

Puget Sound University Talks series II, Part 1 of 2

BUDDHISM & DHAMMIC IDEALISM

[พุทธศาสนากับอุดมคติที่ประกอบด้วยธรรมะ]

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

A Dhamma lecture given at Suan Mokkh on 17 January 1991

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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First of all, I'd like to express my delight and appreciation that all of you have come here in this way, namely in order to search for Dhamma so that one can have Dhamma in living out one's life. Or another way of looking at it is that we are helping each other to learn for the sake of world peace, which is something of widespread benefit in which we can see no limits. Now the Dhamma we're speaking of is that which quenches dukkha. Or if we put it in better terms, we can say the Dhamma is what solves all problems in all their aspects on all levels. On the individual level, Dhamma is like a medicine which has the characteristic or virtue of gently healing us bit by bit, little by little. On the social level, Dhamma will allow everyone – the entire world – to live together without any disputes and arguments.

Further – special matter – as that we are trying to use the world of 5 AM for study and learning, it's a special time which we can call the 'time of blossoming.' Most of the flowers in the forest blossom roughly at this time, and it's the same for the hearts of human beings. They're most ripe for opening – for blossoming – at this time before dawn, which we are calling 'the world of 5 AM.' This was the time that the Buddha awakened, not very long before dawn, and so here we try to make the most of this special time of day. This is a fitting time – the mind is fresh and alive because it has had the night's rest to rejuvenate itself. So this is a time very fitting for study, for discovering something new about life, as well as to do any duty or responsibility that we may have. This is the time when the mind is pure, when the mind is void of any contaminating substances, and so it's an excellent time, a very fitting time, for our study to add something new to life. After dawn, the mind

starts to think about all the things it has to do and so that voidness is filled up with all kinds of busyness and confusion, and that mind is no longer fit or proper for studying Dhamma. The metaphor we'd like to use for this is that the teacups aren't yet overflowing – our teacups haven't been filled to the brim – and so there's still room to put in something new and fresh at this time of day. Our teacups aren't yet filled to the brim, they're not yet overflowing. Most people use the world of 5 AM for trying to get some pleasure out of sleep, and most of them are not willing to sacrifice the pleasure of sleep for the sake of study. And so they have more difficulties as they sleep in, they sleep late – maybe many hours more – and lose some opportunities for understanding Dhamma. But if we wish to study and investigate the subtle and profound Dhamma, then one would do well to make use of the world of 5 AM. If one does so, it will be easier to meet with success in one's endeavor. Compare these a bit: One segment of humanity is using the world of 5 AM to find some pleasure from sleeping and another segment of humanity is using the world of 5 AM to study the Dhamma. The results which come from these two approaches are totally different, and are worth your consideration. It's an ancient custom among Buddhists to arise before 5 AM in order to make use of the world of 5 AM whether doing some kind of study or chanting or whatever kind of Dhamma practice. They use the world of 5 AM in order to be a little more successful. This is an ancient custom among Buddhists, whether the monks and nuns or the laypeople at home.

Now we come to the topic of today's talk. Today's topic is "The Buddhist Way of Life and Dhammic Socialism." First we'll speak of socialism. The socialism of Karl Marx is primarily the frustration, anger, and reaction of the laborers. They're upset with their lot, with their situation, and they are reacting with anger against it. This is one kind of socialism. The socialism in the Buddhist way is different. In this kind of socialism, there must be Dhamma, and so we call it 'Dhammic' or 'Dharmic Socialism.' It means that socialism must have Dhamma. It must be correct, it must be fitting, which means that this socialism is carried out without anger, without frustration, without that kind of reaction and revolt. This word 'Dhammic' or 'Dhammika' means composed with Dhamma, having Dhamma, going along with Dhamma, following Dhamma. Regarding the word 'socialism' (in Thai *sangkomniyom*), this follows the natural principle that in nature, creatures exist or live in groups, in communities. Plants and trees have their communities, animals live together in groups, and human beings naturally gather in groups and communities. So there's this natural principle of living together in communities or sanghas. And then how to do so in the most harmonious and beneficial way, to put it briefly, to live for the benefit of society rather than living for the benefit of each individual – this is the essence of socialism. And then all members of a community must live and work in struggle against dukkha for the sake of survival. And here it's for the survival of the community of the society rather than the survival of the individual. In socialism, everyone works for the survival of the community. The plants and grasses seek survival, the trees need to survive, all animals struggle for survival, and even human beings need to survive. But here, this survival means the survival of the community rather than the survival of the individual. Let us stress that we're speaking about survival of the community or society, and therefore there must be the Dhamma which is appropriate for that survival. For its survival, society requires Dhamma, and the Dhamma that brings about the survival of this society is called 'Dhammic Socialism' or 'Dharmic Socialism.' And Dharmic Socialism can be expressed very briefly in the word 'unselfishness' (non-selfishness). You can see for yourselves that if the members of society are selfish, then they don't really care about society, they don't care about correctness, about justice. But when the members of society are unselfish, they care about what is correct, what is right, what is just. They care about society. Their emphasis is on society rather

