

Bro Teoh's talk on 12th April (Puan Chee)

Audio : <http://broteoh.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Teoh-Thu-180412.mp3>

Whiteboard : <https://i0.wp.com/broteoh.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Teoh-Thu-180412-e1523590496309.jpg>

1. Bro Eric's question:
 - a. I can see my own 'Ego'. **Is Ego good or bad?** Isn't Ego useful?
 - b. Does having no ego mean we let others do what they like to us?

Bro Teoh's answers to question 1(a):

2. Many Buddhists will say *Ego is bad*. But what they **don't understand** is Ego is part of the *mundane mind* borne of **self-delusion** (Sakayaditti). So **Ego needs to be understood**. When *there is understanding*, your mind can be **freed** and *this is very important*. So, it is **not about** whether *the Ego is good or bad*. Ego is just like money and thought – *neither good nor bad* for it depends on its **user**. The *user of thought* is more important. When *there is wisdom* you can see your own Egoic form and mind, which is a good thing. The Ego then **loses its power** when you understand how *via self-delusion* you **get entangled**. The **true mind** can then *awaken the form and mind* via wisdom. With **wisdom connected** to the form and mind, this form and mind is **no longer deluded**. It will then be able to live the third phase of dharma, Pativedha. One can then get to enjoy the fruition of one's hard work to live the life of a noble being.
3. Bro Teoh said, 'If you *seek security*, you will end up *becoming miserable*'. Do you agree with this statement? *Security is a myth*. For **when you take cares of mind, mind takes care of karma, karma takes care of your life**, and then *everything is taken care off* so there is **no need** for Security. True 'Security' comes about through this type of understanding (or wisdom) but **not through** the *craving mind* that **wants and craves** for Security. For the lack of Security (which is **Insecurity**) *brings about fear, worry, anxiety, sorrow and lamentation* caused by the 8 **realities** of the **First Noble Truth**. By *taking care of karma* via following the **Noble Eightfold Path**, you are **confident** of *how life will unfold*. Peace, clarity, tranquility and stillness of mind arises through this understanding.
4. Always remember **not to accumulate** *psychological* memory through *self-delusion*. Self-delusion arises due to the belief that one exist as a human being. Memory includes **the accumulation of all our experiences, good and bad**. *Thought is response to memory* that is **accumulated**. *Negative habitual tendencies arise wrong thoughts*. So, we should *learn how to use thoughts to live life appropriately and wisely*. It is **foolish to use thought negatively** to harm ourselves and hit out at others. Wrong thoughts arise through **self-delusion**.
5. Striving to *realize one's ambition* with **understanding** is a good thing. However, if one violates the karmic laws to **realize that ambition** then there will be **Karmic consequences**. Some people become gullible and trusted fortune tellers, mediums and feng shui masters, etc. All these will not work because this is done via **not understanding** the root of the problem. The Buddha said, *'we are born of our karma, heir to our karma, conditioned and supported by our karma.'* So, **if we don't take our karma**, then our life will be affected and suffering will be the result.
6. **Without wisdom**, the *Egoic mind is heedless*. So, meditation is essentially to train the *heedless thinking mind* (which is clouded by thoughts of fear, emotions and negativity, etc.) to develop the *inner peace, the inner awareness and calmness, stillness and heedfulness within to insight* into truth to arise the wisdom. Bro Eric's **amazing transformation** as explained by Bro Teoh in his sharing is a **very good testimony** for after having those understanding he felt free for the first time in his life after so many years in depression.

7. Bro Eric's second question 1 (b) – How can understanding Ego help? Does it mean that when people hit at you or abuse you, you don't do anything?

Bro Teoh's answer:

a) Without the understanding, you believe you exist as an entity (name given to you). So, what happens when others hit out at you or abuse you? You will start **to react** with your *usual habitual tendencies* conditioned by your *wrong thoughts*. But when you really *understand that this so-called human being or personality* is just a **karmically-conditioned** form and mind for us to come to this world, then there is *no more problem*. The reality is, you have a **true nature within** and *what causes suffering is your mundane mind that is deluded*. Who is *there to fear*, who is *there to seek security*? It's the **mundane mind**, the **Egoic mind**. When this is **understood** via the **direct seeing** with the **true mind** then **wisdom** will arise **to liberate the mundane mind**. Then there is just *awareness, peacefulness, calmness, clarity, tranquility and stillness within*. When you understand that **Ego arises due to self-delusion**, then this *so-called entity cannot be deceived* into suffering anymore.

b) Answer to Bro Eric's question on, not reacting when people hit at you:

