

Understanding Atammayatā through Metaphors

by Buddhadāsa 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 Buddhadāsa 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 volunteer and the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

Today we'll speak further about *atammayatā* in order to understand it more clearly, more fully. We'll do so by using some metaphors.

The use of metaphor can be very powerful. With metaphors we can speak about something that we are very familiar with, that we know quite well already, and then use that to point beyond to something that we don't know yet, that is still unfamiliar to us. In talking about Dhamma, metaphors are a very useful way to try to express things and so they're used quite a bit.

So today we'd like to use the metaphor of oxygen. All of you know oxygen quite well – you've heard about it plenty in your educations. We all well know that if we're lacking in oxygen then we are very uncomfortable, ill, and in pretty bad shape. If we lack oxygen completely, if there's no oxygen, then we die within a few minutes. With *atammayatā* it's the same. Whereas oxygen is something absolutely necessary for life, we can say the same thing about *atammayatā*. If we don't have enough *atammayatā*, then there is a lot of *dukkha*, a lot of spiritual pain. And if we're completely lacking in *atammayatā* – no *atammayatā* at all – then we are spiritually dead. So *atammayatā* is the same as oxygen. Without it we can't live.

When we talk about spiritual death, we're talking about the same thing that is mentioned in the beginning of Genesis, where God told Adam and Eve that if they ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, then they would know good and they would know evil, and they would die. This here means of course spiritual

death or dukkha. That if we know good and evil, if we don't have atammayatā, then our life is full of attachment. And because of this attachment there is a great deal of suffering. If there is too much of this attachment, if there is not enough atammayatā, there's a lot of dukkha. But if there's no atammayatā, then there's so much dukkha that we even go crazy. So for this reason some people kill themselves, or if they don't kill themselves, they lead a rather worthless existence. Without atammayatā, a human life can be completely wasted so that it has no value, but is just a long process of insanity.

We'd like to look at this in three aspects or three functions – the first is protection, second is resistance, and third is destruction. In terms of oxygen, first of all having a healthy supply of oxygen allows the body to protect against disease organisms, against bacteria, germs, viruses, and so on. Also if there's enough oxygen, it allows the body to resist any of these things, to stand up to. One is the general protection and the second is to specifically stand up to any organisms that come in, a kind of immunity. And then third, is can actually destroy any disease organism. So there're these three aspects to our subject – protection, and then standing up to or immunization, and then third to destroy the harmful agent.

With atammayatā it works in a similar way. First of all, atammayatā can protect against the arising of positive and negative. The values of positive and negative can be prevented from arising. Or if positive and negative should arise, at least there can be an immunity against them so that even if they occur, they don't have any power over the mind. And then third, atammayatā can destroy the meaning and value of that positive and negative. So atammayatā has these three fundamental functions.

So this is using oxygen as a metaphor for atammayatā because oxygen is something that you already know quite a bit about. And so we encourage you to use atammayatā as well as you are able to use oxygen.

If we practice *ānāpānasati* successfully, then this will lead to the knowledge of atammayatā, and then atammayatā will prevent against the arising of the qualities of positive and negative. Through atammayatā we'll see that everything is just *māyā* (illusion), that all these things are just illusions, and then they won't have any power or quality or value of positive and negative. Instead there will be the opposite, the knowledge that we call *atammayatā*. And in this way atammayatā prevents against the arising of the qualities, the values positive and negative.

Or in situations where we have slipped, where the mind has erred a bit and ignorance has come in causing the arising of the values of positive and negative. In these cases, atammayatā can provide an immunity where these positive and negative values don't have the power. The mind can resist these values so that the thoughts of 'I and mine,' – the ego – doesn't get concocted. In this way atammayatā can provide an immunity against these positive [and] negative values that have been allowed to arise though a slip in mindfulness. And then these positive and negative values are seen as just illusions, as *māyā*. And so the mind doesn't get caught up in them, doesn't get trapped by them. This is how atammayatā can withstand any positive and negative values that do arise.

When the knowledge of atammayatā has progressed to its completion and perfection, when atammayatā is known on the highest level, then it will completely get rid of our habit of taking things as positive and negative. This tendency to value things positively and negatively will be completely destroyed. When atammayatā is known completely in this way then, any possibility of positive and negative can be completely uprooted. And then such as being is called *atammayo*, *atammayo* which is a synonym for the Arahant, the awakened being.

