

What You'll Get from Practicing Dhamma

by Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa 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. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. 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 Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

Today we'll speak about the benefits of studying Dhamma or practicing Dhamma as we are trying to do here.

For ease we will divide our practice into three stages. The first is the beginning, starting point, then there is the walking or following of the path, and then there is the realization of the goal of the path.

There is the question, 'Why were we born?' or 'Why were you born?' Please scrutinize this question carefully. In fact, the question, 'Why were you born?' may not be so important.

This is because for most of us, we probably had no intention to be born. It wasn't our intention to be born and so it's not really our responsibility, and in fact, none of us really have much of an idea why we were born.

But whether we intended it or not, depending on our mothers and fathers, we were born. The question of 'why we were born?' we could just as well put aside. But then we're still left with the most important question of, now that we are born, what are we going to do? Once we have been born, what is the purpose and meaning of our life?

So then, now that we are born, now that we are here, we must consider carefully and start to understand the questions, now that we are here, 'What are we going to do? Where are we going to go? How are we going to get there?'

Even if we didn't intend to be born, what are we going to do so that this life is not going to be full of *dukkha*?

What are we going to do so that this life isn't just a waste or a failure? So that we end in suicide or mental illness or tragedy. So now that we are here, 'where are we going? How are we going to get there?' This is the most important question for all of us who are yet alive. In short, we have our goal and we must travel to get there. Therefore there is the starting point for our traveling. There is the traveling itself and there it is the realization of the goal. We begin by knowing the Buddha, by understanding the Buddha.

If we speak in Buddhist terms we say, 'knowing the Buddha,' which has three levels of meaning. There is the historical Buddha. The Buddha who is, was a person whom you've all read about in the books. This is the first Buddha. This Buddha will help us to know the second Buddha, the Buddha who is not a person. The Buddha which is not a person, which is not historical or trapped within the limits of time. We call this Buddha 'the Dhamma Buddha,' the Buddha of Dhamma.

Then there is the third Buddha, the Buddha nature, the seed or state of Buddhahood within each of us. This is that potential in all of us which is preparing to be Buddha. So there are these three Buddhas to know. The historical Buddha who helps us to know the Dhamma Buddha. The Dhamma Buddha which was never born, never died, never lived in India. And then the seed of Buddha nature in each of us which is preparing, is in preparation to become Buddha. Many people have read the books about the Buddha's life. There are quite a number of them. And most people, when they have read these stories of the Buddha's life, they think that they know the Buddha. However, this is the feeling of someone who doesn't yet know the way things are.

This kind of knowing the Buddha really isn't really the essential issue of Buddhism. But this personal historical Buddha helps us to know the Dhamma Buddha which the historical Buddha was referring to, when he said:

"The one who sees the Dhamma, sees me; whoever see me, sees the Dhamma."

This Dhamma which needs to be known, which the way things are, this is the real Buddha. Seeing and knowing the Buddha means knowing this central truth at the heart of Buddhism. This is when one really knows the Buddha. It's

not sufficient to read some books or hear the stories about the life of the historical Buddha in India 2,600 years ago. To really know the Buddha, one must know the Dhamma. The words ‘life of the Buddha’ clearly indicate what we are trying to express here. The life of the Buddha is two things, it’s not just one thing. There is the life and there is the Buddha. And these two things are not the same. When we speak of ‘life’ or ‘the life,’ we are talking about a certain story, series of events, a narrative. Beginning with a birth and ending with a death of a person, a man who is called ‘the Buddha.’

This life is a narrative in time which is not the same as the Buddha. The Buddha is not just this series of events of a man being born in India and all the things that happened to him. We should be careful to understand the full meaning of the words ‘the life of the Buddha’ to see what the difference is. So by ‘life,’ we mean a series of events, the narrative of a certain person within time and space. But when we speak of ‘the Buddha,’ we are not talking about such a series of events or a narrative. The Buddha is a quality, the Buddha is a characteristic. It’s not some psycho-physical process. Buddha is a quality, an essence in nature which reveals the truth. The Buddha is that quality that reveals the truth.

