

Life That Doesn't Bite Its Owner, Part 1 of 6

LIFE THAT BITES ITS OWNER

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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On this first occasion I'd like to welcome you here and express my joy that you have come here in order to study and practice the Dhamma. If you are successful in your practice here, then you will be able to understand your own life thoroughly and deeply and you will be able to get rid of the things that we call problems in our lives because that is the function of what the thing we call Dhamma. Then we will discover a life which doesn't bite its owner. These days we lead a kind of life that bites its owner so it's necessary for us to find the understanding and knowledge which will enable us to cope with all these things in life and so that we will find a life that doesn't bite its owner.

If we were wondering how to go about living life so that life doesn't bite its owner and we went up to an infant who is still sucking its thumb and asked the child, "How does one live so that life doesn't bite its owner?", then the child would answer, "Don't be its owner." However, you might think that this is a bunch of nonsense to not be the owner of life. And right here it's where the problem lies. But if you observe a small child, watch the infant, you'll see that it hasn't taken ownership of its life and so this infant isn't bit by life. It's not clawed by life because it hasn't taken life to be its possession, its property. But then a little later this infant begins to become stupid, or we can say it is tricked and deluded by all the strange objects that surround it in the world. And so this child as it becomes foolish begins to think that it owns life, that it possesses life and it becomes the owner of life, and there arises the ego and thoughts of 'I' and 'mine' and so life begins to bite that child. So if we make ourselves the owner of life, then life bites; if we don't make ourselves the owner of life, then life doesn't bite. That's all there is to it. It sounds quite simple although in practice it may be a bit more difficult.

This is essentially artistic. There's a real art to living life without being its owner. If you're someone who's interested in art, then we suggest that you be interested in this highest art, the supreme level of artistry, which is in living life so that life doesn't bite its owner.

I have a European friend who's very interested in Buddhist art. He spends a lot of time, money, and effort traveling around looking for what he calls Buddhist art. He's invested a lot in Buddha images and paintings and other things, and he calls these things — he collects these things and calls them — Buddhist art, but I tell him, “No way, there's no way that any of that is Buddhist art.” Those images and paintings, the Buddha had nothing to do with such kind of art. Those are just children's playthings, just toys for children. That's not the real Buddhist art. The true Buddhist art isn't a material art, but it's a mental or spiritual art. True Buddhist art is the art of living in a way that is completely free of *dukkha*, of pain, of misery, of stress. So please be interested in the correct or the real Buddhist art and not waste time on the toys.

This Buddhist art is the essence of Buddhism: living one's life so that there is no *dukkha*, so that we are above all the problems and difficulties of life, so that nothing troubles us in the least. To live life in this way is Buddhist art and it's the essence of Buddhism. In short, Buddhist art is the way of discovering new life, the new life that is beyond all *dukkha*, all suffering in all of its aspects. You have friends who have come here before. This is what they say they want. They say they're in need of a new life. But they don't know where to find it or how to discover it. They need to know what Buddhist art is and know how to use it. And this is what we'll be talking about in a few moments. If they have this and use it correctly, then they will discover new life most certainly.

At this point, we ought to say something about the word ‘new.’ The new life seems new to those who have never experienced it before. It's new when it's new for us, but in fact this kind of life is very old. It's been around for thousands of years. All of the Arahants — the perfected human beings — have lived life in this way. So there's nothing really new about it. It only seems new to those of us who have never seen it before. So the thing that we need and the thing we're looking for is this new life, which is beyond all suffering, beyond all *dukkha*. But what's rather silly is that we don't even know what this *dukkha* is. We haven't paid much attention to it, and we don't really understand it. So how are we going to find a life that is beyond all suffering if we haven't really found out what suffering itself is?

Further, life can be full of suffering without us ever knowing what suffering is. We can go on suffering, falling into all kinds of miserable states without ever really being aware of this. This point is a very interesting one, one that we ought to pay attention to. So the first thing we need to do is to know what *dukkha* is — to clearly see what this suffering is: all this pain and misery that is biting us, biting us, biting us, biting us. What is it? This is the first thing we need to do.

