

# ***Something Which Most of You Probably Misunderstand***

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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](http://www.suanmokkh.org) and [www.bia.or.th](http://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](mailto:suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com)).*

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Today, I would like to talk about something which many of you may misunderstand – you may misunderstand this thing quite a bit. For this reason, please gather your mental energies and set your mind upon the task of listening carefully. Please pay very careful attention to what will be said today.

The subject that we will be talking about is ‘*sukha*’ or ‘happiness.’ This is a word that is quite ambiguous both in the Thai language *sukh*, the Pāli language *sukha*, and in the English language ‘happiness.’ In all the three languages, this word has quite varied meanings and applications. Sometimes it can be difficult to understand quite what somebody means when they are speaking about happiness. So we will be speaking about *sukha* or happiness today.

The happiness in the everyday lives of ordinary people is one kind of happiness. And then the happiness that arises with the realization of the final goal of life – that is another kind of happiness. There are these two quite different things but we describe both of them as ‘happiness’ or *sukha*. And we generally mix these two meanings up, confuse them and never quite understand what we are talking about.

Let’s take a look at these different meanings of the word *sukha*. Here is one of the ways the ambiguity of the word ‘happiness’ can cause problems. Many of you have come to practice and study Dhamma in search of happiness. Now, the thing is, your understanding of happiness – the happiness that you desire – is

this the same kind of happiness that is the genuine goal of Dhamma and of the practice of Dhamma? If the happiness you desire is not the same as the happiness that the Dhamma practice leads to, then we are worried that you will be disappointed, that your hopes will turn out sour. So let's look at the meanings of 'happiness' – let's not confuse the two different kinds of happiness and most of all, let's understand the genuine goal – the true happiness which is the aim of Dhamma practice.

In order to save time and make it easy for you to listen and understand, let's set down a very simple short principle for the understanding of happiness. The ordinary happiness that most people are talking about is when there is hunger, or a need, or a want, and when that hunger, need, or want is satisfied – this is the common understanding of happiness. But happiness in the Dhamma sense is when there is no hunger, no need, and no want. When we are free of hunger, need, and want – this is happiness in the Dhamma sense. So let's be very clear about this. Please pay very careful attention to the distinction. Make sure that you understand. The common ordinary happiness is when hunger is satisfied. The satisfaction of hunger is common happiness. When there is no hunger at all, when there is no need of hunger – that is the happiness of Dhamma. Hunger satisfied is the first kind, no hunger at all is the Dhamma kind of happiness. You can probably see that the first kind of happiness that is the kind of the satisfaction of hunger, is a very worldly kind of happiness – it depends on the world, it is caught up in the world, and it is within the limitations and conditions of the world. But the Dhamma happiness where there is no hunger at all, this is above the world, this is a transcendent kind of happiness – it goes beyond the world.

This is an opportunity to introduce you to two words – *lokiya* and *lokuttara* – because it follows from what was just said. *Lokiya* means according to worldly matters – worldly concerns. *Lokiya* is to be in the world, caught up in the world, and under the power and influence of the world. So we can, in short, say 'worldly' or 'mundane' is a common translation. Second word is the word *lokuttara* – it means to be above the world, to transcend the world, to be out from under the power and influence of the world, or to be above that power and influence. This is often translated 'supramundane' or 'transcendent.' So then we can see that there are two kinds of happiness – *lokiya sukha* (worldly happiness) and *lokuttara sukha* (transcendent or supramundane happiness). See the distinction between these two and be very clear about them. Let's look at them a

bit closer and even deeper into these meanings. *Lokiya* means to be stuck in the world, to be caught up and trapped in the world so that the power and influence of the world dominates. This *lokiya* means to be stuck in the world, to be not-free – this is a lack and absence of a spiritual freedom, of spiritual independence. *Lokuttara* is to be released from the world, to be unstuck, to be above its power and influence. *Lokuttara*, or this transcendent state, is spiritual freedom. So these two kinds of happiness, the worldly and the transcendent: the first kind is a happiness that is not free, it is a kind of slavery – this sort of happiness; whereas transcendent happiness is happiness that is free and independent, because it is above the world. So there is the happiness of slavery and the happiness of freedom.

