

## Life That Doesn't Bite Its Owner, Part 3 of 6

### LIFE THAT DOESN'T BITE 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](http://www.suanmokkh.org),

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

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

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*email to: [suanmokkh\\_bangkok@bia.or.th](mailto:suanmokkh_bangkok@bia.or.th).*

We've talked enough about the life that bites its owner. Now we should discuss the opposite, which is that the life that doesn't bite its owner. There are certain words which their meanings can deceive us, so we should take time to understand them correctly. These words that we would like to look at are: the word 'life,' the word '*citta*' (mind, heart) and the word 'I' or 'we.'

This is condition that we call 'life,' where the body still living, able to move, it breathes, can walk around, can eat, can speak, can do all the activities that for us make up life. The ordinary person takes this life to be *attā* (the self). But if we look a little bit deeper, we'll see that inside this life there is 'mind.' There's that which knows and experiences and thinks and we see that this mind is in control of life. So then we take this '*citta*' (the mind, heart) as the self. But where is the truth in thinking that life is the self, or in thinking that the mind is the self. Where is the truth in these ideas?

The self is just something that arises momentarily from time to time. It's a concept that arises occasionally in the mind. Where's the truth of all these things? Is life the *attā* (the self) or is the *citta* the *attā*? Is the mind itself? Excuse us for using these Pāli words. They're a little bit clearer, so we choose to use them. And so that the child takes life as being the *attā*. Then after growing up a bit, the child takes the mind or consciousness as being the *attā*. Then when this misunderstanding develops a little more deeply, the child takes the various momentary feelings of the mind – the various types of awareness are taken to be the *attā*. A young child who doesn't know anything about motors and mechanism, if they open the back of a pocket watch, they'd be quite shocked to see all those little gears and springs and things moving and that child would think that this watch is living, and that it was the self.

This kind of concept of the child is much more than just imagination. There's no intention by the child to dream up these ideas but because of *avijjā* or ignorance. The child doesn't know anything about the watch and because of this not knowing, the child very easily comes up with all kinds of crazy notions, such as that the watch is a self. Or the people living up in the forests or the uncivilized folks; when they see a car for the first time, they think this automobile is a living thing. It is some kind of a self because they don't know anything about automobile, and they see it moving and they think it has life and then they think it has a self. Or if they see an airplane, they go and assume that that airplane must be living because it can move and fly, and then they take that living airplane to be a self.

These are some examples of how this illusion of the concept of 'self' keeps coming into our experience. Then we ourselves who are much more developed than the primitive people out in the jungle, we also go around taking everything to be *attā* (to be self) – anything living or moving or whatever is taken as a self. So we take various robots, or mannequins, or all kinds of things as being self. Or there's certain paintings and pictures which are so realistic or lifelike that we wonder if it might not be living, if it might not be real, and we take that living thing, that mind or whatever, and we see it, we take it to be a self. Just the way a child sometimes sees a painting of a wild animal and can be frightened by the painting because it takes it to be a self. Or even adults if they take paper and paints and begin to paint a ferocious or frightening looking animal, then very quickly, it becomes much more than just paper and paints, it becomes quite terrifying. There is self in this thing. It's taken to be some kind of self which is really funny or silly that an adult would be frightened by just a bunch of colors and a piece of paper, but it happens quite often. We heard that there's someone in Thailand who bought a reproduction of the Mona Lisa, so they could look at it and stare at it. They really became obsessed with it, and thinking it was a living thing that there was a self in that picture. This is how we can so easily be deceived by things, by appearances.

So, when it works in this way, then the primitive people in the jungles they take everything to be self. Their mind so easily thinks that everything is self. So they take the sun to be a self and the moon to be a self. They see storms and violent winds as being selves. Certain special trees and the rivers and the mountains are selves. They take all these things to be selves and make them into holy objects, and they worship these things. They worship certain trees. They think there's something living, some spirit in the trees or in the rivers, in the mountains and all over the place. And so thus the primitive person sees selves all over the place, see selfhood in just about everything. Or in the rice fields, since ancient times people have thought that there was a God of the rice field or a spirit of the rice field and people would worship, make offerings to this rice God so that the plants would grow strong and produce a lot of rice.

