

Nibbāna

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

A Dhamma lecture given at Suan Mokkh on 11 January 1988

In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhadāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

Today we intend to speak to you about the thing called ‘Nibbāna’ [Pāli] or *Nipphana* [Thai]. Many of you have probably heard of the word ‘Nibbāna’ or ‘Nirvāṇa’ which is a Sanskrit word. In Buddhism here we don’t use Sanskrit very much, instead we use Pāli. The word ‘Nibbāna’ means the same thing as the Sanskrit word ‘Nirvāṇa.’ However, this word ‘Nirvāṇa’ is a bit chancy or dangerous because it’s very close to the word *nīvaraṇa* which means the ‘hindrances’ – which are things that disturb the mind. So the word ‘Nibbāna’ is favored, is less often misunderstood. But whether we call it ‘Nibbāna’ or ‘Nirvāṇa’ we’re speaking of essentially the same thing.

You all heard something about this thing we call ‘Nibbāna’ and have some understanding and interest about it. However, there remain things which you do not understand completely. So we will be discussing some further things which you ought to be greatly interested in. Nibbāna is the highest thing in Buddhism – the supreme thing in Buddhism. However, almost all the different sects, creeds, and doctrines that have occurred in India have had some aspects or something they call Nibbāna or Nirvāṇa. They all have some kind of Nirvāṇa. However, the meaning in each creed or doctrine or school can differ, and is often quite different than the meaning we’ll be discussing here. Today we’ll be talking especially about Nibbāna [*Nipphana*] in Buddhism.

Somebody described Nibbāna in a way that is both easy to understand and also correct. They said that Nibbāna is the *summum bonum* (the utmost

goodness) of Buddhism. All genuine religions – all the different sects and creeds and denominations in India and elsewhere – have some one thing, something that is *summum bonum*. For example, in Christianity the *summum bonum* is to be with God, to be with God in the Kingdom of God. And so Buddhism also has its *summum bonum* which is Nibbāna.

Without Nibbāna Buddhism would not be Buddhism, or we can say that without Nibbāna Buddhism would have no meaning or value. This's why we're studying the thing call 'Nibbāna' as the essence or the heart or the goal of Buddhism. Without this Buddhism would be meaningless.

There's a very important matter which is commonly misunderstood – many people think that Nibbāna means death, that Nibbāna is the same thing as death, or that it occurs after death. This is a very grave and serious misunderstanding. If something is truly to be the *summum bonum*, it must be something that we can get in this very life, right here and now, in this present life. If we must wait for some other life, then it can't be the *summum bonum*. So the *summum bonum* of Buddhism, Nibbāna, has nothing to do with death. But this is a common problem. It occurs even in Christianity. The true Kingdom of God is something that we can find in our own hearts, here in this life. But there are many people who think that it must come after death. So they have the same problem as those who believe that Nibbāna means death or happens after death. So there are some who must wait for the Kingdom of God or Nibbāna until after they die. This understanding is not correct; it's not proper; and it has no benefit for human beings. So whether we call it 'the Kingdom of God' or the *summum bonum* or 'Nibbāna'; please understand that has nothing to do with death.

The same problem exists in both religions. There're some Christians that insist that the Kingdom of God can only be entered in the afterlife or whatever they want to call it. They won't admit, they won't accept that we can enter the Kingdom of God within our own hearts, right here in this life. And the same thing happens in Buddhism – those who insist that Nibbāna comes after death. Let's be very careful on this matter and understand correctly that both Nibbāna and the Kingdom of God, if they are to have meaning and benefit for human beings, that they must be something that we can have, get, receive, obtain, experience, whatever, right here in this life, this present life, before death.

Allow us to tell you in advance, a little bit ahead of time, so it'll be easier for you to understand later that when one enters or penetrates or realizes Nibbāna; then one at the same time enters the Kingdom of God or is at once with God. When the mind is at once with God or enters the Kingdom of God,

then it realizes Nibbāna. Please understand this now as it will help you as this talk continues.

So many Buddhists think that Nibbāna occurs after death, that Nibbāna is some city or state or place, some wonderful city where we go after death. This understanding is both amusing and laughable, and at the same time very sad and pitiful. The same thing happens in Christianity, of course – those who think that the Kingdom of God is some physical city or place or kingdom. When this understanding interferes, then people aren't able to realize that Nibbāna and the Kingdom of God are to be experienced within each individual's own heart or mind, when that individual has correctly practiced Dhamma. This is the point we should all understand.