When you have this full understanding of atammayatā there will be nothing that can make you laugh or cry. There will be absolutely nothing that can make you glad or sad. There will be nothing that has the ability to concoct feelings of dualism and duality in your mind, if you fully understand atammayatā.

And then there won't be any mental and spiritual problems for you. All such problems will be gone. There won't be any conditions of mental and spiritual suffering in any form whatsoever.

One can observe that the feeling of heaviness in life arises from the feeling that there are positive and negative values, by valuing things positively and negatively. When there're no such positive and negative values, then there's no feeling of heaviness, of weariness, of having burdens or problems when atammayatā is known completely.

All of the defilements – the *kilesa* – have the characteristic of being hot. All of the defilements are hot, and that means they're tormenting us with that heat, have the qualities of darkness, of confusion, and also have the qualities of being bound, things that tie us up and chain us. All of these aspects of defilement – the heat, the darkness, and the entrapment – arise because we're deceived by the values of positive and negative and then get lost in those positive and negative values.

We can raise a few examples to show you what is meant here. For example, love, especially sexual love. Sexual love can't happen without the values of positive and negative having arisen. If there is atammayatā, so there's none of this positive and negative, then that sexual love that makes people crazy, which makes people fight and even kill each other, such love can't occur with atammayatā.

The knowledge of atammayatā can protect against or can control this kind of love. Through atammayatā, if it's necessary for there to be this love, atammayatā can prevent it from being dangerous. Atammayatā will allow one to see that it's just a naturally occurring feeling. It's a kind of feeling that arises through the nervous system that occurs naturally for the mind. Atammayatā that can see this, if we can see it this much, understand love this much, then it can be prevented from making us crazy, from getting violent, from causing a lot of problems over love. So even if one must consume or one must taste the flavors of sexual love, it can be done so without all the danger. Atammayatā can prevent it from causing too much dukkha. It won't be so bad with atammayatā.

Without atammayatā, love will bite its owner. Please understand these words well, the words 'will bite its owner.' If we get involved in anything without atammayatā, that thing will bite its owner, it will claw and scratch and create a great deal of suffering for its owner. So love, if there's love without atammayatā, it just becomes a lot of torment and suffering for the lover, for the one who loves. But with atammayatā, love needn't be such a problem. With atammayatā, love can be something useful. It can allow us to live in a normal ordinary way. Without atammayatā, this sexual love keeps tormenting us. With atammayatā, we can deal with that situation in a healthy normal way. We can in this way call it a kind of mental food. With atammayatā, love can be a kind of mental food which we consume when necessary in order to maintain our balance and mental health. And also atammayatā helps us to live with another person. With atammayatā, love allows us to have a partner in life so that we can travel the path of life with a companion, but without atammayatā that love will be a constant source of problems.

Without atammayatā, love is a defilement, it's something low and crude. But with atammayatā, love can be Dhammic, it can be a Dhamma kind of love. With atammayatā, love takes the forms such as *mettā*, which is a friendly kindness or a kind friendliness. *Karuṇā*, compassion. *Muditā*, to be happy when others are happy, to be happy at the happiness of others. And *upekkhā*, an even-mindedness about the situation of others, so that we're always ready to help them when there's an opportunity. These are some examples of Dhamma love,

and these can occur. Love can take these forms when there is atammayatā. But without atammayatā, love becomes something very low and crude, as we can see is very dominant in the world these days. The news that is often appearing points out very clearly how low and crude love often becomes because there is no understanding of atammayatā.

In short, atammayatā can cope with, can regulate love, can control love, so that love is not harmful in any way. Instead of love being something low and dangerous, love can be beneficial, useful, something of great value. So this is one example of the value of atammayatā, that it can turn love into something truly beneficial.

Next we can look at the opposite of love, which is anger. If there's no atammayatā, then there's no ability to control the feelings of positive and negative. And so when the negative comes up we blindly react with anger. All you have to do is to think about this for a moment because you all know what anger is, you've all been angry often enough to know what we're talking about. When we can't control that feeling of negative, then anger arises. But with atammayatā we can control those positive and negative feelings and then anger doesn't have the ability to arise.