than the individual. If one asks where does this unselfishness come from, the reply is that it comes from the custom and tradition, the culture, the morality, and the religion of each society on successively higher levels to the level where one is unselfish because that's what God wants. God wants us all to love each other, and so there is unselfishness on that level. For Buddhists, there is the understanding that there is nothing which can be taken as a 'self.' There is no ego or eternal soul or persisting self. There's no real 'me' anywhere. And when there's no 'self,' then how could selfishness arise? And so in this way Buddhists deal with the problem of selfishness. And then when there's no more selfishness, there is survival, there is salvation. When there is 'self,' – when this egoistic feeling and conception arises – it's the basis for all selfishness. All selfishness develops out of the belief, the attachment, to 'self.' But when there's none of this 'self,' none of this 'me' and 'mine,' then there's no basis, no foundation for selfishness, and so selfishness doesn't happen. This point is very important, needs to be understood before going further. When there is no more selfishness, then one automatically cares about others. When we stop caring solely for ourself, then we naturally care about others. And so there's no problem with the four *brahmavihāras* – the dwellings of the gods, the divine abodes – these arise naturally when there is no more selfishness.

Let us stress the essence of the *brahmavihāras*. *Vihāra* is a place where one dwells or lives and *brahma* is the most excellent, the supreme thing. So these are the highest, most excellent dwellings, the most excellent ways of living. This is the essential meaning of the term '*brahmavihāra*.' The first of these excellent ways of living is '*mettā*.' *Mettā* comes from the word *mitra*, which means 'friend.' *Mettā* is true friendliness – true, genuine, and pure friendliness. And where there is friendliness and kindness without seeking any material benefits, where's this friendliness without seeking any kind of sexual advantages, we can call it a kind of pure love. The form of love that we call *mettā* is pure, it's not seeking any material or sexual benefits. When one no longer has a self to love – when there's no more self-love – then automatically one loves others in this pure untainted way, which is called '*mettā*.'

The second is '*karuṇā*.' *Karuṇā* is the impulse to help, the kind of mind that seeks only to help. This is a pure kind of helping, which is free of any desire for reward, helping merely for the benefit of the one helped, not in order to benefit oneself or the helper. It seeks not even praise or a thank you, but purely to do what can genuinely help someone else. There is true *karuṇā* only when there is unselfishness. When one is freed of self, only then can one help others purely and totally. So *karuṇā* is only pure to the degree that there is no 'self.' This kind of helping is not for the sake of fame, for the sake of a good reputation, or for any kind of reward or acknowledgement.

The third is '*muditā*,' which is a joy and delight when things go well for others, when others experience success or happiness. There is delight and joy in their success and happiness. Ordinarily, human beings envy each other. People envy the success, the beauty, the wealth, the whatever, the advantages of others. People envy the joy and happiness of others, but this envy depends solely on self – on ego. When there's no 'self,' then there is none of this envy, and one naturally, automatically, is joyful at the accomplishments, the successes, the joy, and happiness, of others. So by eliminating selfishness, *muditā* is natural.