This illusionary concept of self arises quite easily for the human being and all kinds of things are taken to be selves, even things like the rice fields and the rice plants. This gives us some examples of how the human mind sees self all over the place. This concept of self is just an illusion. It's just a concept which occurs in the mind. It doesn't have a reality in nature but there is this concept in the human mind that it has great power and influence. Because of this concept, there arises all kinds of feelings such as positive and negative, happiness and sadness. So there's tremendous power in this concept of *attā* - self, even though it's just an illusion. And so, then things that are living, that can move, bounce, shake, get up and walk around – we take these to be selves. Then when we see that there are these minds which think and experience and feel, we take those to be self (to be *attā*). Then anything that we don't understand, things that seem to have power, but we

don't understand them, then we take them to be selves. So, this illusion of self gets projected upon all kinds of things, upon life, upon the mind, upon things we don't know or understand.

If we can understand how these things deceive us, how life, how the mind, how the self deceives us, then it will not be difficult for us to understand Dhamma. When the mind is stupid, it stirs up all kinds of defilements. All kinds of wrong ideas and crazy concepts come up in the ignorant mind. Then it bites its owner. When there are all these foolish thoughts coming out of ignorance, then life bites its owner or the mind bites its owner, which means that it bites itself. Itself is taken to be the owner. So, life bites itself, the mind bites itself because of ignorance. So, the mind assumes that it has some kind of owner but how could that ever be?

The mind isn't even itself. The mind isn't even a self. How could it have something as its owner? If the mind isn't itself, then there's no self that can own the mind. But this illusion arises in the mind because of ignorance. So the mind sees things that don't exist and because of this, it bites itself. Life bites itself. If the mind is ignorant, then it takes things to be self, and then it bites itself. The mind bites its owner. But when there's no ignorance and the mind see things according to truth, sees things as they actually are, then nothing is seen as self. There's nothing to bite and no owner to be bit, so the mind doesn't bite its owner. If things are understood correctly according to the way they really are, there's no biting. So, in short, the mind that doesn't understand keeps biting itself. But the mind that understands, that has knowledge, has the highest level of knowledge, it doesn't bite anything, and nothing gets bit.

We'd like to use the metaphor of a mind that is like a diamond – a diamond mind. As you know, diamonds are very hard. They're very hard substances. They are so hard that just about nothing that can cut a diamond. However, these very hard diamonds can cut other things. So, the diamond is that which is so hard that it can't be cut but can cut other things. This is how our minds should be. The mind that is like a diamond is a mind that has the highest understanding as the highest wisdom. This highest wisdom that makes the mind like a diamond is the knowledge or the understanding we call '*atammayatā*.' The mind that has this *atammayatā* has the highest possible understanding – it's a mind like a diamond and nothing can cut it.

We said earlier that any woman or girl who has *atammayatā*, there will be no man who can pick her up – kiew (เคี้ยว). The Thai words have the same meaning as 'trick' her into loving him. So, any woman who has *atammayatā* will not be susceptible to men making her fall in love with him. Or any man who has *atammayatā* there won't be any possibility of any woman or girl making him fall in love. The mind that understands this fact of *atammayatā* is a diamond mind. So, we hope you'll be interested in, understanding and having within your minds this thing we call *atammayatā*.

This word 'tā' at the end of the word *atammayatā* in the Pāli language can have various meanings. It can mean the state or, excuse me, the quality of being a certain way, having a certain characteristic. In this case, having the quality that nothing can concoct it. This is one meaning of *atammayatā*. This quality or characteristic of being unconcoctable. There's nothing that can come in and hook it up or concocted. Tā can also mean a state of being, which is more than just a quality or characteristic. So *atammayatā* can also mean the state of being that is unconcoctable, or it can mean an "insight knowledge" – a *ñāṇas* (the clear penetrating knowledge into the nature of things). *Atammayatā* can signify this highest knowledge, or *atammayatā* can mean a power. This diamond-liked string that has the power to withstand anything, that can cut through anything. And finally, *atammayatā* can be a dwelling or *viharadhamma* which means an abode dwelling (a way of living). *Atammayatā* can be the ordinary mode of living that the mind dwells in – the mind is always

dwelling in *atammayatā*.

For example, if a young woman all the time dwells in *atammayatā*, then there won't be any man or boy who can come along and trick her into falling in love with him. By dwelling, we mean the place where the mind lives – it means like a house or a home. The mind can take *atammayatā* as its home, as its dwelling place. The minded dwell in *atammayatā* is a mind that won't bite anything and it's a mind that can't be bitten by anything. If the mind takes *atammayatā* as its home or dwelling place, then it's beyond being bit or biting. This is the highest understanding that we can have in life, and it leads to completed freedom and peace. And since *atammayatā* is so important, we should take some time to examine its meaning until we understand it correctly. Although it may take a long time, it's necessary for us to study *atammayatā* until we understand it thoroughly. So, this is what we intend to do.

