

The Source of Selfishness

by Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

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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).

In the previous talk, we discussed selfishness. That is, we talked about the old life, the old way of life of selfishness, which is *dukkha* (suffering). We also talked about the new life, the new life that is free of selfishness, that isn't *dukkha*, that isn't suffering. Today we will discuss the cause of selfishness, or the basis – the foundation – of selfishness, which we call 'the five *khandha*' (the five aggregates).

We talked about selfishness as the cause of all *kilesa* (defilement) of these low and evil Satans, which are the base of our problems in life, which bring suffering, pain, *dukkha* into our lives. Now we need to look at how to get rid of, how to destroy selfishness in order to free life from these problems, and so we'll look into how to destroy selfishness at its very cause so as to avoid these various problems – the suffering that selfishness causes, both within each of us individually as well as socially, on up to the problems it causes for the entire world.

When we speak of the origin of selfishness, we can begin by mentioning *avijjā* ('not knowing' or 'ignorance'). Ignorance begins with birth. We're born lacking knowledge and then it increases and grows as life continues, causing more and more problems. So we can begin this understanding of the causes of selfishness by examining ignorance. We are born ignorant from our mother's wombs. We lack knowledge, and then as we meet up with different things, they trick us, deceive us, and confuse us so that ignorance grows and grows. This is something we need to examine closely. The first thing to talk about when discussing the origin of selfishness is 'not knowing' or ignorance.

If we look back to birth, we'll see that when we're born, we don't know anything. We lack knowledge, and this is the meaning of ignorance, not having knowledge. Then after birth, as we make contact with all kinds of different things, then we react to them based on our various impulses and sensitivities and feelings, and this leads to our misunderstanding things, or understanding them incorrectly. We don't see things as they really are. For example, when something lovely or attractive comes by, this leads to ... because of our various feelings towards that thing, we fall in love with it, we like it, we react in that sort of way. Then for things which are ugly or unattractive, we follow our feelings and impulses and react towards them with anger or hatred, which is just another kind of misunderstanding. Or there are things which we react to with fear. Because we lack knowledge in the first place, our way of reacting, of interacting with things is based in ignorance, which gives rise to further misunderstandings, and ignorance grows and grows to the point that our way of living is very foolish, to the point that we see everything as I & mine, that we understand that there is a self, and then even further act selfishly in regards to this self. This is how ignorance is the direct cause of selfishness in this way.

In understanding how selfishness happens, we start by examining what we call 'contact' (*phassa*). This is something that is taking place all the time in our lives. Our life is full of contacts, one after another after another. Contact will occur in association with the eyes, with the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. There are these six types of contact (*phassa*). This contact is the starting point for the development of selfishness. When we say contact, what we mean is that the eye, for example, the eye – the visual organ – comes into contact with a form, some sight, some visual object. When eye and form come into contact, then there arises eye consciousness. When the three come together, when these three meet, that is called 'contact.' The same thing happens with the other senses, the ear and sounds and ear consciousness, the nose and smells and nose consciousness, the body or the tongue, the body and the mind. In these six different ways, there are these different kinds of contact. Although they happen with the different senses, it's essentially the same thing of three factors working together. They eye, the form, and eye consciousness and so forth up to the mind, a mental object, and mind consciousness. The three factors meeting and working together is what we call *phassa* (contact). In life, these various kinds of contact are happening over and over, one after the other – eye contact, ear contact, nose contact, tongue contact, body contact, or mind contact, one after the other, in endless series of contacts. This is the starting point for the growth of selfishness.

We study Dhamma by studying contact in these six ways. Please understand that the only way to study Dhamma is to study these contacts as they really happen in life. Your study of this cannot be successful merely by listening to a talk or lecture about them. You can't really learn about *phassa* from books or

from thinking about it. This is not what it means to actually study contact or to study Dhamma. The way to truly study this matter of contact or phassa is to study it as it actually occurs in life, as you actually experience it. The way to do this is to approach it scientifically, to take a very scientific attitude, and instead of working with mere abstract ideas, work with and study and experiment with the real thing. But this is a special kind of science where we don't focus on external things, but this is a science of the mind and body, our own minds and bodies, and we study contact there. This study won't be successful if it's merely an intellectual endeavor. But if we study the real thing as we experience it within our own minds, then we can actually see, we can clearly see the reality of this thing, phassa. We see it for itself, and this leads to an understanding of Dhamma, to the direct experience of it. So please study these six kinds of phassa, of contact, within our own experience.