The fourth is '*upekkhā*,' which is generally translated incorrectly. Often, it comes off as something like indifference or not caring, which is totally wrong and of no benefit. If that's our understanding

of *upekkhā*, it's worthless, it just means one stops, doesn't do anything. Properly, the Pali word *upekkhā* is kind of to focus and watch – to focus upon and watch, to watch over until there's an opportunity to help. The meaning of *upekkhā* is that one watches what's going on until there is an opportunity to help. The selfish person doesn't bother to pay attention, to watch what's happening for others. The selfish person will just go rest, go to sleep, or do some other self-indulgent thing. But the person who is unselfish has the patience and the willingness to watch what's happening with others. And then, when there's an opportunity to help, one naturally helps. This is how we should understand *upekkhā*. In this context, it's not right to translate it as equanimity. One should understand it as this watching, silent watching, or concerned watching until there is an opportunity to help. We can illustrate *upekkhā* with the example of a car, an automobile. When there's a good road – smooth, no bumps or potholes – and all the systems of the car (the drive system, the cooling system, the electrical system, transmission, and all that) are functioning correctly, all the driver has to do is hold the wheel. And within that holding the wheel, the correctness of all these different sub-systems are gathered together. All the driver has to do is hold the wheel and watch over things and allow them to function properly, and this will take one to one's goal. This is an illustration of *upekkhā* – all one has to do is watch over, let things unfold naturally. And as long as they're unfolding and happening naturally in a peaceful way, there's nothing to be done except to observe, to watch carefully, but one is always ready to help should the need arise. Just as when driving a car – one's always ready to make the necessary adjustments.

All of this discussion has been to show that it's impossible for there to be real *mettā* when there is selfishness. With selfishness, one is unable to have *karuṇā*, one is unable to have *muditā*, and there can't be any *upekkhā* when there is selfishness. But when there's no selfishness, then these occur naturally, spontaneously. But to the degree that there is selfishness, these will be incorrect and impure. So, the thing now to consider is how to be free of selfishness so that *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* will arise spontaneously in a pure natural way.

Now we'll speak about unselfishness. Please listen carefully. Generally, religions, religious sects, and schools speak of a 'self.' They teach some kind of 'self,' and that the person is supposed to cherish this 'self,' to train it, to develop it, and to control it so that it is unselfish. In all religions there are a great multitude of practices to lessen and control the selfishness of the 'self' or the 'soul' or whatever one calls it. In Buddhism, however, there's no 'self.' Buddhism recognizes that all things in nature are void of 'self.' And when there's no more belief in this 'self,' then selfishness disappears automatically. So the Buddhist approach is to study until seeing that there is no real 'self.' Now when we say 'study,' we don't just mean reading books, but it involves some intellectual study, some thinking, but mostly a deep and thorough experiential investigation of life – it involves a kind of training and inner development. Buddhists use this kind of study until they see that all of nature is free of 'self,' that nothing in nature can be rightly taken to be 'self.' This is their way of getting free of selfishness.

In Buddhism, there are two levels of unselfishness. The first ordinary level is non-selfishness. The second level is that of selflessness, which is the level of the arahant, the highest individual, the perfected human being in Buddhism. Ordinarily, we are trying to be on the level of non-selfishness, where one tries to keep selfishness under control in a variety of ways. But in this non-selfishness there is still the feeling that there's a 'self,' and this self feeling is controlled so that it does not become selfishness. But through further and higher study and training, one comes to the realization

that that 'self' was just an illusion, was just a hallucination of ignorance. And then there is selflessness because there's no more 'self' left in the subconscious or any other level or aspect of mind – it's totally eliminated. And with that then, non-selfishness – unselfishness – is totally automatic. This thing called 'self' doesn't really exist – it's an illusion or a misconception. Because of wrong thinking, the concept of 'self' is created, but this is just the product, the result of wrong thinking. The 'self' is merely a misconception. One can't find anything anywhere that actually is a self. It's just that we've come up with this idea due to our misconceptions, so we should be very careful about this misconception of 'self.'

In the Buddhist understanding, life is made up of just two things – there is the body and there is the mind. And naturally, really, that's all there is. But ordinarily, we think that there's a third thing, some 'self.' Because of our ignorance, we conjure up this illusion of the 'self' in addition to the body and mind. One should be very careful about this illusion – not take it seriously – investigate it carefully until we're no longer under this illusion of some third thing, some 'me,' some 'self.' And then there remains just the body and mind functioning naturally in life, no longer burdened with the illusion of 'self.'

