

The Four Noble Truths, Part 5 of 7

NOBLE TRUTH OF DUKKHA'S QUENCHING

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

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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. All Ajahn's teachings are now available on:

www.suanmokkh.org,

<https://soundcloud.com/buddhadasa> and

<https://www.youtube.com/@buddhadasabhikkhu7829>.

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Today we will speak about *dukkha-nirodha ariya-sacca* – the Noble Truth of the cessation of *dukkha*. We ought to make a correct understanding of each of these words until each word is clear and precise, then the whole matter that we're discussing will be understood clearly and simply. We should never forget, for a proper perspective, to remember the framework of the *ariya-sacca* – what is it, from what, for what, and by what means?

Now we've come to the third of the *ariya-sacca*, which is for what purpose – what is the purpose of the Noble Truths? When we come to the word '*nirodha*,' obviously there has to be something about this which is of value and benefit for human beings. So we need to examine this matter and the meaning of the word '*nirodha*' until we understand its value thoroughly. However when we translate *nirodha* as 'extinction' or 'cessation,' which are the most common translations, then it may sound like something that doesn't have much value. So we're not convinced that these are appropriate translations. We would like to consider this matter carefully. Literally in the Pāli language, *nirodha* means 'to go out without any remainder,' 'to go out so that there's no remainder left,' 'to go out with nothing leftover.' This is different from a kind of temporary going out where something ceases to exist temporarily. In Pāli there's a completely different word for that – *atthaṅgama* – a temporary ceasing or a temporary not existing. When something doesn't exist for a while, it's called '*atthaṅgama*.' That not existing is '*atthaṅgama*.' But then awhile later it comes back, it exists again. That temporary kind of going out is not what is meant by *nirodha*. With *nirodha* there's nothing remaining whatsoever, and so there's nothing to come back. An easy example of *atthaṅgama* is the sun: For human beings the sun rises in the morning and then it goes out, it sets, in the evening. To the human being it's gone but then in the morning it comes back again. That kind of setting of the sun – a temporary going out – is called '*atthaṅgama*,' which

is different than *nirodha* which is complete and final. So *atthaṅgama* means that 'right now it's not existing.' *Atthaṅgama* means 'not existing at the present moment, but then it can very easily come back later.' This meaning, this temporary kind of non-existence or cessation, is not what is meant by '*nirodha*.' *Nirodha*, whatever it is, has gone out completely. Whatever we're talking about, it's gone out completely so that nothing is left over. But be careful what it means – nothing of that thing is leftover, however there are other things that remain. That thing itself now has gone out completely and none of it remains but certain results will remain. Certain fruits of its having gone out will remain. So when we talk of *dukkha-nirodha*, we feel that the word 'quenching' is probably much more appropriate, much more fitting the meaning of *nirodha* – that *dukkha* quenches and then none of the *dukkha* is left. There are certain benefits or certain results which remain, but the *dukkha* has been totally quenched. We'd like you to consider this. Those of you who are native speakers of English can help us to see if this might not be a more correct translation for *nirodha*.

Another point about *nirodha* which will be somewhat difficult for you to understand is that *nirodha* is a *dhātu*. *Dhātu* can be translated 'element' but it has a suggestion of the word 'potential' – that which can be, that which can function. Everything in the universe is nothing but elements. Everything is made up of elements and everything is nothing but elements. All the kinds of elements fit into three basic kinds: *rūpadhātu* – elements that have form which are material elements; *arūpadhātu* – immaterial elements, non-physical elements; and then *nirodhadhātu* – the element of quenching, the quenching element. All the other *dhātus*, all the *rūpa* and *arūpa* (material and immaterial *dhātus*), are quenched when they come into contact with *nirodhadhātu*. All those other elements go out – they're quenched by *nirodhadhātu*. This is an important thing to try to understand about *nirodha* that it is one of the elements and it is the element which is the quenching or the quenching place for all other *dhātus*, for all other elements whether physical or immaterial.

