

# *The Buddhist Way of Life*

by Ajahn Buddhādāsa

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

A Dhamma lecture given at Suan Mokkh on 5 January 1991

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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](http://www.suanmokkh.org) and [www.bia.or.th](http://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](mailto:suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com))*

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Visitors, although you may have come here as tourists, we welcome you as pilgrims. At this beginning stage, allow us to develop an understanding of certain basic points before going on. First of all, we'd like to express our happiness that you have come here in this way – namely, in search of Dhamma. Second, let us thank all of you for giving us an opportunity to use time in a beneficial way. You don't have to thank us. Rather we want to thank you, because you have given me an opportunity to do something useful with my time.

Further, all of you will help this Dhamma which is truly useful to spread more quickly through the world. As for this thing we call 'Dhamma,' it's the thing that will be of the greatest benefit, will be most helpful and useful in our lives. Next, we'd like to spend a little time considering why it is we choose to speak at 5 a.m. On the personal level, this is the only time of the day that I have much energy and strength to speak, and then as for you, this is the time when your minds are most open and ready to listen. The rest of the day I'm quite weak, don't have much energy. This is a good time for me. It's also a good time for you.

While the majority of people use this time to find a little happiness and pleasure from sleeping, we use this time for the highest kind of study there is in life. This time just before dawn is the time when the Buddha awakened to Buddhahood. And in nature, this is the time when many flowers are blooming, are opening up. Now they're either starting to open, or they're getting ready to open.

Another way of looking at it which is a bit teasing, is to say that this is the time of day when your tea cups aren't yet overflowing. There's still room to bring in something new. There's some space in the mind for something new and different, unlike later in the day when our teacups are filled to the top, and anything new just overflows and is wasted. If you study this carefully, you'll notice that the world of 5 a.m. has certain special qualities about it. This special world of 5 a.m. is a time that's very naturally and easily useful, and so let's make the most of this special world of 5 a.m.

Now there are some miscellaneous matters to discuss. First of all, for the time that you've come to stay with us, while you're resting here along your journey, we ask that you use this time as a kind of training or use it for training yourself, especially to train yourself in being as close and intimate with nature as possible. What we mean is that you must live in the most simple and plain way as possible. When your way of living is very simple and ordinary, very plain, then this will help you to be close to nature. However, this plain living requires a certain amount of self-discipline. To live in the most simple and plain way requires quite a bit of self-discipline on our own part.

With this self-discipline there's necessary that we have some structure, a bit of order, or even some rules. The bhikkhus, the men who have shaved their head and put on the robes to follow the Buddha's example, these bhikkhus, they have quite a few rules which they voluntarily undertake for the purpose of self-discipline. And then Buddhist laymen, Buddhist laywomen, also take on a certain kind of structure and discipline, which can be written down in rules for easy access. This is a very useful practice, if we use it wisely.

So as you are living here, please exercise self-control. Control yourselves within the discipline that we have developed here through experimentation and adaptation to this kind of retreat situation. Please exercise self-control within the discipline that is requested of everyone. In eating, in resting, in working, in our meeting together, and all the other things that we do, please live and do these things in the way that it is most correct and fit for the study and practice of Dhamma. Control oneself in a way where one's living is correct, in terms of our study and investigation of Dhamma.

The lesson that can't be avoided, which is very crucial here, whether you see it as a kind of self-control or however, is the lesson of doing everything with *suññatā*, doing everything in voidness. What this means is, whatever it is you need to do – waking up, going to the bathroom, eating, walking, sitting, and most

of all, meditating – whatever it is you do, do it in voidness, do it free of ego. Whatever we do, there’s no need to drag ego into it, to label our activities as ‘me, me, mine, mine.’ But to do all things, to live throughout the day in voidness, in *suññatā*, the mind where we’re not labeling and discriminating things in terms of ‘self,’ in terms of ‘me.’ This lesson is what you could call the highest form of self-control.