We're trying to put this word '*atammayatā*' into the vocabulary of ordinary people so that this becomes a common spoken word in the language of most people. Although the word '*atammayatā*' appears in a number of places in the Tipiṭaka (the Buddhist scriptures), it's almost completely unknown by Buddhists. This word is there, but it's completely ignored. So Buddhists in Thailand as well as other countries don't know anything about *atammayatā*. They probably don't have any *atammayatā* even in the least little bit, so it's been ignored and forgotten even by Buddhists. Even in the Pāli dictionary compiled by famous Western scholars, they don't have this word '*atammayatā*' – maybe because they're afraid to print a word that they don't understand, and they left it out.

Even in the ordinary English dictionaries, is there any dictionary that has the word 'unconcoctability'? Have you ever found this word in Websters or such dictionary? Isn't this a little bit amusing that the word that has the highest meaning and the highest value isn't even printed or included in any of our dictionary. Sometimes it's beyond our ability to explain *atammayatā* with words. We have to try and use other things as well. But most of all, we have to implore you to look carefully into this thing yourselves. So when we give you an example such as the young woman with *atammayatā* in her mind (in her heart), so that there's no man anywhere who can trick her and make her fall in love. What quality, what state of mind, what kind of knowledge is in that woman's mind so that she is totally free of the tricks and games of any man? There're no words that a man could speak that would affect her mind. No matter what any man would say, it has no effect on her mind – her mind remains clear and cool. And there's no words for the mind that has *atammayatā*. There aren't any words anywhere that can concoct the mind into positive and negative.

Literally, *atammayatā* can be taken to mean the state that where nothing can concoct – the state that is completely beyond being concocted. But if we use a more material word, it's a state that is not the product of anything – the state where the mind can't be produced by anything. Is this too good for you? Are you thinking that this is way too good and not something really that I want at all? Are you thinking that I'm not very interested in this *atammayatā*? Are we someone who still is very excited by, very enticed by our moods and emotions? You like being carried away by moods and emotions. Here's such a person you may be thinking that *atammayatā* is too good for us.

*Atammayatā* is to be above all those moods and emotions, to be beyond them so that they have no more power over the mind. Whether this is too good or not is something for you to see for yourself. If you think that *atammayatā* is too good for you or something that you're not interested in, then

we must tell you that your life will bite itself. Your life will bite itself over and over again if you have such an attitude towards *atammayatā*.

Besides being unconcoctable, the mind that has *atammayatā* is also uncatchable and untrappable. There's nothing that can catch it, hold it, and trap it when the mind has *atammayatā*. The mind that doesn't have *atammayatā* is always being caught and trapped by things, by ignorance, by the deceptions of positive and negative. The mind that doesn't understand, doesn't have *atammayatā* is always getting caught in, entrapped by all the objects and things in the world around us. And once it's caught, it gets bit. There's not any delicious flavor or taste anywhere in the universe that can dominate the mind of one who has *atammayatā*. Whether ordinary, delicious flavors or heavenly delicious flavors, or the most special and magical and refined kind of delicious tastes – none of these whatsoever can grab the mind that has *atammayatā*. They can't dominate it. They can't control it. To put it more simply in somewhat crude terms, *atammayatā* is not having to go wandering around the world looking for delicious things. We are to look and see if these kinds of things exist in our world. Is there much of this wandering around looking for delicious things in our world? Is this something that humanity is doing on a large scale or not? Is our world largely lacking in *atammayatā* so that people are traveling all over looking for things that are delicious that make them feel good? Is this the kind of world we have? People who don't have *atammayatā* are getting caught and trapped by all kinds of wonderful, delicious flavors and sights and sounds and all kinds of things.