The Buddha the man, the man whom we call ‘the Buddha,’ himself said the very important words,

“Whoever sees the Dhamma, sees me; whoever sees me, sees the Dhamma.”

And elsewhere he said,

“Whoever sees dependent origination, sees the Dhamma; whoever sees the Dhamma, sees dependent origination.”

What this means is, that the Buddha is anything that demonstrates, shows, indicates, points to, reveals the whole profound truth of dependent origination. Anything that reveals, that shows dependent origination, that is the essence, the true meaning of ‘Buddha.’ In short, please understand that seeing the Dhamma means seeing the Buddha. We don’t see or know the Buddha until we see the Dhamma. And seeing the Dhamma doesn’t mean reading some stuff in books, seeing the Dhamma means seeing the facts, experiencing for oneself the truth of dependent origination. Seeing dependent origination, one sees the Dhamma; seeing the Dhamma, one sees the real Buddha. And what this means in practice

is seeing directly, experiencing for oneself the reality of, dependent on various conditions, seeing the arising of dukkha.

Seeing that dukkha arises dependent on various conditions, this is called ‘conditioned arising,’ ‘dependent origination’ (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). And it is also seeing that, dependent on various conditions, dukkha quenches. The quenching of dukkha depends on various conditions. So seeing that the arising of dukkha, the quenching of dukkha happens through reliance, dependence on various causes and conditions.

We call this *paṭiccasamuppāda*, dependent origination or dependent arising. Though in fact it includes the dependent quenching of dukkha, but we don’t usually have a separate word for this. We can call it *paṭicca-nirodhā* but this is the word we’ve made up ourselves. It’s not a word that most Buddhists are familiar with. We just bring this up to point out that to really understand the truth of dependent origination means not only seeing how dukkha arises out of conditions, but seeing also how dukkha quenches due to conditions. This is what it is to see the Dhamma, to see the Buddha.

Although we use the word ‘quenching’ or sometimes ‘ceasing,’ ‘cessation.’ One must understand that this quenching arises. This quenching of dukkha arises, it appears, it manifests. So when we say ‘dependent arising,’ it includes the arising of quenching. Quenching is something that happens. It’s a reality that appears or arises. So when we speak of ‘arising,’ of ‘origination,’ we should understand that this is both the origination of dukkha as well as the origination of the quenching of dukkha. The meaning of the word ‘arising,’ of ‘originating’ is vast, one should not understand it in a limited way.

The problem is really in language. Words and language are always difficult and tricky. It is always easy to misunderstand and confuse things. This is the nature of all languages, even our mother tongues.

When a fire appears or is lit and then the fire is put out or quenched, and so we think these are totally opposite. The fire is lit, the fire is put out. These seem to be totally different things, but if we look more deeply, the lighting, the igniting of the fire and the putting out of the fire, both of these are arisings. Both of these are occurrences of reality. So we can speak of both of them as ‘arising.’ And the same is true when we speak of ‘dukkha.’ When dukkha is ignited by various conditions such as attachment, that is the arising of dukkha, and when dukkha is put out because the fuel is taken away, this quenching of dukkha is

the arising of the quenching of dukkha. The truth is the same in both cases. We're not talking about two different truths. It is the one truth of dependent arising. To know the Buddha, one also must know the relationship between the three Buddhas. The historical Buddha, Gautama Buddha, helps us to know the real Buddha, the Dhamma Buddha we have just been talking about. And this Dhamma Buddha, the eternal Buddha, helps us to see the seeds of Buddha, the Buddha nature which is preparing to blossom fully as a Buddha.

To know the Buddha we must also see how these three go together. How they are interrelated. When we see dependent origination, when we see this fact, we realize that, 'Hey, this is within us, this Dhamma, this Dhamma Buddha is within me, within every pore and cell of this body and mind.'