So now I think you can see the importance of this point. If what you are after, if what you desire is worldly happiness, *lokiya sukha*, and you come here and study the Dhamma, you are going to be disappointed. This transcendent happiness is the opposite of worldly happiness. And so what the Dhamma and what the correct meditation is about, is transcendent happiness. So we want you to understand this clearly because we are afraid if you are here in search of the worldly happiness, that you will be disappointed, that you won't get what you are after. So please understand these two kinds of happiness and then you will understand what Suan Mokkh is about.

Please investigate the difference between these two kinds of happiness and understand where you are coming from. See the worldly happiness that is based in hunger and then the transcendent happiness that, when there is no hunger at all. Investigate this matter and see in what ways, into what degree these two kinds of happiness differ from each other. So let's summarize this as clear as possible. Two kinds of happiness: one, the happiness from getting according to one's hunger, from receiving according to one's hunger; happiness number two – no hunger at all – freedom from hunger. Two kinds of sukha – very clear.<sup>1</sup>

The first one is hunger satisfied. Hunger satisfied and no hunger – the two kinds of happiness. So the first one – the happiness based on the satisfaction of hunger – the problem with this is that hunger can never be fully satisfied. Things are always changing, and so whatever satisfies hunger changes, and there is hunger again, or the hunger itself changes. So hunger is in fact a sort of eternal situation. It can never be satisfied. But the world today if we look around

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<sup>1</sup> [He wants me to do it even shorter – I'll try.] added by the translator

in modern society, this is the only kind of happiness anyone is interested in – is the happiness that they get from satisfying their desires.

Imagine if you, just you, were the owner of the world, of the universe, of the entire cosmos, you own everything. Now, that you are the owner of everything, does hunger stop? Can it stop? So take a look in your own minds and hearts, take a very close look and see if you were to get everything that you could possibly desire to the point where you own everything in the universe, would the hunger cease? Would the hunger stop? Or once you own the entire universe, would you hunger for a second universe? Would you desire a third universe? Look in your own hearts and minds and see if it's this way or not. If we look, we will see that hunger is a thing that never ends – it's endless. But the world today is concentrating its time, effort, and energy towards building and producing things which are lovely and satisfying. The economies of the world are designed solely to satisfy hungers. So we have dug ourselves a very deep-deep hole in this orientation of our lives where we are only concerned with satisfying hunger. So take a look inside and see where happiness really is. Is the present way of things going to really bring happiness?

The happiness of the world, the happiness of human beings, proceeds by levels. There are steps and stages to human happiness. The infant, the young infant, is completely happy when it is cuddled in its mother's arms and can suck milk from her breast – this is the happiness of an infant. In this situation, the infant is completely happy. But then as soon as it grows up a little further and gets a little bigger, this no longer satisfies it – the mother's breast isn't enough. Now, it is learning about all kinds of other foods and so its happiness is based on these other kinds of foods – sweets, junk foods, rice crispies, or whatever. And also being able to run around the house and the yard, it is no longer satisfied in its mother's arms, it needs be able to run around in the house. This is a young child. Then it grows a little older and the child will go play football or with darts [??] or something, so another kind of happiness. But the child outgrows this kind of happiness also, and it becomes a teenager. And as a teenager, the ideas of happiness start to turn to sex – grow up and become young men and women and all they do is think about sex and dates and this kind of happiness. And finally, the human being marries with a wife or a husband, and then the thoughts of happiness are all about the house, clothes, the job – things like this. And this situation continues where the happiness progresses from one stage to another, beginning with the happiness of the infant where the

infant is completely satisfied with the comfort and security of its mother's arms and drinking the milk. Through progressive levels to where the hunger and happiness gets bigger and bigger or where the hunger gets bigger and bigger and is more difficult to satisfy – to the point where the human being dies and is reborn as a *deva* (heavenly being). And still, even though being reborn in a heavenly realm – still hungry through thousands of years – the hunger is never satisfied even in heaven. Or if we take it from the Christian point of view, even if one goes to heaven – in the Kingdom of God – the hunger is still not satisfied. This is the way it is with the worldly happiness that is based on the satisfaction of hunger. It's endless and it never stops. It just keeps growing and growing from very simple levels to more and more complex levels.