In certain situations where anger might have some benefits, then we can take advantage of those benefits. We can have an artificial kind of anger without actually experiencing the anger itself. For example, sometimes to make a point with children, one has to look angry. So one can display the effects or the conditions, the symptoms of anger, without having the defilement of anger. This is quite a strange thing, but with atammayatā there can be artificial anger without the defilement of anger, and so then such a kind of anger can at times be valuable.

You've all tasted anger before, so you ought to know that at first it's very sweet, it's like a very sweet delectable drink, but then at the end it becomes a poison. It's much better, life is much more peaceful and comfortable without any anger at all. Without any anger, life is very cool. Anger can be compared to a certain kind of fire, and it burns the mind very hotly. When there's none of this anger, then life is very cool. Atammayatā can control, can regulate this anger, so that life can remain cool.

So please learn how to use atammayatā to control anger. With this anger you must be very, very careful. It's much more difficult to control than love because anger is something that flares up, it erupts quite suddenly. It's very fast, and so if we're not extremely careful it exceeds our control. And it's a very

dangerous thing. Because of anger people kill their parents. We even kill ourselves. We might kill our parents, we might kill ourselves. Or we inflict a great deal of pain and torment on our mothers and fathers because of this anger. You ought to be very frightened, terrified, of this anger by seeing how dangerous and horrible it is. If we can see this, then we can find the atammayatā that we need to control it so that anger doesn't cause all those problems.

Next there is hatred, something that all of you know as well. When just hearing the name of someone we hate makes us suffer, and then if we see their face we suffer even more because of this hatred, it torments us even more. And then we don't even want to be in the same world with this person who we hate. Because of this hatred we want to get them out of this world or get us out of this world – something which completely destroys our inner peace and tranquility. It's just like another kind of spiritual death because we're too lost, too deceived by the positive and negative values, this happens. And when something is very negative, then we hate it, whether it's just an ordinary object – an inanimate object – or another person, or even a domestic animal, someone's pet. If it's too negative, then we hate it and can never be at peace because of this hatred. When we're too attached, when we're too caught up in the positive, this gives rise to the negative. And when there's too much of this negative, then it leads to hatred. And you all know what a problem hatred is.

Or just reading the name of someone we hate in the newspaper can bring up anger. We saw someone tearing up a newspaper, and asked them why they were tearing up the newspaper, and they said because this person's name is in there. And so hatred can make us do such ridiculous and crazy things. Because of hatred we can become hysterical. It can cause all kinds of psychoses, and then there's no way we can be at peace or be sane and healthy when there is hatred. So it's much better to live without any hatred at all.

If we see someone doing something good for a person we hate, then we go and hate that person who's doing the good thing. If we see a person help the one we hate, then we go and hate that person who's helping. And so we increase the amount of people that we hate in this world. And it can go on and on like this for a long time. Wouldn't it be better to abandon hatred completely?

Or if we see someone harming or disagreeing or arguing with someone who we hate, then we go and love this person. If 'A' is harming 'B,' and I hate 'B,' then I really love, I really like 'A.' And so in this way we pick up a lot of really dangerous, stupid, and worthless friends in this world.

Next is fear. Fear is a very natural instinctual reaction to things, and it's something that can be quite a bit of a problem. There're a lot of things that are frightening for us, and this fright can really torment us. This fear can really take us over and dominate us. Sometimes it's just a very simple instinctual kind of fear, but often it's a fear that we think about and dwell upon and blow up into a really huge problem. It can bring quite a bit of suffering to us. When there's something negative, something we take to be negative, then we're afraid that it's going to come and bother us, hassle us, harm us. And so because of the negative, we're experiencing a lot of fear. Often this is only taking place in our own thoughts. It's not really true, but we fear a lot of things in this way. And there are all kinds of things in this world that are frightening. The world is full of frightening things – politics, economics, laws – all kinds of things are quite frightening. We're afraid that they can come. They all have the potential to harm us and cause us disadvantages and problems. And then even positive things – we're afraid they'll go away or disappear, that we'll lose them. And so this world is full of things that can be frightening for us, and so fear is very frequently destroying our sense of peace and balance.

When we think in foolish ways, when our thinking is incorrect, we can cause ourselves to be afraid. Fear is a foolish incorrect way of thinking about things. When we're too attached to positive and negative, the result is often fear. There may not be anything really to be afraid of. There might not actually be any danger or harm, but if we think incorrectly, then we turn it into a problem. We evaluate things as positive and negative, and then attaching to that we create fear where there's nothing actually to be afraid of. We ought to be very, very careful about this. With atammayatā we can prevent ourselves from being deceived by the positive and negative. And when there's no positive and negative, then it's probably impossible for fear to occur.