Let's look at the first stage of this matter. The newborn infant has its first experience of contact through the eyes, and in the infant there is no understanding of whatever it is that makes contact. So there is the experience and some feeling arises towards that contact, and this is the feeling that arises out of not knowing, out of ignorance. And so the reaction towards the contact is foolish. It's a misunderstanding and leads to some kind of misdeed. There is incorrect action coming out of it. This happens repeatedly because of the lack of knowledge. There are these feelings and reactions towards eye consciousness or toward eye contact, ear contact, nose contact, and so forth, and this misunderstanding grows and grows, becomes more and more foolish. This is what we call foolish or ignorant contact. It's contact that occurs in a context of ignorance, of a lack of knowledge, and this is the basis for ignorance and misunderstanding to grow and develop. We say that this is the starting point of selfishness because when there is ignorant contact, it continues and develops into the view that 'I am,' that there is a 'self,' and once that view arises, then there will develop selfishness. So this is the starting point of selfishness, right here at this ignorant contact, which is something that we all experience from the beginning of our lives because of the lack of ignorance, or because of the lack of knowledge, and from that fundamental ignorance has developed greater foolishness which leads into more and more dangerous stupidity, up to what we call selfishness.

Ignorance at contact is the first stage of ignorance. The second stage of ignorance is that there arises *vedanā* (feeling). There's some kind of mental feeling towards that contact, towards that sense experience, and this is the second stage of ignorance because if the contact is ignorant, if it's foolish contact, then the feeling will also be foolish, and that's the second stage of ignorance. Then when there is foolish feeling, ignorance goes on to a third stage and there arises desire based on that foolish feeling, and this kind of desire is of course ignorant also. It's not wise. When there is this foolish desire, there will

grow the foolish belief that there is a self that desires. There will be an attachment to some 'I' that desires, and then from this belief in a self, foolishness or ignorance becomes complete with the arising of selfishness. So there are these different stages of ignorance beginning with contact, then foolish feeling, then foolish desire or craving, then attachment, and finally selfishness. Ignorance grows in this way, and the end result is selfishness.

It will be impossible for you to understand Buddhism in its truest sense unless you study this matter of phassa and these stages of ignorance. If you don't, if you can't understand this, if you're not willing to study it and look at it, then it will be absolutely hopeless for you to ever understand the heart of Buddhism. When there is ignorant contact, then there arises ignorant feeling. When there is this ignorant feeling, instead of just seeing the contact as something natural and ordinary, as just that, just a natural thing, instead of reacting and seeing it in this way, there arises ignorant feeling. Sometimes there is pleasure over the thing, or sometimes displeasure, or sometimes an uncertain feeling that is neither pleased nor displeased. All three of these are merely ignorant feelings based in not knowing. This happens when there is not the awareness that it's just that, it's just a natural, ordinary phenomenon. So when this ignorant feeling arises, then these feelings will happen in different ways depending on the type of object. Different causes will condition pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling, and neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling. Then these ignorant feelings will condition various kinds of desire. The ignorance grows into the desire to get whatever it is pleases or to destroy, to get rid of that which displeases, or if it's an uncertain feeling, that will lead to confusion, doubt, fear, worry, or something like that. So the different kinds of ignorant feeling arise and then condition ignorant desire, and then from these foolish desires, there arises the sense of the self that desires, the self that wants to get or destroy or the feeling that this is my desire or my wanting, my craving. So attachment arises because of the different kinds of ignorant desire, and then from that attachment, the sense of I and mine. There ignorance blossoms into selfishness. This is the heart of Buddhism, how ignorant contact develops through ignorant feeling on up to selfishness. This is the essential matter of Buddhism. The only way to truly understand Dhamma is to study this matter, and you can only study it within your own bodies and minds. It can't be studied in books. So this is what it means to study Buddhism. If you don't bother to study this, then you'll never get anywhere near to understanding what Buddhism is about.

