

THE NATURAL CURE
FOR SPIRITUAL DISEASE:

A Guide into Buddhist Science

by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

(translated by Santikaro Bhikkhu)

FOREWORD

Buddha-Dhamma is as vast as the universe and as concise as a moment's flash of insight. Many sentient beings have gotten lost between the two, unable to resolve through direct personal experience the many teachings available today. Fundamental perspectives are required for us to begin sorting out the multiplicity of experiences and concepts. Here, we offer a clear, direct, and practical guide into the essentials of Buddhism, that is, the Dhamma.

While many Buddhists take Dhamma to be "the Buddha's teaching," it really means "Natural Truth" or "Natural Law." Of course, this is what the Buddha taught and demonstrated, but we must be careful to distinguish the teaching from the Truth itself. Thus, to understand Buddhism one must begin with the Dhamma.

This guide examines the three inter-related aspects of Dhamma and pinpoints the key elements in each. Although Dhamma is One, we interact with it in three basic ways: study (pariyatti-dhamma), practice (patipatti-dhamma), and realization (pativedha-dhamma). Dhamma study is finding the right perspective on our human predicament & what we must do about it. Dhamma practice is developing & correctly applying the basic tools needed for spiritual survival. Dhamma realization is the benefits that occur naturally with correct practice. Each aspect can be approached in many ways. Here, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu approaches each in a direct and practical way.

Ajarn Buddhadasa conceived of these talks as an introduction to the study, practice, and realization of Buddha-Dhamma. He emphasizes that practice is the key. Nonetheless, without sufficient and correct study, one cannot practice properly. And without realization or the fruition of the rightful benefits of practice, everything is wasted. In short, we cannot have one without the others. We must have all three elements of this trio, and they must be fully integrated through practice.

This guide is translated from the first series of talks given by Ajarn Buddhadasa to foreign meditators attending the monthly courses at Suan Mokkh. It is intended for Western Dhamma friends, including those who are new to Buddhist understanding and practice. We hope that the perspectives offered here will help new students of Buddhism to get their bearings straight from the start. Those who have studied and practiced Buddhism for some time, no matter what the school or approach, should also find this guide helpful. We can never be too clear what Dhamma and Dhamma practice is about. Many have gotten lost for lack of clarity and a good guide.

Ajarn Buddhadasa is keen to foster "mutual good understanding among religions." This translation should contribute to that effort by clarifying what exactly Buddhism is about. Many non-Buddhist visitors to Asia have trouble separating the local culture from the Buddhist teachings about Dhamma. We hope that non-Buddhists who read this may understand the true nature of our religion. Then, "dialogues" will have honest and worthy foundations. It does nobody any good to compare (or criticize) the best of one path with the misuses of another. We must offer each other what is best from each of our paths and then understand and appreciate each other. In this way, all religions may work together to combat our common enemy -- selfishness.

We hope that this little book will enable you to start your practice of Dhamma on the right foot. Confusion about what practice really is, meditating for the wrong reasons, inability to integrate meditation with daily life, and uncertainty about where practice actually leads all wreak havoc on the spiritual lives of both "beginners" and "old hands" alike. The Buddha stressed the need for "right understanding" (samma-ditthi) which is not a particular dogma or acceptance of some doctrine. Rather, it is an attitude of alert and joyful investigation of life characterized by the four noble truths. These truths are not to

be believed or accepted; they are to be reflected upon and scrutinized until we have mined them for all they are worth. May we all find in this life the inner knowing which frees us from any doubt as to what is true and what is not, without having to defend or proselytize that understanding.

May all beings be free.

Santikaro Bhikkhu
Suan Mokkhabalarama
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EDITORS' NOTES

These talks originally were transcribed and translated in 1986 for the one and only edition of the "Suan Mokkh International Newsletter" (superseded by Evolution/Liberation). There were only 350 copies of this mimeographed publication, which went out of print quickly. We have here made some adjustments to that original translation, and hope that it now reads more smoothly and clearly.

Most Dhamma talks in Thai, and especially those of Ajarn Buddhadasa, are full of Pali terms (Pali is the canonical language of early Buddhism). These terms have found their way, along with many Sanskrit words, into Thai and are familiar to all practicing Buddhists. They are rich words, and precise, which express concepts and perspectives which are not always apparent in English. They have the further advantage of being fixed, for Pali is a "dead language," like Church Latin.

We have tried not to overdo the use of Pali terms, here, although Ajarn Buddhadasa asks students to become familiar with them. When possible, we have used an English equivalent. But when there is no English word which captures the full meaning of the Pali term, it is left in Pali and explained parenthetically and in footnotes. Words requiring longer explanations can be found in the glossary, which you may want to rummage through in order to acquaint yourself with these important terms.

All footnotes are provided by the translator.

Finally, thanks to the friends who helped bring this book to print. Steve Schmidt, Daniel Kalish, David Olsson, Sister Dhammadinna, Maechi Nandini (Wendy McCrae), the Venerable Dusadee Metamkuro, and the Dhamma Study & Practice Group.

May their efforts help more people to live with less dukkha and nurture greater peace in this world.

The Editors

I. SCIENTIFIC CURE OF SPIRITUAL DISEASE:

YOUR STUDY OF DHAMMA

(3 February 1986)

Our apologies that the formatting &
Pali spelling in this chapter are not yet finished.

(click here for glossary)

To begin, I would like to express my joy that you have come here to study Dhamma (Natural Truth). Second, I would like to thank each of you for helping to make Suan Mokkh a useful and worthwhile place.

Today, I would like to talk with you concerning the question: What benefits will we receive from studying Dhamma? If you get any benefits from Buddhism, you will become a Buddhist automatically, whether or not you go through a conversion ceremony. To convert or not to convert is a meaningless issue. The relevant issue, the important thing, is whether you will get anything useful from Buddhism.

So we will talk about the things that you will gain from Buddhism. Only after realizing that Buddhism has benefited you will you know what Buddhism is about. Until you understand what it is that you have received, you can't really know anything about Buddhism. Let's discuss, then, the things that you will obtain from Buddhism. Thus, you will understand Buddhism and will become a Buddhist automatically.

I would like to say that you will get the best, the highest thing that a human being ought to get. There is nothing more worth getting than this; it surpasses everything. We might call this thing, simply, "New Life." The best thing to do here is to talk about the characteristics of New Life.

Now, for you to understand what is going to be said, I ask you to forget everything. Please forget all the faiths, creeds, and beliefs which you have ever held. Put them all aside for the time being. Even if you prefer to believe in scientific principles more than any of the so-called religions, leave them completely alone for now. Make the mind empty, free, and spotless, so that you can hear something new. Actually, Buddhism shares many characteristics and principles with science, but Buddhism is a science of the mind-heart rather than a science of physical things.¹ Buddhism is a spiritual science. For this reason, it may be something new for you.

Dhamma Medicine

The first thing we would like you to realize is that Buddhism, or Dhamma, is a medicine for curing disease. This is a strange and special medicine because it can be taken by anyone, regardless of religion, nationality, ethnic background, education, class, or language. Anyone may use this medicine, for Dhamma is like those modern drugs that cure physical ailments. Such drugs can be taken by people all over the world, no matter what their religion, race, sex, profession, or language. Although we come from different cultures, we can use the very same kind of medicine. Take aspirin, for example. No matter who and where we are, we can take a few aspirin to get rid of a headache. Dhamma is the same. It is the universal medicine.

We like to say that Dhamma is a medicine for disease or roga. I would like for us to use this Pali word "roga," because it has a clear and useful meaning. Although it's usually translated as "disease," roga literally means "that which pierces and stabs," thus causing pain. We don't really know where the English word "disease" comes from, so we prefer "roga." Its meaning is certain and appropriate: stabbing, piercing, skewering. Dhamma is something that can cure this stabbing and piercing of roga.