We see that it may be just a seed, the seed of Buddha, the Buddha seed. That it's just a seed. Or maybe it is a sprout. Maybe it has begun to sprout. But it is not yet a tree, a fully mature tree. But we see that this seed or sprout is in us. We see that this is the preparation Buddha, the preparing Buddha which, if developed and cared for, grows and becomes the real Buddha, a fully mature Buddha.

At a minimum, while you are here for this ten-day course, you ought to examine yourself, test yourself, to see whether this third Buddha is still just a seed. Is it just a seed which is still lying dormant or has it sprouted yet? Is the preparation Buddha in you? Is it sprouted yet? Or at a minimum, to use our time here in a worthwhile way, we should discover for ourselves whether this Buddha nature in us is still just a seed lying there waiting for things to happen, or has it actually sprouted and is beginning to truly practice and prepare, develop? Or has in fact this seed grown into a tree? A strong vigorous Buddha tree. This is something for each of us to examine in ourselves. So this is the starting point, knowing these three Buddhas as we have discussed.

Once we know them sufficiently, then we begin to travel. Our journey begins. Here, when we speak of 'traveling' or 'the journey,' we mean practicing *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness with breathing). This is what we mean here by 'the journey.' What exactly does this journey entail? What does this journey mean?

You have already heard many times that the basic principles of practice in Buddhism is *sīla*, the natural morality in harmony with ones surroundings, *samādhi*, meditation, developing the mind, and *paññā*, wisdom, understanding things as they really are. The path is the integration of these three components

of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. But many people fail to recognize how mindfulness with breathing is all three of these. And so this requires some consideration so that we are not confused by this matter.

Another thing with which you are very familiar is what we call ‘the Noble Eightfold Path.’ But unless you know the Noble Eightfold Path thoroughly and profoundly, then you may wonder what the Noble Eightfold Path has to do with mindfulness with breathing. You won’t be able to see that the Noble Eightfold Path is *in* *ānāpānasati*. So regarding morality, *samādhi*, and wisdom, as well as the Noble Eightfold Path, we must develop a proper understanding of this in relation to mindfulness with breathing.

Here *sīla* means ‘calm’ or ‘calmness.’ *Sīla* is calmness of body and speech and, of course, even mind. *Sīla* is calmness of body and speech. This means the ability to restrain our bodies and speech so that they are calm. The ability to do this is called *sīla*. In *ānāpānasati* we have this ability to restrain our bodies, our speech, so that they are truly peaceful. To put it directly, if there is no *sīla*, we can’t practice *ānāpānasati*.

If our bodies and speech are not calm, then there is no way we can do *ānāpānasati*. If we have been living life without morality, then we will not have calm bodies and calm speech. But if we are able to practice *ānāpānasati*, then we are able to restrain our bodies and speech so that they are calm.

Therefore *sīla* is inherent in *ānāpānasati*. One doesn’t really practice it. Even in the beginning stages there is, if we practice correctly, there is this peacefulness of body and speech. Thus *sīla* is inherent in mindfulness with breathing. The meaning of *samādhi* is the mind is focused on one object or a thing. This firm focus of the mind is what we mean by *samādhi* and there is one place where this is defined very clearly, that *samādhi* is the *ekaggatā citta* (the mind that has that single focus, the mind with a single focus). *Samādhi* is *ekaggatā citta* that has *Nibbāna* as its object. When the mind is focused on one, just one thing, and that one thing is *Nibbāna*, this is the perfect peace where there is no *dukkha*. That is the essence, that is the true meaning of *samādhi*. The Buddha pointed out the three qualities of *samādhi*. This mind with *samādhi* is pure or it’s clean. The mind is collected together and focused, firmly focused. And this mind is active in performing its duty. It’s totally ready. There is perfect activity in doing its duty.

These are the three qualities of real samādhi. This word ‘active’ here is very ancient, it’s being used even before the Buddha’s time. It’s very important in this context. When we say active, we mean that the mind is ready. It’s fully ready to do what it must do. This mind is agile, nimble, flexible, so that it can do, what has to be done. This perfect readiness, this preparedness, this agility, this nimbleness, sensitivity is what is meant by *kammanīya* (the activeness of the mind). This is the essential quality of samādhi, this mind that is active. Through practice one sees that obviously samādhi is there throughout the entire line of practice of ānāpānasati.

