

Changing Karma

The science of Buddhist practice

Forward

This is a transcript from the YouTube video; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPN0s3lvINO> - “*You versus Your Brain*”

Parenthetical and italicized text are mine.

I submit the following for your consideration in your modern understanding of the knowledge that Shakyamuni Buddha was trying to convey some almost 3000 years ago to a largely illiterate people as well as all caste up to the intellectual (*Brahman*) caste of India.

My constant goal is to make the history and scholarship of Buddhism and its founder’s teachings as easy to understand as this modern era of Mappo can transmit. With the access to our great scholars in both Buddhist lineage as well as those academically trained, this wealth of information can be overwhelming. It is my task to reduce the noise or extraneous pursuits of politicized agendas to deliver a paired back but no simplified, straightforward teaching without distraction. The sciences today, from physics and cosmology to psychology and neurology, provide a glut of observable truths that apply directly to our Buddhist practices and rhetoric. I provide here a direct transcription of video talks from the Internet with interruptions of personal insight regarding Buddhist teachings and practice, as a guide to interrelate our practice with the provided text.

Sifu, Bodhisattva Sylvain Chamberlain

Love and respect, NaMuMyohoRenGeKyo

Transcript Annotated

Intro

Knowing that our perception is an illusion, our sense of self is illusion. All of it is illusion in the sense that it's a construct of our brain, our brain is creating this for

us. And given that, that's an opportunity because we can have some control over how our brain perceives the world, and that's where the power lies.

Perception

Our perceptions are basically formed from a combination of what we expect, so that's coming internally from our past experiences. And then what's coming into our brain externally. And when those two things meet, it creates this perception, which is what we actually experience.

(We necessarily begin with the relationship of our formative karma and the Samsaric conditions we enter in Birth in this lifetime.)

Your inner voice is your ability to silently use language to reflect on your life. Provides us with a survival advantage. It's an incredible problem-solving device. I realized that we have this ability to change our trajectory and change our thoughts. And we can expand the box that we're in. We can expand our perception of who we are in the world.

Our mind are shaped by our prior experience. So as these neurons start forming connections, and as you go through life and have experiences, it's a pruning process. So it's actually strengthening the important connections and allowing the other unimportant connections to kind of wither away.

(And right from the start, we are altering, influencing and changing, Karma.)

And then you start to develop a more defined structure. There's this constant interplay between things that our brain processes unconsciously that informs our behavior. So what you're conscious of at any moment can affect what you perceive and what you remember as well.

So if you're in a negative headspace, you're going to start perceiving more negative things in your environment.

(Time to chant. Your Daimoku changes your "headspace" to Buddhahood.)

If you're in a positive headspace, you're going to perceive more positive things, even though the environment may be exactly the same. So being **mindful** is your brain controlling what you're attending to and also controlling what you're taking in, and how you're reacting to the world.

The more you can understand and also knowing that you live within a certain kind of perceptual box, can create potentially the impetus for you to develop or try to work on developing more **empathy for others** who are living inside their own perception boxes. We're all a work in progress until our very last breath, and there's always room for change.

Nothing is set in stone.

Chatter

Many of us turn our attention inward to come up with some narrative that explains our experiences in ways that give shape to our understanding of who we are, our identity. Our inner voice is part of what we call our “verbal working memory system”. Our inner voice also lets us simulate and plan, control ourselves, and then finally, the inner voice helps us storify our lives.

Chatter refers to the dark side of the inner voice.

(SAMSARA)

When we turn our attention inward to make sense of our problems we don't end up finding solutions, we end up ruminating, worrying, catastrophising. We get stuck in a negative cycle that takes this remarkable tool that we possess, this inner voice, and it turns it into a curse rather than a blessing. The good news is there is a science-based toolkit that you can use to regain control of your inner voice.

Rituals are one way to do that. By engaging the same sequence of behaviors every time, the same way, that's giving you a sense of order and control that can feel really good when you're mired in chatter.

(This is our Buddhist practices!)

The real challenge is to figure out what are the unique combinations of tools that work best for you, given the unique kinds of chatter that you're experiencing.

Negative narratives

So the stories that we tell ourselves, about ourselves have been shaped by our environment, our upbringing. We have something called observational knowledge, and that means that we learn about how the world is by observing those around us in our formative years.

But observational knowledge has a flip side. Sometimes we observe our peers or parents, being highly critical of themselves, and so we learn to do that as well. Or perhaps your parents will exacerbate a particular narrative and then that boxes us into this kind of fixed mindset in our adult life where we don't want to step outside the realms of what's been defined for us.

(Buddha called this “Habit Energy”)

So as humans, we do have a negativity bias, so we perceive negative information more greatly than positive. And the negativity bias can really highlight those things that we say to ourselves, those negative stories. If left unchecked, it will basically form a template to how you see the world. So you will carry that into every aspect of your life, and your brain will perceive that as normal. So whilst our thoughts are extremely powerful, we can use that to our advantage to really pull out the positive

narratives that we want for ourselves. By pulling out the small wins, it will start to shine a light on a different outcome, not the one that you have usually perpetuated.

And it's not until you bring conscious attention to it that you can start to make a change, because the brain is just doing what it knows best.

(Of course that brain is influenced or controlled by you, your mind, your karma, your attitude and intent. And the best way to influence your brain in positivism is to influence it with the Buddha mind of the 9th consciousness. NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo)

It's going to optimize energy for other things and just repeat what has been ingrained.

So when we break those automatic patterns, we take control of that steering wheel and we start to say, "hey, this is how things have usually been, this is the box that I put myself in, that parents put me in, but I want to change that.

And we start to essentially rewire and reshape our perception box and how we see ourselves, and how we think other people interpret us as well.