There's the question, “Where are we going to find out what suffering is?”

The Buddha himself answered this kind of question by saying: *dukkha*, the cause of *dukkha*, the complete quenching of *dukkha*, and the path leading to the quenching of *dukkha*. All of these can be found in this fathom-long body that is complete with mind and perception. He meant that in this living body we can find out everything we need to know about suffering. What this means is that we can't really learn about *dukkha* from a dead body, and we can't learn about suffering from the material objects around us. To learn about suffering we have to look in here, in this living body of ours. You won't find these truths in the holy scriptures, and you won't find these truths in all those books about Buddhism. Many of you are reading a lot of books about — supposedly written about — Buddhism, but for the most part they're really just dealing with superficial things, so they'll never help you. You

won't find these truths in those kinds of books. Nowadays they're printing so many books about Buddhism that it would cost you thousands of dollars to buy them all and even if you bought them and read them all, the best that they could do is to help you to find the way of discovering these truths. But in those books, you'll never find these truths themselves. The best you can do with any books is to use them to find the way to discover these truths within life, within this living body here.

As for these, the scriptures, which in Buddhism are called the Tipiṭaka - the three baskets. You should understand that there are two sets of Tipiṭaka in Buddhism. The first set are all those books that have been printed and which they like to put in fancy cases. These physical books of paper and ink are the outer Tipiṭaka, but then there's a whole other set of the Tipiṭaka. It's the inner Tipiṭaka - the Tipiṭaka of life. It's that inner book that we read and study through Dhamma practice; for example, through *ānāpānasati* we open this inner Tipiṭaka and read within our own bodies and mind the truths that we're discussing today. You can't find these things in the outer Tipiṭaka, you can only find them in the inner scriptures.

If you go and study all of the Tipiṭaka in the various versions, the Pāli, the Sanskrit, the Chinese, the Tibetan and so on, if you study all these books and scriptures until you're an expert upon them, the most you'll get from it is to be a professor in some university somewhere. But through all that studying and professoring, you'll never really discover what life is or what new life is. Just by studying those books, no matter what kind of expert you become, you'll never find the way to end all *dukkha*, all misery and pain. So it's necessary to study the non-material Tipiṭaka or the intangible Tipiṭaka within ourselves. In this way, we will directly read from the book of life. So we have to begin first of all by studying and investigating what suffering is. After that, we can look into the causes of suffering, the quenching of suffering, and the path - the way of life leading to the quenching of suffering. But as a start, we have to look into the reality of suffering.

First of all, *dukkha* is that which torments, that which torments us and causes us to suffer. It leads to torment in all different ways, both in positive ways and negative ways. It's this torment or all the problems and difficulties in our lives that is meant by the word "*dukkha*".

When *dukkha* torments us in a negative way, it's very easy to see. It's all very clear. All the pains and aches and hassles that torment us in a negative way are quite obvious. But *dukkha* also torments us in a positive way. This is where — a deceptive tricky way where — we don't realize that we're suffering. This is — we get all caught up in certain things to the point that we fall in love with them even though they cause us, they make us suffer. In this positive way, there are many aspects of *dukkha*, many, many ways that we fall in love with things so that they torment us and bite us. What's quite silly and amusing is that we fall in love with all kinds of things which make our tears flow. There're all kinds of things, we are tricked by them and indulge in them and fall in love with them although they bite us all the time. And although nobody will believe it when we say so, we would like to point out to you that to love anything is to have it bite you. To love anything is to have it bite you. Because this is a foolish love, it bites. Because this kind of love comes from stupidity, it must bite us. Our way of loving is one of attaching to things and clinging to them, and so they inevitably bite. Because of this attached kind of love, this love bites.

There can be two kinds of love: hot love or this love we're talking about. Is it hot? Or is it cool? Take a good look and see is there anywhere where we can find cool love. Can we find a kind of love that is cool? Where can we find it and how? You won't be able to find a cool love anywhere. There's no such thing as cool love; love is always hot. Love is always biting the mind.

