

## Life That Doesn't Bite Its Owner, Part 4 of 6

### LIFE THAT IS FREE

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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Today we will continue talking about the 9 'Tās' because we weren't able to finish them yesterday. Yesterday we were able to speak about the first 3 'Tās.' All together, these 3 make up a group which is concerned with the characteristics of natural things – these are the 3 fundamental characteristics of natural things. Next, we have another group of three, which we'll talk about today which are concerned with the normalcy or the naturalness of things.

The next 'Tā' is called 'dhammaṭṭhitatā' which means basically "to be set in normalcy" or "to be established in normalcy" which means that things just happen and go along and proceed according to the normal natural way of things. And that normalcy or the natural way of things, is nothing other than the first 3 Tās: *aniccatā*, *dukkhatā*, and *anattatā*. *Dhammaṭṭhitatā* – 'ṭhita' means "to be set in, established in, or to be standing in," and 'Dhamma' means "that which is normal and natural." The important thing here then is to see that this is completely normal and natural. When we say seeing it, that doesn't mean just studying it, hearing about it or thinking about it, but to truly experience that this is how things normally are, to directly realize and experience that this is the natural way of things. If we speak in general terms, we use the word 'saṅkhāra,' which means compounded things – things which have been put together, formed, and all compounded things exist like that. When we say they exist like that, we mean that's just how they normally are: impermanent, unsatisfying and not-self.

If we look inside at this body and mind, or if we speak in more detail at the five *khandhas*, then we see that all of this just exists normally in this way. This is how things normally are, namely, the three characteristics which we mentioned yesterday. And if we look outside at all our property, wealth, friends, relatives and all the various things that have a place in our lives, all the things that

we call 'mine,' all of these without any exception are just have this normalcy – the normalcy that we are talking about here. So, whether the things inside that we call ourselves or the things around us that we call ours, all of these things, whether me or mine, are standing in this normalcy. Previously, we never saw things in this way. We saw things as being strange or special. And we always wanted them to be better, higher, more beautiful, more wonderful, more delicious, more satisfying. So we had all kinds of desires and cravings towards things. All of this is the product of ignorance: not understanding the normal way of things, the naturalness of things. So that's the fourth Tā, or we prefer actually to call them '*vipassanā*.'

*Vipassanā* means to see clearly or means insight into the true nature of things. So, this insight of normalcy, into the normalcy of things is the fourth one. But for sure we call them Tā. Tā in Pāli means "state of being" as we described yesterday, but in Thai it means "the eye that sees." So, it's a convenient word which is short for insight or *vipassanā*.

The fifth Tā is '*dhammaniyāmatā*.' Here, the word '*niyāma*' means law, so *dhammaniyāmatā* is the law of nature or the law of normalcy that all things are existing under power of the law of nature. No matter how much detail we look into things, breaking up them, analyzing them into tens or hundreds or thousands or millions, we'll see that everything without any exception exists under the law of nature. This means that we see that there is a law of nature which controls every aspect of our lives, which thoroughly permeates and dominates our life. We see this domination of the law of nature to the degree that we realized there's no way that we can go against this law, that is impossible to disobey this law. So one sees this law clearly and is thoroughly ready to live in line with the law of nature. If in Buddhism we would like to have a God or something that we call God, then we can take this fifth Tā – the law of nature as being the Buddhist god. Most Buddhists, however, say that Buddhism has no God, that Buddhism is an atheistic religion. But still, Buddhism has this highest thing which is controlling and running our lives completely. This thing we call the law of nature.

Now we come to the sixth Tā which is this very law itself, which has this specific name '*idappaccayatā*.' If we look at it carefully, we'll see that *idappaccayatā* is the body of the law, or the essence of the law of nature. Its meaning is that because this is the condition, this exists; or because this isn't the condition, this doesn't exist; and it means that all things are the conditions for other things. There is this inter-conditioning between all things. This is essentially what is meant by *idappaccayatā*. The birth of things, the arising of things happens according to the law of *idappaccayatā*, and then the ending, the cessation of things, also proceeds according to the law of *idappaccayatā*. And then between the arising and the ceasing of things, there's constant change and transformation, which also happens according to the law of *idappaccayatā*.