The reason for this lesson is so that we use all of our time, throughout the entire day, as study, as learning. What we want to do is make all of life our classroom, so that we never leave the classroom, so that we’re always learning and becoming wiser. So even in the morning, on your walk over from the meditation center to Suan Mokkh, we want that to be a kind of lesson. It’s a classroom the whole way that you’re walking here, because when we are investigating the lesson of voidness, even while walking, then every moment is learning. We call this ‘walking *suññatā*.’ Or ‘void-walking,’ ‘walking-voidness.’ And the meaning is that the whole time that we are walking, the mind is void or free from ego. To walk without an ego, without any self, any ‘me,’ but just to walk in a fully alive and natural way, without the clutter and confusion of ‘me’ and ego. There’s just lifting the feet and stepping, lifting and stepping, the legs moving naturally, with a natural grace and skill, which doesn’t require any ‘me,’ any ego. So we practice this lesson of void-walking. There’s merely the natural movements of the body, the body moving according to certain impulses and the response to the situation. There’s just this natural movement of walking. There aren’t any thoughts, or any concepts of ‘me,’ of ‘self,’ of ‘ego,’ but just purely natural walking in this walking-voidness.

Whether you’re standing or sitting, eating, defecating, or whatever – all of these are just natural movements of the body. Let them be just that, just simple, natural movements, without adding any ego, any ‘me.’ Whether here or at the meditation center, this is all we need to practice – breathing, standing, sitting, walking, eating, just as natural movements of the body, without any ‘me,’ without any self. We can call this ‘the Buddhist way of life’ – to live always in or with, through this voidness. Where there’s life, fully awake and responsive, but there’s no ego, no ‘me.’ To live in this voidness, we can call ‘the Buddhist way of life.’

Now when we speak of a way of life, then it’s necessary to understand what life is. We need to understand this adequately, or we could even say as much as possible. Now this word ‘life’ can be given different explanations and meanings,

which can be ambiguous or even confusing. So let's take a little time to explore the meaning and the usefulness of this word 'life.' What is life?

There are two basic meanings to life. One meaning is that life is something borrowed from nature. We can see life as something which nature has lent to us, to be developed and used as skillfully as possible. Another meaning is to see life is something that happens of and by itself. Life just happens. This is another way to look at it. So either life as something borrowed from nature or as something that happens in and of itself.

The Buddhist understands that life is something borrowed from nature, or that nature has lent to us, in order that we can develop it in the way we feel is best and most useful. And the Buddhist also is always ready to return life to its source, to hand it back to nature. Always the Buddhist is ready to allow life to return to nature, to its owner. There's no need to cling to it as being 'me' or 'mine.' Others might not see life as something borrowed, but may see life as some kind of existence or being, in itself. However people want to look at it is their prerogative, their privilege, but the important thing is that whichever way we look at life, we have some way to let go of it, to stop clinging to it as being 'me' and 'mine.'

Now when we see life as being something borrowed, then it's necessary for us to be very honest about this fact. If life has been lent to us, then we should not go and appropriate it. We must avoid being corrupt and deceitful. We all know what it's like, how some people, when they borrow something, after they a while, they start to pretend it's their own. And they find ways to avoid giving it back to the rightful owner. We must do the same with life – do not appropriate it in a corrupt and dishonest way, but see by which means to not go and seize it as being 'me' or 'mine.' Nature lends us life in order that life can be developed. And nature doesn't charge any interest or doesn't force us to pay a bribe to get the loan in the first place. It's an interest free loan, no strings attached, as long as we don't renege on the loan, we don't default on our loan by going and claiming that 'this is me, this is mine.' And then we can develop life to the highest level; we can make the most out of this loan from nature.

And so this lesson, while walking over from the center, is to practice just this point – to walk as a life that is borrowed, to recognize with every step that life is borrowed, that we're not the owner. We're just borrowing it to make use of it. And so every step and every breathe while we walk, is void of 'me,' void of ego. There's just void-walking, walking in voidness. And it's the same with standing, sitting, bathing, eating, defecating, and all the other necessary and natural

activities of life. Studying this lesson that life is borrowed, that there's no 'me,' no 'mine,' involved. Whenever we take life to be 'me,' or 'mine,' then we are dishonest. We become corrupt. We become thieves, criminals even. But whenever we don't take life to be 'mine,' whenever there is just life, and there's no 'me' or 'mine' attached to it, then we are honest, upright, honest, decent human beings.

