

A person wearing a red and grey robe is sitting on a dark, layered rock ledge, looking out over a vast, misty mountain landscape. The mountains are shrouded in soft, white clouds, and the sky is a pale, hazy yellow. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Sayadaw U Jotika

**“I make my
mind my friend”**

Dhamma Talk

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*Transcribed by Viet Hung
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Recorded Audio

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V. 01.00

“I make my mind my friend”

Today, I'll read a beautiful poem, like a gem. I love poem so much. It's like I'm collecting jewels, beautiful poems, dhamma poems. Poems are very, very meaningful. They have very deep meaning. And the more you read the poem, the more you think. And the more you live it... This is very important part, to live a poem. Get that idea in your mind very deeply: To live a poem. And the more you live it, the deeper the meaning becomes. And in some ways I think my life is a poem. Sometimes I really feel it. My life is a poem. Why? Because in a poem everything fits together. Everything is needed, every word in a poem. You cannot leave one word out and make it complete. Because every word has its place and meaning and connection. It is so compact that you cannot add anything more. You cannot take out anything more. It's like the teaching of the Buddha. It's so complete that you cannot add any more and you cannot leave anything out. It's just right. Everything fits together. So, sometimes I felt like my whole life is a poem. Before I understood and felt this way, I thought so many things happened in my life were so meaningless

and useless. And I was very frustrated every time. Many, many times, I think that it would be so good, if that didn't happen to me in my life. It would be so good, if things were different. When I was younger, it would be so good, if my parents were better parents. It would be so good, if my teachers were better teachers. They were not good enough. They were so lacking... So, so much frustration in my life.

But later, slowly and slowly, as I practice mindfulness and become more and more mindful and see how things, one thing leads to another. I found out that if that didn't happen in my life, I wouldn't be here today. One thing leading to another, one thing lead to another. Every painful experience, difficult experience, every disappointment even, or every happiness, satisfaction also fit into each other. One thing leading to another. Just like a poem. If I leave out one thing, I won't be here today. So, seeing your whole life as a poem is also very deep and meaningful. Only if you can see the meaning, then it will fit together. Everything in this world has a hidden meaning. We only see superficially. We don't see the deeper meaning of it. That's why we feel very disappointed, very frustrated, very unhappy.

I read this poem a long time ago in a book, and I found that book in this library again. So, I copied this poem again from this book just yesterday. And that book is called Insight Meditation by Joseph

Goldstein. I met him in Barre, Massachusetts, when I went there to live for about two months. And there is no title for this poem. And in that book even no mention of the author. But it's a Japanese origin. The idea is a very deep and profound and very, very meaningful.

And another important thing is that the meaning is not just in the words. I've read many books. As you know, I've been talking about my readings. I read a book, or I read a poem and I put it away. And ten years later, I take the book out again and read the poem again. I find that the meaning of the poem has changed. Although, the words are exactly the same. But the way I understand the meaning has changed very, very much. Where does that change come from? From my own understanding of my life I've experienced, from my study, from my reading, also, from my thinking. So, the depth of the meaning depends on you. How deeply you understand the poem depends on you. So, a poem should be read again and again, again and again. So the teaching of the Buddha also is like a poem, especially the gathā, Pāli verses. They are poems. And you know what gathā means? Gathā has very similar meaning to gīta. Gīta means song. It's a song. So, you can sing it. It has got a long sound and short sound and they are very balanced. You can sing it as a song. Very, very beautiful. I like Pāli gathā. I've memorized a lot of Pāli gathā, most of them from Dhammapada.

And one of the gathā you might have read in English translation mostly, I think, and some of you might even remember the Pāli also. “Appamādo amatam padam”. Heard of that poem? Yes. Appamādo means mindfulness, awareness. Amatam means deathless or liberation, Nibbana. Padam means the cause. Mindfulness, heedfulness, awareness is the cause of liberation, deathlessness. And look deeply into the meaning. When you become more and more mindful, then you will understand it. So even to understand this one sentence, it takes a lot of practice to understand it. Not just thinking, not just reading. A lot of practice to understand what it means. So the meaning should come out from your practice, from your life. So mindfulness, awareness, presence of mind, they are all very similar in meaning, opposite of absent mindedness, carelessness, heedlessness, mindlessness. So mindfulness is the strongest cause, the most strongest cause of liberation. There are many other factors necessary too, but this is the main factor. So without practicing mindfulness, there can be no liberation. If we become absent minded, there is no hope for liberation. No hope of wisdom. No hope of seeing things clearly.