Another example which is easier to understand is that of happiness, or of gladness, and sadness. Sadness bites us directly in a negative way but even gladness bites. When there is sadness or gladness, there is never any coolness or peace. Both of them are hot. But this is something we don't understand. We think that gladness is desirable. We think that it's true happiness, that it's the answer to all our problems and so we seek gladness. But whenever there is gladness, it's not cool or peaceful. It makes us very weary spiritually; gladness leads to our spiritual weariness. Neither gladness nor sadness are cool and peaceful. That which is cool is beyond both gladness and sadness. When I say that you ought to have a life that is free of both gladness and sadness, beyond both gladness and sadness, you shake your heads. You're not interested in this because you're addicted to the positive; that which you think is positive; you're addicted to this gladness.

Everyone, the entire world, is stuck on the positive. Everything we do is chasing after the positive. When Thai people come to the monastery, they always ask for blessings and these blessings are nothing but a bunch of positive things. They're always clamoring for the positive. But none of this positiveness will do us any real lasting good. None of these positive things will quench *dukkha*. And if I say that being beyond both positive and negative or be beyond both positive and negative and you'll be an Arahant (a perfect human being), then you'll just shake your head some more. But in the end, the truth is still the truth - that the only way to be free of *dukkha*, of pain and misery and stress, is to live above, beyond both the positive and negative. The life which is above both positive and negative is the life that is new, that is free of suffering.

So let's take some time to study the meaning of *dukkha* in some detail. But please understand that we have to look in a deep way. We have to examine things on their profound level, that is to look at things spiritually if we are to understand what we're talking about here. The first are the things that burn and scorch us: the love that burns us; the hatred that burns us; the fear that burns us; all the things that are burning and roasting us – these are the first aspect of *dukkha* that we should examine.

So in this —in the love that burns; in the hatred that burns; in the delusion that burns; in all that burning and scorching —there is something that attracts us. There's something that deceives us, something that we get hooked on. In love, there's something very charming and attractive, something that we get addicted to and so we keep indulging in love. We fall in love with love and go 'round and 'round in it because we find it very delicious and attractive. And in hatred, there is also something attractive. There's something about hatred that we find very pleasing, very exciting and stimulating. Even to hit somebody or kill somebody can have a deliciousness for us. And so we get really hooked on hatred, even on violence. And then in delusion, in this burning of delusion, there is still something that attracts us, that hooks us in our doubts, in our speculations, in all our dreams and hopes and wishes. In all this deluded thinking there's something very attractive. And so, all these things that burn us also attract us. And so, we become addicted to the things that roast us. This kind of stupidity, such as when it takes the form that —of thinking that —sexual pleasure is Nibbāna. Nibbāna is the highest thing that a human being can know and experience. And it seems that a long time ago, it was thought by various people that sexual pleasure is Nibbāna. This kind of stupidity has been around for a long time, and it shows us how we can be deceived with the things that burn us. And so there appeared in India the Kamadeva - the god of love or the god of sex and this god was worshiped just like all the other gods, and they had temples and images and everything for this - this god of sex for people to indulge their foolishness.

And then some of the things that are called tantric practices. The tantric sex worships this kind of sexual pleasures as the highest thing. They try and make excuses by saying that these are tools or ways or bridges to enlightenment but it's really just indulging in sexual pleasures. This is just a matter of ignorance. These things naturally have great power over human beings. There's a tremendous pull.

These sexual pleasures have tremendous pull on the human being. So it's quite natural that people would get all caught up in them and deceived by them and take them to the point of worshipping them as the highest thing. We heard even that Mahatma Gandhi pleaded with people to stop going, to close up these temples of the god of sex, to stop believing in such foolish things.

So, in short, all this business of sensuality, especially the sexual aspect of sensuality is instinctual; and because it's instinctual, it comes with ignorance. It has nothing to do with correct understanding or wisdom. So forgive us if this is a little bit crude, but it's worthwhile to take a look at – all this sexual activity that people are so fascinated by. People take sex to be such a wonderful and special and important thing, but they've never actually taken a good honest look at it.

