

NATURAL TRUTH

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

A Dhamma lecture given at Suan Mokkh on 10 June 1990

In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhadāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. All Ajahn's teachings are now available on:

www.suanmokkh.org,

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

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

The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the volunteer and the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok

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Be trained, friend, in birth, decay, disease, and death. All of you are interested in the Dhamma. I asked for a chance of saying words of greetings to you all. Greeting to one who being a departer, not a newcomer.

I will say for the Dhamma a few words. Dhamma now means 'truth.' It was a teaching by the Buddha. It is a natural truth, not as of Buddhist, Christian, Mohammedan, something like that. The Dhamma now is natural truth that can be studied and practiced by anyone, like a nourishment of natural food. It can be eaten by everyone. No need to think as being a Christian or Islam or any creed. The food, natural food, can be used by everyone. The Dhamma is like that, can be studied and practiced by anyone.

Now you know the Dhamma in this way. No problem to think as we are Christian, we are Mohammedan, we are Hindu or Sikh or anything else. You have to find out the life, the special life which doesn't bite the owner, the life which did not bite the owner or anyone else and cannot be bitten by another. No one can kill, can wound one who has the Dhamma, the *sacca* (true) Dhamma.

It is the life which comes to develop it to the final goal, salvation – called in Buddhism 'nirvana' or called 'union with God' by another creed – the life which is free from influence of time: past, present, and future. The time cannot influence us because we have such a life of a special life. Now, you will know the life itself.

In Buddhist way of speaking we have a term '*khandha*,' or 'aggregate'; five *khandha* or five aggregates. But in English, they use the Sanskrit form as '*skandha*'; five *skandha* in Sanskrit form a word. In Pāli, '*khandha*.' In Thai *khan*, *khan*, *khan*, five *khandhas*, five aggregates. You have to know the life comprised of five *khandha*, aggregate or group division as a five group. Special life here means the life which is not self, life which has not self. It's not self,

have not self. The self, or *attā* in Pāli, *attā*, self, having special meaning. Now we mean the five *khandha*, five *khandha*, five aggregates. Remember the term and come to know it minutely in detail. You have to know it well. Now we did not get to know it good. Five aggregates means the group of corporality material: the body and then the group of feeling, the group of perception, the group of conception, and consciousness. Mentally we have four: feeling, perception, conception, and consciousness. Then we have five as a whole. The body (corporality) not self. *Vedanā* (the feeling), not self. *Saññā* (perception) not self. *Sankhan* in Thai, *saṅkhāra* (conception) not self. And finally consciousness not self. In another religion, another creed, like a Hindu, they have self in the five aggregates. Five aggregates have been known to them before Buddhist time, before Buddha time, but they know them as having self or is self. Now we Buddhists know them as not self, no self. It is an important truth to be known. Self is not a real thing. Now we have it as a real thing, a real thing, more than a real thing, attached to them.

Not every conception is not a real thing, only a conception illusive, illusive conception. If you understand the sentence that “The doer coming after the doing.” “The doer coming after the doing.” The boy will be, “Oh not logical, illogically, illogically.” He cannot understand how the doer comes after the doing. The doing has to come first, then the doer comes, because the doer is only a conception, an illusive conception, illusive conception, not the real thing. Then it can occur after the doing.

We will try to understand this. When the finger has been cut by a knife, then we feel pain. After the feeling of pain, then comes the concept of ‘I pain,’ ‘I in pain.’ After eating something delicious, delicious, then comes the concept of ‘I.’ ‘I eat,’ ‘I eat,’ ‘eaten it.’ The doer comes after or from the doing. Why? Because the doer is not the real thing, only a conception, delusive conception. Then it can come after the doing.

We can say, in a summarizing way, as the concept of self can come after an emotion, the feeling that gives us the emotion. After seeing, then we feel ‘I see it.’ ‘I have seen it.’ After listening, then comes the concept ‘I listen to it.’ After smelling, then comes the concept of ‘I,’ ‘I,’ ‘I smell.’ After tasting it, then ‘I,’ ‘I,’ ‘I taste it.’ After touching, bodily touching, then comes the concept of ‘I,’ ‘I,’ ‘I have the touching.’ After thinking then comes the concept of ‘I think it.’ Then the self is the delusive thing, delusive concept. This is the heart of the doctrine of Buddhism, which reminds us all things, phenomena, are not *attā*, not self, not being self, only the conception and more than that, delusive concept. The heart of Buddhism is this. All things are not self.