All the various sects and schools that occurred in India in the Buddha's time taught that Nibbāna was something experienced in this very life, within the heart and mind in this life. The exact meaning of it may have differed. Some said that the experience of the first level of absorption or deep concentration was Nibbāna. Some said that the second level of absorption, others the third, or the fourth, or the so-called immaterial absorption – such as consciousness or emptiness or nothingness or its limitless – various deep levels of concentration were taken to be Nirvāṇa or Nibbāna. But all of these cases it was understood that Nibbāna occurred within this life. The misunderstanding that Nibbāna was some city or place we went to after death arose later.

Another misunderstanding which is equally pitiful – one that is very common nowadays – there are many that believe that Nibbāna is something that is out-of-date or old fashioned or something just for old people. Some even say that it's foolish or impossible nowadays. So there are many who have no interest in Nibbāna because they feel that it's old fashioned, or beyond, or something that normal man should not be interested in. This understanding is very dangerous. It seems that the same thing happens in Christianity where there are many people who think that the Kingdom of God is old fashioned, out-of-date, foolish, even stupid. These two misunderstandings ought to be eliminated and got rid of, so that we can be interested in the true Nibbāna.

So we're going to pull this back into the present, into our own hearts. We're going to pull Nibbāna and pull the Kingdom of God into our own hearts right now, in the present, in order to understand and realize and have this highest thing – Nibbāna and the Kingdom of God.

There are many directions from which we can approach this thing, Nibbāna. First, we look at the word in its literal sense. We'll look at the letter of

Nibbāna. When we take Nibbāna literally, it has the meaning ‘the quenching of fires’ or ‘the quenching of hot things.’ Anytime something hot is quenched, is cooled; that is the meaning of ‘Nibbāna.’ So in the physical way if a physical fire is quenched, is cooled; we call that ‘Nibbāna.’ Or if the mental fires, the defilements – the greed, anger, and delusion – are cooled, are quenched; we call that ‘Nibbāna.’ But in both sense whether it’s physical or mental, we can use the same word. We prefer this word ‘quench.’ So please listen to it carefully – ‘the quenching of heat, of fire’ is the literal meaning of the word ‘Nibbāna.’ It might surprise you to know that this in the Pāli language is a very common ordinary word. It was originally just the word that children and adults and adolescent and everyone would use every time something hot cooled off or was quenched. That’s what the word ‘Nibbāna’ could be used, whether it was a physical or mental thing. This is the literal sense of Nibbāna.

So a child might yell out from the kitchen that the fire *nibbāna* meaning the fire cooled down or went out. Or the child might call out that the soup has *nibbāna* meaning the soup has cooled down enough that we can eat it. The word *nibbāna* has this very common ordinary everyday’s meaning that even a child would know and use. And so we can use it even for materials, physical things. To understand it we should understand it in this material aspect as well.

Or a goldsmith working with gold in his furnace, then when he took the gold, the molted gold, and poured it out, and then cooled it with air or with water; that gold, that hot molted gold, would also *nibbāna*. It would cool down. So we can use the word in this sense as well.

Wild animals that have been recently captured from the forest, animals that still are quite fierce and dangerous, when these animals are tamed or are trained until they become tame, when all that fierceness and danger has been cooled down; then we can say that these animals have been made *nibbāna*. When that the fire of wildness and danger has been *nibbāna* we can use the word in this sense also.

So in the literal sense, this various meaning that we’ve discussed so far, all come down to cooling down, or quenching a fire or a heat. We’ve used it so far in a physical material sense. The meaning, the sense, the deeper sense of the word ‘Nibbāna’ – we can use it about the mind and about life. So when one’s life is cool, when one’s family situation is cool; we can also use this word *nibbāna*. When our life is free of problems and hassles and disturbances and annoyances; then we can say that life is ‘nibbāna.’ So in this deeper sense, the meaning of ‘Nibbāna’ is ‘cool’ or ‘coolness.’

When someone's life, when the mind is cool as we've just described; this is called *nibbuddham* – 'one who is cool or the cool one.' Let us tell you ahead of time also that whenever the mind is free of any conception or emotion of 'I & mine,' of 'self,' and of selfishness; then that mind is cool. But whenever there arises in the mind or thought or emotion or idea or sense of 'I,' of 'mine,' of 'self,' of selfishness; then that mind becomes hot. So when the mind is free of this heat, it is cool, it is 'nibbāna.'