For example, what's going on in ourselves, in our own bodies, there are all these various atoms and each atom exists according to the law of *idappaccayatā*. Then the atoms that gather together in various molecules which form cells, and each cell exists and carries on according to the law of *idappaccayatā*. And in the various cells form groups and the groups come together in and form organs, and every organ also exists under the power of the law of *idappaccayatā*. Then, the whole mess together, all these organs and everything else together that we call the body is completely existing according to the law of *idappaccayatā*. All the living things in this universe have a place in our lives, our friends, our relatives, all the people and animals we know about and care about, all of them proceed according to the law of *idappaccayatā*. Without any exception they all exist

under the law of *idappaccayatā*. And then all the inanimate things in this universe, the rocks, the benches, the sun, the moon, the stars, all of them exist under the law of *idappaccayatā*. Whatever happens to them, happens through the law of *idappaccayatā*. All things that have a place in our lives, all the things in this universe, whether living or nonliving – all of them are under the power of the law of the *idappaccayatā*. To make it most short, we just say every atom exists and happens under the law of *idappaccayatā*.

When we say that we don't have to talk about any of the other things, however, when this law is applied in the life of living things, when we talk about this law in terms of sentient beings that are sensitive, have feelings, then we give it a different name, we call it '*paṭiccasamuppāda*.'

*Paṭiccasamuppāda* can be translated as dependent origination. It explains how human experiences arise dependently on a series of mental processes or physical and mental processes. This *paṭiccasamuppāda* was explained quite thoroughly by the Buddha. In the original teachings of Buddhism, this is a very straightforward, direct, although quite detailed and subtle, explanation of how suffering occurs and how suffering is quenched. And in the Buddhist teaching itself, this is exclusively an explanation that has to do with the present reality of our own lives. And it also exhibits the fact of *anattā*. The way the Buddha taught *paṭiccasamuppāda* or dependent origination helps to show quite clearly that all things, everything in our lives, are not self. But then later this very exquisite teaching was confused, and it was complicated and taught in all kinds of different ways. Some of the people coming after the Buddha tried to explain a lot of other things with it. And so, they started to use this thing about the teaching of dependent origination, they started to use it to talk about past and future lives, which was never the Buddha's intention. And then they got very complicated and very confused. So that now it's very difficult to understand what people are talking about. We often hear about dependent origination, but the explanation doesn't always seem to make a lot of sense and so confused. But what we can do to simplify this matter?

We can notice that there are basically two teachings about dependent origination. There is the original teaching of the Buddha, which very clearly shows the fact of not-self (*anattā*), which is specifically concerned with the reality of this present life. This is *paṭiccasamuppāda* that deals with ultimate truth, with the ultimate reality of things. Then there's the other version – the later version, which deals with selves (with egos) and is basically a more of a teaching of morality – it teaches about selves and egos that are born and reborn and so on. This is to teach morality to people. This second version is the '*paṭiccasamuppāda*' that deals with relative truth. So, to simplify the matter, and to get the most benefit from *paṭiccasamuppāda*, we should see that there are two versions of it: the Buddha's version that deals with ultimate truth and the morality version that deals with relative or conventional truths.

Details on this subject we've talked about in other places. For example, in December we gave a series of talks on this subject and you could get those tapes and listen to them. There's also been some books published. There is one small book which has been translated into English also under the title "*Paṭiccasamuppāda* : Dependent Origination." If you like, you can get this book and read it in order to find out more about this subject.

