

The Heart of Buddhism

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The Total Message of Buddhism

by

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To all Dhamma advocates

On the occasion of this special one-time lecture I think it is appropriate to talk about the total message of Buddhism. So I will talk about the essence, the summary of Dhamma, because if you can catch the essential concept of Buddhism it will enable you to pursue more advanced study easily. But if you cannot grasp the concept or essence of Buddhism you will get confused and feel overwhelmed by the great amount of information, which will increase until it becomes impossible to remember, understand, or put to practice.

This is the root cause of failure, because it will make you feel discouraged, lose interest and focus, and give up. You will feel that you have attained much knowledge yet cannot apply or put anything into practice.

Therefore you should listen and concentrate to catch the essential message of Buddhism in order to grasp the **fundamental principle necessary for the correct understanding of Dhamma**. I must emphasize the knowledge of fundamental principle because there is also knowledge that is not the fundamental principle. Incorrect understanding will gradually cause deviation from the main teaching until it

becomes a new Buddhist religion, or a tumour of Buddhism that keeps growing.

The “**fundamental principle of Buddhism**” is the principle that focuses solely on the **elimination of suffering**. It has **clear logic that can be seen** and you will not have to blindly follow others’ belief. These are the important elements of the fundamental principle.

Anything that is not related to the elimination of suffering the Lord Buddha refused to be concerned with and refused to prophesy. For example the issue of whether there is rebirth after death or not: what is reborn?, how

does it happen?, what are the consequences of rebirth? These are not issues that lead to the elimination of suffering. Moreover, it is not Buddhism, not a concern of Buddhism, not in the bounds of Buddhism, because it is not aimed at elimination of suffering. Whoever asks the question will have to believe whatever answer is given because whoever answers cannot provide proof but can speak only from thought and notion. Without evidence the listener must simply believe the speaker, and the issue will gradually deviate until it becomes a different subject not related to the elimination of suffering. The listeners will have to blindly believe the speaker and will

stray further and further away from the bounds of Dhamma.

However, if one asks the question: **is there suffering** or **how can we remove suffering**, the Buddha answers clearly, showing truth in every word. By not just believing, the listener will be able to gradually discern for himself. **If one's understanding reaches the point of extinguishing suffering then one will realize that there is actually no "me" as a living person**, only the impression of "me" or "mine" assumed from the surrounding senses of the ears, eyes, nose, and tongue. When one can eliminate suffering then "self" will disappear and the notion of "me" or

“mine” will no longer remain. Hence there is no birth, no death and rebirth, and the issue of whether there is rebirth after death is therefore foolish and not concerned with Buddhism.

Buddhism aims to show that there is actually no “me” as a person. There is only misconception of the mind which does not realize that what exists is only nature’s assembly of body and mind. This natural assembly has its own mechanism of mental formations: if it functions in the wrong direction it leads to ignorance and the illusion of “me” and “mine”, but in the right direction it results in wisdom and the

realization that there is no “me” or “mine”.

Hence within the bounds of Buddhism there is no issue of whether there is rebirth after death or not, but there are the issues of “is there suffering” and “how to eliminate suffering” as well as “what is the cause of suffering” and “how to extinguish it”. As a matter of fact the cause of suffering is simply the misconception of “me” and “mine”.

Therefore the topic of **“myself, my concerns, my matters,” and the subject of “me” are the only issues** and the total message of Buddhism. They

are the only issues that must be cleared, after which one will realize, understand, and be able to practice all of Buddhism. To this you must pay full attention.

The said **“fundamental principle”** **has only a few basic points** such that the Buddha compared it to “a single handful of leaves” as compared to the great quantity of leaves in the whole forest. This fact is conveyed clearly in a story in the Book of the Buddha’s Teachings which recounts that while walking in a forest with his disciples, the Buddha picked up a handful of leaves from the ground and asked: “how does the amount of leaves in my

hand compare to that in this whole forest?” Everyone agreed that the difference was so vast that they were incomparable. The Buddha then said: “Enlightenment brings knowledge as vast as all the leaves in the forest, but what is essential for you to learn, teach, and practice, is comparable only to the leaves in my hand”.

This account has been incorporated in novels, for example in the story of Kamanita. Anyone who has read the novel Kamanita will have noticed the accounts taken from the Buddha’s Teachings which affirms that the fundamental principles for total elimination of suffering is only a

handful when compared to the multitude of knowledge in the whole world.

By the phrase “a single handful” we can see that it is not too large, not impossible, not beyond our capability to master and attain correct understanding. This is the first important message that we must grasp, to correctly understand the fundamental principle of Buddhism.

Next is the meaning of the word “**Buddhism**” which also needs correct understanding. Today’s use of the word is very blurred, very broad and ill defined. During the days of the Buddha

the word used was “Dhamma” which meant teachings for the elimination of suffering. They did not use the word “Buddhism” like today, they used the word “**Dhamma**”.

What was taught by the Buddha was called “Samana Gotama’s Dhamma” whereas the teaching of other doctrines such as that of Nigantha Nataputta would be called “Nigantha Nataputta’s Dhamma”.

Whichever teaching one likes one would study and practice along that path, and it was simply called Dhamma. It was pure teaching or Dhamma without the added trappings of today

which we now call Buddhism. For some reason the word “Buddhism” has now expanded to also cover things that are merely related to Buddhism.

Therefore you must examine closely to distinguish that **there is the part that is the true element of Buddhism, and a separate part comprising things that are merely related to Buddhism.** This latter part is enormous but we have lumped them all together and call the combination “Buddhism” which is the general understanding of today.

Pure Buddhism alone is already vast, as vast as all the leaves in a forest, and the single handful of essential

teaching that must be learned and practice is already quite an amount, so when things that relate to Buddhism such as the history of Buddhism, the interpretations in terms of psychology, philosophy (brought in to serve those areas and others) are included under the term Buddhism it becomes overwhelming.

For those who cannot extract the essential message the mind will be so overloaded that it will not be able to decide, like going into a shop and seeing so many things and becoming totally bewildered. Consequently it is left to one's common sense, intuition, whim, which will mostly choose what

appeals to the senses rather than to the intellect. Hence we see the practice of rituals, rites, merit making, conducted according to tradition, or to ward off certain fears, which is not the true practice of Buddhism.