We have to say ‘not self.’ We will not say ‘no self.’ If we have to, if we like to say ‘no self,’ we have to say that ‘no self of real self.’ We’ll say ‘not self,’ ‘not self.’ You have to understand this about self. It can be divided into three groups, three groups. At extreme left: self, self, *attā*, *attā*, self, self; all things are self, all things. At extreme right: nothing, nothing, nothing anything; in Pāli we call it ‘*niratta*,’ ‘*niratta*.’ Here *attā*, here *niratta* without *attā*, without self. But Buddhism is in the middle here, in the middle: *anatta*, not self. How can we say ‘the self which is not the real self?’ Then we say ‘not self.’ Here self, here without self, but now not self, not we call ‘self.’ It is the essence of doctrine of Buddhism to tell, to teach not self, not regard anything as self.

Then we have self which is not self. We have a concept of self from instinct, instinct from childhood. When it comes out of mother’s womb, the infant can use eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body to touch with the outside environment, and then the concept of self comes. When the

infant eats something delicious, the concept ‘oh, oh, delicious. I have it. I take it.’ The ‘I’ delusive ‘I come,’ is not the real thing. In the part of ear, of nose, of tongue, of the body, the same way the concept of ‘I’ grows more and more, until the habitual of life.

The little boy can kick the chair. He’s thinking that is another self that hurt me, then I kick it. Such a self is very delusive, very illusive, you know yourself. This self comes from instinct in the mind in the life of everyone. Everyone has self in such a way, not the real self, only delusive self. It grows and grows, grows and grows, having self all the time, all the place. We have self, this self which is not the real self. Then we can say ‘no self,’ not a no self that we can call the ‘real self,’ the self we have, not the real self, not self. If you understand this, you understand the heart of Buddhism teaching the doctrine of not self or *anatta*.

Now you have come here to study the heart of Buddhism in the name of *paticca-samuppada*, the doctrine of *paticca-samuppada* – dependent origination – dependent on some conditions and arising a new one. Dependent origination, dependent origination. The life itself is the stream of dependent origination, is the life. The life is only the stream of dependent origination. If you understand this, you understand the heart of Buddhism.

Now I will tell you about the five aggregates, which is the same thing with dependent origination. We have to begin with the sense organs, sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. Six sense organs we have. And then six sense objects: outside sense objects, inside sense organs. Then we can have the sight, the sound and the odor, the taste, the touch, and the thought. Six sense organs inside, six sense objects outer.

When the sense organs contact or touch with sense objects, then arises the consciousness. You know the consciousness comes now, not being all the time. Sense organs depend on the sense object to give rise to consciousness, such as the eye seeing the sight gives rise to eye consciousness. Eye consciousness is just a newcomer, not a perpetual thing. The ear and nose and tongue are just the same. The ear depends on the sound, gives rise to ear-consciousness. The nose depends on the sense comes from nose-consciousness. And we have the three things in the sense object, in sense organs, outer sense objects, and consciousness. The three things coming together in function we call it ‘*phassa*,’ ‘*phassa*,’ or ‘contact.’ In Pāli we call it ‘*phassa*,’ ‘*phassa*,’ the ‘contact,’ the contact between the three things, and the contact arises. The contact gives birth to feeling, feeling, present feeling and present feeling, feeling the feeling. We call in Pāli as ‘*vedanā*,’ ‘*vedanā*.’ *Vedanā* the feeling gives birth to *taṇhā*, the want, the want, ignorant want or wise want as the case may be. The want or *taṇhā* gives rise to attachment, attach the thing as ‘I’ or as ‘my.’

This is the beginning of the concept of the self, of the self, self. The self comes from attachment to the thing coming into contact with the mind. Attachment gives birth to *bhava*, *bhava*, existence, the beginning of the existence of the full scale of self. Existence gives birth to *jāti*, birth, birth, bloom of the concept of self. Then we have full scale of self, the concept of self we say ‘self,’ ‘myself,’ as ‘I’ or ‘you’ or ‘me.’ And the birth of self gives birth to all, all suffering, all suffering, all dissatisfactoriness of any kind, of any kind you can call ‘all,’ ‘all,’ ‘all.’ You can see that this is the stream, the stream of dependent origination.

To clarify it as this as that as *sañña*, *sañña*, a perception object. And then comes conception upon the perception as thought, as thinking in the full scale of five aggregates, the conception of ‘I,’ conception of ‘my,’ of ‘his,’ of ‘her,’ any, any attachment can come, can come.

