

## Life That Doesn't Bite Its Owner, Part 2 of 6

### LIFE THAT LACKS FREEDOM

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*In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa 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](http://www.suanmokkh.org),

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

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

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Today we will speak further upon the subject of life that bites its owner which we didn't have time to finish yesterday. We should look at the wounds that cover our body. When you look at a dog that is covered with scars and wounds, how do you feel? Or when you see a person with leprosy whose body is covered with sores, how do you feel? Then we ought to look at ourselves who are covered with all kinds of sores and wounds. It's kind of funny that these wounds are the result of life biting itself. Yesterday we talked about the burning and scorching of the defilements such as greed, hatred and delusion. Then we talked about the heaviness of the burden of life. Now we'd like to examine the lack of freedom in life.

Everybody is talking about freedom, demanding freedom, struggling for freedom and fighting for freedom. We hear about it in the newspapers all the time. People are insisting that there'll be given their freedom. This shows that first of all, people desire freedom, but second, that they haven't yet gotten freedom. So, this lack of freedom is the source of a great deal of *dukkha*. There's a secret to this matter which is for the most part misunderstood. So, we'd like to have you looked very deep into this subject and see where the lack of freedom is. And then again, where genuine freedom is. For example, when we insult or criticize someone, we think that we've got freedom, but in fact we don't have any freedom because when we're insulting someone, our mind is dominated and taken over by the defilements. When there are the slaves of the defilements, where can there be any true freedom? When we're hitting someone, beating them, then we've lost all of our freedom to the defilements, or we've abandoned our freedom to our own stupidity. Why doesn't anybody look at things in this way? And when we kill them or when we take the infantry and invade them and then destroyed them, in such instances aren't we just totally losing our freedom to our own stupidity, to our own wickedness and selfishness. Haven't we given up our freedom for these low

and crude defilements and stupidity? Why is it that nobody can see things in this way? We're always ready to insult them, criticize them, fight with them, beat them, and even kill them for the sake of our freedom. But this is the thinking of lunatics because the more we do such things, the more we lose our freedom. If we act in such ways, then we don't have any real freedom at all. It would be good if people could look at this honestly and begin to understand it.

Nowadays we've gone much further than that. We've got these huge armies and these tanks and airplanes and all kinds of missiles and nuclear weapons ready to destroy the freedom of others. We're always ready to fight them or throw our weapons at them, to destroy their freedom for the sake of our own freedom. But what do we really get from this? Is the result of all this madness genuine freedom or not? What do we get besides losing our own spiritual freedom from all these weapons and all this militarism? We ought to give proper attention to the word 'spiritual.' Because we think we're getting physical freedom but at the same time, we're completely losing our spiritual freedom. We shouldn't overlook the spiritual side of the picture.

When we experience the deliciousness of something, when we're tasting the deliciousness of something, we think that we're getting something that we have the freedom to experience this deliciousness, but in fact we have lost our spiritual freedom. We've surrendered our freedom to the power of that delicious thing. For the sake of some physical delight, we abandoned our spiritual freedom. When we get some sexual pleasures, we think that we've won something that we've been victorious in gotten some sexual pleasures, but in fact, we've lost our freedom to those very same sexual pleasures. But we never understand this. We never noticed the facts. When we love anything, then we lose our freedom to that thing. But common people never understand this. They don't even notice this. They think that they're just getting something, that they're receiving this and that. They never look deeper to see what's really happening.

Or on the other hand, in the opposite direction, if we hate something or are angry at something, then we also lose our freedom to that thing. When the mind is full of anger or hatred, why don't we take notice that these things are biting us, clawing us so that we're covered with wounds. Why don't we see that when there is anger or ill will or dissatisfaction in the mind that we've lost all freedom and are biting ourselves, clawing ourselves. Or when we hate someone, then we surrender our freedom to that person. Please look at this carefully.

Or if we are afraid of something, then we surrender our freedom to that thing until there's nothing left. Nowadays we have a world that's full of fear and terror such that there is no spiritual freedom left anymore. We can say that now the left is always afraid that it will lose to the right and the right is equally afraid of the left. Both the left and the right are nervous, apprehensive, and fearful that they will lose out to the other side and so they are unable to sleep peacefully. They're constantly worrying and threatening about this, and this has been going on for days, months, years. The left and the right are constantly frightened by each other. And then we asked the question: When we fight, when we go to war, do we do so for the sake of freedom? Or do we do so in order to lose our freedom? What's the correct answer to this? Even if we win the battle or the war and get a lot of material benefits, in the end, we've lost. We've surrendered ourselves to the defilements, to Māra, or to Satan. So now we're fighting for freedom without understanding that our actions are destroying our freedom.