When we talk about *paṭiccasamuppāda*, we're essentially talking about the law of nature or *dhammaniyāmatā*, but we're speaking in more detail. We're going more directly into the exact workings of the law of *paṭiccasamuppāda* and then we're talking about sentient beings,

*paṭīccasamuppāda* (dependent origination). When we examine dependent origination, we can approach it in various ways. If we take a theoretical approach, we can go on and on forever, going into all these permutations and combinations and proliferations endlessly. Or we can take a philosophical approach, which also is endless, just full of all kinds of ideas and speculations. So, it's best to take a practical approach. The practical approach is just to ask, "How can we regulate, how can we manage the flow of *paṭīccasamuppāda*?" This dependent origination is like a stream which makes up the flow of our lives. And in practical terms, the important question is, "How are we going to manage that?" "How are we going to control it?" And the reply to that is very simple and basic, much simpler than if we got lost in the theory of it. The practical reply is to regulate, to have mindfulness at the moment of contact. To be mindful – to use mindfulness to regulate the moment of contact.

If you practice *ānāpānasati* completely and successfully, then you will have the mindfulness required for controlling the flow of *paṭīccasamuppāda*. When you can do this, then there will not be any contact, any sense experience that will be suffering, that will be misery or *dukkha* for you. So now we've discussed the second group of three things or three Tās. The second group is made up of: *dhammaṭṭhitatā* (the normal natural way of things), *dhammaniyāmatā* (the natural and normal law of everything), and then *idappaccayatā* (that law itself). So, this completes the second group. The first group was about the characteristics of things. This second group is the group of normalcy of naturalness. So that completes our second group.

The seventh Tā – the first of the third group is the fact of *suññatā*. The seventh Tā is called *suññatā* (voidness). This is something that must be seen regarding everything. It is very important to see that everything is void. All things, both phenomena and the noumenon, all things whether conditioned or the unconditioned, are void – are in the state of voidness.

When we talk about *suññatā*, we need to be careful about the meaning here. Often this is translated with different words. The word 'void' or 'voidness' is most correct. Often if we use the word 'emptiness,' this can be misunderstood. When we say voidness, we don't mean nothingness or vacancy or emptiness. Things are but they are void of self. *Suññatā* means merely or simply voidness, being void of 'I' and 'Mine,' of 'self,' of 'soul,' of 'ego.' Things are as they are, but they are void of any essence or substance that could be called an *attā* (a self or soul). An important phrase of the Buddhas which explains what is meant by voidness is void of 'I' or anything associated with 'I,' void of self or anything associated with self. (25.03) **Sunna Attenova Attanenova** (สุญญะ อัตเตโนวา อัตตะเนโนวา. Search in Thai, found "อัตตะเนนะ วา อัตตะนิยเนนะ วา สุญโญ โลโก" - โลกว่างจากตัวตน ว่างจากของตน) means that in whatever it is, there's nothing in there that can be taken as 'I' or as 'mine.' There's nothing related that is a self or anything that has anything to do with self. We've mentioned many times that *attā* – the 'self,' the 'I' – is just a concept arising from ignorance, from misunderstanding. When one sees this fact clearly, then one sees *suññatā* (the reality of voidness). When we see that the concept of 'I,' of 'ego,' of 'self' is just an illusion concocted by the ignorant mind, then one understands *suññatā*.

For example, when we mentioned yesterday that when you kick your car and then you have realized the greatest stupidity about the self that you could ever achieve in your life. And once we have this feeling that there is a self (an *attā*), then there has to be things to associate with the *attā* or *attaniya*. So, once we conjure the 'I,' then we also get all kinds of mind. For example, once we think that we exist, then there must be our life or my body and so on. So because of the illusion of

*attā*, we also create the illusion of *attaniya* (of mine, of things related to and belonging to the self). This body and this nervous system, and the mind based on that body and nervous system, all the natural processes of life can happen without any need for a self, a soul, an 'I,' an ego. Everything in life happens through natural mechanisms. There's no need for some 'I' or soul to be running the show. This is something we've already discussed.