The roga with which we're most concerned is spiritual. We can call it "spiritual disease." Physical disease pierces the body; spiritual disease stabs the mind or spirit. Dhamma is the latter's remedy. If we have no spiritual disease, to come and study Dhamma is a complete waste of time. Hence, everyone must look closely in order to know both kinds of roga: physical disease, roga of the body, and spiritual disease, roga of the mind, heart, or spirit. Then, look within yourselves -- right now! -- is there any spiritual disease in you? Are you free from disease or merely enduring it?

We begin our study of Dhamma by getting to know our own roga. You must look and search within yourself until seeing and discovering how spiritual disease afflicts you. To do so, you must look inside! If you don't, you won't have a proper beginning to your study of Dhamma. Unless we understand the roga from which we suffer, we will only study Dhamma in a foolish, aimless way. Actually, most of you already have some knowledge about your spiritual disease, but for most that knowledge

will be slight, scattered, or unclear.

Let's talk about the disease a bit more in order to clarify it. All of the problems which disturb the mind are problems which arise from aging, illness, and death. These are the first symptoms of the disease. Our minds are disturbed and pestered by problems that result from the fact that we all must grow old, fall sick, and die. These problems are the first thing to look at. Next, there are three general, miscellaneous problems: we get separated from the things we love, we experience things we dislike, and we have wishes which go unfulfilled. These are general problems leading to spiritual disease. Before anything else, each of you must know these problems or roga as you actually experience them within yourselves.

LOOK WITHIN

This is why there is the principle that Dhamma must be studied and learned internally, rather than externally. We must learn from life itself. Learn from all the things that you experience within this fathom-long body. Please be certain to learn inside only, and don't bother learning outside. The things that we learn from external sources, such as books and talks, are never enough. Only by looking within can we come to understand these spiritual diseases completely. The external kind of study and learning, such as reading books, discussion, and listening to talks as you are doing now, can do no more than explain the method and means of inner study. This external study only learns how to go about the inner study. Then, you must go and do that inner study in order to understand Dhamma.

I ask all of you to begin your studies from within by studying the problems that you inwardly experience. Please take a look at the problems that arise from aging, sickness, and death. We are afraid of aging, sickness and death; all kinds of problems on many different levels arise from them. We must clearly observe these things in the same way that a geologist examines a rock, as when we take up something with our own hand, hold it up to the light, and carefully examine it until we see it clearly in all its detail. In the same way, we must see clearly the problems that arise from our own aging, illness, and death. Further, we must investigate the problems which develop out of them, such as being separated from beloved things, meeting with unloved things, and desiring things and then not getting them.

The result of all of the above problems is dukkha (pain), both physical and mental. The symptoms and conditions of dukkha are many and varied. It comes in many forms: sorrow, sadness, dissatisfaction, grief, lamentation, tears, frustration, pain, misery, agony, and more. There are Pali terms for all of these, but what we call them isn't important. We needn't know all of their names, yet we ought to know how these things really feel when we experience them. To begin with, you must know them inside yourselves. All of these are roga, the symptoms of roga, and the results of the roga which we have caught.

Dhamma is the medicine for roga, spiritual disease; thus, the matter we're discussing here is a matter of the mind and spirit. The Buddha was one who came to know this disease, found a cure for it, and used the cure in order to free himself from disease. After doing so, the Buddha was then able to teach us about the roga, its cure, and the way to administer the cure. Please understand the Lord Buddha in this way. If you are afflicted by spiritual disease, you ought to be interested in his Dhamma.² However, if any one of you is completely free of spiritual disease, you are wasting time on Dhamma -- you can go home. I repeat, anyone who has no spiritual disease is invited to leave.

DEVELOPING THE CURE

Now, let's talk about studying Dhamma, which is the medicine that cures spiritual disease. There are many stages and levels to Dhamma. We begin by studying, as we do with any ordinary subject.³ Maybe we have no real understanding of Dhamma at the start. Although we have read many books and listened to talks, we don't really know Dhamma. We study in order to know, then we have knowledge. Once we have some knowledge, it must be used. In short, for it to be worthwhile, we must know Dhamma, until having Dhamma, and then use Dhamma.

Let's go through these three things again. Even though we may have read about and studied Dhamma a great deal, although we may have much knowledge of it, we may not have the right kind of knowledge. This means we don't really have Dhamma. If it isn't the correct knowledge, we won't be able to use it. Thus, we need to study until we have a sufficient amount of the right knowledge. Otherwise we won't be able to use it. Please investigate this fact thoroughly. Therefore, we must have Dhamma, we must have correct and sufficient understanding of Dhamma. But having the right knowledge isn't enough, we must have a sufficiently large amount of this correct knowledge and it must be very quick. If it isn't quick, it is

never on time and in the place where it is needed. We must be agile and expert in the use of Dhamma.

Simply having this knowledge somewhere in the back of our minds doesn't cure the spiritual disease. We must be expert in it; we need to be very skillful in its proper use. We need to be deft, agile, and expert, so that we are able to understand the spiritual disease that is already present, as well as any new spiritual disease that may arise. If we have this understanding, it is a good start in becoming able to use Dhamma to cure our disease. So study the disease within yourselves. This is the kind of knowledge that you must develop.

JUST ONE TEACHING

You must know that the Buddha spoke of just one thing and nothing else: dukkha (pain, dissatisfaction) and the quenching of dukkha. The Buddha taught only the disease and the cure of the disease; he didn't talk about anything else. When people asked questions about other matters, the Buddha refused to waste his or their time with such things. Nowadays, we spend our time studying all kinds of other things. It's a pity how our curiosity is aroused by matters such as: After death, will I be born again? Where will I be reborn? How will it happen? Please don't waste your time on those things. Instead of reading lots of books, take what time you have to focus on dukkha and the complete, utter quenching of dukkha. This is the knowledge to store up, this is the studying to do. Don't bother studying anything else!

The Lord Buddha taught only dukkha and the total cessation of dukkha. He taught that we must study these two things within our bodies. You can only do this while the body is alive. Once the body dies, you don't have to concern yourselves with this problem any more. But now, while there's life, constantly, continuously, and inwardly study dukkha (spiritual disease) and the utter quenching of dukkha (the cure of the spiritual disease).

Throughout this world there is little interest in this matter of dukkha and its end. None of the world's schools pay any attention to it. In the universities, they don't teach or study it. The only thing taught in our schools and universities is cleverness, the storing up of many facts and the ability to perform mental tricks with them. Students graduate with cleverness and some way to make a living. This is what modern education means-- being clever and earning lots of money. Dukkha and the quenching of dukkha are totally ignored. We believe that all education in today's world is incomplete. It is imperfect because the most important subjects are forgotten; a general base of knowledge and the ability to earn a living are not enough. There is a third area of knowledge which the schools and universities don't teach: how to be a human being. Why do they ignore what it takes to be a proper human being, that is, a human being free of dukkha? Because a proper human being ought to have no spiritual disease, modern education will be incomplete and insufficient as long as it fails to cure spiritual disease.

WHAT ARE HUMAN BEINGS?

It is correct and proper that each of you has come here to undertake the third kind of education: how to be a human being without any problems, how to be free of dukkha. It is good that you have come here and are interested in this topic. In short, use this opportunity to learn what it takes to be a human being.

If someone tells you that you're not yet human, please don't get angry and please don't feel sad. First, you must look and see what it means to be human. So let's take a look at "manusaya," the Pali word for human being. This is a very good word for it has a very useful meaning. manusaya means "lofty-minded one," a mind high enough to be above all problems. Problems are like flood waters, but they can't flood the lofty mind. When one's mind is elevated to a high level, then we can say that one is a manusaya. The speaker isn't sure where the English word "human being" comes from. Our guess is that it must mean "high-minded," also. "Man" is probably related to mana (mind) and "hu" ought to mean "high." So, human ought to mean "high-minded."