And so: “Appamādo amatam padam. Pamādo maccuno padam.” Heedlessness, mindlessness, absent mindedness, ignorance is the cause of death. And “Appamatta na miyanti.” Those who are not mindless,

those who are not unmindful, which means those who are mindful. “Na miyanti” means “don’t die”. What is the meaning of that? You don’t die repeatedly. And, “Ye pammatta yatha mata”. This is the most important point again. Those who are mindless, those who are absent minded, those who are not mindful, they are like dead, like dead, as if dead. So when you become more and more mindful, then you feel more and more alive. You are not just living. And I’ve read another word which I think is even better. Most people are just vegetating, not really living. They are just going through, just, just going through. They have no real direction. They don’t know what they are doing. They are doing what others are doing. So, those who are mindless, those who are not mindful, are like dead. They are as if dead. So, as you practice mindfulness, the more mindful you become throughout the day, the more you feel alive, the more you see meaning in your life. You become more and more sensitive to it. So, if you give a sedative to a person or a sleeping pill, sedative, tranquilizer, it will make person become tranquil, sedate, but not alert. And so to be alert, to be mindful is the main factor to become wise.

So when I studied dhamma and I also taught some Abhidharma to a few people, and before I came here, I thought of giving a brief course of Abhidharma too. But no time for that this time. Maybe next time. It’s very deep and meaningful. You cannot understand everything. But there are few things very deep and

meaningful in Abhidharma, which almost everybody can understand and apply. And this application is most important. So in Abhidharma, when I taught Abhidharma I made a very big chart. It's about six feet long and about three feet wide, a big chart. And I put all the 121 mental states and 52 mental factors (into the chart), from top to bottom, 121 mental states. And for each mental state in the graph, I put a circle, which mental factors come with which type of consciousness, mental state. So by doing that, you can really see it. This consciousness, this mental state has these mental factors. And you can see the difference too. In some mental states, some mental factors are absent and some mental factors are present. That's what makes them different from each other. It's very, very interesting and profound. I believe you can get really absorbed in it.

And one very important point is that: When you look at the mindfulness factor, sati, you'll find that when sati, mindfulness is absent, wisdom is absent too. There is no such thing as a wise person who is not mindful. Or there is no such thing as a mental state without mindfulness, but with wisdom that is impossible. So this is a very deep point to understand. So to be wise means you need to be mindful, presence of mind. That's why this gathā "Appamādo amatam padam" is very deep and meaningful. So we are acquiring a lot of knowledge only, but not really wisdom. I know a lot of people who are uneducated

but very wise. So to be wise and to be educated which means to have university degrees is not the same.

So anyway, that's just an introduction. Now I'm really going to read the poem. And. Whatever meaning that I can think of to comment on this will not be complete. I don't know what the author meant, but as I read the poem and think about it, more and more ideas and meanings appear in my mind. But right now, I don't think I can recall all those ideas and put together here and now. So I will just give you some of my interpretation, my commentary on the poem. So poems are very concise. They have few words, and poems use metaphors. That's the beauty of the poem. It's a metaphor. And metaphors have many layers of meaning again. So, the more you read it, the more ideas come into your mind.

The first line is, "I have no parents". How can that be possible? What is he trying to say? I have no parents. All of us have parents, mother and father, although we know it or not. Some people, they just give away their children and the children don't know who their real parents are. But still, he knows that I have parents, even though I don't know. So without parents, we will not be born. But what is this poet trying to say? I have no parents. And he said, "I make the heavens and earth my parents". Heavens and earth. What does that mean? So this is a metaphor. Heavens and earth means nature. In Chinese literature and also in

Japanese literature, heavens and earth means nature. So, nature is my parent. So we have parents in this life. But as I told you, we have many lives before and there will be many lives too. And I remember a few of my past lives too. So, we have many, many parents in our past lives. Every time we are born, we have a set of parents. Father and mother. And sometimes it is very interesting and sometimes also amusing also, [can't get the words].

Because I know one person in Rangoon, who died, and then he became a son of his son. So, his daughter in law became his mother. And he can remember that. So when he grew up, when he was about 4 or 5 years old, when he was beginning to talk quite a lot, he talked about his past life. And when you ask him his name, he will use the same name again. So that sort of person... Another person I know who is in Mandalay, whose name is [can't get the name]. His father's name is [can't get the name]. His father's name was... Because if you ask him who was your grandfather, then what would the answer be? My grandfather was myself. I was my grandfather. So very funny. Very amusing also. So this young boy, when he grew up, when the older people, his parents, his mother taught him to call his father father or daddy, he said no. He refused to call his father daddy. And do you know how he called him, his father? No, not even that. In Burmese, he called his father hekon [can't get the exact word in Burmese]. Hekon means... How do you

translate that into English? It's a very disrespectful way of calling a person, hekon. It's very hard to translate into English. No equivalent in English. Hekon just means... Yes, yes, addressing somebody very low. So sometimes lovingly parents call their son hekon. Very disrespectful, but very lovingly. Call him like that. "Hekon", "hey creature", something like that. "Hey, animal". Something like that. So anyway, all the people said, "Don't do that". It's very disrespectful. It's akusala. You shouldn't call your father hekon. He said no, that's the way I call him. And then he said, I'm not going to do anything for you anymore. I've done enough for you. Very interesting, very amusing, and also very deep and meaningful.