The next is excitement. We really like to be excited. We go around looking for excitement. There're all kinds of sporting events, for example, to excite us. Or there're fantastic shows, such as these acrobatic shows where people do all kinds of marvelous stunts and feats in order to excite us. Excitement can happen in both positive and negative ways because excitement is a result of being tricked by and infatuated with the positive and negative. But when there's atammayatā, then none of these things have the power to excite us. There isn't this craziness about these things, and then so we don't waste our money to go and see things just to get the cheap thrill of excitement.

Because of this excitement, we like to watch boxing matches, watch two men beat each other up. Or we like to watch bullfights in Spain, where in the

end the guy butchers this animal. Because of excitement, because of being infatuated with the positive and negative, we get all excited about these things. It's all really stupid, isn't it, this stupidity of this excitement? It destroys the mind's balance and equilibrium. And what benefit is there in things like boxing and bullfighting? Where can one find any real value?

Look carefully and you'll realize that excitement is not happiness, although when we're very confused we easily mistake or easily take excitement to be a kind of happiness. But pay attention to excitement and see what happens – the heart beats faster and more strongly, the blood pressure goes up, we twitch, we even shake. It destroys, it puts a terrible strain on our body and also stresses the mind. Where's the value in this excitement? What benefit does it give us, or give anyone? With atammayatā we won't be tricked into excitement anymore. If we can prevent, be immune to, and even destroy this excitement, then life will be much cooler, much healthier, without all those heart attacks and all that kind of excitement.

Somebody brought a video of this famous acrobatic show or acrobatic group from Guangzhou in China. They came to Thailand and a video was made. And somebody charged 150 baht a person to watch this video, and all kinds of people went to watch it because it was so exciting, so thrilling. We'd like to ask you, what is the benefit of the excitement? Does it make life shorter or make life longer? What is the advantage of excitement, that it makes life shorter or makes life longer?

And finally, we'd like to ask does it make us stupid or more intelligent? Does excitement make us more foolish or does it make us more intelligent?

Excitement can be a real problem because it causes us to spend a lot of money, use up a lot of time, expend a lot of energy in pursuit of this excitement. We give a lot of attention to finding excitement. We waste a lot of resources merely for the sake of excitement. And what do we get out of it, what are the true benefits of it? It makes our body shake, it makes our eyes twitch. What is the real benefit of this? Is it something that really improves our life, or something that just destroys life?

So please be interested in atammayatā, which can prevent against the arising of or can immunize against the things that have arisen as well as destroy any of those surrounding factors that lead to the excitement which destroys our natural peace and happiness.

Some people think that if there's no excitement, then one is crazy. But this isn't true. In fact, the person who thinks like that is the one who's crazy.

No one can make an Arahant laugh and no one can make an Arahant cry, but an Arahant is far from crazy, is far from insane.

Next we'd like to look at worry and anxiety on one hand, and what's called *alaya* [?? 1.03.40] and *awaddha*, [Thai ??] which translate something like a feeling of that something that is missing or a feeling of reminiscence or a longing for the past with things that haven't come yet. We worry and are anxious. And about things that have already passed by, we long for them, we miss them. This anxiety and worry about the future is about positive & negative things that haven't even happened yet. And this is a habit that is firmly established in us. Or then there are those positive & negative values that have passed by already, and then we long for them, we dwell on them, we miss them.

These feelings of worry and anxiety on one hand, and longing and missing on the other, tie us to the future and the past. They keep us trapped in the future, in the past. For example, with worry and anxiety, it even keeps us awake at night. We may go to bed but be unable to sleep. If that happens, take a look and see if there isn't some worry and anxiety about something positive or negative off in the future where we get ourselves stuck in the future so that it keeps us from sleeping at night. Or we can be chained to the past where positive and negative things from the past, this positiveness and negativeness keeps us dwelling on them, longing for them, missing them, or reminiscing about them. And that also destroys the peace and balance of mind to the point where this being tied up with the past and the future in these ways, it prevents the mind from being at peace. One goes to bed and one can't sleep. Or in the daytime one is awake but isn't really at peace because of this being trapped in the past and future. With *atammayatā*, one is no longer trapped in the past and future because there are none of these positive & negative values in the past and future. And so then there's a coolness. One can be free of this worry and longing. One can sleep at night, one can go to bed and fall asleep and sleep soundly if there is *atammayatā*.