Bro Teoh explained that it is **not possible** to do that because this *question arises from the thought*. The real understanding lies in **straightening one's view to see things as they are via accepting them for what they are**. Then you *may smile at him* because you have *compassion for him*. Through ignorance, he behaves that way because he doesn't understand the karmic law. Your smile and metta towards him has to be sincere. Without the ego, the so-called entity (the 5 aggregates of form and mind) will be beautiful. However, this does not mean Ego is bad. We have **a functional body** so use it but **do not be deluded by it**. We exist in this world with this body and mind, so the Ego (or mundane mind) and the physical or functional body has its place in life.

c) Why did, the Buddha left the palace when he saw the **four signs**? When he saw the first three signs, he **realized** he has real problems will regards *to old age, sickness and death*. Under the Bodhi tree, He came to **great liberation** when He realize that the body and mind was **not real** (because it is condition arising/dependent originating) hence **not a permanent unchanging entity, not Him**.

d) The five aggregates of form and mind, even though it is **not you**, but it is **very useful**. The reason being, you need it to develop the understanding via the cultivation. Then, you *can experience the pristine beauty and wonders of life*. Life then becomes *very meaningful*. With this understanding, *you can still achieve success, have ambition and become a blessing to all* while at the same time, *live the life of a noble one*. Without the five aggregates, you *cannot arise* in this world **neither can you connect** to your **true nature**. So, do not be deluded by what others tell you, - 'Ego is bad, thought is bad. Just let go of them'. Who let go? It's the **thought** that wants to let go. So, the advices given are wrong. Without understanding, you *will try to practice letting go*. But, **when you understand**, you *will not hold*. If you **don't hold**, *what is there to let go*? People are just the way they are. So, how can we dislike them just because they give us problems? It is because the ego is so strong. Without understanding, we cling to words, concepts and ideology.

e) It is important for us to meditate to understand *what this human being* is all about. With this understanding we **can use it appropriately**. *When the user of thought is wise, the thoughts are pure and non-grasping* (they are right thoughts without the 3 evil roots of Greed, Hatred and Delusion).

8. Sis Keat Hoon's question – How can we change the past?

Bro Teoh's answer:

a) The past is already gone hence not a reality anymore. We need to inquire - What is life? To live life, one has to go through existence. So Life can be equated to Existence. Then what is existence? It is time-related, right? There are three periods of time - past, present and future. So to understand life, we have to understand time.

b) Past is already gone, no more a reality. Why must you carry it in your memory and project it causing you all the psychological misery? What is future? It has *yet to come*, also not a reality. The **present moment** is the only reality in Life. So what must we do? It's only in the **present moment** that we *can cultivate wisely* to arise

the appropriate right conditions to prevent the negative conditions from arising to condition our negative karmic fruition. If we cannot change the past then why do you still pay fortune tellers to change the past?

9. Sis Keat Hoon - What are past parami? What do they mean?

Bro Teoh's answer:

a) *If you have cultivated before, you will have past parami (your good merits and perfections) to protect you.*

10. Sis Keat Hoon - What do we need to do to ensure that we can have better parami in this life?

Bro Teoh's answer:

a) The **present moment** is the only reality in life. Moment to moment, life passes by what are you doing? All heedless people are **too busy thinking, planning and worrying** about their life. Instead one should develop the cultivation to be heedful and aware to avoid all evil via following the Buddha's advice to keep one's precepts, cultivate virtues and purify one's mind. This is how you can avoid arising anymore new negative karma to take care of your life from that moment onwards. Then, with **heedfulness** you can cultivate the **Noble 8-Fold Path** to develop your parami. Thus, **avoiding condition** for negative karma from the past to ripen too. This is what is meant by *'you take care of mind, mind takes care of karma then karma take care of your life.'* The trained mind that has clarity can bring about the **transformation** via wisdom.

b) When we take care of karma, there is no condition for bad karma to arise. Even if bad karma were to arise, wisdom will enable you to act without negativity. You will know how to take the necessary appropriate actions like asking for forgiveness, repentance, cultivate wholesomeness to invoke power of merits for turnaround etc. and not to react negatively like before.

c) With clarity of mind, tangible solutions can be taken **without projection of thoughts** to arise the fear, worry and anxiety.