Therefore we must learn to separate the elements of true Buddhism from the things that are the trappings of Buddhism.

In addition, we must be able to recognize the fundamental principle or the essential message in the elements of Buddhism, and that is why I intend to talk about the issue of fundamental principle or essential message, even

though I am not quite sure how best to present the topic.

Nevertheless, in coming to this hospital I am inspired to think of an interpretation of the Buddhist Scripture which hailed the Buddha as the **“Spiritual Healer”**. Now that you have heard the term **“Spiritual Healer”** I will explain further because you might not have got the meaning immediately.

In a particular section of the Buddha’s teachings or Dhamma in those days illness was interpreted to be of two kinds: that is, physical illness and mental illness. However, the use of the term “mental illness” today differs

from its use in the days of the Buddha when it meant illness of the mind in terms of having the wrong view or belief, or suffering from lust, desires, craving, passion, which were termed as “mental illness”.

Today we use the term mental illness to mean physical disorders of the brain which confuses it with spiritual illness. Therefore I would like to coin three new terms which are: “Physical disease” for physical illness; “Mental disease” for mental illness; and “Spiritual disease” for spiritual illness, the latter directly corresponding with the term “mental illness” in the days of the Buddha.

The words “Spiritual” and “Mental” have vastly different meanings: “Mental” means the physical mind which is associated with the body. If we suffer from a mental disease we would go to a mental or psychiatric hospital. It is a mental disorder and not a spiritual disease.

The word “Spiritual” here does not mean ghost, phantom, or evil spirit, it means the spirit or the soul which can become ill from defilements, especially from ignorance and false views. It is a mind filled with ignorance and false views that suffers from spiritual disease, which means **wrong views or mistaken belief that give rise to**

wrong thoughts, wrong words, and wrong deeds.

So you can see straightaway that without exception we are all afflicted by the spiritual disease. The physical and mental diseases however, afflict only some people occasionally and are not that bad because they do not cause constant suffering with every breath in the same way as the spiritual disease.

Thus the diseases of the body and the physical mind are not issues of the Buddha who heals the spirit. That leaves only the diseases interpreted as “mental illness” in the Buddhist Scripture but which we now term as

“Spiritual disease” and prefer to call it disease of the spirit.

When I thought of the interpretation of the Buddhist Scripture which hails the Buddha as the “Spiritual Healer” I felt that talking along this line would make it easier to understand. Since every person suffers from spiritual disease so everyone must receive spiritual treatment, which, in fact, is Dhamma. It is the single handful of Buddhism that must be accessed, put to practice, absorbed and assimilated until the disease is cured.

Further, we must be aware that **people today ignore the spiritual**

disease, so they suffer more severely both individually and collectively. When everybody is afflicted with the disease of the spirit then the whole world is afflicted and it becomes a spiritually sick world. Consequently permanent crisis prevails instead of permanent peace. No matter how hard we try peace cannot win even for a short while. It is no use to talk about peace because both sides are sick with the spiritual disease and each declares itself in the right and the other in the wrong and so they keep on inflicting suffering on themselves and others. It is like a machine churning out suffering on earth so how can this world find peace.

The remedy for this situation is that we **must relieve people's spiritual sickness**. What then is the medication? Medicine for this disease is the single handful of Dhamma that must be grasped. This is the reason why Buddhism has not become the global refuge that the Buddha intended it to be even though we can see that Buddhism has spread further and is more understood than before.

It is true that more people are studying Buddhism. But if they are not aware that they are spiritually sick they will not actually take in Buddhism to treat the disease in the same way as when we do not feel ill we will not visit

the doctor or take medicine. So most people just follow the customary practice to **listen to Dhamma and study Dhamma as a medicine without realizing one's own sickness**, or to use to debate with each other which sometimes can turn into quarrels. This is the reason why Dhamma has not become a refuge for the world.

Therefore if we want to set up a Buddhism Study Club like this one here we should have clear objectives and guide activities in the right direction, which is to use Dhamma to directly and quickly cure diseases of the spirit. We must not be vague and undecided as to which path or which direction to take.

We should spread the use of Dhamma as an elixir, a miraculous handful of medicine, which, if properly used, can cure all. In this way the establishment of such a club or association will be of great merit and highly beneficial to all. Accordingly you must strive to achieve every success and not be ridiculed in any way.

Now let us diagnose the **“Spiritual disease”** and **how to heal it with a single handful of Dhamma.**

The term **“Spiritual disease”** is the disease that infects us with the feeling of self, the perception of “me” or “mine”. It is a germ that feeds the

notions of “me”, “mine”, and selfish actions. It is the source of greed, anger, delusion, and is the cause of trouble for oneself and for others. These are the symptoms of the internally embedded spiritual disease. To make it simple let's call it the “me-mine” disease.

We are all infected with the “**me-mine**” **disease** and we pick up more germs every time we experience sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, and process them in our minds in an ignorant way. That is to say every time we receive external stimuli to the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, the physical senses are processed in our minds to form the mental sense that

boost the perception of “me” and “mine”.

Therefore we must get to know the “germ” which is **mental adherence or attachment** (in Bali it is called “Upadana”) which consists of two types: attachment to the notion of “me” and attachment to the notion of “mine”.

Attachment to the notion of “me” is the perception that I am who I am, or I am this, or I am that, or I have great dignity and therefore cannot lose to any one.... these are examples of “me”.

While attachment to the notion of “mine” is the perception that this is

mine, this is what I love, this is what I like, or this is what I hate and therefore is my enemy.... these are the notions of “mine”.

In Bali the concept of “me” is called **“Atta”** while that of “mine” is called **“Attaniya”**. In India another version of these terms is commonly used in all the branches of philosophy where the “me” notion is called **“Ahamkara”** and the “mine” notion called **“Mamamkara”**. Ahamkara literally translates as creating the feeling of “me” because “Aham” means “me” while Mamamkara creates the feeling of “mine” because “Mama” means belonging to me.

