

## **Dialogue about Nibbana, by Ram Rachum**

Bob is out on a lunch break. He's sitting in the diner next to the garage he works in. He already finished his meal, and now he's just sitting at his table, relaxing.

He sees his old buddy, Jeff. Jeff comes up and joins him at the table.

"Hello Bob!"

"Oh, hello Jeff!"

"How are you?"

"Fine, what about you?"

"Oh, great, great. How's your family?"

"Doing fine. Mary's migraine is better. Little Stanley is preparing for his spelling bee."

"Ah, wonderful, wonderful. And how's business?"

"Looking good. It's been a few tight days in the garage. Big queue of cars to fix, impatient customers complaining about having to wait a few days to get their car back. Me, I've got like seven carburetors waiting for me to fix them."

"That's good, work is always good. You know, Bob, I heard something about you."

"Oh?"

"I heard that you've been experimenting with Buddhist meditation."

"Oh, yes, I have."

"I heard that you attended a course about it. In fact, it sounded like something quite serious. I heard that the course took 10 days, in which you were not allowed to talk. Is that true?"

"Yes, it is, Jeff. That course is called Vipassana. You go for ten days to an isolated course site, and you get taught how to practice Buddhist meditation. The process of studying how to meditate is very intense and rigorous. You are not allowed to talk the entire time, except for maybe once a day to ask your teacher a question. This is to make sure that you are very serious in your study. There are more rules, like you can't communicate with anyone outside the course site, and you can't eat meat or even kill a fly, and other things like that."

"Wow, that sounds very serious. It sounds like you become some sort of ascetic monk."

"Well, the rules aren't the important thing about it. The rules are just to help you study better. The important thing is the meditation you're studying."

"Oh? What's that about?"

"Well Jeff, Buddhist meditation is all about releasing yourself from the endless circle of life and death. Twenty-five hundred years ago, a man called

Siddhartha Gautama discovered that all human suffering comes from the way people crave things. When a person finds something that makes him feel nice, he will want to have that nice feeling again and again. He will get attached to that nice feeling. And when that nice feeling will be taken away from him, he will feel miserable."

"Ok, I think I understand."

"So Gautama tried to get rid of this craving. Little by little, he trained himself to crave nothing, to become attached to nothing. He did this by meditating. When he meditated, he did not let any feeling of craving get over him. He aspired to become a master of his own desires. No more will he let the habit of craving make him miserable! After many years of meditating, he finally achieved that state. He released himself from the endless circle of craving and misery, of life and death. He became free. He became what is called Buddha. He achieved perfect happiness. He achieved a state of mind called Nibbana, which for Buddhists is essentially Heaven. Heaven on Earth. It is a state of mind so wonderful and pure that anyone who has not achieved it cannot even begin to imagine how wonderful it is."

"That sounds so very inspiring. So is that the idea behind Buddhism?"

"In a nutshell, yes. And everyone who practices Buddhist meditation aspires to achieve that state. Of course, that usually takes many many years, lifetimes even. Some people spend their entire lives meditating, trying to achieve Nibbana. In fact, almost all of the people who try to achieve it eventually fail. Only a fortunate few achieve Nibbana and get to become a Buddha. Since Gautama himself, there have been less than thirty known Buddhas. Less than thirty, over a time period of twenty-five hundred years. As you can imagine, that ten-day course I took is meant only as a brief introduction, a tip of the tip of the iceberg, a modest first step on the way to Nibbana."

"Oh, I see. And what are your conclusions from this course? Are you now ready to devote your life to achieving Nibbana?"

"Actually, Jeff, I may have some shocking news for you regarding that matter."

"Well, I can't wait to hear it. What is it?"

"Well, Jeff, on the last meditation in the last day of the course, I have achieved Nibbana."

"What?!"

"I achieved Nibbana. I have liberated myself from the endless circle of life and death."

"That is impossible. You must be joking."

"I know it is incredible, but it's true."

"No way, Bob. You are testing my gullibility."

"I assure you I'm not, Jeff. I am dead serious. I know very well that no one in the history of Buddhism had ever achieved Nibbana without years, sometimes lifetimes of meditation. However I, Bob, have achieved Nibbana after a ten-day Vipassana course. It is incredible, but it's true."

"Oh my god, Bob. That is the most amazing thing I have heard this month, or this year, or maybe my entire life. So you are now a Buddha?"

"Yes, I am. I have achieved that state of perfect peace of mind that millions of Buddhist monks have spent their entire lives trying to achieve. I have achieved that wonderful state of mind, and forever I will be in that wonderful state of mind, even now as I am talking to you. I have achieved that state which I couldn't even imagine before. I will never crave anything again, I will never be miserable. I feel perfect happiness and endless joy, and so I will feel for the rest of my life. "

"Wow, that's just amazing, Bob."

"Yes, it is."

"That's just unbelievably wonderful."

"Yes, it is."

"How does that feel, Nibbana?"

"It feels great, really. Everything that's been said about it is true. I cannot even begin to explain how wonderful it is. If you ever wondered how it feels like to be in Heaven, I can tell you from my experience that it's every bit as amazing as it is said to be."

"Wow, sounds like you finally made it, huh Bob?"

"Yes, yes I have."

There is a moment of silence.

"So what do you plan to do now, Bob?"

"Oh, I have those seven carburetors waiting for me."

"Oh yes, the carburetors, of course."

"And then I need to take Mary to the doctor again, just to make sure everything's alright."

"Of course."

"And maybe help little Stanley prepare for his spelling bee, if it won't get too late."

"Oh, how nice of you."

"And now I've really overstretched my lunch break. Got to go back to the garage. Don't want the boss to get all grumpy, right?"

"Right, right Bob."

"So I'm off to the carburetors. Have a nice day, Jeff."

"Thank you, Bob. Good luck with those carburetors. I'll be moving along as well. Have a great day, and goodbye, Bob!"

"Goodbye Jeff!"