Only the mind that is correctly established is free. Only this properly established mind can maintain its freedom. If the mind maintains itself incorrectly for just a bit, then it loses its freedom. So, we must find how to establish the mind so that it retains its freedom. When we don't love anything,

when we don't desire anything, when we don't wish for anything, is there true freedom or not? But when we're taken over by the values of the positive and the negative, are we at all free? When the positive values arise, then our mind is taken over by greed and lust. Or if the negative values come up, then the mind is lost to anger and hatred. When we observe such things, we'll start to find out where genuine freedom lies.

When we have wishes or hopes, the same kind of hopes and wishes that we teach our children to have, our mind has lost its freedom to whatever it hopes for the whole time – that there is hoping and wishing. Living without any hopes or wishes is to live with total freedom but nobody believes this. Everybody insists that it isn't possible to live without hopes and wishes. We've told you earlier that this is the most artistic thing we can do to live without desires, wants and hopes. To live with freedom, to live with mindfulness and wisdom – this is the supreme art of living.

In our Dhamma language, we described the life of wishing and hoping as the life of *preta*. A *preta* is a kind of being often translated as a hungry ghost which is pictured of having a stomach - the size of a mountain and the mouth - the size of a needle. It got this huge stomach and it's constantly hungry, but a tiny mouth can never satisfy that hunger. This living like a *preta* is how it is when we're full of hopes and wishes and desires. It's a pitiful kind of existence to live with this constant hunger gnawing on us and all these wishes and desires are chewing at us. But still it's a way of life that many people are caught, quite attached to. Take a good look at the body of these *preta*, or hungry ghosts. These huge stomachs with the hunger of a mountain and mouths tiny like the eye of a needle. How can such a tiny mouth ever fill up such an enormous belly? So finally, we must ask ourselves, "Are we living like hungry ghosts?" When we live like a hungry ghost, we're being constantly dominated by hunger, by desires. Our mind is full up with these wishes and this hunger. This is biting us so much that we're full of sores and wounds. But we are unable to control this hunger. We can't control these hungry minds, so we continue being hungry ghosts on and on and on.

When we want to love something, we can't control ourselves and fall in love with it. Or when we want to hate something, we're unable to control ourselves and fall into hating that thing. This is where our problem is. We're unable to control things, so we keep falling into love and hatred. We get angry so easily like a flash of lightening. We burst into anger. We flash into anger so easily, so quickly, and we can't control it and stop it. The anger continues and we feel vengeance and ran towards others, and we store up this vengeance and carry it with us for days, for weeks, sometimes we carry these vengeful feelings around with us till the end of our life. It is so easy and so fast - this anger and we often can't do anything about it. Or when we do something very wrong to someone, we never want to ask for forgiveness. Or if somebody comes to ask our forgiveness, we never want to forgive them. These are emotions which we were unable to control. We can't stop ourselves from feeling ill will or feeling upset by or annoyed by others, so we keep falling into these harmful moods because we're unable to control ourselves. When we can't control these emotions, then they bite and bite and bite until we're covered with wounds. These wounds may not show on our physical bodies but they're covering our minds or our spiritual part of our minds. But you needn't worry. If the mind is full of these wounds, it won't be long before we get into conflicts and hassles with people. Then before long our bodies will also have their share of sores and lumps and wounds.

Please remember that being unable to control the mind leads to all these wounds. When the mind can't control itself, then life bites and bites and bites. In fact, it's the mind itself that bites itself. The rabbit, dog keeps biting itself. It is rabbit mind that can't control itself and keeps biting and

biting and biting. But if you are successful in your practice of *ānāpānasati*, then you'll be able to eliminate all of these problems completely. *Ānāpānasati* will have the results of being able to control the mind and be master over the mind in all aspects.