Once again the limitation of language makes difficulties for us. So when we say 'cool' many people thinks that this is the opposite of hot. Real Nibbāna that we're speaking of is not the opposite; it's not the partner or the mate of hotness or heat. The cool of Nibbāna that we're talking about has nothing to do with temperature. It isn't the opposite or the complement, the collate of hotness or heat. And cool also in this meaning doesn't have anything to do with cold. If you were cold, really cold, wouldn't you catch pneumonia and die? And that's not we're talking about. The coolness of Nibbāna is not the opposite; it's not caught up in any meaning of hot and cold in temperature. It's a different kind of cool, of coolness; when the mind is void of 'I,' 'mine,' and selfishness.

So then we come back to the word 'void' – void that is void of positive and negative, of hot and cold, of all dualisms; void that is above all of that duality. This is the real meaning of coolness. The real coolness is void. It has nothing to do with hot and cold, or with positive and negative.

In the Pāli text, it's recorded very clearly that the quenching of the fire of *rāga* (lust), the quenching of the fire of *dosa* (anger), and the quenching of the fire of *moha* (delusion) – this is Nibbāna.

So understand coolness in terms of the quenching of those fires of lust, anger, and delusion. Now let's start over and take a good look at the importance of this thing we're calling 'coolness' or 'quenching.' If we look at our own lives, we'll see that without the quenching and cooling of thirst, of craving; then we would either go crazy or we would die. All the desires and craving and thirst and hunger and fears and worries, all these fires that are coming up all the time each day; if there wasn't any quenching and cooling of all these fires, if all these fires were burning in the mind constantly, non-stop; then the mind couldn't take it, and we would go crazy, or if we didn't go crazy we would just plainly die. This is pointing to the very basic necessity of Nibbāna, of quenching in this meaning – that the calming of all that desire and craving and thirst, that cooling, that quenching is necessary if we're going to avoid going insane, we're going to avoid committing suicide. So in just a very fundamental way, can you see the

importance, right here, today, right now in your own lives, of Nibbāna?

So even if this quenching is just a little bit here, a little bit there, only very temporary or little Nibbāna, little temporary quenching; even so it is still absolutely necessary for the survival of life. So if you can reflect in this way, you'll see that for all of us the quenching of these fires is absolutely necessary. If for example, hunger – if hunger went on endlessly, continuously, without letting up, without ever stopping; then we would die. If anger was a constant phenomenon continuously in our life, then we would die. Or even if love for our lover, if this love just went on and on and on without ever being quenched; then we would die. For all of us, the continuation, the survival of our life depends on quenching, on Nibbāna. If all these fires went on and on and on, we couldn't take it. So it's Nibbāna that sustains life. This quenching, this cooling nourishes, sustains life. Without it life could not continue. You can see this, you will see how important Nibbāna is; even to those who have no interest in spiritual things, they still need it in order to survive.

There are two types of quenching. The first is the quenching that happens by itself; and the second is the quenching that we have arranged, that has occurred through our practice of Dhamma. All the things that happen within our lives will quench eventually by themselves. All the harmful or evil or hot things that occur in the mind, these will naturally quench by themselves. Nothing is permanent. So all these things will eventually come to a quenching or cooling of their own. But sometimes if the thing, if that doesn't happen soon enough, or if we have enough wisdom; we can be aware of the possibility to quench these things through our practice of Dhamma. Please know the difference between the two kinds of quenching.

We can study the meaning of Nibbāna right here, now, today, in our own lives. We can just take the ordinary experiences of our lives, and use these as a way to explore what Nibbāna is. For example, when a fire goes out – this's a very simple experience of seeing a fire, a candle, a match go out – in that we can see the meaning of Nibbāna in a very simple way. Or when we take a bath, the water cools down the heat of the body – and this is an experience of quenching. Or when we sweat, when we perspire; the sweat coming out of our pores cools the body, cools that heat down – this is an experience of Nibbāna. We can use these very basic human experiences to learn, to get to know the meaning of Nibbāna. We can directly experience it in this way for ourselves. There're all kinds of these examples: when it rains we can experience the cooling that occurs all over from the rain; or when there is an illness or pain or fever or something, when this goes away we can experience that quenching. All

kinds of different experiences that would occur in our daily life can help us to discover the meaning of quenching, of Nibbāna; but nobody takes the time to look, nobody is interested in this thing called ‘Nibbāna.’ So they don’t even look for it and are completely unaware of it although it’s happening constantly in our own lives. So take the time to pay attention to the little very simple experiences of Nibbāna that are occurring in all the things that around us, and in everything that arises within our mind. We can use all of these in order to discover the meaning of quenching.