The whole point of *suññatā* is to let us know that life just happens naturally, that there's no self, or soul, or ego in this body, and there isn't any of those things in this mind either. Many people want to have a self or a soul. They give emotional comfort and security. But in the body, in the mind, or associated to the body or mind, we can't find anything that is truly a self, an ego, a soul, an 'I' or whatever word we might want to call it. It's just like with the child that opened the watch, saw all the parts moving and jiggling and thought that the watch must be a life. The child thought this way because it didn't understand correctly according to reality. So, it made the foolish assumption that the watch was alive just because it was moving. Maybe assumption that the watch has a self because it was moving. So, in the same way, because of our lack of understanding, we look at our lives and see the movement of body and mind, and take that to be a self, that there must be a self that behind all that movement. This is an understanding that comes from ignorance, from lacking a clear knowledge about truth. So, we need to examine the matter more clearly and carefully just like the child eventually did. One day the child realized that the watch wasn't alive, that it didn't have a self or a soul. And we can do the same thing with our own lives to see that these lives are free of self, and anything related to self. We need to look carefully like this until we understand correctly.

One has to understand the watch just like a watch repairman. Don't understand the watch like the young child. Otherwise, you will basically be an animist that sees spirits and powers and ghosts in everything, and that kind of understanding leads to superstition. And people in the past or our more primitive ancestors and relatives have seen things in that way. People living in the forests saw spirits and souls in everything – in the rocks and the trees and the rivers, and so they had many superstitious practices and beliefs. Because of this belief that there was *attā* (self) in everything, this is an understanding that we no longer need, this one that we can let go of. We're quite saddened by the fact that many of our Buddhists believe that there are these powers and spirits and selves all over the place. Many of these Buddhists have failed to examine the Buddha's teachings and end up believing in selves and souls and spirits. This is quite unfortunate because the Buddhist teaching was a higher development upon the previous understanding of humanity. Before the Buddha, everything as selves were seen all over the place. Then the Buddha saw more deeply and gave a higher teaching, an understanding that was correct in place of the previously incorrect explanations, that explain how all things are void of self, of ego, of soul. It's a shame that many Buddhists haven't realized this and cling to their superstitious practices.

Don't forget the sentence which we've mentioned many times. The sentence that "we have a self which is not self." We have a self that is not a real self. What this sentence means is that we have this ignorant concept of a self, but that concept, that illusion, isn't really a self. We've created this idea that there is a self, but you can't find any real self in that idea or anywhere connected to that idea. We should know 3 words. There are the words: *attā* (self), the word '*niratta*' which is basically nothing, and then '*anattā*' in the middle. There are *attā*, *niratta*, and *anattā*.

*Attā* is the understanding or belief or whatever that there are selves all over, that there are real existing solid selves and that these are often seen all over. *Niratta* is the belief or understanding that nothing exists. It is basically nihilism. *Anattā* is neither of these misunderstanding. *Anattā* is that there are things and these things that we take to be self, but in fact, they're not real self. Things exist but these things are not self. So, this is neither the one foolishness that things are self – self really existing, permanent lasting substances, or the other misunderstanding that there is nothing or that nothing exists. So, *suññatā* is to help us see this fact. If we understand *suññatā*, we won't have the misunderstanding of *attā*, nor will we go to the other extreme of *niratta* or nihilism. So don't translate the word *suññatā* as nothingness or emptiness that will end up being *niratta*. *Suññatā* is voidness – void of the self or 'I' or 'mine.' That is meant by *anattā*.