Next we will consider how *paññā*, how wisdom, seeing things clearly is included in mindfulness with breathing. Wisdom, *paññā* or understanding starts with looking. We really are beginning when we look. We look at ourselves, by ourselves, within ourselves. We look at ourselves, within ourselves, by ourselves until we see ourselves. When we see, see more and more deeply what we really are this leads to knowing. Knowing in an intuitive way, not in a verbal talkative way. This knowing, when we really know, we analyze, we investigate this knowing. We scrutinize this knowing until it is known thoroughly.

And then, what we need to do, what we must practice becomes clearer and clearer. This is what wisdom is. Looking, seeing, knowing, and then analyzing that until one knows what to practice. And then we practice, and then the results of practice occur. And the true fruits of practice, knowing that, is the final aspect of wisdom. Paññā then begins with looking. Until we know how to look, we have no wisdom. But then from looking, we begin to see. Seeing leads to knowing. When there is knowing, that can be thoroughly investigated, analyzed, scrutinized until we know what and how to practice.

Know how to practice means practicing and then there arise the true fruits of practice. Knowing, understanding all of this, seeing all of this clearly, directly for oneself, by oneself, is the meaning of wisdom, *paññā*. This word in Pāli *paññā*, or in the Thai pronunciation *panya*, has two parts. *Pa* and *ñā* – *ñā* means ‘to know,’ means ‘knowing’; *pa* means ‘correct’ and ‘thorough,’ *pa* is correct and thorough or comprehensive. So when we say *paññā* that we translated as ‘wisdom’ it means ‘correct and thorough knowing of what needs to be known’ or ‘correct, thorough, comprehensive wisdom.’ This is the meaning here of *paññā*. We like to translate *paññā* as ‘wisdom.’ This is the standard translation and people seem be quite happy with it. But what ‘wisdom’ means, what the meaning of this English word ‘wisdom’ is, is a good question. And it is your

responsibility to find out. If you want to translate *paññā* as ‘wisdom,’ one must check and see whether wisdom actually means *paññā*. Correct thorough, comprehensive, complete knowing, correct and thorough understanding. That’s what *paññā* means in Pāli. What ‘wisdom’ means in English, you have to sort out for yourselves. You can see for yourselves, without believing anyone else, that throughout the entire line of practice called *ānāpānasati*, there is *sīla*, this calmness through restraint, *samādhi*, the collected focused mind, and *paññā*, this correct and thorough understanding. All of these are included in *ānāpānasati* from the start until the end.

So it should no longer be a problem or question of how *ānāpānasati* is the path, is *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. Now we can consider for a while *ānāpānasati* in light of the Noble Eightfold Path.

First, *sammā ditṭhi* (right view, right understanding) has induced you to practice *ānāpānasati*. Right view has pulled you into this practice and as long as we are practicing properly, right view is always there.

Next is *sammā sankappa* which must be translated ‘right aspiration.’ This means that our want, that what we want or that our intention is correct, is in harmony with Dhamma. This right desire, this right want, this right intention or aspiration to practice *ānāpānasati* of course must be there if we are to practice, as we should.

Next is *sammā vācā* (right speech). Most people realize that in meditation we are not speaking. We shouldn’t be speaking, but if one does speak for some reason, that is, if one does speak, that speech will be correct, will be appropriate. Or although we may not speak outwardly, if we are speaking inside, if we speak within the mind, then that speech will be correct, it will be peaceful, it will be useful, it won’t create any problems.

Next is *sammā kammanta* (right action). *Ānāpānasati* itself is about as right as an action can be. To practice *ānāpānasati* is in itself right action, action for the sake of quenching dukkha. Or if one has *ānāpānasati* and one acts in other way, then that whatever action it will be, will be correct. If one really has *ānāpānasati* in acting, then the action will always be for the sake of ending dukkha. Our actions will not create more dukkha. So in *ānāpānasati* there is always right action.

