

Living Computer is Not-Self

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular talks during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

Today we will continue where we left off yesterday, that is speaking about the life which is compared to a computer.

In a computer, there are a number of mechanisms, or systems of mechanisms, necessary for it to operate. In the same way, in this body, there are a number of mechanisms and systems of Dhamma which allow it to operate.

In this computer life, there are the matters or realities of the five *khandhas*, the five heaps of human existence, then there are the four *ariya-sacca*, the four noble truths, and then there is *paṭiccasamuppāda* – that is dependent origination – and finally the matter or subject of *ānāpānasati* – mindfulness with breathing in and out. Within this computer life we can find all four of these subjects or areas to explore: the five aggregates or heaps, the noble truths, the reality or law of dependent origination, and mindfulness with breathing.

So in this computer of ours, there is the system of the five *khandhas*, this is the body and mind, the basic hardware of our computer, the body and mind, and then there are the four noble truths. The four noble truths are like our disc operating system. These four noble truths are specifically the understanding of how *dukkha* occurs and of how *dukkha* is quenched. And then there is the dependent origination which goes into the arising and ending of *dukkha* in great details. Then finally, there is *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness with breathing) which is the practice through which we learn how to keep the entire system operating without any *dukkha*, without any problems.

We'll begin by talking about the five khandhas because this is the basic hardware of our computer. When we speak in this way, we distinguish life, we distinguish the mind-body into five areas or five sections, and each of these sections is called a *khandha*.

When we speak of the five *khandhas*, we can break them up into two categories. The first category has to do with the body, it's the physical category. And then the second category are the mental or the psychic. So all of the five khandhas can be broken into two categories. The first category has one khandha and the remaining four khandhas fall under the mental category.

The first category is made up of a single khandha, that which is called *rūpa-khandha*, which means 'the body.'

But if we study it in more details, we see that this one khandha of the body is made up of four *dhātus* or four natural elements: the earth element, water element, fire element and wind element.

By the earth element, we mean that which takes up space, the property of solidity which takes up space.

The water element is the property that holds things together, it's the property of cohesion, the liquidness that connects and holds things together; that is cohesion.

Regarding the water element, we can see easily that, if you take something and split water, it always comes back together and fills up the space. In this way we can see the quality of cohesion in water.

The fire element is the element of temperature. It has the property of combustion, of burning up things, of consuming things.

The wind element has the property of movement. For example, in all gases you can see the property of movement, that property which causes the gases to move is what we mean by the wind element.

But all four of these elements work together to make up one khandha, the *rūpa-khandha* or the body.

The second category of khandhas begins with the *vedanā-khandha*, or feelings.

The second mental khandha is the activity of recognizing or perceiving the feeling or that which is self. Once something is felt, then we recognize what it is and evaluate it, and then regard it as being this or that. This is called *saññā-khandha*.

Then once something has been recognized, this causes thinking. The thinking about what is felt and recognized is called *saṅkhāra-khandha*, which simply means ‘thinking.’

Then we come to the last of the mental khandhas, *viññāna-khandha* or the aggregate of consciousness. This is that which knows or cognizes things. In fact, it ought to be the first of the mental khandhas because it arises before the other ones. But because it functions so often, it functions in regard to all of the khandhas, and so it is... in the traditional list, it comes last; but actually it should be the first of the four mental khandhas.

So altogether there are five khandhas or sections of life. The physical category is made up of one khandha, *rūpa-khandha*, which literally means the ‘form aggregate,’ but it simply means the body. And then there are the four mental khandhas or sections. There is *vedanā-khandha*, the feelings section and then *saññā-khandha*, the recognition section, *saṅkhāra-khandha*, the thinking section and *viññāna-khandha*, the consciousness section. Altogether, these *five khandhas* make up a living being, a human living being.

We ought to know these things within ourselves, in terms of being one person. We ought to know ourselves that, in this one person, there are these five khandhas, that this person or individual, whom we are, is composed of these five khandhas, and nothing more.

We’ve never considered ourselves in this way before, we’ve never looked at ourselves in terms of these five khandhas, because we’ve never been taught about it. No having had it explained to us, we don’t see its importance and so we don’t give it any attention, but in fact it’s something very important, something that requires our careful attention our interest.

