

REC002

The title of our talk today will be

Nourishment and Craving *

Anagarika Tevijjo

And we shall begin our talk,
with a few words on ‘nourishment’
or ‘nutriment,’ as it is often translated,
from the Theravada texts.

Concerning ‘nourishment’

Human life begins as a small, dark speck,
which needs nourishment, in Pali (*ahara*),
as a condition (*paccaya*), to evolve,
—through a dependent process of
coming-to-be (*bhuta*)—
which,

(in conventional parlance),

we call being—‘b-e-i-n-g’—
which is a process/ we shall have
to examine more closely, as we proceed.

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Just as every living thing or ‘being’ in this world
— (and even this world itself)—

needs the condition of *nourishment* ...

—so, even this galaxy/, needs the sun
and a certain set of co-existent conditions
for the continuance/ of its just ‘being there,’
within the so-called-equilibrium/
and balance of the universe.

Every living thing, large or small,
in one way or another, depends on nourishment.

Just as the earth needs certain conditions
of oxygen, elements, and temperature,
to continue
becoming-and-being,

so human existence, depends,
on a certain balance of conditions
— of oxygen, of elements, and temperature
—just to continue ‘being.’

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To narrow the focus, considerably —
to an object of analysis,
with which we are familiar:

The Buddha described the state of ‘**human being**’
in terms of two component parts:

—**The Mind and The Body**—

both of which require **nourishment**
(co-dependently and independently)
in order to continue to survive:

Just as the body needs
certain requisite conditions and combinations,
in terms of food, clothing, shelter,
and remedies for maladies,

to maintain and nourish its existence,

so the mind apprehends and perceives,
from the very earliest stages/ of mental consciousness,
what it needs/ to do/ to contrive to get -

what the psychophysical (mind-body) organism requires,
to continue to survive, and/, subsequently/, to devise
strategies/ with which to nourish/

—(both its necessary and unnecessary)

wants and needs)

Now,

on both basic-elemental-essential/
and wholly-non-essential levels.

If ‘nutriment’ is the **ONE** single fact about life
which first needs to be understood,
let’s proceed from there and start to explain:-

Stating the Buddha’s point, quite succinctly,
the Venerable Nyanaponika, Maha Thera,
in *The Four Nutriments of Life*,
printed by the **Buddhist Publication Society**,
(Wheel Series: Book No. 105)

—The Venerable Nyanaponika Maha Thera says,

“All beings subsist on nutriment.”

This, according to the Buddha

“Is the one single fact about life
that above-all deserves to be remembered,
contemplated and understood;

and, if understood widely and deeply enough,

this saying of the Buddha reveals
not only a truth that leads to the root of all existence,
but also to its uprooting.”

Venerable Nyanaponika writes further:

“The Buddha proved to be the one
who saw to the root of all things,
and he saw the root of all things as ‘nourishment.’

Moreover, he saw that,

“The laws of nutriment govern four kinds of nutriment:

- (i) first, edible foods
- (ii) second, sense impressions
- (iii) third, volitions [or basic wants] and
- (iv) fourth, consciousness.”

Each of these four types of nourishment
needs further explication, which we
shall now undertake to provide,
(consistently and consecutively),
as we go along.

To continue to quote, Venerable Nyanaponika,

[still for introduction’s sake],

“It is hunger that stands behind
the entire process of nutrition,
wielding its whip relentlessly.

The body, from birth to death,
craves ceaselessly for material food;

and the mind, similarly, **hungers** ceaselessly
for its own kind of nourishment—

for ever-new-sense-impressions—

and for an-ever-expanding-universe of ideas.”

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To reiterate the problem,

(quoting, still, from Venerable Nyanaponika):

“The **body** from birth to death **craves** for material food;
and the **mind hungers ceaselessly** for its own kind of nourishment.”

Notice the words;

“The **mind hungers ceaselessly for its own kind of nourishment.**”

This is something that we all need to think about:-

And I think we all, inherently, know,
and we will admit, (quietly to ourselves, at least),
that this “**hungering ceaselessly**” is also at the root
of our own personal, mind-body problems/
physical distractions/ and mental dissatisfactions.

