

Fruits of Removing Self from the Five Khandhas

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

Due to the fact that this is the final talk of this series, I would like to talk about the final topic associated with what we've been talking about. So today I would like to talk about the results or fruit of uprooting the idea of a 'self' or an 'I' associated with the five *khandhas*.

So today we'll be answering the question: what are the benefits of pulling out the self from the attachment to the five *khandhas*?

As we discussed yesterday, the first question we must answer in life is: once we are born, what is it that we ought to receive? What should we accomplish in life? What ought to be accomplished? What ought to be attained or achieved? Or what ought to be received through the living of life? This is our first question.

We may not have achieved it or received whatever this thing is. But nonetheless if we know what it is that should be received through life, then we will have some direction. And it will make our practice much easier because we know where to aim and what direction to go. And so we need to know what the thing is that ought to be received in life.

Now this thing which ought to be received once we've been born . . . We may not have realized this thing yet – we may not have any direct experience of it – but this doesn't mean that what we're talking about is useless. Although we do not have direct realization of this thing yet – of this benefit – nonetheless we work at

understanding it on the theoretical level first. We use our ability to think – to rationally think. We use this ability to develop an intellectual understanding of this thing that ought to be received in life.

And so at this stage – even though there is no direct realization of this thing yet – we study it and we develop an understanding of it even if only on a theoretical level. And this is to get us pointed in the right direction so we know where we're headed which will save us a great deal of time and energy.

So don't complain that what we're talking about is too ideal or it's purely intellectual. We can't make you see this thing. We can't make you realize it just by our talking. That's something you must do on your own. All we can do is begin the studying and thinking about this thing to get a proper intellectual understanding of what it is. And then it's up to you to take it from there.

The way we are speaking here is metaphorically, figuratively. We are using similes and metaphors to describe something that is mental and immaterial. We use examples or metaphors from the physical world which we all know so very well. We take these common everyday examples of physical things which you already understand and we use these as metaphors for the mental situations and activities, and for the spiritual truths which cannot really be expressed directly in words.

So understand that this is the way we're speaking. We're using metaphors. And don't think that the words we're using here are meaningless or empty of any value.

When we are able to end attachment to the five khandhas, we say that 'we are released from the five khandhas' or 'we are freed from the five khandhas.' What we really mean here is that we are released from attachment to the five khandhas. But to put it most simply we usually just say 'by ending attachment to the five khandhas we are released from them.' But we mean the thing that we're really released from – we're let free of – the attachment in the five khandhas.

This is like a prisoner or convict being let out of jail – being released from prison. Or even escaping from jail. It's the same situation. The prisoner gets out of the shackles and chains and handcuffs and outside the bars and beyond all the guards and TV cameras and everything, and is free – is released from this prison.

The prison we're talking about here is the attachment to the five khandhas. This is the prison of life that we're so thoroughly stuck in. We're trapped within this prison of life because of our attachment to it. But through ending attachment to

the five khandhas, we are released from this prison which we make out of that attachment.

When we say the five khandhas here, this includes all things that exist in the world. All the various worldly phenomena are included in one khandha or another. So when we talk about being freed of the five khandhas, we're talking about being freed of everything whatsoever – released, escaped from all the various things which we have attached to. So this is what we mean by saying 'by ending attachment in the five khandhas, we are released from the five khandhas.'

So generally when we speak in the ordinary way, we say 'We escape from the prison of life' or 'We are released from the prison of life.' You understand now what we mean by 'the prison of life' – this prison built out of attachment in the five khandhas.

We have to remind you that when we say the word 'we,' what we're really talking about is the *citta*, the mind of our heart. So if we're going to speak more accurately, then we need to say the mind (*citta*) is released from – is liberated from – the prison of life.

In the common way of speaking we use the word 'we' but those of us who understand the Dhamma realize that there is no such thing as a 'we.' And so it's more proper to use the word, the *citta* (mind or heart). So it's the mind which escapes from the prison of life – which is released from this prison built out of attachment.

So the first benefit of pulling out this attachment in the five khandhas is to be released or liberated from the prison of life. This is something that is discussed in all religions. In all the various religions you have something – you either have salvation, deliverance, liberation, release, something of this sort.

In Buddhism we can use the word 'liberation' or 'being released from' and it has the meaning which we have just described. This is the first of the benefits.

The second benefit of removing attachment in the five khandhas is freedom – is being in a state of freedom. Once the *citta* (mind-heart) is released from the prison of life, then it is free. It is free to do whatever needs to be done according to its mindfulness and wisdom.

The mind that is free uses mindfulness and wisdom (*sati-paññā*) and does what it needs to do. It is free to do this. It is no longer hindered in doing the right thing by the defilements. It is free to do the correct thing. So this is the *second* benefit.

There's a very useful Pāli word that describes this state of freedom. In Pāli the word is *viveka* (V-I-V-E-K-A) and in Thai it's pronounced *wiwek*. *Viveka* can be translated as 'singleness' or 'oneness.' It's a state of singleness or oneness of the mind where it is at such a level of oneness there is nothing which comes and disturbs the mind or afflicts it – bothers it or annoys it – in any way. The mind is in such a state of oneness or singleness that nothing disturbs it. This is the kind of freedom we're talking about that is the second benefit of pulling out the attachment from the five khandhas.

So the second benefit is freedom. And we're not talking about freedom in the usual worldly sense that people are fighting revolutions for all over the world. We're talking about freedom or liberation in the Dhamma sense.

The third benefit of removing attachment in the five khandhas is cleanliness. We are clean. We become clean by removing this attachment.

Usually through this attachment we're quite filthy. The mind is very dirty because of the defilements (*kilesa*). The literal meaning of the *kilesa* are dirty things – impurities. And so we are filthy and impure because of these *kilesa*. And the *kilesa* arise because of attachment.

So by removing this attachment, then we become clean. We clean up the defilements (*kilesa*). We clean up the *anusaya* (defiled tendencies). And we clean up the *āsava* (defiled outflows).