The feelings of me and mine are the most dangerous feelings, the most poisonous ailment which we call disease of the spirit. Every branch of philosophy or Dhamma in India during the Buddhist era aim at healing this sickness. Doctrines and religions other than Buddhism also aspire to clean out Ahamkara and Mamamkara, the only difference being that after freeing oneself from the disease they call it the “true self” or the “pure self” whereas in Buddhism we do not call it the “pure self” because we do not want to retain attachment to self but we call it a state of “emptiness” or “Nirvana” (or “Nibbana” in Bali). An example is seen in the chapter that says “Nibbanam Paramam

Sunnam” which means utmost emptiness which translates as void of self, void of ownership, free of all ties, that is Nirvana or complete cure of the spiritual disease.

This perception of “me” and “mine” is very mysterious and if not truly interested and pursued one will not see that it is the actual cause of suffering or the root cause of the spiritual disease.

What is called “Atta” or “self” is actually what we know as “ego” in Latin. If a selfish feeling arises we call that “egoism” because if there is perception of self then the feeling of ownership will naturally follow.

Therefore the feelings of “me” and “mine” together is “egoism”. The “ego” or sense of self is a natural phenomenon that exists in all living things and, even more, forms the core of living things.

“Ego” if translated into English will be “soul” which is “Atta” which is equivalent to the Greek word “Kentricon”. The word kentricon corresponds with the word “centre” in English which means middle or core. Since ego and kentricon are the same thing hence soul and Atta are the core of living things, the nucleus essential for living things, and therefore it is not possible

for the common people to eliminate or refrain from having these feelings.

Thus all common people will have a constant sense of egoism even if it is not apparent all the time, but will become obvious whenever sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch are experienced or thoughts arise. Therefore every time you feel there is self and ownership that means you already have the spiritual disease regardless of what causes that feeling because it results in selfishness.

Now we won't call it egoism anymore but we will call it selfishness, because it is overheated egoism that

leads to immoral or wrongful or extreme selfishness with no concern for anyone else, and results in selfish actions arising from greed, anger, and delusion. The symptoms of the disease manifest themselves in selfishness and thus endanger others as well as oneself. Extreme selfishness is the most threatening danger in the world.

The reason for the present troubles in the world today is nothing more than individual selfishness. People are divided into groups and factions and although not wanting to, they fight each other because they cannot control their lust or resist the power of passion and so succumb to the disease.

This disease of selfishness erupts because germs invade and we do not know of the **medication to combat the disease, which is the “Heart of Buddhism”**.

Now that I have used the words “Heart of Buddhism” we must refine our understanding of the Heart of Buddhism.

If the question of **What is the Heart of Buddhism** is asked, people might race to answer all at once, but whether the answers are right or wrong is another matter. Also one must discern whether people are answering simply from rote memory or

from true recognition of the heart of Buddhism, and who, in fact, really knows and has grasped the heart of Buddhism.

When asked what is the heart of Buddhism some people might answer “the 4 noble truths”, or some might say “impermanence, suffering, and non-self”, and some might refer to the teaching “to avoid all evil, cultivate good, and purify the mind is the heart of Buddhism”. These answers are all correct but only to a certain degree, and are mostly cited from memory and not from personal experience.

For the heart of Buddhism, I would like to recommend the short phrase of “Do not be emotionally attached to anything” or, in other words, “nothing should be emotionally adhered to”.

Because there is a recount in the Bali scripture that someone once asked the Buddha whether all of his teachings could be summarized and condensed into one sentence. He answered yes. He said: “Sabbe Dhamma Nalam Abhini-vesaya” which means “do not be emotionally attached to anything” or, in other words, “nothing should be emotionally adhered to”. And he further elaborated: “whoever listens to

this, hears all in Buddhism. Whoever practices this, practices all of Buddhism. Whoever reaps the fruits from practicing this, reaps all from Buddhism”.

You should think this over to figure out whether or not it is the true heart of Buddhism because it covers the entire scope of theory, practice, and outcome of practice. It is all-embracing in teaching that one should not adhere or become emotionally attached to anything, and should practice to rid oneself of adherence and attain the fruits in the form of a purified mind or a state of perfect emptiness. This is deemed to be the heart of Buddhism.

Now if one arrives at the realization that nothing should be emotionally adhered to, then it means that there are no more germs to cause eruption of the disease such as greed, anger, delusion or any other wrongful acts in thoughts, words, or deeds. So when sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, emotions are experienced, the built-in realization of “nothing should be emotionally adhered to” will act as an immune system or antibody to defend oneself from the disease. It will either reject the germs or destroy them upon entry. The germs cannot grow and break out into a disease because they are continually being destroyed by the immune system.

This is the heart of Buddhism or the heart of all Dhamma summarized in the saying: “Sabbe Dhamma Nalam Abhinivesaya” meaning “do not be emotionally attached to anything” or “nothing should be emotionally adhered to”

Accordingly the type of person possessing immunity or antibodies will not contract the spiritual disease. However, common people who do not know the heart of Buddhism will be the opposite. Having no immunity at all they can quickly and easily contract the disease and therefore suffer consistently from spiritual illness.

So now you understand the meaning of spiritual disease, and spiritual healer, and who is involved. When we see that those involved or afflicted are actually ourselves then we will be eager to seek treatment. Before now we did not know so we simply sought fun and pleasure. It is like a person who does not know that he or she has a serious disease such as cancer, tuberculosis, etc. so carries on enjoying life without seeking treatment until it is too late and dies from the disease.

That is what is deemed mindless or heedless. We must not be so mindless in order to be worthy of the Buddha's teaching which warns us not to lack

caution and to be mindful all the time. Therefore, as mindful people we must be watchful of the disease of the spirit, continually alert and checking on the appearance and cause of the spiritual germs. In this way we can certainly attain the best fulfillment that humans can receive in this lifetime.

Furthermore we must examine **whether the adherence is the disease itself or the germ that develops into the disease.** If you look closely you will all see that adherence to the notion of me and mine is in fact the origin of all vices.

We can classify vice or defilement as greed, anger, delusion, or as lust, hatred, ignorance, or enumerate in more detail into 16 categories or even more than that. Finally, however, they all sum up as greed, anger and delusion and all three taken together can be condensed into the one feeling of me and mine.

The feeling of me-mine that is embedded in the nucleus or the midst of the mind is what breeds greed, anger and delusion.

Greed is craving to possess, wanting to have, and is attracted to the aroused emotion.

But if a repulsive feeling arises in another situation then that translates into anger or hatred.