The Kingdom of God – we are not sure what individual Christians exactly believe about when they think of the Kingdom of God – not quite sure what the theologians think either. If the Kingdom of God is a place where there is still successive levels of hunger, of seeking after the happiness that is based on the satisfaction of hunger and desire – if this is what the Kingdom of God is about – then Buddhism isn't very interested. But if the Kingdom of God is the end of hunger, freedom from hunger, the absence of hunger, then that's the same as Nibbāna – the goal of Buddhist practice. So we are not sure what the Christians are after.

Now in the Buddhist description of the universe, there are many many levels to the world or to the universe. There is the common human world, with which we are familiar. In this world, we go about trying to satisfy the hunger of the human conditions. And above this are various heavenly realms. For instance, there is the realm of the devas – one level of heavenly beings. They live in a realm called *kāmavachon* [Thai ??] – *kāmāvacara* [Pāli] which is the sensuous heaven. So these devas still have sensual hunger and their happiness is based on the satisfaction of this sensual hunger. They don't have a problems in satisfying these hungers that the humans have but they still have the hunger. But then there are realms above that – there finer and more subtle levels of hunger and so there are the *Brahma* worlds. There are two main Brahma worlds. One is where there is no longer sensual hunger but there is still a hunger for forms, for material existence, and for material things, but it's not as crude as the sensual hunger. And then above that is the Brahma world of non-material – of formless existence where the hunger is for the purely formless, purely immaterial things. But even here, on the highest and most sublime heaven, there is still hunger.

Hunger doesn't end – it just climbs up this ladder from one level to the next, just higher and higher. But it is endless and there is no stopping it – at least in this way. So this is what the world is about – all these different levels of hunger and worldly happiness is all caught up in these different levels of hunger. So whether it's a Christian cosmology or a Buddhist cosmology, as long as hunger or the happiness is based on the satisfaction of hunger, there is no end to it. So that is why we take a look at the transcendent happiness where there is no hunger – the hunger is stopped – we end hunger, we let go of hunger. This is true happiness. Now this kind of happiness, when there is no hunger, when there is freedom from desire, is when the 'I,' the 'me,' the 'my-self' no longer exists. When these illusions, when these deceptive false concepts no longer arise in the mind. So we need to see the connection between the end of hunger and the cessation of the illusion of 'self,' the illusion of 'I,' 'me,' and 'mine.' Because in the worldly situations, there is always a 'self' or an 'I' who hungers who is trying to satisfy the hunger. And even when this 'self' works its way to the highest Brahma realm where the hunger is only for the immaterial things, there is still a 'self' trying to get things and trying to be things. As long as there is a 'self' or an 'I,' hunger persists and it will not be satisfied. That is why we need to look at the other side of the situation where there is no hunger because there is freedom from 'self,' freedom from 'I,' 'me,' and 'mine.'

At this point, you ought to be familiar with what we call 'good' (the thing that we call 'good') and also the thing we call the 'best.' You have to have an idea of what these are about. Now whatever you identify as the 'best,' that is where your hunger stops. Your hunger will always be reaching for the best. Now if you identify hunger with a day on the beach, or I mean if you identify the best with the day on the beach, then that's where your hunger proceeds. Or if you identify your best with five minutes of no nasty thoughts going through your head, well that's where your hunger will stop. Or, if you identify the best with going to heaven and basking in God's radiance, then that is where your hunger will stop. But by 'stop' – maybe I should use another word – I don't mean that it ends. That's just when you identify something as the best, that's where you hunger for. But once you get there, does it really stop? Once you spend your day on the beach or your five minutes of calm meditation or your whatever in the kingdom of God, does hunger stop? As long as there is a 'self,' that is identifying something as 'best,' whether it is the best of children – which is one level – the best of teenagers, young adults, married people, old people, the best of heavenly beings on the successive levels – as long as there is this

‘self,’ that is identifying something as the ‘best’ and hungering for it, then that hunger is endless. There is no real stopping. Hunger will fix on that thing which is identified as the *summum bonum* – the supreme goodness. But if it gets there, then it will just start hungering for something more because there is still clinging to a ‘self,’ to ‘I,’ ‘me’ and ‘mine.’