We've discussed these three aspects of defilement – the *kilesa*, *anusaya* and *āsava* – in an earlier talk. And all of these things are purely filthiness. They're just three aspects of dirtiness. The *kilesa* is the external dirt. The *anusaya* is the dirt that is stored away inside – in the depths of the mind. And then the *āsava* are the flowing outward – the squirting or leaking outward – of that dirt.

Through removing attachment all this defilement and dirtiness is cleaned up. And so then 'we' – the *citta* – is clean. Once again we're talking about 'clean' in the Dhamma sense – in a Dhamma meaning of the word. We're not talking about it in an ordinary worldly sense. So this cleanliness – in the Dhamma sense – is the third benefit of removing attachment in the five khandhas.

The fourth fruit to mention is that we can stop running. The fourth benefit is being able to stop running. We can use an example of this – your own condition, your own situations. You’ve all run from America, Europe, Australia, someplace. You’re running from somewhere. And before long you’ll be running from Suan Mokkh. Running off in some other direction.

You’re running here and there because of desire – because of wanting to get this or get that. Because of the power and influence of desire you’re running one way, running another way. You’re always running somewhere.

This desire comes from attachment to things – to attachment in something. And all of these things which you are attaching to fit within the five khandhas. So all this running back and forth, to and fro – this endless running – can be stopped by pulling out that attachment in the five khandhas. Without that attachment there will be no desire – no ignorant craving. And then one can stop running.

Now when we say ‘stop running,’ another way of talking about this is to say . . . or . . . this state of constantly running is – in a broader sense – can be explained as being born over and over again. Being born once, being born again, being born again. Constantly being born over and over and over again. Born in this state, born in that state, born in another state. Born with this desire, born again in this desire, born again in a different desire. Being born over and over again or running back and forth – to and fro – constantly.

The fourth benefit is that this stops. All this being born over and over again or this running back and forth stops. But when we say the running back and forth stops, it doesn’t mean that ‘you’ stop because with the end of attachment there’s no more ‘you’ to stop.

So the running stops. There’s no more running back and forth. But there’s nothing to stop. There’s no thing or ‘I’ or ‘self’ that stops. So not only is there no running, there’s no going. There’s no coming. And there’s no staying in one certain place. So there’s neither coming [n]or going [n]or stopping in a certain place.

With all the running to and fro, there is no rest. There is no chance to relax and find peace. But when the running stops and there is no coming or going – and no stopping either – then there can be peace. This is the fourth benefit of removing attachment within the five khandhas.

The fifth benefit is coolness. By removing attachment in the khandhas there is coolness (*nibbāna*). This word ‘coolness’ is directly translatable by the word (in Thai) *nippaan* or (in Pāli) *nibbāna*. That’s all that Nibbāna means is coolness. But we have to understand this coolness properly.

Some people have the misunderstanding that Nibbāna means death and there are many Western scholars who have shown their ignorance of Buddhism, such as Freud, by equating Nibbāna with death. This is to completely misunderstand what is meant.

Nibbāna means coolness and we can give many examples of this coolness that we’re talking about. For example, a burning coal – burning charcoal from a fire – when removed from the fire it will be glowing red because it is so hot. But then it will cool down. It will no longer be red. It will be black or gray. And when it is no longer hot, then we say that that charcoal is *nibbāna*. It is cool.

Or say rice that is being cooked on a fire. The rice must be boiled and so it is very very hot. But then when it is removed from the fire – after a period of time – we can say the rice is *nibbāna*. It is cool enough to eat.

These are some physical examples of Nibbāna. The word *nibbāna* means when something hot – when some fire – becomes cool, that coolness is *nibbāna*. When any fire calms down and becomes cool. . .

We’ve given you these physical material examples first. But the fires we’re talking about – when we’re talking about the real meaning of Nibbāna – aren’t the physical fires with which we cook rice or burn things. We’re talking about the fires of the mind which we mean the defilements, the kilesas.

If you’ve honestly looked at these things you realize that they are truly fires. The defilements are fires which are burning the mind. When these defilements become cool, that coolness is Nibbāna. When these fires go out, that is Nibbāna. But most of us don’t even realize this. We’re not really aware of these fires in the mind. And so we have trouble understanding what is meant by ‘spiritual coolness.’

To help you understand this we can talk about two kinds of fire. You’ll have to listen very closely because this will sound a bit strange to you. But there are two kinds of fire. There are fires that are wet – that are wet – and fires that are dry.

When we talk about fires that are wet, we’re talking about lust and greed. We’re talking about sensual desire which includes sexual desire. These very strong

desires and lusts or passions, these are what we mean by ‘wet fires.’ And most of you are so enamored by these wet fires – you enjoy them so much – that you don’t realize how hot they are. This is one kind of fire – the wet fires of sensual desire, of lust and passion and greed.

The other kind of fire is the ‘dry fires.’ This is the fire of anger, of hatred, of ill will.

So there are these two kinds of fire, both wet and dry. When these fires go out, there remains coolness (*nibbāna*). [This Nibbāna has nothing to do with death. So please don’t confuse it.] It’s the going out of hot things – the going out of the fires. This is nibbāna which is the fifth benefit – the fifth fruit of the removal of attachment from out of the five khandhas.

Now the sixth benefit is that you will be someone who is free of doubt and uncertainty. There will be no doubt or uncertainty within the mind. You will no longer have to ask questions of other people. You won’t have to ask people, ‘what is this?’ ‘What’s it like?’ ‘Why is it like this?’ And ‘what do I do about it?’ We no longer need to ask these questions of ‘what is it,’ ‘what are its characteristics,’ ‘why is it like this,’ or ‘what should I do about it?’ We don’t have to ask these questions anymore because we are now free. The mind is free of doubts and uncertainty.