So being tied to the future with worry, and being tied to the past with longing – both of these cause a great deal of suffering in human life. They destroy the mind's balance. It keeps the mind off balance with all this worrying and longing. And so people are unable to sleep properly, and they go and buy sleeping pills. What a pathetic thing when people must take pills to be able to sleep at night. And then taking these pills just makes the situation worse and it

becomes neurotic. And this all happens because there is no atammayatā. If there was atammayatā one could completely sweep away all this worry for the future and longing for the past. We ought to be very careful about this little germ of neuroses, of worry and longing. It's very subtle and may seem insignificant. Many people think it's no problem but it can grow and really destroy life, so we ought to be very wary of this germ and understand that we can use atammayatā. If we need a sleeping pill, the only one that really works is atammayatā, and it doesn't cost a penny, and you don't even have to eat it or swallow it. We ought to know this medicine of atammayatā that can free us from worry and longing.

Next is envy or in Pāli, *issā*; in Thai, *ritsaya*. Envy is where we don't want anyone to be better than us, higher than us, more successful than us. And then if someone is better than us or above us or whatever, it creates a lot of dukkha for us and we want to harm that person or get even or do something because of this envy.

The feelings of positive and negative lead to envy, and this envy is something that all of us have got, or that's happening to all of us, if not a lot, at least some. For example, we see someone who has more beautiful clothing than us and then we're envious, and this envy knocks the mind out of balance, makes the mind spin around in confusion. Or we see that someone has a more comfortable house than us, or a more comfortable situation, or better food, or a bigger orange, or whatever, and we become envious and this knocks the mind out of balance and into a turmoil. Envy can even take negative forms, where I am worse off than them, I feel that I'm worse than them, or have a harder deal, or more disadvantages, and then I'm envious. And of course the mind is neither balanced nor peaceful. And the positive side, it's envy that they have something better or more or whatever, and this too is harmful for the mind. So any kind of envy arises from feelings of positive and negative, and then takes positive and negative forms. This is something that atammayatā can protect us from.

If a beautiful woman walks into this place, all the women who aren't so beautiful will get envious automatically before they even know it. Or if a good-looking man walks in, all the men who aren't very good looking become envious immediately, automatically. Envy like this happens automatically, before we even know it, and then it confuses the mind, harms the mind, puts it into a turmoil. Envy can happen to us automatically like this. We need to be very careful about it.

When envy arises, it bites the heart of the one who's envious. It doesn't bite the heart of the object of the envy. If I'm envious, the envy bites me, and the

person I'm envious of doesn't even know a thing. It's kind of silly, isn't it, that this envy it arises automatically and then bites its owner? It bites its owner first of all. So we have to be very careful about it, this ridiculous envy that causes us so much trouble and torment.

All day and all night, please don't bother being envious about anyone else. It happens very automatically that as soon as someone who's better than us or higher than us or has more of something than us, as soon as they come in, envy arises automatically. We oughtn't to let this happen because it doesn't affect them in the least. They still can sleep well at night and have no problems, but the envy really makes a mess of our own lives. So why bother?

Envy arises because of being infatuated with the positive way too much. For example, we've read in the Bible there's a story about envy in Genesis right after the account of how Adam and Eve came to the knowledge of good and evil, and therefore were punished by God with spiritual death. Right after that passage, after Adam and Eve have eaten the fruit and known good and evil, then there's the story of how the children, the sons of Adam and Eve, how the older brother was envious of the younger brother, and so he tricked the younger brother to go into the forest. And there the older brother killed the little brother. Cain killed Abel because Cain was envious of Abel, because Adam loved Abel more than he loved Cain. Because Cain was so infatuated with the positive, this envy arose and he went and committed the first murder because of envy. So envy arises from being too infatuated with the positive.

Envy can also arise from being too concerned with the negative. If one has any weak points or failings or whatever, then this leads to envy of those who are better than us, who don't have those weak points, who are successful in the things that we fail at. Because of this envy we become angry with those people, we hate them. So being hooked on the negative can also lead to envy, because we compare ourselves with others. This positive and negative gets us comparing people, then there arises this negative kind of envy, which brings with it other defilements as well, such as hatred.