In brief we can see Nibbāna or quenching in everything. All things that arise, all things that are caused, that occur, all things that are born, will eventually quench, will eventually ‘nibbāna.’ For this reason we can study this quenching in everything. All the various things that arise eventually will quench. In Pāli the words are

“Yam kiñci samudaya dhammaṃ sabbaṃ tam nirodha dhammaṃ”

which means

“All the things that arise through causes will quench, and to see this is to see Dhamma.”

When we start to see this quenching, the cooling of all conditioned things like this and all the things that happen within our lives, when we see this quenching that occurs within all these things; then we begin to see Dhamma. The eye of Dhamma, the spiritual eye, begins to open as we see all this quenching happening everywhere. And when the eye of Dhamma, the spiritual eye, begins to open; then we begin to understand the Dhamma. So in everything that you can possibly see or know or experience is an opportunity to begin to see this truth of quenching, to see this fact of Nibbāna. And if we begin to see this, then the spiritual eye begins to open. And as that understanding of Dhamma grows, it is through this that the spiritual path develops and reaches fruition.

Whenever you see the quenching of something, then you ought to see Nibbāna in that thing. Whenever you see something quench, you ought to see Nibbāna. Whenever it is, no matter where, in anything, when you see quenching, you should see Nibbāna. If we can study Nibbāna in all the things that are happening everywhere, anywhere, all the time; then we will start to understand the true meaning of Nibbāna. We can begin with the little things, the little quenching, that don’t really have that much meaning or significance. But then we explore more and more deeply so that the understanding of Nibbāna

becomes more and more deep, more profound, and gets closer and closer to the true Nibbāna, that is the most significant thing in human life. So using all the different possibilities, all the different occurrences of quenching within our lives; we can study the meaning, the significance of Nibbāna.

So take the opportunity of all these little Nibbānas that occur everyday, study them more and more until the understanding and experience deepen, until the point where we have a sincere desire and need for the highest, the most complete, the perfect Nibbāna. Please don't be careless about these little quenchings that occur each and every day. Just because they're small doesn't mean they should be overlooked. These are the starting point of our understanding, so we should be very careful to observe these little Nibbānas, the momentary quenching that are occurring all the time; and then to study these so that our understanding grows and becomes more correct, more profound, until we develop a very earnest and sincere desire for perfect Nibbāna. So use these small opportunities that nature is giving you now in order to develop for the more perfect Nibbāna.

We observe in the way we've been describing and come to see that these little Nibbānas, these little quenchings that sustain life, that nourish life, that cool life, that allow us to continue in life. If we start to see this, then we will genuinely appreciate Nibbāna, and we will start to love, to actually love Nibbāna – the thing that allows us to live. And then our desire, our need, our want for Nibbāna will grow and grow and grow until it becomes very sincere and earnest. So use these little opportunities to allow our love and need for Nibbāna to grow, and so that we will then apply ourselves fully to the higher methods which will then allow the realization of perfect Nibbāna.

Now we have studied these little Nibbānas, sufficiently understood this basic level of Nibbāna well enough that we can begin to develop this understanding, to expand it, to broaden it; in order to come to the realization of the Nibbāna which is complete, which is full, which is perfect. So please take this beginning level of understanding now and expand it for the deeper realization. Please study this matter very very carefully.

The first thing we need to understand is what we call *dukkha* [Pāli] or *tukkha* [Thai] (suffering or mental suffering). If we don't understand this thing called *dukkha*, then it's hopeless, it's impossible that we would ever be able to understand Nibbāna. So let's begin with what is meant by *dukkha* (suffering) so that we can also understand Nibbāna.

As we said earlier [that] Nibbāna is the quenching of *dukkha*, but if we

don't know dukkha, then how are we going to know that quenching? Or if we don't know what dukkha is, then there is no meaning. There isn't any real quenching for us if we don't understand what dukkha is. So then let's look into the matter of dukkha. Let's explore, examine the dukkha that is occurring, the suffering that's happening in our own lives today and everyday, in our normal daily lives, in order to understand dukkha sufficiently that we can also understand the quenching, the Nibbāna, of that dukkha.