But sometimes due to ignorance one is confused and not decided as whether to welcome or repulse a feeling, then that is delusion.

I have explained in this way so that these emotions can be easily recognized. Lust or greed is attracted to the aroused feeling, but anger or hatred repels the feeling, while delusion confuses the mind, making it undecided whether to accept or reject.

In short the physical sensations of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch can give rise to three kinds of emotions, depending on whether they occur directly or indirectly, whether they arouse acceptance or repulsion, or whether they are muddled and not understood.

Although they stimulate different reactions all three kinds of emotions are defilement because they all originate from the same feeling of me-mine buried deep inside.

Hence it can be said that the **sense of me-mine which is the mother of all defilement is the root cause of all**

sufferings, the root cause of all spiritual diseases.

The Buddha has made clear about suffering by explaining that because we do not look closely enough we misunderstand that birth is the cause of suffering, ageing is the cause of suffering, etc. when in fact these are only the symptoms. Ultimately he concluded the explanation as **“Sankhittena Pancupadanak Khanda Dukkha”** which means that the five elements of the corporeal being (Panca-khandha) that engage adherence or attachment are the real cause of suffering.

This means that anything that is adhered to as me or mine is the source of suffering. Anything that is not adhered to as me or mine is void of suffering.

Therefore if not perceived or adhered to as me or mine the occurrence of birth, ageing, sickness, death and anything else will not cause suffering. Only when attached to the me and mine will birth, ageing, sickness and death become suffering.

In the same way it does not mean that the body and mind embody suffering. That is not true. They will harbour suffering only when there is attach-

ment to the me and mine feeling. The absolutely pure body and mind not tainted with the feeling of me-mine do not experience suffering, such as that seen in the Buddhist saint (Arahant) whose body and mind are purified, not tainted with defilement or the me-mine perception, and is therefore free of suffering.

We must be aware that the me-mine perception is the origin of all suffering. Whenever the feeling of attachment and ownership arises it clouds the mind, leads to darkness and unawareness, ignorance instead of enlightenment. This is because it is not void, it is raging with the selfish desires

of me and mine. On the contrary, a mind that is free from the feeling of me-mine is a mind that is serene, hence filled with wisdom and awareness.

Whereupon we we must capture the fact that there are two points of concern here: **one is the perception of me-mine, and the other is awareness and wisdom.** These two are adversaries in that if one enters the other must leave, if one exists then the other cannot survive, which is to say that if the mind is filled with the sense of me and mine then wisdom and awareness cannot prevail, but if wisdom and awareness are present then the sense of me-mine will disappear.

To put it cleverly in a short but rather startling statement one would use the saying of the Zen Buddhism or the Zen Teaching of Huang Po that “emptiness is Dhamma, emptiness is enlightenment, emptiness is the original mind or true mind”. This is one train of thought, while the other enthuses that “disquiet, disturbance, or non-emptiness is not Dhamma, not enlightenment, not the original mind, but are new gilded perceptions”. And so there are 2 trains of reversed thinking. Now when we know of these two concepts we will be able to easily understand Dhamma.

As you are sitting here listening you are devoid of the gilded perception of me-mine because you are concentrating with awareness and wisdom so the feeling of me-mine cannot enter. But another time or for some of you something could strike the mind and arouse the feeling of me-mine then the voidness such as you have now will disappear and awareness and wisdom will also be lost.

I would like to point out here that by awareness and wisdom we mean true wisdom, because there is also another faculty or mental power or intelligence that has nothing to do with the voidness of me-mine, and that

kind of intelligence is not called wisdom in the Bali language. That kind of intelligence is called "**Cheko**" in Bali. However in the Thai language it also translates as intelligence but not the wisdom that is void from the sense of me. It is intelligence that is full of the notion of me and mine. It is ignorant intelligence that supports adherence and attachment. This kind of brain-power must not be included in the meaning of **awareness and wisdom** which is against egoism, because Cheko embraces egoism. You should not get them mixed up because it will cause confusion.

If we are free from egoism, **free from the feeling of me and mine, then true conscious wisdom which extinguishes suffering and cures the spiritual disease is present.** Therefore at that moment disease cannot erupt, or if formerly existing, it will instantly vanish. Thereupon that moment will be filled with Dhamma, like the saying that “emptiness is wisdom, emptiness is Dhamma, emptiness is enlightenment” because when the mind is void of the notion of me-mine, at that instant all Dhamma from the whole of the Buddhist scripture (Tipitaka) that we should wish for will become apparent.

To put it simply, at that instant we will experience unsurpassed awareness, shame of sin, utmost patience, tolerance, gratitude, through to the full cognition that leads to enlightenment.

I have intentionally expressed that there must be awareness, shame of sin, patience, tolerance and gratitude because these are also qualities of Dhamma which can be a refuge for the world. If only there is a sense of shame of sin and fear of evil this world would be at peace. **Today there are only shameless people** who are unashamed and unafraid of sin, so they do bad things and insist on doing so even though they can see that it will devastate the world.

Even if just this one aspect of Dhamma is missing the world will be destroyed.

A narrower aspect of Dhamma is gratitude. With gratitude the world can find peace because we must admit that we are all indebted to one another in building this beautiful world, take for example all the knowledge and inventions that have been contributed to the world. Moreover, not only are we indebted to human beings but also to dogs, cats, and even sparrows. If we realize our debt of gratitude to these things we will not harm them. Therefore just one aspect of Dhamma, gratitude, has the power to save the world.

So true Dhamma, genuine Dhamma, all have the same power and can save the world. However, Dhamma that is not real will hinder. It will appear to be innumerable and a great mess. For that reason when there is true Dhamma, which is being void of me and mine, there will be complete Dhamma, complete enlightenment, everything will be complete within the purified mind, the original mind. On the contrary, if the mind is gilded with the boiling sense of me-mine then at that moment the mind has no Dhamma, no awareness, no conscience, no restraint, no shame or fear of sin, is hardened and insensitive to evil, extremely ungrateful, and can instigate any des-

truction. If one has fallen so deep it would be pointless and impossible to talk about the cognition of impermanence or anything along those lines.

Accordingly we must first get to know these two states of mind which are: void from self, and, not void from self which can be taken to mean hassled, or chaotic.