So, first of all, if we look at these things, in carrying out the sexual function, it's dirty. It involves a lot of dirtiness. Second, it's something ugly. And so people have to hide when they do it. It's so ugly that people are afraid to do it in public. They must hide unless they're totally shameless. Third, it takes a tremendous amount of energy. Practicing sex eats up a lot of our energy. Fourth, it's something so ordinary that the dogs can do it. And fifth all you get from it is a flash of craziness. You're crazy for just a flash and then it's over. And so, if we take an honest look at sex, we can see that it's dirty, ugly, takes up tremendous amounts of energy; it's completely ordinary and common and all you get from it is a moment's insanity. It's time that people stop being all confused about sex and sexuality. Because people don't understand sex — that it's biting them, they fall in love with sex and so it bites people and causes a lot of problems and suffering. If people understand it properly, then even though they may have to take part in it, it won't be able to bite but because there's so much confusion, people are being bit and clawed by sex all the time. For example, people don't realize that there's a distinction between sex or between sexuality and reproduction. People don't see the difference between their sexual pleasures and the natural duty of reproduction. If we don't see the difference, we mix them up and it creates increasing problems.

Reproduction, breeding or whatever is merely a natural duty of human beings in order to carry on the species. However, reproduction is rather a difficult, ugly and dirty thing and so people wouldn't naturally do it. However, nature has come up with a trick; the sexual, the pleasure of sex is a kind of bait to trick people into having sex. If there wasn't the pleasure - this momentary craziness, who would bother to have sex; who would go through the trouble. So nature has this trick or you could even call it a bribe. People are bribed to have sex. And because of this bribery and trickery that nature has to use in order to get people to reproduce, we mix it up. We get confused and we can't tell the difference between what a natural duty is and what the sexual pleasures is. And when we don't distinguish, we get confused, and we don't understand things properly. And so' that sex bites us. Our indulgence in sexual pleasures bites us. So sex, sexual pleasures and reproduction are different things. They're not the same thing. Only fools take them to be the same thing.

For example, we have a clear example of this in the audience who were still householders. In Buddhism, the people who have achieved a high level of understanding and also a high level of non-attachment are called the noble ones, the Arahants. Some of them were monks and some of them lived at home with families. The ones on the level of *Sotāpanna* – the stream enterers and once returners and no returners. From the example of these various noble ones who still lived at home with families, we see that sex in itself, sex for the sake of reproduction, is nothing wrong or bad about it. They were able to have sex for the sake of reproduction because they understood that this was a natural duty to be performed. And so they did it without being tricked by the pleasures of sex. The sexuality part didn't deceive them. They did it as a natural duty and they didn't need to be bribed to do it. So they weren't just the stupes or the dupes of nature who had to be bribed and tricked by a few crazy thrills, but they

did it merely out of their understanding that it was a natural duty. This is one example of the distinction between sexuality and reproduction. This is something that we should discover for ourselves and particularly those of us who are living the household life.

For those of you, for whom it's necessary that there must be sex because it's a very powerful instinct that most people cannot avoid, if this is the case then please be careful about sex, learn to control it. Don't let sex have power over our lives. Don't let sex take over our lives and run our lives. Instead learn to control it.

If one must have sex, engage in sex as the master not as the slave. Don't go worshipping the god of sex enslaving one to these brief thrills and moments of craziness. But if it's necessary, do so with awareness, with mindfulness and with clear understanding of what's happening and what the purpose is. We engage in sex with mindfulness and wisdom, then it won't bite us. But if we go worshipping it, being tricked by it over and over again, then it would keep plunging our life into chaos and confusion. So sex may be a necessary thing for many people because of its being such a powerful instinct but it can be engaged in in a mindful and wise way. Please be very careful about this.