As things are, Dhamma is the knowledge which tells us exactly what it means to be human. We're interested in what it is to be fully human, rather than merely masquerading in "human" bodies. To be truly human is to be above all problems. Study and learn in order to be completely human. Study, practice, and work to develop a mind, heart and spirit that is above all problems. By problems, we mean dukkha, the thing which, if it arises, we cannot tolerate or endure. When it occurs, we

can't stand it and struggle to get away from it. This causes agitation, discomfort, unhappiness, and unhealthiness. Dukkha, our problem, means "unbearableness, intolerableness." We can't stand it, we can't put up with it."

Once again, let me repeat that if you have no problems you can go home. You need not waste your time studying Dhamma. However, if you happen to have some problems, just one little problem, or perhaps many, then take a good look at them. Stick around and learn how to look at problems.

I dare say that every one of you has a problem, and further, that you all have the same problem. This one problem that bothers us all is the thing we discussed above. It is the problem that arises out of aging, illness, and death. In short, we don't get the things that we want. We can't maintain this body forever. Life is never exactly what we want it to be, we can't have things our way all of the time. This problem is shared by each and every one of us.

SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

We are all in a situation where we must use a scientific method to solve our problem. We must use a specifically scientific approach, because the methods of philosophy and logic can't solve the problem.⁴ There are myriad philosophies concerning everything imaginable, but none of them can solve our problem. Philosophies are very popular with people in today's world, they are fun and interesting, but they don't work. This is why we must turn to a scientific method which can and will solve the problem.

It is now time to recall something about which you've probably already heard: the four noble truths (ariya-sacca). Please reflect upon this most important matter. The four noble truths are Buddhism's scientific principle of the mind. The four noble truths allow us to study the specific problem exactly as it is, without relying on any hypothesis. Most of you are familiar with the standard scientific method in which a hypothesis is proposed, then tested through experimentation. Such hypotheses are merely forms of guessing and estimation. With the ariya-sacca such clumsiness isn't necessary. Reality is experienced and examined directly, rather than through the limitations of hypothesis, predictions, and guesstimations.

What, then, are the four noble truths that you must look into? They are:

1) dukkha; 2) the cause of dukkha; 3) the quenching of dukkha, through quenching its cause; 4) there is a way or path that quenches dukkha by ending its cause.

These are the ariya-sacca. They have the features of science, the reasoning of science, and the methodology of science. In short, we apply these truths to real things as they actually happen in life, without using any hypotheses.

Merely reading books won't enable you to do this science. Books lead to more hypotheses, ideas, and opinions. Even in a book about Buddhism, the four noble truths become just more hypotheses. Such is not science, it is only philosophy, which is always inviting us to play around with hypotheses. So we often get stuck in endless circles of suppositions, propositions, and arguments. There is no true Dhamma in that, there is no reality of actually quenched dukkha.

THE REAL THING

If we want to be scientific about it, practice with the real thing and forget the hypotheses. Study the real thing itself: study dukkha as you experience it. Look at the cause of dukkha by experiencing that cause. Observe through direct personal experience the other side of the coin -- the end of dukkha. Lastly, investigate what you must do to end dukkha. This way is scientific. For as long as you aren't doing this, you're doing philosophy. You'll only have a philosophical Buddhism. Don't get stuck in theories. Look inside, study inside yourselves, see these truths as they actually happen. Just playing around with ideas about Buddhism, you will never find the real thing.

If you study Buddhism from books only, no matter what your sources, or how you study, in the end you'll always come away with the feeling that Buddhism is a philosophy. This is because the authors of most books on Buddhism approach it as a philosophy. They actually believe that Buddhism is a philosophy, which is totally wrong.

FORGET ABOUT PHILOSOPHY

This idea that Buddhism is a philosophy, put it aside, lock it up in a drawer, in order to practice by studying directly in the mind, as they happen, dukkha, the cause of dukkha, the end of dukkha, and the way that leads to the end of dukkha. Study these until you experience the quenching of some dukkha. As soon as you experience this, you'll know that Buddhism is no philosophy.

You will know instantly that Buddhism is a science. It has the structure, principles, and spirit of science, not of philosophy. At the same time, you'll see that it is a religion, one with its own particular character, that is, a religion entirely compatible with modern science. Everything that is truly understood by science is acceptable to Buddhism, the religion which is a science of the mind and spirit. Please understand Buddhism in this way.

You may be one of the many who believe that a religion must have a God and that without a God it isn't a religion. Most people believe that a religion must have at least one God, if not many. Such understanding is not correct. A wiser view is that there are two kinds of religion: theistic and non-theistic. Theistic religions postulate a God as the highest thing and belief in that God is all-important. Consider Buddhism to be non-theistic, for it doesn't postulate any belief in a personal God. Buddhism, however, has an impersonal God, that is the Truth (sacca) of Nature according to scientific principles. This Truth is the highest thing in Buddhism, equivalent to the God or gods of theistic religions.

You should study the word "religion," it doesn't mean "to believe in God." If you look up this word in a good dictionary, you'll see that it comes from the Latin religare, which means "to observe and to bind with the Supreme Thing." Ancient grammarians once thought that religare came from the root lig, to observe. Thus, religion was "a system of observance that led to the final goal of humanity." Later scholars considered that it came from the root leg, to bind. Then, religion became "the thing that binds human beings to the Supreme Thing (God)." Finally, both meanings were combined and religion was understood to be "the system of observance (practice) that binds human beings to the Supreme Thing." The Supreme Thing needn't be called "God." If, however, you insist on calling it "God," then recognize that "God" must have two meanings: personal God and impersonal God.

THE BUDDHIST GOD

If you prefer to call it "God," you should understand that Buddhism has the law of nature as its God. The Law of Nature -- for example, the law of idappaccayata, which is the law of causality and conditionality -- is the Buddhist God. idappaccayata means:

With this as condition, this is; Because this arises, this arises. Without this as condition, this is not; Because this ceases, this ceases.⁵

This is the Supreme Thing in Buddhism; this Law of Nature is the Buddhist God. In Buddhism there isn't a personal God; its God -- the Law of Nature -- is an impersonal God. Because Buddhism, in fact, has a God, it is a religion.

Many Western writers and scholars of Buddhism say that it isn't a religion, since it has no God. They make a terrible blunder, because they don't know anything about the impersonal God. If they knew it, they would see that it is more real and true than any personal God. Then, they wouldn't write that Buddhism isn't a religion. They would write that Buddhism is another kind of religion. Religions with personal gods are one kind of religion, but Buddhism is the other kind, the kind that has an impersonal God.

Most religions believe in a Creator, usually an individualistic God with a personality. The Buddhist Creator is impersonal. This impersonal God, the Law of Dhamma or Nature, is the law of idappaccayata:

Because this is, so this is. Because this is, thus this is. Because this is, so this is.

This is the law of causality, the natural evolutionary process of this causing this which in turn causes this and so on in endless concocting. Buddhism has a Creator, but it is the impersonal God. If you are able to understand the difference between these two kinds of Gods -- impersonal law of causality and personal Creator -- it will be easy for you to realize what

Buddhism is.

When things happen in this way, you'll realize that this matter of dukkha and its quenching happen according to the law of the impersonal God. Then, you'll understand Dhamma correctly and live in harmony with Dhamma. You'll see it as science rather than mere philosophy. The distinction between science and philosophy will ensure that your study of Buddhism is correct and in line with Dhamma.

If you have this knowledge and use it, you have the medicine for curing spiritual disease. By taking this medicine, the heart is emancipated; it is saved, that is, freed from all dukkha. Every religion teaches emancipation, but only Buddhism teaches freedom from all problems, from all of the problems discussed above. Thus, there is no problem or dukkha to dominate us; this is called "emancipation." We have been cured of all the diseases discussed above.

I hope that you understand the general principles, the meaning, and the genuine goal of Buddhism. If you do, you'll steadily solve your problems, because your understanding will be correct from the start.

If you understand what has been said, you will proceed smoothly in the study and cure of spiritual disease. As time has run out, more details must wait until the next talk. Before closing, I would like to express my joy at the right action of all of you who have come to work on this problem of spiritual disease.