This is the way saṃsāra is. One life you become a father, another life you become a son. So don't treat your sons badly. Don't treat your daughter in law's badly. Maybe you'll get reborn into the womb, and then they'll treat you badly again. And you will suffer. So this is something to think about, to keep in mind. And when we understand this very deeply, our relationships with people become very deep and meaningful. So I think about reincarnation. This should be enough.

So anyway, we have many, many fathers, many sets of parents and many lives. So who is our real father? Who is our real mother? Each take in turn, only temporary father and mother. So in Burmese, there a

saying, talking about something as parents. Can any Burmese here remember that? Something is your mother and your father? In Burmese a very beautiful thing. [talking in Burmese] that is in Burmese. Your kamma is your mother and your kamma is your father. Actually, who really brings you into this life is your kamma. Your parents support you. In some way, the connection of kamma also is there. The relatedness of kamma is also there. But your real parents is your kamma and kamma is nature also. Again, it's not a being, it's not a thing. It's an energy, a kind of energy, mental energy. But it's nature also. So kamma means mental or verbal or physical action, but mainly it's mental because whenever we say something, it's rooted in our thought. Because of thinking, we say something. Because of our thought, we do something. So mainly kamma means mental process, wholesome / unwholesome. So wholesome / unwholesome kamma is not just a concept, not just a designation. It's not a paññatti. Because you cannot say, well, from now on we will call this wholesome. No, you cannot do that. So what are the qualities of wholesome kamma? The characteristics of wholesome kamma. So in Abhidharma, wholesome kamma definition is [in Pali]. Wholesome kamma has the characteristic or the quality of blamelessness or thoughtlessness. You cannot find fault with something wholesome. It is good. So any kind of wholesome action, you look at it... Metta, it's so beautiful, so noble. So, it is beautiful, it is noble. And it brings happiness also. When you

feel loving for another person, that person will be happy. You don't do anything harmful to that person, so it is the cause of happiness also. And it is happiness actually. And bringing happy results also.

So one person, not just one, a few person asked me in Burma, "You talk about mindfulness as a wholesome state of mind. How do you mean that?" Because most people don't know that. I said [can't get the word. Nivea] means "be aware". And that is a very powerful, kusala, wholesome state of mind. Because they understand dāna as wholesome. Most people, when they talk of kusala, they immediately think of dāna, giving something to another person. That is wholesome. But most people don't think of awareness as a wholesome mental state or kusala. So I explained to that person, when you are very, very mindful, completely mindful, look deep into your mind again. Look at that mental state. It is calm and peaceful, clear, happy. And with that peaceful, clear, happy, noble, beautiful mental state, you cannot do anything harmful. To do something harmful, you have to develop very ugly mental state. With a beautiful, calm and peaceful mental state, you cannot do anything harmful. To do something harmful, unwholesome, you need to develop ugly, destructive mental state, painful mental state. So before you harm another person, you already harm yourself. Because there is that mental state.

For example, I told you once... A dog came to sleep on my veranda, on my doormat. I didn't like dog sleeping on my doormat. I tried to pour water on the dog to make the dog wet and run away. Because he likes to be in a dry, nice place. Because before when I did that, I watched my mind and I found out that this is a very cruel mind. It is very painful. So when you are mindful, your mind is clear, very noble, peaceful. And it leads to more and more peaceful states, makes you become wiser and wiser. That's what awareness, mindfulness is the highest kusala. Later, I will talk about this thing again, because right now I have so much to say that I don't think I have enough time. So please give me more time if I go on talking and talking. Please be patient. Please be indulgent. So our real parent, think very deeply who is our real parent? Our kamma, which means we are creating our parents. We are creating our life. We are giving birth to our own life. Very, very deep this is.