So this life is naturally made up of two things – body and mind. This body includes the nervous system. In Buddhism, the nervous system is considered to be part of the body. The nervous system is not the mind. The nervous system has five physical aspects: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and then the other part of the nervous system that functions with those five organs. And then there's also the mental sense which isn't strictly the nervous system. Whenever the nervous system is stimulated by some object, then the sense experience is conveyed through the mind. What is actually happening naturally is just that the nervous system is stimulated – it's seeing, it's hearing, and so on. But when a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, or a touch, is conveyed to the mind, because of the mind's stupidity, it takes it to be 'me' or 'mine.' The mind doesn't recognize that this is just the natural activity of the nervous system. Instead, it goes and takes the whole thing to be 'mine.' An easy-to-understand example is that when we eat some delicious food, the food is experienced by the tongue – that's all that's happening – the tongue is feeling delicious. But because of ignorance, the mind takes it, "I feel delicious, I'm feeling the deliciousness." It's actually just the tongue feeling the deliciousness, but the ignorant mind takes it to be 'me,' "I'm feeling delicious." The same kind of thing happens with all the other senses. Because of ignorance, this illusion, this hallucination, this ghost of 'self,' arises on top of the natural sense activity, becomes "I'm this, I'm that." If the tongue, the nervous system, doesn't feel delicious, there are no nasty or painful consequences. But compare what happens when 'I' don't feel delicious, then, 'I' get angry at the cook, maybe insult the cook or give them a cut in pay, or maybe say something cruel. When 'I' doesn't feel delicious, then there are unfortunate consequences, various forms of dukkha. Notice the important difference between when the tongue doesn't feel delicious and the ego doesn't feel delicious. The consequences are vastly different.

When the eye sees a form, the nervous system is forgotten and it becomes 'I' see, 'me' sees, the 'ego' sees. When the ear hears a sound, the nervous system is ignored and it's just 'I' hear. When the nose smells an odor, it becomes 'I' smell. When the tongue tastes a flavor, it's 'I' taste a flavor. And when the body feels a touch, it becomes 'I' feel the touch. Because of this fundamental ignorance, it all becomes 'I...I...I,' 'me...me...me,' and the natural activity of the nervous system is ignored. If one carefully observes the activity of the nervous system, then one sees that there

wasn't a 'self' to begin with. Our ordinary assumption, based in ignorance, is that there is a 'self' kind of hanging around all the time. But if one carefully sees, observes the functioning of the nervous system, one starts to see that the 'self,' the concept 'me,' arises after the eye sees the form or the ear hears the sound, and so on. 'Self' – this misconception of 'self' – is merely a reaction to the sense activity. It's just a delusive concept which arises in the mind after the activity of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking. But ordinarily we don't see it that way because we've built up a point of view that the 'self' is there all the time. We assume that it's always there, that everything is happening to the 'self,' everything is happening to 'me,' for 'me,' by 'me,' but in carefully observing the way things are actually happening, you see how the concept of 'me' comes after the sense activity, not before. There's the activity, and only after the activity is there the concept of an actor. This also goes against our so-called common sense. We habitually assume that for there to be activity there has to be someone who does it. But in fact these activities are just natural functions happening naturally. They don't require a doer or an actor. But in our minds, the concept of the actor arises after the action, after the activity. This is the 'doer comes after the doing,' whatever kind of doing it may be. And so this is why we call the 'self' an illusion – it's a deluded, elusive kind of thinking, or more crudely, an hallucination. Because our experience is confused and unclear, we interpret it in this confused way. We hallucinate the presence of a 'self' that doesn't actually exist. You can see through that illusion by observing how the 'self' always comes after. It's not hanging around there all the time. Some other religions may teach that there is some persistent or even eternal self or soul that's kind of always there to receive experience, but Buddhism doesn't teach such a thing. It observes that the concept of 'self' just arises in the mind, and then it doesn't go and assume that there is really any such thing.

