

Five Aspects of the Five Ways – 3 of 4 ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 One of the main discoveries of the historical Buddha was this notion that you could take

00:00:26 the phenomenon of limited suffering self and analyze it into its components.

00:00:34 And as the result of that, your identification with the limited suffering self would be broken

00:00:42 and the sense that there ever even was a limiting suffering self evaporates.

00:00:51 In early Buddhism, there were a number of ways of sort of chopping up the pie.

00:00:57 The five aggregates of clinging, if we were to put into a more contemporary vocabulary,

00:01:06 would probably be something like the five things people tend to identify with.

00:01:13 So what do we identify with?

00:01:14 Rupa, the physical body.

00:01:16 Vedana.

00:01:17 You can interpret the Pali word vedana, broad or narrow.

00:01:23 You can interpret it as applying to any and all sensory experience or just body sensation.

00:01:29 But I would say, however you interpret it, the thing that really gets us are the emotional

00:01:39 pleasures and pains.

00:01:43 It's hard, but you can learn to accept physical pain in the body.

00:01:49 People learn to do this.

00:01:50 But how many people can have an arising of terror or grief or rage in their body and

00:02:02 it's just not, it just, it doesn't get them.

00:02:08 That's really, really hard, even though it's just body sensation.

00:02:11 They're much harder to have a complete experience of.

00:02:18 Why?

00:02:19 Because what I call feel, you all know my definition of feel, body sensation that seems

00:02:25 to a given individual at a given time to be emotional in nature.

00:02:31 Those are sensations that have been honed by the evolutionary process to be an internal

00:02:38 reward and punishment system to control us robotically.

00:02:46 So it's really, really hard to have a complete experience of feel, but it's

well worth it.

00:02:53 Okay, so the rupa, vedana, sanya.

00:02:56 Sanya means concept.

00:03:00 Means thinking.

00:03:01 But concept is very conceptual.

00:03:05 I like to deal with thinking in terms that it's a sensory event, image talk.

00:03:12 Now you might say, but what about the unconscious?

00:03:15 Well, when you develop a sensitivity to where images arise, most of you have had this experience.

00:03:22 At some point the surface images don't arise, but you're aware there's some activity down

00:03:27 there, a lot of activity.

00:03:29 That's subconscious visual thinking.

00:03:33 You develop a sensitivity to where you can hear internal talk.

00:03:36 At some point you don't hear the words anymore, but there's a rumbling of a thousand voices

00:03:41 down there.

00:03:43 That's subconscious auditory thinking.

00:03:46 So you can directly experience and monitor the subconscious by using the categories image

00:03:55 space and talk space, even if there's no explicit image activity or talk activity.

00:04:01 So that's at least one level of the subconscious.

00:04:06 Then there's this thing called sankara in Sanskrit or sankara in Pali.

00:04:15 It's a plural actually, sankaras.

00:04:20 That's the deep unconscious mind where the habit patterns are stored.

00:04:27 One way to get in contact with those very deep levels that you can't directly observe,

00:04:35 they're below even the subtle field image talk.

00:04:39 They're way, way down there.

00:04:41 You look at your sub-personalities or you look at your habitual modes.

00:04:49 I've got certain grooves that I just fall into.

00:04:56 There's like, okay, let's entertain ourselves with mathematics groove.

00:05:06 That's one of my grooves.

00:05:07 There's, okay, let's run a sexual fantasy groove.

00:05:10 That's another one.

00:05:11 If I don't do one, I do the other.

00:05:14 Then there's, okay, I got to do some writing because I'm a meditation teacher and I got

00:05:22 to do ...

00:05:23 That's like another groove.

00:05:27 Got to work with students groove.

00:05:28 It's like call people, see how their practice is going.

00:05:32 That's a lot easier than sit down and write texts and articles.

00:05:38 That's a hard groove.

00:05:40 It's like somebody calls and they're in crisis and they got three hours.

00:05:44 Wow, that's great.

00:05:45 I'm totally up for it because I know what the probable results are and it doesn't really

00:05:53 take that much effort on my part.

00:05:54 It's an algorithm.

00:05:55 I see the whole chess game in front of me, 12 moves ahead, years and years and years

00:06:02 of practice.

00:06:04 So when sub-personalities or these major habit patterns come up, I can sense this cone that's

00:06:14 going down deep, deep, deep into my subconscious.

00:06:19 It broadens as it goes down and it's accessing all that previous conditioning and the tip

00:06:24 of it is coming up as this sensory event of this pattern.

00:06:30 So it's just space simultaneously expanding and contracting.

00:06:37 If I can experience it that way, then I can break the identification.

00:06:44 Then there's vijñāna or vijñāna in Pali.

00:06:48 That means consciousness.

00:06:50 I don't know what consciousness is, but I can tell you in traditional Buddhism, it comes

00:06:54 in six flavors, hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and body sensation.

00:06:59 In my system, it's touch, sight, sound, feeling, which is why I like the Sages of the Light

00:07:03 and Silence piece, Blind and Quiet.

00:07:05 Those are the flavors.

00:07:06 I don't know what consciousness is, but it comes in those flavors.

00:07:11 That we can also consider it in its vanilla form, independent of flavor.

00:07:20 When we consider it independent of flavor, then we call it consciousness.

00:07:25 In the traditional Buddhist formulation, consciousness is no more spiritual than your material body.

00:07:35 What's spiritual is zero.

00:07:40 The material body is called rūpa, and the other four aggregates are collectively called

00:07:50 nama.

00:07:51 Nirvana is explicitly defined as beyond nama or rūpa.

00:07:58 That's where I was thinking of that story.

00:08:00 There's a monk who is pretty enlightened, gone pretty far, and he is having a conversation

00:08:11 with his master, and it gets late into the night.
00:08:19 It's time to go back to his room.
00:08:21 Of course, they didn't have flashlights in those days.
00:08:27 He's got this candle, and he steps out of the room.
00:08:31 Now, remember, he's pretty enlightened, but he's not quite there yet.
00:08:35 It's the job of the roshi to point him to what's the next step.
00:08:41 He steps out of the room, and the minute he steps out of the room, the roshi goes,
00:08:46 Blows out the candle!
00:08:50 And there's nothing but darkness.
00:08:54 That's the last little holding on to identification with consciousness itself.
00:08:59 You've got to let the light go out.
00:09:04 Definitely do not rage against the fading of the light.
00:09:09 Let it happen.
00:09:10 It'll come right back.