Another verse is, I have no home. Again, something to think about. I have no home. All of us have a roof, walls and floors to live in. Whether it's good or not, all of us have a roof on our head and walls around and on a floor also, even it's a dirt floor. But what this poet is trying to say is that he's not talking about this physical floor, physical home, I mean. "I have no home. I make awareness my home." Another very, very deep metaphor. Very, very deep metaphor. What happens to a person who has got no home? He's going here and

there. He doesn't belong anywhere, and he's exposed to all kinds of difficulties and dangers, exposed to sun, rain, cold weather, hot weather, exposed to biting insects. And also many other kinds of danger. Because when we are in our home, we feel protected in many ways. We feel at home, protected, secure, no danger. So people homeless... I know even in England there is a place where they call Cardboard City. Surprising for me to hear that. I know something about Bombay, where a lot of people are living on the street, sleeping on the street sidewalk. But even in England, I've heard that there are people sleeping inside a cardboard box. And try to understand how they will feel, homeless. How insecure? How dangerous? So it is the same way with the mind. When the mind is not mindful, it is going here and there. It has got no home. It is exposed to all sorts of danger. No protection, no dignity. So when the mind becomes mindful, it is at home. So mindfulness is our home. When we are mindful, we can feel that, it's like coming back home. You can really feel it. You feel so secure, so fulfilled also in a way. So, when the mind is not mindful, it's like [can't get the words] going here and there, aimless, wandering. So, this is also a very deep and meaningful.

"I have no life or death." Oh, another very strange idea. I have no life or death. All of us die. We are born and we will die for sure. Nobody lives forever. But what is this poet trying to say? Every line is so

beautiful. So, how do you see that? So different from the way we think. It really makes us think, I have no life or death. Wow, what does that mean? So, "I make the tides of breathing my life and death." So, in one sutta I read Buddha taught monks to reflect on death. So, the monks went away and they meditate on death, one day we will die. And then when they came back, Buddha check them, ask them how they meditated on death? One person said, well, we can die any day today or tomorrow. So I was thinking, if I can live for one day, one more day, I'll make the best of that one more day and practice meditation. Buddha said, yes, very good. And he asked another person and how you reflect on death. Thinking of death doesn't mean that you are just thinking of death and becoming depressed. When you think of that, then you don't waste time, you meditate, you learn. So another monk said, well, I was thinking, if I can live long enough the duration of time when I eat one morsel of food, long enough, that means about three minutes. You take a piece of bread and eat it and chew it. So maybe two minutes. I don't know exactly. It depends on how slowly you eat. So that monk said, if I can live that much longer, in the meantime, I'll make the best of that moment and meditate. Buddha said, oh, that is good. And then he asked another person, and how do you think of death, reflect on that and practice. And that monk said, I was thinking, you can die before you finish your in-breath. You can die before you finish your out-breath. In one breath, you can die. And if I

can live for one breath, I'll be fortunate enough. And I'll make the best use of that moment and be mindful and meditate. Blessed you... Sadhu. Sadhu. Sadhu. That's the best way to think of death.

So, we're born and dying. So, birth and death, every moment. And when you really meditate, you can see that each moment is a life. And so the real life span is one thought moment. And how short is that? Buddha said it's about one by 10 billion, maybe more than that, thousand billion, so shot. One thought moment is very, very short. And that's our lifespan actually. Because things are in a chain, they are rising again and again. So that one short moment is the time where we can die. And when a person sees this as a reality, at every moment, things are arising and passing away. That is death. And that is the way, a very profound way of seeing death. We cannot say that we live for 90 years. We cannot see 90 years. All we live is each moment, each moment, each moment, each moment. So and this is also very deep and meaningful.

And another verse is "I have no divine power", no psychic power. I don't have any power to create anything, to control anything, to overcome anything. "I have no divine power. I make honesty my divine power." Honesty... Actually, honesty is the best power. We want to be very powerful. All of us, I think, in one way or another, whether we accept it or not, we want to be powerful. We want to be in control. So

power has many different connotations. Some power is very bad, like destructive power to harm another person. But there is also nurturing power. You have power to do something good for another person, like parents have nurturing power. Teachers have nurturing power. The more you can help another person to learn, the more powerful you are. Not imposing your idea on another person, not forcing another person to learn, but to help another person who wants to learn. So the more you can help, the more powerful you are. So if you want to be powerful, develop more qualities, so that you become more helpful. That's a good way to be powerful. So this poet said, "I make honesty my divine power". Especially in practicing our spiritual practice, meditation, this is very important. That is why whenever we chant this, you find that. What is that? An upright, straightforward. That means honesty, actually. Uju which means very, very honest. So not only cheating another person, don't cheat yourself even. Be very honest.

So sometimes when people get upset and you tell them, well, why are you so upset? They say, "No, I'm not upset. I'm just trying to teach him something. I'm just trying to correct that person's mistake." But look at him, he's very angry. His face is tense and his voice also is very hard and tense. And he said, I'm not angry. And even parents do that. They hit the children very hard. "I'm just teaching him. He's not learning. I'm

teaching him, but I'm not angry."

