

**BHĀRA SUTTA**  
**OR**  
**Discourse on**  
**THE BURDEN OF KHANDHĀ**

by  
The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw  
of  
Burma



Translated by U Htin Fatt (Maung Htin)

Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization  
Mahasi Thathana Yeiktha  
Rangoon

# BHĀRA SUTTA

OR

## THE DISCOURSE ON THE BURDEN

*by*

THE VENERABLE MAHASI SAYADAW

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Translated by U Htin Fatt (Maung Htin)

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# BHĀRA SUTTA

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## FOREWORD

The Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, the Author of this Sutta, since his arrival at the Sasana Yeiktha Meditation Centre from his native place Seikkhun, Shwebo District, in November 1949, has been inducting numerous batches of *yogis* into the practice of *vipassanā* meditation. He has also trained members of the Sangha as meditation teachers up till now. While performing this noble work as a true disciple of the Buddha, the Sayadaw has given discourses on a regular basis. Never does he fail to rely authoritatively on the relevant teachings of the Buddha in all his discourses. Every Sutta so imparted is unique in itself and typically in tune with the present times.

The present Discourse bearing the name of 'Bhāra' resembles a graceful flower in an ornamental string of dhammas. The usage and choice of words and the pattern of composition is classically modern. The literary style of Mahasi will, it is hoped, continue to remain distinctive for years to come.

This Sutta, originally written in Burmese, is translated into English language by U Htin Fatt (Pen-name: Maung Htin), who is one of the prominent writers among the galaxy of journalists in Burma.

## FOREWORD

### ABOUT THIS BOOK

It is therein stated that on one occasion to a question of what attributes or qualities a monk should fully possess to be really deserving of being regarded as a Dhammakāhika, Buddha's answer was that a monk deserves to be called a Dhammakāhika if he could well convince others, nay, his audience, to become morally repugnant to his own 'self'—the physical body, and give guidance to them to be able to get rid of the sensuous feelings, *taṇhā* or cravings. According to Buddha, a worldly person who assiduously practises so as to be able to free himself from sensuous cravings may be termed as *Rahan* (an ordained monk).

The Bhāra Sutta like other suttas has its own objective lesson. The Buddha opened the subject of his discourse to an assembly of monks and laymen while residing at Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatti City, mentioning the Five Aggregates of grasping or attachment as a heavy "Burden". He then reiterated the components of 'Khandhā' which means a group or an aggregate. Buddha has called the man as the sum-total of five khandhās. In the course of his Discourse, the Buddha elaborates on the dhamma as briefly explained below.

That all men and animals are composed of interrelated mind and matter (*Nāma* and *Rūpa*). *Nāma* and *Rūpa* is constantly changing with

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whirling motion not remaining the same even for two consecutive moments. *Rūpa* by itself is devoid of any sensation or feeling. *Nāma* is so called because of its tendency to incline towards an object of sense. *Rūpa*, the physical body is subject to perpetual change and is characteristic of impermanence. The term 'Nama' comprises consciousness (*viññāṇa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*sañña*), and Volitional tendencies or activities (*saṅkhāra*).

Of the Five Aggregates, the first is *Rūpa*, form, shape or matter-the physical body as including the organs of sense. The second is *Vedanā* which includes the feelings or sensations, pleasant or unpleasant or neutral. The third is *Saññā* which comprises all perception or recognition, whether sensuous or mental. It is reaction to sense stimuli which may be described as "awareness with recognition". The fourth bundle, the *Saṅkhāras* signifies and includes all tendencies, mental and physical-the elements or factors in consciousness, all moral and immoral volitional activities or characteristics that have been put in motion by past *kamma*. None of them is Self. They are incessantly changing-coming into being followed by dissolution. Thus all component things are impermanent. The fifth of the *khandhās*, *Viññāṇa* is as perishable and fleeting as others. This is best explained as Consciousness. It is also in a state of flux. According to Buddha, *viññāṇak-*



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*khandā*, the aggregate of consciousness is without Self or Substantiality. This *Vīññāṇa* is consisted of the six groups, namely, sight or sense of seeing, sense of hearing, sense of smell, sense of taste, sense of touch and mental (mind consciousness).

All five aggregates are *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anatta* (non-self) within the law of cause and effect. There is nothing such as Ego. When such consciousness becomes full and perfect, the one who achieves moves from mundane to super-mundane state.

In the second part of this Bhāra Sutta, it has been elucidated in what manner the Burden of Aggregates is accepted and as to how this Burden should be thrown down or entirely discarded.

The intangible force of kamma generated in the past works through the processes of the physical universe to produce living beings. Birth is preceded by death and death, on the other hand, is preceded by birth. This succession of birth and death in connection with one individual life-flux constitutes what is known in Buddhism as *Samsāra*: rounds of rebirth or existences. In all this incessant rounds of birth and existences, formation of Five Aggregates invariably takes place. The *Upādānakkhandhā* naturally brings forth passions of greed, anger and delusion. To root out those passions and

## FOREWORD

to eliminate the feeling of *taṇhā* and cravings, there is a way out. In other words, to get rid of the Burden which causes all kinds of suffering, Buddha has taught the Four Noble Truths and revealed to us the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to an end of sufferings.

In essence, the six senses are the inevitable consequences of mind and body. The life existence brings all sorts of trouble, misery and sufferings. The Burden is heavy indeed from the time of birth till death. In order, therefore, to remove and be relieved of the Burden thereby bringing about the cessation of the entire aggregate of sufferings, it is most gratifying that the dhamma has shown us the way to take up the practice of insight meditation and in the least achieve the status of *Sotāpanna* which would eventually lead to the highest stage of final liberation from *samsāra*.

May all beings be happy.

MIN SWE

SECRETARY

*Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization.*

October, 1980.

PART I  
BHĀRA SUTTA  
OR  
DISCOURSE ON THE BURDEN

# BHĀRA SUTTA

*or*

## DISCOURSE ON THE BURDEN

( *Delivered on the full-moon day of Tazaungmon, 1328 Burmese Era, by Mahāsi Sayādaw* )

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Today I shall discuss Bhāra Sutta of Khandha Vagga in Saṃyutta Nikāya briefly and to the point. I preached it long time ago. My audience might have forgotten it now. But if I repeat it their memories may be revived. Those who have not heard it before, however, would be glad to hear it as a new sermon.

### INTRODUCTION

Four months after the *mahāparinibbāna* or demise of Buddha, the First Saṅghāyanā (Buddhist Council) was convened by Mahākassapa Thera and his 500 monks at Vebāra, near Rājagraha. During the ceremonies Mahākassapa asked where Bhāra Sutta was delivered by Buddha. Then Ānanda replied, saying, "Evam me sutam....." (Thus have I heard,) and recounted it in the following words:

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At one time, the Venerable Teacher was residing at the Jetavana Monastery, donated by Anāthapiṇḍika, the Rich, situated in Sāvatti City, ruled by King Pasenadi Kosala.

Sāvatti is the headquarters of the two States of Kāsi and Kosala. At times Buddha resided at Veḷuvana Monastery in Rājagṛaha City, or at Gijjhakuta Hill near the City. At other times he would be residing in Vesāli, or Kosambhi, or Alavī, or Kapilavatthu. He changed his residence from place to place because he would like to preach the *dhamma* to *veneyyas*, amenable audience.

While Buddha was thus taking up his residence at the Jetavana Monastery, he drew the attention of the monks gathered together before him saying, "O bhikkhus!"

### BUDDHA'S DAILY ROUND OF DUTIES

Here, in parenthesis, let me tell you about the five daily rounds of duties performed by Buddha, session by session.

1. Firstly, there is the *purebhatta kicca*, morning duty observed by Buddha between dawn and the end of the morning meal. Early at dawn attendants offered him water and brush when he brushed his teeth and washed his face. Then he remained in solitude till the time came for the round of alms when he donned his

## BUDDHA'S DAILY ROUND OF DUTIES

yellow robe and set out from the monastery. Usually he went out like any other ordinary monk, walking. But at times he worked miracles while sojourning. A gentle breeze, acting like a broom, cleared the path he took. Rain drops fell from the skies settling the dust along the way. Clouds spread out like an umbrella to give him shade. Flowers fell about him as he walked. Obstructions and pot-holes disappeared of their own accord, and the road became smooth. Whenever he set his foot on the ground, lotus flowers popped up to act as cushions.

As he entered the city-gate six rays of colours.... grey, yellow, red, white, pink and iridescent... issued forth from his body.

Elephants, horses, birds, etc., made mellifluous sounds while musical instruments unattended by players produced music.

Such were the miracles. Some people put their faith in Buddha only when they saw him work miracles as a supernatural being. This faith led them on to the path to liberation from miseries of life. It is for their benefit that Buddha exercised miraculous powers called *patihāriya*. Men are widely different in their nature. Some would appreciate the *dhamma* when it is expounded in a simple and ordinary way. Some, however, prefer preaching with a show of supernatural powers that produce strange and miraculous phenomena. I know of

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one lay woman who is fond of things out of ordinary. Once she was venerating an image of Buddha saying, "May Buddha come down and rest on my head fully attired in golden robes, equipped with a bowl studded with diamonds and a walking stick inlaid with many kinds of jewels." On hearing this wish-making, her elder brother chided her. "You are," he said, "too squeamish and punctilious. Must Buddha work endless miracles just to please you? If I were Buddha I would have none of your invitations!"

Once a lady from western countries told me that she thought it redundant to venerate stupas and images in memory of Buddha with a paraphernalia of flowers and other artifacts made of paper, plastics, gold-leaves and precious stones. "If Buddha is with us today," she said, "he would refuse to accept such veneration." This shows the difference in the nature or the way of thinking of different peoples. I think it was because Buddha wanted to oblige those who were drawn irresistibly to strange phenomena that he worked miracles.

When citizens saw the miracles they at once knew that Buddha was on his way for alms to streets or wards they resided in. Then they dressed themselves well and paid their homage to him with flowers and scents. Thereafter, they invited a number of monks accompanying

## BUDDHA'S DAILY ROUND OF DUTIES

him according to their capacity of alms-giving and offered food.

Having partaken of the food Buddha preached to suit the nature of the audience when some of them became established in the Three Refuges while others took five precepts to observe. Some even attained the stages of sotāpanna, sagadāgāmi, anāgāmi and arahat.

After preaching, Buddha returned to the monastery. He rested in the assembly hall for some time waiting for the return of the monks from their round of alms. When he was informed that all had returned and finished with their meals, he retired to the Gandhakuti, perfumed chamber, having done his *purebhatta kicca*.

2. The second duty is *pacchābhatta kicca*, done after meals in the afternoon. As he was about to enter the perfumed chamber, he washed his feet. Then, standing, he made this admonition:

O bhikkhus! Be vigilant; and strive forth with diligence. It is hard to be born into the era of Buddha's appearance in this world; it is also hard to be born a human being; it is also hard to achieve complete fulfilment; it is also hard to attain monkhood; it is also hard to get the opportunity of hearing the teachings of the true faith.



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After Buddha's appearance in this world his teachings still prevail; and so we are under the aegis of Buddhasāsanā. This opportunity is hard to come by. Those who are getting it should be vigilant to strive for the accomplishment of *sīla*, morality. *samādhi*, concentration, and *paññā*, knowledge. Buddha mentioned *sampatti*, complete fulfilment. It needs clarification. Being able to live in a place suitable for practising the *dhamma* that paves the way to the Path and its fruition, being endowed with personal beauty, being strong in faith in the Three Gems, being born into a good and prosperous period of time, being affluent with nutritive food, being healthy and strong for the purposes of practising the *dhamma*...all these are the conditions that need must be fulfilled to attain *sampatti*.

After the admonition reminding the monks of the five kinds of hardships, Buddha prescribed *kammaṭṭhāna*, meditation exercises, to suit their intellectual capabilities, for those who asked for them. Having received these prescriptions, monks retired to the forests and meditated under the trees or other suitable shelters.