Now we'll consider what it is that has been borrowed. According to the Buddha's teaching, what we have borrowed are elements. The Pāli word is *dhātu*. In Thai, it's pronounced *thaat*, which can be translated as 'natural elements.' This is what has been borrowed. There's the earth element, the water element, the wind element, and the fire element. There is space element, and there is consciousness element. These six elements are what have been borrowed from nature.

The Earth element is the element which takes up space, the element which has area and dimensions. So it's the basic structure or foundation on which the other elements act. The water element is the element that holds things together. It's what connects and hold things together, so it's often called cohesion. The water element is this cohesiveness that holds things together, especially which holds the earth element together.

The fire element is the element of combustion. It's a kind of burning or combustion, and it's through this combustion that change is possible; this allows new things to develop. This is the element of fire. No matter what the temperature of the fire element, it always has the quality of burning, of combustion. If there's a high temperature, then there's a lot of combustion. If there's a low temperature, then there's a little combustion. But even the lowest temperature, there is still some combustion. This quality of burning, of combustion, is always present in the fire element.

And then there's the wind element. The wind element is the element that spreads or expands; you can call it the element of expansion. Just like gasses – gasses have this movement within them, this constant expansion against their container. And so the wind element is like a gas, which is this quality of expansion. And in this, there is constant movement. This is the element that makes movement possible. The wind element is the element of expansion and movement.

These first four elements are the physical structure of life. Next is the fifth element, which is called *ākāsa-dhātu* (the space element). For the first four

elements to exist, there must be space to receive them. This space in which the other elements can manifest and exist is the fifth element, the space element. It's kind of the opening or the free space that allows the other elements to manifest.

Most people don't think that emptiness has any value or that space is of any value. This is very, very narrow and foolish thinking. In fact space or emptiness has tremendous value. For example, to sit on the bench, it has to be empty. The bench is of no value to you unless it is empty. That's only because there is space, there's some free space, can you make use of the bench. Or a glass. If a glass didn't have some emptiness, what good is it for you? It's of no value as a glass. You can't put water into it, you can't drink out of it. But it's only when there is space that things can have value for us. So the person who looks at things more carefully recognizes that space has incredible value.

If you look well you'll see that without space, there would be no world. This world, all of this existence, can only exist because of space. If there wasn't any space, where would you sit? How could you eat? How could you breathe? It's only through space that everything can happen. It's the container of all the other elements.

The sixth element is called *viññāṇa-dhātu* (the element of consciousness). This element is not physical like the first four. You can call it the mental element or even the spiritual element. Rather than being something physical, something that is known or is experienced, it's the element which knows things. *Viññāṇa* means to know clearly, to know distinctly, to be conscious of something. So this element of being conscious is the element that allows us to experience, to feel, to know things – only through consciousness element is experience possible.

So the elements come in three sets or groups. The first four elements are the physical elements, the material elements, and then the last one is the spiritual element. And then the fifth, the space element, this you can't call it physical, and you can't call it spiritual. We can't discriminate it one way or another. And so this is the third element. Because it depends on what it's serving, if it's serving the physical elements or the spiritual element. So we don't discriminate it either way.

So these six elements are life. You can say that we borrow these six elements from nature, or you can say that we borrow life from nature. All together, these are the things that we borrow. And the Buddhist is always studying and being

aware of this fact that life are just these six elements, which have been borrowed from nature.

Now there's some people that feel that these elements, that life, belongs to itself rather than seeing life as borrowed from nature. Life is seen as its own life, belonging to life, existing in and through life. Now what you should consider is which of these two approaches is of most benefit in terms of first, morality. Which way of looking at life will allow us to have the morality which will bring peace to the world? A real kind of morality will result in peace amongst people, and between humans and the rest of the world. And then on the second level, which way of looking at life will lead to the understanding of truth on the highest level, the kind of understanding that will free us, will free mind from all *dukkha*, from all suffering and entrapment?