Once we know these five khandhas, we see that these five khandhas are the foundation for the arising and quenching, the arising and quenching of all other *dhammas*. All things, all natural events, occur and end with these five khandhas as their basis or foundation.

Next, we come to the second subject, that of the four noble truths. This is the subject of the things that happen with the five khandhas as their basis. Once we have the five khandhas, then the four noble truths occur or become relevant.

If we want, we can summarize these noble truths into just two. There is *dukkha*, that’s one, and there is the ending of *dukkha*, that’s two. But because the subject of *dukkha* has two aspects, namely *dukkha* itself and the cause of *dukkha*, and because the ending of *dukkha* has two aspects, the quenching of

dukkha and the way of practice that quenches dukkha or that leads to the quenching of dukkha; for this reason, we speak of the four noble truths.

The first noble truth is the truth about dukkha. Dukkha is everything undesirable, unpleasant and unsatisfying which happens to this body or/and within this body. All the things that we don't want to happen, all the things which are unsatisfying, all these are what we mean by dukkha. This is the noble truth of dukkha or *dukkha-ariya-sacca*.

All forms of dukkha, all forms of pain and dissatisfaction, are included within the feeling aggregate or *vedanā-khandha*. All forms of dukkha are just certain kinds of feelings.

Next, is the cause or origin of dukkha, the *samudaya-ariya-sacca*, which is nothing other than desire, the desire which causes, which leads to attachment, to clinging to things as 'me & mine.' The desire which itself comes from feelings, because there are feelings then there arise various desires ... those feelings, because of those feelings. This desire is the cause or origin of dukkha. If we wish to classify it according the five khandhas, then it is *saṅkhāra-khandha*. Desire is a kind of thinking.

Next we come to the third noble truth, the noble truth of the quenching of dukkha. This is called *nirodha*, which means not just a temporary cessation, but a thorough utter quenching of dukkha where dukkha is gone for good. This is the third noble truth.

Now this thing, *nirodha* (utter quenching), it's something difficult to understand. If we look at it in terms of our experience, then we would say that *nirodha* or quenching is a kind of feeling. Because *nirodha* is the quenching of all dukkha, we can call that a certain special kind of happiness, and this happiness, this special happiness of *nirodha* then must be considered a kind of feeling. But if we look at it more broadly and deeply, we see that *nirodha* is just another name for *Nibbāna*. If we look at it more from the side of reality than the side of our experience, then we see it in terms of *Nibbāna*, and *Nibbāna* is not included within the five khandhas. So if we look at it on this higher level, *nirodha* is a matter of *Nibbāna*, it's a matter of the *asankhata*, of the unconcocted or unconditioned, the unchanging timeless reality. So if we look at it in this way, then the third noble truth of *nirodha*, of utter quenching, does not fall within the five khandhas; but if we look at it in terms of our own experience, that this reality of quenching can be experienced or felt by us, then we would speak of it as *vedanā-khandha*.

The fourth noble truth is the *magga-sacca*, the truth of the path or way. This is the noble truth of the path that leads to the quenching of dukkha. This is something we must understand carefully. The path is not the quenching of dukkha, the quenching of dukkha itself is the third noble truth. But the fourth noble truth is the path, the way, the methodology that brings us to the realization of the quenching of dukkha.

The truth of the path is the way of living, the correct way of living that leads to the realization of the final quenching of dukkha. In order for dukkha to be quenched, then the path is simply a way of living, the correct way of living that doesn't allow dukkha to happen. If we can keep dukkha from arising, then eventually, all dukkha will be quenched. This way of living, that prevents the arising of dukkha, is what we mean by the path.

We can illustrate this point with the simple example of a fire. Which is easier and better? To prevent the fires from happening or to put them out once they have started?

If we let the fire happen, then we have to get involved with the fire and have to put it out, and in the process we can get burned. But if we prevent that fire from happening in the first place, then there is no need to mess around with the fire itself, this way it's much safer and cleaner. It's the same way with dukkha. If we let dukkha happen, then we have to suffer through it until it can be ended. But if we prevent all dukkha, then we don't have to mess around with it at all. So this makes up the fourth noble truth, the noble truth of the path that leads to the quenching of dukkha. Altogether these four noble truths, dukkha, the origin of dukkha, the quenching of dukkha and the path that leads to the quenching of dukkha, these are the four things that make up our second subject, the four noble truths.