Buddha also retired to the perfumed chamber, and, if he desired, lay down on his right side and took rest. When he became relaxed he got up and surveyed in his mind's eye the state of the world with *indriya paropariyatta ñāṇa*,

## BUDDHA'S DAILY ROUND OF DUTIES

knowledge of the high or low degree of development of moral faculties in human beings, and *asayānusaya ñāṇa*, knowledge of the inclinations and desires inherent in them. These two kinds of knowledge or wisdom are commonly known as "Buddha's eyes." He looked at the world to see which tractable being is ripe for liberation from human miseries. When such a *veneyya*, as he is called, was to come to him, he waited for him; but when he was in a far away place, he went to him using his supernatural powers. These duties were done during the second period of the session. In the third period townfolks from the streets or wards where Buddha previously went round for alms flocked together to the monastery dressed in their best, carrying flowers and scents. In Rajagraha they used to come to the Veḷuvana Monastery; in Vesālī, to the Mahāvana Monastery; in Sāvatti, to Pubbārāma Monastery. (At the time of Buddha's delivering of the sermon on Bhāra Sutta, they came to the Jetavana Monastery). When they had thus congregated in hundreds and thousands, it was usual for Buddha to enter the Dhammasāla (Congregation Hall) and preached suitable sermons. Then all the monks who were not sick or disabled made it a point to attend without fail the religious meeting together with those laymen who came to hear his teaching. These monks took holy orders keeping their minds on

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*arahatta magga*, the Path of arahatship, which annihilates all sufferings and miseries of the *samsāra*, round of rebirths. That being so, they liked to listen with devotion and ardour to what Buddha preached. Female monks also came. The audience, therefore, consisted of male and female monks as well as male and female lay persons. But it was his wont to give precedence to the monks, and so he always addressed them first.

In the present case when he was about to deliver the sermon on Bhāra Sutta, he called out to the monks as I have earlier mentioned. Then the latter reverentially replied, "Reverend Sir!"

Buddha then went on preaching, after which the monks and the laity of both sexes dispersed having made obeisance to the Teacher.

3. *Purimayāma kicca* means duties performed in the evening. Buddha took his bath if he so desired and sat alone on the dais within the perfumed chamber. Monks would then ask him to explain certain knotty points in religious matters, or to prescribe further meditation exercises, or to preach. He spent the time complying with their requests, till, say, about 10 o'clock at night.

4. Then *majjhimayāma kicca*, midnight duties, began. At night, devas and brahmas from tens

## BUDDHA'S DAILY ROUND OF DUTIES

of thousands of universes approached Buddha and asked him questions. Answers to such questions have been canonized in Sagāthā Vagga in Saṃyutta Nikāya. This lasted a few hours past midnight, say, about 2 o'clock in the morning.

5. The last part of the night was spent doing the duties of the *pacchimayāma kicca*. It lasted for three hours. In the first hour, Buddha walked up and down the cloister to keep up his health. It was only at the second hour that he slept, and that for about an hour. When he awoke in the third hour, he surveyed the world and extended his net of knowledge over all as he did during the *pacchābhatta kicca* to see if there were any who were ripe for salvation.

It will be seen that Buddha had practically no time to spare for things mundane. He was always occupied with these five duties. He might have delivered the Bhāra Sutta during the performance of evening duties; but I am inclined to think that as it concerned all four kinds of audience, monks and laity of both sexes, he might have taught this Sutta in the afternoon. It must also be remembered that, although the four kinds of audience were present, it was mainly directed to the monks, since the introduction began with the words, "O bhikkhus!". And so we have the following:

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O bhikkhus! I will tell you about the burden, about the porter who carries the burden, about the act of transportation of the burden and about the laying down of the burden. Hark me well and pay good attention. I shall speak of them now.

Thus did Buddha enjoin the monks to pay good attention to his discourse relating to the burden, the porter, the act of transportation and the laying down of the burden. Buddha's insistence on paying good attention is worthy of note. Nothing avails him who does not listen well. Only those who fix their minds on what is taught can get enlightenment on the knowledge of the Noble Path and its fruition. In prefacing his discourse, his emphasis lay on how to throw down the burden much to one's relief and joy.

### THE VERITABLE BURDEN - THE FIVE AGGREGATES

When the disciples had pledged themselves to be attentive, Buddha opened the subject with the following introduction:

What, O bhikkhus, is the burden?  
*Upādānakkhandhās*, five aggregates of clinging, are the veritable burden.

Katamo ca Bhikkhave bāro?

Pañcupādānakkhandhā tissa vaccaṇīyaṃ.

## THE BURDEN OF THE KHANDHĀ IS HEAVY

In our daily life we might have come across stevedores at ports or porters in railway stations, transporting heavy loads from place to place. Some loads are so heavy that cranes have to be employed. A familiar sight in Burma is a worker carrying rice-bags. A strong man can carry it or even keep it on his shoulders for a long time. But this long time is, in point of fact, only a matter of minutes. He cannot keep it for hours, not to say for days. If he were to keep it on his shoulders permanently, he might be crushed to death. But what a relief when he throws it down! He now feels glad that at long last the job is over.

But this is just an ordinary load that one can carry. What about this burden of the *khandhā*, the five aggregates of psycho-physical phenomena which we call the body? When we cling to these five aggregates, we have the *upādānakkhandā*. This is a great burden.

## THE BURDEN OF THE KHANDHĀ IS HEAVY

What I would like to tell you is this burden of the *Khandhā* which is heavier than any other burden that working peoples are daily carrying from place to place. Every living being is occupied with keeping his body fit and well. He has to feed it daily so that it remains healthy. Some have to be mindful of not only keeping the well-being of their bodies, but also

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that of the bodies of others, and this, not for a while, but for the entire span of human life. This is said only in relation to the present existence. In point of fact, we are all carrying the burden of existence through the myriads of the *saṃsara*, the round of rebirths. We cannot lift it off our shoulders even for a while.

What, then, are the heavy loads of the five aggregates of clinging? Here is what the Buddha taught:

What are the five aggregates of clinging? They are elucidated as:

Katame pañca? Rūpupādānakkhandho, vedanupādānakkhandho, saññupādānakkhandho, saṅkhārupādānakkhandho, vinnanupādānakkhandho, ayam vuccati bhikkhave bāro.

And that is, *rūpupādānakkhandhā*, the aggregate of clinging to material body;

*Vedanūpādānakkhandhā*, the aggregate of clinging to feeling or sensations;

*saññūpādānakkhandhā*, the aggregate of clinging to perception;

*sankhārupādānakkhandhā*, the aggregate of clinging to volitional activities; and

*viññāṇupādānakkhandhā*, the aggregate of clinging to consciousness.

## KHANDHĀ AND UPĀDĀNAKKHANDHĀ

O bhikkhus! These are the five burdens.

I have been lecturing repeatedly on these five aggregates of clinging in this Sasana Yeiktha, because, in essence, there are only these five aggregates in all the phenomena of existence. I shall, therefore, repeat this sermon here briefly.

### KHANDHĀ AND UPĀDĀNAKKHANDHA

Khandhā means a group or an aggregate. All phenomena, past, present and future, are grouped into *Khandhās*. This statement calls for further explanation. When a phenomenon arises, *rūpa* or matter is involved. This matter existed in the past. It is still here at present. It will continue to exist in the future. It is within us, as well as without. It may be coarse or refined. It may be of inferior or superior quality. It may be proximate or remote. All such matter can be grouped into *rūpa*, and we name the group *rūpakkhandhā*, the aggregate of matter, that is, the assemblage of the material elements and properties that constitute what we call the body. When feeling, perception, volitional activities and consciousness are similarly grouped or classified, they are respectively called *vedanakkhandhā*, aggregate of feeling, *saññakkhandhā*, aggregate of perception, *saṅkhārakkhandhā*, aggregate of volitional activities, and *viññāṇakkhandhā*, aggregate of consciousness. All



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these five together are *khandhā*. Here it may be argued that *rūpa*, matter, alone cannot be called a *khandhā*, since the term is a collective one for all the five groups. In point of fact, however, the components of the aggregates also may severally be termed *khandhā*. So matter is *khandhā*, feeling is *khandhā*, perception is *khandhā*, volitional activities are *khandhās* and consciousness is *khandhā*. But there is one single *dhamma* which cannot be grouped or classified in the manner specified herein. It is *nibbāna*. It is One. It has no past, no present and no future. It is, timeless.

*Upādāna* is clinging or grasping intensified by *taṇhā*, craving or desire, and *diṭṭhi*, wrong view or belief. It therefore connotes a high degree of attachment. *Upādānakkhandhās* are so called because they form the objects of such attachment. At the time of the realization of the Path and its fruition, *lokuttara citta*, supramundane consciousness, is developed. It has eight states. These eight states of supramundane consciousness together with the concomittent mental states, appertaining to *magga*, the Path and *Phala*, the fruition, are also known as the *khandhā*, but they are not treated as the *upādānakkhandhā*. In the five *khandhās*, *rūpakkhandhā* concerns with matter while the remaining four relating to feeling, perception, volitional activities and consciousness belong to *nāmakkhandhā*. *Upādā-*

## THE FOUR UPĀDĀNAS

*nakkhandhā* encompasses all attachment to the five *khandhās*. Here in this Bhāra Sutta, where we are concerned with the discussion of the Burden, we shall deal only with things mundane, *lokiya*, to the exclusion of things supramundane, *lokuttara*; and so both *rūpakkhandhā* and *nāmak-khandhā* will be discussed. Be it noted, however, that *khandhā* here is emphasised as *upādānak-khandhā*, the five aggregates of clinging.

### THE FOUR UPĀDĀNAS

Clinging is manifested in four ways:—

- (1) clinging to sensuous objects, *kāmupādāna*,
- (2) clinging to wrong views, *diṭṭhūpādāna*,
- (3) clinging to wrong religious practices, *sīlabbatupādāna*, and
- (4) clinging to the doctrine of self or ego, *attavadupādāna*.

1. Clinging to sensuous objects is *kāmupādāna*. Pleasurable sensations arise when we come into contact with sensuous objects. Because of these sensations, a desire to enjoy them is developed in us. Then we get attached to them. Our attachment may relate to sensations aroused within us, or sensations prompted from outside. When the male desires the female, and *vice versa*, this is affinity between the sexes. It is an example of strong attachment. We yearn for

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the pleasurable sensations which we have come into contact at present as well as those which we hope to contact in the future. We desire to have what is hard to obtain; and when we have what is not easily obtainable, we cannot part with it. This is attachment to *kāmabhava*, sensual existence. But our desires do not rest there. They go beyond to *nāmakkhandhā* and *rūpakkhandhā*, the groups of mind and matter. As we cling to them there is developed within us an attachment to *rūpabhava*, corporeal existence, and *arūpabhava*, formless existence. They are also *kāmupādāna*.

2. Clinging to wrong views or beliefs is *diṭṭhupādāna*. Generally speaking we are attracted to ideologies. Hence it is not unusual for us to become attached, somehow or other, to this or that ideology, moderately or intensely. But here, in this particular case, we are concerned with wrong ideologies or beliefs. There are wrong beliefs about morality and the existence of self or ego. I shall, in the first instance, leave aside these two which will be treated separately later on. The belief that there is no *kamma*, action, whether wholesome or unwholesome, that there is no resultant of *kamma*, and that there is no hereafter falls into the category of *diṭṭhupādāna*.

3. Clinging to religious practices which do not lead to cessation of the round of rebirths,

## THE FOUR UPĀDĀNAS

and to realization of *nibbāna* is *sīlabbatupādāna*. *Sīlabbata* means performance of religious rites not consistent with Buddhism. It includes cattle-practices and dog-practices which stem from the belief that by behaving like cattle and dogs one gains salvation from suffering. Other similar beliefs relate to worshipping animals like cattle or dogs, or devas, sakkas, brahmas, or such like powerful lords and masters with a view to liberation from human miseries. The belief that all sins will be expiated if one bathes in the Ganges or makes sacrifice of animals is another example of *sīlabbata*. To put it briefly, all religious rites and practices where the Noble Eightfold Path is wanting cannot be regarded as wholesome deeds that lead to the cessation of all forms of suffering.

4. Clinging to the idea of self is *attavādupādāna*. There are many theories about the origin of life. Some relate to the belief that a piece of living matter resides in the body. One exists when that matter is living, but one's existence ceases the moment it dies. This way of thinking is *ucchedadiṭṭhi*, which means that existence terminates completely with death. It is nihilism. Another ideology is *sassatadiṭṭhi* where *atta*, or self, or ego is presumed to be indestructible, and is, therefore, eternal since, at its death, it transfers itself into another body. It is eternalism,

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In the final analysis the four *upādānās* can be reduced to *tanha*, desire or craving, and *diṭṭhi*, wrong view. *Kāmupādāna* belongs to *tanhā* while the remaining three *upādānas* to *diṭṭhi*. The former is based on sensuous objects while the latter on wrong thinking.

### HOW ATTACHMENT ARISES

Because of the sense-organs, clinging to sensuous objects arises. When senses are sharp they render the objects clearly manifest. When the eyes see an object distinctly, when the nose smells its fragrance, when the tongue finds it tasteful and when the body feels a soft touch, pleasurable sensations arise; and the attachment not only to our own body but also to bodies other than our own is developed. We are attracted to our own good features and also to those of other peoples. We are gratified with the performance of our organs of locomotion that causes bending, stretching, sitting, standing, etc. Because of this attachment to our own material or physical body, there arises in us the notion "It is I; it is mine; this is my husband; this is my wife; this is my son, etc." This is motivated by our clinging to *rūpa*, matter or body, and it is known as *kāmupādāna*.