So one side is to understand life as borrowed from nature, and on the other is to understand life as something that belongs to itself, exists in itself. Now we don't need to try to judge or compare which is right, which is wrong, which is true, and which is false. That's not important. All we need to ask is, which is most useful? Which way of looking at life will allow us to be free, to be free on the highest spiritual level – seeing life as borrowed from nature or seeing life as something that belongs to itself? Whichever way we look at it will have its consequences, will lead to a different way of thinking about life. We should consider then which way of viewing life will enable us to be free of *dukkha*.

You are completely free to choose whichever approach you prefer. I am not trying to force you, or compel, or even beg you to choose one way over the other. Now as we said, Buddhists look at it from the perspective that life is something borrowed, and this is something that I can explain and discuss in many ways, the way of life that follows from such a perspective. But this doesn't mean that you have to agree with this or whatever. We don't really care which way you look at it. That's up to you, whatever you prefer.

Since we follow the approach of seeing life as something borrowed from nature, we'll then continue to discuss and think about life in that way, since this is the way we use. So we'll be considering life – when life is something that is borrowed from nature, then how can we develop it? How are we to develop life so that it's most useful, so that we get the best benefits from life, or we can say, so that life is correct? What is the most correct benefits to receive from this life which is borrowed?

If you view life as something which is borrowed, then your coming here, coming to the meditation center, then is to learn how to investigate how to develop this life. What is the best way, the most efficient way to develop life, so that it is both correct and in time? If your developing is too slow, you'll die before you get anywhere, and so our developing must be efficient enough so it brings results while we're still breathing.

You have the freedom to choose whether you will take life as something borrowed or something that belongs to itself, that is its own. But there's one other fact we want you to be aware of. If you decide incorrectly or if you chose wrong, then life will bite you. You won't be able to develop life, you won't be able to do much with it, and it will bite you. So be very careful how you chose.

So consider, in the most free and independent way, right now, is your life being bitten? Right now, is life being bitten, or is it free of something that you would call biting? An easy test is to ask yourself – is love biting? Or have you ever been bitten by love? How much has love bitten you in the past? Is anger biting you? Have you ever been bitten by anger? Does hatred bite? How many times have you been bitten by hatred? How does this burn and scorch one? Does fear – and we mean foolish, ignorant fear – does this bite? Have you ever been bitten by this before, by fear? Then what about excitement. How many times have you been bitten by excitement?

Still we love to find excitement, to search for adventure and excitement, so that it can bite us. Have you ever looked at excitement in this way before? Have you looked at excitement as something which bites? Does it bite you? What about anxiety and worry about the future? Wishing, hoping and being anxious about things that haven't happened? Does this ever bite you? Are we able to work in a way that there's no worry or anxiousness about the future? Can you do this? Can you work so there's absolutely no worry? Can we live in a way that we don't need hope or wishing, but instead live with mindfulness and understanding? Can we live with mindfulness and wisdom, rather than with hopes and wishes? Eventually you can see for yourself whether worry and anxiety about the future bites, and how often, and how hard it has bitten us already.

Next is longing after the past, missing things and not being able to get them out of your mind – past things that you just can't leave alone, you're stuck on them, longing after them. Does this bite? These things which have past, which are behind us – we don't really want to drag them around with us, but we're



unable to forget them. They've bound themselves to us. Does having to drag all this past along with us, does that bite?

Another one which is particularly wicked and harmful is envy – envy where we don't want others to be as good as us, or we don't even want them to be good at all. Anybody who does anything as good as or better than us, we envy them. We don't want them to develop. We don't want them to be better or even to be happy. This kind of destructive thinking, always wanting the worst for others, is envy. Has it ever bitten you? If this world had no envy, this world would have no wars. Is this true? Look right here, look at one's self – when we're envious of someone, who does it bite? The other person doesn't even know. The envy doesn't bother them, but it's biting our heart all the time.

The next is jealousy or possessiveness. You've got something, and you're jealous of it; you don't want anyone else to use it. You've got something, and you're afraid your friends might ask to borrow or somebody might want to share it. This stinginess or miserliness, this is jealousy. In Thai, this ordinary kind of jealous, possessiveness is called *huang*, but there's another word, *hueng*, which is this jealousy and possessiveness about the opposite sex. So we could call it 'sexual jealousy' – the way you feel about your husband, wife, or lover, your boyfriend or girlfriend. You don't want another man to look at your wife or even think about your wife. You don't want another woman to even get near your husband. If he smiles at somebody, you want to kill somebody – it's either her or him. People actually go around killing each other because of this sexual jealousy, and still it doesn't go away.