Now common sense will immediately tell us that no one welcomes chaos. If I were to ask the question "Does anyone like chaos?" and if someone were to raise their hand it would be hilarious, because everybody likes to be free, unoccupied, in which-

ever way that might mean. It could mean being lazy and free from work, being free from disturbances, being free from annoying children and grand children. But the above denotes being physically free and has nothing to do with being mentally free.

Being mentally free is the state of mind that is normal, not disturbed or chaotic. Such is the free mind. And if purified until free from self or egoism, void of the notion of me and mine, then it is enlightenment or Nirvana.

Chaos is the opposite, it creates turmoil in every direction, physical, mental, spiritual. It is a state of dis-

quiet. The mind is so disturbed that there is not a moment of peace.

Within the void or emptiness is the Dhamma, the enlightenment, the original pure mind, or whatever one may wish to call it. Whereas within the non-void there is no Dhamma, no enlightenment. Even if we were to shout “Buddham Saranam Gacchami” etc., there will not be Dhamma. Therefore even if they receive the five precepts pronounced by the monks, make merit, or give alms, the people who have their minds full of the me-mine notion cannot really capture the three jewels of “Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha”. Their activities are all ceremo-

nial. The true Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha exists within a void mind, void from the notion of me-mine. With temporary voidness the existence is temporary, but if the voidness is truly permanent then there will reside true and permanent Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha.

Thus you must continually practice freeing your mind from the me-mine notion which will enable you to gain a certain level of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and keep on practicing until you reach the full attainment.

In this way we are applying Dhamma as a therapy and as a preventive

medicine both at the same time. We can instill it in the mind or in the spirit and it will protect us from contracting any spiritual disease.

But now we should consider the therapy in more detail. The approach to preventing and treating the disease must be based on the said principle of voidness of me and mine.

So how many ways are there to treat the disease? Well actually there are quite a number of ways. Because even with physical or mental disease there can be different methods of treatment for the same disease. It is not restricted to one method but the

expected result is the same. In the same manner the Buddha has described many methods of practice for the treatment of spiritual disease, in order to be appropriate for use with various people, time and place, on different occasions. Hence we will have heard of many designations/appellations or names of Dhamma and are perhaps alarmed to learn that there are eighty four thousand Buddhist codes of morality or moral laws. To take in 84,000 laws would be overwhelming and totally discouraging. If we were to try to assimilate all that we would probably not succeed, we would learn and forget, then re-learn and forget again, or become totally confused. In

fact there is only a single handful, only one concept, like the Buddha said when he summarized into one sentence that which is “do not be emotionally attached to anything”. Therefore whoever listens to this hears all in Buddhism, whoever practices this practices all of Buddhism, and the fruit of such practice heals all diseases.

As for the many methods for the elimination of the me-mine disease they all work alike to rid oneself of the perception, and so it is up to the individual to decide which method to pursue. For example, one practice is to constantly contemplate that **me and mine are in fact an illusion**, a hallu-

ination, and do not actually exist. It will make you see that what is perceived as me is simply a mass, a lump, a piece, a chunk, an illusion according to the manifestation of Paticca-samuppada.

In theory **Paticca-samuppada** is a lengthy subject which would require one or two months to learn because it extends into the realm of psychology and philosophy and becomes very diffused.

But Paticca-samuppada in Buddhist practice is only a small amount, or the single handful that the Buddha said. It is the chain of causation describing the

causes of suffering which arise when the eye or ear sees or hears, that is, when they come into contact with sight or sound. This contact is called “Phassa” in Bali. The Phassa creates Feeling. Feeling creates Craving. Craving creates Attachment. Attachment creates Becoming. Becoming creates Birth. After birth then comes ageing and death which are sufferings.

You should note that once emotion arises it is already Phassa, which creates feeling, and the chain of symptoms that follow is called the **symptoms of Paticca-samuppada**. Once generated each symptom gives rise to the next symptom, which is to

say that each symptom is dependent on the preceding symptom. This process of dependency or chain of happenings is called Paticca-samuppada.

The way to control this is to break the process or to cut off the chain. For example, when the eye experiences Phassa one should stop there and not allow it to give rise to feeling. Do not let feelings of pleasure or displeasure arise. This is called not engendering feeling. If feeling is not aroused then craving and attachment which create the perception of me and mine will not arise either. Since the illusion of me-mine emanate from craving and attachment, therefore if Phassa is

stopped at its point of contact then one will not be afflicted with the spiritual disease of me-mine and suffering.

However, for a common person to stop Phassa from engendering feeling is tremendously difficult. Once touched it will not stop at contact but will always overflow on to the feelings of pleasure or displeasure. One does not stop at Phassa because one has never learned Dhamma. Yet there is still a way to free oneself by stopping at the point of feeling pleasure or displeasure and just let the feeling go away. Do not let it overflow on to craving to serve our liking or disliking. If it is liking it could be in the form of desire, love,

passion, jealousy, envy, and so on, and if disliking it might be wanting to kill, destroy, annihilate. Having any such feeling means we have developed craving, it means that feeling has progressed to craving. In this condition we are afflicted with the spiritual disease causing suffering which no one can help. Even the help of all the Buddhas put together cannot save us. The Buddha cannot save us because he cannot control the laws of nature. He can only disclose the laws of nature for us to understand and put to practice ourselves. If practiced wrongly then there will be suffering, but if practiced rightly there will not be suffering. In short if feeling gives rise to craving

there will definitely be suffering since it will arouse desire of one form or another which is craving.

Now if we look closely at the elements of desire, we will see that what is stirring or firing up the desire is the consciousness of self, or me, who wants this, wants that, or wants to do this, wants to do that. That is, there is an instigator of the desire which is me. The “me” wants to have, wants to own, or wants to be. To have ownership or possession there must be an owner which is the notion of “me”. At the same time the notion of “mine” is also present.

This notion of me and mine, called “Upadana” stems from adherence or attachment. Attachment arises from craving, in other words craving develops into attachment. If Paticca-samuppada has progressed to the point of attachment then we already have the full ingredients of suffering. It means that the germs are fully incubated. If the germs that came from contact with the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body have developed to the stage of craving and attachment they are fully grown and will exhibit the full symptoms of disease, causing attachment to be followed by “becoming”. Attachment leads to becoming.

