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.

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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 beliefs 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.

*Translated into English by Santikaro Upasaka (Kevala Retreat) in March 2020.*

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*May all beings be free of suffering and at peace.*