As senses come into contact with objects, sensations arise, to which we cling. All these sensations, whether pleasant or unpleasant, are presumed as emanating from the body, and the

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individual enjoying or not enjoying these sensations asserts, "I feel; I hear; I see." When he is doing fine he says, "I am well." When he becomes sick, he says, "I am not well." When he feels uneasy or uncomfortable, he says, "I am suffering," or "I am having *dukkha*." When he is in a sorry state of affairs, he says, "I am in difficulties; I am in danger; I am sad; I am disappointed." He thinks that in all such cases, "I" or "self" is involved. In other words, he thinks that all sensations he experiences are his, and that, therefore, they constitute "I" or "self". This is how clinging to *vedanā*, feeling, arises, and how sensations are construed as self.

Clinging to *saññā*, perception, arises in much the same way. When a man perceives an object, he thinks that it is he who perceives it. So he declares, "I perceive it; I note it; I remember it; so I can recall it to my mind." This is how one gets attached to perception which becomes personified as "I" or "self".

*Saṅkhāra*, volitional activities, determine our physical and mental behaviour. Although all our actions are conditioned by volition, a person thinks that it is he who is doing things. So he says, "I sit; I stand; I think; I imagine; I am angry; I am attracted to it; I have no faith; I am foolish; I am wise; I have faith; I am compassionate." All these go to show that he takes

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all groups of mental states as his "self". This is how clinging to *saṅkhāra* arises.

When a man sees an object he at once recognizes it. "I know it," he says. Thus the notion "I" arises in him. He says, "I see it; I hear it; I taste it; I smell it; I touch it; I consider it." He is thus equating himself with his "atta" or "self" This is how clinging to *viññāṇa*, consciousness, arises.

Clinging or attachment is *upādāna*; the objects of clinging are *upādānakkhandhā*. The notion, "It is I; it is mine," belongs to *upādānakkhandhā*. When a person visits a shop and sees articles of clothing and many kinds of footwear, a desire to wear them arises in his mind. Then he imagines himself as wearing them. Just at that moment he thinks that he owns them. Here *taṇhā*, craving, has developed in him. The moment one feels pleasant at the thought that he has come into possession of the thing he desires, one must recognize that *taṇhā* is at work. Thus craving intensifies the sense of clinging.

The material *khandhā* is the entire physical body from top to toe. Attachment relates to any part of the body. You just pull somebody's hair, and he will at once protest saying, "Don't pull my hair." He thinks it offensive to be thus pulled by the hair. It is because he regards it as himself. "The hair is mine. It represents me," so he thinks. All matter that constitutes

## ATTACHMENT TO THE IDEA OF SELF

his body is his. This is the attachment to *rūpa*.

### ATTACHMENT TO THE IDEA OF SELF

Those who have never had the experience of meditation on the nature of *nāma* and *rūpa*, consciousness and corporeality, run away with the idea that this human body is a veritable living substance called *atta* or self or ego. Even among those who have the experience of insight-meditation, there are many who fail to distinguish *nāma* from *rūpa*. They, therefore, regard that a living substance or animus resides in the body. This is attachment to *atta*. He cannot get away from it. Even those who come to know the impersonality of *nāma* and *rūpa* cannot completely detach themselves from this concept, although, it must be conceded, they have learnt that what is to be regarded as self is a personification of *nāma* and *rūpa*. If a semblance of detachment can be detected in them, this detachment cannot be held as arising from personal conviction but from traditional acceptance of the teaching. It is common knowledge, rather than insight, that reveals the truth about mind and matter.

If a *yogi* practises insight-meditation which reveals to him the true nature of the psycho-physical phenomena that arise and pass away, *atta* can never assert itself. But, even then, if



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he hesitates to practise the Noble Path, it may appear again. The idea of self totally ceases in him only when he is actually on the Path to *sotāpatti* (stream-winning) stage.

There is an assertion to the effect that if one wants to indulge in meditation exercises, one must first get rid of the idea of self. I do not consider it feasible. When the notion of self is done away with, one becomes a *sotāpanna*. Therefore, the assertion just mentioned amounts to saying that one can become a *sotāpanna* without practising insight-meditation. In point of fact, detachment is achieved only through insight-meditation. It has been said in the scriptures that purity of views is accomplished only when *nāma* and *rūpa* are discerned in their true nature. Attachment to *atta* is incompatible with the *dhamma*. I hold that such incompatibility is not current among those who truly revere the law propounded by Buddha. It is because of its absence among Buddhists that insight-meditation can be put into practice.

In Buddha's time people who had very strong views about the idea of self approached the Teacher to hear what he had to say. As they listened to his discourse, they became completely detached from the view of self and realized the Path and its fruition. This shows that they did not come to Buddha abandoning their views of self beforehand. It was only while they were

## EXCLUSION OF AITA

listening to the *dhamma* that they saw the light of it and attained the Path.

## EXCLUSION OF ATTA

Believers who have acquired some knowledge about the fundamentals relating to *nāma*, *rūpa*, *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness) and *anatta* (unsubstantiality), should take up the practice of insight-meditation. It involves noting the mind and matter in a state of flux at the six sense-doors in accordance with instructions relating to the establishment of mindfulness, *satipaṭṭhana*. Note what the eyes see; note what the ears hear; note what the nose smells; note what the tongue tastes; note what the body contacts; note what the mind thinks; and then you will come to know all that is to be known in accordance with the degree of perfection you have acquired.

As a *yogi* practises mindfulness, his power of concentration will become strengthened and his mind purified. Then he will be able to distinguish the *nāma*, or the mind that knows, and the *rūpa*, or the body that is known. Then he will come to realize the absence of the thing called *atta* or self, or "I". Repeated noting will lead him on to the knowledge of the causes and effects of *nāma* and *rūpa*. In the end, the idea of self will be utterly destroyed. Before the practice of mindfulness he might be wondering

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if *atta* existed in the past, and is still existing at the present moment and will exist in the future. After the vipassana-practice all such doubts will be resolved as the true nature of the phenomena is understood.

As the *yogi* continues noting, he will find that the sense-objects together with the consciousness directed at them disappear. They are all impermanent. They just arise and pass away of their own accord. What is not permanent is not satisfactory. Nothing is substantial. Then, what is there to cling to this "I" or "Mine"? All phenomena are in a state of flux, now arising, now passing away. Contemplating on these matters, one can, with one's own conviction, do away with *atta*.

### ATTA CAN BE DISPENSED WITH BY NOTING

Some would like to think that noting merely the arising and passing away of *nāma* and *rūpa* is not enough. They would prefer to going at some length and speculating what *nāma* or *rūpa* or phenomenon is. Such speculations are not based on self-acquired knowledge gained through actual practice, but on hearsay or book-knowledge. Such knowledge is perceptual and not intellectual. We are not here concerned with mere perception but with insight-knowledge which can be gained only through actual practice. When you personally watch people going through a gate, you will notice for your-

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self their goings and comings; you need not depend on others to know at second-hand that they are going in and out of the gate. In the same way if you yourself watch and note the six sense-doors, the eye door, the ear-door, etc., you will actually see how *nāma* and *rūpa* arise and pass away without resorting to the process of thinking.

Take another example. Place a mirror at the roadside. All pedestrians and vehicles will be reflected in the mirror in their true nature. If you watch and note them you will see them as they really are. In the same way if you watch and note with mindfulness all that appear at the six sense-doors, you will notice the sense-objects (which have no consciousness) arising while the mind (the subject that possesses consciousness) is taking cognizance of such arising. Then both the objects and the subject pass away. Then this process is renewed. Then the *yogi* will come to realize that this is the phenomenon of *nāma* and *rūpa* arising and passing away. Consciousness and corporeality are, after all, not everlasting. They are not permanent. They are suffering. They are unsubstantial.

When you note the working of *nāma* and *rūpa* you will come to know their true nature. Having known their true nature what remains there to be thought of and considered? So it is not in

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the nature of things to think merely about *nāma* and *rūpa* without actually noting how they arise and pass away. Having come face to face with them are you going to argue their existence? And it does not stand to reason if one merely recites, "Arising! Passing away!" without actually noting the actual process. Knowledge acquired by this method of thinking or reciting is not intrinsic but mere second-hand gained through books.

The essence of insight-meditation, therefore, is to note personally all dhammas or phenomena as they occur. If you are ruminating about them, concentration will not be established. Without concentration you cannot get the purity of mind. As you think and consider about the philosophy of *nāmarūpa*, if you get at the truth, it is well and good; but when you are miscarried by wrong views you will be done for. For instance you might have contemplated on impermanency as permanency or on unsubstantiality as substantiality; and then *atta* will assert itself.

I would advise the beginners in insight-meditation to note things as they happen. When an individual walks, he lifts his legs, extends them forward and drops them down. Note each process of lifting, extending and dropping the legs. The beginner may not be able at first to differentiate one process from

## ATTA CAN BE DISPENSED WITH BY NOTING

another. But later when the power of concentration gets strengthened he will be able to note not only each process but also the mind that takes note of it. When he lifts his legs, the lifting legs are the objects noted by the mind. As his *samādhi*, attentiveness or concentration, gets strong, he will clearly notice that the objects are one thing while the subject, the mind that takes note, is another. The objects constitute *rūpa*, while *nāma* is the subject. In the same way, when he bends his legs, he will come to realize that "bending" is one phenomenon and "knowing" (that the legs bend) is another. In this way, *nāma* can be clearly discriminated from *rūpa*. In every movement that he makes he will be able to recognize the phenomenon of "moving" as distinct from that of "knowing." The whole idea of existence, therefore, depends on *nāma* that knows and *rūpa* that becomes known. There is no being, no individual, no living substance. *Nāma* and *rūpa* come into being for a while and disappear to reappear the next moment. This realization is *nāmarūpapariccheda ñāṇa*, knowledge of differentiation of *nāma* from *rūpa*.

It may be asked whether gaining this knowledge alone can contribute to the abandonment of *atta*. I have spoken about it earlier. Even when a yogi feels convinced of the law of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and unsub-

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stantiality, the sense of attachment to *atta* may arise if he calls his practice of meditation to a halt before he gets to the Noble Path. Detachment occurs only when the series of knowledge following *nāmarūpapariccheda ñāṇa* are duly established when the knowledge about the Noble path bears fruition.

Earlier I have spoken about clinging or attachment based on craving and wrong view relating to the five aggregates. We cling to the matter that we see because the sight is pleasing, goading us on to develop attachment to self. This is clinging to *rūpa*. In the same way we cling to *vedanā*, feeling, to *saññā*, perception, to *saṅkhāra* volitional activities and to *viññāṇa*, consciousness. Apply these principles of clinging to all the sense-doors where all phenomena happen, and we will arrive at the conclusion that all *nāma* and *rūpa* constitute *upādānakkhandhā* aggregates of clinging, which are a burden unto us.

HOW HEAVY IS THE BURDEN ?

Consider well, and you will come to realize how heavy the burden is. When a man is conceived in his mother's womb, the five aggregates appertaining to him have to be cared for. The mother is to give him all necessary protection so that he may be safely born to develop well into a human being. She has to be careful in her daily pursuits, in her diet, in her sleep, etc.

## HOW HEAVY IS THE BURDEN

If the mother happens to be a Buddhist, she will perform meritorious deeds on behalf of the child to be born.

When the child is at last born, it cannot take care of itself. It is looked after by its mother and the elderlies. It has to be fed with mother's milk. It has to be bathed, cleansed and clothed. It has to be carried from place to place. It takes at least two or three persons to look after and bring up this tiny burden of the five *khandhās*. Incidentally, let me tell you how much children owe to their parents and relatives for the care with which they are brought up and nurtured. But ungrateful generation says that one comes into being because of parental incontinence. What evil thoughts ! The true cause of the burden of existence is not parental, but *karmic*. It is *kamma* fanned by the flames of *kilesā*, defilements of the mind, that this burden of the five *khandhās* is thrown upon this world of living beings. Parental cause is only auxilliary. If mankind is devoid of parents, those who are rooted in bad *kamma* and *kilesā* would find their way only to four nether worlds.

When a man comes of age he shall have to look after himself. He shall have to feed himself two or three times a day. If he likes good food he shall have to make special efforts to get it. He shall have to make himself clean. He bathes himself; he makes his own toilet;



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he clothes himself. To tone up his body he shall have to do the daily constitutional ... sitting, standing, bending, stretching, walking, etc. Everything he has to do himself. When he feels hot, he cools himself and when he feels cold he warms up himself. He has to be careful to keep up his health and well-being. When he takes a walk he sees that he does not stumble. When he travels he sees that he meets no danger. In spite of all these precautions, he may fall sick at times, when he will have to take medical treatment. It is a great burden to tend to the welfare of his *khandhā*, the five aggregates of psycho-physical phenomena.