“Becoming” means “being” or “existing”: being and existing of what? of none other than of “me” and “mine”. Kamma or actions that give birth to “becoming” are the actions that give birth to me and mine. Therefore what is termed “becoming” is the mature condition of the me-mine disease.

Becoming gives rise to birth. This means that the mature disease is manifested in birth, which is a statement of “This is me, I am born”. Birth embodies suffering, ageing, death, sorrow, grief, unhappiness, resentment, etc. which are too numerous to elaborate but all can be summed together as suffering.

By being here now it is evident that we are suffering from this disease, evident that Paticca-samuppada has progressed to the point of manifestation of disease and suffering.

In practice we can stop or break the chain at the point of Phassa or contact, blocking it from giving rise to feeling. And even if we fail to do so at that point we can still cut the chain at the point of feeling, stopping it from giving rise to craving. However, after craving it will be impossible to halt the process. Therefore we must try to assimilate Dhamma so that when the eye, ear, nose, experience sight, sound, smell, they will not become attached to the

physical stimuli. We keep on being taught that nothing should be adhered to because for common people it is normal for Phassa to give rise to feeling followed by craving, becoming, and then birth. This path is so well trodden that it is wide open and clear and easy to follow. But we must not submit. When touched by Phassa we must pull back onto the path of awareness and wisdom and not go down the path of me and mine. Even if the process has reached the stage of “feeling” we can still rally back to the path of awareness and wisdom and not get carried off by the current of me and mine. If we can do this there will be no suffering day or night. And if we can do it well, practice

to perfection, we can attain “Ara-hant” (achieve Nirvana).

According to the teaching of the Buddha there is a simple basic principle which he described to his disciple named Bahiya as follows: “Hear me Bahiya. When you see something, simply observe. When you hear something, simply listen. When you smell something, simply discern. When you taste something, simply sense. When you touch something, simply know. And just stop there. Involve only the natural sense of awareness and there will not be self (me and mine). When there is no self there will be no restlessness, no ceaseless seeking and running in

different directions, or stopping anywhere. That is the end of suffering. That is Nirvana.” If you achieve permanent cessation then it is permanent Nirvana. If temporary cessation then it is temporary Nirvana. This is the only basic principle and there is no other.

You can follow any mode of practice in order to stop the emotion that arises. Any method of insight meditation (Vipassana), if it is right and not false will adopt this approach, which is to block emotion from giving rise to the me-mine perception. This will result in destroying vice or defilement. If one can do this it will automatically wipe out defilement.

This can be compared to the situation where we want to get rid of rats. We can bring in cats. By just keeping cats we can get rid of rats without having to catch or kill rats ourselves. With the cats doing their job we can be free of rats, free of the undesired situation.

In the same way we only have to properly control eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind and that will by itself eliminate defilement. This is similar to what the Buddha himself said: "If you can live together rightly this world will not be devoid of Arahant" which, if you listen well and ponder carefully you will see that all one has to do is to live

rightly, nothing more than living rightly, and this world will not be without Arahant.

These are not light words. The message is clear. It is not light because when nearing Nirvana the Buddha instructed his disciples: **“Ime Ce Bhikkhave Bhikkhu Samma Vihareyyum Asunno Loko Arahantehi Assa”** which means: “Hear me, all monks. If all monks live rightly the world will not be devoid of Arahant”. **“Samma Vihareyyum”** means existing or living in the right way.

What then is the right way to live for the world not to be devoid of

Arahant? Living rightly is living in a way that sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, cannot defile. They can be experienced but must not give way to feeling, craving, attachment. We must live with self awareness and wisdom or voidness of me and mine as said earlier, since we have sufficiently studied and practiced until we are familiar with and know these sensations well. Therefore the physical stimuli will simply impact and roll back like waves on the shore. It is like our house has a cat and if rats were to come from other houses or from the woods to our house they would all die because the cat would always kill them.

If we live rightly according to the principle of non-adherence then sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, emotion, cannot harm us. They can make contact, but we can consciously manage the contact with awareness and wisdom. We can take in these senses, consume these senses, possess these senses, or keep these senses but there will be no suffering on account of having no being, no adoption, no consuming, no retaining, because there is no self, no me, and no mine.

On the other hand, if the me-mine is present everywhere there will be suffering all the time. Even when not yet consumed, not yet retained, suffer-

ing will have begun. Once consumed or retained, there is even more suffering. Hence there is suffering in every direction. This is called not living rightly, causing worry due to disease or suffering. If living rightly the disease or suffering cannot arise.

Another way to further explain this is that if we do not feed the defilements, give them no nourishment, they will starve and die by themselves. It is like capturing and locking up a vicious tiger in an enclosure with no food. We do not have to kill it but it will die by itself. In the same way we must capture and enclose sight, sound, smell, taste, touch,

emotion when they impact the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Frame the enclosure here. If practiced correctly at this point the defilement will have no food and will not be able to grow or develop. The germs of defilement will die hence there will be no defilement or suffering.

The Buddha preached that if we live rightly, live correctly, the world will not be void of Arahant. This is the practice of Paticca-samuppada: to live rightly in a manner that defilement cannot emerge due to awareness that the me-mine perception is a illusion. This is because the perception is formed only when the eye sees sight,

the ear hears sound, etc., and then gives rise to feeling which in turn develops craving. If there is no stimulus to stimulate craving the illusion of me-mine will not arise.

Therefore you should realize that the me-mine perception is formed instantaneously as a creation of the mind, not a reality but a false impression, in the same manner as waves are formed by the impact of wind on water. Water exists, wind also exists, but waves are created, fabricated, an illusion. This is using an example as comparison which is not exactly as in our case, but is meant to point out the illusion of waves which similarly

materialize from external impact. That is, when the wind blows on water it creates waves which rise and finally fall and disappear. In the same way each me-mine perception that arises many times a day is like the waves in water, in this case, emotion, sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, which come into contact with wind, meaning stupidity, obsession, ignorance, and erupt as waves which is the me and mine notion, several times a day.

Each time the me-mine perception or egoism arises it is called birth. Hence each actualization of the me-mine perception is one birth.

This is the true meaning of birth, not the birth from the mother's womb. When one is born from the mother's womb and dies, that is physical birth and not the birth that is meant by the Buddha.