And, once again, I thank you for helping to make Suan Mokkh a useful place.

Endnotes

1. In Buddhist terminology, there is no real distinction made between the heart and the mind. The intellect and the emotions are not seen as being polar opposites. Rather, it is all citta, which can be translated "mind," "heart," or "mind-heart." We use these three terms as synonyms.
2. Here, Dhamma is both Natural Truth and the knowledge of Natural Truth which enables us to end the disease, that is, dukkha.
3. Here, study is not just intellectual learning. It involves thinking, investigation, training, experimentation, and direct experience, with emphasis on the training and experience.
4. Ajarn Buddhadasa makes a clear distinction between philosophy and science, as he understands the two terms. The former is mere speculation devoid of practical application, while the latter can be directly experienced and personally verified through practice.
5. Some translators render these lines "this ... that ...," but the Pali original explicitly repeats "this ... this" We leave it to the reader to reflect why.

II. THE USE OF DHAMMA:

YOUR PRACTICE OF DHAMMA

(February 6, 1986)

Our apologies that the formatting &
Pali spelling in this chapter are not yet finished.

([click here for glossary](#))

I'd like to express my happiness at this second opportunity to speak with you. Last time, we discussed what we will get from Dhamma, from Buddhism. This time, we'll discuss the successful use of Dhamma, that is, how to live with Dhamma.

When speaking about Dhamma, we mean the knowledge that we must practice in order to cure spiritual disease. When speaking about this practice, there are four important things (dhammas) to be understood.¹ These four things are sati (mindfulness, reflective awareness), sampajañña (wisdom-in-action, ready comprehension), samādhi (collectedness, concentration), and paññā (intuitive wisdom, insight). If you consider them carefully, you will find that you have caused these four things to arise through your practice of anapanasati (mindfulness with breathing).² Now, we must discuss in detail how to use these four dhammas. We'll consider them one by one.

SATI

Sati (mindfulness, reflective awareness, recollection) is the quick awareness and recall of the things which must be recalled. It must be as quick as an arrow. We also can describe sati as a vehicle or transport mechanism of the fastest kind. This most rapid transport doesn't carry material things, it carries wisdom and knowledge. Sati delivers paññā (wisdom) in time to meet our needs. Through the practice of mindfulness with breathing, sati is trained fully.

SAMPAJAÑÑA

The second dhamma is sampajanna. Sampajanna is wisdom as it meets up with and immediately confronts a problem, as it deals with and wipes out that problem -- this is wisdom-in-action. It is only that wisdom specifically related and applied to a particular situation or event. Nonetheless, you may have come across a variety of translations for "sampajanna," which can be rather confusing. We recommend that you remember it as "wisdom-in-action." Even better, learn the Pali word about which there is no doubt. The word "wisdom" encompasses many meanings and understandings, we can't even begin to estimate its content. However, the word "sampajanna" is far more limited in its meaning. It is exactly that wisdom directly needed for the problem that confronts us. Active wisdom isn't general, it is a matter of particulars.

The same holds for the word "Dhamma," which has an incredible variety of meanings, depending on how it is being used. When Dhamma is applied to solve a specific problem, event, or situation, there is a specific Dhamma particular to that situation. The meaning is limited to the occasion and its circumstances. In this case of Dhamma solving problems, the most precise and proper term is "dhamma-sacca" (Dhamma-Truth). Dhamma-sacca is the particular dhamma called for by the immediate situation with which we must cope, be it the onset of spiritual disease or exposure to the germs of spiritual disease. It is the use of just the right thing in a specific incident or event.

We can compare Dhamma with the medicine chest in our house. In it we store a wide variety of drugs, pills, capsules, ointments, powders, and syrups for possible use. When we're actually sick, we must choose from among the many the one drug which will be effective in treating our ailment. We can't take them all; we take just what is needed to cure our illness here and now. The same is true for Dhamma. Understand that there's an incredible amount of what we call Dhamma and paññā, but that we only apply a little bit at a time. We apply just that portion which can take care of the immediate situation. Know how to use the Dhamma, the paññā, which is exactly relevant to our situation and problem. The Dhamma or wisdom which controls that situation and problem is what we call "sampajanna."

SAMADHI

The third dhamma of today's session is samādhi. This literally means "well-established mind, properly-maintained mind, correctly-founded samādhi mind." The Buddha gave the broadest possible meaning to samādhi when he defined it as "the one-pointed mind (ekaggata-citta) that has nibbana as its object."³

We can say that samādhi has three characteristics: parisuddhi (purity), samahita (firmness, steadiness, stability), and kammanaya (activeness, readiness, workableness). Thus, when you want to know whether the mind is in a state of samādhi or not, examine it for these three qualities. See whether or not it is pure, stable, and active.

When we speak of the power or energy of samādhi, we mean the way the mind focusses all of its energy on a single point. This is similar to the magnifying glass's ability to focus the sun's rays onto a single point so that a flame appears. Similarly, when the mind's power is collected into one point, then it is one-pointed. The mind that is samādhi produces a very powerful energy, which is stronger than any other kind of power. We can describe this highly concentrated mind in two ways. The first is indriya, which means "sovereign" or "chief." The second is bala, which means "power, force, strength." Thus, we have samādhi-indriya and samādhi-bala, the mind that has sovereignty and is more powerful than any other thing.

Samādhi must work together with wisdom. Samādhi is like a knife's weight and paññā is like its sharpness. For a knife to cut anything properly, it must have two things: weight and sharpness. A knife that is heavy but dull, like a hammer, can't cut anything and only makes a mess. On the other hand, a very sharp knife that lacks weight, like a razor blade, likewise can't cut through whatever it is we must cut. A knife needs both properties; the mind is the same. To do what it needs to do the mind requires both samādhi and paññā. You might wonder what it is that cuts, is it the knife's weight or its sharpness? If you can understand this, it will be easier for you to understand how Dhamma cuts through problems, that is, mental defilements. In the moment of sampajanna's activity, both samādhi, and paññā are working together to slice through the problem. They're interconnected and, in practice, can't be separated.

PAÑÑĀ

There remains only the last dhamma to discuss: paññā (wisdom, intuitive knowledge, insight). The meaning of this word is broad and includes much. Literally, it means "to know fully," but not everything that there is to know, only those things which should be known. Paññā is the full and adequate knowing of all things which should be known. Of all the things that we could know, paññā refers only to those things which we need to know, the knowledge which is able to solve our problems. For example, it isn't necessary to know about atomic nuclei or outer space. We only need to know what quenches dukkha (spiritual disease) directly in our mind.

That which we should know is solely a matter of the quenching of dukkha. This statement agrees with the Buddha who said that he says nothing about other matters, that he speaks only of dukkha and the end of dukkha. There is a beautiful, meaningful quotation in the Pali which we'd like you to hear:

Pubbe caha bhikkhave etarahica dukkhañceva paññapemi dukkhassa ca nirodha.
Bhikkhus! In times past, as well as now,
I speak only of dukkha and the utter extinction of dukkha.

The Buddha didn't mention the future because it doesn't exist. As for the past and present, he taught only these two things.

Among the things we should know, we can talk of four important aspects of wisdom. The first topic I'd like to point out is the three characteristics of existence (ti-lakkhana): anicca (impermanence, change), dukkha (unsatisfactoriness), and anatta (non-self, selflessness). Detailed explanations of the three characteristics can be found in many different books. Today we will only summarize them.

COMPOUNDING

Anicca means that all compounded things are constantly changing. Please note that we're speaking only of compounded things. The uncompounded thing doesn't have the characteristic of anicca. Impermanence only applies to things that are produced through causes and conditions. As this term "compounded thing" is important, you would do well to learn the original Pali term, "sankhara." Sankhara means "to form, to compound, to concoct, to condition," that is, all the myriad things are constantly conditioning new things. This is a characteristic or activity of all phenomenal things, such as these trees around us. Different causes have come together in them. New things arise, there is growth and development, leaves grow and fall, there is ceaseless change. Sankhara is this continuous activity of formation. Anything which is conditioned into existence is called "sankhara." That, in turn, conditions the arising of other things and those things are also called "sankhara." Thus, sankhara are both things conditioned and the things which condition, both the causes and results of conditioning.