The greatest burden for a living being is to fend for himself. In the case of human beings, some have to work for a living starting from the age of twelve or thirteen, and for that purpose they have to be educated. Some can get only an elementary schooling and so they can get employment only as menials. Those who can get good education are profitably employed in higher positions; but then they have to work day in and day out without any break.

But those who were born into this world with past good *kamma* do not feel the burden. A man born with the best *kamma* has been fed and clothed since childhood by his parents who gave him the best education as he came of age. Even when he grows to be a man they continue

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to give him all support to raise him up into a man of position who can fulfil his desires and wants. Such a fortunate man may not know how heavy the burden of life is.

Those whose past *kamma* is not good never knows affluence. As children they know only hunger, not being able to eat what they would like to eat or dress in a way that they would like to dress. Now that they have grown up, they are just trying to keep their body and soul together. Some do not even have their daily quota of rice ready for the table. Some have to get up early to pound rice for cooking. Some do not even have that rice; and so they have to borrow some from their neighbours. If you want to know more about this life, go to poor men's quarters and make enquiries yourself.

But Burma is a land of plenty; and so conditions here are not as bad as in those countries where rice is not produced. Grains are stored up for distribution in times of need. For so long as men are civilized, problems are few. But in the animal world, finding food is a great problem. For herbivora, as grass and vegetables are still available abundantly there is hardly any difficulty. But in places where water is scarce and vegetation sparse, poor animals find it a great burden in their search for food. With carnivora, the picture is different. Beasts

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of prey pry on weaker animals which are killed for food. In a world where the jungle law of the strong eating the weak prevails, life is a veritable misery. It is unwholesome for the strong to be always thinking of killing others. While an animal is trying to kill others, it may itself be killed. When it dies, it dies with an *akusala citta*, an evil mind obsessed with anger, in which case it will be headed for an evil existence in the future. As it dies with unpleasant thoughts of anger and enmity, how can it aspire to a plane of superior existence? Invariably it will be dragged down into an inferior one. Buddha, therefore, says that once a being happened to be born into the animal world, it will be difficult for it to get reborn into the human world. All these go to show the heavy burden borne by *khandhās* in search of food.

We have seen that to eke out a living is a heavy burden. There are good people who practise right livelihood. They take up agriculture or trading, or get into the business of management or administration which are generally regarded as innocent occupations which do no harm to others. Such people may not encounter any *dukkha*, or suffering, in their round of rebirths, and the burden of existence may not appear to be so heavy relatively. One should, however, be apprehensive of living by dishonest and unfair means. Indolent opportunists who try to become

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rich as quickly as possible have no qualms about acquiring other people's property by foul means. For their own selfish ends they would not mind taking life, or stealing, or cheating. When honest folks have to work with the sweat of their brow to earn five or ten kyats a day, money-grabbers make easy money by cheating or similar means to earn hundreds and thousands of kyats in a day. They would never hesitate to commit murder, dacoity, robbery, theft, cheating or misappropriation to make a fortune. This is earning one's livelihood by criminal means. But crime does not pay, not only here and now, but hereafter. Evil deeds produce evil results, as can be seen from the story of *petas* or creatures of the outer world, as related by Mahāmoggalāna.

### A PETA OF BONES

At the time of Buddha, Ashin Moggalāna and Ashin Lakkhaṇa were residing together at Gijjhakuta Hill, north of the City of Rājagraha. One day the two came out together for a round of alms in the city. On the way Shin Mahāmoggalāna, the elder monk, saw through his supernatural vision a *peta* made up of only skeletons. The creature was crying in great pain as crows, kites and vultures pecked for food the flesh and viscera embedded in the skeletal cage of its body. Then it occurred to him that all *kammas* and *kilesās* had become extinct in so far

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as he was concerned and that, therefore, there would be no occasion for him in future to be like the *peta* he saw. This thought filled him with joyful satisfaction, and so he smiled. Arahats in joy never laughs aloud; they usually do not smile unless there is a very significant reason. Ashin Lakkhaṇa saw this and asked the elder monk why he smiled. The latter told him that he should ask about it when they were together in the presence of Buddha.

After the rounds of alms, the two monks went to the monastery where Buddha was residing. Then the younger monk asked the elder why he smiled.

Ashin Mahāmoggalāna replied: "While we were coming down from the Hill, I saw a *peta* running across the sky pursued by crows, kites and vultures who pecked for food the flesh and viscera embedded in the skeletal frame of his body. He was crying in great pain. When I saw this I thought to myself how such a creature could be possible."

On hearing this, Buddha intervened to explain the existence of the *peta*.

"O monks! My disciples have eyes of wisdom. Verily they have seen such creatures, and let this fact stand testimony to their existence. For myself I have seen them when I gained enlightenment under the Bo tree long time ago. But I

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ever told you before about this; for, there might be unbelievers who doubted the truth. Their doubts would produce *akusala dhammas*, unwholesome effects, on themselves. So I refrained from saying anything about it. In fact the *peta* whom Moggalāna met was, in one of his previous existences, a butcher. Because of this *akusala kamma*, unwholesome act, he was consigned to hell for millions of years. The resultant of his bad *kamma* still remains to punish him. So in the present existence he has become a *peta* with a body of skeletons.”

Buddha mentioned eyes of wisdom. From this it may be inferred that ordinary beings are not able to see such creatures. They can be seen only by arahats with supernatural faculties called *abhiññā*. Today's science has no proof of their existence. But lack of scientific proof is not a determinative for the conclusion that they do not exist.

The fact that Buddha refrained from mentioning anything about the *peta* he had seen, lest it would lead the doubters to unwholesome thoughts is worthy of note. Such thoughts could result in unwholesome reactions. So only when Ashin Mahāmoggalāna was in a position to offer supporting evidence to the truth of the existence of *petas*, he let it be known to his disciples. Criticisms and arguments arising from lack of material evidence would create doubts

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that would generate only *akusala dhammas* that paved the way to nether worlds.

What I would like to emphasize with regard to this story is that the *peta*, as a butcher, had killed many heads of cattle just for his own sustenance that enabled him to feed and clothe his body, the five *khandhās*. But he had to pay for it with suffering in hell that lasted millions of years. Even when he was released from that suffering, he was tortured by crows, kites and vultures as his residual bad *kamma* was still working on him. How heavy the burden of his five *khandhās* can best be imagined.

### A PETA OF FLESH

On another occasion, Ashin Mahāmoggalāna met a *peta* whose body was all flesh. He was also tortured by crows, kites and vultures pecking his body for food. He ran crying in great pain. Ashin Lakkhaṇa again asked the elder monk about this in the presence of Buddha who again explained to him regarding the existence of the world of *petas* in much the same way as he did on the previous occasion. This fleshy *peta*, said the Enlightened One, was also a butcher at Rājagraha in one of his previous existences. He was consigned to the nether world for million of years, and on being released from there he became a *peta* tortured by crows, kites and vultures having been destined

## MANY KINDS OF PETAS

to suffer thus owing to the residual bad *kamma*.

Here it may be asked why the two *petas* were different, one being bony and the other fleshy. The evil committed by them were the same but their destinies became quite different; and so why the difference? When *cuti* (death) consciousness occurs, a symbol or sign associated with the good or bad actions done in one's life, called *kamma nimitta*, presents itself at the mind-door of the dying. [A layman may, perhaps, explain this phenomenon as an omen seen by the dying man.] The "death-symbol" seen by the first butcher was not the same as that seen by the second. Their evil actions were no doubt similar, but the *nimittas* they saw were different. Perhaps the former saw only the bones as it was his practice to carve out bones from meat and make a heap of them. This heap of bones might have appeared as *kamma nimitta* at his mind-door as he lay dying. So when he was reborn a *peta* he was all bones. In the case of the latter it might have been his practice to collect only boneless meat which he saw as a symbol at his death bed. So he was reborn as a fleshy *peta*.

## MANY KINDS OF PETAS

Then Ashin Mahāmoggalāna saw different kinds of *petas* on different occasions. There was



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the mince-meat *peta*, who, Buddha said, had been a falconer in one of his previous existences. Then there was the skinless and bloody *peta* who was a butcher of goats and sheep. Then there was the hairy *peta* whose hairs were like daggers which flew about his body and hit him back. The ways of the *kamma* are strange. Here these daggers cannot be regarded as the handiwork of ogres. They were what the bad *kamma* created. The crows, kites and vultures which tortured the *petas* were also the results of bad *kamma*. Perhaps it may also be conjectured that the daggers and the tormenting birds were just phantoms that arise of their own accord just to punish the evil-doers.

Ashin Mahāmoggalāna also saw a *peta* with hairs like lances sticking out of the body. They flew up into the air and rained down on it. He was a hunter in one of his previous existences. There was also a *peta* with hairs like arrows growing on the body. In one of his previous existences he tortured convicted persons with arrows.

He also met the *kumbhaṇḍa peta* suffering from hydrocoele which had developed into the size of a water-pot. In one of his previous existences he was a cunning judge who used to take bribes. He could not cover up his shame, sitting on his own heavy organ, carrying it about as

## FEMALE PETAS WHO AMASSED WEALTH

he ran for life from the pestering crows, kites and vultures.

There was also one female *peta* who, in one of her previous lives, had had illicit sex. Her body was unprotected by skin. Another female *peta* was very ugly. She was a *nat-kadaw* or a demoniac who was a propagandist of wrong views. There were also men and women *petas*, who, in their previous lives, were monks not performing their priestly duties well. Their robes were on fire. And their monasteries were also on fire.

All these beings were consigned to the world of *petas* because while they were humans they acted improperly just for the sake of their five aggregates of *nāma* and *rūpa*. It is for this reason that we say that the burden of this body is very heavy. There are many similar *peta*-stories; but I shall confine myself with only the last one about female *petas*, who in the past existences had earned their living by foul means.

## FEMALE *petas* WHO AMASSED WEALTH

At the time of Buddha there were four women in Rājagraha who traded in rice, oil, butter, honey, etc. by unfair means using false weights and measures. When they died they became *petas* near the moat outside the City, while their husbands who survived them remarried,

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rolling in wealth left by them. One night the four met together and mourned over their present lot recalling their past. Their wailings were heard by the citizenry who regarded the unpleasant sounds with forebodings. To ward off evil they offered meals to Buddha and his disciples and told them of the cause of their fright. The Teacher comforted them and said, "O devotees! No danger shall befall on you for the ominous sounds you hear. They were caused by the cries of the four female *petas* in distress as a result of their previous evil deeds. They bemoaned their lot saying that in their past existences as human beings they had amassed their wealth by foul means and that when they died their ill-gotten gains were appropriated by others besides themselves. Now they are suffering in this world of *petas*."

This shows that the four women in their existence as human beings amassed wealth by dishonest means just to serve their burdensome *khandhās*. When they died they failed to realize their aim of enjoying life. Heavy, indeed, is the burden of this body.

### CARRYING THE HEAVY BURDEN

This body, the *khandhā*, is a heavy burden. Serving it means carrying the heavy burden. When we feed and clothe it we are carrying the burden. That also means that we are servants to *rūpakkhandhā*, aggregate of matter.

## CARRYING THE HEAVY BURDEN

Having fed and clothed the body we must also see to it that it is sound and happy both in the physical and psychological sense. This is also serving *vedanakkhandhā*, aggregate of feeling. Again we must see that this body experience good sights and sounds. This is concerned with consciousness. Therefore we are serving the *viññāṇakkhandhā*, aggregate of consciousness. These three burdens are quite obvious. *Rūpak-khandhā* says: "Feed me well. Give me what I like to eat; if not, I shall make myself ill or weak. Or, worst still, I shall make myself die!" Then we shall have to try to please it. Then *vedanakkhandhā* also says: "Give me pleasurable sensations; if not, I shall make myself painful or regretful. Or worst still, I shall make myself die!" Then we shall have to hanker after pleasurable sensations to serve its needs. Then *viññāṇak-khandhā* also says: "Give me good sights. Give me good sounds. I want pleasant sense-objects. Find them for me; if not, I shall make myself unhappy and frightful. Eventually I shall make myself die!" Then we shall have to do its biddings. It is as if all these three *khandhās* are perpetually threatening us. So we cannot help complying with their demands; and this compliance is a great burden on us.