And then the highest advantage of *atammayatā* which we must repeat over and over again is that the mind with *atammayatā* is above the power of everything in the world – all things in the world either have the meaning of positive or negative, that's what the world is. With *atammayatā*, the mind is above everything in the world, that means the mind is above the power of all these positive and negative things to influence it. There's no crying and no laughing. There is no need for sadness or for gladness. There's no more of this laughing and crying and sadness and gladness anymore. There is no more being the winner nor being the loser. There is no more being the debtor – the one who is in debt, nor the one who is being credit – the one being the creditor. There's no getting – being the one who gets, or the one who loses. The mind is above all these illusions. But if one still likes laughing and crying and getting and losing and winning and being defeated, then there's not much that can be done to help such a person. They'll never be interested in *atammayatā*. Everyone is quite enticed and infatuated with the positive. Everyone thinks the positive is really wonderful and great. At the same time, one's always being defeated by the negative. The negative causes us to hurt, inflicts pain and suffering upon us. But with *atammayatā*, one is above any power or influence of both the positive and the negative. Neither of them can take over the mind. Neither of them can control and dominate the mind if there is *atammayatā*.

It's beyond our ability to define *atammayatā* in just a few words. It's hard to understand this by using words, but what we can do is talk about the context or the situation in which there is *atammayatā*. And if you pay careful attention, you can start to see *atammayatā* as we talk about the things surrounding it. As we've said, we can use the metaphor of the diamond. *Atammayatā* is the diamond that can cut everything, but nothing can cut it. Exactly what that's like. You have to pay attention to and find out for yourself, and then you can go and define it in whatever words suit you best. So now we'll look into and study the point "What do we do to have *atammayatā*?"

As knowledge, *atammayatā* is the highest knowledge and understanding that there is. As a state of being, *atammayatā* is the highest possible state of being for the human mind. As a power, *atammayatā* is the most powerful thing that the mind can have. Just as we said, it's like a diamond

– it's just like in the world where diamonds are considered great wealth – the most expensive kind of thing. In the same way, *atammayatā* is the most valuable possession that the mind can have. To achieve such a high knowledge or power, we have to use lower levels of understanding, lower conditions as a kind of stairway up to *atammayatā*. This is what we'll look at now.

There are many levels to knowledge and understanding. There is the kind of knowledge that we find in books, that we hear from others. This is a kind of knowledge that has its value and benefits. But the knowledge that comes when we take what we've read and we use reasoning and logic to analyze it and consider it, and then we come to certain more basic conclusions. This is a higher kind of knowledge than the first kind. But even that isn't good enough. It's not the highest kind of knowledge. The highest kind of knowledge is to go beyond the knowledge of reading, and the knowledge of reasoning, to the kind of knowledge that is to have a direct intimate spiritual experience of something. This is the highest knowledge.

So there are these various levels of knowledge. The common person for most of all just knows the first level and some of the second. Some people have developed the knowledge of reasoning even further, but we have to go beyond that to the highest level of understanding which is that of direct spiritual experience. We have to find, or we need to make this kind of direct spiritual experience regarding all things.

So, there are three basic steps or stages to understanding. First, there's the knowledge we get from outside ourselves. It's the first stage. Then there's the second stage of digesting that knowledge, digesting and using reasoning, using wise skillful reflections to come to more precise and more truthful understanding. Then there's the third stage of having a direct, intimate experience of that thing where the mind knows that thing directly, realizes that thing directly without any need of thought or words or language. But there's a direct realization of the things. These are the three stages of understanding: getting something from outside ourselves, digesting it with reason and reflection, and then making a direct experience realizing the thing directly.

So, in knowing anything including *atammayatā*, one goes through three stages of deepening understanding. There's also another way. There's another kind of progression or stairway to *atammayatā*. There are eight steps that we can take to *atammayatā*. Actually, there are many different ways that we could talk about climbing up to *atammayatā*, but the one we're going to talk about now is one that we feel is most appropriate and we will make it most clear and simple for you to understand.

There are eight Tās which are the steps leading to *atammayatā*. This word 'Tā' as we mentioned earlier means characteristic or state of being and so on. There are eight of these and together with *atammayatā* there are nine Tās that we will discuss.