The mind is free of doubts because it no longer has any craving. The mind no longer has any ignorant desire to get or to be – to get rid of or not be. Because there are no longer these desires, it doesn’t have to run around looking for these answers to the questions of what is it, what’s it like, why, and what do I do about it?

In the language of Dhamma we say is ‘to transcend doubt’ or ‘to raise the mind above and beyond all doubt’ or ‘to have crossed over the ocean of uncertainty.’ To be completely free of all these doubts – to no longer have to ask these questions anymore – this is the sixth benefit of removing attachment in the five khandhas.

Another way to put this in more simpler terms is: because of the coolness of Nibbāna you no longer will have to use the words what, where, when, why, how, and all the other words like that. In fact we can just take them all out of the dictionary. We can free the dictionary of these words such as what, where, when, how, why, wherefore, etc., etc. This is the benefit of ending uncertainty. This is the sixth benefit of removing attachment.

The next [7th] benefit is that one is free of the domination of the pairs of opposites. By the pairs of opposites we mean all the various dualities such as good and evil, positive and negative, gain and loss. These pairs, and there are dozens of them, are dominating our lives. They have a tremendous influence over our lives, over the minds, and are constantly afflicting the mind in different ways – forcing it this way and forcing it that way according to the power and influence of these pairs of opposites.

But by removing attachment – which is the source of all this duality – then the mind is freed from this domination and these pairs of opposites are no longer able to afflict the mind. They're no longer able to disturb the mind or force it to go in one direction or another.

Most of us are really caught up in these things – in good and bad, and all these other distinctions, all these dualisms. But this is the way of viewing life that is foolish. All these pairs of opposites belong only to fools. The fool will say 'oh, this is good, that is bad.' 'This is a gain, this is a loss.' 'This is winning, that is losing.' 'This is good, that's bad.' 'This is positive, this is negative.' This is the talk of fools – the people who talk like this and actually believe that it is true.

But someone who is truly intelligent will not make all these discriminations. The person who is truly intelligent will realize that there's no good and there is no bad, but there is only being centered and balanced in what we call 'the void.'

This being 'centered in the void' is completely free of the influence and intimidation of all these different opposites – pairs of opposites which are swirling around us. Being out from under this domination is what we mean by being free of the pairs of opposites.

This is exactly what is being talked about in the third chapter of Genesis in which God forbids Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What God is saying is 'don't attach to good and evil.'

The knowledge of good and evil means attachment to this as good and that as bad which is to put one under the domination and power of the pairs of opposites. But if one obeys God's command which very few people do . . . No matter how devout they claim to be, they still don't listen to God and they still go and attach to the pairs of opposites – especially the [??]

So by removing attachment in the five khandhas, the mind is no longer under the influence of these pairs of opposites. We can use the word ‘duality,’ ‘discrimination’ or whatever you want, but the clearest word or phrase is the ‘pairs of opposites’ as then you see very clearly that there are these opposing things.

And the mind that is wise will get free of that opposition and conflict. By ending this attachment, then one will be truly a good Christian. The mind will be cool and peaceful, and one will have finally obeyed God’s command.

The eighth fruit of removing attachment in the five khandhas is that we end desire. It’s the end of desire. Now we have to be careful about this word ‘desire’ because it’s often confused. And so let us explain a little bit what we mean.

We can talk about ‘wise wanting’ and on the other hand we can talk about ‘ignorant desire’ or ‘craving.’ So you have to learn the difference between these two because it’s very important. And by confusing these two one becomes very lost and has no idea of how to live properly in the world.

There is a kind of wanting or desiring which is based in foolishness or in *avijjā* (not-knowing). Because of the lack of knowledge – because of ignorance or stupidity – there are certain kinds of desire and craving which automatically lead to *dukkha*. No matter what, these desires always condition *dukkha* because they are based in ignorance. They’re based in not understanding reality. So they inevitably lead to *dukkha*. This is one kind of desire – the ignorant desire or craving that is rooted in and accompanied by ignorance, by *avijjā*.

But on the other hand there is what we can call ‘wise wanting.’ Wise wanting is not accompanied by ignorance and has not been conditioned by ignorance. Wise wanting is just a matter of seeing what needs to be done and doing it. And in that no *dukkha* will arise.

Ignorant desire will always give birth to the ‘self,’ to the ‘I’ – the ‘I’ who wants, the ‘I’ who desires. But when there is ‘wise want,’ there is no ‘I’ who wants. There is just what needs to be done and it is done, and no ‘I’ who attaches to and is attached to this process.

So these are the two kinds of wanting – ‘wise wanting’ which is not a problem, and ‘ignorant desire’ which is a cause of *dukkha*. By ending attachment in the five khandhas, this ignorant desire ends. This is the eighth benefit.

When we talk about ignorant desire, we should also point out that there are three kinds of ignorant desire.

The first kind of craving is the desire to get – the desire to get something. There is something that the self wants. There's this desire to get something.

Then there is the desire to be something – to be this, to be that, to be rich, to be beautiful, to be whatever.

And the third kind of craving is the desire to die – the desire to not-be, to die. All these are totally ignorant and inevitably lead to dukkha. And if you understand that the desire to die or if you understand that Nibbāna has nothing to do with death, then you will understand how silly it is to want to die, to want to commit suicide.

So these are the three kinds of ignorant craving which you need to distinguish from 'wise wanting.' The ending of attachment will end this ignorant craving. And then there will be no more hunger – no craving, no hunger, no thirst. The mind is totally at ease because it is no longer hungry to get, to be or to die. This is the eighth benefit.

The ninth benefit is that the mind is above all conditioning. We're afraid that this way of phrasing it will be difficult for you to understand but we've got no better way of stating it. So we'll just stick with our original phrase. The mind is above the conditioning.

What we mean is that there is what the Buddha calls *saṅkhāra* which has the meaning of conditioning. This is when various factors or causes have an influence on the mind which condition it one way or another. This conditioning is a compounding of further causes and effects. And so this is the process of conditioning that is going on.

This benefit is that the mind is above that process of conditioning. It's free of the conditioning and that it is truly at peace.