So this is what worldly happiness is like – no matter on what level it is, whether it is on a crude, easy-to-satisfy level of animals, or on a deeper, more subtle, loftier levels of celestial beings, whatever kind of happiness it is, it is still based on the satisfaction of the hunger of some ‘self’ or some ‘I.’ Then there is no end to it. It would just keep growing, developing, and evolving into these higher and higher levels. This is what *lokiya sukha*, worldly happiness, is all about – hunger and its satisfaction. As soon as there is a little satisfaction, there is immediately more hunger. There is never a total satisfaction.

This just illustrates that if we are going to ever be happy, we are going to have to look for happiness somewhere else. If we keep looking for it in the world, we are just going to have this endless process of hunger throughout this life and who knows maybe throughout other lives as well. So this is why we need to be interested in *lokuttara sukha*, transcendent happiness, where there is no ‘I,’ no ‘self,’ no ‘me,’ no ‘mine,’ no ‘my-self’ to hunger and to be hungered for. There is freedom from hunger and there is freedom from the egoistic identification with things.

This freedom from the world – this transcendence of the world – is where true happiness lies. So try and understand what worldly happiness is about. Begin to get interested in transcendent happiness. If you can do that, you have a chance of success.

Now this thing called the ‘best,’ which we each identify and attach to in our own way, it doesn’t come alone. If there is the best, there is also the worst. When there is good there is also the evil or bad. So when we are still looking at things in terms of good and the best, this drags with it the worst and the bad. For this reason, there is no freedom. This hungering after the best keeps us entangled with the worst. Always wanting good things keeps us cluttered up with the bad things. This is because of the illusions and limitations of our own understanding.

And that’s why chasing after the best is just a self-perpetuating hunger. The way out of this hunger is voidness – emptiness – the freedom from ‘I,’ from

‘self,’ from ‘me’ and ‘mine.’ Those of you who are Christians, who have been Christians, or raised in Christian families, and who have read the Bible, especially the first chapter of Genesis, would be familiar of the story of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you understand the meaning of this, then you will understand what Buddhism is about, even though traditional Christians will interpret it in a different way.

God forbid Adam to eat the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil. God told Adam that if he ate the fruit of this tree, that he would die. Now the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil is to start distinguishing things as good and as evil – it’s the beginning of dualistic thought. And once when one gets trapped in this, there is death. There is death because there is a self. All dualistic thought comes out of the illusion of the ‘self’ – the separation of a self from the rest of nature. So with this original dualism, grows into the dualism of good & evil, and from that follows death. Before eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil, there was no death because there was none of this knowledge of good & evil – none of this dualistic thought, there was no ‘self,’ no ‘me,’ no ‘mine.’

Now Adam’s children, down through us, carried with us the death – the burden of ‘self,’ the burden of knowing good and knowing evil, so we attach to the best and we attach to the worst. We identify the good and we attach to them. We identify things as bad and we suppress them, and so we are caught-up in the worldly conditions to this attachment to ‘self’ and the attachment through dualistic thought – this leads to death as God taught Adam in the Bible. Now what are we to do about it – those of us who have inherited this problem? To keep running around, chasing after the satisfaction of hunger, to keep seeking the best is just to perpetuate this cycle of birth and death – it’s just to keep the hunger going – that will never satisfy anything. That is why Buddhism is not interested in any of these realms of higher and more subtle happiness that is based on the satisfaction of hunger because there is no end to these things, there is no true peace or happiness. So if we talk about God as some big ego or big ‘self,’ or we talk about God as the ‘supreme good’ – Buddhists cannot accept this. To say that the highest thing or the supreme thing in the universe is the highest good, or as the collection of everything good, or the totality of good, or the perfection of good – Buddhists cannot accept this because this is still based in egoistic dualistic thought. Therefore, it is based on attachment and it is deluded thinking. But if the highest thing – ‘God’ – if we choose to use that