Because of envy we don't want anyone to be as good as us, or be as beautiful as us, or have as many things, or qualities, or wealth, or whatever, as us. We don't want their house to be as good as our house, or their clothes to be as good as our clothes, or their wife or husband to be as beautiful as our wife or husband. Because of envy, we don't want anyone to be as good as us in any way. And then if someone is as good or better, then we've got to struggle and compete and spend a lot of time, money, and energy to get better than them. So

envy creates a tremendous amount of problems and trouble in our life, all because we're so wrapped up in the positive and the negative, so deceived by these illusions of positive and negative.

Last we'd like to talk about jealousy. Or in Thai there are two words *huang* and *hueng*, which the last one we don't have as clearly in English. *Huang* is a kind of jealousy where we don't want to share anything with anyone else. With envy, we're envious of what others have, but with *huang* it's a kind of possessiveness about what we've got. We've got something good and we don't want anybody else to have it or benefit from it, so it's a kind of miserliness or stinginess. *Huang* is about normal objects, any normal thing that we don't want anybody to have or to benefit from. *Hueng* is a kind of special jealousy, the jealousy between husbands and wives, where say a husband loves his wife, so if anyone looks at his wife he becomes jealous, he becomes angry and furious if another man looks at his wife. Or a wife who loves her husband so much that she becomes jealous, becomes *hueng*, so that if he talks to another woman, she becomes very angry and upset. She doesn't want him to go outside the house, she's so possessive and jealous. So these are other forms of defilement. Everybody's got these kinds of jealousy, both the ordinary form and the sexual form of jealousy.

(I'm supposed to find very short words for *hueng* and *huang*. *Huang* we can very easily say 'jealousy,' but *hueng* I can't think of a particular word for this special jealousy between husbands and wives, so since the translator can't think of one, you can think of it on your own.)

If a man is *hueng*, his wife – I'll use the word 'possessive' for now, this possessive jealousy. If a man is possessive towards his wife and then he goes off to work. He's at the office and she's at home. If there's this possessiveness, he's tormented all day long, worrying and wondering about what she's doing, what's the mailman up to and all kinds of things. And if a woman is possessive of her husband, as soon as he leaves the house, she drops into hell. If there's this possessiveness she's in hell all day long not knowing what the husband is up to with his secretary or business acquaintances or whatever. If there's this possessiveness, it's incredibly destructive and in just about all husbands and wives there's a tremendous amount of this possessive jealousy.

If this possessiveness becomes really strong, it becomes insanity to the point where a husband will kill his wife so that no one else can look at her. Or where a wife will kill her husband so that he doesn't leave her. Jealousy can go to the

point of insanity, and it drives people to murder. In such an absurd way murdering the one that one loves.

Husbands and wives argue so much mainly because of this possessiveness.

This word ‘possessiveness’ isn’t enough to encompass what *hueng* means, but *hueng* is this very powerful possessive jealousy that happens between husbands and wives. I hope somebody can think of a good translation for it. And it happens this *hueng* arises always because of being confused by, because we’re trapped by positive and negative. It not only takes these positive forms, but it can also have negative forms. There can be a kind of this *hueng*, about say for a husband whose wife isn’t so beautiful.

So, for example, if a husband’s wife isn’t so beautiful, and then a person comes by who’s more beautiful, this will bring up this kind of possessive jealousy in that husband. Or say with a wife if her husband isn’t so handsome, and then somebody comes by who’s much more beautiful and handsome, then it will bring up this jealousy in her as well, regarding her husband who isn’t so handsome. Because of these comparisons, one gets hung up on what one takes to be a negative quality in one’s husband or wife. That leads to this jealousy when the husband or wife is around people who are better in that respect.

(We’ll probably have to add the word ‘crazy’ in front of the word ‘possessiveness’ for it to have the same value as *hueng*. So *hueng* is a crazy possessive jealousy.)