Although it may be a bit strange and new for you, it is valuable to pay attention to the word '*dhātu*' because everything is a *dhātu*. Another possible translation, by the way, of *dhātu* is 'being in itself the essential being of something within itself, not within other things.' So everything is nothing but *dhātus*, even Nibbāna. There's a thing called '*nibbānadhātu*' which is the element of cooling or the cooling element. Often Nibbāna is used as a synonym for *nirodha* and vice versa but we can make a slight distinction. Nibbāna is the cooling that is a result of *nirodha*. When something is quenched, when there's the quenching element, then the result of that will be a cooling of Nibbāna. In the language of Dhamma, *dhātu* – the elements – are a very important way of looking at, of understanding things. So it would do us well to begin to understand what is meant. What may be hard for us to understand is that by '*dhātu*' we mean something that exists naturally. It's just there in nature and when any other element comes into contact with it, that thing, whatever has come into contact, quenches and then cools. So by '*dhātu*' we mean just something existing in nature of itself. In the case of *nirodhadhātu*, *nibbānadhātu*, anything that comes into contact with it, then quenches. By quenching then it is also cooled.

This word '*dhātu*,' of course, isn't the same as the English word 'element' that is used in terms of the physical elements, the chemical elements. It's not quite the same meaning but we haven't found a better translation yet than the word 'element.' For example, the fire element is something which exists in nature – the element of fire – and it has a quality of burning. So whenever anything comes into contact with the fire element, then it starts to burn. It's the

same with *nirodhadhātu*, this quenching element exists naturally. When anything touches or comes into relationship with the *nirodhadhātu*, then that thing is quenched and cooled. Speaking in this way may be somewhat new for us but it's the spiritual way of studying. To study things in terms of *dhātu* is a spiritual way of studying nature and life.

When both *dukkha* itself, the *dukkha* element and the *samudaya* element (the cause of *dukkha*) – whether *dukkha* itself or the cause – when these come in contact with the *nirodha* element, they are quenched. They're both quenched. So *dukkha* comes into contact with *nirodhadhātu* and then *dukkha* quenches, *dukkha* goes out. If any of the causes or origins of *dukkha* come into contact with this element, then they are quenched. So if ignorance (*avijja*) comes into contact with this element, ignorance is quenched. When attachment (*upādāna*) comes into contact with it, it is quenched. When craving (*taṇhā*) comes into contact with the *nirodhadhātu*, craving is quenched. When the *saṅkhāra* – all that proliferating and concocting – comes into the contact with this element, it is quenched. *Dukkha* itself and all the causes and the origins of *dukkha*, when they come into contact with *nirodhadhātu*, they are quenched. None of these things remain and there's nothing leftover of these things but there is a certain result left which is the *Nibbānadhātu* – the coolness, the coolness that remains after all these things have been quenched.

There is another thing associated with *nirodhadhātu*. When there's this quenching, when *dukkha* and the causes of *dukkha* have been quenched, along with that there is the quality or the activity of liberating, of emancipating. This liberation and emancipation is called 'vimutti.' So included within *nirodhadhātu* is also the implication or the activity of liberation, emancipation. When we speak of *dukkha-nirodha ariya-sacca*, we're talking about quenching, cooling, and liberating all together. Quenching, cooling, and liberating are all included within *dukkha-nirodha*. Sometimes the word 'quenching' is appropriate, sometimes the word 'cooling' is appropriate, and sometimes the word 'liberating' is appropriate, depending on what we're experiencing at this moment. We use whichever one is most fitting for this situation, whatever suits our experience.

Nowadays Buddhist studies almost exclusively translate *dukkha-nirodha* as 'extinction' or 'cessation.' What seems to be understood here is that then nothing is left, everything is extinguished. So we suggest that the word 'quenching' is more appropriate because although none of the *dukkha* remains, there is the result of coolness which does remain. So we feel that 'quenching' much more appropriately captures the meaning here. Please consider this and see if this is the proper word for *nirodha*.

Whether you are aware of it or not, whether you have observed it or not, there are times when our mind, our heart is with the *nirodhadhātu*. Sometimes when the mind is most at ease, most at peace, when it's most cool and free, then the mind is with *nirodhadhātu*. We may not have observed this, we may never have been aware of it, but there are moments when the mind isn't all busy and crazy when it's with this quenching element. Please learn to observe this. Start to observe this and then we have the chance to learn what the *nirodha* element is about. There're those times when the mind is above and beyond positive and negative, and when positive and negative are quenched, then the mind is with the *nirodha* element.