Our thoughts and reflections regarding the quenching of dukkha can be included within the fourth khandha, the third mental khandha or *saṅkhāra-khandha* – the thinking section or aspect of life. All of our thoughts and reflections on the four noble truths would fit, be categorized as thinking or *saṅkhāra-khandha*. But one should recognize that this is a different kind of thinking than the ordinary concocting of our minds. This kind of thinking is going in the opposite direction, whereas most of our thinking is defiled and egoistic. Thinking in terms of the quenching of dukkha cuts through that, goes against the stream of all that, it leads toward the ending of concocting.

So finally, one can see that the truth of dukkha is *vedanā-khandha*, the feeling section, and that the origin of dukkha is *saṅkhāra-khandha*, the thinking

section. And then the noble truth of the quenching of dukkha, this is once again the feeling section. And then the path that leads to the quenching of dukkha is the saṅkhāra-khandha or thinking section again. So there is feeling section and thinking section, feeling section and thinking section. This is how the four noble truths are based upon our computer, this is how they interact with our computer.

One can close one's eyes and observe for oneself that the four noble truths are within the five khandhas. We can see, experience and understand these four noble truths only within the five khandhas. There is no other place to find them.

Until now we've covered two subjects: the five khandhas and the four noble truths. The next subject goes into the arising of dukkha in great details. This is the way to really understand how dukkha happens. So next, we will discuss the *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination).

The meaning of *paṭiccasamuppāda* is quite simple. It just means that, depending on this, this happens, depending on these things, this happens. So happening, originating, dependent on other things, relying on other things, is the simple meaning of dependent origination. This happens depending on things, and then next this happens depending on things, and then this happens depending on causes and conditions. This constant flowing of things arising due to causes and conditions, things constantly arising one after the other, depending on causes and conditions, it's what is meant by *paṭiccasamuppāda*, or dependent origination.

To study dependent origination, we begin once again with *rūpa-khandha* or the body section of life. When we speak of the body here, we mean specifically the senses, the media for communication with the world, namely the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind which are collectively called the *āyatana*s, the communicators, the media for communicating with the world. There are these six inner communicators and they communicate or make contact with things outside, material things, the forms which are seen by the eyes, sounds heard by the ears, smells, flavors, physical sensations and mental objects or experiences. These latter six are called the outer *āyatana*s or 'external communicators.' Without the external communicators, then the inner ones don't operate or function. But when these six sets or pairs make contact, when they interact, then there is *rūpa-khandha*; this is where our study of dependent origination begins.

Now when the inner communicators meet with the outer communicators, this activity of meeting is called *paṭicca*. The word *paṭicca* in *paṭiccasamuppāda* simply means 'to come together,' or 'to interact.' Although in Thai it's generally translated as *asaigan* or 'dependent' or 'dependently', but

literally it means *tueng gan khao*, which we can say is ‘to come together’ or ‘interact’. So when the eyes meet with form, this interacting, this paṭicca leads to the arising of something new, namely consciousness. If it is dependent on, having to do with the eyes, we call it ‘eye-consciousness.’ When it’s regarding the ears, we call it ‘ear-consciousness.’ Then there is nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness. So depending on the six pairs of communicators, when these six pairs interact, or when they paṭicca, then there arise the six kinds of sense-consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

So just here with the interacting of the inner and outer communicators, we already have paṭicca, and then with the arising of consciousness, depending on the senses – for example eye and form, or ear and sound – just that is dependent origination. We have the activity or the reality of dependent origination, right there. And so now we have three things, we have the inner communicators, the outer communicators and then sense-consciousness. There are these three things and then, depending on these three things, there is another mode or level of dependent origination. Depending on these three things, as these three meet together, then there arises *phassa, phassa* or ‘contact.’

Phassa or contact is when the experience makes an impression on us. And then, depending on this contact or this sense-impression, there arises feeling. Please observe until you see for yourself how feeling arises due to contact.