Moreover,

If we were actually able/, to observe and analyze,
with sufficient detachment and objectivity,
the meanderings of mental consciousness,

as it is ceaselessly and relentlessly, and
continually hungering, and gnawing away
at our mind-and-substance, in a way

that will eventually eat away even
the very substance of our physical-mental being—
through restless worry and resultant ill-health—

And

If—we were actually able to analyze properly

and see things the way they really are,
we would realize, indeed, and eventually
gain the clear and irrevocable insight —

that it is exactly this uncontrolled, uncurbed
and untamed, process of ceaseless hungering —

which causes us most of our personal
suffering in life and the world).

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Now, if this is the **problem**
of craving for nourishment,

As explained by the Buddha,

The **solution** to the problem
has also been clearly explained by the Buddha,

[for those who are fortunate enough to hear and listen]:

To quote the Buddha, from the texts:

“**Monks**, when a monk becomes totally **dispassionate towards one thing**,
when his lust for it entirely fades away, when he is entirely liberated
from it, when he sees the complete ending of it, then he is one, who,
after fully comprehending the goal, makes an end of suffering, here
and now.

“**What one thing?**”
The Buddha asks,

And the answer is,
“**All beings subsist by nutriment.**”

Explaining further, the Buddha says:

“**When** a monk becomes totally dispassionate/

towards this one thing (**nutriment**)/,
then his lust for it/ entirely fades away/, and

when he is entirely liberated from it/, and
when he sees the complete ending of it/,
then, O Monks/, he is one/,
who, after fully comprehending the goal/,
makes an end of suffering/ here and now.” (AN 10, 27)

The crux of the meaning is that
the craving for nourishment,
when it is finally uprooted,
will bring the suffering of existence to an end.

[Pause. Look around.]

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Venerable Nyanaponika also explains how,
not only the mind, but also the physical body
—has its untamed roots of hunger and craving,
from the very beginning,
to the very ending of life.

Indeed,

Craving for something is the principal condition
for what he calls the need for ‘intake’ or ‘uptake,’
or (*upadaana*) in Pali/ which means
—‘nutriment’ in its widest sense—

and the needy body and the greedy mind
may both be viewed as ‘craving’ (in Pali *tanhaa*):

In other words
what they hunger-for and desire
and want in the widest sense,
is quite often translated,
using the all-encompassing
Latin-based word, ‘*volition*’

—which, in English,
has come to mean;-
—‘wishing for,’
—‘selecting and choosing,’
—or ‘desiring and wanting’
(or *cetanaa* in Pali).

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[**Beyond** the obvious recognition of the fact that
— concerning bodily needs
—there is obviously a certain minimum
amount of basic nourishment—
which requires fulfilment—just
for man just to continue to survive—
in a healthy and on-going state.]

Normally, we are not commonly
—not mentally consciously-aware
that such hidden needs and
volitions are ever even present—

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Concerning **mental needs** of the mind
—especially in early development stages
—we are (similarly) seldom aware of—
—we lack insight into.
—we are, indeed—wholly ignorant of,
—what is **not so obvious on the surface**
—which is the way the mind **subversively works**,

—in its relentless and ceaseless hungering, on unconscious levels.

Indeed, the mind is a trickster, so we have to watch for its tricks.

Normally, we are unaware of what
the craving mind needs and wants

—beyond the obvious grasping of the senses,
—reaching after perceptible, desired six-sense-objects-of-contact;

However

The mind is described
as being frequently aware/
of an uneasy sense of gnawing-awareness,
due to the mind's involuntarily

‘knowing’ (or sensing)

that the mind still needs and wants to have
the things it has not yet had/ and still has
not yet explored/ within the vast range of
possibilities of endless realms of new experiences.

[While the mind might react
potentially skilfully or unskilfully
towards mental objects within vast realms
which it may never even have conceived of,]

we may certainly also find
hidden,
within the mundane mind/
potentially brutal remnants
of obsessive,
willful, compulsive/
primordial desires

for total dominance over

exterior mind objects
which 'so-called' civilized man
might surely be morally-shocked
to realize that his mind
might still be capable of.

[Regretably, it goes without saying
that the ever-present companion of
satisfaction of selfish-nourishment of mind

is the insidious cohort of abject horror,

although this does not inevitably imply that one is
merely here to participate in the predatory
social process of devouring one's neighbour.]

