification as 'me' drops away, it all expands into one experience, and there is this sense of expansion, clarification and illumination.

We often have this kind of experience in meditation at least to some degree, because meditation offers many opportunities to loosen our identification with the subject.

So that is what is meant by the word mind — mind is there when there is some kind of relation to an object, whether or not one identifies with the subjective content. Mind is just a term that covers it all.

Mind is just that idea and it doesn't exist otherwise. It is an idea, a useful concept, a way for us to engage with the actual experience we are having.

So what about mental events? Well, mind is when an object is perceived. But then we get involved with the object. That's mental events happening, and there can be many of them.

Sangharakshita puts it quite well, he says "If I look at and become aware of a person, this is mind. But if I then start thinking, say, 'he's a bit taller than that other fellow' or 'I don't like the look of him', these are examples of mental events.

So in terms of our five omnipresent mental events, there is first the bare experience of something, then there is how it feels, our recognition of it as 'this' or 'that', and so on.

In meditation you can get to a point where mental events get fewer and

fewer and you're left with a singleness of mind in which they have all been absorbed. At least this is how Sangharakshita describes it.

So. Let me just summarise. Mind in Buddhism is a relational term. It is a reaching out to an object. It is dynamic rather than passive. At a certain point, there is usually some kind of engagement with the object, and this is where the mental events start up.

There are many different mental events. We can see on our A4 sheet 51 of them. We could name many more that aren't listed, but this covers the general field.

If you look at the top three boxes from right to left you see 'the four variables', 'the five object determining mental events' and 'the five omnipresent mental events'.

So there in the centre are the mental events that arise when we are trying to concentrate on something. And the ones at the left, we have seen already, are those that are always there.

Then below that, the three columns headed 'the eleven positive mental events', 'the six root klesas' and 'the twenty secondary klesas'. These are the mental events that come up in daily life.

Something like doubt, lack of confidence, that root klesā. Klesā means a defilement or negative state. We all recognise that. When in some mind situation, that klesā of doubt arises, there is going to be trouble.

Typical trouble in this case are the three secondary klesas at the right, but there could be many others as well.

But things may not go bad, maybe there will be some more positive mental events around like those at the left. So over the next day or so we will look at all these mental events.

Today we are getting a general handle on our mind situation and the mental events that are always there.

So to finish, let's look at those and then meditate.

Right here, I have your attention, or at least some of it. Attention is an omnipresent mental event.

Listening to me, can you notice that the attention fluctuates? It is almost

impossible to be fully focused on what someone is saying because we often need to step back and check something in our own thinking, or because of the power of distraction.

Yet that quality of attention is always there, perhaps more often seeking distraction. You can't stop it going somewhere. Attention is omnipresent.

And behind it, there is a kind of drive to single out objects, perhaps distracting objects, perhaps objects that will help make sense of what is happening.

And this drive, too, is always there, omnipresent. We are always driven, we always want this, we want that. Or don't want, it's the same thing, a drive, a pushing and pulling here and there.

Sometimes in a gentle way, sometimes totally obsessively.

We want to think about this, this, and this, not that, we want to see this, taste this, listen to this. The drive to engagement with or avoidance of different things is a huge part of our being.

In the skandhas and the nidana chain it is called samskara; here it is called cetana, the mind's directionality or drive.

It is also karma, it is also the process of being conditioned in our actions by previous actions. Cetana, samskara and karma are the same. And almost all the time we are driven towards objects, in dreams as well.

So when we connect with an object with our senses, that is called sense contact. Contact with the world of forms or Rupa. It is always there.

There is an art to noticing it happening. If you examine your experience too hard it can be as though it gets shy and hides away out of sight until it thinks you're not looking. If you relax and persist though, that self-consciousness goes and you can see it without scaring it.

A bit like watching birds and animals, you just need to be considerate and then they will trust you and show themselves. It's got to be natural or it won't work.

See the constant contact with different objects, and then see the constant feelings and sensations coming out of those. Our attention is constantly pulled towards contact with objects and with each there is the feeling of it and also recognising it.

Feeling, vedana, is like the quality that seems to come off the thing. Vedana is usually explained as feeling that is pleasant painful or neutral, but it is broader than that, it is basically how something feels in the sense of the sensation we get when we make contact.

So putting on a shirt made of silk will feel different from one made of wool. And it will feel different if we are sick or feeling impatient or afraid, or if it's early in the morning or late at night. Every condition makes a difference to how an object feels.

Then finally Samjna is when we put a label on something, we identify it as 'one of those'. Or we might even identify it as 'unknown object'.

Through a process of naming and labelling, Samjna puts our world together in patterns we can use. Just for a moment, think about that and look into your experience and watch the labelling going on.

I think you'll find it is mostly something that happens to us, rather than something we actively, consciously do.

Meditation
Groups
Discussion.