word – the highest thing is beyond good, then Buddhists can accept it. In Buddhism, the highest thing is emptiness, voidness – the voidness of the ‘I,’ of the ‘self,’ of the delusions of the ‘me & mine,’ of the false conceptions of ‘myself.’ This is the highest thing. Voidness is beyond good and beyond evil – it is beyond the best. Thus, emptiness is freedom from the spinning around – the going round and round in circles chasing after things that will satisfy hunger. In emptiness, both the hunger and the one who hungers disappear. There is no self to hunger, there is no one, no thing, no anything that is hungry – not even God. And so hunger disappears too. In emptiness, all these illusions of ‘me’ & ‘mine’ disappear. Hunger disappears because there is no one or nothing, no ‘self,’ no ‘I,’ no ‘me,’ no ‘mine’ to hunger. This is the highest thing – this is what the goal of the practice of Dhamma is about. It is to transcend the endless cycles of hunger in worldly existence and to be free of hunger and free of self, free of the one who hungers – this is emptiness or voidness, it is the highest thing.

So the knowledge of good & evil is the central concept in both Buddhism and Christianity. Back before there was knowledge of good & evil, it was impossible. Or when there is no knowledge of good & evil, it is impossible to attach to good & evil. When there is no attachment to them, then there is no *dukkha* – there are no problems. What happens after the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good & evil has been eaten, what happens after we know good and evil? We know good & evil but we lack the wisdom to stay in control of the situation and so we go and attach to good or we attach to evil as they arise in the way of ordinary human beings. So we just go around attaching to good things and attaching to bad things. This is what happens after eating that fruit. This attachment bring with it the *dukkha*, it brings with it all the problems of life, and it brings with it death. These are the results of eating that fruit – *dukkha* and death. But for those of us who have knowledge of good & evil, there is no going back to that point where we don’t know good and we don’t know evil. But what can be done and what must be done – what is our duty and responsibility – is to learn that this good and this evil which we have knowledge of, that they should not be attached to, that they must not be attached to – don’t attach! Learn how to not attach! Learn to not attach! Stop attaching to good & evil! So the knowledge of good & evil will remain – attachment to them will cease. And when attachment to them ceases, then there will be no *dukkha* and no death just as it was with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before they ate that fruit. For us, there is no going back to a state of innocence but there is still a need and necessity of going beyond attachment and being free of *dukkha* and death. This

is the essence or the heart of both Christianity and Buddhism, even though some Buddhists and some Christians will understand things in quite a different way. But if you understand this, then you will have the key to genuine happiness, to freedom, and to the end of hunger.

When we know the good we hunger for the good, when we know the better then we hunger for what is better, and when we know what the best is, then we hunger for the best. Then we find something that is even more than the best – even better than the best – then we hunger for that. We hunger for the best-best – we are always caught up in this hunger.

No matter how subtle, how fine, or how invisible this hunger is, it will still give rise to problems and dukkha. Coarse low level hunger will give rise to coarse crude dukkha. The more subtle the hunger is, the more the dukkha. So when the hunger is very subtle, very refined, possibly invisible levels, then the dukkha will also be very subtle and refined and invisible. Nonetheless, there is dukkha, our lives will be troubled, and there will not be perfect peace or perfect happiness. So this is why Buddhism teaches emptiness which transcends the best. In emptiness, there is complete freedom from any hunger. There is no crude hunger and there is no subtle and fine hunger. Even the highest, most subtle, and invisible levels of hunger are gone. Therefore, there are no dukkha whatsoever and there are no problems and there is peace.

As long as there is some hunger remaining – no matter how subtle it is – then the final goal has not been reached. But when all hunger has been extinguished and with it all dukkha and all problems, that is the final goal. This is ‘emancipation’ in Buddhism. Emancipation is this freedom from hunger. Emancipation is emptiness – emptiness of ‘self,’ the voidness of ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and ‘mine.’ This is the final goal, this final emancipation, liberation and freedom.