The birth meant by the Buddha is spiritual, meaning the birth of the me-mine delusion which can occur many times a day, ten times, a hundred times, etc., depending on each individual. But every single time it is a birth, an incarnation of me and mine which forms, fades away, and dies, then resurfaces again when stimulated by sight, sound, smell, etc. Each individual birth has a reaction which is passed on

to the next, as if as the chain of physical birth, where each birth is the consequence of the former life, the result of Kamma or actions in the former life which are passed on.

This is what is meant by the result of Kamma or inheritance of Kamma and is what the Buddha taught, otherwise it would deviate from his teaching. We must understand the meaning of birth, Kamma, and inheritance of Kamma in this manner.

For example if we were to covet something and then die, we can be reborn as a thief, then die and be reborn as someone who either con-

sumes or does not consume that thing, then again reborn and accused, or reborn and sentenced and imprisoned. There can be numerous such births which are very confusing, intertwined, and complicated. Look closely and you will understand that when we can stop birth then that is Nirvana which means no birth, no ageing, no suffering, and no death.

If there is still birth then there will always be the me and mine notion, continuous cycle of birth and death, continual suffering, continual propagation of the chain.

But we must not misunderstand that no birth means being void of all senses, frozen stiff like a piece of wood. In fact it is an extremely active state. Being void from self or being void from birth proves to be the highest state of awareness and wisdom which is most nimble and agile because it can never have false thoughts, false words, or false deeds, and therefore can act very swiftly.

The fact that it can never be wrong is because it is a state in which awareness and wisdom exist naturally, automatically. This is the state of voidness from me and mine. The “self” that is void from “me”, or the individual

who is void from “me”, or the existence in the Nirvana state can bring about anything, can never be wrong, but can be extremely swift in action with immense and vast benefit. This is the virtue of being void.

Do not misunderstand that being void means to not be able to do anything, or to stop doing everything, or to feel lethargic, lifeless, dull. This is ignorant thinking which causes fear, fear of voidness, fear of Nirvana, or fear of losing all the enjoyment from defilements, for example.

Being free of defilements is most enjoyable, most happy, the kind of

enjoyment and happiness which is true and not dangerous, not false, not deceiving.

The enjoyment of common people is not true, it is false and deceiving, and inflicts suffering on the person just like biting on a bait and getting hooked, equivalent to falling under the power of the devil, therefore suffering constant anxiety. Consequently the person is trapped in the cycle of birth and death, which is the chain of suffering, or drowned in the sea of suffering and cannot surface.

This practice along the principle of Paticca-samuppada to extinguish the

me-mine notion by realizing that the me-mine perception is an illusion is one way, or one method.

I will illustrate with several methods. For example, we can look at emotion. That is, using our knowledge of impermanence, suffering, and non-self to scrutinize the six senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, emotion, that impact the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, and recognizing that even emotion is an illusion.

We should not misconstrue the matter of impermanence, suffering, and non-self as something for the elderly or simply as prayers for the

dead. It must be put to use in the daily life of the living.

Anyone who can adopt the knowledge of impermanence, suffering, and non-self in his daily life will have maximum immunity to the disease, and will not be poisoned by emotion, sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and will lead an unfettered and peaceful life.

In Bali the word Khema is used to mean unfettered and peaceful, whereas in Sanskrit they use Ksema while in Thai it is Kasem.

It is strange that the word “happy” was not used. This is because “happy” can be misleading as it also inherently implies illusion or false, therefore let’s opt for Kasem which means unfettered and peaceful.

To put it more clearly, to be free from illusion we should call this state “Kasem from Yoga”. Yoga here means disturbances of Kasem. To be peaceful and unfettered by disturbances is the state of emptiness or Nirvana.

If one wants to lead an unfettered and peaceful life one must have full knowledge of impermanence, suffering, and non-self which will help one to

resist the impact of emotion, sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and not be carried away by feelings of love or hate.

There are only two kinds of disturbances: delighted with love and hostile with hate, which are the causes of laughter and tears. If one can see that laughter is also exhausting, one would see that it would be better to stay indifferent, not laughing, not crying. This is the state of Kasem which is to be unfettered and peaceful.

Therefore we must not be slaves of emotion, laughing and crying whenever tempted by emotion. We are better off being free, unfettered and peaceful.

This is **how we can use the awareness of impermanence, suffering and non-self as a tool to guide our daily lives**, being able to see that sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, are illusions in the same way as the notion of me and mine is an illusion, because it also arises from the emotion of me-mine. All emotions are illusions. If one can see this through the principle of impermanence, suffering and non-self then there will be no disease and therefore no suffering.

Now we will take a shortcut to look at what is pleasing emotion. Merriment, enjoyment, deliciousness which are happy feelings are pleasing

emotions. Pleasing emotion is an illusion because it arises like waves that rise and fall intermittently, not real, not existing permanently. I have said so because all the things in every world, no matter which world, **have value when they give rise to pleasing emotion.**

Think carefully. Why do you study, why do you work, why do you amass wealth, fame, comradeship, followers? The answer is to obtain the pleasing emotion. Thus everything points to the same goal: the pleasing emotion. For that reason if we have knowledge in this matter and can manage this appropriately, everything will be right.

Accordingly the pleasing emotion must be viewed correctly in its true form as a form of illusion.

We must manage the pleasing emotion rightly as an illusion, which does not mean that we should detest it, because if we feel hate towards it that would be insane. On the other hand if we are attracted and become enslaved to it that would also be crazy. The way to appropriately manage the emotion is Dhamma. That is the way of the Buddha's disciple, to overcome suffering and not be inflicted with the disease of the spirit.

This must be done by contemplating the pleasing emotion to realize that it is an illusion. It is like a wave that arises by the wind blowing on water, meaning that when sight, sound, smell, taste, are experienced and impact on the ignorance and delusion of the unintelligent mind, this gives rise to the wave or the pleasing emotion, which finally disperses. If viewed in this way we will not be slaves to the pleasing emotion. We will be able to control and manage it without any suffering. Our family will not suffer, our neighbours will not suffer, and the whole world will not suffer because of us. If every person is like this then this world will have permanent peace. This

is the true and permanent happiness. It is the result of being cured of the spiritual disease by different methods, being cured of the me-mine disease.