Next, relying upon this feeling, there arises desire (*taṇhā*). This desire happens depending on the value of the feeling. Whether the feeling has a positive or negative value, then various kinds of desire will arise, wanting and desiring according to that value of the feeling.

If the feeling is ignorant, if there is no wisdom or intelligence regarding the feeling, then the desires or wants that arise due to that feeling will also be ignorant and lacking in intelligence. However, if the feeling is experienced with wisdom, if there is wisdom on managing things, then the desire that arises due to that feeling is different, and so we no longer call it *taṇhā* (desire) instead we call it *saṅkappa* (aspiration). To aspire in a wise way is much different than to want in the typical and blind foolish way, which is called *taṇhā*. So it’s very important, first to understand that due to feeling desire arises, but also to see the difference between the foolish desire that arises when there is no wisdom regarding the feeling and the wise want or aspiration that occurs when there is wisdom at feeling.

Right here is the fork in the road, this is our big moment of decision. One fork leads to *dukkha*, that is the fork of *avijjā* – of not-knowing, of non-intelligence, of ignorance. If we take this fork, then it leads from ignorant feeling, to ignorant desire, to attachment and to *dukkha*. That's the fork of ignorance. But the other way, the other path is the fork of *vijjā* (right understanding), of *paññā* (wisdom). If we take this fork, then from wise feeling it leads to wise aspiration, and this path doesn't stir up *dukkha*, this is the fork that leads to the quenching of *dukkha*. So one ought to get to know this fork in the road between going on heedlessly, ignorantly, stupidly towards *dukkha*, or to carry on wisely towards the quenching of *dukkha*. If we understand this fork in the road well, if we really understand it with wisdom, then we will be able to take the most beneficial choice, to follow the way towards the quenching of *dukkha*. Unfortunately, people in this world – and that means all of us – lack the wisdom and understanding to follow the wise path. Lacking that wisdom, we just can't help it that there is ignorant feelings, there is stupid desire, this gets us into the foolishness of attachment and so there is *dukkha*.

If we foolishly let desire happen, then the desire grows, it intensifies, and as the desire gets stronger, it leads to the arising of attachment. Attachment happens because of this foolish desire. Attachment is even more foolishness, it's even greater stupidity. It's when, because of the intensity of the desire, the mind assumes blindly that there must be the one who desires. Because there is this twisted energy of desire, ignorance assumes that there must be someone who is the desire, or owns it or controls it. And so this leads to attachment, to the 'desirer'. From the ignorant desire, there arises stupid attachment (*upādāna*).

Once this attachment has arisen, this is the beginning of ego. Once there is attachment, the ego, the 'me,' the self has begun. But it's not yet complete, it's not yet fully mature or ripened. At the level of attachment this could be compared with the conception of a human embryo. When the sperm fertilizes the egg and there is conception of human life, this is comparable to attachment, and then depending on this attachment there arises *bhava* (existence). So far, it hasn't existed completely, but now there is complete or full existence, this is what is called *bhava*.

If one wants to ask, 'How does this "me," this ego happen, how does it establish itself?' then we answer 'Right here, in the arising of *bhava*, dependent on attachment, through this attachment, and then there arises this ignorant existence.' That's how this 'me,' this ego sets itself up.

When the sperm fertilizes the egg, then there is conception and then this embryo grows and develops, and then eventually the embryo grows into a fetus,

which develops further, and once it is mature, it is born as a new human life. This is a physical example. What we call 'attachment' is comparable to the conception, and then the growth and development of the embryo and fetus is the same as existence. In the way the human life begins to exist, once the embryo begins to mature, in the same way, ego starts to exist, this 'me' exists with bhava. And then, as this ego develops and ripens, it becomes mature enough to be born, and this birth is called *jāti*, *jāti* which simply means 'birth,' in this case the birth of the ego, the fully mature and ripened 'me.'