Quite on the contrary, for example,

the craving mind (indeed) might also have hidden needs
to seek for nourishment and soothing mental supernatural satisfactions
on loftier/, more delightful heights/ and planes of yearning/
for supreme satisfaction/ within heavenly regions/ which are totally and
wholly beyond/ the ethereal limits/ of the grasping human imagination.

Have you ever felt that way? If you have, you are not alone.

Unfortunately, what the ceaselessly-hungering mind
may actually and potentially want

—in both pure and wholesome
—and impure and unwholesome realms
—remains, ultimately,

an uncertain psychological mystery,

an open-ended question,
an irresolvable riddle,
a paradox, an enigma,
which is always present

in the psychophysical sense of endless-yearning,
which is—(in-and-of-itself)—a further-continuing
and ever-endless perpetual source
— an incurable itch— (or open sore)
of mental distress and dissatisfaction.

It is our lack of understanding/ of such unfathomable/,
such unconceivable needs, for nourishment
—especially for craving/ for mental nourishment—
which leads the mind/ into unsatisfactory,
conscious and subconscious and unconscious states,

arising out of feelings,
leading into and dependent upon
—an ever-present lack of fulfilment
—an ever-present sense of incompleteness
—a lack of final-unity,

which plagues us,
in greater-and-lesser-degrees,
throughout the entire course
of the rest of our existence,
usually
—even up the very last moment
—in the final/, instantaneous/
—very last, gasp of life.

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Actually, psychologically,
because the mind is always
craving and thirsting for things
—in both healthy and unhealthy,
—in both wholesome and unwholesome ways,

it is how the mind develops strategies
to deal with such hungering, thirsting, craving,
seeking, needing and hankering after —
both certain-and-uncertain-desired-conditions

which determine

the body-mind's continually
arising and changing moods,
and states of mental balance or imbalance.

**And
This is a common
BUT
seldom discussed
seldom confessed.
psychophysical
form of irritation
which I frequently
call 'the perpetual
existential mental itch.'**

[Pause pensively and look around]

**Now we haven't got very far
Into our topic but this seems to
be an appropriate
place to pause
to allow for questions.**

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So are there any questions?

Allowing time for
(i) reflections or
(ii) questions or
(ii) collecting of thoughts

If not we shall continue.

Now, after a pause for rumination
let's continue our enquiry and analysis of

the mental process of

observing, analyzing and watching,
this ever-fleeting process of
thirsting-craving-thinking
(with detachment,) which is sometimes called:

The Mind Watching the Mind.

The Mind Watching the Mind/
may be defined as
a method of mental actions/
and analysis
which leads/
not only through/
momentary mental-awareness/
and directed bare-attention
following our wandering,
and fleeting mind-objects/

but, which can,
actually,
indeed,
through time,

be refined and tuned and developed/
through heightened–concentration/
and intensely-focussed mind-training/
capable of connecting and following/
psychophysical energy impulses
back through the mental process in time.

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In some Pali Texts, this method
of watching, observing and
analysing the energy motions
of the mind within an ever-more
subtle focussing and refining process,
leading to a deepening

understanding and wisdom
is designated in the Pali language

by the obscure word *vipassana*,

which in English is more
usually loosely-known
and widely-labelled as
Insight Meditation.)

But, as both **translations are vague unsatisfactory labels**
or words which would surely/ only further confuse us
rather than help clarify/ the point under analysis,

Let's divert our focus, instead,
back to our earlier-declared task
of mentally dissecting the machinations
of the divisively,
of the intricately insidious workings
of the uncontrolled mind.

To start small, for example,
with a common-human-problem,
which we will all admit to having,
(especially those of us who
have been training in the practice),

is that, in the back of a man's mind,
the main problem/
in maintaining mental health/
is that the untrained mind/
so often wilfully wants/
more than it actually needs/
to maintain a bare-balanced,
middle-path existence/

—thereby causing
a psychophysical-imbalance
—dependent upon,

—in proportion to,
and resultant from,
**the mind's self-obsessive,
overly-greedy inclinations.**

Indeed,
such gathering of wilful ego-centric needs,
may slowly increase in intensity,
to the point at which
a tug-of-war then arises, between,

- (i) **on one hand**, realistically seeing the base, bare, essential needs requisite for momentary existence, and,
- (ii) **and on the other hand**, seeing (within a wider scope) a wholly obsessive and senseless struggle/ to obtain, unessential and even unreasonable, needs/ of the mind—such needs/, (just to take one example)/, as the popular demand/, for a self-assuring sense/ that ‘self-as-being’ will be guaranteed continuing existence on a permanent basis.