The first one is *aniccatā* – the fact of impermanence – the fact that everything in the world is constantly changing, that all things in this world of ours are changing ceaselessly, that nothing stays the same, that there's constant change. If one sees that everything is changing, this is called *aniccatā*. This means that everything that we experience, everything in our world depends on causes and conditions, and these causes and conditions of things are changing all the time. And if the causes and conditions change, then the thing itself must change as well. This is what we mean by the fact of impermanence, that everything that exists solely to causes and conditions which change. And so, the things themselves exist. This is what we mean by *aniccatā* which literally means the fact of impermanence or the fact of instability that things don't remain the same – they don't stay the same. One can see that in this world, whenever two things come together, you get

something new. We always have these things moving and coming together and always producing something new. Whether the causes or the conditions or there is affecting factors, whenever a new one gets involved, there's change. This is the constant situation in our world where things are interacting ceaselessly, constantly producing new things. This is the condition that we call *aniccatā* (impermanence). Whenever two things come together, there's a transformation of energy. For example, when a male and a female come together, we always get something new. This constant production of new things is what we mean by impermanence, the fact of impermanence. This impermanence is nothing else but the flow of evolution. This endless process of transformation and evolution that we are a part of. This is exactly the same thing as *aniccatā*.

Without *aniccatā*, there would be no evolution. You've already studied biology well enough to understand this fact quite simply, quite easily. Imagine what it would be like without impermanence. Everything would just stay the same. We have to go through everything over and over and over again and nothing would ever change, and we get so bored to death with everything. It would be totally boring. So, we ought to be quite thankful for impermanence. Only because of impermanence, life is always giving us something new from moment to moment. There's always something completely new. Thanks to *aniccatā*. What we call deliciousness is just a deception of impermanence. If you took the most delicious food and have to eat it over and over and over again, that deliciousness would disappear quite quickly. But because of the impermanence, because we're always changing what we eat, there is this illusion of deliciousness. Things can only be delicious because of impermanence.

Let me give an example which may be a little bit silly. But the cream crackers that we ate 60 years ago tasted a lot more delicious than the cream crackers that we eat today. Whether it's a change in the cream crackers themselves, or a change in our nervous system, who can say? But now we see quite clearly that the cream crackers are a lot worse than they were 60 years ago. So whether it's change in the crackers or change in whatever, whether it's the impermanence in the crackers, or impermanence of whatever, things are changing all the time. And this constant change is always giving us new tastes to sample, to enjoy, always giving us new samples of deliciousness. This is just the way it is with *aniccatā*. So, whether it's changes in the things we eat or changes in our tongue in the nervous system, you should examine this carefully.

If we understand this point, then we won't create a lot of problems for ourselves about what we eat. If we understand this, we won't go liking this and disliking that, wanting it to be this way or wanting it to be that way. If we understand this fact of impermanence, we won't get so trapped in our likes and dislikes which bring up the feeling of positive and negative. And it's the fact that the cream crackers they made in England 60 years ago aren't the same as the cream crackers they make in Malaysia today even if the container looks just the same. Where is the *aniccatā*? Where exactly is the impermanence? If we understand this, then life won't bite itself. Life will stop deceiving itself if we understand *aniccatā*.

Next, we come to the second 'Tā' that is *dukkhatā* – the state of all the different kinds of tormenting that exist. Because all the things that we live with, that we associate with, that we get involved with, because they're all changing all the time, but on the other hand, there are many of them that we don't want to change or the ones who we want to change more quickly – because of this, we get into struggle. In conflict with these impermanent things, this gives rise to the quality of torment. Because we must live with, associate with and depend upon impermanent things, the quality of *dukkha*, of pain, of misery, of torment must occur. This is very close to us. It's right here in front of us. We ought to look at this carefully to see that because we must live with all these changing

things, there must arise *dukkha*. Because we must live with all kinds of things such as our wealth, our possession, our clothing, our fame, our status, our honor and so on, and all of these things are changing all the time, there must be *dukkha*. Or even that we live with a husband or wife, and there is changing all the time, and because of this, there must be the characteristic of *dukkha*. Because all the things we attach to are constantly changing, this is the fundamental cause of *dukkhatā*. The condition of having to live with things which we must endure is what we mean by *dukkhatā*. Because there are all these things that if being with them requires that we endure them, this itself is this characteristic of *dukkha*.

For example, having to be with the things we love requires a certain kind of endurance. Then, of course, being with the things we hate is a whole other kind of endurance. To be with the things that make us happy is one kind of endurance. And the things that make us sad, requires another kind of endurance. Because we have to endure all these things, this state of having to endure things, is what is meant by *dukkhatā*. When we laugh or when we're happy and bubbly and everything, the heartbeat starts to pick up and the blood pressure increases. So even in laughter and happiness there is something that must be endured. It has to be endured. It's something there must be born or barred. And then when crying and sadness, it's of course there's even more to be endured.