And another honesty is when we meditate, you know, sometimes we cheat ourselves. Sometimes we pretend like we know something. We become boastful also sometimes. And even when the teachers ask the student, how is your meditation? Some students, they try to please the teacher also. Also, they want to have some good impression. So they imagine something and just try to say nice things to the teacher. "Oh, I meditated for a whole hour. No thought at all. Just very nice and peaceful and quiet. I was just in bliss." Well, if it were really true, it would be really wonderful. But very hard for a beginner to do that, for one hour no thought is impossible. Even for one minute is impossible. So to be very honest is very important. Sometimes students compete with each other. When the teacher says nice thing to another person, "oh, you are doing very well. I'm very pleased with you." Another student said, well, "what can I say to get that sort of praise?" So try to imagine things and say things like that. That is dishonesty too. If a person is dishonest, he cannot develop any spiritual quality. No hope. That's why Buddha mentioned twice. "[Can't get the words]. To be very, very honest." So, honesty has great energy and power too. So people say that, "well, one cannot be so honest in these days." Everybody is so dishonest. If you are really honest, then people think you are stupid. So just to appear not being stupid, we try to be very clever. So

to be too clever is not good.

Oh, here's another thing I almost forgot. Another very beautiful four lines. Without honesty, there is no real growth. There can be no spiritual growth, I mean. Without honesty, there can be no spiritual growth. So our spiritual practice is based on honesty. Foundation, honesty is our foundation also. Keeping five precepts, metta, honesty... Very very important. Without honesty, there is no real freedom. Yes, dishonesty. Try to say something dishonest and make yourself consistent also, what (will) happen? You have to say more dishonest things. You have to lie, and lie and lie more and more. You are trapped in your own lie. That's why in one book I read that person said, "I'm living a lie". And it really struck me very hard. My goodness, I am also living a lie. Playing a role... So many times I look at myself and felt very unhappy about myself. I thought, I am a hypocrite. I tell myself, and it was very painful. And it was also true. I am a hypocrite. I'm just playing a role, just trying to put up a very good image, good mask on my face. I'm not real, I'm dishonest. I'm not cheating anybody. But I'm putting up a face, putting up an image. And just playing a role. Just like an actor. I'm an actor. I'm not real. I'm a hypocrite. Oh, it was just so painful. But anyway, that's the way we grew up. First, we learned that we are not perfect and then we try. Slowly and slowly. So it takes a long time to do that. Be very honest and be very patient too. And also be very

forgiving and loving too. We forgive ourselves for not being perfect. It's very important. So because it is so painful for us to accept what we really are, we try to cheat ourselves. "Oh no, I'm not that bad. I'm just beautiful." Just very loving and forgiving person. Just very honest. Just plain honest.

So, look very deeply and see. Only when we see our mistakes, then we can crack and overcome and become a better person. Although it is painful, it is like growing a tooth. It's painful. Growing up is very painful. So without honesty, there is no real freedom. Without honesty, nothing is real. Because without honesty, everything is just a show, not real. Everybody is just a show. Just acting. Nobody is real. So we cannot really trust another person because that person is not real. We feel that I'm not real and he's not real. So there is no trust anymore. So without honesty, nothing is real. And another line is the last line is even more profound. "Without honesty, nothing is." Nothing anymore without honesty. So to live our lives, really, we must be more and more honest. Try our best to be more and more honest. So to be 100% honest is very difficult. We don't even know. Sometimes we cheat ourselves, unconsciously we do that. Unconsciously our parents even teach us not to be honest actually. They always verbally say, "don't tell lies, be honest", but indirectly, non-verbally, they are teaching us to lie, to be dishonest. For example, somebody call on the phone and the children go and

pick up the phone and say, “mom, it’s for you.” “Hey, tell tell that I’m not at home.” What are you teaching? And sometimes we are angry, but we try to be very nice. I don’t mean that we should blow up, but try to be more real. It’s very difficult. But when you become very real, then we feel like we are growing up.

So another verse. “I have no friends.” All of us are friends. Our parents also can be our friends, our teachers, our friends, those with whom we play together. Our friends go to school together. They also are our friends. And here also we are all friends. And this poet is saying, “I have no friends”. So every time he says something, he’s not talking about anything physical. He’s talking about something spiritual. And this line is what I like the best in this poem. And I even want to make an engrave in a very beautiful piece of wood, engrave very beautiful calligraphy letter and hang it somewhere. “I have no friends. I make my mind my friend.” I make my mind my friend. So, look very deeply. Are we friends to ourselves? This is our mind, our friend who is hurting us the most. We think that all our parents, our boss and our this and that, our spouse or somebody else is hurting us. But the person who hurts you most is yourself, you yourself. Nobody can really hurt us that much. They can hurt us in many ways, but not that much. We hurt ourselves most. Why? Look at some people. They are doing something very terrible. Like, say, I’ve got a lot of friends, not really friends, because I cannot call