Next, we'd like to talk about addictions. Addictions are things which entertain or amuse the mind. There are kinds of intoxications which provide a certain amusement or entertainment. When people are amused in this way, they feel that they're really well off. Sometimes they even think that they're in heaven, and that these addictions and intoxications are paradise. At Koh Samui, there's a certain kind of mushroom, in English, they're often called magic mushrooms. The foreigners who come to Koh Samui really like these things. The Islanders themselves, however, never touch these things. These mushrooms make you drunk and dizzy and one doesn't really know what's going on. They give a certain kind of excitement and stimulation, and the foreigners seem to really enjoy this being drunk and intoxicated by these mushrooms. So, although the villagers don't eat them themselves, they make a lot of money selling these to the crazy foreigners who get their kicks from being drunk and out of it. The Islanders themselves consider these mushrooms to be poisoned but the foreigners who come as tourists think that they're wonderful and really marvelous, so they spend a lot of money on these things. They're willing to give up their life and their freedom for the sake of some crazy little entertainment and amusement.

Now people really get off on all these addictions and drugs, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, even heroin. You can find these all over the place and people really like them, really hooked on the cheap pleasures and thrills of these addictions. But it's kind of interesting that if we looked back to before modern civilization came about, back to when the people still living in the forest, they didn't have any of these things. Their lives weren't so centered on things like alcohol and cocaine. They weren't dominated by these things. But look at all our wonderful progress of this modern civilization, look how we've developed so that people can't live without these cheap little pleasures from alcohol, Marijuana and so forth - things which didn't even exist way back long ago. Please remember one simple sentence "Dogs don't drink alcohol even though they don't take on any moral precepts." You don't have to make a dog take on a bunch of moral morality rules and still they won't drink alcohol. Thousands of years ago, the dogs wouldn't drink alcohol even though they never talked about morality, and even now, they still don't drink alcohol, and they still don't have to talk about morality.

But of all these addictions, there's nothing more powerful than sex. We mentioned yesterday how there's an important distinction between sexuality or sensuality and reproduction. But the people who are addicted to sex or really hung up on the pleasures of sex have allowed themselves to be completely absorbed in, completely taken over by sex. It's like sexual pleasures have completely infiltrated their minds and dyed their minds so that there's nothing that has more power over them than sex. Dogs, if we observe them, can be seen to not really have any sexuality at all. For dogs, there's just reproduction once a year at a certain season – they reproduce and that's about it. They're not dominated and taken over by sexuality. But human beings are the complete opposite. With human beings, there's no thought of reproduction. Human beings are constantly thinking about sex all day long, all month long, even for the entire year, just sex, sex, sex, all day and all night. This is almost human beings think about it. They never consider reproduction. For dogs where reproduction is a seasonal thing, there is no addiction especially to sex, but for human beings there is a most powerful and almost total addiction to sex. Human beings in their cleverness have developed something called "love play" and they've come up with all kinds of tricks and variations and possibilities for this. There are all kinds of books written about it, and you can even go and

take classes or have therapy in love play. Dogs don't even know anything about all this and they've completely unable to get involve in this stuff, but for human beings, love play is something very, very important. So, why not make a decision – make a careful examination and decide for yourself between humans and dogs: Which of the two is more a slave of the defilements? Which are more enslaved to the positive and the negative?

All religions and all of the moral systems within and without religion are all aiming to save human beings from their addictions. No religion wants human beings to be addicted, so there are more teachings to help save humanity from this foolishness, this drunkenness, but it hasn't been very successful. We can see the results of modern man that's completely full of all kinds of addictions. The addictions nowadays are so much more than one thousand, two thousand years ago when many of the great religions got started. The difference is so huge. We can no longer even compare the way it is now with the way it was then. So nowadays people have no respect for order, for discipline, for morality, for religion. They really looked down on these words: morality, discipline, religion. People just kind of sweep them aside, brush them aside and enslave themselves completely to addictions.

Why not stop for a while and take an honest look and see: “Whether our enslavement to our addictions is – the desire of *vijjā* (correct knowledge) or the desire of *avijjā* (ignorance)? Are these addictions coming from wisdom or are they coming from blindness and stupidity? Why not stop and take a careful look at our addictions in this way?