Next is *sammā ājīva* which is usually translated ‘right livelihood.’ But please don’t understand *sammā ājīva* in a narrow way. Many people think this just means our means, our way we earn a living, our job, our profession, the way we feed our stomachs and earn money. This is a far too narrow understanding of *sammā ājīva*.

It really means right maintenance of life. It’s the way we establish and maintain our lives. All the things we do to maintain our life, to continue life, this is what is meant by right livelihood, *sammā ājīva*. It’s not just one’s job or one’s profession.

When there is *ānāpānasati*, everything we do to maintain life is correct. We won’t do anything that exploits or oppresses others, our own bodies or whatever. So in *ānāpānasati* we are maintaining, we are already doing something very wonderful for maintaining life. And any other actions or things we do to maintain life that come from *ānāpānasati* will be correct, will be non-violent, non-oppressive.

Next is *sammā vāyāma* (right effort). To try, to persevere correctly. But this right effort ought to include the word ‘struggle.’ It means the right struggle of life to always move forward, to develop itself higher and higher. This struggle to evolve more highly, more perfectly towards the goal of life. This is what we should mean the by *sammā vāyāma*. It includes daring, to dare, to try – to dare to do what needs to be done. This daring to struggle, to always try, to move forward in this struggle of life. To do so rightly is part of *ānāpānasati*. *Ānāpānasati* is a very powerful way to struggle, to always move forward in life. So when there is *ānāpānasati*, there is this right struggle or right effort.

Next is *sammā sati* (right mindfulness) which we really don’t have to explain at all. It is obvious that *ānāpānasati* is *sammā sati* itself. *Sammā sati* is to govern the mind so that it is always attentive. The mind is always present correctly to what needs to be attended to. Always attending to life itself, always being fully present, aware. This *sammā sati* is *ānāpānasati* itself. In all levels, from every possible angle of *sammā sati*. We find it from *ānāpānasati*, mindfulness with breathing.

The eighth aspect of the path is *sammā samādhi* (right concentration). Concentration here is the mind that is focused and rightly established. It’s rightly established. It’s firm. It’s secure. This mind that has been established and secured is what we mean by *sammā samādhi*. When there is this right focus

and this right security, securing of mind, then the mind continually sees things more and more clearly. Sees things more and more, as they really are. The mind develops, progresses in seeing things as they are. We could say that the mind progressively sees the Buddha, the personal Buddha, the Dhamma Buddha, and then the Buddha nature – sees this more and more deeply, more and more thoroughly, more and more correctly. This is what happens when there is *sammā samādhi*. One most important thing to understand is that this Eightfold Path is one, it's one single path. What this means when we speak of 'eight factors,' or 'eightfold,' we don't mean that these are eight things. These are not eight separate things. It's one thing with eight aspects or this one thing has these eight factors, these eight folds within it. This means that our practice must encompass all eight of these factors. But they must be brought together, integrated, harmonized as one.

As long as we see them as eight factors, we haven't really seen the Path. The Path is one, it's one path leading to one goal practiced by one person. This single path leading to this single goal of a single practitioner. It's all one. Can't separate these things and until it is one, we haven't really understood this path. So this one path, all eight aspects of this one path are there in *ānāpānasati*. So these are the things we need to understand about how *ānāpānasati* and the path are the same. Now if eight meant 'eight paths,' if there were eight things, that meant there were eight paths and it is impossible to walk all eight paths at once. So obviously, if we think of eight different things, it's impossible to do them all. But if it's one path where these eight come together – they never were separate anyway unless we are confused – but when the eight are together as one path, that is something we can walk, we can follow, we can practice.