Now you might think of better words for describing these things that we're talking about. We're using words that occur to us. But you need to examine these things for yourself, and then chose the words that suit your own experience and understanding. But we'll review them and you can consider how they bite.

The first is love which is foolish; love which is blind. Second is anger. With this one, we don't have to specify that it comes from stupidity, because everybody knows that anger is always stupid. Third is hatred. Fourth, fear. Fifth, excitement. Sixth, worry about the future. Seventh is longing after, always remembering the past. Eight is envy. Nine is ordinary jealousy. And ten is this special sexual jealousy and possessiveness.

There are a whole lot more, but these ten are enough to get the picture. Consider these things well. Do they bite you? Have you ever been bitten by these

ten examples? And the other things like them. The life which isn't properly developed will get bitten by these things over and over again. Therefore development means to make life so that it never gets bit. And now we're going to consider with what are we going to develop life with. What are we going to use to develop life?

When you came here, were you looking for something with which to develop life? So when asking ourselves, what are we going to use to develop life? If we give a short, concise, precise, simple, straightforward answer, there's just one word – 'Dhamma.' Dhamma's the only thing we need to develop life. Dhamma has so many meanings that we could never list them all. We probably couldn't even count them. But right now we only need one meaning, the one most appropriate for the situation. And this is that Dhamma is the correctness, the appropriateness, the fitness for developing life. Dhamma is to be correct, to be fit, perfectly fit for developing life, or for making life free of dukkha.

A while back some scholars in England, especially the ones who were trying to translate the Buddha's scriptures, tried to find the best translation for Dhamma. They had the idea that every word has to be translated into English. They ended up with thirty-eight different translations for the word Dhamma, and then they still weren't finished or certain which was the best one. It's not even worth the trouble of translating. It's better not to translate it – just the word, Dhamma. This ancient Indian word is better left untranslated, but slowly come to understand its different meanings, all its different aspects.

And we ought to use the most precise and clear term that we can find, and the one that I would like to recommend is the term 'Buddha-Dhamma.' Buddha-Dhamma. The Dhamma of the ones who know. Buddha means the knowing, the being awake, and so this is the Dhamma of being awake, of knowing things as they really are. This is more precise and clear than just Dhamma, to use the term Buddha-Dhamma. But most of you are used to the word 'Buddhism.' We, however, don't like this word, this 'ism.' This 'ism' has a smell of being some kind of philosophy, or of depending on some authorities, or holy books, or priests, or something. So we don't like the word 'ism,' this 'ism.' It's not a very nice or attractive word. We think the word Buddha-Dhamma is much more attractive and lovable.

Some people like the term *Buddhasāsana*, the religion of the Buddha, but this term is kind of, it's a little too vague, it kind of spreads a little too far, gets into things that really aren't of much value to us. The word 'Buddha-Dhamma' sticks

with the essentials, with the basics. Now Buddha-Dhamma can come in the form of what you study, what you learn and then study, which is called *pariyatti-dhamma*. It also comes in the form of what you commit to, the thing that one commits to, and so practices, that which we incorporate more and more fully into our life, which is called *paṭipatti-dhamma*. And then also Buddha-Dhamma comes in the form of that which is realized, that which we come to know more and more deeply through our own direct, immediate experience, which is called *paṭivedha-dhamma*.

So Buddha-Dhamma comes in these three forms. The form that is study, the form that is committed to and incorporated into our life, and the form that is realized through immediate experience. Over at the center, you can meet with all three forms of Buddha-Dhamma. There are the times when your instructors are teaching you about the Dhamma, and so then you meet with the Dhamma that we study, that we learn about. And then there are the other times where you take what you've heard, and you put it into practice. You start to bring it into your own reality, to make it live – that's that aspect. Then there are the times when you realize that life is more cool, more peaceful. So the realization aspect of Buddha-Dhamma is there. You can discover all three of these aspects – Buddha-Dhamma that is studied, that is put into practice, and that is realized. In one day, you can cover all three of them.