We can compare this endless compounding of sankhara with the bricks in a wall. Each brick props up another brick and that

brick props up another, which props up other bricks, and so on through the successive layers of bricks. Each brick is supported by some of the bricks, while it supports other bricks; it relates to them both as supporter and supportee. Thus, sankhara has three meanings, both verb and noun. The first meaning, the verb, is the activity of forming, conditioning, compounding. The second meaning refers to the things conditioned by that activity and the third refers to the causes and conditions of that activity. The meaning of sankhara is as broad as this.

Observe the activity of conditioning; you will see it in everything. Without this fact of things being continually formed and ceaselessly forming other things, there would be no existence or life. There can be life or existence only through this constant conditioning and reconditioning. But sometimes this conditioning is very subtle and we don't see it. It may even be hidden, as in a rock. There is perpetual conditioning happening within each rock, but when you look, your eyes may not detect it. Nevertheless, see the process of ceaseless conditioning in all things which exist.

The best approach is to see the conditioning within ourselves. It's all happening within our bodies. We can see the conditioning here, we can see the things as they are conditioned here, and we can see the things which make the conditioning. By looking within, we can see all this sankhara. There's the conditioning of the body-aggregate (rupa-khandha); the conditioning of the feeling-aggregate (vedana-khandha); the conditioning of sanna-khandha (the aggregate of perceptions, recognitions, and classifications); the conditioning of the thinking-aggregate (sankhara-khandha); and, lastly, the conditioning of the consciousness-aggregate (vinnana-khandha). These five important groups, or aggregates, of existence and their constant conditioning can all be seen within our living bodies.

CONTACT POINTS

Examine the transmission or contact points: now the eyes work, now the ears work, now the nose works, now the tongue works, now the skin works, now the mind works. One-by-one they perform their duties and do their work. When one functions, in that moment there is sankhara. This is when, where, and how the conditioning can be observed. In the body alone, there is ceaseless conditioning and constant change. The cells die and new ones form such that before long they've all been replaced. Even these physical aspects of existence fully exhibit sankhara. For in this body there are the six internal sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. They meet up with their external objects: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and mental objects. When the sense organ interacts with the corresponding sense object -- for example the eyes see a form or the ears hear a sound -- there is immediate conditioning. A form is seen, a sound is heard, an odor is smelled. We call this "phassa" (contact). It's the starting point for conditioning; a series of further sankhara arises from it. The meeting of sense organ and sense object (eyes and form, ears and sound, ... mind and mental object) conditions phassa. Phassa conditions vedana (feeling: the pleased and displeased mental reactions toward the sense experiences). Vedana helps to condition sanna, because perceptions and recognitions arise through the influence of feelings. What is felt, that is recognized and classified. Sanna then conditions various thoughts and thinking, including emotions (sankhara-khandha). This leads to doing this and doing that. Then, there are the results of the actions, which lead to further thinking, which lead to further action, and so it goes. This is one example of what we mean by "conditioning." We see that this sort of conditioning goes on constantly, even in our own bodies. It never stops, never takes a rest, never pauses. It continues whether we're asleep or awake. This perpetual flux, this ceaseless flow, is the characteristic of anicca.

DUKKHA-NESS

When we clearly see the characteristic of anicca, it is easy to understand the second characteristic, dukkha -- unsatisfactoriness, unbearableness, ugliness, worthlessness. If we want things to go our way according to our thoughts, we'll experience dukkha. When things change from what we like or want, we feel dukkha. In fact, they never really are what we want, because they never stop changing long enough to really be something. Thus, we have the problem that unsatisfactoriness (dukkha) is endless. It's so difficult to with all of this conditioning, amid all these shifting things. This is the characteristic of dukkha.

Looking closely we see that we ourselves are impermanent, painful, and unsatisfying. The things that we love, that satisfy us, are anicca and dukkha. The things that we dislike are anicca and dukkha. There is nothing among all this sankhara which is nicca (permanent) and adukkha (satisfying, enduring). We must see anicca and dukkha within ourselves in this way.

When we see impermanence completely, when we see unsatisfactoriness fully-- clearly and obviously -- then we automatically see that all those things are anatta (not-self). They aren't permanent selves that we can call "me." Amid all the change and conditioning, there is no individual entity or eternal substance that can be called a "self." Everything is anatta or not-self. Things exist; we are not saying they don't. What is, is; but everything that is, is not-self. We shouldn't misunderstand and think that we have a self (attā). There is only the flow of change. All this is the understanding or paññā regarding anicca, dukkha, and anatta.

VOIDNESS

The second topic is the understanding or paññā regarding sunnata (voidness). When we see the three characteristics of anicca, dukkha, and anatta, when we realize that all things are not-self, then we understand that everything is not-self, is void of anything that has the meaning of the word "self," and is free of anything that ought to be called "self." This is the meaning of sunnata. This single characteristic of voidness gathers together and caps the previous three characteristics.

The meaning of "suññata" is better, broader, easier, and more useful than any other word to take as a principle of practice and life, but only if we understand it on the Dhamma level, in the language of sati-pañña (mindfulness and wisdom). It should not be misunderstood through materialistic interpretations, such as "nothing exists" or that "all is a vacuum." The Buddha pointed out that such nihilist views are one extreme of wrong understanding. Sunnata isn't nihilism or a nothingness. Everything exists, but is void and free of anything that could be called a "self." Thus, we say that everything is void, which is the meaning of "voidness" in the language of Dhamma. If we see voidness, it includes seeing anicca, dukkha, and anatta also. We don't need too many things, the three can be untidy. Just one -- voidness -- is enough to prevent against the mental defilements.⁴

When we see voidness in the things that we love, we don't love. When we see voidness in the things we hate, we don't hate. Then there's no love and no hate, no liking and no disliking, no happiness (sukha) and no dukkha. There is just centeredness, living quietly and freely in the middle. Such is the fruit of truly seeing the voidness of things. If we don't see the voidness of all things, we will love some things and hate others. While love and hatred remain, the mind is enslaved by attachment to the things loved and hated. With full penetration of sunnata, the mind is free and no longer a slave to those things. True freedom is voidness.

Sunnata is a synonym of nibbana. Nibbana is voidness. When the mind realizes voidness, there are no defilements. When there are no defilements, there is no heat. When there is no heat, there is nibbana, which means "coolness." Thus, when there is sunnata, there is coolness, nibbana. The Lord Buddha said, "You should always view the world as something void of atta (self) and attaniya (belonging to self)." This is the second aspect of paññā.⁵

THE LAW OF NATURE

The third topic I'd like to mention is conditionality (idappaccayata), which means:

because this is, this is; because this arises, this arises; because this is not, this is not; because this quenches, this quenches.

These conditions are called "idappaccayata," the law that things happen according to causes and conditions. We can also call it dependent origination (paticca-samuppada) because idappaccayata and paticca-samuppada are the same thing, the same principle of wisdom to be studied, seen, and understood. You will see that everything in the world is constantly flowing, that all the world is in continual flux. It is a profound and complex matter. Many books treat it in great detail, particularly when it's described in terms of dependent origination. As we don't have much time today, you may need to consult some of those books.⁶

THUSNESS

Now, we come to the fourth and last topic: tathata (suchness, thusness). "Merely thus," "just such": everything is such as it is and in no way different from that thusness. This is called "tathata." When tathata is seen, the three characteristics of anicca, dukkha, and anatta are seen, sunnata is seen, and idappaccayata is seen. Tathata is the summary of them all -- merely thus,

only thus, not-otherness. There is nothing better than this, more than this, other than this, thusness. To intuitively realize tathata is to see the truth of all things, to see the reality of the things which have deceived us. The things which delude us are all the things which cause discrimination and duality to arise in us: good-evil, happiness-sadness, win-lose, love-hate, etc. There are many pairs of opposites in this world. By not seeing tathata, we allow these things to trick us into believing in duality: this-that, liking-disliking, hot-cold, male-female, defiled, enlightened. This delusion causes all our problems. Trapped in these oppositions, we can't see the truth of things. We fall into liking and disliking, which in turn leads to the defilements, because we don't see tathata.