Let’s take another look at this word ‘hunger.’ We can see two kinds or two levels hunger – physical hunger and mental or spiritual hunger. Physical hunger has to do with the needs of the body, for food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. This kind of hunger is not a problem. It can be satisfied and doesn’t have to lead to dukkha. Physical hunger need not lead to hunger. We can see this in animals who have these physical needs of hunger as well – these instinctual needs of food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. But they do not experience dukkha because of that. The problem with human beings is that our minds have developed beyond the minds of mere animals. In animals, the minds are still on a relatively low level where they do not make physical hunger into spiritual

hunger. They do not attach to their physical hunger and cause it to be a spiritual hunger which leads to dukkha. But in human beings, the mind has evolved onto a much higher level. And on this level, there is lots of attachment. This highly evolved mind of the human being is caught-up in dualistic thoughts and attaches to things – it clings to things. This is what gives rise to spiritual hunger and dukkha. So if we can see these two kinds of hunger – the physical and the spiritual – and distinguish between them, then when there is a physical need, it can be recognized. When it is recognized, it can be dealt with in a wise mindful way so that no problems arise. If this physical hunger is recognized and dealt with wisely, that means there will be no attachment to it as ‘my hunger,’ as ‘my problem,’ or as ‘I,’ or ‘me.’ So physical hunger remains just physical hunger and is not a problem nor is it a dukkha. So if we can stop attaching to these physical needs and physical hunger, then it is possible for spiritual hunger to stop. See that this spiritual hunger is where the real problem is – this attachment to good & bad, to ‘this’ & ‘that,’ to ‘me’ & ‘you.’ See that this spiritual hunger, this attachment is the cause of all our problems, cause of our dukkha. Understand the difference between these two levels or these two kinds of hunger – the spiritual and the physical – the physical hunger which we share with animals and the spiritual hunger which is uniquely human. So there are these two kinds of hunger. The hunger on the physical level need not be of any sort of problem. When any of these hungers arise such as a need to eat, then just go and eat – take care of the situation wisely and with mindfulness, and then there will be no problems, no attachment, and no spiritual hunger will arise.

Physical hunger (physical needs) can be taken care of in this way. It’s quite simple and it need not cause any difficulties. Truly, physical hunger should not disturb us in anyway. It should just be taken care of wisely and mindfully, that’s all – it’s very simple. Now, with spiritual hunger, the more we eat, the more we are hungry. When there is spiritual hunger, whatever its hungering for, if we give it a little bit, the hunger just grows and wants more. So the more we try and satisfy the spiritual hunger, the more it expands and the more it grows. This is because it’s an endless, unsatisfiable kind of hunger. Now most of you came here with some kind of hope, wish, or expectation, and these hopes, wishes, and expectations are in themselves kinds of spiritual hunger. So be careful of those hopes, wishes, and expectations. A problem in the world is that most children are taught and trained to have hopes, wishes, and expectations – this is encouraged and much of our modern education is based on these hopes and expectations – this gives rise to competitions, all kinds of tests, psychological

tests, and all sorts of things. But these hopes and expectations can never be satisfied because they are just another kind of spiritual hunger. So when we go to teach our children – encourage them to hunger in spiritual ways – what good are we doing them or anyone else? We should just teach children to learn how to satisfy physical hunger in mindful and wise ways. And rather than teach them to develop spiritual hunger, teach them to not attach to it – to let go of spiritual hunger. And when there is no spiritual hunger, when there is no physical hunger, physical hunger is dealt with wisely and mindfully, and there is no attachment which gives rise to spiritual hunger – in the absence of both kinds of hunger – can you imagine what that bliss, peacefulness, and joy would be like? Can you picture it? – The total absence of all hunger! Think about it! And so finally, we would like to say a few things about what it's like, about the result, the fruit of the total absence of hunger.

So now, we will say something about the fruit, the results of the end of hunger. To explain this, we would like to introduce one more word. We will use a Pāli word and please try and remember it even though we realize that these are new words and it's a new language. This new word is *viveka* – in Thai its *vivek* and in Pāli *viveka*. This word means 'utmost aloneness' – 'utter solitude' – to be alone. There are three levels to *viveka* – there is the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. Physical *viveka* is when nothing disturbs one on the physical level – there are no physical disturbances. Then one is alone physically. One is in physical solitude. But even if there is physical *viveka*, there may not be happiness. There are many people who turn into hard-core meditators and go running off to caves, or forests, or sound-proof rooms, or isolation chambers, seeking physical aloneness because they think they will find happiness there. But if there is just physical solitude but not mental solitude, they will not find much happiness.