Many religions, especially the Hindu teachings, say that there is a self which exists always, that underlying all experience is a constantly existing self – an '*atta*' or an '*ātman*.' But Buddhism doesn't teach that. Buddhism doesn't hold that there is any kind of 'self' in any way. Whereas the one teaching that there is this 'self' always there, which kind of does its thing at the eye and does its thing at the ear and then functions at the nose, the body, the tongue, or whatever, and then after acting at the eye it goes back somewhere and rests, and then it goes out again and comes back and goes out again. That's one very old conception. But in Buddhism, through our careful observation, it's recognized that the eye just functions naturally – consciousness naturally arises – and the same with all the other senses. We see that the 'self' is merely an idea. It's a perception, a conception, a thought in the mind. Always. This thought arises after the actual activity of seeing, hearing, smelling, and so on. The thought never comes before the seeing – it's always after – and then when we see this, we recognize that the self is just a concept created by our own mind. And then we see that it's the product of illusion – it's a delusion, it's seeing something that doesn't actually exist, it's imputing something to experience which isn't really there. This is the teaching in Buddhism that 'self' comes after the acting. There's no actual actor. The actor is just an hallucination created by our own ignorance.

An easy-to-observe example is if a young child walking, bumps into a chair, then in the child there arises spontaneously the ignorant conception that the chair is a 'self.' I am a 'self,' that 'self' is dangerous to my 'self,' and so I need to frighten it or punish it. And then the child kicks the chair – you can actually see this – a child kicking an inanimate object as if there is some kind of 'self' there. This is just a natural mechanism due to the natural ignorance that we're all born with. There is this natural instinct that takes the chair, that takes oneself to be a 'self,' and then we act upon

those ignorant conceptions. If the child didn't feel that the chair was a 'self' and that itself is a 'self,' it wouldn't kick the chair. If there was no feeling of 'self' there would be no need or no purpose in kicking the chair. And the same is true of the rest of experience, whether the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue. When the ignorant concept of 'self' arises, it takes everything to be 'me' or 'mine' and acts accordingly. This is the birthplace of selfishness. The example of the child is a universal example, the one we've just given. When this 'self' concept arises, this is the birthplace of all selfishness. And when there's selfishness, there's no true love, there's no genuine love. There's no '*mettā*,' no '*karuṇā*,' no '*muditā*,' and no '*upekkhā*' when there is this selfishness. And then, without any of these – any real love amongst human beings – there is no peace. There is competition. There's taking advantage of others. There's arguing and quarreling, fighting, and going to war. We end up killing each other, blowing each other up, and all kinds of atrocious things, and the birthplace of all that is in the 'self,' in the ignorantly taking our basic sensual experiences to be 'me.'

Another aspect of this dilemma is that when there is 'self,' then a lot of other things are grabbed onto as belonging to 'self.' When there is 'me,' then countless things are taken to be 'mine.' Thus, when there is 'me,' there is my wife, my husband, my car, my home, my money, my reputation, my future, and on and on and on. Just the problem of 'me' isn't enough. Because of ignorance, we make things far heavier and much worse. And then, when life is filled with all this 'me' and 'mine,' selfishness is rampant. So Buddhism aims to free human beings from all this 'me' and 'mine' by pointing out that it's all just an illusion – that 'me' is just an illusion, 'mine' is just an illusion – and then selfishness will not arise when we see through the illusion.

When we realize that things are not 'me,' then we also realize that things are not 'mine.' So the purpose of Buddhism is to study life more and more carefully, more and more deeply with more and more subtlety until realizing the fact of *anattā* – not 'self,' not 'me,' not 'mine.' And when we examine this in a very refined and subtle way, we look at it in terms of dependent origination, *paṭiccasamuppāda*. The more profoundly, the more clearly we recognize dependent origination, the more obvious it becomes that all things are not 'me' and not 'mine.' So to deal with this dilemma of selfishness and the lack of peace in the world, we need to further examine the fact of dependent origination. This matter of dependent origination can be considered the heart or essence of Buddhism. On the other hand, it can be considered the entirety, the wholeness, the totality of Buddhism as well. When one sees dependent origination, one has gotten to the very core of Buddhism and at the same time one has understood all of Buddhism. When this is completed, perfected, then the understanding of *anattā* (not self) is also complete.