What we must see constantly and deeply is that good is a sankhara and that evil is a sankhara too. The pleasant and unpleasant feelings, sukha and dukkha, are both sankhara. Getting and disappearing, losing and winning all are sankhara. There isn't anything which isn't a sankhara. Thus, all things are the same -- tathata. All things are just suchness, just this way, not otherwise. Further, we can say that heaven is a sankhara and hell is a sankhara. So, heaven and hell are tathata -- just thus. Our minds should be above heaven and above hell, above good and above bad, above joy and above dukkha in all respects. Tathata is the fourth area of understanding or paññā, the wisdom that must be developed to a sufficient degree. We must study reality on both the physical-material level and on the mental-spiritual level, until our knowledge and wisdom is adequate, natural, and constant.

Now, we know these four dhammas: sati, sampajanna, samādhi, and panna. Next, we must know how to apply them so that they will be correct, successful, and beneficial paññā. The question, now, is how to use Dhamma, or Buddhism, in our everyday lives.

EVERYDAY USE

How are we going to use them in our daily reality? A quick answer is that we must live through these four dhammas. We must use these four dhammas correctly to face all the situations and problems that arise each day. Whenever there arises a situation which can lead to problems or dukkha -- such as the eyes seeing a form, the ears hearing a sound, or the mind thinking a thought -- we must have sati. Sati realizes that something is happening and recalls the paññā relevant to that event. Sati immediately transports the necessary wisdom to that situation in time to deal with any possible problems. Mindfulness comes first.

That wisdom applied to the experience is sampajanna. Delivered on time by sati, wisdom-in-action deals with the immediate situation. Then, in the very moment when sampajanna goes to work, the power and strength of samādhi gives force and energy to wisdom so that it can cut through the problem. To the degree that there is samādhi, to that degree wisdom-in-action will be able to solve the problem. Paññā acts as the warehouse of accumulated knowledge and insight which sati draws upon to deal with the sense experiences.

When these four dhammas work together in this way, we'll see that we are most intelligent in that moment. We are so clever because we're able to encounter the situation right then and there without any problems arising. We don't become enslaved to the meanings of any of the pairs of opposites. This is the free life, which is peaceful and cool. It's the best thing human beings ought to get.

To summarize, we must have sufficient paññā, must use sati at all times, must apply sampajanna correctly and sufficiently, and must apply samādhi properly and in adequate strength. Together these four dhammas are sufficiently and correctly used in every situation that may arise with us. This is the answer to the question: how do we use the Dhamma successfully?

I hope that each of you will try to use these four dhammas in your lives. Nothing else will justify the time, effort, and expense which you have spent in coming here. I hope that you don't leave here in debt, but that you make a profit out of your stay.

Endnotes

1. The most basic meaning of the word "dhamma" is thing. Here it has the sense of "quality" or "virtue". You will find, however, that it has many meanings, levels, and ramifications. See the Glossary, for a start.
2. The system of meditation taught at Suan Mokkh. See *Mindfulness With Breathing*, by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (Wisdom, Boston: 1996).
3. "Ekagatta-citta" should not be confused with "ekagatta." Although both may be rendered "one-pointedness," they are used in different contexts. The latter term refers to a factor of jhana. The former term refers to the "mind with a single purpose or object."
4. Kilesa: disruptions and contaminations of the mind's natural peacefulness and radiance. They are discussed in Chapter III.
5. For more on sunnata, see Ajarn Buddhadasa's *Heartwood From The Bodhi Tree*, published by Wisdom Publications, Boston, USA.
6. See Ajarn Buddhadasa's *Practical Dependent Origination* (Dhamma Study & Practice Group, Bangkok: 1992). Other talks on paticca-samuppāda will be published in the next year or two.

III. NEW LIFE:

YOUR FRUITS OF DHAMMA PRACTICE

(February 11, 1986)

Our apologies that the formatting &
Pali spelling in this chapter are not yet finished.

([click here for glossary](#))

I would like to express my joy in having a third opportunity to speak with you. In the first talk, we spoke about the way to study Dhamma. In the second talk, we spoke of how to practice Dhamma. Today, we will speak about the fruits and benefits of practicing Dhamma.

When we speak of the benefits of practicing Dhamma, we can divide them into two categories: first, a happy life free of problems, and second, the ability to use that life in the most successful and productive way according to our needs. Put another way, the two kinds of benefits are happiness and the appropriate use of that happiness for our needs. Together they can be called "New Life." We will get New Life from practicing Dhamma.

We will begin with the first benefit, the happy life free of problems. You must recollect, observe, and see the fact that this on-going process of life follows our instincts and proceeds under the power of these instincts, which we are unable to control. Because they are out of control, the instincts lead to things called "defilements" (kilesa).¹ Before going further, we ought to examine the defilements until they're understood clearly, for they are bound up with all spiritual disease.

DEFILED CONTROL

When defilements arise, this life -- in the language of Dhamma -- is sorrowful, that is, dukkha. We have experienced over and over again the kind of dukkha that we're discussing. We've become so familiar with it that most of us consider it normal, we don't even think it's a problem! Let's learn to distinguish the difference between two kinds of life: life when the defilements are in control and possession, and life when the defilements aren't running the show. We must understand both kinds of life. If you are unable to see and understand the defilements, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for you to practice and benefit from Dhamma. You won't know how to compare the life of defilement with a life free of defilement

and see how different the two are. This is why I request that you try to understand the defilements as they arise in your own lives, even if they annoy you in the process. Study them and get to know them as they arise within you. The more deeply and completely you know them, as your insight into them grows, to that degree and no other, you will understand Dhamma and be able to benefit by Dhamma.

DELUDED OBSTRUCTIONS

The first nivarana, sensuousness, is of the greed type and the second, aversion, is of the anger type. The remaining three are of the delusion type. The third nivarana is thana-middha, when the mind lacks energy and is weak, tired, groggy, numb, drowsy, or stupefied. When the mind is low in energy it lacks clarity, freshness, brightness, and alertness. There are many symptoms of the dull, shrunken, lazy mind which all can be summarized as the lack of mental energy. This includes the dullness and sleepiness that follows from overeating. Hindered by thana-middha (sloth and torpor), it is difficult to think, reflect, listen, meditate, or do anything.

The fourth nivarana is the opposite of the third. This hindrance, uddhacca-kukkucca, is the agitation and distraction when the mind goes beyond its limits and is out-of-control. We can see it as a kind of nervous disorder. In your attempts to meditate, I'm sure that you have all come across this out-of-control mental activity. An example of restlessness and agitation is the inability to sleep at night because the mind won't slow down, won't rest and relax, but scatters itself in all directions thinking this, thinking that, thinking anything, thinking everything. Such unnecessary agitation doesn't allow the mind to get the rest and peace it needs. When the mind keeps running all over the world, keeps getting involved in everything, it is impossible to perform even a simple task like writing a letter.

Now, we've come to the last nivarana, vicikiccha, wavering and uncertainty. Vicikiccha is uncertainty and doubt concerning the correctness and safety of things. It is being unsure about what is truly correct and safe. We lack confidence and trust in what is happening and what we're doing. Those who follow a religion that takes faith as the basic principle, faith in God or whatever, seldom have a problem with this hindrance. Those of us who follow a religion based in self-confidence, however, encounter doubt much more easily.