With atammayatā, the values of positive and negative won’t happen, and so then the positive and negative won’t drag us into this jealousy, whether the ordinary kind of jealousy or this crazy possessive kind of jealousy. With atammayatā the mind will remain cool. It won’t get caught up in these kinds of jealousy. With atammayatā the mind is free of the influence of positive and negative, so the mind remains cool. We all need a new life, a new kind of life. An atammayatā that releases us from the value of positive and negative is the knowledge that brings us to new life. If there’s this atammayatā and the mind isn’t being infatuated with positive and negative, then all these things that have happened that we’ve mentioned won’t happen to us. We won’t be tormented and troubled by love, by anger, by hatred, by fear, excitement, worry, anxiety, or missed longing after the past, as well as these two kinds of jealousy. None of these can trouble us, none of these will happen to us if atammayatā frees us from the values of positive and negative. This is what we call a new life.

With atammayatā we'll be an impeccable artist. We'll be the perfect artist, the most talented artist that there is. All of these things won't be problems for us, but we'll have an artistic kind of love. Anger will be artistic for us. There will be artistic hatred, artistic fear, and so on. All of these things will be done artistically. There'll be a tremendous art and skill in them for us through the knowledge of atammayatā.

So with atammayatā, the negative and the positive won't have any more power, and so none of these harmful conditions will trouble us again. They won't come over us and mess up our lives anymore. Through atammayatā there will be this new life, which is totally cool, no longer burnt up by any of these harmful states. It'll be a life that's completely cool. It'll be a life that is truly free, a kind of freedom that has the highest and fullest meaning. And it'll be a life that is clean. There will be nothing dirty or foul in such a life. This is enough to have a life that is cool, free, and clean. These are the fruits of atammayatā.

If one has realized this atammayatā, then one has gotten back, or one has completely justified the time and energy one has put into coming here to study Dhamma. In coming here to join this course to study Dhamma, this atammayatā is what one is looking for. You may not have known this when you came, but this is what we are all in need of. The time, the energy, the money that we have spent leaving home, traveling around the world is just in order to get atammayatā. Please stop just running around in hordes, all these tourists traveling around following each other from beach to beach, sight to sight, or even ashram to ashram, saying 'Oh this one's good, that one's good, this teacher's great, that beach is beautiful,' going around from the positive to the positive endlessly, without knowing what is truly good. You ought to know that the reason that you have come to Asia, and the reason that you've come here to study Dhamma is to get atammayatā. There's no need to continue chasing around after the good and the positive. The only thing we really need is this atammayatā. This is the only thing that can really make our trip, our travels, and our time worthwhile. To realize atammayatā is the only thing that can justify all the resources we've spent traveling around the world.

If we understand atammayatā, then positive and negative have no more influence, and then we're above all the world. Instead of being trapped within the world, always being squeezed and oppressed by the world, when we're freed of the positive and negative, then we're above the world. We're above the entire universe – the whole world and universe is[are] beneath our feet. That means that it's under us and so it doesn't have any ability to cause us problems, to

make trouble for us. In Buddhism this is called the ‘ultramundane,’ to be above the world, to transcend the world. We may still be living in the world, but we’re above it because atammayatā frees us from the values of positive and negative, which trap us in the world. So this atammayatā is what gives us a whole new kind of life, a life that’s completely cool because it’s no longer troubled and hassled by the world.

Good and evil, happy and sad, right and wrong, winning and losing, getting and missing – all of these pairs of opposites exist only in this world. The world is full of these pairs of opposites, these dualities, but above the world there is no duality, there are none of these opposites, none of this good and evil, none of that positive and negative. So above the world, we’re free of all these dualities that trap us when we’re in the world.

So we encourage you to do your best in order to be successful in having atammayatā to do what is necessary, so that there is atammayatā. Keep working on it. If in one session one isn’t yet successful, well then that’s OK. Continue in the next session. Keep working on it until there is atammayatā that can free us from all the positive and the negative. Through the practice of *ānāpānasati*, if we practice *ānāpānasati* completely in all respects, correctly, and successfully, then this practice of *ānāpānasati*, mindfulness with breathing, will allow us to be successful in acquiring, in living with atammayatā.

Once one is successful in atammayatā, then one will be a complete human being. One will have fulfilled the potential and meaning of being a human being. We won’t just be semi-human but will be fully human with *atammayatā*. So this has used up the amount of time we set aside for today, and we’ll end the talk now. Thank you for being very good listeners to a rather long talk. That’s it for this morning’s meeting.

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Transcribed by Bill Weir (*arizonahandbook@yahoo.com*) in June 2015
Audio files: 5125320206020.mp3 & 1989-02 (2) Understanding Atammayata through metaphor.mp3

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