In everyday there are all kinds of little dukkha, little experiences of that dukkha happening over and over again, all the time; these little experiences of dukkha happening over and over again. So there're a lot of these little things that are dukkha, that are suffering. So we can get to know these. In Thai we call this *niworn*, in Pāli *nīvaraṇa* which is the word that tends to get confused with 'Nirvāṇa.' Nirvāṇa and nīvaraṇa are quite different. The *niworn* – we often translate as the 'hindrances.' You start to understand what we mean as we describe them. There're these little things which disturb and annoy the mind, which pester the mind throughout the day.

The first of these is: we can give the feeling that kind of flows in a sexual way; it's a sexual feeling or sense of sexuality. Pay attention to this, you'll see how they excite or disturb or annoy the mind, all the time. And when the mind has been pestered by these sexual feelings, how cool is the mind? Can the mind be cool at all? For the mind to be cool these sexual feelings have to be quenched. So this is the first example, the first of the nīvaraṇa.

The second one is like a vengeance, ill-will, is when we don't like anything – we don't like this, we don't like that, we don't like this person, we don't like that person. If this feeling becomes so stupid that we don't like anything; we don't really know what it is that we don't like – just this feeling of dislike, of a vengeance. When the mind is being pestered like this, annoyed by these feelings; it's not at all comfortable or peaceful. But when this feeling of dislike is quenched, then the mind is very much in ease. It's cool. This is the second of the nīvaraṇa – the feeling of dislike, of a vengeance.

The third of these: when the mind is weak, dull; when the energy level of the mind is drop; when the mind is very low in energy; it's not very bright; it's kind of dull, dim, weak. When the mind is lacking in energy like this, then it really isn't able to do any work. It's lacking the freshness, the brightness that we need to do anything. So the mind like this is very lazy, very dull. It's very dim. This includes also when the mind is drowsy and sleepy. All these feelings are in the minds which are tightened with a weak level of energy; when the mind is

lacking in the strength, the brightness, the freshness, the sharpness that it needs to function properly, to do various duties of life. These all make up this third *nīvaraṇa* – when the mind is dull, weak, dim, drowsy, and so forth. You need to get to know this thing as it really exists. It's not good enough just to write it down in your notebook or to think about it; but to examine it as it arises in your own mind all the time, even maybe right now. Get to know it as it really exists, and then you will be able to start to see how it quenches as well.

The fourth one is the opposite of the third – when the energy in the mind is causing the mind to scatter, to disperse, to leap out. It's bubbling bouncy scattered distracted mind that bouncing all over the place, running all over the place. When the mind is dispersed and distracted like this; it's unable to think, unable to work. It can't do anything properly because its energy is going off in all directions. This is something that, of course, is occurring to all of you constantly. And so it's time you've got to know it and really study what it is like. So the fourth of this is this dispersion, this distracting, this scattering of the mind and its energy.

The fifth *nīvaraṇa* (hindrance) is uncertainty or doubt or suspicion. It's when we are uncertain about what is happening, or what is right. When we're uncertain about whether what we are doing is correct. When we sit there and think 'Is this right, am I doing the right thing, or is my right correct?' We have all kinds of doubt like this – 'Is what am I doing right?' And when we are thinking like this, then we are never contented. There is no contentment. And these doubts and suspicions and uncertainties arise about our lives. 'Is our way of life, is our life really safe?' 'Is it really healthy?' 'Is it really correct?' We've been disturbed by these doubts and uncertainties all the time. So our life is never really at peace. It's happening in your own minds. Whether you've taken the time to look or not, it's happening. So it's much better to observe it in the reality of the thing, and not just the sound or the letters of the word.

So now let's take a look and see what it would be like if all of these were quenched, if all five of these hindrances were quenched, what would be like. What would that be like? If all five were completely quenched, so in one moment there were none of them at all; then Nibbāna would appear, would manifest automatically, spontaneously by itself. When all five of these hindrances are quenched, then there is nothing but Nibbāna. The mind is cool, is quenched.

Now if we want we can just let these things quenched by themselves, but they may take a while and we may not be able to put up with all the hassle and

discomfort while we're waiting. It's really not enough just to wait for them to quench by themselves. So we need to do something about them. We need to quench them through our own practice. There are various methods for doing so. This is why we practice mental cultivation, this is why we train and develop the mind, or one of the reasons – in order to quench these little fires or hindrances.

Through the correct practice of concentration or tranquility meditation, through the correct practice of things like *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing), using these mental development technics and methods; it is possible to quench these *nīvaraṇa* (hindrances). And then when that happens, there is an experience of little temporary experience or taste of Nibbāna. These little Nibbānas are the results of correctly practicing mental development. Within them is the correct meaning, the real meaning of Nibbāna; even though it's just little Nibbānas, not the perfect and complete Nibbāna but still it has the same meaning.