There are many different ways that we can explain and describe this conditioning. There are many words we can use. For instance there is nothing that is 'exploiting' the mind or nothing 'treading upon' the mind. This conditioning is like something 'walking upon' the mind – 'stepping on' it, 'stamping on' it.

The mind is free of this. It's free of the conditioning. It's free of being dominated by these things. It's no longer under the influence of these things. It's no longer controlled by them. It's no longer stimulated by them – no longer incited by them, no longer pulled off and dragged around in different directions by these things.

All these various things end when attachment is removed from out of the five khandhas. And then the mind is in a state that we call 'unconditioned.' This conditioning the Buddha called *saṅkhāra* and the state of conditioning – *sankhata*. And then the Buddha talked of *visaṅkhāra* meaning 'outside of or being unconditioned'.

And so the mind will realize or penetrate to a state of *visaṅkhāra* where there is nothing conditioning it. And in this state of being free of conditioning – where nothing has the power to incite or overwhelm or influence or dominate the mind – then the mind is truly calm, cool, and peaceful. This is the ninth benefit.

This ninth benefit is something you can use in your daily lives. You can use it each and every day of your lives beginning right here and now. Another way of stating this is that the mind doesn't tremble, it doesn't shake. Or to put it most simply, the mind doesn't move. It doesn't move.

What we mean by this is when some famous person – some honored and famous person – comes to your house, the mind starts to shake and tremble. It's moving. Or when a beggar comes to your house, then the mind's shaking again. It's moving. Even when the postman comes to your house which is in no way a strange event – when he brings a letter or telegram – the mind moves.

The mind is always shaking or moving in some way. All day long it's always moving. When you go to watch, say, acrobatics at a gymnasium or on TV – the mind is moving. Or you watch a football match – the mind is moving because of the football match. Or whatever sports . . . or when you go to a concert or a movie or a play . . . listening to music – the mind is moving. The mind is always moving.

If you like this – if you find it peaceful and relaxing – well then go ahead and do it. But if you realize that all this movement of the mind is too much – that it's tiring, that it's disturbing, that it's impossible for the mind to be clear and peaceful with all this moving, with all this shaking and trembling going on . . . If you understand this, then you'll see the value of ending the conditioning of the mind – all this shaking and movement of the mind.

By removing the attachment to the five khandhas as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ – by pulling out this attachment – all this movement of the mind ceases. And then the mind is truly peaceful.

This is something that you can practice each and every day of your life. You can practice this living where the mind is not always moving in response to all these conditions. This is the ninth benefit of removing attachment to the five khandhas.

The tenth benefit is light or brightness or, we can say, radiance. This is the tenth benefit of removing attachment in the khandhas. We’re not talking about the ordinary light that comes from electric light bulbs, fires or the stars in the sky. We’re not talking about this kind of light – about physical light. We’re talking about spiritual brightness or radiance.

To help you understand this we can compare it with the darkness of *avijjā*. As we explained *avijjā* (not-knowing) is not realizing the truth of things. And this is a kind of darkness that cannot be dispelled no matter how many hundreds of suns or how many floodlights or flashlights or whatever you have. No matter what, that darkness will still be there even in broad daylight. This is the darkness of *avijjā*.

On the other hand this radiance or brightness which we’re speaking of, no matter how dark it is – it may be the night of the new moon and it may be very cloudy and you don’t see any stars, maybe pitch black – but still this radiance will be there. The radiance we’re talking about will be able to shine forth no matter how dark the surroundings are. No matter how dark a place you are, this brightness will remain and will shine forth.

This is the brightness or radiance of realizing what we call the *paramattha-sacca* which is the highest, the most highest truth. Realizing the most highest truth is to realize that there is nothing whatsoever which ought to be attached to. There is nothing whatsoever that can be attached to without getting burnt – nothing at all. This is the highest truth. Realizing it is a brightness or radiance that fills one’s life. In fact life becomes this radiance through realizing the truth.

Most of us don’t realize the way things are. But this brightness is to see things in their reality. The easiest way to say it is ‘the brightness is seeing according to reality’ – seeing according to reality. This is something you need to remember. This is the meaning of brightness.

But on the other hand, at this time we don't see according to reality. And so instead there is the darkness, the foolishness, of seeing not according to reality – seeing in discord with reality. Our vision, our way of seeing things, does not match up with truth and reality. And this is a great darkness.

But this lightness – this brightness and radiance of seeing according to reality – can illuminate our lives and then our lives become that radiance. So we're not talking about the physical light that comes from the sun or the moon or a fire. We're talking about this spiritual light which is the meaning of 'enlightenment.'

When we talk about 'enlightened beings,' this is the light we're talking about. They are illuminated by this spiritual light – the light of the Dhamma eye, the light of seeing things as they really are, seeing the impermanence, the *dukkha*, and the *anattā* of things.

The eleventh benefit is being a person who never does anything wrong. Or put it a little more directly, being someone who does not make mistakes.

Now there's a very common saying in the world which most of you probably subscribe to. And this saying is 'the person who makes no mistakes is the person who doesn't do anything.' If you don't make any mistakes, then you're not doing anything. This is a common attitude in the world and we would like to very directly point out that this is completely wrong. It's crazy and it's stupid.

To say that the only way to not make mistakes is to do absolutely nothing is to be very foolish and not understand life at all. So we want to be on the record as completely disagreeing with this foolish saying. And we encourage you to all give it up and forget about it. There is no truth in the saying that 'the person who makes no mistakes is someone who doesn't do anything at all.'

It is possible to make no mistakes whatsoever. By ending attachment – by ending attachment to all things or to the five khandhas – then there will be no more mistakes. By not allowing the 'I,' the 'self,' to arise – by seeing things as they really are – there will not be any more mistakes. There will not be the errors of ignorance.

So it is completely possible to live – to do all sorts of things – to do whatever needs to be done. Whatever needs to be done can be done. There can be all kinds of doing this and doing that but without any mistakes or errors. This is completely possible.