When we don't know whether these desires of ours are wise or stupid, it means that we don't even know ourselves. If we can't tell what kind of desires are, then we don't even know who we are. And so then, life keeps biting and biting this life that doesn't even understand itself. It keeps biting and biting and biting until it's covered with sores, scars and wounds. When we don't know ourselves, then we don't understand life. We don't know what life is, we don't know what the purpose of life is, so life is constantly biting itself. It bites and bites because there's no real understanding of life, because we don't even know what ourselves is. So, the result is we're covered with these scars and wounds in such a horrible and pitiful way. It's even more disgusting than someone who has leprosy. This is the state where we're in – more pitiful condition than someone who has leprosy.

Now imagine what life would be like if it no longer bit itself. If there was none of this mind biting and all the wounds disappeared, what that life would be like. This life where there's no biting, where there's none of these wounds – we call this “the life of coolness.” It's a cool life which is the meaning of the word 'Nibbāna.' But the life that bites its owner is a life that has a tremendous attraction and charm. There's something attractive about it that pulls us in, tricks us, and it addicts us to the life that bites itself. For the most part, people are much more attracted to the life that bites its owner much more than the life that doesn't bite. But even when people begin to get a sense of what's happening and start to lose their satisfaction with this biting and wounded life, even when there's some dissatisfaction, people start to wander around looking for an alternative, but they've got no idea where to look. This is quite interesting and strange. There are a number of people wandering around not really satisfied with their present life, not fulfilled with their present life but with no real idea where to look or where to turn to find something better. You all have come from the West and come to the Far East in order to find the wisdom of the East. If you're able to find this wisdom, it will mean very simply that you have found the life that doesn't bite.

As for Buddhism which is a religion or a system of wisdom from the East, all the knowledge in Buddhism or the practices in Buddhism, everything that is genuine Buddhism aims solely for achieving or realizing the life that doesn't bite. And the funny thing is that when you find this understanding, when you find this wisdom, it will tell you that "Don't own life. Don't be the owner of life. Don't try and possess life. Don't take it as being I and mine. Don't make an Ego out of life and then it won't be able to bite." This is what the wisdom of the East has to say. Don't become the owner of life. Don't try and possess life. Like we said yesterday, when the young child comes up to you and says "Please don't be the owner of life. Give it up. Let it go. Don't be possessive towards life and then it won't bite you anymore." When the child says this to you, don't slap the child because it's bringing you the highest wisdom. So don't slap the child's face because it's giving you the highest thing, bringing you the highest wisdom of Buddhism.

There is a saying which might sound a little bit difficult to somebody, but it's really not so difficult. Let's see if the translator can get it right: "Have without being the owner. To have something legally but without being its owner. To have something according to the normal ideas and rules of society but without really being its owner." For example, you have a piece of land, you own some land, you have a deed to it. The government or the police recognized that you are the rightful owner of this piece of land, and you have a piece of paper and all the formal registration to prove it. But really, it belongs to nature. If you die, you can't take the land with you and you can't prevent it from changing from the powers of nature, and you don't really have that ability. So legally, conventionally, socially, materially, you own it in the ordinary language of regular people. In people language, you own it and it's your land, but spiritually, in the language of Dhamma, of the truth, there's no way you could ever own it. Materially, you have some kind of material, conventional ownership, but there's no genuine ownership, especially no spiritual ownership.

This truth and the teaching of this truth can be found in the Christian Bible, I believe. In First Corinthians in the letter of Saint Paul to the people of Corinth, there's a passage where he says, but I can't remember the exact wording – it's something like: "Have a wife as if you have no wife. Have wealth and possessions as if you have none. Be happy as if you have no happiness. Going to the market, making purchases, return home as if you purchased nothing."

When we say that we are not to have a wife, as if one had no wife, what this means is that in the normal sense one is married, conventionally, one has a wife, but one acts as if one didn't have a wife. Of course, we can expand the meaning here to include have a husband as if you had no husband, depending on one's sex either have a husband or have a wife. What this means here is that though one is married, one has a husband or wife in the ordinary sense, there is no attachment to him or her as 'I' or 'mine.' This is what Saint Paul meant. You can have a wife or a husband but don't attach to that husband or wife as 'I' or 'mine.' Otherwise, that husband will bite, that wife will bite over and over again as long as you attached to him or her as 'I' or 'mine.'

So, there are two sides to everything. There's the material conventional legalistic side and then there's the spiritual side. Although one may own something materially or conventionally, although one may be the owner in the eyes of the world where ordinary superficial people will say that "oh this is his wife or her husband," that's just the superficial material conventional side. But on the spiritual side, when realizes that there's nothing that can be attached to, that there's nothing that can really be 'I' or 'mine.' So when one doesn't attach, one sees the futility of spiritually attaching the thing that if we try to attach, the result is just a lot of biting and wounding and pain.