In relation to this word, we should use the word 'experience.' *Nirodhadhātu* is to be experienced. Whenever there is no craving, whenever the mind is free of craving, when craving has been put out, then there is *nirodha*. The *nirodha* of *dukkha* means most

specifically the quenching of craving. When the mind is quenched, that means it has no desires, none of this craving. So it's totally at ease and peace – it's not in any conflict or contradiction with reality. This is what we mean by '*dukkha-nirodha*' – the quenching of craving. Even if it just happens accidentally, even if it's merely a coincidence that *dukkha* is quenched, we still can call that '*nirodhadhātu*' or '*nirodha*.' If the craving, the attachment, the defilements, the concocting which is the cause of *dukkha*, even if these things go out coincidentally and we're not even aware of them, that is still '*nirodha*.' However if we're not aware of it, we don't have the opportunity to learn anything of value, so we overlook the importance of this, but this is our opportunity to learn about what *nirodha* is. Wherever *dukkha* quenches, whenever there is the quenching of defilements, of craving, of attachment, of the concocting and proliferating, right there is the opportunity to experience and learn about *nirodha*, *dukkha-nirodha*.

Why is that we like so much to go to the beach and stay at the beach or go into the mountains? If we look very deeply into the nature of what's happening, we'll see that in these kinds of places it is generally much easier for the mind to experience *nirodhadhātu*. We may not have realized this consciously, but these places provide surroundings that may give much more opportunity for *nirodhadhātu* to appear to the mind. If we're careless or foolish, we don't use these opportunities and we just get lost in various kinds of pleasures and stimulations. But if we look on a deep level we can see that some of these settings or environments provide a much easier opportunity for the mind to experience *nirodha*. It's unfortunate that nowadays all these places are not set up anymore to help one to experience *nirodhadhātu*. They're all set up in the opposite way for other kinds of things in a way that kind of prevents or obstructs the opportunity to experience this quenching. This is an unfortunate situation, the way most of these places now are operated.

If we examine carefully, we'll see even that our own instincts have a tendency toward *nirodhadhātu*. Our instincts in their own way realize the value and importance of this quenching element. All the time they're looking for the rest, the peace, that comes with quenching. You can even see it in puppies – the need, the instinctual need, for rest, for peace. This is something that deserves our attention.

So we must study and become familiar with, get to know and understand *nirodhadhātu*. We must provide opportunities for our minds to get to know, to understand, to experience fully *nirodhadhātu*. This is enough of an introduction to *nirodha*. Now we'll speak about the third Noble Truth directly – we'll speak directly about the *nirodha* itself.

When the Buddha, after the awakening, spoke for the first time about the Noble Truths, when he came to *nirodha*, he said "*taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho cāgo paṇinissaggo mutti anālayo*" – the remainderless quenching of *rāga*. *Rāga* is lust but here it's used as a synonym for craving, so 'the quenching of craving so that nothing remains.' *Cāga* is 'to give things up,' 'just to give up.' *Paṇinissagga* which has the meaning of 'giving away' but giving it back to its original owner, meaning nature. *Mutti*, which has the meaning of 'release' or 'freedom,' has basically the same meaning as *vimutti* – 'liberation,' 'emancipation.' *Anālaya* means 'without *ālaya*.' *Ālaya* is 'to think back on' or 'to reminisce about,' 'to long for.' So this means that the craving and desire have been quenched. There's no more longing for the object. Not only is all the craving quenched, but any longing for whatever it is, it's been completely given up, returned to its owner, and there's no longing for it anymore. This is the meaning of *anālaya*. An easy example is when a husband and wife divorce. They no longer

live together but it's very difficult for the longing to finish. This longing, of course, is not for the future – it's a longing for the past. *Ālaya* is that sense that something we once had is now gone, and feeling the lack of it and longing for it. In *nirodha* this *ālaya* is also quenched. *Asesavirāganirodha* means 'the quenching of' basically 'attachment without any scraps, any pieces or bits left over.' *Rāga*, remember, is this dying of the mind which has essentially the same meaning of *taṇhā* (craving) and *upādāna* (attachment). So here the complete quenching of attachment so that none of it remains. None of the attachment remains.

The next, *cāga paṇinissagga mutti* has very close meanings. It means that we must rely upon mindfulness to be right on time at the moment of contact with something. As soon as any sense object make contact with the mind, mindfulness must be right there, and then we use that mindfulness to let go and give up whatever it is: *cāga* (giving up), *paṇinissagga* (giving back to the rightful owner), and *mutti* (becoming free). In all of these, *sati* (mindfulness) is crucial.