If things are positive, it's fun to endure them. We enjoy enduring things that are positive that make us happy, but then the negative things are very difficult to endure. It's very clear and obvious pain in having to endure them. But either way, it's kind of endurance. We have to endure all these changing unstable things. Love must be endured. Greed must be endured. Hatred must be endured. Anger must be endured. Fear must be endured. Worry must be endured. Excitement must be endured. All these things without any exception must be endured. All these things that we have to endure – this is the characteristic of *dukkha*, of painfulness. So, the positive aspects of things are to trick us into enduring things. For example, on little sweets and cakes they put a little smear of jam or jelly on them to make it more positive so that we're willingly endure these things. We've loved in the past, and we continue to love things that are suffering, things that are *dukkha*, things that we have to endure. Because they've got a little positive quality to them, we love them. Because there's fun to endure, we love them. Things like sex or sexual pleasures which are very tiring, really are hassled, quite a bit that has to be endured about sex and sexual pleasures, but still, we are very happy to endure them. This is an example of the foolishness that keeps us tied, keeps us trapped in impermanent things. All the things that we love are things that change and that have to be endured. So, everything that we love has this quality of *dukkha*. So in fact, we love *dukkha*. The result is that we love suffering and misery. When we say this, probably nobody believes it. But the result of our way of living, our way of thinking and seeing things is that we love suffering, we love misery. The word '*dukkha*' which we have been translating as "that which must be endured" can also be translated as 'ugly.' When you see how it has to be endured, you see it as ugly. This having to endure things is ugliness. This is another meaning of the word '*dukkha*.'

The third way of understanding the word '*dukkha*' is that these things that have to be endured and which are ugly for that reason, are completely empty of any real substance that it would be desirable, satisfying. You can't find any such substance. The vacancy of this essence, which would satisfy us is also ugly. So there's this ugly emptiness where in these things we can't find anything, any essence that truly fulfills our desires. If we're going to understand the word "*dukkha*" or suffering, we need to understand all three of these meanings because there's successively more profound. If we understand that all things have these 3 aspects of *dukkha*: that they must be endured, that there is this having to endure them is ugly, and that there are completely empty of anything

that can really satisfy. Understanding all three aspects of *dukkha* is to thoroughly understand what we mean by the quality of suffering.

To translate the word '*dukkha*' as suffering is only one-third correct. It only covers 1/3 of the meaning. As for the other 2/3, we don't know how to translate it. So we're not going to bother. We're just going to use the Pāli word "*dukkha*" which means much more than just suffering. When we don't understand *dukkha*, we don't understand the things that are *dukkha*. Then, we grab onto them. We fall in love with them. When we love *dukkha* like this, then it bites. This *dukkha* bites life – bites the one who grabs onto it. This is what happens when we don't understand this second 'Tā' – *dukkhatā*.

Now we come to the third 'Tā': *anattatā* – not-self. This is something which we must be particularly interested in. Because we can't control impermanence and we can't control the *dukkha* of impermanent things, that means we must endure all that impermanence and all that *dukkha*. There's no self that can control these things, and none of these things are self which can be controlled. The inability to control anything whether our bodies, whether our minds, our thoughts, whatever. Because we can't control any of them and stop them from being impermanent, stop them from being difficult to endure, because we can't control them in any way, there's nothing anywhere that can really be taken to be 'I' or 'mine,' to be self or owned by self. It's neither a self that controls or a self that can be controlled. This is what we call 'not self – *anattatā*.'

Another important meaning of *anattā* that we ought to understand is that because things are not self, because they are impermanent and not self, this means that they can work naturally, automatically. The body, the mind can function naturally, automatically because they're not self. If they were self, of course they need something constantly making it do this, doing that, constantly controlling it. But because our lives, our body and mind are not self, they can function naturally. This is something that we generally don't see, we don't understand. For example, when a child opens the back of a mechanical watch and see things whirling and spinning, the child thinks that it's an *anattā*. He sees there's movement. If there's movement, there must be a self-controlling the movements. This watch must be some kind of a self. This is how we generally understand things. We are deceived by the movement, by the change and we take it to be a self. But in fact, it's not self. Things just happen naturally. If we understand this, then we don't grab on the things. We don't try to be their owners and so nothing bites. But if we misunderstand, then we get bit by everything that we try to possess, try to own. And then these bodies of ours they can do a whole lot more than a watch can. They can walk, they can jump, they can dance, they can sing, they can eat, they can do all kinds of stuff, so we take them to be self. We take the body to be a self. And then the mind. The mind can do a whole lot more even than the body. The abilities and powers of the mind are incredible, and even more so we take all that to be self. We take the mind to be self. But what we don't see is that there is a natural mechanism in things. There is a natural mechanism within the body, within the mind, that allows them to perform their functions. Thing operates, thing works, things do what they do because of this natural functions.