Next, we come to wealth and possessions. “To have these just as if one didn’t have any” – this means though one has whatever wealth and property, one asked towards these things as if one didn’t have anything. One let go of the idea that they are ours or mine, that we are the owner of these things. If we don’t let go like this, these things will just bite. They’ll be very heavy and oppressive. But if one acts towards them as if they weren’t even ours, then they have no ability to bite or threaten. And all the other things such as land or farm, a house or car, all the various material things that people own – all of these we can have them just as if we didn’t have them. If we really believe that we own them, then they become very heavy. It’s like piling them up on top of our heads and carrying these weights around with us all the time. If we attach to the land as my land, the land is no longer out there in the field, the land is stacked on top of our head, and then the house and the car – all these things are piled up on our head, very heavy and oppressive. If they’re just the land and we don’t act as if we own it, the land is just where it is, it’s no longer a burden on our mind. And the same with the house and the car – they’re just what they are, but we don’t act towards them as if they’re mine and so they’re not heavy. They don’t make life burdensome and weary.

Then there’s happiness. “Have happiness as if there wasn’t any or be happy as if there wasn’t any” – this means that there can be joy, satisfaction and contentment. We can add these feelings of joy and contentment without feeling or acting like we own them. We can be joyful without any idea of owning that joy or happiness. This is very important. Joy is just a natural thing and there’s nothing wrong with it. But if we go in, grab onto it as ‘I’ or ‘mine,’ it bites. Even happiness can bite us if we attach to it. When happiness comes, if we’re clinging to it as ‘I,’ we fall in love with it, we indulge in it, we get greedy for it, all of these things are biting and biting us. Or if we don’t get the happiness, we’re not satisfied and attach; if we attach to that, then this leads to anger and hatred and all kinds of ugly moods. If we attach to happiness, it leads to all kinds of attachments to the positive and the negative. It’s much wiser to not bother attaching. Just let happiness be a natural feeling. It belongs to nature. There’s no need for us to own it and possess it. If we make the mistake of ownership, though, it will bite us mercifully.

Although Saint Paul only mentioned these three things – husbands, possessions and happiness, the principle applies to everything. It applies to friends, to children, to gold, to money, to silver, to beauty, to status, to fame, to honor, to dignity, to everything. This same principle – we can have all these things but don’t attach to them as I and mine. As soon as we make the foolish mistake of ownership, then these things will bite us and wound us. He just mentioned the three but the idea or the teaching applies to everything.

Then there’s the fourth example that Saint Paul mentioned: “Buy something in the market but don’t bring anything home.” This is an excellent example of Dhamma language. Something that in ordinary language may sound confusing, but when understood in terms of Dhamma, it has tremendous meaning. It’s a kind of Dhamma riddle or puzzle to challenge our intelligence and help us to understand things more deeply. It has the same basic meaning as the first three examples. Go to the market and buy something, but don’t bring anything home. The meaning here is very profound about the importance of doing everything that needs to be done but not attaching to any of it as ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ So one has some money and one goes to the market and takes the money and buys something with it. Then, one has some new purchase, but Saint Paul warns us not to take anything home. That means though we may have bought something, we don’t have any foolish ideas about owning it - about it being ours. Physically, we may have brought something, but spiritually we relinquish all ownership. There’s no attachment to it as I or mine. If we really think

we own it, if we go and buy things and foolishly think that we own them, that they are mine, then this is going to make us a lot of problems, add tremendous burdens in life, a lot of fighting and wounding. But if we understand that it's all part of nature and we there's no need to attach to it, we just do what needs to be done.