I have illustrated with 3 examples of practices which should be sufficient since time is running out. We can see through the principle of Paticca-samuppada that the me-mine perception is an illusion, or we can see through the principle of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, that emotions formed from the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste are illusions, or we can also reflect upon the pleasing emotion and see that it is an illusion.

To be able to achieve this one must be very careful, be very aware at the moment contact is made with the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, as reiterated by the Buddha to Bahiya that: “When you see something, simply observe. When you hear something, simply listen. And just stop there. Do not let pleasant or unpleasant feelings arise”. However, if feelings are aroused you can still stop there and not let them develop into craving, but turn your concentration to the thought of voidness and disquiet as fully as possible.

Just this one-time lecture or hearing for the first time will allow some understanding. Then one must go on to

inspect oneself until aware that we actually do have quite a lot of voidness. There is quite a lot of time during which we are undisturbed, not chaotic, and present with awareness and wisdom. The notion of me and mine arises sporadically, which is to say that birth occurs intermittently, and every birth causes suffering. However, whilst there is no birth there is no suffering and this condition is present quite a lot of the time. Nonetheless people are ignorant and overlook, that is, fail to notice the presence of Nirvana, and do not see that there is Nirvana.

Although it is only a tiny Nirvana, a foretaste of Nirvana, but in essence it is

the same as the true Nirvana or permanent Nirvana, differing only in being temporary. Because we cannot prevent the disease, cannot eradicate the disease, so the disease develops now and then, and Nirvana is cut off at intervals.

A person of good Kamma, who has wisdom to realize that the original mind is void or has Nirvana in itself, will understand that all one has to do is to guard against new things and not allow them to enter. The owner is peaceful, it is the visitor that is chaotic, so do not let it enter, drive it away and do not let it into our house then the mind can remain void all the time.

The way to drive away the newcomer is to practice Dhamma according to the teaching of the Buddha. This will give encouragement and create contentment and strong faith in Dhamma, diligence in pursuing Dhamma, and a scrutinizing mind fully absorbed in Dhamma and constantly watchful. In such a way one can succeed, it is not difficult.

However, if ignorant and on the wrong track from the start then it will be most difficult, more difficult than rolling a rock up the mountain. But if we search and hit upon the right track then it will be easier than rolling a rock down the mountain.

Another thing is that we must be alert and conscious all the time. Do not forget, and do not be careless and unguarded. Watch out for the void and chaos or disturbances that arise in our every day life.

The meaning of **“we”** here is the **“mind”** or **“spirit”** and not the me-mine perception. Train the mind to habitually take pleasure in voidness, to be content with voidness or Nirvana, and not to drift towards the misconceived illusions of chaotic things.

Now the most difficult problem is that people do not like to put an end to suffering, so much so that one dare

not affirm that the purpose of birth is to extinguish suffering. It has come to being born for any reason, for whatever one wants to indulge in, for enjoyment, so no action is taken to quench suffering. In actual fact the way to eliminate suffering is not difficult, not beyond our ability, in much the same way as tackling our own work, only we do not understand and turn our back on the issue, and therefore are subjected to constant suffering.

In summary to be free from disease, or not to be afflicted with the spiritual disease, boils down to knowing how to prevent the emergence of the me and mine notion.

That is the state of being free from disease, which we hail as extremely good fortune.

In the days of the Buddha the medicine seller would shout at intersections and along the roads that to be free from disease is extremely good fortune (Arogya Parama Labha) by which he means physical diseases such as toothache etc. But the spiritual disease according to the Buddha means the disease of greatest suffering, which is the real disease. Therefore to be free from disease must involve complete eradication of the spiritual disease.

We are free from disease nowadays with the help of the Dhamma of opposites. For example, we can expel anger with forgiveness (Tadanga-pahana), and gain temporary voidness (Tadanga-vimutti). Thus we are temporarily free from disease daily by coincidence. But the disease will consistently resurface now and then. Nevertheless **we must not forget that, without being aware, there are repeated intervals of being free from disease naturally** which is called Tadanga-vimutti.

Now, if **we consciously set up our mind to overcome the disturbances by repression we will achieve even**

more voidness, more relief from the disease because we have it under control. This is called quenching of self or liberation from all defilements (Vikkhambhana-vimutti).

Furthermore, if we can completely uproot, completely eradicate the germs, that is called Samuccheda-vimutti or Samuccheda-pahana, meaning to completely wipe out, not just a coincidence, by chance, or temporary control.

And so we normally get results, at least in the form of Tadanga-vimutti, but if more than that it will be Vikkhambhana-vimutti and eventually

Samuccheda-vimutti, the final goal. Once achieved, we will not be existing with greed, delusion, and cravings but living an unfettered and peaceful life filled with awareness and wisdom, free from suffering, lively and cheerful akin to being eternally young and not ageing. This is how it is with being cured from the spiritual disease.

Lastly, everyone who has come together to form this Dhamma Study Club should know the true purpose of this collective gathering. If evidently deemed worthwhile then you should unite in sacrificing the common things in life for more superior things, more noble things. In other words you

should all give your support to maintain this activity. Do not let it decline and fade away, but help it to grow and flourish for your own benefit as well as for the benefit of all mankind. Then it can be said that in this life you have done the best thing that a human could have done, and have received the best thing that a human could have received. There is nothing more than that, for that is all there is.

So, that is the end of the lesson on what must be learned and what must be done and the consequences of Kamma, in order that we may lead a life without suffering, both during seeking and consuming. We will not suffer

while striving in our work or concentrating in our study which amount to seeking, neither will we suffer when consuming the fruit from seeking such as wealth, honour, fame, etc. There will be no suffering in both situations. It will be marvelous, splendid, wonderful. **Like catching a fish without getting spiked by its spines, and eating the fish without getting jabbed by its bones.** While catching the fish there is no suffering, neither do we suffer while eating the fish. And that is all there is. There is nothing more than that.

Therefore everyone should get to know the physical disease, the mental

disease, and the spiritual disease, all of them totally. Do not miss anything. Treat and cure every disease to become completely free of sickness and achieve the status of Arogya Parama Labha.

So now, on this note I would like to end my lecture on “The Heart of Buddhism” for this occasion at this point here.

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