them my friends because we don't have any real common values. For example, I know some people in Burma who are drug addicts. They became drug addicts. And so they lose their job. They become very unhealthy. Even they lose their thinking, clarity and even the parents cannot tolerate them anymore. The parents threw them out. No, don't come back home anymore. We don't want you anymore. This [can't get the word] the children. So they went away and lived with their own little group, all drug addicts. And their life got worse and worse. And then the police arrested them and put them in a hospital for drug addicts. And I went there and gave a dhamma talk to the drug addicts, because the doctor who was the in charge of the hospital is my friend. So I went and talked to them and I looked at them and I felt such waste of life. This person could become a very spiritual, loving, intelligent, wise person. He has all the potentials to become a very beautiful, wise, and he can do a lot of good things for himself and for others. And look what he has done to himself. Who did that? Not anybody else. They did that to themselves. How cruel? So if you ask them, do you love yourself? They will say, "Of course". How can you prove that? Look what you have done to yourself. A useless person you've become, a burden to the society.

So whenever we have any unwholesome thought, look at that thought. This is not a friend. This mental state, this mind is not a friend. This is an enemy to me. And

whenever you have a very wholesome, good thought, look at it and say, this is my friend. So when you have made your mind, your consciousness your friend, then that mind, that thought will motivate you to do more and more good things. And you become better and better person. You really learn and grow up. So look very deeply and see whether our thought is our friend or our enemy. And this is also part of our meditation, cittānupassanā, being aware of thoughts, mental states.

So, I talk about this thing to some people in Burma, too. And one man, he is a very intelligent man. And he was a teacher in the university. And then he quit the job and he went to Japan and got a job and saved some money and came back and he started a new business. But his business venture failed and he lost all his money. He became very, very unhappy because one thing after another failed in his life. So, he became very unhappy. His marriage life also was disintegrating. They cannot relate to each other, talk to each other. They have no respect for each other, no kindness to each other. They always quarrel and fight. And then they were thinking of a divorce. Even the children. He has got two daughters. Mother in laws house. I've been to his house. So everything in his life was disintegrating, getting worse and worse. And he talked about this with another friend who is a very good meditator, who is a doctor actually. And this friend, because he is a good meditator and very loving

and compassionate person, he listened to this friend and said, look, before you make things right in your life, make yourself become calm and peaceful first. With your (current) mental state, you cannot do anything right. No matter how much you try with that sort of mental state, you cannot do anything right. Everything will go wrong. So first put your mind right again.

And so this person teaches his friend meditation. Actually, this doctor is my student also. And he gave that person one cassette tape my dhamma talk. And in that dhamma talk this line is also mentioned, discussed “making your mind your friend” and this person, he listened to the whole tape, which lasts for about 90 minutes. But this one point got into his mind. Just one line. So I want to tell you, you listen here for 1.5 hour. If you don’t remember anything else, it’s okay. Just remember one line, that’s enough and really live it. So, this man thought, my mind is my friend. I’m going to do that. So he meditate, breathing in and out sometimes when he can, in the morning, in the evening and during the day, the whole day, he try to watch his thoughts. Every time a negative thought comes, he just watch it and it goes. This is not my friend. So by doing that for six, maybe more than six (months), because I met him eight months later. He came to see me and then eight months later I met him again. He was a different person now. He became very calm and peaceful. So, for example, one day he was offered a

job, a kind of work. And the pay also was mentioned. And this person thought, this pay is too little. He couldn't accept that job, that work for so little pay. So he went to the person to negotiate or to tell him that he could not accept it. So when he went into that house, he felt very calm and peaceful, and he went inside the house and sat there. And then before they talk about the work, this person mentioned that your house is so calm and peaceful. You know why? The whole family meditates. You can really feel it. They are very relaxed and calm and gentle. And this householder also said yes when you came in and I look at you, and I feel that you're very calm also very peaceful also.

So this person said, normally, naturally, I'm not a very calm and peaceful person, but I found a way to make myself calm and peaceful and I'm practicing that. And when they talk about dhamma for a while, they found out that both of them listen to my dhamma talks and apply dhamma in their life. So I teach dhamma to practice, to apply in daily life. So they became dhamma friends. And after that they talk about the work. And that person said, it's the pay is very small, so I'm sorry, I cannot accept that works very gently, very kindly. Not complaining. Just very gently and kindly and with calm and peaceful mind they were talking. And the person who wanted to get that work done said, how much do you want? And he asked for three times the original pay. And the person said,

“Okay, yes, I’ll pay that amount”.