Now we'll settle on one meaning of Dhamma. Dhamma is the fitness, the correctness needed for developing life. In order to develop life in the most useful, in the most beautiful way, there's a properness or appropriateness, a fitness, that is required. This is what we mean by Dhamma.

We'd like to use one other term which is even more clear and gives us a somewhat different perspective on Dhamma, and we'll say it in English so that the translator doesn't get it wrong. Dhamma is gentle healing for spiritual disease. Dhamma is that which heals, but it's not a violent or combative kind of healing. It's a very natural and gentle healing not for the body, but for the spirit. All this biting that we keep going through is spiritual illness, and Dhamma, which is what will heal in a very gentle, loving way, all those wounds, all those teeth marks all over our spirit.

When we say gentle, we mean also that it's sometimes so subtle, so refined, that you may not even be aware that it's healing you. This gentleness of the Dhamma is that it operates in such a subtle way, that the healing process isn't some big commotion. It's not a big to-do that, you know, lights going off, and

visions, and all that. But the Dhamma that heals us, does so so gently that we're often not even aware of it, but if we watch, we notice that a process of healing is taking place. In the Dhamma is this very refined, subtle, delicate, gentle thing which is doing the healing.

There are some people that think Dhamma is worthless. It doesn't do anything because they haven't noticed this point which we've just made. They haven't understood that subtlety in which Dhamma works, and so they think Dhamma doesn't do anything. But the one who has observed this, sees that Dhamma is the most important thing, the most valuable thing, and it works in the most marvelous way.

Consider that there are many kinds of disease, that there are different levels of disease. There's physical disease and to cure it, you go to the ordinary hospitals or to your doctor. If there's mental disease, then you go to the mental hospital, or you go to see a shrink or psychotherapist. And then for spiritual disease, you go to the Buddha's hospital; you go to the Buddha to get cured. Further, one should see that when there is spiritual disease, it leads to a lot of physical and mental disease. A lot of our mental and physical problems are rooted in spiritual disease. When there's no spiritual disease, there's just about no physical and mental disease. They're almost non-existent, once we're free of the spiritual disease.

Our accidents in the street, especially our car accidents, are due to our own carelessness, our own busyness. These seemingly purely physical problems are really rooted in our own carelessness, our own confusion. If there was no spiritual disease, there would be hardly any of these physical accidents. Only a few of our car accidents happen because of just freak malfunction of the cars, but it's always our carelessness, not taking proper care, driving with bad manners, being in a hurry, drinking, and all the other forms of stupidity and carelessness. This is why so many people are killed on the highways.

And then all the neurosis and psychosis, all the mental diseases. These come from the fact that our way of looking at life gets more and more twisted, more and more confused, more perverted. The more we look at the world in a confused and distorted way, the more mental illness, mental disease, there is. More than that, physical illness and mental illness, you know these, they come and they go. There are long periods of time when we're both physically and mentally healthy. But spiritually, we're always sick. You could say that every second of life, we are spiritually sick. Until we really start to understand Dhamma, until we start to get clear about Dhamma, we're sick just about every second of our life.

Now let's ask then, what is the cause? What is the source of this spiritual disease? The fundamental source of spiritual disease is our own stupidity. The ignorance, the misunderstanding that there is self. All of us think, believe, understand that there is self and there are things of self. And this fundamental stupidity is the source of all of our spiritual illness. Because of this ignorance, there arises self, ego, 'me.' And because of this 'me,' there is selfishness, and as soon as there is selfishness, it bites. All that biting is just the selfishness of 'me,' which comes from our ignorance. We don't recognize that there's no self, so we go grabbing onto things as self. We get selfish, and this selfishness bites us. This is where the spiritual disease comes from.

Now this thing we call 'me,' this feeling, this concept we call 'me' or 'self,' this is something totally new. Some people think that 'me' or the self exists all the time. Most people think that there's this 'me' that is existing all the time, but that's an illusion. In fact 'me,' this concept, this feeling, is something that just happens like that, momentarily, and then it goes away, and then another one happens – but it's always a new one, totally different. So this 'me' is always something new. And this 'me,' and 'mine,' self, and of-self, this happens because of our foolishness towards the things we call 'positive' & 'negative.'