So let's study the heart of Buddhism right now. The A-B-Cs of dependent origination begin with the fact that we have eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodies, and minds. Is there anyone who doesn't have eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind? Is there anyone who doesn't know the eyes, the ears, the nose, tongue, body, and mind? We all know them, but only to some degree. Our understanding is only partial. So now we need to study them until our understanding of them is complete. These six things are within the body, and so they're said to be inner – the inner sense organs. And then there are these six kinds of things which stimulate the sense organs: the forms, sounds, odors, tastes, touches, and mental objects. These two sets of six – these six pairs – are the starting point of dependent origination. Nobody is able to learn this from a book. It can only be learned from the real thing – from these actual functioning eyes, ears, nose, tongues, bodies, and minds within our

body, and then, the forms, sounds, odors, tastes, touches, and mental experiences that stimulate the sense organs. We can only learn dependent origination from actually functioning things. When the external sense object sets off the sense organ, something new happens. Consciousness appears, or sense consciousness, *viññāṇa*. There are six kinds of these: eye consciousness, ear consciousness, and so on. This is the newest dependent origination once the sense organ has set off the sense object. When these three things – the sense organ, the sense object, and the corresponding sense consciousness – have all happened, they work together, and this working together is called '*phassa*' or 'contact.' This is a mental contact – the experience makes contact with the mind.

When there is contact, then feeling happens. Feeling naturally occurs when there is contact. Feeling can be separated into two kinds: We can distinguish positive feelings and negative feelings. Positive feeling leads to wanting – wanting to have, to get. Negative feeling leads to wanting to get rid of – to push away, to destroy. In short, positive feeling leads to pulling in and negative feeling leads to pushing away. These positive and negative feelings stir up these kinds of problems in life. Now this is happening, this pulling in and pushing out, is happening over and over again in our lives, in all aspects of our lives. And if one doesn't know about this, stop for a minute and think what kind of fool one is if one is unaware and ignorant to this reality that's happening. It's called 'desire' – '*taṇhā*' (desire or craving). All this pulling in and pushing out is called 'desire.' When there's positive feeling, we want to have it. When there's negative feeling, we want to get rid of it. This we call 'desire.' It's happening all the time in our lives. What we could call 'wanting' or 'need' has two forms: The kind of wanting which is blind, is ignorant, foolish, this we call 'desire' or 'craving,' but there's another kind of wanting or need which is free of ignorance, which is happening with wisdom. This we call 'aim' or 'aspiration,' especially right aim, right aspiration. But ordinarily for most of us when there is feeling, there arises desire, craving – the ignorant kind of wanting – and this leads to all of our problems.

Now we come to the most important part. When there is this desiring, ignorance goes and comes up with the very stupid idea that there has to be someone who desires. When there is desire in the mind, ignorance assumes that there must be a desire-er. This is called 'attachment' or '*upādāna*,' this false conception of there being some 'me' or some 'mine,' that there must be some desire-er if there is desire. This is to hallucinate, this is to have some ghost play tricks on us to trick us into being very stupid. This is the crucial stage of dependent origination. When there is desire and then attachment, it stirs up further what we call '*bhava*,' which is a very difficult-to-translate word. *Bhava* has the activity of both becoming and existing. When there is the attachment to the desire-er – to 'me' – then this 'me' gets established. Once the 'me' arises, it gets established. This becoming an establishment of the 'me' based upon attachment is called '*bhava*' or 'existence.' When this *bhava* is fully established and grows, it reaches a point where it explodes. This explosion of *bhava* is called '*jāti*' or 'birth.' When the 'me' has been established and it grows, then it explodes into the birth of ego. Ego is born with all its games, all its roles, doing all its kinds of things. And then all the foolish actions of life grow out of this – this birth of the ego – where the 'me' is full grown and it's expressing itself in all its wonderful creativity and chaos. This is a mental or spiritual kind of birth. It shouldn't be understood as being some physical birth, being born from one's mother's womb. It's a mental kind of birth that happens repeatedly in each day of life. When this ego is born mentally, spiritually, then all the forms of selfishness arise out of it. When there is this 'me' dominating consciousness when the ego is born, then all kinds of selfish

thinking develops. All the positive kinds of selfishness and the negative kinds of selfishness are the result of this birth of ego, and in this way selfishness runs our lives. Selfishness dominates our lives because this ego is coming up over and over and over again, whether we realize it or not.