So please give up the idea that the person who doesn't make mistakes is the person who doesn't do anything at all. Give this up and then you might be able to realize the eleventh benefit of ending attachment in the five khandhas which is to be a person who makes no mistakes.

The twelfth benefit goes together with the eleventh. They form a pair. The eleventh one is making no mistakes. And when there are no mistakes, then we have the twelfth benefit which is doing everything correctly.

Everything that is done is done correctly. All the work, deeds, activities, and duties of life can be done correctly whether they are intentional or unintentional. Even unintentional actions will be done correctly. This is the twelfth benefit of removing attachment in the five khandhas.

Whatever has to be done in life – obtaining food, finding clothing, bathing oneself, exercising the body, the necessary thinking and learning that is part of life, all these things which must be done in life – will be done correctly. There will not be any mistakes.

Everything is done correctly, rightly. And when this happens the mind becomes content. When everything in life is correct – all the necessities in life are done and taken care of correctly – the mind is very very content. And we call this *Dhamma-pīti*. *Pīti* means contentment. *Dhamma-pīti* is being content in Dhamma which means being content in correctness.

Normally for the average sentient being, contentment only comes with the *kilesa*. The defilements are satisfied. Anger is vindicated. Greed is satisfied in one way or another. And then the *kilesa* are content. And through our attachment to the *kilesa* we think that we are content. But it's really just the defilements are content and we attach to that. This is a very low kind of contentment.

But through doing everything correctly, there is the contentment of Dhamma – the contentment of doing everything correctly. When life operates in this way – when life is managed in a way that is always correct – then you can do something which you've probably never heard about before. So please listen.

If life is correct in every movement – every activity, every thought, word, and deed – then one can bow to oneself. At the beginning of all these talks you bow down to something outside yourself. But if you really want to bow, the highest

meaning of bowing or paying respects or saluting is not to do it to some external thing, but to bow to one's own correctness.

To have lived a day with only correctness – having maintained life in correctness – then one can bow to oneself. One can bow to that correctness and can experience that contentment in Dhamma. This ability to bow to oneself, this is the twelfth benefit of ending attachment to the five khandhas.

In the thirteenth benefit we want to stress something we've already touched on. And this benefit is that we will be completely above, beyond, and outside of the influence of good and evil. Good and evil will no longer have any power or influence over us. Let us emphasize that there is nothing more hateful, ugly, and disgusting than good and evil.

Now this might be something that is a little too high for the average person to understand. There are a lot of people who just can't understand what is being said here. But we're speaking on the level of ultimate truth. And so we're going to say what has to be said. And this is that there's nothing more dangerous and fierce and ugly and hateful than good and evil.

Good and evil have all kinds of dangerous influence over us. Something is good and we laugh like fools. Something is evil and we cry like maniacs. Good and evil is leading us to cry and laugh like fools and insane crazy people all the time. This is disgusting and terrible. This shows how fierce good and evil are.

If there is no attachment, then good and evil cannot have this power over us.

To show the importance of this fact, we'd like to point out that the first thing that God says to mankind . . . If you study the Book of Genesis, the first teaching and instruction when he says, "Don't eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil or you will die."

Good and evil is the cause of death and God pointed this out to mankind right from the beginning. Unfortunately mankind has never bothered to pay any attention to what God says. So we ignore this ultimate truth.

Good and evil are fierce and horrible. Through attachment we allow good and evil to lead us into all kinds of foolish and silly acts, and to get up in all kinds of conditioning and turmoil and dukkha. So by removing attachment in the five khandhas we finally begin to obey God's command.

We do what God tells us and then there is true freedom. The mind is free of this fierce and powerful domination of good and evil. Good and evil can no longer do their tricks upon the mind. And so we are truly free. We know the genuine peace that comes with true liberation. This is the thirteenth benefit of removing attachment in the five khandhas.

When we talk about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil we have to be careful about this word ‘knowledge’ and so we’d like to analyze it a little bit here.

It seems that there are two kinds of knowledge. There is the kind of knowledge that leads to attachment and the kind of knowledge that does not lead to attachment or leads away from attachment. Obviously what God is talking about or what this Tree is about is the knowledge that leads to attachment. So this is the knowledge of good and evil that causes attachment to good and evil. That’s the kind of knowledge that is meant by this tree and by its fruit.

The fruit of the tree is the attachment. The knowledge is the kind of knowledge that leads to attachment.

Actually we wonder if this has been translated properly because we know that ‘knowledge’ is an English word. Unfortunately we don’t understand the old Hebrew with which the Book of Genesis was written. And so we don’t have the scholarly ability to check and make sure that ‘knowledge’ is really the correct word. Maybe the word should be something like ‘misunderstanding’ or something like that. But since we don’t have this ability, maybe if one of you has the knowledge about languages to do this we encourage you to check up on this matter. But until then we’ll just have to take it that there are two kinds of knowledge. There’s the knowledge that leads to attachment which we can say is ‘incorrect knowledge.’ It’s not the knowledge that sees according to reality. It’s not true seeing and vision of genuine reality.

On the other hand there is the kind of knowledge which does not lead to attachment and this we call ‘correct knowledge.’

So the incorrect knowledge of good and evil is to discriminate between good and evil, and then attach to them. This is incorrect knowledge. But the correct knowledge of good and evil which does not lead to death – the correct knowledge of good and evil is that there’s no such thing as good and no such thing as evil –

that these are just illusions. This is the correct knowledge because it does not lead to attachment.

Now we're speaking on the level of highest truth. If you don't understand what we're explaining completely then please don't go off with any half-baked ideas. But work on it and think about it until you have a complete understanding of what is being discussed. This being free of good and evil – of this incorrect knowledge of good and evil – is the thirteenth benefit.

(Ajahn Buddhādāsa says that) we're using a Bible that has been translated from the Greek and that the Greek must have been translated from the Hebrew.