Then we come to the one that's a little more difficult – *anālaya*. For *anālaya*, *samādhi* and *pañña* (wisdom) must be sufficiently strong. *Samādhi* is the mind that must be pure enough, stable enough, and active enough to be able to not long back for whatever it was. This takes sufficient *samādhi* as well as sufficient wisdom. When we act in this way, then there's nothing left of craving – craving is quenched and then there is coolness. To live in this way, of course, one needn't die. This is a kind of active living. This is an activity of living – this quenching that we're talking about. There's no need to die and it has nothing to do with death. There's life, and in life all craving, all attachment, all *dukkha* have been quenched. There remains a life of coolness.

Earlier we discussed how *dukkha* arises from attachment to the five *khandas*. We've explained how by quenching that attachment, then *dukkha* is quenched. The most perfect or complete meaning of the word '*nirodha*' is quenching the attachment regarding the five *khandas*. This quenching must start with the quenching of ignorance, and then craving quenches, and then *upādāna* (attachment) quenches. This is how quenching must be for it to be complete. As we mentioned there is a very important synonym of *nirodha*. This synonym of course is Nibbāna, which means 'cooling' or 'coolness.' Nibbāna can be understood on many levels. There are ordinary meanings of the word as well as the highest meaning of the word. When there is the perfect quenching of *dukkha* so that no *dukkha* remains, we call that 'Nibbāna.' The perfect coolness is Nibbāna. But the ordinary coolness that an ordinary person can experience, this we use a somewhat different word though it has the same derivation – the word '*nibbuti*.' *Nibbuti* is something that anybody can experience in ordinary life. *Nibbuti* means basically 'a cool life.' So there's the highest meaning which we can call '*Nibbāna*' and then a more ordinary common meaning which is '*nibbuti*.' In Thai we have a word for this which is just a 'cool heart and mind' – this is what is meant by '*nibbuti*.' It's when the mind is at ease, it's relaxed, it's peaceful in a way that has nothing to do with the defilements. When the mind feels good in a way that's unconnected to defilement, this is what we mean by '*nibbuti*.' You can even just call it 'having a good time.' If it's having a good time without any defilements present, that's what we mean by *nibbuti*. Everybody loves this *nibbuti*. Whenever the mind has some, it really enjoys it, but nobody knows the name of it, so we thought we would let you know. Everybody really goes for this *nibbuti* even though the name of it isn't known. We're not sure exactly how to translate it into English but it basically has the same meaning as Nibbāna, only that Nibbāna is complete and perfect. It's

final whereas *nibbuti* is temporary. It's not yet perfect but it has the same basic meaning of coolness. We can call it 'cool life' or 'cool living.' If it's not yet complete and perfect, we call this cool living '*nibbuti*,' but if the cool living is complete and perfect, then we call it 'Nibbāna.' This is the meaning of *nirodha* – when all craving and attachment have been quenched, then there is cool living either in the incomplete or the complete form.

It will be helpful for us to know some more about perfect Nibbāna, perfect coolness. When the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion have been cooled completely, when none of these defilements remain in even the least way, but still the mind discriminates between positive and negative, this is the first aspect or first stage of Nibbāna. Then when the defilements have been cooled completely, there's no greed, hatred, or delusion remaining in the least way, and the mind has no feeling or sense of positive and negative, that is the second aspect or stage of Nibbāna. The first one, where there's no defilement, the mind is completely cool but there's still this positive and negative. This is called '*saupādisesa-nibbāna*' – Nibbāna with a little bit left, a little fuel remaining, meaning the positive and negative. When there's no defilement and no positive, no negative, this is called '*anupādisesa-nibbāna*' – Nibbāna without any of that fuel, any of that positive and negative remaining. To make it a little more concise – the first kind is when the mind still experiences positive and negative but that positive and negative cannot concoct the 'self,' cannot concoct 'self' or 'ego.' In the second kind, the mind doesn't experience positive and negative at all. So of course no 'self' could get concocted. This is why we call it 'New Life' – the life that is beyond the world, that is above the world or *lokuttara*.