This uncertainty, non-belief, trustlessness, and doubt is about what one is, what one has, and what one is doing. For example, we may have doubts about our health, our economic situation, or even our personal safety. We may have doubts about the things we're involved with: "Is it right and proper? Is it safe? Can I depend on it?" This doubt may often have to do with everyday concerns, but it can arise toward Dhamma, or Natural Truth, as well. "Is it really true? Is it of any use?" You might even doubt that there is such a thing as Truth, have doubts about the way to realize Truth, or lack confidence in your potential for awakening. If uncertainty about everyday things hinders us from using them correctly, how much more so when the doubt is about Dhamma. If we think, "What if it's just words? How can I know it's true? This isn't taught at university," then we won't be able to take advantage of and benefit by the Dhamma.

For Christians, vicikiccha may be regarding God, the Bible, or Jesus Christ. For Buddhists, doubt may concern the Buddha, the scriptures, the Dhamma, or practice. When one has even the slightest doubt that everything is correct and that life is safe, then one is under the influence of this nivarana. Take a good, deep look inside and see that vicikiccha might exist in our subconscious all the time.

UNOBSTRUCTED LIFE

Together these five things are called the "nivarana." How is the mind when it is free of the nivarana? If the mind is free of all five hindrances, how is our mental life? Study this mind and know what it is like. Can we call such a life "New Life"?

Here, freedom from the nivarana is called "New Life." Further, New Life ought to be free of the kilesa as well. Half-formed defilements are called "nivarana." Fully developed defilements are called "kilesa." To be New Life, it must be free from the kilesa, too. We must now consider the kilesa in some detail. They can be known easily by the symptoms of the influence they have on the mind. These can be experienced easily and known clearly. It isn't necessary, however, to know all the tiny details of the defilements. We just need to know the main symptoms. With electricity, we may not see the electricity itself and we may not understand it, but we can see its power, its influence, and its symptoms through various electrical appliances and equipment. Similarly, we may never see the defilements themselves, but we can learn all we need to know from their

symptoms, from the influence they have on the mind. Their symptoms are many and varied, but we don't have to discuss them all. We will talk about the most important ones, the ones that cause the most trouble in our lives.

TROUBLESOME LOVE

The first of these troublesome symptoms is love. When love arises in the mind, is anything lost? Is there something the mind must suffer and endure? Does it pick up any burdens or loads? What effects does this thing love have on the mind? I'm sure that each of us can understand this phenomenon, as all of us have had some experience with this thing called "love." Previously, we mentioned the meaning of roga, a synonym for kilesa, as "something that pierces and stabs." Does love pierce? Does love stab? To know, we need not look anywhere but within our own experience. So look and see for yourself. Other meanings of defilements are "things that burn"; "things that bind, fetter, and chain"; and "things that dominate and imprison." Do any of these meanings fit with the thing we call "love"? You ought to see whether it is a problem or not. Although many people consider love to be bliss, from the Dhamma point of view it is utter lack of calmness, that is, supreme disturbance. Examine it closely and realize for yourself whether or not love causes problems. Don't take our word for it, but don't believe all of the romantic propaganda of TV, novels, and pop music, either.

Ordinarily, the thing we call "love" is conditioned out of ignorance (avijja, not-knowing), the ultimate defilement. Although there may, only in certain situations, arise a kind of love that comes from wisdom or is governed by it, as soon as it is the mind of "love," it becomes a problem. It is no longer peaceful or joyful. Just by labeling it "love," it changes from wisdom to ignorance. The terrible dilemma of love developed from the instinct to preserve the species and reproduce. Take a good look at its effects. Can you see all the problems it causes and the torments through which it drags us? Is it a burden? Is it an obstacle to peace, purity, and joy? At the same time, consider how well off we would be if free of this problem. Even non-sexual love, such as the love of our children, parents, and friends, causes us problems by destroying tranquility and happiness. Non-sexual love must be controlled just as much as sexual love. Otherwise, there is no peace. If we said, "Do everything as a lover would do, but do it without love," would you believe that it is possible? Could you act in such a way without any defilement?

There are kinds of love which are Dhamma, such as metta (friendliness, kindness) and karuna (compassion), but they must be correct if problems are to be avoided. Metta and karuna can be defiled by distinctions, discriminations, and attachment, then they are dukkha. Not being able to love and not being able to love what we want to love are problems, are dukkha. All these are wrong. Even the love that isn't directly defiled, love that has nothing to do with sex or sensuality, may be defiled indirectly when contaminated by ego and selfishness. Even the higher forms of love, such as metta and karuna, must be correct.

In short, love is a problem, it isn't peacefulness and joy. It must be controlled, or, if possible, abandoned. Then, the mind will not be disordered. We must transform defiled-love into Dhamma-love. A life that can master love, that is above its influence, should we call that "New Life"? I'm sure that each of you can find the answer.

ANGER & HATRED

Now, we'll talk about love's opposite: anger or ill-will. When it arises, what is it like? It's another kind of fire that burns the mind. It stabs, imprisons, dominates, and fetters the mind. We all know anger very well, we know the many problems it causes. We don't want to get angry, yet we do. We don't want to be angry, yet we remain so. You know how disturbing anger is. If we can control it, how peaceful will that be? Ponder this, please.

The third defilement is hatred, which is different from anger, although both are forms of dislike or not-liking. When something ugly, dirty, or repulsive appears, we hate it. We can't control ourselves, we just hate unattractive, hateful things. That's how it is, because we can't endure the cause of the hatred. Thus, hatred burns, possesses, and torments our mind. Now, think what it would be like if there was nothing to hate and nothing to love. No love and no hate -- what blissful peace that would be! Just like the Arahant (the perfected human being). The Arahant is above the feelings of both hate and non-hate. The liberated mind has no problems with "hateful" or "ugly" things, because there is nothing hateful and nothing not-hateful for that mind which totally fulfills Dhamma by fully realizing Dhamma. Don't misunderstand that it is dangerous to be free of hate, that we need hatred to protect ourselves from danger. Hatred itself is the danger! It's best not to hate, but we never seem to learn. Thus, pitiful instances of hate continue in our world. White-skinned people hate black-skinned

people. What's the excuse for such a problem? We shouldn't have problems like that. If we understand correctly, there will be no need to hate and we won't hate.

FEAR OF LIFE

The fourth defilement is fear. Everyone is having this problem, we're all afraid of something. Fear comes from stupidity, from selfishness, from the craving of a self that desires things it can't have. So we fear! Nowadays, we have every possible kind of fear in this world of ours, especially the fear of nuclear war and annihilation. When we're afraid we become helpless. When there is fear, we lose our mindfulness and wisdom (sati-panna), and our ability to struggle with problems and protect ourselves. To be unafraid is much better.

Fear comes from the instinct of egoism, fear is an instinctual necessity. If there is insufficient knowledge and wisdom, this instinct is impossible to control. Through the study and practice of Dhamma, necessary and sufficient wisdom is developed so that this instinct can be controlled and fear does not arise. Understanding and insight into anatta (not-self) allows us to be free of fear, helps us to uproot fear, and protects us from its future arising. All of you surely can see that fear has no use at all, that it always leads to dukkha. We ought to be able to do anything in the face of fearful and frightening things. Then, we will be in a much better position to deal with those things and succeed in the business of living. If we must fight with an enemy, but cannot do it without fear, we are in no position to fight effectively. Our abilities will be weakened, our wisdom will be diminished, and our mindfulness will be slow. We will be defeated by whatever foe it is. Unafraid, we are able to use our wisdom, mindfulness, and skills in the degree needed to defeat that enemy. Face all frightening things fearlessly. A fearless life is of great use.

POSITIVE DEFILEMENTS

There are many other forms of kilesa. Another is worry and anxiety about the things we love. In Thai and Pali this is called "alaya-avarana," the anxious worrying and thinking about, longing after, dwelling upon, and missing of things we love. This is that spinning around of the mind when it can't stop thinking of beloved things. If the mind can't stop, this keeps it awake at night and causes headaches during the day.