There's these things that we think are positive, and because we're careless and stupid about these positive things, there's 'me' – 'me' gets born. Then there's the things we think are negative and because of that stupidity, another 'me' gets born. And then the self, selfishness, and it bites.

Whenever we are unaware that 'self' is just an illusion, it's just a kind of confused thought in the mind, whenever we're unaware of this, whenever we forget this, then we'll react to positive & negative and 'me' gets born again. And the 'me' creates selfishness and bites us, and thereby all the problems of our lives occur. But when we stop forgetting, whenever we are no longer blind in this way, whenever there's the awareness that things are not-self, that in fact things are not-me, not-mine, whenever there's this fundamental awareness of life – then the self doesn't happen. There's no 'me.' Then there's no selfishness, and there's no biting. There's nothing that bites the mind, and there's nothing to get bit.

The ancestors of humanity used to be very intelligent, but we modern generations have forgotten all that and have become quite stupid. The ancestors of humanity, even back to the beginnings of historical times, have evidenced great wisdom, which we nowadays totally ignore in our stupidity. For example, in the Old Testament of the Bible, at the very beginning, there's a story which probably

comes from the very beginning of history, which happened first in the Middle East. There's the story where God warns Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil. There's the apple, knowledge becomes the apple, but there's this tree with a fruit and if you eat the fruit, you know good & evil.

And the first thing God ever said to humanity is, "Don't eat that fruit." Because you'll attach to good & evil, and by attaching to good & evil, you will die. These are the very first words of God. But we don't listen; we eat the Fruit. We attach to good & evil, and we die. We keep dying over and over again, because we ignore this ancient wisdom.

There was a time when this was known and understood, and the story is still there in the Bible, although nobody takes it seriously anymore. To speak in a more scientific or evolutionary way, we can explain the story a little differently, that human beings first started to have the problem of dukkha when they started to discriminate the positive from the negative. Up until that time, human beings weren't making all this spiritual fuss and problem out of life, but when they first learned to discriminate good, evil, right, wrong, positive, negative, this is where the problem of dukkha, of this biting, first occurred.

So you can see how the Old Testament totally undercuts selfishness. It severs the roots of selfishness by going right to the source and preventing the ignorance that leads to 'me,' to self. And so this totally undercuts selfishness, which is a much more skillful and powerful way of dealing with the problem of dukkha. It's much better than always having to control selfishness, as is done in the New Testament. The message of the New Testament is merely to love others and this loving others, the most that can do is control selfishness – which isn't bad, but it's not as effective and powerful as the Old Testament of the Jews that goes to the basic source of the problem by eliminating the attachment which creates self in the first place.

The reason we've been talking about this is because we understand that most of you come from Christian backgrounds. If you yourselves aren't Christian, than at least your parents are probably Christian or if not, then Jewish. And so we've tried to point out how the origins of Christianity and the oldest message, the first real teaching of the Old Testament, is the same as the teaching of the Buddha, of Buddha-Dhamma – that there's nothing worth attaching to as 'me,' or 'mine,' don't fall for positive & negative, don't get trapped in positive & negative, don't become the slaves of positive & negative. As soon as we fall for positive & negative, we get trapped in it. As soon as you think positive & negative, you get

trapped in that thought, and then out of that entrapment, there is ego, there is self, there is selfishness, and all dukkha.

But when we understand the message of Buddha-Dhamma, of God's first words to humanity, then we don't fall for the positive and the negative and the problems cease. So we suggest that you go back and study the Old Testament again – how God warned Adam and Eve not to eat the Fruit of that Tree, that if we eat the Fruit of that Tree, then we get trapped in good and evil, and then the penalty of that is death. But of course this is a myth, and so the meaning is spiritual death, because Adam and Eve, they didn't die physically, but they kept dying spiritually.