Once there is this birth, then the thing that we are calling 'ego' or 'self' or the 'selfish ego' – it's not so much what you call it but seeing the reality of it – when this *jāti*, this ego or self or selfish ego is born... and once it's born it grabs on to everything as being 'me' or being 'mine.' Once there is the ego, then everything is grasped and clung to, it's claimed to be 'me & mine.' So for example joy and sadness, pleasure and pain, birth, ageing, getting old, illness and death, these are all taken sometimes as being 'me,' other times as being 'mine.' And what's most stupid of all, this ignorant activity will go and take the *five khandhas*, the five sections of life as being 'me,' as being 'mine.' So when due to birth, ego lays claims to things as being me and mine, through this there is *dukkha*, this is how *dukkha* arises. Because, through birth, things are grasped and clung to fully, tightly, completely as being 'me' and 'mine,' so the only thing that can happen is that there will be *dukkha*, there will be pain. So this is the final mode or link in the dependent origination of *dukkha* – how depending on birth, there is *dukkha*.

This birth of ego is happening all the time, each day of our lives, over and over again, moment after moment, minute after minute, day after day, for our entire lives. This birth of ego, of the selfish 'me,' keeps happening over and over again. For we don't recognize it, we don't see it, we think that nothing is happening because we don't see and understand dependent origination. So we don't see this ego being born over and over again, but it's going on all the time. Sometimes it's dependent on the eyes, sometimes on the ears, sometimes the nose, the tongue, the body or the mind, but over and over again, this ego, this 'me,' this selfish self keeps getting born.

And when we don't know these things that are happening within us over and over again, almost constantly, then how stupid are we? To what degree are we stupid when we don't even know that which is happening within us? Please consider this question.

So whatever kind of experience it is, whatever kind of object, whether making contact to the eyes, the ears or whatever, whether it's positive or

negative, it just leads to trouble. If it's a positive object, then there is positive experience, positive desire, positive attachment, positive ego; if it's a negative object, then a negative experience, negative attachment, negative ego. But if there's ego, whether it's positive or negative, it's heavy. All forms of ego, no matter how positive or good, are burdensome. So, it doesn't matter what kind of contact, if it's positive or negative, then there is this burdensomeness, this heaviness of the ego, this dukkha of carrying this weight of ego then makes us suffer.

If it's positive, then we like it, it delights us, it makes us happy and glad, and so we're tormented by gladness. This gladness, this happiness is a positive kind of torment. If it's a negative experience, then we don't like it, we hate it, and so we are tormented in a negative way. Whether if we let things become positive or the negative, then it's a torment nevertheless, without exception. Both positive and negative experiences are a torment. Please try to understand this, otherwise you'll be deceived by the positive. You'll fall in love with the positive and then it will keep tormenting you forever and ever.

If it's positive, then we hug it, we cuddle it, we caress it. The positive is the kind of dukkha that we are most willing to endure, the kind of pain that we volunteer for most readily. And so we fall into it, get totally addicted to it, until our whole lives are dominated by our obsession with the positive, in spite of all the dukkha and trouble it causes.

If we need to be glad and happy all day long, if we need to be laughing all the time, then we won't be able to eat, we won't be able to swallow our food. If we're sad and sorrowful all the time, if we're crying all day long, then we still won't be able to swallow our food. Whether this laughing all the time or crying all the time, it's abnormal, it's a kind of torment. Although in its external conditions, or in their externals, these two are opposite, but in their effect upon us, they are the same in that they torment us, they burden us.

But if we are above and beyond all that positive and negative, so that it can't cause us any trouble, that is the meaning of salvation. The true meaning of salvation is to be above and beyond the power of all positive and all negative, so that none of it can affect us or concoct us.

When things are like that, then there must be one more system within our computer, or within our computer life, that will regulate, that will manage and oversee this stream of dependent origination. This stream of dependent origination is going on all the time, we need some system to manage it, to deal with it.

This system will create and develop *sati* (mindfulness), the mind that can recollect the present reality all the time, it will create and develop *paññā*, wisdom, correct understanding of things as they really are, will develop *sampajañña*, the immediate and specific application of wisdom, of understanding to whatever is going on right now, and it will develop *samādhi*, the mind which is well established, firm and focus.

So for this reason, we practice the system of mindfulness with breathing in order to develop this mindfulness-wisdom, ready application of wisdom and *samādhi*, in order to control and regulate the stream of dependent origination.