An interesting thing about these *nīvaraṇa* is that they can arise without any external concern encouraging them or stirring them up. Not necessary for there to be some external object of these hindrances. You can observe these easily sometimes when you are in bed about to fall asleep, where these *nīvaraṇa* would just come up from inside us without any real objects being there to stimulate them. They can just come up from inside because their causes are internal. This is a very interesting thing about them. Exactly how that happens, we'll discuss at another time. But you can see how these *nīvaraṇa* (hindrances) can happen without any external objects. When you understand this, you'll see how easy it is for them to occur, and how that they're happening so often.

These *nīvaraṇa*[s] are just little things, little disturbances and annoyances of the mind, which bring about little bits of dukkha. It's dukkha, it's suffering, but on a very low level. It's annoyance and that because they're coming from within. It's not any big heavy-duty thing because they're just arising from within. There isn't necessary an external object. So we also need to move on and examine the stronger, the heavier suffering that arises from the defilements. The defilements are much stronger, much more destructive, and bring about much more torment and suffering than the little *nīvaraṇa*. The *nīvaraṇa*[s] are like half grown or half complete; but the kilesa, the defilements, are full-blown. They're very powerful. So we need to study these as well because they bring about much suffering in our lives. We've already talked about them before, so you should understand them already. We'll go into them just a little bit. The first is *rāga* or *lobha* – is wanting, desiring to get, to hold and clutching and hug and all that. That's the first kind – one is to pull in, to grasp, to bring in. That's

the first kind – greed and lust. The second is *dosa* (hatred) and *kodha* (anger). This is the opposite of wanting. It's disliking, wanting to knock away, wanting to get rid of, wanting to destroy. And then the third is *moha* where we don't know what is going on at all; we're confused; we're deluded. And it's like the mind running around in circles. So there's the pulling, gathering, sweeping in. There's the pushing and knocking away, and then the running around in blind confused circles. These are the three kinds of kilesa. These are big heavy things now that are happening. If we're going to understand Nibbāna, we need to understand these aspects of dukkha. So take a look at these things as they occur, get to really know them. If you don't understand these defilements, then you'll never understand Nibbāna. So please pay attentions to these defilements, and then you'll be able to get an idea, to imagine what Nibbāna is.

When we said to know and understand these three defilements, we mean to experience, to have a direct personal penetrating experience of these things. That means when they happen, really feel it, not just to think about it or remember it a few minutes later, but really experience it. When you have this direct and penetrating experience of these three defilements, you'll see that they're fires. Experience how hot, how burning these things are. And then when you experience that; then you'll see how when those fires don't exist, when they've been quenched; then you'll see how cool, how peaceful, how right Nibbāna is. If you don't understand these fires, these defilements; you'll never have any clue about Nibbāna. Nibbāna is the quenching of dukkha. So we have to have a very full, a very clear understanding, experience of these defilements. They're happening any way. So why don't see what they're like and get it over with, so that you can understand what's better – the quenching of these things, the coolness of Nibbāna.

There's another aspect of dukkha which nobody ever talks about. They don't talk about these things, it's maybe because it's profound or very subtle. But we'd like to talk about it now. What happens whenever these defilements – whether lust, anger, or delusion – occur, whenever they happen; after they've passed they build up. Each time they contribute to a familiarity with these things, or a tendency for them to happen again. Each time a defilement occurs, it fills up the tendency for that defilement to reoccur. These tendencies pile up; they build up in the depth of the mind, or what maybe could be called the 'substrate' of the mind – the basic, the foundation levels of the mind. These tendencies develop. And so it becomes easier and easier for the defilements to occur because these tendencies become deeper and more set. These patterns solidify. This is a very much more subtle and not talked about. People don't pay

much attention to it. But to understand dukkha we have to understand this aspect of defilements as well. It's more subtle but you can see how it happens. The tendencies building up within the depth of the mind – we call the *anusaya* or in Thai *anusai* (the tendencies). This is something that deserves a very careful attention.