But if we understand this story and put it into practice, then we don't fall for positive & negative; we don't fall for good and evil. We don't get lost in sin and virtue, and then one is free. So we recommend that you re-learn this story. This story shows that once, humanity was very intelligent, but the descendants of those intelligent people have become rather foolish, even stupid. The message here then is that we've got a very important lesson to learn, so that we can recover the intelligence of our ancestors.

Another example of this wisdom of our ancestors is in China. Lao-Tzu who taught, the founder of what's later become known as 'Taoism,' although it was originally just called 'The Way,' and Lao-Tzu taught that one shouldn't attach to *yin & yang*. If you go and cling to *yin & yang* as being this or being that, then you get trapped in them, and then you are out of harmony with the eternal Tao. But when one has this wisdom, and you don't mess around with *yin & yang*, then there are no problems.

Not only was this taught in the Middle East, but it was taught in China, and in other places as well. But we've ignored this message. We think it's old-fashioned and out of date. It's not nearly as impressive as all our modern little toys, with which we're so infatuated. And so then we have the world that we have here, with all its wars and violence.

So in short, instead of worshiping and cherishing positive & negative, kill it. Instead of just worshiping this positive & negative – kill it, get rid of it, destroy it, and be free for once and for all. But now you spend so much time worshiping the positive, that you can't kill it, and so it's killing you. This was understood thousands of years ago in the Middle East by the Jews, in China by the early

Buddhists and by many others. This is the message – rather than worshipping positive & negative, kill them.

At Christmas and New Year's, we wish everybody that they'll be happy and well, and this and that; we wish them merriness and happiness, and that they'll be better and better, and get all their wishes that they want – and so all we're doing is making our friends more and more stupid. We're just wishing that people will suffer more and more. Because the more they get trapped in this thinking of happiness, and good and better, and more and more, and fulfilling their wishes, and all that, the more they're trapped in self, in selfishness, and in suffering. So stop making your friends stupid.

So in short, don't get trapped by positive & negative. Don't worship, don't fall for positive & negative, and then you'll be free. This is the gentle healing of the spiritual disease. There's nothing violent about this. All one has to do is stop worshipping the positive and the negative, stop falling for the positive & negative, and then one will be healed in the most gentle and natural way.

When we are no longer trapped and enslaved by the power of positive & negative, then we can develop life to its highest potential, then life will be truly useful and peaceful. When we free life of this terrible baggage of the ego created out of positive & negative, then life is peaceful, and out of that peacefulness, life can be made truly useful. This is what it means to develop life. There's much more to be said about this, which we'll have to save for another opportunity, but today we've wanted to make it very clear that all you've got to do is stop falling for positive & negative.

Those of you who are Christians have heard of the term, 'original sin.' The original sin was simply falling for the positive & negative, attaching to good & evil. And out of this original sin, all the suffering of humanity has followed, and it's constantly re-created in each of us through our own ignorance. But in all the religions that were ever intelligent, you can find this same message – don't get trapped in good & evil, positive & negative, in sin & virtue. Whether in the old, Jewish teaching or in the Taoist approach, in Buddhism, or Hinduism, or whatever – in all the religions that were ever intelligent, you'll find this message.

According to your registration, your passports, your government identity card, you will be Christian, or Jewish, or Taoist, or Hindu, or Buddhist, or Muslim, or something. But it's better, in reality, just to be above and beyond positive & negative. According to your documents, you may be Buddhist, or



Christian, or something but what matters is that in our heart, we are beyond positive & negative.

It's OK if we call ourselves Christian, or Jewish, or Buddhist, Hindu, or whatever. But understand that emancipation for all of us is the same, no matter what we call ourselves. Real emancipation comes about solely through no longer clinging to positive & negative. When we escape from the bondage of positive & negative, that is the meaning of emancipation, of salvation, for all us.

Last of all, we'd like to thank for being good listeners, so thank you very much. We hope that you have been able to use this time effectively and beneficially, and able to help you really get somewhere in life. Thank you. We'll close the meeting for this morning, and we'll see you again tomorrow morning.

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Transcribed by Jessica (*jess.haines8@gmail.com*) in Nov. 2015  
Audio files: 5125340105010.mp3 & 1991-01 – (1) The Buddhist Way of Life.mp3

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