And this person received that work and he worked wholeheartedly. He put all his energy, all his ability into doing that work and got the work done so well that he was very happy about that. He said, I even didn’t know that I can do it so well. Because he never tried that. When you accept the work, you just try to do the minimum and gain the maximum pay. You never do the maximum or the best we can. We never use all our ability to make it the best we can. But this person, because he is also a meditator and because he became very friendly and also his attitude has changed so much that whatever he does, even now, he do it with wholeheartedness. He uses all his resources. So that way he did the work so well that he was very, very happy about his own work. And the other person also was very satisfied that although he paid three times the amount, he also was very satisfied with the work. And because he became a very peaceful and calm person, when he talked with his family, he can express this acceptance, openness, honesty, softness, gentleness, and also not trying to be bossy. So, they negotiate very well. It worked very well and things got settled very smoothly. And now both of them are meditating, his wife and himself also.

So, before you put things right in your life, put your mind right first. Because your life is the reflection of your mental state. If you are calm and peaceful, gentle

and open, your life will become like that, more and more creative. So this is just a brief talk about this person. Because the way he changed was so dramatic that I couldn't believe it for a long time. I talked with him again and again and trying to find out whether he's just trying to deceive me again. But later I found out that he was not deceived and he became so cool and peaceful. Another thing he said was that even when I was walking in the sun in the middle day in Burma, Rangoon was so hot. He said, I didn't even feel the sun, the heat of the sun. I feel so cool inside. And my mind is in touch with that coolness that I feel cool. Really amazing... It can happen. It happened to him. It happened to many body and many people. And it can happen to you too.

So let me go on and on talking. Forget about the meal we eat every day. "I have no enemy." Well, even Buddha had enemy, you know that. Was that Devadatta? Yes. So even Buddha had somebody who was thinking of harming him, saying things bad about Buddha. And this person here is saying, I have no enemy. So as he said in many previous verses, he is not saying about a being who is enemy. He is saying about another mental state. He is going to say about another mental state which he will talk as an enemy. Can you guess? What would that be? He said, I have no enemy. And then he will say, mentioned another thing which is enemy. Well, you have been thinking about the answer, so keep your answer in your mind and

check it. I make carelessness my enemy. Carelessness, mindlessness, heedlessness, unmindful. They are in the same group. They are synonyms, actually. So, mindlessness, heedlessness, ignorance, carelessness, it's the worst enemy. When a person becomes heedless, mindless, careless, the quality of his whole life will go down. There's no way you can bring up the quality of your life by being careless, heedless, mindless. By being careful, by being mindful, by applying our wisdom, by doing things with clear understanding wholeheartedly, we can uplift the quality of our life, like the person who did that I mentioned just now. So by being careless, we are destroying our life. The quality of our life is lower and lower. We degrade ourselves. It's degrading. So carelessness is degrading. Mindlessness is degrading. Heedlessness is degrading. So if we want to upgrade our life, we must develop mindfulness, carefulness, heedfulness, awareness. Without it, there's not much we can do. So when you think deeply, the thing that is destroying the quality of your life is this mindlessness, heedlessness, carelessness. So that is the real enemy. So don't look for enemy outside. (For) other enemies (outside), you can protect yourself from being hurt. But (for the) enemy inside, it's very difficult.

Another verse, "I have no armor". Armor means steel plates on the body. In the 15th or 16th centuries, some very brave men, they fight and they have this armor. So he said, I have no armor. "I make benevolence my

armor". Benevolence means metta, being kind. So, kindness, metta, benevolence is our armor. So many people, they come to me and they want something that will protect them. They say, what can I do to protect myself? To make myself safe? In Burmese, they say, [talking in Burmese] to be free from danger, what should I do? What shall I do? So every time I teach them, practice mindfulness and also metta. The two are the best protection. So when you become mindful and when you feel metta for all the people, you feel protected. So the best protection is benevolence, metta. So, what do they use armor for? To protect the body. But that's not the right protection, because you cannot wear your armor 24 hours a day. Impossible. So if you practice mindfulness and metta, that becomes your armor. It will protect you.

"I have no castle". Castle means a very strong house, very thick walls with only small and strong door at the bottom and very small windows up there. So a castle you have seen... he said, "I have no castle. I make immovable mind my castle". So, why do they build castles? To protect from enemies coming inside. So you build a very thick wall, and then you stay inside. Then you feel protected. But that's not a real protection, actually. So, "I made immovable mind my castle". Immovable mind means a very strong samadhi. Also very strong sati, mindfulness. So, when your mindfulness and samadhi becomes very, very strong, what happens? Unwholesome thoughts cannot

come in anymore. You are protected from unwholesome thoughts. Deep samadhi is a protection. So, we try to protect our body. We take a lot of, a lot of [can't get the word] to protect our body. But we don't put enough effort to protect our mind. We let everything coming in, from our eyes, from our ears, and also thoughts, thoughts, thoughts. So, the real protection for our mind is very strong samadhi, very strong sati – mindfulness. So that will become a castle for our mind.