I've been instructed to find a very easy word, that is easy for you to understand and remember, that carries the meaning of familiarity, that returns very quickly or very easily – meaning once the mind is familiar with a particular defilement, that defilement returns or is re-caused very easily, very quickly. These are kind of habits of mind. But I think the word 'tendency' – these tendencies of mind – captures the meaning sufficiently, that once the mind becomes more and more familiar with each defilement; then that defilement occurs more and more easily, and returns more and more easily. This is what we can call the 'tendencies' (*anusaya*). Now as we build up, as we deposit and pile up these tendencies; they build up a pressure. They have all these junks deposited in the mind. It starts to bubble and ferment, and it builds up the pressure. And as this pressure built, it's very easy for that pressure to escape, to blow out, to shoot out. And so if there's any external concern or object; then it will shoot out in a complete form as lust, anger, or delusion – when there is an external object for it to shoot out at, blow out at. When there's no external object; it would just kind of ooze out, seep out, or bubble up as the *nīvaraṇa* – which aren't as full or complete as the defilements, but are still suffering nonetheless. These are important secrets of what's going on in the mind: how these tendencies pile up, bubble away, ferment away all these junks and skunks pestering in the mind; and then it either shoots out at the external objects or kind of bubbles up as the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa[s]*).

Now when this fermenting in the mind shoots out at a specific object, we call that the *āsava*. The *āsava* is – when that pressure shoots out, it bursts out, that is flowing out of that junks that built in the mind. It's called *āsava*. When it first occurs, it's primarily stirred up by the object; we call that *kilesa* (defilement). But when it's more coming out of these tendencies within the mind bursting out, we call that *āsava* (the outflows). These are aspects of what's going on in the mind. We need to understand all of these aspects: the *nīvaraṇa[s]* (hindrances), those more subtle, incomplete, more vague feelings – then the full blown, the full form defilements of greed and lust, anger and hatred, and delusion; then the tendencies (*anusaya*) that build up in the substrate of the mind; and then that shooting up, that flowing out of the *āsava*. If we understand all four – the *nīvaraṇa*, *kilesa*, *anusaya*, and *āsava* – then we will

completely understand what we mean by ‘fire.’ This is the aspect of the fire that’s burning the mind.

These *nīvaraṇa[s]* (hindrances), although they are small they’re happening all the time. No matter how small they are, they’re still hot, they’re still suffering. And then the defilements, they don’t happen that much. The *nīvaraṇa[s]* are happening all the time. The *kilesa[s]* (defilements) aren’t happening so often, but when they happen they’re heavy and they are really hot. Those *anusaya*, where we store up that heat so that it’s ready to shoot out, to bubble out, to burst out. So there’re these aspects of all these heat, all these fire. Please, please, please, please understand what these things are; understand, get to know, really, deeply, completely, perfectly what *nīvaraṇa* is; what the hindrances are; what *kilesa* is; what the defilements are; what *anusaya* is; what the tendencies are; and what *āsava* is; what the outflows or cankers are. Please, please really get to know these, really, clearly, profoundly, completely, so that you’ll be able to also understand Nibbāna.

So we come to *dukkha* or *thukkha*. The meaning of *dukkha* is very broad but it always comes down to torment. The meaning of *dukkha* can be summarized as torment – some aspects or another of torment within the mind. This is *dukkha*. So these hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), how do they torment the mind? The *kilesa[s]* – the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion – how do these torment the mind? The *anusaya[s]* (tendencies), how do they torment the mind? These things that make it so easy for defilements to occur. None of us want to feel greedy. Nobody likes to be angry or stupid, to be afraid, to feel lonely. We don’t want to feel like these. We don’t like to worry. But because of these tendencies, it’s so easy. It’s just because we built up this familiarity, these habits, patterns, in the depth of the mind. It’s just so easy to get angry, easy to be afraid. It just happens so easily. How did this easiness, these tendencies torment the mind? And then the *āsava* that flowing out and then becomes defilements again, that flowing out and turn into either anger or greed or fear or worry, whatever. All these things that are tormenting the mind, burning, scorching, synching the mind; get to see that what is like to really understand the *dukkha* of all these fires burning scorching, tormenting the mind.

All of these are associated and interconnected. So why is it that we can’t control ourselves? Why don’t we have any self-control that we don’t fall into all these ugly negative things that nobody likes? Because they’re interconnected and so we fill our bags with the *anusaya*. Our bags are full of these tendencies, so we’re unable to control ourselves. These things, some people think, just happen; but it’s because they’re interconnected. So we suffer, we experience

dukkha because our bags are too full, are too stuffed with this anusaya. But there's something we can do about this. Once each defilement has occurred, it burns the mind. But what we can do is by practicing correct mental development, both concentration type or the concentration aspect along with the insight aspect that sees into the reality of things, through correct mental cultivation especially mindfulness of breathing. What we do is we poke a hole, we punch a hole in these bags, and then drain off the tendencies. Instead of building up the tendencies more and more, we siphon them off, we drain them off through these holes that we drill with concentration and insight. And so that bag that is stuffed full, that is overstuffed with anusaya, with these tendencies; the bag becomes less and less full. And as it empties, there's less and less of these outflows.