To reiterate the problem of craving nourishment,
perhaps more fundamentally and essentially:

the untrained body and mind, indeed,
are always scanning the field of experience,
looking for new things to feed on and

the mind-body organism always finds itself
in a distressing state of psychophysical imbalance,
being pulled back-and-forth,
(as we have said),
between **on the one hand** what it basically needs,
just to continue to live and thrive and survive,

and, on the other,
what it might potentially desire, (for example,)
if the mind and body and the six senses were all,
simultaneously, allowed to go/ on a wholly-unruly
and uncontrollable/ rampage of wild feeding-frenzy.

Most people in today's world,
(especially in the younger generation),
seem to be, incongruously, inclined
towards the feeding-frenzy side-of-life.

They feel they have concrete reality and have
been placed here, in the world, with an inalienable
right to feed to succour the needs of their existence.

— even to points of excess (which, more often than not,
inevitably lead to obsessive and self-destructive ends.

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Fortunately, for the world,
there are also a few others,

who, in the words of the Buddha,
wisely know how

“**craving for nourishment, when it is finally uprooted,
will bring the suffering of existence to an end.”**

Indeed, there are also those in this world
who know, through direct experience,
that the appetite of desire is like
an ever-growing fiery-dragon,
with a never-ending voracious appetite,

which can never be fully-satisfied,
no matter how intense and no matter
how long-lasting its greedy feeding-frenzies
may permitted to persist and prevail—frequently and perversely,
leading to the point of becoming both
life-threatening, and ultimately fatal addictions

[pause].

**There are a few people, however,
who, with little dust in their eyes,**

through insight, and through developing-wisdom, know

—that—just as it's in the nature of wealth to always-be-diminishing

It is also in the nature of desire—ever-to-be-developing-a-greater appetite.

It is in the nature of desire ever-to-be increasing

—and, therefore—never-to-be satisfying,

never-to-be-fulfilling-or-lasting—
for anything longer than just an
anxious, furtive, expectant,
fearful, fraction-of-a-fleeting-
thought-moment-of-perception,
in what is falsely perceived of as time.

In their delusory perception of time, such desirous individuals
always have an inherent, in-built, unconscious fear
that their sources of momentary physical and mental pleasures
will not last—will be ripped-out from-under/or torn-away/ from-them.

People **live like this**, as their own unknowing victims
—in self-made, fractional-time-frames
—in-mentally-projected, temporally-restricted-prisons
—in perpetual, momentary-fear of losing the
impermanent sources of their present,
fleeting pleasures and satisfactions.

But as, we have said. Not everybody is like that.

There are a few—there are those who know
—how the secret of the Buddha's diet
of balanced-nourishment brings
the highest happiness in the end.

Indeed, there are some few individuals,
(avid practitioners),
who, with insight and wisdom,
have developed the skill to know
—how to diligently observe
and analyze and refine mental states

—who know how to carefully arouse
skillful impulses to maintain
wholesome arising states.

There are those who know
how to maintain wholesome states
—which nourish the mind

(carefully)

—as with a steady/, balanced hand,
to heedfully tend/, with delicate energy,
the focus needed/, to nourish,
the firm and un-flickering flame,
of wholesome practice/,
which is required for progress/,
in the process of purity,
which leads to the point/ of final relinquishment,
of the last remaining strands/ and filaments of contact
to unwholesome traits and states of mind in this world.

To put it in one sentence, there are those, who along
with the Venerable Nyanaponika and the Lord Buddha know

How:

“Craving for nourishment, when it is finally uprooted,
will bring the suffering of existence to an end.”

Rather than speaking, just now, however, about how to establish oneself/
upon a firm foundation/ and be able to dwell/, in ease and comfort/, within
sublime states/, we must direct our focus back to the perplexing and
paradoxical point of our paper:

which is to show how the mind watching
the mind continually tries to pry into,

—and examine and analyse,

the causes of the very reverses of skillfulness—
which arise out of the terrible truth
of the debilitating results of delusion and wrong view

[which we shall continue to do,]

By digging away at, and scraping into,
causes of unwholesome, harmful roots,

through further exposing
even more deeply-enmeshed
filaments of fine-root-networks of fibres,
seemingly ensnarled and ensnared
in wholly unwholesome mental states,

Through magnifying, and closely observing,

and carefully probing, with the scalpel of truth

prior to refining a final elemental diagnosis,

preparatory to preventive last-moment mental surgery.