There are things and these things that we take to be self, but they're not real self. We can tell children that you are "the you" that isn't really you. I am "an I" that isn't really I. We may say this, but sometimes the children may not understand. They may think we're trying to trick them or lie to them but still we have to keep trying to explain this to even the children. You are "a you" that isn't really you. I am "an I" that isn't really I. While still in the womb or immediately after birth, the child lives without any concept or illusion of 'I,' of *attā*, of self, but then soon after that when the sense organs are working well, then there are various experiences, and then eventually there arises the concept: "I experience." "I feel." "I am." Then this stupid idea happens, and the child gets started off on a life of misery. All of us, without any exception, begin life with the ignorance about the self. We all begin life with this mistaken belief in self. Because of the self, this illusion of self, there develops selfishness. Selfishness is the source of all our problems in this world. There's so much war, strife, crime, abuse and exploitation of each other because of selfishness. The selfishness can only exist because of the mistaken belief in self. There's nothing we can do to help because this is how we all begin our lives with this illusion of self. But if we're going to clear up this mess of suffering, if we're going to be free of *dukkha*, it's necessary to understand this idea about self and see what the actual reality is.

For example, if a knife cuts this finger, the reality is just a sharp metal instrument slicing through skin and flesh and some blood flows. But because of the sense, when this happens though, it has a feeling towards the mind. And because of ignorance, we take it to be the knife cut me. Really, it's just the knife cutting a finger, but we all take it to be the knife cuts me. So, this is an example of how the self is arising regarding our normal experiences. There are just ordinary experiences, but they're misunderstood to be I and mine.

Look into this matter carefully and then understand it well enough so the knife no longer cuts you, it just cuts the finger. One can see quite easily that this self doesn't exist all the time. Self arises intermittently depending on experiences: whenever there is an experience that's misunderstood, then self arises and then it goes away, and then another experience and self arises again. One can thus see that the self doesn't really exist because it doesn't last, and it keeps coming in different ways in different forms. If we see that *attā* is just a product of ignorance when we regard our experiences in a stupid way, then we see that the actual fact is one of *anattā* (not self). So, when the eye sees a form, then it becomes "I see," "ego sees." Or the ear hears the sound, then it becomes "I hear": I hear this pleasant sound or I hear this unpleasant sound. Or when an odor enters the nose, there's not just smelling, but it always ends up "I smell": I smell something nice, or I smell something unpleasant. Or when there is flavor on the tongue, it becomes "I taste something delicious, or I taste something not delicious." Or touches on this skin – not just touches, it always

ends up being “I feel something gentle, or I feel something nice” or “I feel something smooth or coarse.”

Even with the mind, when the mind performs its functions of thinking or recalling or remembering or whatever, it's always “I think”: this is my thought, I think this or I think that, I remember this or I remember that. All of these ordinary processes end up becoming ‘I.’ That just shows what an illusion the *attā* is because there are thousands, millions of selves. Every time it arises, it's in a different shape, a different form. So what kind of a self is that? These thousands or millions of selves that we've got, it's all just an illusion.

It's doubly difficult to understand this matter of *anattā* or *suññatā* because, festival, all of us, as children and then adults, instinctually have a sense of self. There's a basic instinct of self. So we very naturally feel that there is the self and then have our own ideas about the self. But then on top of that there are all the various religions, psychologies and philosophies that teach there is a self. So, on top of this basic instinctual feeling of a self, we add all these ideas and all the teachings of all these religions, that there is a self, that there is a soul, an Atman or something. So, it's doubly difficult to understand the truth of *anattā*.

Before the Buddha's time, there were teaching about *attā* or *atman* in India. So, it's what everybody believed. And of course, we find this same thing happening today. So it was necessary then that the Buddha or what the Buddha did was discovered the fact of *anattā* and then tried to explain this to others. For many people it was very difficult to understand, especially because they had been taught so much that there is a self, there is a soul and so on. So it's very difficult for people to understand *anattā*. And this is still the case for many of us, and it's very difficult to explain, to express and help people to understand the facts of *anattā* and *suññatā*. But there's nothing else to do because if this isn't understood, there's no way that *dukkha* will be quenched. If *anattā* is not understood, then there's no way that suffering can be ended. So, the Brahmanistic, the Vedic and Upanishadic teachings of *attā* and *atman* spread all over the world from India, spread to Sri Lanka, to Burma, even to Thailand. So, people in all these places, we had this belief in *attā*, in self or soul for even before Buddhism appeared. And then after the Buddha appeared and taught *anattā*, it was always an uphill battle, always a struggle to help people let go of the false belief in *attā*.