When we talk about abandoning the defilements, this is what we mean. A defilement that has already occurred, there's not much you can do to abandon it. But we prevent further defilements. This is what we mean by abandoning them. By draining off the tendencies, then lessen the possibilities of further defilements. And as insight deepens, as the understanding of Dhamma deepens, that hole becomes bigger, and the tendencies drain out more quickly. So the defilements arise less and less. This is the quenching of the defilements. We quench the anusaya; and then we quench the āsava that's shooting out; and then the defilements (the hindrances) are quenched as well. This is just through correct practice. This continues if we do mindfulness of breathing correctly, this draining off of the tendencies develops further and further – whether to the levels of *Sotāpanna* or *Sakadāgāmi* or *Anāgāmi* or *Arahant*; whether the stream-enterer, the once-returner, the non-returner, or the perfected human being. These are levels where the defilements have been drained off more and more and more, where suffering has been quenched more and more.

So the quenching of all this dukkha – any aspect and all aspects of dukkha – this quenching is the meaning of *Nipphana* or Nibbāna. This is the most important thing in Buddhism. We encourage you to remember these Pāli words. The meaning of the Pāli words is very special, very concise. And you'd be better off if you can remember the Pāli words and learn their complete meanings, because when we translate them much of the meaning is lost. It's much easier to understand the Dhamma when we learn these Pāli words, because they capture the meaning just right, because that's what they were created to do. Whereas once we translate them, much of the meaning falls apart. For example, the word *thukkha* or *dukkha*, it's much better to learn this word, to take the time to learn the word, and of course its meaning instead of translating

it; because the word ‘suffering’ doesn’t capture the full meaning of *dukkha*. Or unsatisfactoriness, dissatisfaction – these translations are only partial, so they’re insufficient and there’ll be an obstacle to your understanding these words, these meaning. So learn the Pāli word, learn the word *dukkha* because it means much more than suffering. For example, there are three basic aspects to *dukkha*. The first is the tormenting of the mind, the experiencing, that tormenting occurring in the mind – that’s the first aspect. The second aspect of the word *dukkha* is the characteristic or quality of tormenting, of torment that exists. This is the second aspect. It’s not exactly the same. And then the third is that which leads to, that which brings on torment. *Dukkha* has these three aspects, so it’s best to learn the Pāli word and its complete and correct meaning.

For example, if we say ‘This rug is suffering’ you’ll think ‘You’re crazy.’ If we say ‘This rug is suffering’ if we speak in this way, nobody will understand. But when we say ‘The rug is *dukkha*’ if you understand the word ‘*dukkha*’; then you know that we mean this rug here has the quality of *dukkha* within it. And so if we attach, if we cling to this rug as ‘my’ rug, or ‘I’ am this rug, or it’s ‘my’ rug; then that is *dukkha* in the meaning, in the sense that brings on *dukkha*. So there’s *dukkha*, something is *dukkha*; or it has the quality of *dukkha*; or it brings on *dukkha*. When we say ‘*dukkha*’ it has these different meanings. You have to understand them all to be able to understand the language of Dhamma.

This complete quenching of *dukkha* is the meaning of Nibbāna. To have a full understanding of Nibbāna you must have the full understanding of *dukkha*. So it’s something is *dukkha*, it has the experience of *dukkha*; it has the characteristic of *dukkha*; and brings on *dukkha*, leads to *dukkha*.

So it all comes down to that Nibbāna is the quenching of the heat, of *kilesa*. And that’s enough. So please pay attention to Nibbāna. Be interested in it as the thing that cherishes life, that nourishes, sustains, supports, cherishes life, that without Nibbāna life couldn’t go on. This is what allows us to live – the quenching of these fires. This is Nibbāna. We hope you’ll be very interested in it and pay careful attention to it because this is where the story ends with Nibbāna. So the story ends.

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Transcribed and lightly edited by Pranee in September 2015
Audio files: 512531011130.mp3 & 1988-01(3) Nibbana in Buddhism.mp3

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