So let's review this. There is first ignorant contact. Ignorant contact conditions ignorant feeling. Ignorant feeling conditions ignorant desire. Ignorant desire conditions the feeling or the sense that there is a 'self,' an 'I,' who desires. This leads to the thought 'my desire' and this develops – this conditions – selfishness. All of this, these different successive levels and developments of

ignorance, is all happening internally within the mind. Please listen very carefully. This is all internal. All this ignorance is taking place inside. It's internal. There are also external conditions and causes for selfishness. The world is full of all kinds of things which incite selfishness, all kinds of strange and terrifying and exciting sights, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts. The world is full of all these things which can incite selfishness. Then nowadays it's become even worse because there are so many people on the planet, in each country, in each city, that there's never enough to go around. There aren't enough things to go around, and so there's a lot of selfishness involved in struggling, in competing to get enough, to get what we need. So when we take this internal ignorance, which is the internal condition for selfishness, and then we take the external conditions of all these things which incite and encourage and fuel selfishness, along with the scarcity of what we need, we have both the internal and external conditions and then selfishness is full and complete.

What we've been talking about so far is the origin – the cause – of selfishness, and now what we would like to look at is the basis or the bases – the foundations – of selfishness. Everything that exists must have a foundation, some kind of basis, and so we will now look at those things which are the basis, the foundation, the things on which selfishness is established or built. Selfishness arises out of this sense of there being a self, of there being something which is I, and this sense of self is further established on other things, and this is what we would like to look at. There are things which we take to be the self, and out of that grows selfishness. These things which are considered to be the self we call 'the five *khandha*' – that's the Pāli word. In Sanskrit the word is *skandha*, and in English we will call them 'aggregates.' These are the five aggregates (the five *khandha*) which are taken to be the self. This is where the 'self' idea is established. We'll call them 'aggregates' for now, but exactly what we mean by that will become clearer as we discuss them. Please take a special interest in this. If you understand these five things which are the basis for selfishness, then you will have a powerful tool which will enable you to overcome this problem and the pain of selfishness. So please listen carefully about the five *khandha*.

These five *khandha* (aggregates), we can see these as being the ingredients of life. A life is made up of five parts, and these we call the *khandha*. Other systems of study may talk about it in another way, but in Dhamma this is how we talk about life. We can see that life is basically made up of five parts or components. The first part is the body, the physical component of life. This is *rūpa-khandha*. Then the rest are the mental components, the ingredients of life which make up the mind and heart, all the non-physical aspects, the mental-spiritual aspects of life, and there are four of these mental components. We put all these together and we get five parts, the five *khandha* (aggregates). Every

time that there arises this sense of ‘self,’ of ‘I am,’ it is based upon one of these ingredients, one of these khandha, and it changes. Sometimes it is the sense of self is based on this khandha, sometimes on another khandha. But we haven’t analyzed things carefully, we haven’t looked at things clearly with understanding. Instead we just follow our ignorant feelings, the awareness that has been conditioned out of ignorance, out of misunderstanding, and we go on this basis. We have this ignorant sense of a self and we cling to this, this attachment to self, and we don’t look more closely to see that every time there arises a sense of self, it’s established on one of these aggregates, and so we lump it all together and develop a very firm and powerful belief in a ‘self,’ in ‘I.’ This is all conditioned by ignorance, and so it would do us well to look more closely and see that this idea of self is actually only conditioned and established upon these five khandha.

We’ll begin with the first aggregate, *rūpa-khandha* (the form aggregate, the body aggregate). *Rūpa-khandha* is the body. It’s the physical aspect of life. The body (*rūpa-khandha*) is unable to feel things by itself. There is no awareness in the body itself but the body is of course necessary as the basis for the mind. The mind is established upon the body, and so it is the mind that is able to know things, which is able to sense things, feel things, and experience things. This is done by the mind. But that cannot happen without the body, so *rūpa-khandha* (the form aggregate) serves as this foundation for the mind. When we talk about this form aggregate, we include the nervous system. All the nerves including the brain are part of this physical part of life, the material *rūpa-khandha*, which serves as the basis for awareness and feeling. There is something very strange about this which will sound very strange to you probably, that if we examine it, we’ll see that when the body, when *rūpa-khandha* performs its function, when it does its job, then it exists. But whenever *rūpa-khandha* is not performing this function, then it does not exist. That might sound strange to you who have a concept of the body always existing. But when we talk in the language of Dhamma, we are concerned with what is actually experienced in the mind, and in Dhamma language, we say that *rūpa-khandha* only exists when it performs the basis, when it becomes the basis of some mental awareness. For example when the visual nervous part of the nervous system, the eyes and everything, sees a form or the ears make contact with the sound, when the body performs this function that allows for the arising of consciousness and the other mental factors, then we say that *rūpa-khandha* is performing its function. When it doesn’t perform its function, there are merely the elements, which we can talk about the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind. These four elements are there. But we only say that *rūpa-khandha* exists when it performs the function which allows the mind to be aware. This is the first of the five aggregates.