So even Buddhism spread to other countries, to Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, China and other countries, it always had to struggle against the very firm attachment and belief in *attā*. Nonetheless, we must admit that there is some benefit and value in the belief in *attā*, in self. Because if one believes that one has a self, one is sincere about this, then one wants to have a good self, a better self. So, this has a lot of value in terms of morality that the belief in *attā* can be used for people to have a better life and to be good. But no matter how moral one is or how good one acts, as long as there is *attā* (a self), then it gets heavy. Life becomes a burden, even if it's good. So, in the end, the only way to be completely free of *dukkha* is to understand *anattā*. If we still believe in *attā*, no matter how moral and good we are, we will not quench suffering completely. Only by a thorough understanding of *anattā*, one completely eliminates *dukkha*.

However, we can fit these two viewpoints together. They're not really at odds. The moralistic understanding of *attā* and the ultimate understanding of *anattā* and *suññatā* can complement each other. So, if we want to understand the whole story of human life and human development, we can

start with one abandons evil. One abandons evil and does good. This is still the moral level: stopping all everything that is bad and sinful and becoming good, being good. But there's still *attā* in that being good. And so then one must abandon the *attā* and enter voidness. So, from bad to good, but in being good, there's still suffering – there's still *dukkha*. So, to let go of the good in order to go beyond all bad and good, and then there is voidness which is completely free of 'I' and 'mine.' So, the whole picture of human progress can start with the conventional moralistic level, which is all caught up with ideas about self, about 'I.' What's good for me? But in the end, there must be let go off to an understanding, a realization of *suññatā* (voidness). So from bad to good, and then from good to voidness. Then after this seventh Tā, we come to the eight Tā which is call *tathātā* – thusness or suchness.

This eighth Tā is following from all the others and the realization of this *anattā* (the fact of not self – the fact of voidness) – it's just the way things are, things are just like that. This is the suchness or the thusness of things: *tathātā*, which in short 'the thusness' or just the simple way things are. There are thusness or suchness is that there is *attā* which is not a real *attā*. There is appearance of *attā* which is not really *attā*. This is what we mean by *tathātā* – the thusness of things. For the most complete and thoroughly understanding we have seen all of these from the start to thoroughly penetrate *aniccatā* and *dukkhatā*, *anattatā*, *dharmatthitatā*, *dharmaniyāmatā*, *idappaccayatā*, up through *suññatā*. When all 7 of these have been thoroughly explored and penetrated, then one can see just how it is: the suchness, the thusness of everything. And then one thoroughly understands *tathātā*. So seeing the things are just like that, this is just the way things are, things can't be, otherwise, they are just like this, which influenced all other Tās: *aniccatā* through *suññatā*. Seeing all of that is just being thus, just how things are, we thoroughly understand *tathātā*. When *tathātā* (thusness) is thoroughly penetrated and realized, then there's no way that any feelings of positive or negative can arise.

Before seeing *tathātā*, we have ideas of this is good, this is bad, this is satisfying, this is dissatisfying, this is exciting, this is boring. When *tathātā* is penetrated and realized, then none of those kinds of feelings arise again. Things are just thus, there is this thusness and there's none of the confusion and delusion of excitement and boredom, positive and negative.

In seeing *tathātā*, one transcends, one goes beyond the limitations of all dualities. The mind is no longer trapped in dualistic thinking, dualistic labeling. So, then all the pairs of opposites, such as positive and negative, good and bad, winning and losing, hot and cold, male and female, all of these dualities are let go of. The mind is above all these pairs of opposites, winning and losing, excitement and boredom, laughing and crying, sadness and gladness are all transcended by understanding thusness (*tathātā*). Seeing *tathātā* (thusness), none of these things have any meaning and power over the mind – all these positive and negative, good and bad, happy and sad don't have any power over the minds. That means that none of these things can bite the mind. There's nothing that bites the mind that sees *tathātā*. So, life no longer bites itself. Life doesn't bite itself and nothing bites life when *tathātā* is realized. Then we can see easily how the eight Tā leads into the ninth Tā which is *atammayatā*.