So whether we speak of it in terms of the three *sikkhā* (the three trainings) of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* or we speak of the Noble Eightfold Path, it's not the name that is important, what matters is that we can practice it. That it is real. And if it's real, we can do it, we can travel this path and it will take us to the goal. The important thing is that we can practice it, that it is practicable. It's quite a pity that in Thailand, this very Thailand, we still hear this explained incorrectly. We very frequently hear the words *mak paet* or *mak*. *Mak*, path, *paet*, eight. The eight paths. Over and over again, we hear people saying 'eight paths, eight paths' which is just to butcher the Pāli meaning, which is literally and clearly one path with eight factors, one path with eight folds. So we can call it 'the eight-factored path,' 'the eightfold path.' Please remember these words

correctly. It should never be eight paths or three paths or even two. It's one path with eight factors, eight folds, eight aspects.

Now we come to the third thing, 'arriving.' There are three, there is starting, there is traveling and then arriving. Now we will consider to what or in what do we arrive? What is the arriving here? In arriving there are various benefits. These benefits are of two kinds. There are worldly benefits and transcendent benefits.

By worldly benefits, we mean benefits for living in this world, for dealing with the worldly situations of this world, to be able to do that without... that is one benefit, one sort of benefit.

And then there is the transcendent benefit. 'Transcendent' means to go beyond, to be above, beyond the world. The transcendent benefits are to not have any problems regarding this world. 'To be beyond the world' means that nothing in the world is a problem for us. So in arriving, we receive both kinds of benefits. Arriving at these worldly benefits, being able to live in this world and arriving at the transcendent benefits of being above any problem regarding the world.

In Thai the words are very simple *nai-lok* (in-world) and *nuea-lok* (above-world). It's very simple. In English we have seen that they have the words 'mundane' and 'supra-mundane' or 'ultra-mundane,' which comes from Latin and, of course, the literal meaning is exactly the same. In Pāli it's *lokiya* (in-world, having to do with the world, regarding the world) and *lokuttara*. *Uttara* means 'above,' 'beyond.' So exactly the same meaning as 'supra-mundane.'

One, there are these both kinds of benefits, the mundane benefits of living in this world without any problems, all problems regarding living in this world are finished, are taken care of, and this supra-mundane, *lokuttara* benefits, there are no more problems about being above the world. So all of these are the benefits of arriving at the goal.

This point we can summarize by returning to the question we brought up at the beginning. Why were you born? For what purpose were you born? If one has realized these worldly and transcendent benefits, then one will be able to answer this question immediately.

We will emphasize that the real question is – now that we are born, here we are born into this world and now that we are born, what are we going to do? The

answer to this will be obvious, we'll have no doubts about how to respond, when we have arrived at both the mundane and supra-mundane benefits. Anāpānasati is the path we travel. When we have traveled it all the way then we will arrive at these benefits. And then we know what we are doing here, what this life is for.

Now we look in some detail at what these benefits mean. First, on the worldly level. In terms of worldly things, our studies – all of us especially when young undergo studies – there are no more problems regarding our studies. We can undergo them and succeed in them. Then we have the work of our lives. All of us have some function to perform for the benefit of society. We can perform this work without any problems.

And then all the other duties and responsibilities of worldly life, families, friends, communities, all the duties we must perform in ordinary life. There won't be any problems in doing so. These are the worldly benefits that we carry out and successfully fulfill. Our studies, our work and all the duties and responsibilities of our lives in this world without any problems.

In ancient India, they have a very interesting word. This has a very surprising meaning, this word is *jīvita saṃvohāra* which means, we can translate it 'the business of life,' or 'commerce through life.' What we mean by 'commerce through life' or 'business through life,' it's like our lives are an investment. You think of life as a business and we have these lives that we are given. This is our basic investment and then we trade, we work, we exchange, we sell and buy and trade and all that so that we are constantly getting a return from our investment, so that this life is growing and developing always until we develop this life as far as we can.

All of us have been given these lives by nature. All of us have these lives and we can invest our lives. And then in order to get the maximum return, to get the most out of life that is possible. This is what is meant by 'the commerce through life' or 'business of life,' *jīvita saṃvohāra* – to invest one's life in the best possible way in order to get the most that is possible from our lives. To put it a little more directly, nature has given us life as a basic stake or investment or you can say, God has given us life in the form of an investment. When we are born these lives that we were given are not yet profits, we don't see life as just some profit we have been handed, but life is the basic investment and then it is up to us to invest life properly, to take this investment and make the most of it.