Let's talk about *nirodha* some more. There're different kinds of *nirodha*: There's the kind of *nirodha* where craving is quenched, we can say accidentally or coincidentally. There are times when because of the objects or the surroundings we're in – the situation around us – it makes it impossible for craving to arise. Sometimes our situation makes it impossible so that craving doesn't happen to us. So that's one kind of *nirodha* – coincidental *nirodha* – it's coincidental depending on circumstances. It has nothing to do with our own effort or wisdom. Then there's the second kind which comes from our own practice where we control the mind, we supervise the mind so that craving doesn't arise. This quenching of craving through our own effort and practice is a second kind of *nirodha*. Then there's a third kind where all craving has been quenched completely so there's not any possibility that any craving would arise again. All craving, attachment, and ignorance have been quenched. This is perfect quenching. We no longer have to actively practice as before. Now it's automatic quenching. This third kind of quenching – this perfect quenching – is the quenching done by the *arahant*, the awakened being, the perfected human being.

Ānāpānasati (mindfulness with breathing) will enable us to discover and experience all three types of quenching. If we live with *ānāpānasati*, if we exist with *ānāpānasati*, then it's easy for the spontaneous coincidental quenching to take place. It will happen often and then through *ānāpānasati* we are more and more able to quench things through our own practice. We have the knowledge, the understanding, and the ability in stronger ways. *Ānāpānasati* gives us the possibility to get rid of the defilements so that there is the complete and perfect quenching. All three kinds of quenching can be experienced through *ānāpānasati*. To completely explain how *ānāpānasati* leads to these three kinds of quenching would take quite a bit of time. To explain the methods and all that of *ānāpānasati* would take more time than we have, so we'll leave that for another time.

Now we'd like to talk about some of the tricks we use in dealing with this situation. First of all, we don't attack the situation head-on. We don't struggle head-on but we come at things from the back – we kind of sneak up on the problem from behind. We don't just plow right in straight at the problem, we sneak up on it from behind. What this means is we don't get in there and struggle with *dukkha* straight on but we sneak around behind and remove the cause of *dukkha*. To get in there and fight it out with *dukkha* is a real hassle and it's not very successful. The trick we use is to get there behind it and remove the cause. This is much more exquisite and it works much better. We've got a nice phrase in Thai that we'd like you to learn because it explains this point quite well. It's a proverb: "*aou mai saan pai run kee*" which has a rather crude meaning, so I'll translate it with some rather crude English words which mean 'to hit shit with a short stick.' 'Kee' is feces or anything that's really dirty and stinking up the place. To clean it up we've got to get rid of it. If we do that with a short stick, this means like that they used to use sticks to scrape the toilet, so to clean up the manure around the place. To use a short one, it makes a real mess and you end up covering yourself with all this feces as you try to clean it up. It makes a real mess and stinks up the place. It's much better to use a long stick and then you yourself don't get dirty. Attacking *dukkha* straight on is to "*aou mai saan pai run kee*" – 'to take a short stick to beat shit,' but we suggest a skillful means of using a long stick. It's much easier, it's much cleaner, and we don't suffer so much. Even better than that, if you want to really be good at this is "don't let it shit at all." This means you don't have to put up with *dukkha*. We don't have to fight with *dukkha*, just quench it at its cause, quench it at the source and origin. There's no need to go through a lot of *dukkha*, to suffer through it and go through all the hassles, but learn how to quench *dukkha* at its source. This is the trick we use.