11. Sis Keat Hoon's question – What is karma?

Bro Teoh's answer:

a) Karma is **moral causation**. It involves **mental intention** (wholesome or unwholesome). In Pali, it is called cetana. Your **mental intention** will condition the **thought to have karmic effect**. Moral causation is different from Newton's **physical Law** of cause and effect (for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction).

b) The Buddha said, *'you reap what you sow. Do Good begets good, do evil begets evil.'* Through **self-delusion**, the Egoic mind makes us **selfish** and **possessive** and *when we grasp and cling through our wrong views, conditioning etc. suffering will be the result.*

12. Sis. Keat Hoon's question – Is there karma when a thought arises?

Bro Teoh's answer:

a) When your **view is wrong**, your thoughts will be wrong for it is cetana or mental intention that I call karma.

b) When the **mental defilements are there**, there is karma already *even though it is only at the thought level.*

c) In the Buddha's time, there is a Jataka story about a man who changed gender due to **a lustful wrong thought**. **(Extracted from the Internet:** This is the tale of a householder name Soreyya. The story goes that, on seeing the beautiful skin colour of a **bhikkhu** Mahakaccayana, Soreyya had the wish to have him as his wife or else that his wife might have a similar bodily hue. This **impure lustful thought** caused him to change into a woman right on the spot. The tale continues, with his experiences as a woman until at some point she has the condition to offers a dana meal to Mahakaccayana and asks to be forgiven, whereupon she gain back his male gender.)

d) Thought is very powerful so do not simply thinks the wrong thought.

e) Jataka story of Devadatta described by Bro Teoh (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seri-Vanija_Jathaka_Katha, http://www.Palikanon.com/english/pali_names/d/devadatta.htm) also involve very strong negative thought.

- f) According to the Buddha, karma is a very complex subject and cannot be understood by normal beings *unless one's mind* has attained to a very high level of understanding because it involves understanding a lot of conditions. Only a Bodhisattva who has gone through all the 31 planes of existence will be able to have that understanding.
- g) We are born of our karma, conditioned and supported by our karma and we are what we are because of our karma. So what are we waiting for if our *entire life* is *dependent on karma*? There is *no one who can escape* this powerful law. So, it is *never worthwhile* to violate this law.
13. Sis. Mee Fong shared the *importance of cultivating more goodness* to overcome *tough conditions* borne of *karmic negativity's fruition*.
Bro Teoh's answer:
- When a thought is created, there are *seventeen thought moments within that thought*.
 - When the mind is *not receiving* any *sense stimuli*, it is in a state of *bhavanga*. There is *no awareness*. When you are in a bhavanga state, you need strong *sense stimuli to impinge upon the mind stream* to become conscious.
 - If it is the *first Javana cetana*, karma can *only ripen this life* if there are conditions. Otherwise, it ceases.
 - If it is the *last Javana cetana*, karma will carry on to the *next life*. Without the conditions, it ceases too.
 - But most people create the *second to the sixth cetana*, then karma will follow them to eternity (even for Arahants). This happened to Angulimala when the Buddha encouraged him to endure and take it in that life rather than having to experience it in hell where the suffering and misery is *worst* and may *last much longer*.
 - If you *cultivate only nominal goodness* but *have committed so much negative karma*, it is *equivalent to having a lot of salt in a small glass of water*. When one avoid all evil and do good there is *only pure water* and *no more salt* because the *pure water* is your *good karma* so that no more salt is added thereby diluting the earlier water.
 - With wisdom, karma ceases to affect you. However, without wisdom, it will continue to torment you.
14. Sis. Mee Fong shared about the five type of heavy karma – matricide, patricide, causing a schism in the Sangha, wounding a Buddha, killing an Arahant.
Bro Teoh's answer:
- If one commits any of these heavy karma, there is no escape from the effect of such karma.
15. Sis. Keat Hoon's sharing – I always thought karma was fatalistic. But after listening to Bro Teoh's sharing, it is not. We can still do something about it.
Bro Teoh's answer:
- Sir Francis Light, a famous philosopher who studied Buddhism said, 'the past may condition us but it does not dominate over us.' The reason being, moment to moment we can still do something to improve our karma.
 - When we have wisdom, karma does not have power over you because karma will reverse itself once it can't torment you anymore.
 - Most Buddhist books explanation of the dhamma have not done proper justice to the real teaching.
 - The Buddha was able to summarize all of Life (both the mundane and the supra mundane) into just the Four Noble Truth which is the essence of his teaching.
 - The Buddha has penetrated the fields of consciousness and even understood the Unconditioned.
16. Sis. Keat Hoon's question – We talk about Right View but we are *so diverse in our way of looking at things*. So, my view may differ from your view.
Bro Teoh's answer:
- The Buddha's Right View is not about your views and my views. This are the individual's views or belief systems. Right View here refers to the universal *spiritual laws* of nature: Law of Karma, Law of Mind and Law of Dhamma.
 - This teaching is beyond thought and beyond mind.
 - The dharma can only be realized by the wise.
17. Bro Teoh mentioned that the mind of the enlightened ones is non-grasping.

18. Bro Teoh complimented Sis. Keat Hoon on a good job done for the short notes of the previous Thursday's class.

Above draft was prepared by: Puan Chee.