A highly-developed disciple,
[who can so carefully scan the mind,]
will be able to pick-up on wider,
on-going movements of the mental energy waves

and effects of the process of the vibrational workings of the
unwholesome factors, conditions and causes resulting in
continuous-mental imbalances, in the vibrating mind,
conditioned by lack of restraint and arising impurities

—and he will be able to observe them, as arising and gaining and gathering

—in potentially damaging and destructive powers

—resultant from having been allowed sufficient time-and-space

—to linger and ‘hang-out together’— (to use an unrefined analogy)
—on the seemingly indefinable borders
—between the habitats - of jungle bands - of hungry brute beasts
—and of urban-gangs of treacherous, unsavoury companions and comrades.

Or—(to use a more simple-elemental simile, followed by a somewhat more complex, extended and epic image):

[Simple image]

—**Just as** a building-up of negative charges of accumulating electrical energy

—can eventually develop into potentially explosive, destructive forces

—**just as** pulses of energy may be said to build up into powerful waves

—in just such a way,

[now, comes the complex imagery]

—**Just so**, ocean waves of water may be figuratively seen as being similar to the arising of steadily-increasing surging crests, becoming ever-more-powerfully curling, snarling walls of white-caped waves,

So mental accumulations of bad influences and ill-intentions,
—which have long-been mentally-emotionally gathering,
—through the mind’s persistent carelessness, in nourishing unwholesome contacts.

—**Just so**, (to continue the analogy) can the gathering force of ocean waves

—be compared to the building-up/-and-becoming/ of a great, heaving, forceful,

—accumulating wave, an overwhelming and destructive outburst of mental emotions

—which can strike — with potentially-intensifying — Tsunami-like force

—at any moment—in which the unheedful mind is unskilfully focussed,

having been inadvertently,
but inextricably hooked-into
and caught up in aggressive states
towards people and things

which might make one want
to simply annihilate
anyone or anything
which would get in the way

of what one feels
of what one wants or needs
for the full-satisfaction of his
momentarily, unleashed greed.

The figurative sense of the analogy is that

Just as with the emerging or building-up of Tsunami-like seismic energy force,

Just so the fiery, human force
of a volcanically-erupting mind
may similarly strike out at another (or others)

with unleashed, immeasurable, destructive mental force,
directed towards what it both perversely likes and dislikes
and leaving in its wake destructive scenes
of personal and social devastation behind.

This is the way of the world.

This is, indeed, the way wars start.

By comparison, however, just as a highly-skilled mental surgeon
—who through insight, knowledge and vision, can scan mind-conditions
—to obtain a wider view of the tangle of unsavoury contacts and snarls
—of the mind’s potential inclinations and intentions
—**just so**, a highly-skilled mental surgeon will know,
—when and how to heedfully and carefully un-hitch and un-hook,
—and un-snarl, **how to** deftly and slowly disentangle, untie and unravel,
—the twisted and knotted tangle-within-the-tangle,

(which was formerly felt and thought to be hopelessly-tangled
—beyond the remotest hope of any ultimate disentanglement,)

Just so, the disciple who himself has become a highly-skilled mental surgeon
will know, how, through careful, constant, practiced and continuing
concentration,

—through having gradually honed the skilful-knife of incisive insight
knowledge
—following the right practice of mental-surgical meditative concentration

will know how to surgically disentangle
what had formerly seemed to have been
a wholly knotted-tangle/
within a tangle/ within what had appeared
to be a hopelessly/ and inextricably/ tangled mind.

[Thus ends today’s talk.]

*Excerpted and revised from www.noblepath.info from *The Mind Watching the Mind* by Anagarika Tevijjo]

Note:

“A secret mystery of an ancient lost key with which one would be able to unlock/ the doors of inestimable and infinitesimal numbers of interconnecting and interacting impulses passing through the portals and vast interlinking networks within the intricate workings of the human mind.”

Who has the lost key?