*Saṅkhārakkhandhā*, aggregate of volitional activities, is also another burden. Life demands that we satisfy our daily needs and desires and for

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that satisfaction we have to be active. We must be working all the time. This round of human activities gets encouragement from our volition prompted by desire. These activities make threatening demands on us daily, indicating that, if they are not met, trouble and even death, would ensue. When human desires remained unfulfilled, they resort to crime. How heavy the burden of the *saṅkhāra* rests upon us! It is because we cannot carry this load well upon our shoulders that we get demoralized into committing sin that brings shame upon us. Criminal offences are committed mostly because we cannot carry the burden of *saṅkhārakkhandhā* well. When criminals die they may be consigned to the nether world or they may be reborn as *petas* or animals. Even when they are reborn as human beings, their evil actions will follow in their wake and punish them. They may be short-lived; they may be oppressed with disease all the time; they may face poverty and starvation; they may be friendless; they may be always living in danger or in troublous surroundings.

*Saññākkhandhā*, aggregate of perception, is also a great burden; because it is with perception that you train your faculties like memory to be able to retain knowledge and wisdom which can discern good from bad and reject from your mind unwholesome things produced by unpleasant

## CARRYING THE HEAVY BURDEN

sense-objects. If the demands of the mind for pleasant sense-objects are not met, it will take up only evil which does nobody any good. Regrets and anxieties arise because we cannot shoulder the burden of *saññākkhandhā* well.

For all these reasons Buddha declared the five *upādānakkhandhā*, aggregates of clinging, a heavy burden.

We carry the burden of our *khandhās* not for a time, not for a minute, not for an hour, not for a day, not for a year, not for one life, not for one world, not for one aeon. We carry the burden from the beginning of the *samsāra*, round of rebirths. But it is infinite. It has no beginning. And there is no way of knowing when it will end. Its finality can be reached only with the extermination of *kilesā*, defilements of the mind, as we get to the stage of the *arhatta magga*, the path of the Noble Ones. Even *arahats* have to tolerate this burden before they attain *nibbāna*.

The arahats, therefore, used to contemplate thus:—

For how long shall we carry this burden of the five *khandhās* which give rise to suffering?

Kīva ciram nukho ayam dukkha bāro vahitabbo?

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Even an arahat has to tend to the well-being of his *khandhā*. To feed it he has to go round for alms. He has to take a bath to cleanse it. He has to excrete for its inner cleanliness. He has to take care of its health by daily adopting the four *iriyapathas*, postures, of walking, sitting, standing and lying down. He has to sleep regularly for its recuperation. Such are the loads that weigh him down.

### WORLDLY DELIGHTS SEEM TO LIGHTEN THE BURDEN

*Puthujjanas*, ordinary individuals or worldlings, are obsessed with *taṇhā*, craving, and therefore, they consider the five aggregates of psycho-physical phenomena not burdensome. To them the burden is light. So when we say it is heavy they might consider that we are vilifying, because they think that *khandhā* gives them enjoyment of life. There are pleasant sights to see; mellifluous sounds to hear; delicious food to taste; fragrant perfumes to smell; and pleasurable body-touch to experience. There are also good things to know. Under the influence of *taṇhā*, life is considered unblame-worthy. Being delighted with the agreeable sense-objects, one feels that one's burden is light.

A man loves his wife very much. Neighbours, however, have noticed certain faults in her. But the husband is blind to them. As far as he knows about her, she has been always sweet

## REALIZATION OF THE HEAVINESS OF THE BURDEN

to him. Her behaviour is beyond reproach. So he does not believe what others say about her faults. In the same way one who has a craving for one's *khandhā* can never accept the criticism that it is burdensome.

## REALIZATION OF THE HEAVINESS OF THE BURDEN

Only when a man gets old when he is unable to move about as he would like to, unable to relish his food as much as he would like to, unable to get sleep as much as he needs it, and unable to satisfy his own desires as much as he wishes, he becomes convinced that the burden of his *khandhā* is indeed heavy. When he falls sick, his conviction grows and when he and his companions encounter all sorts of trials and tribulations, his realization of the heavy burden becomes complete.

An arahat has eliminated desire or craving. So it is no longer necessary for him to contemplate on the burden. Knowledge about it comes to him naturally. Let me revert to the story of the man very much in love with his wife. At first he thought that his wife was blameless. Then he discovered her infidelity and her plot against his life. When he realized this true situation, he need not be warned by others of the dangers that would befall him. In much the same way an arahat needs nobody's warning about the heaviness of the burden he is



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carrying. He has only to think about how long he shall have to carry it.

The load that a porter carries is no doubt very heavy, but he carries it only for a while. As soon as he feels that it will break his back, he at once throws it down and gets relieved. But the burden of our *khandhā* rides on our back throughout our lives, nay, throughout the *saṃsāra*. It gets off our shoulders only when we attain arahatship having extirminated all *kilesās* in us, and even then only after reaching *nibbāna*.

Buddha, therefore, said that the heaviest burden is the burden of the five *upādānakkhandhās*.

### WHO CARRIES THE BURDEN?

O bhikkhus! Who is carrying the burden? The individual is carrying the burden. He goes by the name of Tissa or Datta, etc. He belongs to the line of Kanhayana or Vacchayana, etc.

Katamo ca bhikkhave bārahāro ?

Puggalotissa vacanīyam, yvāyam  
āyasmā evam nāmo evam gottho,  
ayam vuccati bhikkhave bārahāro.

It means that the porter is a *puggala*, individual, assuming the name of Tissa or Datta, being a descendent of Kanhāyana or Vacchāyana family.

## WHO CARRIES THE BURDEN

To us Burmese he will be either Maung Phyu or Ma Phyu, or Maung Sein or Ma Sein. Names like Mahākassapa, Kaccāyana and Koṇḍiñña are family names. Burmese family names are, however, rare.

In the words of Buddha, *āyasmā* is mentioned, and it means "monks". But what the Teacher meant is all beings, including laymen and even *petas*. For they are all carrying the burden of their *khandhās*. In ordinary parlance, all individuals are carrying the burden.

As it has been postulated that the five *khandhās* are the burden and that the individual is the porter, the question arises whether or not they are distinct from the individual. Men of self or *atta* infer that as Buddha recognizes *puggala*, individual, *satta*, being, and *atta*, self, the individual is one and the *khandhās* are another. This inference merely reveals the character of their attachment to self. Buddha's teaching about *anatta*, not-self, is as clear as day light. If Buddha's philosophy is one of *atta*, his teachings will not be different from those that were current before his time, in which case there would be no necessity for Buddhism to arise. Outside the realm of Buddhist teaching there was the belief that the five *khandhās* constitute *atta*. Another belief, however, asserts that the five *khandhās* are not *atta*, but *atta* exists as a material entity separately elsewhere.

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Buddhism, however, denies the existence of *atta* irrespective of whether it is separate and distinct from the five *khandhās* or not. But in accordance with common custom and usage Buddha used the word *puggala* or *satta*. There were also occasions when he used the grammatical connotations of *atta* (myself) and *para* (others) to distinguish one from the other. For instance, in the saying, *attā hi attano nātho; ko hi paro natho* (I am my own saviour; there is no other who is my saviour), *atta* does not mean the philosophical concept of 'self', but simply the pronominal "I". There is also another instance of the use of *atta* as a personal pronoun in such a saying as *attanam eva paḥhamam paṭirūpe nivesaye* (Let him first establish himself in what is right). There are also such usages as *atta saraṇa* (myself to take refuge in) and *anaññā saraṇa* (none other than oneself to take refuge in) where *atta* and *aññā* are used as pronouns.

According to Buddha there are four kinds of individuals, viz., the man who acts for his own advantage and not for another's, the man who acts both for his own and another's advantages, the man who acts neither for his own nor for another's advantages and the man who acts not for his own but for another's advantage, employing the words *attahita* and *parahita*, the *atta* referred to is not the philosophical "self" but the pronominal "self."

## VAJIRĀ'S REPLIES TO MĀRA'S QUESTIONS

Misconceptions arise following the grammatical connotations; and hence, the wrong views. This is shown in *Kathā Vatthu* and in the *Anurādha Sutta* in *Khandhavagga Saṃyutta Pali Text*.

"Anurādha! What do you think: is *rūpa* a being?"

"*Rūpa* is not a being, Sir."

"Is *vedanā* a being? Is *saññā* a being? Is *viññāṇa* a being?"

"No, Sir. They are not beings."

This catechism shows that there is none whom we can call an individual or a being whether in relation to his five *khandhās* or not. In the *Sutta*, Buddha declared that his teachings were concerned with *dukkha*, suffering, and liberation from *dukkha*, caused by the five *khandhās*, and that he did not preach the eternal existence of *puggala*, *satta* or *atta*.

## VAJIRĀ'S REPLIES TO MĀRA'S QUESTIONS

Māra asked: "Who creates beings? Where is the Creator? Where does the creature arise? Where does he vanish?"

To these questions Vajirā Theri, the female arahat, replied as follows:—

What, Mara, do you think, is a being? What do you think is wrong view, is it not? What is generally thought a being is

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but a heap of *khandhās* in a state of flux otherwise called *saṅkhāra*. You cannot find the being in the *saṅkhāra*.

I shall give you an example. When the wheels, axles and other parts are assembled, the assemblage becomes known by the word, chariot. In the same way when the five constituents of *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* are grouped together, the group comes to be named a being.

Indeed, there is no being but suffering that comes into being, that continues to establish itself as a being and passes away. Nothing but suffering exists; nothing but suffering passes away.

When we use the expression that someone comes into being, the someone referred to is not the individual, but the suffering inherent in the five *khandhās*. What has been established as someone is not the individual but a load of suffering. And in the same way what has passed away is also a load of suffering that is inherent in the *khandhās*.

So when, in this Bhāra Sutta, it is said that the porter who carries the burden is the individual, the statement merely conforms to common usage. By the term, individual, is meant the five *khandhās*. But it does not mean to say that there is an individual beyond the five *khandhās*.

## PAÑÑATTA AND PARAMATTA

### PUGGALA IS JUST A NAME

When an object is made known it is called *paññatta*. *Puggala* is used just for terminological purposes. It is but a name. To make things understood we have to fall back upon the use of *paññatta*. If we say that the burden of this *khandhā* is being borne by the *khandhā*, it would be too abstract, and few would understand the meaning it conveys.

### PAÑÑATTA AND PARAMATTA

There are two methods of instruction in Buddha's teachings, namely, the *paramatta desanā* and the *paññatta desanā*, the former being concerned with abstract knowledge while the latter with ordinary or conventional knowledge appealing to perception by which objects are known by their names. When we discuss about *anicca*, impermanence, *dukkha*, unsatisfactoriness, *anatta*, unsubstantiality, *dhātu*, property of primary substances, *sacca*, truth, *satipaṭṭhāna*, establishment of mindfulness, and *āyatana*, sense-spheres, we are concerned with abstract subjects. When we talk about men, women, devas, brahmins, etc., we are concerned with everyday subjects that one mentions by name. There are people who can see the light of the *dhamma* by *paññatta* means of instruction as well as those who get enlightened by *paramattha* means. A professor who knows many languages explains things to his English pupils in English, Indian pupils

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in Hindi and Burmese pupils in Burmese. Buddha taught in much the same way employing either of the two methods I have mentioned.

There are eight reasons why Buddha used names in common usage and taught in the *paññatta* way, namely, (1) to explain *hīri*, shame, and *ottappa*, fear, which act as deterrents to sin, (2) to show that individuals have only *kamma* as their belonging, (3) to describe the outstanding deeds of individuals, (4) to explain the uninterrupted and irredeemable nature of the worst type of *kamma*, (5) to encourage the exercise of Brahmavihāra, perfect goodwill towards all beings, (6) to reveal the nature of *pubbenivāsana ñāṇa*, supernormal faculty of remembering the past lives of oneself and others, (7) to explain *dakkhiṇavisuddhi*, purity of gifts and (8) to abide by current speech.

(1) When we say that the *khandhās* are ashamed or frightened, the meaning of the term may not be understood; but when we say that the girl got ashamed or frightened, everyone will understand what the statement means. Therefore, when Buddha wanted to emphasise the development of the sense of shame or fear as deterrents to sinning, he used common parlance.

(2) When we say that *khandhās* have only their *kamma* as their possession, the meaning of the statement may be ambiguous. But when we say that individuals commit good or evil

## PAÑÑATTA AND PARAMATTA

deeds which result in good or evil kammās, and that, therefore, these kammās are their own possession, the individual kamma can be understood. When *kamma* is to be expounded Buddha used names in current speech.

(3) When we say that *khandhās* build houses or monasteries, the meaning will not be clear. So when we speak of *Anāthapiṇḍika* we say that he built the Jetavana Monastery, mentioning him by name. Then the meaning will be clearly understood. Hence the use of individual names.