“I have no sword”. So in the old days, warriors, they carry very long sword. These days, nobody do that anymore, except for decorations, I think, in some occasions. So when we meet an enemy, we cut down the enemy with the sword. To cut down the enemy, we use sword. So he said, “I have no sword. I make absence of self my sword”. So, whatever happens in your life, whatever lokadhamma, all these things are lokadhamma... I know the word, but I forgot. Anything that you experience in your life, good or bad, is lokadhamma. Happiness, unhappiness, hHaving many friends, having no friends, blame, praise,... (they're) all that. So, any kind of difficulty you face in your life is a lokadhamma. So, it makes you painful. But when you have developed this anattā very strongly, it doesn't hurt you anymore. You cut down everything with anattā. So, I talk a lot about anattā yesterday. So this understanding, this deep understanding of anattā, not a soul, not a being, not

being in complete control, only the process, mental process, physical process. They are related, to condition each other arising and passing away. If you see these things very clearly, then nothing can hurt your mind anymore. Whenever you see something, just see anattā and it cuts down, slash. So, to cut through all the vicissitudes. Yes, that's the word, now it came without thinking, the vicissitudes of life. So whatever you experience, if you see everything as anattā, you just cut it. So, anattā is a very sharp sword, cut through everything. Nothing can really stand in your way. Just look anattā, it cut through everything.

So, this is the end of the poem and I've made it very short, my commentary very, very short. Because I'm looking at the clock. The time is running short. In fact, I want to talk a lot more, elaborate a lot more of the meanings, very, very deep and beautiful. So, I hope you love the poem and live the poem, not enough to just love it. It's very important to live it. Make your mind your friend. Make mindfulness your home. If you remember only these two, I am very, very happy, satisfied. I hope you remember. So, we conclude our meeting here for Sunday today. Very glad to see all of you again and again. And I hope you live long and happy and practice dhamma and grow.

Thank you. There will be a fundraising lunch for venerable Jyothika on Saturday the 22nd of March,

which is next Saturday at 12:30 p.m. and it will be at Becky's and McMinn's residence at 180 Rupert Street, West Footscray. M.v. reference 40 1E4. After lunch. Venerable Jyothika will present a short Dharma talk and all proceeds will be donated to the venerable Jyothika monastery in Myanmar. And for any information, kindly contact Matt Myint or I at you. Thank you.

So, let's pay respect to the Buddha, to honor the Buddha. It is very good to honor those who are worthy of honor.

Imaya dhammanu, dhamma pati-pattiya, buddham pujemi. I honored the Buddha by the very practice which leads to liberation.

Imaya dhammanu, dhamma pati-pattiya, dhammam pujemi.

Imaya dhammanu, dhamma pati-pattiya, sangham pujemi.

So, just give me one minute more. I have so much to say before I forget. If we really honor the Buddha, we already honor the dhamma also. Because we know about the Buddha through the dhamma. If we don't know dhamma, we don't know Buddha. So by honoring the Buddha, we are also honoring dhamma at the same time. And also by honoring Buddha and dhamma, we are also honoring sangham. Because who is carrying the dhamma, learning and practicing and teaching? Without sangham, there would be no

dhamma anymore. It will disappear. Even though we have stacks of books and everything in record, if nobody reads it, learn or teach it or practice it, we can say that it has disappeared. So to keep the dhamma alive is very important, not just to keep in the books. Dhamma actually is not in the books. Only the records (are) in the book. Real dhamma is in our life, in our practice. Thank you.

The complete poem

I have no parents:

I make the heaven and earth my parents.

I have no home:

I make awareness my home.

I have no life and death:

I make the tides of breathing my life and death.

I have no divine powers:

I make honesty my divine power.

I have no means:

I make understanding my means.

I have no secrets:

I make character my secret.

I have no body:

I make endurance my body.

I have no eyes:

I make the flash of lightening my eyes.

I have no ears:

I make sensibility my ears.

I have no limbs:
I make promptness my limbs.
I have no strategy:
I make “unshadowed by thought” my strategy.
I have no design:
I make “seizing opportunity by the forelock” my design.
I have no miracles:
I make right action my miracle.
I have no principles:
I make adaptability to all circumstances my principle.
I have no tactics:
I make emptiness and fullness my tactics.
I have no talent:
I make ready wit my talent.
I have no friends:
I make my mind my friend.
I have no enemy:
I make carelessness my enemy.
I have no armor:
I make benevolence and righteousness my armor.
I have no castle:
I make immovable mind my castle.
I have no sword:
I make absence of self my sword.

A warrior's creed – anonymous samurai song – 14th century