This understanding of buying what's needed but not bringing anything home is an excellent example of the essence of Buddhism – to do what needs to be done without any ideas of 'I' or 'mine,' to do whatever must be done without any ownership or any possessiveness. Some people will listen to this and won't be able to understand. People who are not very intelligent would think this is just some crazy teaching. It doesn't make any sense, and this is ridiculous – “Go to the market and buy something and not even bring it home.” To the stupid person, this teaching sounds very stupid but for those who understand will see the tremendous wisdom of it, that in purchasing things at the market, it's just like we mentioned with the land. We make the purchase and so we have the legal right to use something. This is a worldly convention used in society, which has certain practical benefits, but in spite of that legal ownership and right, spiritually there is no ownership. In truth, there's no way we could ever own that. The legal convention is just pretending. If we understand this spiritually so there's no attaching as 'I' or 'mine,' then there's no problem. The purchases, whatever it is we buy, cannot create any problems for us. We can buy whatever we need and none of it will bite us. But if we don't understand this, then all these purchases will bite us and claws. If we can understand this fact, we understand it well enough that we no longer attach to things as 'I' and 'mine,' then we will have understood the essence of Buddhism and will be free of all the biting and wounding.

Excuse us for interrupting a bit. We'd like to point out something very interesting. All religions aim to save humanity from suffering. All the religions are in attempt to free humanity from suffering. They go about it in different ways. They have different languages, different terms to talk about life but the basic point is the same, which is to free humanity from suffering. And because of this fact, it's possible for all the religions to cooperate, to harmonize.

For example, Christianity, which puts a tremendous emphasis on faith, on believe. This may be somewhat childish. This may be an emphasis primarily for people who are unable to understand things on their own, so they have to go and believe what others tell them. Although that may be the emphasis of Christianity, still in Christianity there are teachings of the most profound wisdom, such as the teaching of Saint Paul that we've been talking about. So there's no difficulty in Buddhism and Christianity, finding this common ground so that there's no problem in creating harmony between the two religions. There's no need for any conflict or argument between Christianity and Buddhism. This is a point that any real Christian or any true Buddhist should understand and be happy to accept. For this reason, we're building a place we call the International Dhamma Hermitage. It's across the highway about 2 kilometers away and we'll take you there on the last day of the course. This International Dhamma Hermitage is being built in order to bring together the different religions so that we can see the points in which we are in harmony and so we can stop getting in arguments and competition. So, we'd like to tell you this a bit in advance that all the religions are able to harmonize and to avoid all conflict between them and among them.

So the mere belief that everything belongs to God and that nothing belongs to me – this belief in itself will eliminate about 50% of our attachments. Then, we can continue letting go of attachments until they're all gone. So, the believe that taught in Christianity can be a very useful way to abandon attachment. If one understands this correctly, then one can continue letting go of attachments in this and that so that there's no sense or idea or belief in 'I' or 'mine' remaining, still thinking that

it all belongs to God and that it's not 'mine.' There's still a 'mine' or 'me,' but if we can let go of all that, 'I' and 'me' and 'mine,' even the idea that it's my God or my relationship with God, we let go of all attachment. Then life is totally free. There's nothing that has any ability to bite life ever again.

The heart of Buddhism can be expressed in one short sentence: "*Sabbe dhamma nalam abhinivesaya*" – All things ought not to be attached to as 'I' and 'mine.' This one sentence expresses all the truth of Buddhism.

In this sentence, the Buddha used the word Dhamma which we usually translate as things but "Dhamma" here or things should be understood to include everything. Everything in the universe, both things that are phenomena, both including all phenomena and also the noumenon, things which are conditioned and that which is unconditioned. That means everything, including Nibbāna, including absolute truth, whatever we want to call it, should not be attached to as 'I' or 'mine.'

Literally, the sentence "*Sabbe dhamma nalam abhinivesaya*" can be translated literally, it means "all Dhamma, all things which no one ought to interfere with. *Abhinivesaya* means "to interfere with," "get involved in," meaning to attach to them as 'I' and 'mine.' So there's nothing worth attaching to as 'I' or 'mine.' The words "all things" have enormous meaning. All things include everything without any exception. It includes everything mental and everything physical and includes anything that is neither mental nor physical. It includes both the positive, the negative and that which is beyond or above the positive and the negative. Everything whatsoever without any exception should never be clung to, grasp at as 'I' or 'mine.' If we understand this one sentence completely, we fully understand the meaning here. Then we will have understood the most profound Dhamma in Buddhism as well as the genuine Dhamma in all other religions. The profound truths of Christianity, of Daoism and any other religion are all contained in this one sentence "*Sabbe dhamma nalam abhinivesaya*." This is a universal truth, a universal law that applies to everything, everywhere, at any time. It's a timeless law. So when we say that it belongs to nature, it doesn't mean that nature is the owner. The ordinary person hears and says "Oh it belongs to nature, that nature must own it. Nature must be the owner." But not even nature can own things. Nothing can be owned by anything else. Everything is completely free of ownership and being owned.