When we look at it as the five khandha, we have five: body, feeling, perception, conception, and consciousness. For in detail we can look at it as the dependent origination about twelve objects to study. And the six of inner sense organs, outer sense objects. And then contact and then feeling, and then *vedanā*, and then *vedanā* (feeling), and then *taṇhā*, the want, and then attachment to the thing we want, and then existence, the beginning of existence and then birth, the birth. Now the birth, we mean the birth of illusive self, illusive self. We come out of the mother's womb cannot be called the full scale of birth

We can look at it as the five aggregates or the twelve dependent originations. If you understand it, you can see clearly, clearly 'oh no self,' 'there's no real self,' 'it is not self,' not attaching to anything as being self. Whenever we attach to this thing or each of these things as self, then comes the suffering. The life will bite itself when we have attachment of anything as self at the time. The life will bite itself, the owner.

Now you know the heart of Buddhism that there is nothing that can be called 'real self.' You know this but you cannot govern it. You cannot command it. Then you have to practice your mind in the way of mindfulness development, *ānāpānasati bhāvanā* (meditation) that you have been taught, have been training in the center.

Summarizing, you can say at the center we learned in the theoretical way about dependent origination. Then we practice in a practical way the *ānāpānasati*, development of mindfulness by breathing. Two things only – the knowledge and the practice – the knowledge to know what it is, what is that, what is what, and then practice it as you have studied it, as you have trained it. But in the interval of 10 days we cannot practice the whole set of the Dhamma. What we can know is to practice it by ourself now and then, now and then, on and on, on and on until we know it well and we can command it well to know the truth, to practice the truth. Only to learn to learn in the 10 days you can continue it on and on, on and on.

If you succeed in knowing it and commanding it, you have a new life. The life will not bite the owner, not bite anyone, and not be bitten by anything. A special life, the life is blissful, blissful, blissful. More than that it is useful, useful to everyone in the world. Remember the two terms: blissful and useful. Now we have life which is blissful and useful. Adequate this sound of benefit.

Now I feel glad you're coming here to study this, to practice this. Wishing all of you to be able to continue the study and the practice on and on, on and on. I feel happy seeing you come here in this manner to seek knowledge of Dhamma, the Buddhist way, that can be used by everyone of any religion, of any creed. I said this such as the food having nourishment to solve the problem of anyone of any religion, of any creed. You have this. I am glad, I am glad, very glad to see you to come here, to come to Thailand as a tourist, and you will go back as a pilgrim. You come as tourist. You go back as pilgrim carrying full knowledge to solve all the problems of the life. I'm grateful to you.

My English knowledge is little, knowledge self-taught and self-learned. It's make can't see as a Chinese-speaking kind. You have to estimate what I meant to say in reality, then you remember then it more and more.

Here is my greeting word to you all. Very glad in seeing you to come here, to collect the knowledge, to solve all the problems of life until you have life which is blissful and useful –

two terms only – blissful and useful. You come here as tourist, you go back as a pilgrim. This is my greeting word wishing you will succeed on your wish, on and on. If not have full knowledge now, I ask you to continue to study further, practice further, train further, on and on. It will be one day you can have a new life, a free life, a free life, free from all problems. The life, the supreme life, we can say we can call it ‘supreme life,’ life beyond all problems, beyond all the problems of the world.

Now we are under the problem of positiveness and negativeness. Positiveness makes us delight. Negativeness makes us sad. Beyond delight, beyond sad, beyond delight – fullness and beyond sadness. Beyond, beyond, above, not between, not between, not balance between the positiveness and negativeness but beyond and above. In front of positiveness and negativeness there is a free life, emancipated life anyone can have. Anyone in any creed, any religion, can practice this, can have the same result, and then we cannot regard us as Buddhist or Christian or Mohammedan, and now we are the free man, the free man, free of all the problems of the world, mundane problems in the world. No, have been solved. Now we are ultramundane, ultramundane, beyond the world, beyond the problems in the world. Here adequate, adequate to have such a life. I’m greeting you to come here in the purpose of this.

And I have to end my greeting. Wish you all the time will be successful on your wish to be beyond the problems, beyond the influence of positiveness and negativeness in the world. Now the world attaches too much to the positiveness – say positive, say positive all the time – enslaved by the positiveness, not free. Now we are free from positiveness and negativeness in the world. Utmost benefit you can have from the Dhamma, the Dhamma. Thank you to be a good listener, endure to hear my clumsy English about the Dhamma. Thank you. Thank you. I end my greeting now. Thank you, thank you, the good listener.

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

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