This is what we are here for. Or at least, we have been given these basic stakes, this basic capital and now it's up to us whether we invest it or not, whether we invest it properly. If we don't invest this basic capital, then there is no way we'll make any profit for life, we'll just get some capital and then that's all. And if we go through life without investing properly, without this commerce or business of life being developed, then there is no profit in life which is the same as saying, 'we have wasted our life.' We haven't really gotten anything out of this basic capital.

So the thing to do of course is to make the most of this capital, to invest it, to reinvest it, to trade, to do business until we have increased our original stake as much as we can. To do this, we practice Dhamma. To make the most on this is to practice Dhamma as we have been discussing all along.

We hope that you are very successful in this business of life so that you get the most profit from life. All of that has to do with the worldly benefits of the path.

Now let's look at the transcendent, the *lokuttara* aspects. This is easy to see just by taking the word *lokuttara*, to be beyond the world. What is it? Just think about the meaning, to be beyond the world, above the world. This is to be above all the problems of the world. There is nothing in this world that is a problem for us anymore. There is just none of the old problems, are problems anymore.

The world cannot be a problem in any way for us. This is what it means to be above the world or beyond the world. To be beyond all the problems of the world.

Or we can use some words that are little more modern, the term 'materialism' and the term 'spiritualism.' We have already looked at the materialistic benefits, the worldly benefits. And then there are the spiritualistic benefits and we should receive these abundantly on the highest possible level. So we will give this some more consideration. We can say that in this world, there is just the positive & the negative. Everything in the world comes down to the positive & the negative. The positive makes us laugh and the negative makes us cry.

When our minds are still caught in the world, then we are laughing & crying, laughing & crying, endlessly. Our life is just laughing & crying, laughing & crying. But when we are above the world or beyond the world, then

we don't have to laugh and we don't have to cry. We are free of all this laughing & crying, laughing & crying. This is the highest spiritual benefit. In terms of the mind this is the supreme benefit. Not having to laugh & cry all the time. The world is positive & negative for us. For us the world is positive & negative. And this is the reason for all the struggles, all the busyness, all the confusion, all the problems, all the hassles of our lives.

But there is a way, there is a method, a means to end, to remove the positive & the negative from the world, to free the world and ourselves from positive & negative. This means would take us a few more hours to explain so we will save that for some other time. But we want to point out to you that there is a way to be free of positive & negative so it has no more power over us.

We hope that you will be interested in a life that is beyond positive & negative. Totally liberated from, emancipated from positive & negative. The word 'free' has no meaning. There is no such thing as freedom until one is free of positive & negative. This is the only true freedom in this world. We hope that this is something you are interested in. If you are interested in being beyond positive & negative, in the highest spiritual benefit, then one will be able to start the journey. One will be able to make the journey and eventually one will arrive to this highest benefit, to be free of positive & negative. We hope this is something of genuine interest to you all.

In Buddhism we have a fundamental principle to study, to lead us ever forward in life. This is the principle of Nibbāna (coolness). Now when we investigate Nibbāna, there are two aspects of Nibbāna that we can look into.

The first, we want to explain this technically or literally, but we will get to the essential meaning. The first kind is where there is coolness, where there is still positive & negative, where things are still positive & negative for you but this positive & negative can't do anything to you.

Things are still positive & negative but that can't do anything to you. The positives & negative are no problems for you. This is one level of Nibbāna. Then there is the Nibbāna where there is no positive & negative at all, where one is totally free of positive & negative. This is an important principle to study. There is the Nibbāna, the coolness, where positive & negative can't do anything to you and there is a Nibbāna where there is no positive & negative at all.