So one ought to be very interested in this practice called *ānāpānasati*. Because through practicing mindfulness with breathing in and out, then we can develop all four of these necessary things. So far, we don't have any means to control the stream of dependent origination, so the ego and *dukkha* keep getting concocted over and over again. But through *ānāpānasati*, we can develop within our minds the necessary mindfulness-wisdom, specific application of wisdom and concentration needed for controlling the stream of dependent origination. So please be very interested in this and apply yourself to its practice. At a minimum it's a very excellent kind of psychology, at a minimum it will bring us good mental health, and if we really develop it, it will take us much further. So please be most interested in this practice.

Now for those of you who are practicing and training in this way, let us explain that there are four kinds of victory, of 'victoriousness' included in this way of practice. There is the victory over the body, the victory over the feelings, there is victory over the mind and victory over all the things which will trick us into attachment. Through this system called mindfulness with breathing in and out, there are these four kinds of victory.

So the first victory is over the body. In this, we improve and adjust our bodies until they are correct and so that there are no more problems regarding these bodies. And so, on one level the body is strong and vigorous, it has a strength, efficiency and ability required for further practice; and second, this body is calm, it's very calm and quiet. So there is a kind of peacefulness and a happiness, a joy that comes from gaining this victory over the body.

Next, is the victory over the feelings. The feelings or the *vedanās* – which by the way are not emotions – but these feelings, these *vedanās* have the power to pull the mind in all the different directions, positive feelings pull the mind one way, negative feelings the other, and then feelings which are kind of in the middle pull the mind in another way. These feelings have great power to pull

and lead the mind, so they are the basis for everything that happens in our lives and in this world. These feelings have such power over us that we become their slaves. But through investigating, understanding and then getting control over these feelings, we achieve a great victory. This victory over the feelings is what comes through the second part of mindfulness with breathing, what is called *vedanānupassanā* or ‘contemplation of the feelings.’

Because we are slaves to these feelings, we end up doing all kinds of things in order to get them, especially the positive ones. And so we create all kinds of things to create these feelings that we desire. And so, nowadays, we have all kinds of things which amount to needless unnecessary luxuries. This is what we’ve got in this so-called ‘developed modern world.’ In this modern world, it’s full up of things that bring us the kind of feelings we like. But we don’t observe this, we don’t pay any attention to it, we’re just very proud of our development, our technology, of our modernity. But what it comes down to – or take a good look, and see if it doesn’t just come down to – a lot of excess, a lot of unnecessary stuff, just created for the sake of the feelings. And then when we’ve created all this technology and all this industry to serve the feelings, then we have to have, we have to abuse arts and psychology to create advertising and marketing. We have to come up with these ways to trick people to buy stuff they don’t even need. And this is just another way to stir up the feelings. And then, in this world of technology, of luxury, of advertising, of competition, then we find ourselves competing and struggling with each other, to get the feelings. We find ourselves fighting amongst friends and our families and even between nations. So in the end we go to war because of these feelings. Because of our slavery, because of our infatuation to these feelings, we create all the kinds of problems that exist in this world, including war. So one ought to examine this situation that we, and all of humanity is in. See the very harmful results that come from our slavery to the feelings, and then you will get, you will develop a genuine interest in getting free of this power of the feelings in raising above and beyond the influence of the feelings. Please examine these things until you have a sincere desire to get free of the power of the feelings.

So we need to study, a lot, to the degree that we go to university and even get post-doctorate and then get graduate degrees, and then we need to work, work, work, work, work, work. And then we get all kinds of money, and we store our money, and invest our money, and save our money; and then we travel and travel and travel. And all of this is just to find and sustain the feelings. All this study, work, saving and travel, it’s just searching for, trying to get and maintain these feelings. So one can see the problem created by the feelings, this burden of our infatuation and slavery to the feelings, that we have to do all this

studying and all this working and all this saving and all this traveling because we are slaves to these feelings.

We are not afraid to be slaves of the feelings, we're not even embarrassed that we're in such a serfdom, that we are such slaves. We don't ever think of going against the feelings, of fighting against them, of getting ourselves free, of overcoming them. So we just go on and on in our slavery, spending our entire lives as slaves to the feelings without ever once thinking of getting free. We think we are already free, how little we understand.