Mental solitude is when no fears, no emotions, no loves, no hates, frustrations, jealousies, envies, and worries disturb the mind. When these things do not disturb the mind, then there is mental *viveka*. There can be mental *viveka* even in a crowded room when we are with many other people. This is not dependent on *physical* *viveka*. Now when there is physical *viveka* and mental *viveka*, this is still not the highest happiness. This is not the goal of meditation. This is not the goal of Buddhism – just to have physical and mental solitude or to be alone physically and mentally – that's not the end, that's not the final goal. Thus, there is the third and highest level of *viveka*. This *viveka* is when the spirit

is not disturbed by ‘I,’ by ‘me,’ by ‘mine.’ When there is no attachment to ‘self,’ ‘my- self,’ or ‘things that belong to me’ – no ‘me & mine’ – this kind of aloneness and this kind of solitude is spiritual viveka. And this spiritual viveka is emancipation, is liberation, is freedom in Buddhism. This is the final goal – this spiritual solitude. The goal is not to be off alone in some cave, or just to have a peaceful quiet mind. The goal is to be completely free of the disturbances of the self, of false illusions about ‘I,’ ‘me’ and ‘mine’ – to get completely rid of all these deceptions, all of this attachment – this is the ultimate freedom for which we practice the Dhamma, so understand these three levels of viveka. When you can have physical viveka – well then make use of it. Learn to develop mental viveka. But most of all, keep practicing until there is spiritual viveka. This is what we mean by happiness – this spiritual viveka where no ideas of ‘self,’ of ‘me & mine’ disturb the spirit. This is ultimate peace. This is liberation. This is Nibbāna. This is the ultimate happiness – the happiness where there is no hunger.

If you are able to practice mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati-bhāvanā*), completely and successfully through all its steps and stages, then you will come to know these three kinds of viveka. You will know physical viveka where nothing disturbs one physically, mental viveka where there are no mental disturbances, and finally spiritual viveka where no delusions of ‘self’ disturb the spirit.

Through the practice of *ānāpānasati*, if it is fully developed, and fully practiced, these three kinds of viveka will be known. It is not necessary to bring in other methods or practices. *Ānāpānasati*, by itself, at least according to the Buddha and Ajahn Buddhadasa, is sufficient to experience and realize these three kinds of aloneness – these three kinds of solitude. And for this reason, we encourage you to fully develop and correctly understand and practice *ānāpānasati* in order to understand this kind of happiness that results when the three kinds of solitude of aloneness are experienced. We want to make this kind of happiness very clear to you because we were afraid that some people might be here looking for something that we cannot provide. Buddhism is interested in happiness that results from no-hunger. If you are interested in the happiness that results when desires are responded to, when hungers are satisfied, then there is nothing we can do to help you. If this is what happiness is for you, then Buddhism cannot help you in any way. Buddhism is not about this kind of happiness. But, if you are interested in the happiness which results when there is

no hunger – when there is physical aloneness, mental aloneness, and spiritual aloneness – meaning that nothing disturbs the physical, nothing disturbs the mental, and nothing disturbs the spiritual – if you are interested in this kind of happiness, then Buddhism has much to offer you and we will do whatever we can to aid you in your development of this true happiness. In order to know and realize this genuine happiness, we encourage you to come to understand ānāpānasati and practice it properly and correctly. Avoid attaching to any wrong ideas or any right ideas. But practice ānāpānasati in a balanced and proper way. If you do that, if you continue practicing it and fully develop it, it will lead to these three kinds of viveka. It will lead to the true kind of happiness which is not dependent on the worldly satisfaction of hunger. This is what Buddhism is about, this is what *ānāpānasati* is for – for transcendent happiness, the freedom of hunger, freedom from hunger where there is no hunger at all.

At this point we will close today’s talk. Thank you all for coming and for making use of Suan Mokkh. Thank you very much.

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Transcribed by Tripur Manandhar (*tripur7@gmail.com*) in Jan. 2016  
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