Another kilesa is envy. This happens instinctually on its own. It happens in children without their being taught. Envy is a huge problem for the one who feels it, but it isn't any problem for its object. The first feels dukkha, the latter doesn't.

Finally, we come to possessiveness and miserliness. If it gets too strong, it becomes jealousy, especially the sexual kind. This is yet another form of selfishness. It often takes place in marriages. The husband doesn't want his wife to talk with other men; the wife jealously worries that another woman will steal her husband away. We are all familiar with that pain and suffering.

These are six examples of defilements. There are many more which we could bring up, but we are limited by time. Nonetheless, these few examples are enough to illustrate our point: if we are free of every symptom and condition of defilement, how healthy, well, at ease, happy, and peaceful will we be? It's up to you to discover what this is like, yet even now you ought to be able to imagine its value. The mind that is totally free from all symptoms of these defilements is a totally new way of living. This peace and freedom, this coolness and bliss, is one meaning of New Life.

USING NEW LIFE

Now, for the time that remains, we'll discuss a second meaning of New Life. We must be able to skillfully use this new way of existing -- that comes with freedom from defilements -- to meet our needs. The first aspect of applying the New Life is making the mind happy at any time. For example, through successfully practicing mindfulness with breathing (anapanasati) it is possible to have genuine happiness at any time, in any place. Because of the proper development of mindfulness with breathing, we have influence and control over the mind. We have instant happiness as we need it.

The second aspect of using the New Life is that fully practiced Dhamma can help the sense organs -- eyes, ears, nose,

tongue, body, and mind -- to perform most efficiently, as if they were "divine."² By this we mean only that they have more ability and effectiveness than is ordinary. The eyes are more effective than ordinary, the ears are more efficient than ordinary, the nose and so on are more capable than ordinary, as if they were "divine." Divine (dibba) simply means "beyond ordinary."

MASTERING EXPERIENCE

Third, is the ability to control experience, that is, the mind, so that it is always in a state of correctness. This type of mastery has three aspects: control of the vedana (feelings), control of sanna (perceptions, recognitions, classifications), and control of vitakka (thinking). Controlling the vedana means preventing them from conditioning defilements, or not experiencing any unwanted feelings. (Please note that feeling (vedana), here, does not mean emotions). Sanna -- recognizing, evaluating, classifying things as this or that -- can be controlled so that it doesn't lead to dukkha. Controlling vitakka (thought conception) is to control the thinking so that either it is correct or there is no thinking at all. Feelings, perceptions, and thinking can be controlled because there is Dhamma.

Eating delicious food provides an example of the first kind of mastery. If the food is very delicious we become stupid or crazy over it through our delusion about deliciousness. When there is enough Dhamma, we can control the feelings that arise toward that delicious food. Then, we aren't deluded by the deliciousness, we don't eat more than we should, and we don't make any problems out of it. We see it all as "just thus, merely thus," rather than with foolishness and delusion. The delicious food doesn't defeat us, it doesn't control us, it isn't our boss, it doesn't make us do anything stupid. We don't force it to be not delicious. If it's delicious, it stays delicious, but the deliciousness can't control us. We control the deliciousness so that it doesn't control us and force us to do something wrong or foolish.

We can see most easily that people throughout the world today are slaves to deliciousness. Much time is spent making delicious things which serve no other purpose than to excite desire and craving. Then, we compete for those things. Finally, we divide up the world in attempts to control those things and fight endless wars, only because we have lost control of and are slaves to deliciousness. The words "Satan" (the Christian Devil) and "Mara" (the Buddhist Tempter) represent our stupidity regarding deliciousness. We need to know that the feelings (vedana) can be controlled.

Now, let's talk about the control of sanna (recognition, classification). Previously, we couldn't remember things well or recall them correctly. From now on, we'll have an excellent memory and clear recollection. Through the mastery of sanna the mind won't fall into false distinctions and misperceptions, that is, the ones which punish us with dukkha. For example, sanna can be controlled so that we don't identify and regard things as being male and being female. Thereby, we're free of the problems that arise from masculinity and femininity. The mind remains cool and calm. Mastery of sanna means controlling it so that it is always correct. Correct means that it causes no dukkha.

Controlling vitakka is to control thought. Whenever there is sanna of something, it invites thinking along the meaning of that sanna. So we think. If it isn't controlled, the thinking goes wrong and dukkha is born. So we control thought only along ways which are correct and beneficial: thinking along the lines of leaving behind sensuality, of not harming or injuring others, and of not troubling anyone even unintentionally. If we want more than that, we can stop thinking altogether. For example, if we will enter samadhi (one-pointed concentration) or samapatti (attainment of deep levels of concentration), we can stop the thinking totally, in all respects. We are able to control vitakka: we can think or we can not think. Or we can think only in the ways we ought to think. Nothing wrong happens and there is no dukkha. This is what is meant by controlling vitakka.

REMOVING THE WOMB OF DEFILEMENT

A fourth, and final, aspect of this mental mastery is the direct control of the defilements themselves, which is to control dukkha and prevent its arising. When there is enough Dhamma, and when Dhamma is practiced sufficiently, attachment (upadana) can be controlled. This control prevents attachment to "good" and attachment to "evil." With no attachment, there is no dukkha. We won't let upadana arise, then the concept of "I" (egoism), which is the womb of defilements, isn't born. Without the concept of "I," there will be no defilements. Once the defilements can be controlled, they are finished. This is the last good result, a fourth kind of mastery, the control of attachment, which automatically controls dukkha.

In these ways, life is mastered and used wisely, so that we reap all the appropriate benefits. Such is the New Life of peace, coolness, and bliss. For example, we have the ability to be happy whenever we need to be. We have such splendid sense organs -- eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind-sense -- that they can be called "divine." Then, we can control the feelings, perceptions, and thinking. Finally, we control attachment so that it never again arises. Thereby, all problems vanish! There isn't even the slightest, most remote chance that the defilements will arise or that there could be dukkha. With these capabilities, life is maintained in the most skillful way and we accomplish whatever must be done. If you look honestly, you'll know within yourself that this is the New Life in its complete meaning: the highest, the supremely new life. This is what you'll receive from the correct and successful application of Dhamma.

The first thing is you study Dhamma, the second is you practice Dhamma, and the third is you receive the fruits of practicing Dhamma. Look at these clearly and carefully consider their benefits. Each of you must be fully self-reliant in doing so. It's up to each of you to realize the meaning, way, and benefits of practicing Dhamma.

THANK YOU

Finally, I'd like to express my joy that you have begun to study, practice, and receive the Dhamma. And one last time: thank you. Thank you all for coming to this place, for making use of it, and helping to make it beneficial. You don't have to thank us for anything, but please allow us to thank you.

Endnotes

1. Kilesa is usually translated "defilement." We use it both in a general sense, covering all the aspects and levels of things which dirty, pollute, or tarnish the mind, and in a specific sense, limited to the most noticeable aspect of defilement, the selfish thoughts and emotions such as lust, anger, fear, worry, laziness, and envy.
2. Divine Eye and Divine Ear are believed to be results of highly perfected mental concentration (samādhi). They're commonly viewed to be magical, and the foolish may meditate solely to gain these powers.

AFTERWORD

The talks which comprise this book were the first of many series Ajarn Buddhadasa has given during the monthly meditation courses at Suan Mokkh. Subsequently, all the points in these three talks have been expanded upon in greater detail. To the degree allowed by causes and conditions, we will publish as many of these series of talks as possible.

For more on the subject of Spiritual Disease, see *Heartwood Of the Bodhi Tree: The Buddha's Teaching on Voidness* (Wisdom Publications, Boston, USA: 1995).

For more about Mindfulness with Breathing (anapanasati), the system of meditation taught at Suan Mokkh, see *Mindfulness With Breathing: Unveiling the Secrets of Life* (Dhamma Study & Practice Group, Bangkok).