We'd like to mention certain synonyms of *dukkha-nirodha* because these will help us to understand *dukkha-nirodha* easily. The first is to calm all concoctions. In Pāli, *sabbasaṅkhārasamatho* – all the meanings, all aspects of the concocting – to quench, to calm this is one aspect or one synonym of *dukkha-nirodha*. The second is to throw away all the burdens, just take all the burdens and chuck them away. The burdens here mean the five *khandas* that are attached to. This means attaching, clinging to the five *khandas* as 'I' and 'mine.' To take all this heaviness – the heaviness and burden of all that attachment – and just throw it away, this is a second synonym. In Pāli it's *sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo*. The third one is *taṇhakkhayo virāgo*. *Khayo* means 'to end,' so it's the ending of craving, to make craving end, to end craving. Then *virāgo* – this means the fading away of whatever dyes the mind, this attachment and everything that dyes the mind, that dissolves and fades away until none of it is left, there's nothing dyeing the mind anymore. When the *rāga* has faded away, this is *virāgo*. The last synonym of *dukkha-nirodha* – the quenching of *dukkha* – is *nibbānaṃ*, to make everything cool physically, mentally, and spiritually. There are no aches, no pains, no problems, no hassles, no *dukkha* – make everything cool – this is *nibbānaṃ*, the last synonym of *nirodha*. Once we understand the meanings of these words, the meaning is quite beautiful, it's a beautiful sounding thing. Sometimes we just repeat these words to ourselves – "*sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*" These words have an excellent meaning and it's possible to take this as a meditation, to take this as the object of the calm clear mind. When the mind is calm and clear it can put its attention and work on these things internally, bring this into the mind and work on it within the mind. When we do this it's called '*dhammasamādhi*' – to concentrate on Dhamma, but concentrate here not in a tense way but with a still, calm, clear mind. In the Pāli text, the

Buddha called it '*dhammasamādhī*.' Nobody talks about it anymore but it's possible to take these synonyms or take *nirodha* itself as an object of meditation. However in practice the fourth stage or the fourth part of *ānāpānasati* is this kind of *dhammasamādhī*. It doesn't go by this name but in practice it has the same effect, the same result, to take quenching as the object of meditation. So this is basically included within *ānāpānasati*. You can go to Burma, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, or wherever, and you'll never hear about this. Nobody will be talking about *dhammasamādhī*. It may sound strange but one can take Nibbāna as the object of meditation, to take Nibbāna itself as the thing to work on within the mind. In *ānāpānasati* this is actually done although it just goes by the name '*ānāpānasati*,' but it has this *dhammasamādhī* included where the mind actually takes Nibbāna as its object of study and contemplation. To concentrate the mind upon, to gather the mind fully and focus it completely upon coolness, upon the quenching, this is what we mean by '*dhammasamādhī*.' We can do it anywhere – we don't have to go anywhere to do this kind of Dhamma concentration, concentration upon Dhamma.

If we speak in an ordinary way for ordinary people, we can just say 'aim for peace' or 'set your sights on calmness,' 'set your sights on calm.' Whatever we do, aim for calm, find what is calm and peaceful in any kind of thing we do. This is something that anybody can practice in any situation. We can aim for the peace and the calm that can be found within that activity, that situation, that thought, whatever.

Nowadays people around the world love to talk about peace and making a peaceful world and these kinds of things, but it never happens. There's a lot of talk about it and meetings, but it's never actually happening anywhere because people don't know anything about *dukkha-nirodha*. People don't understand and they aren't even interested in quenching the certain things that need to be quenched – quenching ignorance, quenching craving, quenching attachment regarding the five *khandas*. People don't understand anything about the quenching of *dukkha*. So then all the talk about peace and a peaceful world and peacefulness doesn't really lead anywhere because people don't know how to do the quenching that is necessary for peace.

One last thing we'd like to mention is what in Pāli is called '*upāya*,' often translated 'skillful means.' In Thai, we can translate it as '*kled*,' which means 'to make it easier,' 'make it faster,' 'make it most efficient and successful.' We can actually use the English word 'trick' for this. So we'd like to talk about another trick or *upāya*. A metaphor for this is to '*kluea chim kluea*' – 'to put salt into the salt,' something like this. *Chim* is like if you take your doughnut and you dip it into coffee or you dip a French fry into a sauce. So to 'take salt and dip it into the salt' is the trick we use to deal with our situation of *dukkha*. This means to take *dukkha* and dip it into *dukkha*. Use *dukkha* to solve *dukkha*, or we can say 'use *taṇhā* to solve *taṇhā*,' 'use craving to get rid of craving,' 'use craving to remove craving.' This is a trick we can use. Another idiom for this is 'to use thorns to pick out the thorn' – if you step on a thorn and it gets stuck in your foot and then breaks off, it's very hard to get out. We can take two more thorns and then stick them in along the first one and pull out the first thorn. So 'use a thorn to dig out the thorn' is what we mean by 'dip the salt into the salt' or use '*dukkha* to get free of *dukkha*,' 'use craving to get rid of craving.' This is a trick that we can use quite successfully. What we must observe is that it's a different kind of salt that we use – we don't use the same salt. There's this salt and we bring in another kind of salt to dip in. To get that thorn out, we have to take another thorn to dig it out. So when we talk about 'using *dukkha* to get free of