When we speak about everything in the universe, it's a little bit beyond our own immediate situation, so we ought to come back and talk more directly about our own reality. The essence here is that nothing in this life, nothing in our own lives should be clung at or grasp at as 'I' or 'mine.' If we stop clinging to our old lives, to everything involved in our lives, then our lives will be completely free and cool.

These lives of ours are made up of two things: body and mind. If we want to study it, we can distinguish these two aspects. Although in realities there's just one thing. You can't really separate the body from the mind. To do so would be to die. But we can distinguish them for purposes of study, although the reality is just one thing, one life. When we study, when we investigate through our lives, however, we can distinguish between body and mind. And further, we can distinguish various abilities of the mind. So often we talk about life, or we talk about mind, body, or we talk about the five *khandhas*, the five heaps, or the five aggregates. There's first the body and then the mind. As far as the mind goes, we can distinguish for abilities. There's the ability to feel, to sense pleasure and displeasure regarding experiences. There's the ability to perceive things, to regard them as this as that, as green, blue, purple or red. There's the ability to think, to conceive thoughts,

and to put them together as thinking. And then there's the very powerful ability of consciousness - to directly know experiences via the eyes, nose, tongue, body and mind sense. For the purposes of study, we can distinguish these five basic functions or abilities of life: body, feeling, perception, thought, and consciousness, though in reality it's just one life. And all of these abilities or functions of this life, all of them, according to Buddhism if we attach to any of these five, then that will cause suffering. All *dukkha* come down to attaching to one of these five *khandhas* as 'I' or 'mine.' And so, the way to end suffering is to stop attaching to the five *khandhas* as 'I' or 'mine.' This is another way of expressing the fundamental message of Buddhism.

So, we ask you to do your best to investigate these five *khandhas* – look into them until you understand them thoroughly; understand what they are and how they work, and understand deeply there a sensual reality, the truth of these conducts. We've got in this life of us, we've got this body and the living in life, the living body is acting, is moving and this is one function of life. And then when the body is living, there arise feelings of pleasure, displeasure and neither pleasure nor displeasure. And then there arise perceptions: things are regarded as being this, that, male, female, positive, negative or whatever. When the body is living, there arise thoughts, ideas. And when the body is alive, there arise consciousness by the eyes, ears, nose, tongue body and mind sense. With this living body, there are also these living mental functions or abilities. Altogether they make up the five *khandhas*. We beg you to investigate them until you understand that none of them should be attached to as I or mine. That clinging to the five *khandhas* is *dukkha* and that not clinging to the *khandhas* is the end of all *dukkha*.

The highest mindfulness is to know that right now life is taking the form of the body aggregate; to know that right now life is taking the form of the feeling aggregate; right now, that life is taking the form of the perception aggregate; that right now life is taking the form of the thought aggregate or that right now life is taking the form of the consciousness aggregate. The highest mindfulness is to know right at this moment what form, what shape, what function life is fulfilling or taking. To know this from moment to moment is the highest mindfulness. And from this mindfulness we come to understand the reality of life itself. And then we see that there's nothing that can be clung to as 'I' or 'mine.' There's nothing that can be owned. That ownership is impossible. There is nothing that can be the owner, and there's nothing that is able to be possessed. Seeing this is the highest wisdom, so with the highest mindfulness and the highest wisdom, we are free of all biting, of all suffering. So the highest mindfulness and wisdom is knowing that life is not ego. Knowing that there's just this life happening naturally, there's just body and mind or just the five *khandhas*. None of it is ego. None of it is self or soul.

Realizing that there's just life and none of it is I or myself, ego, soul, spirit, atman or whatever you want to call it – Realizing this, the life is totally free. Life no longer bites. Lives can no longer be bitten when there is this highest wisdom. So all suffering is gone. All suffering has been quenched. This is the highest wisdom and the highest realization that a human being can attain, and at this point then everything is finished in terms of what is accomplished, everything that needs to be accomplished. So we'll close the meeting at this point. Thank you for being very good listeners, very patient. And if you can put up with some more, come back tomorrow and we'll have another talk. That's all for today.

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