(4) When we say that the *khandhās* kill their parents, no one will be able to understand what it means. But everybody will understand us when we say that the son killed his mother or that King Ajatasattu killed his father, Bimbisāra. Evil *kammās* at once seize the matricides and patricides the moment they die. And this work of *karma* is said to be irredeemable in nature as the worst type of evil kamma known as *anantariya* and it allows no pause for rest. In an explanation of this kind, Buddha used common language.

Ajatasattu was seized by the *anantariya kamma* because he killed his father. So although he had had the opportunity to hear Buddha preach, he failed to get illumined in the *dhamma*. Killing his father acted as an impediment to the realization of the Path, and so he is regarded as a *maggantarāya*, danger to the Path.



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After his death he went straight for the nether world to suffer in *Lohakumbhī* hell, losing the opportunity to be raised to heaven. Therefore, he is also regarded as *sagganlarāya*, danger to the world of devas.

(5) When we say that *khandhās* send their good wishes to other *khandhās* for their long life and happiness one may not understand what it means. So we say monks and laymen wish other monks and laymen happiness and liberation from human miseries. Buddha preached his disciples about the practice of *Brahmacariya*, exercise of the qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, goodwill and equanimity. Establishment in this exercise is known as *Brahma-vihāra*. When Buddha wanted to expound this doctrine he used the *paññatta desanā*. Here, those who do not know Buddha's methodology in teaching the *dhamma* conceived that *paramatta desanā* is better and, therefore, send their good wishes not to the individual, but to the *khandhās*. It must be remembered that in practising *Brahmacariya*, not only the generic term, all beings or *sabba satta*, is used but also the specific term, all men or *sabba purisa*, all women or *sabba itthiyo*, etc., is used. In sending love and kind regards to others one has to direct his mind or attention to recipients as individuals, and not to their mind and matter. Mind and matter being abstractions, they would present

## PURITY OF GIFTS

themselves like bricks and stones; and if that be so, what boots it to send one's love and regards to inanimate objects? It is, therefore, commonplace that, when you are practising *brahmacariya*, you must recognize the individuality of those on whom your mind dwells.

(6) If we say that our *khandhās* can remember their past, no one will be able to understand what that means. So we say Buddha remembered this, or the arahat remembered that. When, therefore, Buddha wanted to say something about the remembrance of things past exercising his *pubbenivāsana ñāṇa*, as it is called, he used the *paññatta desanā*.

(7) If we say we make our offerings to the *khandhās*, it will be ambiguous. One *khandhā* gives food to another *khandhā*. One *khandhā* gives robes to another *khandhā*. How can *khandhās* give and how can they receive them? Which group of matter can promote merits of giving away, and which group demerits? Which group of matter is wholesome and which unwholesome? If one looks to abstracts, confusions would surely arise. Buddha, therefore, referred to the giver and the recipient as individuals.

## PURITY OF GIFTS

Incidentally let me tell you about *dakkhiṇavisuddhi*, purity of gifts. There are four kinds of such purity, as follows:—

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- (a) When a person practising morality gives alms to one not practising it, the giver earns merit. The gift is pure.
- (b) When a person not practising morality gives alms to one practises it, the gift remains pure from the point of view of the recipient. The giver, therefore, earns merit all the same; and the merit is all the more great.
- (c) When both the giver and the recipient of the gift are immoral, the gift is impure; and the act of giving is to no avail. Even when the giver shares his merits to the *petas*, the latter cannot receive them and will not be released from the world of *petas*.
- (d) When both the giver and the recipient of gifts are pure in morality, the gifts will also be pure, and merits accruing from such giving will earn the highest merit.

Here gifts are classified into those given to individuals and those to the Order of monks.

### GIFTS TO INDIVIDUALS

There are 14 kinds of gifts according to the 14 kinds of individuals to whom gifts can be made. They are gifts to:—

## GIFTS TO INDIVIDUALS

Buddha

Pacceka Buddha (non-preaching Buddha)

Arahat

One who is striving for arahatship

Anāgāmi (Never-Returner)

One who is striving for the state of anāgāmi

Sagadāgāmi (Once-Returner)

One who is striving for the state of  
Sagadāgāmi

Sotāpanna (Stream-Winner)

One who is striving for the state of sotāpanna

(Here, all those embracing Buddhism are to be regarded as striving for the state of sotāpanna; and, therefore, in this category are included all ranging from initiates who have taken refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha to those who are treading the Noble Path. This is in accord with what the Commentaries say).

One who is endowed with *abhiññā*, supernatural faculties, even when he flourishes outside the realm of *Buddhasāsanā*, Buddhist teachings;

One who is endowed with morality, even when he flourishes outside the realm of *Buddhasāsanā*;

One who has no morality;

Animal.

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### MERITS ACCRUING FROM GIFTS TO INDIVIDUALS

- i. Gifts to animals can accrue merits a hundredfold.
- ii. Gift to individuals not practising morality can accrue merits a thousandfold.
- iii. Gifts to individuals practising morality even though they be outside the realm of Buddhasāsanā can accrue merits a thousandfold all throughout a thousand life-cycles.
- iv. Gifts to individuals endowed with *abhiññā* even though they be outside the realm of Buddhasāsanā can accrue merits for a million-million life-cycles.
- v. Gifts offered to individuals having the potential to become sotāpannas can accrue merits for innumerable life-cycles. Such gifts can be classified according to the status of the recipients, and merits gained are graded according to the status. For example, gifts to individuals who abide by *pañca sīla*, five precepts, can bestow more merits to the giver than those to persons taking refuge in the Three Gems.

The following recipients of gifts are arranged in order of merit they provoke:

Individuals abiding by eight precepts

Individual abiding by ten precepts

## GIFTS TO INDIVIDUALS

Individuals practising *samatha*, concentration

Individuals practising *vipassanā*, insight-  
meditation

Lay individuals practising morality

Monks practising morality

Monks practising *samatha* and *vipassanā*  
diligently and methodically.

Individuals attaining *vipassanā* knowledge  
in order of the stages reached.

Individuals striving for *sotāpatti* stage,  
and so forth.

Theoretically, the highest merit will be gained if one makes offerings to a *yogi* who has trodden the Noble Path. But as the duration of time of inspiration of the Noble Path lasts only one thought-moment, it is impracticable to catch that particular moment during which the gift is to be offered so that it can accrue the highest merit. It is possible to gain the highest advantage out of a gift to a *kalyāna puthujjhana*, man of virtue, who has reached the stage of knowledge of establishing equanimity towards all conditioned things, the ninth stage of wisdom in insight-meditation exercises, which is termed as *saṅkhārupekkha ñāṇa*.

vi to xiv: The enormity of the merits derived from gifts to *sotāpannas*, *sagadāgāmis*, *anāgāmis* and *arahats* can better

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be imagined than described. They can last for *asaṅkheyya* life-cycles. (This numeration denotes a number of one followed by 14 zeros).

### GIFTS TO THE ORDER

Gifts offered to Buddha and the monks in the Order are called *sanghika dāna* which are of seven kinds.

- i. Gifts of food and other necessities allowed by the rules and discipline of the Order to Buddha and his disciples of monks of both sexes collectively accrue merits of the highest order.
- ii. Next in the line is the kind of gifts made to the Order of monks of both sexes after the *mahāparinibbāna* or death of Buddha. Here the Order means all the monks of both sexes who came to the place of offering whether by invitation or not.
- iii. The third in the line are gifts offered to the group of male monks. In these days it is customary for a benefactor to invite all the male monks residing in a monastery to receive alms. Such charitable acts belong to this category.
- iv. The fourth in the line are gifts offered to the group of female monks. Now-a-days such gifts are no longer possible as the Order has no female monks.

## GIFTS TO THE ORDER

- v. The fifth in the line are gifts made by benefactors by invitation to a specified number of male and female monks from their respective congregation. This kind of gifts is also not possible these days for reasons stated in iv.
- vi. The sixth in the line are gifts made by benefactors by invitation to a specified number of male monks. The practice prevailing now is for the benefactor to approach the head of the monastery and invite a specified number of male monks to his house where the offering is to be made so that he can direct his veneration to the entire Order of monks which the invited monks represent. In this kind of *dāna*, charity, the benefactor has no personal aims for any particular monk or monks but for the whole Order. The head of the monastery would send his monks either in order of their seniority or by lots. Among them there may be some whom the benefactor would not like to revere. Albeit, he must be reverential to all of them as representatives of the Order. When one offers flowers and lights to a Buddha-image, the image just serves the purpose of drawing one's reverential attention to Buddha. Actually one's mind is not on the image but on Buddha. The image is only an object that directs one's mind to



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Buddha. In the same way the monks that visit the benefactor's house to receive the gifts is only representative, and they draw his mind to the existence of Buddha's disciples for whom he is actually making the offering. The monks in his presence serve only as a means by which he becomes mindful of the fact that he is giving away to Buddha's disciples organized as the Order. It is this significance that renders *sanghika dāna* highly meritorious.

Regarding the use of such offerings, only the monks who are near at hand can use them, as allowed by the rules of discipline. When a donor offers food to a monk going round for alms saying "*Sanghassa dhemi*," (I give unto the Order), it is *sanghika dāna*, as the offering is intended for the entire Order. But if the monk receives the offering saying, "*Mayham papunāti*" (It has come into my hands), the food becomes his own, and he can use it himself. But there is a saying with respect to this privilege. When you offer lights to the Buddha-image, you dedicate it to Buddha who actually lived in the past. The light of your wholesome actions radiates all around. It is all-encompassing. But the light of the candle that you donate to the image can shed its rays only within its precincts. If the monk in question brings all the food he gets during the round of

## GIFTS TO THE ORDER

alms to the monastery, all the monks residing there can have a share, as the offering, in point of *vinaya*, rules of discipline, is *sanghika*. In that case it will be good both for the donor and the donee. It is important that one should know the meritorious way of making *dāna*, charity.

vii. The seventh in the line are gifts made by benefactors by invitation to a specified number of female monks. The head of the female monks usually decided who should accept the invitation. Such gifts are now no longer possible for reasons given before.

On *Sanghika dāna* Buddha has this to say:

O Ānanda! Never would I say that charity towards individuals is more beneficial to the donor than that towards the Order.

In the Commentaries it has been shown that giving alms to an ordinary monk whom the entire group of monks directs to receive them as their representative in accordance with the Vinaya rules accrues more merit than giving alms individually to a noble personage such as an arahat. Gifts offered to the Order always rate high.

It is when Buddha desired to emphasize on the purity and nobleness of gifts to the Order that he taught in the *paññāta desanā* referring to the recipients of gifts in their personal names.

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So far we have the *four* kinds of pure gifts, 14 kinds of gifts to individuals and *seven* kinds of gifts to the Order. In referring to them *paramañña desanā* is not employed and therefore there is not the slightest mention of *khandhās* or *āyatanas*, sense-spheres. Only individuals are mentioned. This is a point worthy of note for donors and donees alike when they are performing libation.

### SEMBLANCE OF VIPASSANĀ IN ACTS OF CHARITY

I emphasise this point just to remind you of the impropriety of allowing a semblance of *vipassanā* getting mixed up in acts of charity. Some would like to think that it is better if, in practising charitableness, insight-meditation is also practised. So during the libation the following formula is used:

“I, who am but a bunch of *khandhās*, made up of *nāma* and *rūpa*, make this offering to the individual, who is also but a bunch of *khandhās*, of these material objects which are also a bunch of *khandhās*, subject to the laws of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and unsubstantiality.”

This formula is not in accord with Buddha's teaching. It is incongruous. *Dāna*, the act of giving, is performed for the sake of merits derived from it. It is not performed for the sake of insight-meditation. If one's mind is

## SEMBLANCE OF VIPASSANĀ IN ACTS OF CHARITY

bent upon insight-meditation, there is no necessity for one to be giving alms. One should merely retire to a place of solitude and practise insight-meditation when his power of concentration will get strengthened, thereby giving him the utmost benefit. He will then gain *vipassanā kusala*, merits derived from insight meditation. It is a world of difference between a proper meditation exercise and a mere one or two minutes of it during the performance of libation. What is important in acts of charity is to render oneself worthy of the accumulation of *dāna kusala*, merits derived from giving alms, by giving them away with sincerity of purpose. That is why we have been exhorting alms-givers to rejoice in their good deeds. Merits gained from charitable acts will be multiplied if the giver of alms contemplate on the high morality of the recipients or the usefulness and propriety of the objects given away. Such contemplation would lead to more rejoicing because of which the giver will enjoy the cumulative effects of the merits gained. If he contemplates on the *khandhās* of the recipient and realizes their true nature, he will not be able to discriminate between the morality and immorality or the nobleness and ignominy of the latter, for, these qualities emanating from the *khandhās* are all abstractions. Again, if he contemplates on the *khandhās* relating to the objects he gives away and realizes their true

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nature, all what he has given away would be worthless like stones and pebbles, in which case what is there for him to rejoice? Without rejoicing his *dāna kusala* comes to nought.