The idea of self is just a concept produced our deluded thinking, produced by our own misunderstanding and stupidity. But the reality is that things just work in their own way by their own natural mechanism. The nervous system can produce emotions all by itself. And then when emotion arises, when the nervous system feels this emotion, then the mind takes it to be 'I.' If there is emotion, there must be the one who has the emotion, so we cling to the 'I' who has the emotion. So first there is a naturally arising thing - the emotion. It happens just through the nervous system. But then the ignorant mind misunderstands and takes us to be a self. So, the emotion comes first,

the activity of the body-mind process comes first, then only there comes deluded idea that there must be a self or an owner, a controller, or an *attā*.

So this is how it always works. Life function naturally by itself but the ignorant mind misunderstands and keeps interpreting everything as being a self – that the body is self, the feelings are self, the perceptions are self, the thoughts are self, the sense consciousness is self – all these things are taken to be self, and we get trapped within this deluded conceptualization, deluded thinking. But it all really just an illusion. The idea of self is just an illusion which is projected upon nature, upon reality. But this delusion has the ability to concoct the mind, to bite the mind. If we understand that it is just the delusion, just an illusion and we don't believe in it, and see just how things happen naturally, we see that there is no need for a self anywhere, that there isn't any self anywhere, this understanding is what we call *anattā*.

If we tell you that the doer is born after the doing, you probably won't believe this. If we tell a child that the doer comes after the doing, they think you are crazy. Our normal way of seeing thing is that we assume that there must be someone to do it. In any action, there must be an actor who does it. But in fact, those are just our deluded assumption about life. In reality, the doer comes from the doing. Because things are *anattā*, because there is not-self, there is just a doing. But then we misunderstand it and project the idea of a doer upon the action, so the doer is just a result of the doing and that the doer is illusion that comes from our misunderstanding of the doing. All these activities of this body and mind happen naturally. There is no need for a doer, for an actor, for an owner. If we can understand this point, then we will understand *anattā*. This may seem illogical to some of us but remember that logic is just a kind of thinking. And if all we do is think about things, then we will never get to the truth. We are not talking about thinking, about it logically. We are talking about observing the reality, dealing with the fact themselves, not just our idea in logic. So there is nothing illogical about what we are saying because it fits the facts that the doer comes after the doing. Understand this and you will understand *anattā*.

When a child carelessly bumps into a chair, a bench, a post or a rock, there is pain because their foot or leg is struck in hard object and there is pain. And then the child gets angry at the bench, the rock or whatever. Because of the pain, the physical activity of the pain, the child projects it as the one who hurts, the one who feels the pain and then take the rock or a bench to be a self also. Because of the ignorance in the child, the pain is taken to be 'I,' and the rock or the bench is taken as self, so the child gets angry at that thing. This is another example of how the idea, the concept of self, get stirred up by the various activities in life. It doesn't exist all the time. It just arises occasionally when certain activities are misunderstood and taken to be self. When there is the inner self, the inner ego, then arises its opposite, the outer ego. So there is an inner ego and it got the outer ego to get angry at or to hate, or to be afraid of, or to worry about or whatever. Because we produce the idea of 'I' who acts, or 'I' who owns this action, then we also stir up the idea of ego - the self, out there.

So in this way we are producing the illusion of self internally and all around us. And then this foolishness can go on so far that we even project this self on inanimate objects – things that don't live or even don't move – such as sometimes you may have taken a glass and thrown it down in anger, breaking it or make it be a plate of some other objects. Taking inanimate things as a self and then getting angry with it and then destroy it – this is how our foolishness can keep growing and get carried away while we project this illusion of self all over. When you kick your car for some reason, that is complete idiocy where you taken the car to be some kind of self. So that's the essence of *anattā*.

We have time to talk about 3 Tās but this is all the time we have for today. So we will stop now and continue again tomorrow morning. Thank you for being patient and enduring listeners. Whether enduring this talk has been *dukkha* for you or not, that's for you to know yourself.

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