It's interesting and somewhat amusing to look at this in another way. Although this may be the special case of only certain people but there are some people who engage in sex as a kind of food. For some sex is like food. Let us explain this a bit. In the body we have a system of glands. We have the hormones which exist naturally in our bodies. And when the body ages to a certain stage of maturity, these glands begin to function and produce hormones. So this brings up a kind of hunger in the body. Now, some people will satisfy that hunger just in the same way that they eat food when they are hungry. Sex as merely a response to this naturally occurring physical hunger can be like a kind of food. There isn't any slavery to - about this or any indulgence or stupidity. It's merely satisfying a natural physical hunger.

You can see that this is understood and respected in all the world's religions. There is no religion that forbids sex. Sex is not condemned. But in all religions, in the ethical teachings of every religion, there are certain constraints or limits put on sex so that sex as a food, as a natural instinct, can be coped with in a reasonable way. But there are ethical limitations such as in the third precept of the five precepts of Buddhism that prevents sex from getting carried away and causing a lot of problems. If sex is treated as a kind of food, then it doesn't get very hot. It doesn't cause so many problems for the mind. This is a very interesting and amusing point that people would do well to understand. So we hope that you can understand and appreciate the value of ethics, of morality in religious teachings and elsewhere, hope that you can appreciate and honor these moral teachings which help to protect us from the suffering that comes from out-of-control sexuality. With proper moral understanding sex is contained in boundaries that prevent it from causing a lot of *dukkha* for us. And so we ought to appreciate and honor this and if we examine people who take sex to be their god, who worship the god of sex, we see all kinds of crazy results. We see people who have all kinds of things happening to them, of which - over which they have no control. Their constant addiction to sex creates all kinds of difficulties in their lives which they can't do very much about or because of their craziness about sex, going about it without any decency or morality. Then we see people getting into situations where even they even kill themselves because of sex or the difficulties coming out of it. We see people turning to crime, oppressing others, exploiting others, abusing others, because of their addiction to sex. We can even see it leading to insanity. The list is quite long, and it all just goes to help us understand the importance of understanding sex correctly and putting proper limitations upon it. After looking at *dukkha* from the aspect of burning and scorching, we can look at it from another way - from another angle.

Next, we can look at *dukkha* from the angle of heaviness. We can look at *dukkha* - suffering as a burden. Whenever we go about anything in life with the feeling or the idea of 'I' or 'mine,' whenever ego comes into life, then things get heavy. Whatever we're doing if we attach to it with ego, then that thing gets heavy. It becomes very burdensome and tiresome for us. There's nothing heavier in life than ego. In the Buddhist teachings, there's the phrase "clinging to the five *khandhas* is a burden." The five *khandhas* - the basic functions and activities of life - if they're grasped at as ego, then they become very heavy. This is another aspect of *dukkha* - the heaviness of it, the burdensomeness of it that arises whenever we grab on to something as 'I,' as 'mine,' as 'ego.' For the newborn infant, when they're hungry they drink some milk; when they've had enough, they go back to sleep; whenever they're hungry again, they have a drink until full and then go back to sleep. And none of this is a problem for the tiny infant because there's no attachment to it as 'I' or 'mine,' there's no ego involved. But when the infant grows a bit older and it begins to see things in terms of self, in terms of ego, then there's no longer just the natural processes of life. There are also the thoughts such as "I am hungry," or "I'm satisfied," "I'm not satisfied," "I'm delicious," "I'm not delicious." When this happens, things get heavy even for the young child nursing with its mother. Whenever this ego comes in, it gets heavy even on the very basic and early level of the infant.

And then for adults, we're always taking something as ego and turning life into a heavy burden. Sometimes we take our bodies as 'I' or 'mine,' we attach to these bodies as being ego, and then the body gets heavy. But we might take our feelings of pleasure and displeasure as being ego. Sometimes, it's our perceptions that things are this or that, which we cling to as ego. Other times, it's our thoughts, our ideas, or sometimes it's just that fundamental consciousness that knows experience. We're clinging to these various functions of life as ego. And whenever we do so, it gets heavy; anything clung to with ego becomes a burden. It puts a tremendous weight and pressure on the mind. And so the Buddha said that taking any of the *khandhas* to be ego is the essence of *dukkha*. When we take any of these functions as the self, as 'me,' then it gets heavy, it becomes painful.