Think about that. Go into that, see how marvelous, how wonderful that would be, where there is no more positive & negative. Please consider this deeply. There is one extra little point to make that, when we speak on the *lokuttara*, the transcendent level, things are quite a bit different. They are the opposite of how things seem on the worldly plane. Our worldly perspectives look at things one way, but when we look from the transcendent level or perspective it's the opposite. So when we talk of 'arriving,' it means you don't have to go anywhere. The arriving we have been speaking of doesn't mean you had to go someplace. Or when we talk of 'going,' it doesn't mean you need walk, it's not like you have to go from here to there.

Arriving doesn't require going. Or if we talk about traveling, it doesn't mean moving someplace else. This is how it works on the above the world level – it's not a level, it's just when things are above the world, that's how it turns out. What this means is that, instead of the going, the walking, the travel, it's not moving our bodies from one place to another. One just stays right here but uses Dhamma to overcome ignorance, the not-knowing, the not-understanding things as they are, or even the foolishness that we accumulate. We get rid of that through Dhamma. We use Dhamma, especially *ānāpānasati*, to let go of all the ignorance, confusion, foolishness, stupidity.

When there is no *avijjā*, no ignorance, when all misunderstanding, all lack of understanding has been released, then you don't have to go anywhere. Nibbāna will come all by itself. You don't have to go looking for Nibbāna. Nibbāna will find you when there is nothing blocking it. The only reason Nibbāna can't find you is because there is something in its way. Remove that something, remove that something and Nibbāna will find you immediately.

See, on the transcendent level this is how things work. You don't have to go anywhere. The arriving isn't a moving. You have already arrived. It's just a matter of... We can summarize the discussion by saying that we will have a life which is cool and useful. The life will be cool and beneficial. This is the result of practice.

Notice that there are two things. One, life is cool. There are no more problems for this life. But just being cool that doesn't do much good. But when the result is also that this life is also of great benefit for everyone. If life isn't of any use to anyone, then what good is it? But when life is cool, it can also be of the highest benefit, can be most useful for all sides, for everyone. This is what it

is to arrive, when life is cool and of benefit to everyone. So there is starting, and there is walking, and there is arriving – arriving at the goal of a life that is cool and of benefit to all. Fools say that Buddhism is only for saving oneself. People who are quite stupid claim that Buddhism is just the way to save one's own skin, to end one's own suffering. These are the words of someone who does not understand the facts.

Buddhism teaches how to save oneself, that is true, but the salvation or the liberation of Buddhism is one that benefits everyone else also. In this liberation all others are liberated as well. So one should not look at Buddhism with prejudice or with narrow opinions. One should try to understand that the correct goal of Buddhism is not just saving one's own skin. Not just freeing oneself of one's own problems. The goal of Buddhism is to liberate oneself from dukkha and to liberate all others. In short, life is cool. Life no longer bites its owner. The positive & the negative in this world don't bite the owner of life, the one who lives. Greed, hatred, anger, fear, confusion, doubt, envy, jealousy, possessiveness, worry, anxiety, guilt, boredom, excitement none of these can bite one ever again.

This is what it means to 'arrive at the goal.' Life no longer bites its owner.

We will end with a sentence which you may or may not understand, which you will probably have to investigate further. But when one has really arrived, then life no longer has an owner. Life isn't the owner of anything, nor is life owned by anything. This is what it is all about. When life is no owner, life has no owner. This is to fully arrive in voidness, total freedom, where there is no need to laugh and to cry anymore, where nothing can own life, nothing can be owned, nothing is owned by life. There is just life. Life that has been given by nature.

This gift of the universe, life, is developed to get the most out of the original investment. But there is no more owner. There's nothing owned. This is what it is to arrive. To really arrive. If you don't understand now. Don't worry about it. One day you will understand. If you continue investigating and practicing Dhamma as we have been considering here, then one day you will understand. There is no need to worry about it. Just keep trying. Keep trying to practice Dhamma and one day you'll understand.

Thank you all for listening. We hope that you have enjoyed it. Thank you all for being such good and patient listeners.

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Transcribed by Guykaro Metta (*guykaro_metta@fellowdesigns.com*) in May-Aug. 2015
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