When the mind sees thusness so that it's beyond all pairs of opposites, it's no longer under the power of dualism, of duality. Then that mind is beyond the ability of anything to concoct it. Nothing can hook up or stir up that mind. So the eight Tā leads to *atammayatā* - to unconcoctability. There's nothing that can stir up the mind at all in the least way. The mind with *atammayatā* or the

state of *atammayatā* can be described as completely still. The mind is completely still because nothing can come and shake it or stir it up. It's a mind that can endure anything. Or we could say it's the mind that is invulnerable. The mind that has the highest immunity to the degree that is completely invulnerable. The mind with *atammayatā* isn't invulnerable to anything. There's nothing that has any power over it, that can concoct it in anyway. This is what the condition or state of *atammayatā* is like – one of total invulnerability. We can think back to the phrase we mentioned yesterday. Any woman who has *atammayatā* will be completely safe from the games and tricks of any man. So one won't be able to laugh, won't be able to cry, there won't be any sadness or any gladness because the mind is completely stable and still. Although it experiences all the different things, although the flow of experience continues, none of it can shake or rattle the mind. The mind is completely still and invulnerable because of *atammayatā*.

And the most important meaning of *atammayatā* is that the mind is above all meanings of positive and negative within this universe. It's a mind which has been saved – the mind that is liberated from the power of things to concoct it. It's the mind that's been totally liberated from everything. So, this is why we say that the mind that has *atammayatā* is as hard and strong as a diamond. And if one has a mind like a diamond, then one's life is like a diamond also. This means that it's a life that's so strong that nothing can cut it. A life like a diamond can't be cut by anything, but it can do all kinds of things. Nothing can be done to this life, but this life can do all kinds of things just in the way that while nothing can cut a diamond, a diamond can cut everything else. This is what it's like to have a mind and a life like a diamond.

The third group is the group of *suññatā*, *tathātā* and *atammayatā*. We call this group “the group of liberation.” With the first group of insights or Tās, we see the characteristics of all things. Then with the second group of Tās, we see the normalcy, the naturalness of all things. And then in the third group of Tās, one realizes that the mind's liberation from all things. Being liberated from all concepts of *attā*, this is the highest, the supreme liberation. We'd also like to tell you now, so the things are clear that these 9 Tās are organized in these 3 groups: we've arranged things in this way with the intention to make it as easy for you as possible to study the essence of Buddhism by using these 9 Tās arranged in these 3 groups. We feel this is the best way to understand what Buddhism is really teaching. This is our own arrangement. In the Buddhist original scripture, all nine of these Tās appear quite frequently, but they appear in different ways, often separately arranged in different places in different styles. What we have done is gathered them together and arranged them in this way to make it as easy and simple and direct as possible to understand the heart of the Buddhist teachings. In the scriptures there are 84,000 Dhamma topics to learn about, and to save you the trouble of learning all 84,000 we've distilled out these 9 Tās in these three groups. If you can understand these 9 Tās, then you will understand all of the 84,000 dhamma topics. So, focus your attention on these 9 states of being - these 9 Tās and you will understand everything there is to know in Buddhism.