Further there's something connected to or related to all this ego. We call this 'that which is connected to or associated with ego.' Ego or self is called *attā*. In the Pāli language we call it '*attā*,' which means 'I,' 'self,' 'ego.' Then there's also *attaniya* - the things associated with ego. In short, *attā* is 'I' and *attaniya* is 'mine.' So even for the infant, once ego comes up, then they're all the things that belong to ego. So, the infant starts to have my wonderful toys, my pretty little toys, my mother, my father, my crib, my this, my that. And when the infant grows into a child and then an adult, the adult accumulates so many possessions and so much wealth and property that are mine, my house, my clothes, my car, my husband, my wife, my children, my grandchildren, my fame, my good name, my honor, my status. All this my, my, my, my weighing heavier upon that person. So once there is ego, there are the things related to ego. All the things clung to as 'mine' and this makes life very heavy.

So these are some examples that make it more than clear that life bites its owner. These are some examples of how we turn life into difficulties, into stress, into suffering. Whenever we grab onto anything as 'I' or 'mine,' it turns life into something that bites its owner; whenever we become the owner of life, it bites us. And this goes on and on both while we're awake and even while we're asleep. Even while sleeping we dream, and we dream about 'I' and 'mine.' So even while asleep it bites us, it claws us and chews on us. So this shows us what *dukkha* is about. This biting that comes when we become the owners of life, when we take life as being 'I' and 'mine.' So if a child comes up to you and says, "Don't be the you that is you.", "Don't take life as being 'I' or 'mine'." If a child says this to us, don't slap it in the face for being impertinent or rude because this is the most wonderful advice you can ever get. Not to take yourself as being you - the you of ego. Not clinging to life as 'I' or 'mine,' not

being the owner of life. This is the wisest thing that anyone could tell us. So please don't slap that child who tells us this.

So have a self which isn't self or don't cling to the 'I' as really being 'I.' What we mean is that we're always taking deceptive things - things that deceive us and trick us - as being the self, the ego, as being 'I' and 'mine.' Stop doing that. Have an 'I' which isn't 'I'; have a self which isn't self. Stop being deceived by these things. This is all that Buddhism has to say. The only message really of Buddhism is that there is nothing which can be taken as 'I' or 'mine.' Nothing whatsoever that you can get away with clinging to, as ego, as self.

So, to not take this self as being a real self, or this 'I' as being a real 'I'; this is the message of Buddhism. These bodies and minds are natural things. We have these bodies and dependent upon these bodies there are the mind. The body has no real knowledge, but the mind has the ability to know and understand. However, for the most part, the mind is stupid, and the mind takes itself as being a self. The mind foolishly clings to itself as 'I,' as 'mine,' as ego. Sometimes it latches on to the body as ego; sometimes it takes itself to be ego. This is in fact, a very crooked and dishonest thing to do, but because the mind is stupid, it has no shame and very deceitfully claims itself to be 'mine' or 'me.' In fact, the body is just natural, it belongs to nature. The mind is natural, it belongs to nature. So to claim it as 'me' or 'mine,' is actually a very dishonest act. It's a very crooked act of thievery. And when we steal from nature in this way; when we plunder nature like this, then nature slaps us in the face. Thieves must be punished. So, whenever we dishonestly steal from nature, it slaps us in the face and life bites us all because of this stupidity of a mind that doesn't know any better and goes around claiming things as 'I' or 'mine.' In fact, everything is just nature. It all belongs to nature. If we would understand this and live our lives accordingly, then there wouldn't be any problems. This stupidity which leads to us clinging to things as 'I' and 'mine' is called *avijjā*, which means the lack of correct understanding. When there isn't any correct understanding, we call that ignorance or *avijjā*. This *avijjā* is the ultimate source of all the foolishness and stupidity in our lives. Because we don't know correctly, then we do all kinds of crazy and ridiculous things. This is something to be found out and understood how that at the bottom of all our pain and suffering is this ignorance - the fundamental lack of correct understanding about life.