This is the arising of ego, the arising of selfishness from A to Z – from Alpha to Omega. This is the highest understanding there is. If you understand this, you will be able to control the arising of self and selfishness. This is the highest understanding because it gives us the means to control selfishness. If you study this more and more, and more thoroughly understand it, then you will be more and more able to control selfishness until the point comes where there is no more selfishness. This is why this matter is so important.

All of these things are happening in our lives. But we don't see them and therefore can't help ourselves. Sense organs and sense objects, forms of consciousness, touching and impact, feelings, wanting, attachment, becoming, and birth are real, happening through many cycles each day. Not knowing this, egoism and selfishness come up dozens and hundreds of times each day. If we aren't aware of this, selfishness takes over and no one can help. If we are to deal effectively with selfishness, we need to see and understand this stream of dependent origination, these reactions dependently arising out of each other. When we manage this wisely, we thereby control selfishness. In this way, Dhammic Socialism is possible. Dhammic Socialism, a truly peaceful society, becomes possible when we are able to control selfishness. This is why understanding dependent origination is so important in our own lives right now.

There are less than a dozen terms here, so there's not even very much to remember. There are ten terms: sense organs (sense objects, sense consciousness), contact, feeling, desiring, attaching, becoming, establishing, existing, birth, and then selfishness – just ten terms, less than a dozen. So there's not so much to remember, and then it's not so difficult to get started in seeing this, in studying it, investigating it until we actually see this stream of dependent origination, and then are able to control it. So we hope you are successful in getting the stream of dependent origination under control. Start by remembering these ten terms, not very much.

The question now is a matter of having mindfulness and wisdom to manage the flow of dependent origination so that it doesn't happen in this ignorant painful way, so it happens in the opposite way, meaning wise and peaceful. So the thing is to have sufficient wisdom that is direct experience of the way things really are, to overcome our habit of seeing things in prejudiced and confused ways. And then right mindfulness – to be aware of what's going on and recollect the wisdom that we've developed. And then *sampajañña* – to put that wisdom into practice in each specific situation and experience. And *samādhi* – the mind that is well established, clean, clear, calm, and active, this strength of mind that provides the energy for all of this. So the question is having mindfulness, wisdom, wisdom in action, and *samādhi*, so that dependent origination doesn't happen in the ignorant, dukkha filled way, it only happens in the opposite way.

When there is mindfulness – sufficient mindfulness – it brings the other factors into action and then no selfishness arises. To have this mindfulness, mindfulness must be well trained, and to do so, the best way is to practice *ānāpānasati* – mindfulness with breathing in and out. At the beginning of each month we hold courses here where people learn how to practice mindfulness with breathing. Usually they don't perfect it in just ten days or even a couple months, but when they

have developed fully trained mindfulness, then that mindfulness brings in the wisdom and everything else in order to control the stream of dependent origination. This is the second matter.

The more understanding of dependent origination there is, the more we need to practice mindfulness with breathing to have the mindfulness, wisdom, and so on to deal with dependent origination. The details of practicing mindfulness with breathing are somewhat lengthy and there's not enough time to discuss it today, so you'll have to consult the book or some of the tapes which are available. But the point is that through training mindfulness with *ānāpānasati*, then the stream of dependent origination is brought under control. 'Self' doesn't arise, selfish doesn't arise, and then Dhammic Socialism is possible – a peaceful society is possible. When there is no selfishness, then the four *brahmavihāras* appear automatically, spontaneously. And when everyone in the world has these four excellent ways of living, then there is peace throughout the world. When there is this peace, then all our problems are finished. Life is peaceful, and then life can be truly useful. And that's the purpose of our lives – to be peaceful and thoroughly useful.

So, thank you finally for being good listeners. You've listened for over two hours and we thank you.

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Transcribed by Bill Weir (arizonahandbook@yahoo.com) in October, 2024
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