dukkha, 'using craving to get rid of the craving,' it's a different kind of craving. It's not to use the same old craving but to use a new, a different kind of craving to get rid of the old stuff. So notice although the name is the same, the meaning is different – 'salt and salt,' 'thorn and thorn,' 'craving and craving.' The names are the same but the meaning is different. It's a different kind of salt, a different kind of thorn, a different kind of craving. When it comes to using craving to get rid of craving, this new craving means something else. We can use the word '*taṇhā*' but we mean something different with it. We just mean a certain new kind of want or a different kind of want. The old kind of want, that blind craving that comes from ignorance is nothing but trouble. So we're going to use a different kind of want or desire, or what we can call 'aspiration' – the desire to be better, the desire to do better – to use this to solve the problem of *taṇhā*. We use the same name but there's an important difference in the meaning. We can't use that same old problem to solve the problem, but there's something similar which we can even give the same name that can help us to solve the problem. Within *dukkha*, there is the quenching of *dukkha*. The arising and existence of *dukkha* always contains within it the quenching of *dukkha*. They're not in separate places. *Dukkha* and the quenching of *dukkha* are always together. This means that if we look carefully into the *dukkha*, we'll find, we'll discover the means to quench the *dukkha*. This means *dukkha* will teach us how to quench it. If we understand *dukkha* thoroughly, within that will be the knowledge of how to quench it, so within *dukkha* is the quenching of *dukkha*. If we study carefully, if we are honest and open and sensitive, then *dukkha* will teach us how to quench *dukkha*. So this is the meaning of 'using a thorn to dig out the thorn.'

Let's study things properly, study *dukkha* properly, and it will teach us the way to be completely free of all *dukkha*. Study the problem and it will provide the answer. It's the same as with a fire. Wherever there's a fire, within it is the quenching, the going out of the fire. Where will you find the quenching of the fire if not in the fire itself? If the fire is here and we go looking for the quenching over there, we'll never find it. The only way to see the quenching of the fire is right here, in the fire. We can't look for it anywhere else. The same with *dukkha* – the quenching of the *dukkha* is in the *dukkha*. To look for the quenching of *dukkha* somewhere else is an endless, foolish, impossible journey. The end of *dukkha*, the quenching of *dukkha*, is always right in the middle of the *dukkha*. So we ought to be thankful, we ought to have a great bit of gratitude toward *dukkha* that it teaches us. *Dukkha* keeps teaching us and making us smarter and wiser. So we ought to be thankful that *dukkha* teaches us in this way. The only place to see the end of *dukkha* is in *dukkha* itself. We have a pond at Suan Mokkh called 'Sa Nalikaē' which is meant to symbolize what we're talking about now. A single coconut tree in the middle of the pond symbolizes Nibbāna as in the middle of a sea of burning wax, in the middle of *dukkha*. The only place to find Nibbāna is in *dukkha*. This is an important trick to Dhamma practice. There's all this craving in our lives and we can learn to sublimate it, to redirect it into aspiration, and then use that aspiration to get free of *taṇhā*, to eliminate *taṇhā*. *Taṇhā* itself will just fight back and forth, so to try and fight *taṇhā* with *taṇhā* would just be a lot of conflict. But to sublimate the *taṇhā* and use aspiration, this is a trick that will free us of *dukkha*. So we put out the fire in the fire. We find Nibbāna in *dukkha*. We use craving to eliminate craving.

So finally we say, "Thank you *dukkha*, thank you *dukkha*, thank you *dukkha* that you have made us smarter and wiser." "Thank you *dukkha* that you have created the Buddha." "Thank you *dukkha* because if it wasn't for the *dukkha*, the Buddha – the one who completely

understood and awakened to the end of *dukkha* – would have never arisen in the world. “So thank you *dukkha*.” This may sound a little bit optimistic but it's a healthy way to look at things. So when *dukkha* arises, welcome it properly and we'll be able to quench *dukkha*. So the matter of *dukkha-nirodha ariya-sacca*, the Noble Truth of the quenching of *dukkha*, is now finished and we end today's talk at this time.

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Transcribed by Bill Weir (arizonahandbook@yahoo.com) in May. 2023

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