Avijjā naturally leads to what we call *upādāna* or attachment. The function of *avijjā* is basically to cause this attachment, the clinging to things as 'I' and 'mine.' Once we do this, once *avijjā* does its job and we're grabbing onto something as ego, then it gets heavy, it slaps us, it bites us. For example, when a fool has money in the bank, when a foolish person has a lot of money in the bank, they still go around worrying about it. Although the money is in the bank, they worry about it, they wonder about it, they sometimes don't get to sleep at night thinking about this money in the bank. And so it's like that money was piled on their head, causing them all kinds of stress and difficulty. For the fool, this is how attachment brings suffering - the attachment that is based in *avijjā* - the lack of correct understanding of things as they are. And so the fool, though they have their money in the bank, very stupidly is always going around wondering "well, what if the bank goes bankrupt or what if I'm not getting the highest possible interest rates?" or "what if my account manager makes a mistake" or "what if this, or what if that." And so instead of the money being in the bank it's like it's pressing down on that foolish person's head.

And so, examples like this make it very clear how attachment punishes those who are foolish enough to attach to things as 'I' and 'mine.' There's more to it, of course, than just money. There's all one's clothing, possessions, house, wealth, husbands, wives, children, friends, grandchildren, status, one's position in society, one's fame, one's reputation. All these things when they're taken to be 'I' or 'mine' then they're no longer just natural things, but they are these heavy weights crushing down on our

skulls. These heavy burdens weighing us down, causing us a lot of difficulty and misery. So when anything is taken to be ego, it gets heavy and becomes a problem. Even this body, if we take this body as ego, then it's like sticking it on top of our heads. Who wants to go around carrying a body on our heads? It just gets ridiculous and causes all kinds of hassles and problems. So, whatever it is, whether our house, our family, our status, our getting, our losing, our winning, our being defeated, anything whatever it is in life that is taken as 'I,' as 'mine,' as 'ego' becomes heavy, becomes a burden which makes life tiresome and dreary. Even the universe if we go around and we stick the whole universe on our heads, then it's tremendous pressure and weight. Wouldn't it be wise to let go of all this and be free of all these burdens?

The symbol of the Christian cross is very pertinent to our discussion here. There's the capital "I" that is the upright of the cross. This capital "I" is - symbolizes the ego, the self and then there's the cross piece, which symbolizes the cutting of the ego. So the symbol of the Christian cross represents the cutting of the ego, the ending, the destruction of this delusion that there is a separate individual "I" or self. If one is a good Christian, if one truly follows the Christian teachings, then one cuts through the ego and so there is nothing heavy or burdensome upon the mind. Our thoughts aren't always caught up and dominated by 'I' and 'mine' and so there's nothing heavy on the skull, there's no pressure on the skull if one is a real Christian and cuts through the ego. Christians like to say that the cross is the stairway to God, that one can climb the cross up to God. And this is absolutely correct that by cutting through the ego, cutting the ego, cutting through the ego one gets closer, one climbs the cross. And if one completely cuts through ego so that the mind is completely spotless so there's no attachment and ignorance left, then one realizes God, one reaches God by cutting through the ego. If there's ego, there's not yet God. But the cross takes us to God because in the cross, there is the destruction of the illusion of ego. And then one can realize God.

When the ego has been destroyed, when this ridiculous craziness of ego has been gotten rid of, then there is tremendous freedom in life. Life is totally free. When there's ego, when there's the 'I' and 'mine,' then life is tied up, bound up, entrapped in this self. The pain and destruction of that being tied up and bound up by ego, the lack of freedom of ego is something we'll talk about later. But one should also be aware that there is the potential to be completely free, to be totally free by letting go of ego, of attachment. This is all the time we have for today. So we'll save the issue of life being caught up and trapped, being enslaved by ego for tomorrow. Thank you very much for being good and patient listeners. This guy up here. He talks too much. He's not able to just say a few words and that's all for this morning.

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