

DHARMA FOR ORDINARY SICK PEOPLE

by

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This Dhamma talk is for stimulating the intelligence of people who are ill. Please read carefully and consider thoroughly.¹

Illness is Ordinary and Natural

Illness ought to be seen as natural occurrences for all physical *saṅkhāras* (bodies), whether humans or other animals, because *saṅkhāras* undergo change.² Whenever there is change, it can be up or down. Upward change feels comfortable and healthy. Downward change creates illness. When physical *saṅkhāras* get successively older, most of the change is painful and ill. This facts needs to be see as it truly is: all *saṅkhāras* are just like this. In short, pain and illness are normal and natural for physical *saṅkhāras*.

¹ This talk appears to have been recorded for a student who was ill. He speaks to someone in the latter stages of life, who probably had traditional Buddhist believes about future lives. At the same time (Jul 19, 1982), Tan Ajahn's own health was up and down.

² Here, the context suggests the common understanding of *saṅkhāras* as physical bodies. Usually, Tan Ajahn uses the term in its universal meaning (all conditioned things) or specific meanings as found in *paṭiccasamuppāda* teachings. Here, he doesn't specify physical *saṅkhāras* but his audience probably understood *saṅkhāras* to be 'bodies.'

Illness Reminds Us to Be Clever

Let us examine the reason why this illness happens. We ought to consider in a beneficial direction, that is, to see that this illness occurs to warn us. Illness doesn't exist to make us suffer or be sad. There's nothing about it to be sorry for or suffer over, which have no benefit because physical *saṅkhāras* are just like this. Rather, illness is to warn us and teach us to be more intelligent, rather than suffer. Illness informs us to be ready for the ultimate quenching without remainder of *dukkha*. If we as yet spin around in *saṃsāric* cycles we necessarily suffer with birth, aging, illness, and death. If you don't want birth, aging, illness, and death to occur, then don't spin around in cycles of *saṃsāra*.

To Go Beyond Dukkha, Must Quench Without Remaining

Now, illness and fever have arrived to caution you, to demonstrate how life is. If you wish to be free of this sort of existence – namely, illness – you must prepare yourself for quenching without anything left over. This remainderless quenching is the cooling of *saṅkhāras* that leaves no fuel behind for further birth. Even though the body isn't ready to break up, the heart volunteers for dissolution. To put it directly, we are fully willing to be without Ego from this moment. We volunteer to be free of Ego right now. Our hearts release regarding everything and give up all matters concerning *saṅkhāras*. End all matters concerning these *saṅkhāras* so that there's no thinking in terms of Ego and Mine remaining. We are aware that insisting on wandering around within *saṃsāric* cycles leads to being like this (sick). There's no end to it. If you wish to stop being like this, then quench the feelings of *saṅkhāras* as being Ego and Mine. With no more feeling that anything is me or mine there's quenching.

Don't Take Saṅkhāras Personally

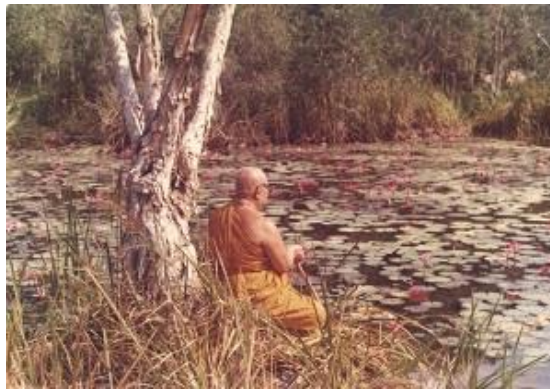
Saṅkhāras naturally get sick. If we cling to them as 'our *saṅkhāras*,' the pain and illness become ours, too. So we suffer, we're sad or disappointed. If we are uncompromising with a new intention, with intelligence and mental fortitude, we commit to letting the *saṅkhāras* be their own story. Let the *saṅkhāras* happen according to their own business; don't hang on as 'mine' or 'ours.' The story of *saṅkhāras* is they don't last; they're impermanent. *Saṅkhāras* are *dukkha*, stressful, and undependable. *Saṅkhāras* are *anattā*, without essential or lasting selfhood. What we wish for is stopping, quieting, and cooling, which is the story of *nibbāna*.

Release Mind into Freedom

Mind must look to see in this way so it doesn't grasp physical matters as being mine or about me. Let physical *saṅkhāras* get sick or decay naturally, so that they aren't clung to as my pain, my illness, or my death. Mind won't be bound up with illness and death. Instead,

mind is freed from pain, illness, and death. In this freedom there's no going and returning within the cycles of *saṃsāra*.

This is the warning that illness brings us, so that will be smarter. Illness doesn't visit to make us suffer. It doesn't demand that we suffer. It merely reminds us to be fully prepared for remainderless quenching of feeling there is Ego and Mine. It challenges us to quench Ego and Mine. It doesn't tell us to hurry up and kill ourself, which would be pointless. Instead, it reminds us to quench clinging to 'me' and to quench clinging to anything as 'mine.' This is what I mean by warning us to quench without remainder. When clinging to 'me' and 'mine' is quenched, there is nobody to be born, age, feel ill, and die.



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May all being be free of suffering and at peace.