So if anybody knows the Greek you can still check up the Greek. But we still don't know if somehow the translators into Greek made any mistakes. So we're not sure still whether the word 'knowledge' is the word that should be used in relation to this Tree that we're talking about. But nonetheless whatever the word is isn't as important as understanding the truth involved here – the truth that through attachment to good and evil there will be spiritual death or dukkha.

The next [fourteenth] benefit [is] that we will have a new life that is enjoyable through helping others. Or we can say we will have a good time through helping others.¹

Can say 'to enjoy life – to have an enjoyable new life – by helping others.'

When there's no more attachment to 'self,' then there isn't the selfishness arising which makes it very difficult to truly help others. So when we take away this attachment we are able to help others and not in a grudging painful way. People don't have to pay us to do it or trick us into do[ing] it or bribe us in some way. But we are willing to help others just because it's enjoyable – it's pleasant, it's fun.

We learn that this is the best way to have a good time – is to help others. And as we realize this, we realize also that in helping others we're helping the entire world. And we are part of that world. So helping others is to help ourselves. So we have this new life in which there is great enjoyment. We have a really good time in helping others – in helping ourselves, in helping the entire world.

¹ "He wanted me to be very careful how to translate the Thai word *sanuk* and I did my best." [added by the translator]

The fifteenth benefit is that we will feel warm-hearted through having nothing but friends throughout the entire universe. We'll have a very warm-hearted feeling in knowing that there is no one or nothing that is not our friend. Throughout the entire universe we only have friends.

Because everyone or everything is our friend, we have nothing to fear. So this warm-heartedness has within it a deep feeling of safety and security.

This is warm-heartedness that comes from realizing that everyone is our friend and comrade in birth, friend in illness, friend in aging, and friend in death. We're all friends throughout the entire universe and so we can be secure in this warm-hearted feeling of friendship. This is the fifteenth benefit of removing attachment to the five khandhas.

The next benefit – the sixteenth one – is that we will have *āyatana* that are heaven. The *āyatana*, if you remember, are the sense-spheres. So this is that we will have sense-spheres that are heaven.

Let us point out that when we say 'sense-spheres' this includes both the six internal sense-organs – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind – and the external sense-objects – the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts. Altogether these twelve things are what we call the *āyatana*.

But often we'll just talk about the sense-organs. We'll just mention the ear, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. But when we do so we're implying the sense-objects because the eyes are meaningless without sights. We only know of one or the other because of interaction between the two. So they always come in an inseparable pair: eyes and sights, ears and sounds, and so forth.

So even though we only say the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, we're still talking about the sense objects as well.

In fact let me clarify that when we say 'eyes' we're including all of the physical visual apparatus that includes the eye balls, the optic nerve, the part of the brain that's involved in sight, and also the medium – the air through which the light travels from the sight or form that is seen.

So all this is what's included in the *āyatana* – all the sensory apparatus and all the sensory objects. These are the *āyatana*. And these *āyatana* will be heaven through removing attachment in the five khandhas.

When the Buddha arose in India – when the Buddha appeared in India – the common belief of almost everyone was that somewhere way up in the sky – who knows exactly where but way up high – is ‘heaven.’ And down below – in the depths of the earth – is a place called ‘hell.’ And this is what just about everybody believed.

Now the Buddha didn’t go and deny this but he didn’t agree with it either. He neither denied nor certified this common belief in some heaven up in the sky and a hell down in the bowels of the earth. Instead what the Buddha said was that heaven and hell are at the āyatana. “Heaven and hell are at the *āyatana*.”

The meaning of this is that when there is any sensory experience such as seeing – if that seeing is correct – then that will be heaven. If the seeing is incorrect, it will be hell. So heaven and hell arise at these āyatana by whether it is correct or incorrect.

By [in]correct, as you should already understand, if there is attachment to the seeing – if there is liking or disliking and then desire and attachment and the birth of the ‘I,’ all of this compounded by ignorance – then that will be hell. That is incorrect seeing and it is hell or dukkha.

But if the seeing or hearing or whatever is correct – meaning that there is no ignorance but instead there is mindfulness and wisdom supervising or managing the sense experience – that will be heaven. So by correct seeing, correct hearing, and so forth, the āyatana are heaven. This is the sixteenth benefit of removing attachment to the five khandha[s].

Now we come to the seventeenth benefit of removing this attachment. This benefit is to be free of – be out from under the power of – *bhava*. Those of you who have not studied Buddhism very much will probably not be familiar with the word *bhava*. So we will explain it. Unfortunately it’s very difficult to translate.

The literal meaning is ‘becoming.’ So this is to be free of the power of becoming. What is meant here is that when there is attachment, and there arises this thought or idea of an ‘I’ or ‘self,’ then there is a ‘self’ that becomes. This becoming of the ‘self’ is what is meant by *bhava*.

It’s often also translated ‘existence.’ Because once there is the becoming – the coming into existence – then there is existence or being. And so we can translate *bhava* as becoming, existence or being. This existence or becoming is always

dukkha. Once there is this becoming there will be dukkha. And so to be out from under the power of bhava is to free oneself of dukkha.

The Buddha said that even the smallest tiniest particle of bhava is still dukkha. Even the most minute miniscule bit of bhava is dukkha. It's like if we took a very small bit of excrement, no matter how small it is it will still smell. It will smell bad. Bhava is the same way. No matter how small a particle of bhava there is – even this tiniest amount of becoming – is still dukkha.

And so if you understand this then you'll see the benefit in being out from under the dominance and power of bhava, of becoming or existence.²

We need to examine this word a bit more. The common belief of a lot of people is that this word means 'world' and so that there are different bhava – this one, then higher ones up in heaven, lower ones in other places – and that there are different existences – different levels of existence – and that these existences occur in separate distinct worlds.

We're unable to accept that or to believe in it. And what we understand this to mean – the meaning of these different existences, specially the three existences that the Buddha taught about – are not physical realms here and then higher up where various souls or whatever go to exist.