It may be argued, as indeed some actually do, that as insight-meditation is nobler than charitableness, it will be more profitable to indulge in it than to give away things in charity. Indeed that argument is sound. Once all worries relating to alms-giving are eliminated, there will be more time to concentrate on meditation. In actual fact, charitableness is practised not for purposes of insight-meditation but for gaining merits from giving. If that be so, it is better that the donor contemplates on his act of giving away so that he rejoices at it with the result that his merits get accumulated.

When therefore, Buddha wanted to teach his disciples and devotees about the purity of gifts, he employed the *paññāta desanā*, naming the individuals.

(8) Now I come to the eighth reason why Buddha taught *paññāta desanā*. Who could have realized more than Buddha that all existences are the phenomena of *nāma* and *rūpa* arising and passing away and that all conditioned things are in a state of flux? On appropriate occasions he taught them so. But he never rejected common usage. There are terms like mother,

## CONVENTIONAL LANGUAGE

father, son, daughter, man, woman, god, monk, etc. These terms are used in everyday speech; and Buddha spoke the language of the people current in his time.

### CONVENTIONAL LANGUAGE

After all *puggala paññātti* is conventional language. When we say that one is an individual, a being, a woman or a man, we are being realistic, for all mankind has accepted the descriptions given. Truth ordained by general consensus of opinion is *samutisaccā*. In other words it is truth accepted by conventional language of mankind; and so it is no falsehood. Not desiring to abandon convention, Buddha, in his Bhāra Sutta, made references to the porter as an individual.

To sum up, the heavy burden is the five *khandhās*, which we regard as "I" or "Mine" and the one who carries it is the individual who is made up of the five *khandhās*.

But be it noted that the five *khandhās* cannot be conceived as a separate entity from the individual. This has been extensively explained before.

Some may not agree with the proposition that the five *khandhās* are both the burden and the porter. In that case, please regard the burden as the five *khandhās* which desire happiness and well-being and the porter as the five

## BHĀRA SUTTA

*khandhās* which are actually belabouring for the realization of that happiness and well-being.

Now that the burden and the porter have become recognizable, the only thing that remains to be considered is how to discard it. That will be the subject of my next lecture. Now that the time is up, I must close.

May those who have given their respectful attention to the discourse relating to the Bhāra Sutta be able to develop a sense of repugnance towards the five *khandhās* which oppress us as a heavy load does, to note the phenomena of the five *khandhās* arising and passing away at the six sense-doors, and, eventually, by such noting or *vipassanā* practice, to reach *nibbāna* where the burden can be thrown away.

PART II  
BHĀRA SUTTA  
*OR*  
DISCOURSE ON THE BURDEN



BHĀRA SUTTA  
OR  
DISCOURSE ON THE BURDEN

This is the second part of my lecture, a continuation of the one I delivered a fortnight ago, wherein I dealt with *upādānakkhandhā* as the burden, and the individual as the porter carrying the burden. In other words, *nāma* and *rūpa*, mind and matter, are the burden while every one of us is the porter. We are daily serving our body of the five *khandhās* by cleansing it, dressing it, feeding it, entertaining it, nurturing it, etc. We are constantly paying our attention to its well-being. By now, I hope, you are convinced how heavy the burden is.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE BURDEN

Now, why do people carry this burden knowing it to be very heavy? Who prompts them to carry it? A serious consideration is enough to show you that no one is prompting anybody to carry it. It is he himself who is carrying it at his own sweet will. Those who believe in creation might say that God makes him carry it. If that be so, the poor, the diseased,

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the maimed, the blind, the deaf and the oppressed would have ample reasons to quarrel with the creator. According to Buddha's teaching no one ever imposed the burden on us. It is the individual himself who likes to accept it.

Buddha said:

O bhikkhus! What is it that makes us carry the burden? *Taṇhā* makes us carry the burden.

Katamaṅca bhikkhave bārādānaṃ?

Yāyaṃ taṇhā ..... idaṃ vuccati bhikkhave bārādānaṃ.

### TANHĀ IS HUNGRY FOR SENSE-OBJECTS

*Taṇhā* is craving or desire. It is very much like hunger and thirst. It yearns for pleasant, wholesome and beautiful objects. It is never satiated with them. It is always hungry for them. Having seen a pleasurable thing, it desires to see another. It likes to hear sweet music; it likes to enjoy fragrant smell, it likes to enjoy good taste; it likes to feel pleasant touch; it wants to think of or imagine about good subjects. It never gets satisfied with all the objects that appeal to the senses. It is always in great hunger which is all-consuming.

When the mind dwells on a pleasant object, it develops desire to possess it. This desire accepts the burden of the five *khandhās* which

## TANHĀ IS HUNGRY FOR SENSE-OBJECTS

we call the body. Attachment to sense-objects is *upādāna* which strives for the fulfilment of desire. This produces *kusala* and *akusala kamma* good and evil actions. As one nears death these actions appear as *kamma nimitas*, signs associated with good or evil actions done in the past, which point up to *kamma gati*, destiny guided by such actions. As the individual clings to these signs, a new *khandhā* arises after the death by dint of that clinging. It may be seen that all the six senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching and thinking play their parts in the creation of desire or attachment. The development of desire tantamounts to the acceptance of the burden of the body. Because of desire, attachment is motivated and this we describe as *upādāna kamma* which gives rise to new *khandās*. Hence we say that craving creates a new existence or *bhava* after the death of the man. About the nature of *bhavas*, please refer to my discourse on *Paticcasamuppāda*, Part II, wherein I have given the explanation at some length.

*Taṇhā* gets absorbed into sense-objects with which it comes into contact without discrimination like the dyeing chemicals that hold fast on to the materials to be dyed. It attaches itself to them whether such attachment is proper or in order, or not. It takes a fancy to everything it sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches,

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or thinks about. So it is described in the scriptures as taking delight in objects. It never feels weary with enjoyment. From the point of view of a man in higher station in life, it may be presumed that superior beings will have no inclination for conditions of life of inferior beings. They may feel bored or repugnant under such conditions. But when they actually get debased they can find enjoyment in their new lives. Viewed from this plane of human existence, one would have thought that the bodies of worms or snakes are repulsive or abhorrent. The very thought that one would be reborn out of the womb of a worm or a snake is disgusting. But when, as his *kamma* asserts itself, an individual is born a worm or a snake, he finds life in the animal kingdom highly enjoyable. That is the work of *tanhā* which finds joy and pleasure wherever it is posted. So Buddha has also described it as a disposition which revels in whatever sense-objects wherever they exist. It is exemplified in the stories of Campeyya, the King of the Nāgas, and of Queen Upari.

### CAMPEYYA THE KING OF THE NĀGAS

Once, Bodhisatta was reborn a poor man living by the side of the Campā river. At that time the human King of Anga and Magadha threw a feast as was the custom in honour of Campeyya, the Nāga King residing at the bottom of the Campā river. Then all citizens came out

## CAMPEYYA THE KING OF THE NĀGAS

to participate in the festival. The Nāga King was the king of snakes. He appeared among men in the guise of a human being together with his retinue of snakes, also in the guise of human beings.

The poor man, Bodhisatta, saw the Snake-King and his followers all in their glory. So he gave alms, bent on being reborn a *nāga* in his next existence. So he was reborn a *nāga*. When he looked at his own body he felt repugnant to it. So he thought to himself: "The acts of charity that I did while I was a human being should have produced wholesome results and made me reborn into the world of devas... in *catumahārājika*, *tavatimsa*, *Yāmā*, *tussitā*, *nimmānariti* and *paranimmitavasavatti*, the six celestial planes. But it was not to be, because I longed for rebirth as a *nāga*. It was wrong of me. It were better to die than continue to be a snake." And he thought of suicide.

But at that time *Sumanā*, a female *nāga*, was by his side. She at once gave the signal to *nāga* courtesans to entertain the new Nāga King, also known as *Campeyya*, for that was what Bodhisatta had become. All the snakes, in the guise of human beings, all beautiful, entertained him with music and dancing. On this, the new *Campeyya*, the Snake-King, came round to realities and thinking that his abode was as good as that of the King of Devas he

## BHĀRA SUTTA

exulted in his new existence. He had now become at one with all the female nagas who entertained him.

For some time he was forgetful how at first he hated his snake-life. But being a Bodhisatta, he was brought to his senses to realize his true situation. Then he thought out a way to escape from the present existence and become a human being again. He discovered that the only way for him was to practice perfection through the commission of meritorious deeds like alms-giving and observing precepts. This he did by visiting the human world in the guise of a man.

This story gives us the lesson that *taṇhā* revels in any situation anywhere. From the point of a human being, it may be presumed that Bodhisatta might have felt the life of a snake as loathsome since snake bodies are usually repugnant. But when he was entertained by female nāgas he appeared to be delighted with his new life. This is the work of *taṇhā* which was prompting him to accept the heavy load of the new *khandhā* as a nāga.

### QUEEN UPARI

Long, long ago, King Assaka was ruling in Pataliputta in Kāsi. His chief queen was Upari. It was the tradition for kings to choose the prettiest maidens in the realm to be their queens, and, therefore, there can be no

## QUEEN UPARI

gainsaying the fact that the queen was exceedingly beautiful. He doted upon her; but unfortunately she died in her early years. In court language, her death was described as "going to heaven;" but actually she failed to reach there. She was reborn a beetle.

The King was very much bereaved. He kept her body preserved in sessamum oil in a glass coffin placed under his bed. He refused food and wept day in and day out. His ministers consoled him reminding him of the law of mortality and impermanence; but he went on mourning for full seven days looking on the preserved body of his beloved.

At that time our Bodhisatta was born a yogi who had gained supernormal powers called *abhiññā*. One day he surveyed the world to see whom he could liberate from human miseries by enlightening him with the *dhamma*. He saw in his mind's eye the King in great sorrow, and knowing that none in the world but him could save him from such a situation, he visited the King's Royal Garden, where he met a brahmin attendant. He asked the latter about the King. When he was told how bereaved the King was, he suggested that if the King would come to him, he would disclose the destiny of the queen. The brahmin, therefore, hurried to the palace and told his lord and master, "Sire! There has arrived at the Royal Garden a powerful yogi who possesses

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divine eyes and he can tell you your queen's present existence and show you where she now is. Pray, visit him."

The King was exceedingly glad, and he at once repaired to the Garden by chariot, and arriving there, paid due respects to the yogi. Then he asked: "Is it true that you can tell me where my queen is?"

"Yes," said the yogi, "your queen, while in this human world was immensely proud of her beauty, spending her days all the while developing it, forgetting to do meritorious deeds of alms-giving and keeping sabbath. So when she died, she became degraded to be born a beetle, now living in the southern part of this Garden."

Pride is associated with riches, family connection, education, status in life and physical beauty. When one is possessed with pride, one forgets to be kind-hearted and respectful and be of service to others to acquire merit. It has been said by Buddha in Cula Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta that pride usually debases the person possessing it. If one is humble, one can aspire to nobility in the next existence. In the case of Queen Upari it may be presumed that in her haughtiness she might have behaved disrespectfully to those who ought to be respected, and it is because of this misbehaviour that she was reborn a lowly beetle.



## QUEEN UPARI

When the King heard this he said that he could not believe it. So the yogi said that he would summon the beetle to appear before the King and talk with him.

Using his supernormal powers the yogi called up the beetle, when a pair of beetles, one male and the other female, appeared out of the dung-hill. He then showed them to the King, saying, "O King! Look at the female beetle following in the trail of her male partner. She was your queen. She has abandoned you now in favour of her present husband. Look at her closely. She keeps company with her husband wherever he chooses to go."

Still the king could not be convinced. Those who do not believe in the laws of *kamma* and its effects and in the law of dependent origination are unable to accept that a human queen should have gone so low as to become a beetle in her next existence. Even in these days of Buddhasāsanā there are some people who hold that once you are a human being, you cannot be destined to be reborn into a plane of existence inferior to that of human existence. Outside the aegis of Buddhasāsanā, there were many who held the view similar to that of the dissenters of the present day. According to Buddha's teaching, for so long as one has not attained the state of an *ariyā* (Worthy One), one in the superior planes of existence may descend to the

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four nether worlds. Whether one is the king of devas does not matter. One's mode of rebirth after death depends on how one is mindful at death's door. If one's mind is directed to *kusala dhamma* (wholesomeness) when dying, one may be reborn a man or a deva, however lowly he may be. And the reverse is true. There is the story about Ashin Tissa. On his death-bed, his mind got attached to the saffron robe that he was wearing. The result was that he was reborn a louse making its home in his saffron robe. There is another story about a frog being reborn in Tāvatisā heaven as a deva as it died listening to the gospel of Buddha. But as the King had never heard of such stories he could not believe what the yogi told him.