Even though this form aggregate (*rūpa-khandha*) has no awareness, is completely unable to know anything or be aware of anything, even so we go

and attach to it as ‘self.’ It itself doesn’t know anything, but we go and attach to it as ‘self.’ For example, if a finger is cut, we don’t look at it and say, ‘Oh, a sharp metal object has sliced into some flesh.’ Instead we go, ‘I’m cut, I’m cut, I hurt.’ We don’t see it as it really is, but we attach to this form aggregate as ‘I.’ Or sometimes the hand hurts or a foot aches, and instead of seeing it merely as pain in the foot or pain in the hand, we attach to it, we cling to it as ‘I,’ and there arises the thought, ‘I hurt.’ So even though that in these physical components, these material aspects of life, there is no awareness in itself, they still can serve as the basis of our attachment because of ignorance. There arises these very foolish ignorant thoughts that, ‘I am cut, I hurt, I am going to die,’ and so forth, when it’s only something happening to the body. And it doesn’t happen just with internal, with the internal physical things of our own body. It even can happen with external physical objects, lifeless objects such as we mentioned yesterday. When a child bumps into a chair, there arises an ignorant feeling towards the chair, and the child projects upon the chair the thought that that is a self, and then with anger attempts to destroy and kill the self which has been projected on that chair. We can do this with all kinds of physical objects. These things are lifeless. They are not selves, but still because of the ignorant workings of the mind, we try to destroy or possess these things that we take to be selves, even those outside the body. So in this way, even lifeless material insensitive things can be the basis of pleasure, displeasure, and suffering.

So the first aggregate is the form aggregate, *rūpa-khandha*. It has the nature of being hard, insensitive, and material. Then there are the *nāma-khandha*, the immaterial, the mental aggregates. There are four of these. The four, the mental aggregates, perform the various functions of knowing, of being aware, of being sensitive, of thinking, of perceiving, and so forth. These are all mental functions, but these cannot occur without the physical *rūpa-khandha*, so the various *nāma-khandha* are dependent upon, they must be established upon *rūpa-khandha*. But even though they are dependent on the body in this way, they are nonetheless very, very important because this is where all the kinds of mental operations are taking place in what we can call *nāma-khandha* or the mental aggregates, or more simply, mind. The mind performs four basic functions. We can discuss it in four basic ways, and these are the four mental *khandhas*. Sometimes the mind performs the function of feeling, and we call this ‘feeling aggregate.’ Sometimes the mind performs the function of perceiving or discriminating, and this we call *saññā-khandha* (‘perception aggregate’). Other times the mind performs the function of thinking, of having emotions and so forth, opinions and all that. This is *saṅkhāra-khandha* (the ‘formations aggregate’). And then the mind sometimes performs the function of knowing, the basic sense experience, and this, the basic sense consciousness, is called *viññāna-khandha* (‘consciousness aggregate’). The mind has these four functions, and when it is performing one of these functions, then that aggregate

arises to perform its duty. The first of these is the feeling khandha. When there is some kind of contact, then there arises a feeling towards it. This is a mental feeling of sometimes being pleased, other times displeased, and sometimes uncertain, neither pleased nor displeased. When this function of feeling takes place, this is then the basis for attachment. When there is some kind of ignorant feeling, when there is a foolish feeling of pleasure, displeasure, or uncertainty – uncertain feeling – then there arises the attachment ‘I feel, I feel.’ The self is identified with feeling. ‘I feel and this is my feeling.’ So ignorant feeling becomes the basis of attachment in this way, and so when feeling is attached to, when feeling is taken to be the self, then life becomes this attachment to feeling.