But that we're talking about 'states of being' of the mind. The mind has various 'states of being' and we can call these these 'becomings of the mind'. These existences of the mind are what is meant by *bhava* [Pāli] or *phop* [Thai].

The Buddha spoke of three kinds of *phop*.

The first kind is that when the mind is pleased with something sensual, when the mind is involved in some kind of sensual satisfaction or pleasure . . . It's getting its kicks out of one of the senses – either the eye, visual senses, the ears, nose, tongue or body. This includes sex. Then this is the first kind of existence – *kāma*, *kāma-bhava*. This is the sensual existence. And so when the mind is attracted to sensual things – when it's interested in, in chasing after sensual things – then the mind is in a sensual state of being.

² "This word that I pronounced *ba-va* is spelled *B-H-A-V-A* and my pronunciation has been corrected to *pha-wa*. If I make it *pha-wa* [??] that's a different word with a different meaning. So I'll try to say it properly, *pha-wa*. Or in Thai it's very easy – *phop*." [added by the translator]

The next existence is the *rūpa, rūpa-bhava*. This is the realm of pure form or the pure form existence. And this is when the mind is no longer interested in sensual pleasures but its interest is in what we would call ‘pure form.’ These are formed material things but they are not a source of sensual pleasure. So the interest in them is not sensual. This can be things such as our possessions where we’re not deriving sensual pleasure from the possessions but there is still an interest in these objects, these forms. This is the *rūpa-bhava*.

Another example of this existence is deep levels of concentration where the object is some form such as the breath, something physical. When the mind is very interested in deriving pleasure from these pure forms – a kind of pleasure that is free of sensuality – this is the second type of existence, the *rūpa-bhava*.

Then the third level of existence or state of being of the mind [*arūpa-bhava*] is when the mind is not interested in sensuality and it is no longer interested in pure forms. But in this moment the mind is seeking pleasure within the form-less realm. It’s seeking pleasure from things that have no form. This can be things such as abstract ideas or levels of concentration that are based not on physical objects but on immaterial or form-less objects.

So these are three states of being or three bhava of the mind. The mind can circle around or spin around and in between these three levels. Sometimes the mind is in a sensual state of being, other times in a pure form state of being, and other times in a form-less state of being.

These are the three kinds of bhava. But no matter what, when the mind is caught up in these three types of existence there is always a ‘self.’ There always is a ‘self’ that is existing and is seeking pleasure in one of these existences. And because of this ‘self’ – which is the result of attachment – there will always be dukkha.

So no matter how tiny the amount of existence on whichever of these three levels, there will still be dukkha. And so the freedom – being out from under the domination and power of these three bhava (*kāma-bhava, rūpa-bhava, and arūpa-bhava*) . . . Being free of them is another benefit of ending attachment to the five khandhas.

The eighteenth benefit is another difficult to translate thing. This one is to be *imm* [Thai] all the time. *Imm* is the word used in Thai when, after eating, you have eaten enough food and then you are *imm*.

In English or in America we often say ‘full.’ Other words implied in this are ‘content’ – but we’ve already used that word in a different place – and ‘satisfied’ which we also used in a different way.

So I’ll use the word ‘full’ but I mean it in the sense of having eaten an adequate . . . the kind of full we are when we’ve eaten enough food – enough but not too much but the right necessary amount – and then the feeling of well-being and contentment that comes with being full or *imm*.

When we are *imm* that means that there are no more desires. We don’t want anything. There’s no hunger or craving for anything because we’re full or we’re complete. There’s no feeling of something lacking or missing that we must search for – that we must crave after.

And so this is a feeling of great contentment and peace. So by removing any thought of ‘self,’ ‘soul’ or ‘I’ – or any of these illusions in the five khandhas – there will be the benefit of being always full, always complete.

This eternal *imm* or spiritual fullness means that there is no longer any ‘self,’ any ‘I,’ that wants – that desires or craves. With the disappearance – the fading away – of this illusion of an ‘I,’ of a ‘self,’ then there is a constant fullness – a state of *imm*. There’s no hunger. There’s no craving to get something. So there’s this contentment which doesn’t pass away.

Usually we only know this kind of feeling for a very short time – maybe a split second – because we’re caught up in this craving for something such as food. And then we satisfy that craving. And then we have this feeling of *imm* for a very short while. Then we start craving something else because the self is still caught up in the craving – the satisfaction of the craving. And then it starts craving something else.

There’s always this spinning round. And so the fullness is a very temporary and fleeting state.

But when there is no ‘self’ – no ‘I’ – then the craving disappears. And so there’s a perpetual automatic state of fullness – which we can call ‘spiritual fullness’ – which is completely cool and peaceful. This is the eighteenth benefit of the ending of attachment in the five khandhas.

And now for the nineteenth benefit. This is that there is no more *tuagoo konggoo* [Thai]. There is no more egoistic ‘I,’ no more egoistic ‘mine.’

The other day we spoke about the normal level of I & mine, and then the proud and arrogant level. So this arrogant level of I & mine is disappeared. We had some other suggestions for this: the obsessive ‘I’ or the ego-centric, the self-centered, the self-obsessed ‘I,’ the self-obsessed ‘mine.’

All this egocentricity – all this egoism – ends and disappears. And when all this egoism – all this selfishness, all this self-centeredness – disappears, then there is no more burden of life. The heavy burden of life is completely dependent on this self-obsessed ‘I,’ this obsession with ‘self.’ And when it disappears, then the burden of life is put down. So the ending of the I & mine is the nineteenth benefit.

The twentieth benefit is that the mind will enter the supreme level of voidness – the supreme void-ness.

You may have heard of the word *suññatā* before which means ‘voidness’ – means ‘void of any idea or thought of I or mine.’ But the Buddha used another word *paramanuttara-suññatā* which means the ‘supreme transcendent voidness.’ This is the highest possible level of voidness or of *suññatā*. In the scriptures in various places the Buddha spoke of different levels of voidness or *suññatā*. But the very highest level is *paramanuttara-suññatā*. This is the supreme transcendent level of voidness.