And so we're still slaves to the feelings, and so the feelings lead us by our noses around the world. We go around and around the world – how many times? – and we still don't find an end to it all. No matter how many times we go around the world or where we go, we never come to an end of this slavery, to this this power of the feelings. And so it just goes on and on endlessly, this slavery.

We'll be able to be masters, the bosses, of the feelings, when we can have mastery over the mind. So therefore we must learn how to control the mind so that we can be masters of the feelings.

So we make the mind satisfied by doing things that are correct. We train the mind to be satisfied with actions and activities which are correct. And then, we control the mind by concentrating it in various ways, to different levels, to different degrees. And then we make the mind release, we make the mind let go, we train the mind to release everything so that it's not clinging or hanging on to anything. So in these different ways, we learn how to control the mind, we gain mastery over the mind by making it satisfied with correctness, by concentrating it in better and better ways, by making it release and let go.

This takes us to the last stage of practicing *ānāpānasati* which is called *dhammānupassanā*, 'the contemplation of *dhamma*.' Here *dhamma* means 'all things,' it means 'all of nature,' but to talk of contemplating all of nature is far too broad, it would take us forever. So what we mean here is, amongst all things, those particular things which are the basis of attachment, the things that have tricked us into attaching to them. These are the dhammas that we contemplate in this last tetrad or stage of *ānāpānasati*. So we contemplate these dhammas until we see them as they really are, until we can let go of them so that they are no longer able to trick us into attachment.

When we say 'dhammas' or 'things,' the things that we are most attached to are our homes, our possessions, our husbands and wives, our lovers, our children, our status, our reputations, up to and including our own lives, these are

the things we are attached to. We need to look at them carefully, deeply, until we can let go of them, until we see that none of these things are worth attaching to as being 'me' or 'mine,' and then when we can let go of all these things, then we are free. When we are free of these things, then we are able to relate to them. We can still have homes and possessions, we'll have reputations and families, and we can still live our lives, but our relationships, our interactions with all these things, will no longer be made of attachment. They'll be lived in freedom, with non-attachment. So everything is fine, everything is just OK. Instead of everything being just a burden, a problem, a hassle, a struggle, everything is fine because we no longer deal with things through attachment.

It's not necessary that we burn down our homes, we don't have to drive our cars into the ocean, we don't have to divorce or kill our husbands and wives, all we need to do is to stop attaching to these things. Instead of living with them through attachment, we can live with them through mindfulness and wisdom. When we are mindful and wise, then we no longer attach, and so none of these things are a problem. When we are not attached to these things, then they serve us, but when we're attached to them, we serve them. It's like we've got all these things piled on top of our heads and our heads are burdens; our brains, our minds are burdens by all these things that we must serve. But by letting go of them, we don't have to serve any of them and then we can make the most of them, we can use them in truly beneficial ways.

So we ought to make this computer life of ours free of attachment, by practicing mindfulness with breathing and achieving these four victories over body, feelings, mind and all the dhammas we attach to. Then we can have our computer won't be fouled up with any attachment. And then this life will be complete, it will be free.

So now we know about and understand the *five khandhas*, the four noble truths, the entire sequence of dependent origination and the practice of *ānāpānasati* in its fullness, in all four areas. With this knowledge, then our life computers can run most efficiently and without any glitches and foul ups. And so this life is free of problems and we have realized the purpose of life.

Some of you might be thinking that this living computer is magical, that it's even more than magic. But we'd like to say that in fact, there is nothing magical or strange about it, it's totally natural, that everything we've been talking about is just natural. And so please, don't think that it is difficult, instead just study nature, the law of nature, the duty according to the law of nature and the results of doing that duty correctly according to the law of nature. If you study these

meanings of nature, of Dhamma, then it will be simple, it will be easy for you to make this living computer function superbly without any problems.

And so time is up, we've spoken for a full two hours. In closing we wish you all success in studying Dhamma, in practicing Dhamma, in having Dhamma, and in using Dhamma, in applying Dhamma so that your lives are free of problems and troubles. We wish you complete success in this.

And so please walk back to the meditation center, without a walker. Just walk naturally without the added burden of the walker. Let the living computer function on its own, correctly, according to its natural mechanism. Don't drag this silly illusion of a walker along with you.

And so allow us to end today's talk and close the meeting for today.

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