When feeling arises, if it is just seen as a natural occurrence, something that is conditioned under the law of cause and effect as just a natural thing that is just that, then it does not need to become the basis of attachment. But in general, because it is not seen in this way, the feeling is taken to be I, mine, & myself. The next aggregate or the third khandha is *saññā-khandha*. *Saññā* is often translated ‘perception.’ It’s when the mind performs the function of perceiving something, but this is not the full meaning of the word *saññā*. *Saññā-khandha* is broader than merely ‘perceptions. Once the mind perceives something, then it also recognizes. It recognizes it as this or that, and then on top of that recognition, it is regarded, not only is it recognized to be this but then it is regarded to be this and then classified according to that recognition and regarding. So *saññā-khandha* is more than just perception. It includes perception, recognition, to regard it as that, according to how it is recognized to actually take it to be that and to classify or categorize it accordingly. In this way, *saññā-khandha* very easily becomes the basis for attachment. We perceive, recognize, and classify things to be good and bad. This is pleasant, that’s unpleasant; this is good, that’s bad; this is nice, that’s ugly; this is beautiful and so forth. This is male, this is female; this is getting, this is a loss; this is a gift, this is a sacrifice and so forth. All these different kinds of perceptions and discriminations are taken to be I & mine. ‘I perceive, I recognize, I discriminate.’ This is my perception, my discrimination and so forth. Instead of just seeing it as a functioning of the mind, the natural process of the mind, the ignorant understanding or ignorant misunderstanding takes it to be self or the possession of self.

Next we come to the third of the mental aggregates or the fifth of all five aggregates, depending on how we count. This third of the mental aggregates is called *saṅkhāra-khandha*. *Saṅkhāra* means to form, to make, to produce. This aggregate is essentially the thinking. When something has been perceived and recognized and classified, then there arise concepts about it. This concept formation and thinking is the *saṅkhāra-khandha*. This is very important because *saṅkhāra-khandha* is the cause of our various actions and deeds. The things we do arise out of our thoughts. Even to come here to Suan Mokkh, you had to

have the thought of going or coming to Suan Mokkh. This is how saṅkhāra-khandha leads to our various actions. So if we don't control this saṅkhāra-khandha, if we allow it to become the basis of attachment and selfishness, then all kinds of dangerous deeds can arise. Saṅkhāra-khandha is the cause of our various good deeds, wrong deeds, right deeds, incorrect deeds, harmful deeds, beneficial wholesome deeds, and so forth. All these activities arise out of the aggregate of conception or saṅkhāra-khandha. Sometimes saṅkhāra-khandha gets so busy, it kind of takes over and dominates the mind to the point that we can't even sleep at night and go crazy with all our thinking, where it can't stop and just drives us insane. So saṅkhāra-khandha needs to be kept under control, otherwise it can cause a real mess. This is the aggregate of conception, the fourth of the five khandha or aggregates.

Next we come to *viññāna-khandha* (the aggregate of consciousness). This aggregate of consciousness is the basic consciousness of the objects that contact the various sense apparatus, so it's consciousness of forms, consciousness of sounds, smells, tastes, touches and so forth. There are these six avenues of sensory consciousness, and this basic knowing of the different objects which make contact with life, this is called *viññāna-khandha* (consciousness aggregate). Sometimes we can call it a kind of awareness, but we shouldn't confuse it with the feeling aggregate. This is more of a knowing, just to know whatever object it is that makes contact with life, with the mind. That is consciousness aggregate, and it functions on the six sense bases of eyes, ears, nose, and so forth. This is the basic consciousness on which the other khandhas can arise. Without this consciousness, the other khandhas wouldn't be able to function, so this is very important. It's also the most subtle of them all, and it's the one we tend to overlook the most. But even so, it can still be the basis of attachment, the 'I am conscious' or 'my consciousness,' and so we attach to even *viññāna-khandha*, this very fundamental knowing that is the basis of all experience. This is *viññāna-khandha*. It's the last, the fifth of the five aggregates or the fourth of the four *nāma-khandhas*, the four mental aggregates.