If one penetrates all nine of these Tās, if they're all understood, then all problems and difficulties in life disappear. All *dukkha* will be abandoned and destroyed. Then life is totally free and cool. You'll notice that we've emphasized and focused upon just these 9 Tās. This is in order to save you time and energy in your study and practice of Dhamma. Some of you may have noticed that we haven't spent time talking about moral teachings like *mettā* (friendliness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā*, *upekkhā*. We haven't talked about these moral teachings because if one has these 9 Tās, if one realizes *suññatā*, *tathātā*, and *atammayatā*, then one doesn't just have a moralistic level of

love and friendliness and compassion – *mettā, karuṇā, muditā, upekkhā*. But there is the highest, the most perfect *mettā, karuṇā, muditā, and upekkhā*. There is perfect friendliness, perfect compassion, perfect sympathetic joy and perfect equanimity because there's no self. If there's still a self, these are all just ways to control the self with morality. But if there's no self, then there's no selfishness and perfect selflessness. Perfect unselfishness is the real meaning of *mettā, karuṇā* and so on. So, we haven't wasted time and energy on dealing with these morality things, and we haven't talked about abandoning sex or abandoning sexuality and sexual pleasures. We've just focused on these 9 Tās because if one thoroughly penetrates *suññatā*, if we realize *atammayatā*, then sexual feelings, indulgence in sexual pleasures can't happen in the least. So to save time and energy, we've focused on the essence of Buddhism – these 9 Tās.

If you have any problems with one defilement or another, for example, *rāga* (sexual lust), the best way to deal with this problem is with the understanding of *suññatā, atammayatā*. If one doesn't use these methods and uses some of the things like contemplating corpses or contemplating the foulness of the body, these may not work so well because if one still has some feelings of self, if one is still clinging to self, then this lust may take another form, and one may do some perverted sexual things with the corpse. So the best way, the most efficient, the quickest way to deal with these things is directly with *suññatā, tathātā, atammayatā*. So now with this understanding of *atammayatā*, the mind is able to withstand, has immunity against all problems. The mind can solve all problems and the mind can prevent all problems. This means the mind is like a diamond. There's no problem, there's no difficulty anywhere that can happen to the mind that understands *atammayatā*.

Let us stress once again the value and benefits of *atammayatā*. With *atammayatā*, the mind that sees, realizes *atammayatā* becomes liberated from everything. It becomes the mind that we say is the noble one – the *ariya* mind that has raised itself above the world, above all worldly conditions, all the positives and negatives of this chaos and turmoil. The mind raises itself above that, and it's the *lokuttara* mind. '*Lokuttara*' means above the world, beyond the world, liberated, freed from the world. *Atammayatā* has the benefit of liberating the mind from the world, so then the mind is above the world. The mind that is above the world can't be touched, can't be harmed, can't be tormented by any of these worldly conditions like positive and negative, winning and losing, getting and destroying, happy and sadness, and on and on and on and on. Let us stress this highest benefit of *atammayatā*. It frees the mind from all worldly conditions so that the mind can't be concocted by anything. There's no problem that can touch that mind. So, study these Tas continually, keep studying them until we have little *atammayatā*, until there's more and more *atammayatā*, until *atammayatā* is complete, and that means being an Arahant (a perfect human being).

We can take the diamond as being the thing with the highest value. And so, these 9 Tas, we can compare them to being 9 diamonds. These 9 insights have the value or have the strength and hardness of diamonds. And so, we call them '*vajira-dhamma*,' meaning dhammas or things that are like diamonds or have the value of diamonds. And when the mind has these 9 '*vajira-dhamma*,' it becomes '*vajira-citta*' – a diamond mind. And when there's this diamond mind, then life becomes a '*vajira-jīvi*' or a diamond life. This is the highest life possible – the diamond life that of the diamond mind. This mode of living we can call '*vajira-jīvi*' – life that is like a diamond (the diamond life). The diamond-like life – life that has the value and strength of a diamond. And henceforth, this life won't bite itself. This life doesn't bite its owner. It doesn't bite itself. There's

nothing can bite it. This life is beyond, is free from all biting, and all *dukkha*. This is the diamond life that doesn't bite its owner. And so the life that doesn't bite its owner – the life that doesn't bite itself is as we have been describing the last couple days. And so now we've finished our discussion of life that doesn't fight its owner, and we've also used up all the time we have for today. So this ends today's lecture. So thanks for being very patient listeners. If you've got the strength and endurance to listen to another talk, come back again tomorrow morning. That's all for today.

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