The Buddha himself said that he lived constantly in the state of *paramanuttara-suññatā*. The Buddha dwelt . . . Somebody asked him where does the Buddha dwell and he said ‘in the highest transcendent voidness.’ This is where the Buddha lives.

What it means is³ the mind is completely free – utterly free of any trace, any glimmer – of ‘I’ or ‘mine.’ There is absolutely no egoistic feeling or thought anywhere. The mind is completely free of all egoism, of all thoughts of ‘I,’ ‘mine,’ ‘self,’ ‘soul,’ or any of the various illusions which fall under the term *attā*. The mind is completely free of all of this.

And so when the Buddha was visited, say by a king and his army, which happened a number of times . . . The Buddha would be staying somewhere and a king would come up with a large army. And to the Buddha it was nothing – just another king with his army.

Or maybe a group of millionaires would come by. Rich influential millionaires would come by to talk to the Buddha. And it was nothing. The Buddha’s mind was

³ “This is similar to something we said earlier.” [added by the translator]

not disturbed. It didn't get excited or agitated the way you would get if the president or prime minister of your country visited you at your home.

Or maybe a group of Brahmans – of priests – would come to ask the Buddha questions or pay respects. And though these religious teachers would come, the Buddha was not disturbed or excited by this. He remained in the state or . . . the mind remained in a state of paramanuttara -suññatā.

Or other times opponents – the followers of various hermits and ascetics – would come to ask him questions, would try and set philosophical traps for the Buddha. And the Buddha remained the same in this state of supreme transcendent voidness.

Or beggars or whoever came to talk to the Buddha.

Sometimes great lavish spreads of food were set before the Buddha and he wasn't excited. Other times he would go for a few days without anything to eat. Sometimes he was sick, sometimes in very good health. None of these different states disturbed the Buddha's mind. The Buddha remained dwelling in paramanuttara-suññatā – the highest, most supreme, transcendent voidness.

This is the example that you all ought to follow. If you can begin to follow this example of supreme transcendent voidness – the absolutely utter absence of any thoughts or feelings of 'I' or 'mine' . . . This is the twentieth benefit. This will be possible through ending all attachment in the five khandhas.

And now the twenty-first benefit. This one is a bit special – maybe quite special for you. The twenty-first benefit is that you will receive a diploma from Suan Mokkh. You will receive the Suan Mokkh diploma. The diploma which is awarded at Suan Mokkh for those who have successfully studied and completed this training is 'death before dying.' This is the diploma of Suan Mokkh.

If you successfully end all attachment to the five khandhas, then the self will die before the body dies. So the 'death before dying' that we're talking about is death of the attā – death of the 'I' or 'self' or 'soul' – before the dying of the body.

So 'death before dying' means that the 'soul' or 'self' or 'I' dies before the body dies. So the body may continue on for who knows how long but this illusion of a self is dead. This is the meaning of 'death before dying' or, in Thai, *daay koon daay, daay sia koon daay*. This is the diploma of Suan Mokkh, the very special twenty-first benefit of removing attachment to the five khandha[s].

And now we come to the twenty-second and final benefit of removing attachment in the five khandhas. For those of you who don't like the diploma of Suan Mokkh – if this diploma doesn't seem important enough for you – then the twenty-second benefit is to receive the diploma of the Buddha. So if you don't like Suan Mokkh's diploma, then you can have the Buddha's diploma.

The Buddha actually used the word *pariññā* which is the word used in Thailand for diplomas and certificates that students get after graduating. So the Buddha actually used the word 'diploma' and he said there are three kinds of diplomas. We'll use the Buddha's word. The Buddha said there are three kinds of *pariññā*.

The first *pariññā* is to abandon greed, to abandon *rāga*, –to abandon lust (*rāga*).

The second *pariññā* is to abandon *dosa*, *dosa* (anger).

And the third *pariññā* is to abandon *moha* (delusion).

These are the three *pariññā* of the Buddha. If one can completely let go of all I & mine – all *attā* & *attaniya*, all thoughts of egoistic, self-centered, obsessive, egocentric thought . . . These can all be let go of – all this arrogant pride revolving around the ideas and feelings of I & mine. If all this *attā* & *attaniya* is abandoned, then one will know surely, clearly within the mind that one has been awarded the three certificates, the three *pariññā* of the Buddha – the abandonment of lust, anger, & delusion.

We've mentioned twenty-two benefits that arise from removing attachment in the five khandhas. In fact there are many more. But twenty-two is probably too many for you to handle in one day anyway. And so we've given you this many so you can see clearly what the advantages are and what the benefits are of abandoning all attachment to the self. So we've given you this long list of benefits and if you understand even half of them, then you will appreciate the value of abandoning attachment in the five khandhas.

To summarize it all we meet up with a new life. We know the new life and have the new life that is free of all heavy burdens. The new life that is free of the burden of life.

And we will end today's talk on this note.

*Bhārā have pañcakkhandhā,
bhārahāro ca puggalo;
Bhārādānaṃ dukkhaṃ loke,
bhāra-nikkhepa-naṃ sukhaṃ.*

*Nikkhipitvā garuṃ bhāraṃ,
aññaṃ bhāraṃ anādiya;
Samūlaṃ taṇhamabbuyha,
nicchāto parinibbuto*

*Bhārā have pañcakkhandhā,
Five aggregates are suffering,
bhārahāro ca puggalo;
The so-called ‘person’ is the burden carrier.
Bhārādānaṃ dukkhaṃ loke,
Carrying burden is suffering in the world,
bhāra-nikkhepa-naṃ sukhaṃ.
Throwing over them is not suffering.*

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Transcribed by Arthur Brown in August 2015
Audio file: 1986-12 (6) The result of removing self from the five Khandha.mp3

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