So these are the five ingredients of life. In life, one of these khandhas is functioning in every moment of life, and we ought to know which aggregate is functioning right now, which khandha is working at this moment. We ought to be aware of this, be mindful of this. There are these five khandhas working in life, performing their various duties, and they are all the same in that each of them serves as the basis of attachment. They can all be the foundation for the feeling of 'I,' for the sense that 'I am,' that 'this is mine, this is myself.' This kind of regarding things as 'I' and 'mine' is always established upon these five khandha. So they're all the same in this way. If we were to phrase it the same way that Descartes, the French philosopher put it, we might say that because I feel, therefore I exist, or because I perceive, therefore I must exist, or because I think, I am thinking, therefore I am. Or I am able to know things, visually,

orally and so forth, therefore I exist. Even with the body, because the body is able to do its various functions, we would say, ‘Oh, the body does this or that, I exist.’ This is merely foolish or ignorant workings of the mind, ignorance establishing itself in clinging to one of these five functions of life, one of these aggregates, as the self or as something that belongs to self. And as soon as that happens, it grows. It develops into selfishness, which is the cause of all kinds of dukkha and suffering. So if we understand this, if we examine and get to know these five khandha and see how they become the basis of attachment and selfishness, then we will start to understand how to become free of the pain and suffering that arises from selfishness.

In the Pāli language, there is a very easy way to express this, and we’ll see if we can translate it into English. Pāli can express it in a very natural way. It phrases it very naturally that shows how it’s just all a naturally occurring process of natural phenomenon, nothing but nature. When something can grow, because it grows we call it ‘form.’ This is the form aggregate. Because it grows, when something performs this function we call it ‘form.’ Because it feels, we call it ‘feeling.’ Because it regards or classifies, we call it ‘perception.’ Because it thinks, because it conceives, we call it conception. Because it cognizes, because it is aware, because it knows the sense objects, we call it ‘consciousness.’ There are just these five functions, and we give them the different names – form, feeling, perceptions or discriminations, conceptions and consciousness. Depending on the different function that is taking place, we give it a different name. We give it a name according to one of the five *khandha* (aggregates). There are just these five functions taking place. The different elements are conditioned into this or that function, and so this function occurs and then that function and this function and that function. And each of these functions can take place without there having to be any attachment to them as ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ They happen already. They can happen and function completely well, very smoothly on their own. There doesn’t need to be any identification with them as ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ They don’t have to be clung to or regarded as ‘I,’ ‘mine,’ or ‘myself.’ There are just these five functions and we can give them the various names accordingly, but there is no need at all for the ignorant attachment to them as I & mine to turn them into selfishness and suffering.

So now we come to a fact that is very important. We have our own personal conventional truths, or another word for it is our own foolishness and stupidity which we take to be the truth, and this is that as the five khandas are functioning, we are constantly attaching to that function as ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ When the body functions, when rūpa-khandha does its job, there arises the thought, ‘I am doing this or that.’ When there is feeling performing the function of a feeling, we think ‘I feel.’ When saññā-khandha perceives, regards, and discriminates, then we think ‘I perceive, I regard, I discriminate.’ When saṅkhāra-khandha conceives of thoughts, we think ‘I am thinking, I am

conceiving,’ and when viññāna-khandha knows the various sense objects, we say ‘I am conscious, I cognize these sense objects.’ Because of our foolish... because our minds are trapped under what we take to be the truth, but it is based in foolishness and ignorance, we attach to these five functions. We say ‘I am doing this’ or ‘this is my body, my feeling, my perceptions, my conceptions, my consciousness.’ And we do this, we turn all of this into suffering. Buddhism boils down to a very simple fact that whenever there is attachment to one of the khandhas, then there is suffering. There is some pain within the mind. And when there is no attachment, then there is no dukkha. There is no suffering. But because of our fundamental ignorance, our lack of understanding of how this works, we are attaching to these khandas all the time. ‘I am this, I am that, I do this, I do that,’ over and over, this ceaseless attaching to things as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ is constantly brewing up suffering, dukkha, within our lives. Buddhism, the heart of Buddhism, if you’re interested in learning what Buddhism is about, comes down to just this one fact that when there is attachment to something as ‘I’ or ‘mine,’ then there is dukkha, suffering. And when there is no attachment, then there is no dukkha, no suffering, no pain. This is what Buddhism is about. We hope that you will be interested in this teaching. We hope that you will be interested in studying the five khandha, but studying them as things that we don’t have to go and attach to. Studying them as things that are not-self, not-I and not-mine. If you do so, this can liberate life from dukkha. This will be the end of today’s lecture.

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