Therefore, the yogi had to make arrangements by which the female beetle talked about herself. Through his supernormal powers he set the following conversation going at the same time making it to be understood by the King and those present.

*Yogi:* I ask you female beetle. What were you in your previous existence?

*Female Beetle:* I was Upari, the Chief Queen of King Assaka.

*Yogi:* Do you love Assaka or your present husband, the beetle?

## QUEEN UPARI

*Female Beetle:* When I was a human being, I felt happy with my former husband, the King, with whom I used to enjoy the pleasures of life in this very garden. But I am now leading a new life in this world of beetles. So Assaka had nothing to do with me now.

According to the Commentaries, she went further than that and added:

"In my present existence I would even relish cutting up the jugular vein of King Assaka so that I could wash the feet of my present dear husband with his blood."

Isn't it too cruel of the ex-queen? It may be that she was trying to please her present husband, the beetle. But in life there are many instances similar to this case. When a family broke up, the wife got divorced from her first husband and took another husband. In such a case, the wife would love and care for her present husband without any consideration for her old partner.

The following is the version of the Commentaries regarding the female beetle's reply.

"I, who loved Assaka when I was his queen, used to roam about frequently in this southern part of the garden, enjoying all the comforts and luxuries of life as the beloved Queen of my lord and master. But the miseries and happiness in this life as a beetle far transcends those of my past life. Therefore I love my present husband, even

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though he be a lowly beetle, far more than I loved the King.”

Hearing this unkindest remark of the female beetle, King Assaka became extremely mortified. “I loved and adored her so much,” he thought, “that even when she died I could not part with her body; but she is hard and cruel to me.” So he at once ordered his attendants to throw away her dead body. Later, he chose another beautiful court-lady to be his queen. Having admonished him, the Yogi returned to the Himavuntā Mountains.

Queen Upari, while a human being, could never have entertained without feelings of repugnance the thought to be born out of the womb of a beetle; but when *kamma* was at work, she became a beetle and felt delighted with her *khandhā* she had assumed which she considered as far, far superior to that of King Assaka. This is why the text says that *taṇhā* takes delight in any situation anywhere in which it operates.

Dogs delight in being dogs, pigs in being pigs, chickens in being chickens, and worms in being worms. In our human lives, there are instances of people in higher station in life suddenly becoming reduced to poverty. They have not only to tolerate the new situation into which they are thrown by the force of *kamma* but also revel in it. Feeling so happy with the new

## KĀMATANĦĀ

destiny, some erring youths revolting parental authority in preference to an inferior way of life would refuse to return to their former environment despite entreaties of their parents, so much enchanted were they with their new surroundings. This is because of the machinations of *taṅhā*.

### THREEFOLD TANĦĀ

Taṅha, craving, is threefold, namely, *kāmatanḥa*, craving for sensual pleasures, *bhavatanḥā*, craving for sensual pleasures associated with the view of eternalism and *vibhavatanḥā*, craving for sensual pleasures associated with the view of nihilism. These *taṅhās* receive and accept the body called *khandhās*.

### KĀMATANĦĀ

*Kāmatanḥā* is craving for objects that yield sensual pleasures. Such objects may originate in ourselves or in others. When things of joy and beauty attract us, we must at once recognize that craving for those things has developed in us. Beautiful sense-objects do not merely mean the primary objects of joy and beauty. When we refer to a beautiful girl or a handsome boy, we are not referring only to the girl or the boy who possesses good looks, but also the accessories of beautification such as dress etc. So when we say craving has been developed, we do not mean that it is only for sights and

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sounds that are enjoyable, but also the accessories accompanying them. Consider in like manner when we speak of craving for good smell, delicious taste, pleasurable touch and fanciful mental images. When we desire to become human beings, devas, men, women, etc., our desires relate to sensual pleasures to be expected from sense-objects that appear at the six sense-doors. The development of *taṇhā* is due to *avijja*, ignorance or delusion, which covers up the true nature of the phenomena, revealing all the opposite of truth, thus contributing to the emergence of wrong thinking. As it covers up the truth, falsehood comes up in a favourable light. In this way it reveals impermanence as permanence, unsatisfactoriness as satisfactoriness and unsubstantiality as substantiality. Hence *anatta*, not self, is mistaken as *atta*, self. In like manner unwholesomeness and ugliness are mistaken for wholesomeness and beauty. When delusion invokes craving, *upādāna*, grasping or attachment arises; and because of this attachment we try our very best to fulfil our desires; and as we make great efforts in the fulfilment of our desires, *kamma*, action, and *saṅkhāra*, volitional activities, are brought into play. They create new *khandhās*. So, after one life we go over to another in a new *khandhā*, all by dint of craving prompted by delusion. Finally we are left with the burden of the *khandhā* to carry.

## UNFULFILLED DESIRES

### UNFULFILLED DESIRES

We always want the best, but we rarely get it. An individual longs to become a man or a divinity; but he may, instead of becoming what he wants to become, have to go down to the four nether worlds or to the world of *petas* by force of *kamma*. Or he may be reborn an animal. He may become a buffalo, or an ox, or a chicken, or a worm. Life is like staking in a lottery. Everybody stakes his money in the lottery hoping to win the one-lakh-kyat prize. But only the luckiest gets it. Others have to be content with ten-thousand or one-thousand-kyat prize. Most of them go away with a few hundred kyats. The most unfortunate fellow draws only blanks and gets nothing. Not everybody gets the first prize. In the same way not everybody can become a man or a divinity. Those who possess good *kamma* may be reborn in those higher planes of existence. But good *kamma* can be achieved only through the practice of charitableness, morality and concentration. Those who fail to perform these *kusala dhammas*, merits, cannot gain entrance into this human or divine world; but they are likely to be consigned to the nether, or animal or *peta* world. All new *khandhās* have their genesis in *taṇhā*, craving, which finds enjoyment in pleasant objects; and it is, therefore, said to be the receiver or acceptor of the burden.

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Every time we accept a desirable sense-object, we are accepting the heavy burden of the *khandhā*. Having accepted it, we have to carry it and serve it for forty, fifty or a hundred years of our lives amidst untold hardship and misery. Had we realized this before, we would have looked upon attachment to our desired objects with abhorrence. In fact we would be more than horrified had we known beforehand that because of this attachment we would be reborn into the animal world to bear the burden of animal-*khandhā*, or worst still, into the *peta* world to bear the burden of *peta-khandhā*. Earlier I have told you about *petas* who suffered because of their evil deeds which they committed with the encouragement given by their desires. Had we known beforehand that such desires would ultimately lead us to hell we would be all the more frightened.

King Ajatasattu had a strong desire for the life of a king lolling in luxuries. He, therefore, killed his father. As a consequence of this evil deed, he was thrown into the nether world to suffer in *lohakumbhī* hell to which four sons of rich men had already been consigned after death for their lustful desires. As humans they had committed adultery, sleeping with other people's wives whom they seduced with money. The *lohakumbhī* is a cauldron of immense proportions. The four sinners were boiled in the molten iron



## UNFULFILLED DESIRES

in it, now sinking to the bottom, now rising to the surface, oft and on. It took 30,000 years for each of them to sink from the surface to the bottom, and another 30,000 years to rise up to the surface. So, after a spell of 60,000 years, the four met together for a flickering moment on the surface of the molten iron, when they sought to say something about their condition of suffering and misery, But each could utter only one syllable and sank down again to the bottom. What they tried to say could only be heard and recorded as "*du, sa, na, and so.*"

The first man who uttered "*du*" meant to say that while he was a human he failed to practice acts of charity and observe morality, spending his whole life in doing evil. Just as he was beginning to say what he wanted to say, he was dragged down to the bottom.

The second man who began articulating "*sa*" wanted to say that he had been more than 60,000 years in hell wondering when he would be released. Like the first man he was also dragged down to the bottom able to utter only one syllable.

The third man had barely time enough to say "*na*" when he was sunk. He meant to say that he and his companions could see no end of their miseries because they had done nothing but evil in their human existence.

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The last man who cried out "so" and got sunk to the bottom meant to express his regrets promising that if he were released from hell he would practise alms-giving and observe precepts to gain merit.

### REPENTENCE

They were, no doubt, repentent. But it was to no avail since regrets came after the commission of evil deeds which had already produced consequences. Buddha, therefore, always enjoined us to become mindful in good time.

O bhikkhus! Bear this in mind. Be vigilant so that you do not feel remorseful only after the commission of evil deeds. I have repeatedly warned you about this.

Indeed, one must be vigilant. One must not be forgetful. One becomes unmindful when one lolls in the luxury of sensual pleasures. Buddha, therefore, warned us not to be hankering after them. Only when you get old, or when you are nearing death, or when you have already degraded yourself into the world of animals or *petas* or into the nether world, you may become repentent for not having practised *dhamma* when you were hale and hearty in the world of human beings. But then, it is too late. It is useless to repent, for, under the circumstances described above, you will not be able to do

## REPENTENCE

anything to make amends. Now that you have the opportunity to practise *vipassanā*, insight-meditation, do it now.

Every layman or monk should seriously consider the words of Buddha and abide by his admonition. We are enjoying life now, but for how long? Leaving aside the period of youth and old age, there is left barely a span of forty or fifty years during which we serve our *khandhās*. If, during that service, our life is unsupported by meritorious deeds, only demerits would accumulate and they will direct us to the four nether worlds. The four rich men's sons who sank to the bottom of hell as they cried "*du, sa, na, so,*" suffered for thousands and thousands of years in their one span of life. *Akusala kammās*, unwholesome actions, can direct us to the same fate met by the four sinners. Remember also the fate of the *petas* about whom I told you on another occasion. Those who are still suffering in the nether worlds or in the world of *petas* had bowed to the wishes of their *khandhās* forgetful of doing meritorious deeds of alms-giving and practising morality. If, during this present life, we fail to practise dhamma for the realization of the Path and its fruition, yielding to carnal desires, who can guarantee that we shall not go to the four nether worlds after our demise? Now is the opportunity for us to get the benefit of the

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teachings of Buddha as his *sāsanā* is still flourishing. Seize this opportunity by the forelock and practise *dāna*, *sīla*, *bhāvanā* and, especially, *vipassanā*. Apropos this, there is a verse composed by an experienced *sayadaw* (chief monk) which runs as follows:

O body! I am neither your slave nor your hireling. Having had the benefit of Buddha's teaching, I can no longer nourish or nurture you.

Before Buddha's time, when his teachings had not been propagated, people fed and nourished their bodies according to their dictates. But when Buddha taught that the bodies of the *khandhās* were a burden unto them, that the burden was very heavy, that these *khandhās* could never be satiated with whatever nourishment fed to them, that they could never be depended upon for help in times of crisis since they are impermanent, and that bringing them up only meant untold miseries in nether worlds throughout the *samsāra*, round of rebirths, they desisted from bowing to their wishes and desires and turned their minds on the practice of the *dhamma*. Why did they so desist? The second verse gives the answer.

I have nurtured you and yet I have suffered untold miseries going round and round in the realm of the endless *samsāra*.

## REPENTENCE

Nāham dāso bhaṭo tuyham;  
nāham posemi dāni tam;  
tvameva posento dukkham;  
patto vaṭṭe anappakam.

Well, we have been yielding to the wishes and desires of our bodies. When we are commanded to go, we go; when we are commanded to speak, we speak; when we are commanded to find food for them, we find food for them. In this way we are servants to our bodies. Perhaps as servants, we might have done our duties faithfully and justly. Doing these things is wearisome, though; but it does not generate evil. So it may be quite all right. But if, in the service of our bodies, we happen to do evil, such as earning a livelihood by dishonest means, we will be done for. Inevitably we shall be going round and round in the realm of the endless *samsāra*, suffering either in the nether world, or in the animal-world, or in the *peta* world. For example, we might have, just to sustain our life, resorted to killing, or looting, or stealing, or cheating. Or, perhaps, we might have maligned others or indulged in false propaganda against others, just to make capital out of the disharmony created. All these are *akusala dhammas*, unwholesomeness, which pave the way to hell. Those indulging in such misdeeds may be reborn in

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the world of men and divinities, but they are bound to be miserable in spite of their favourable existence.

### DUKKHA AS SEEN BY WISE MEN AND YOGIS

Miseries described so far relate to those experienced by ordinary human beings. To wise men and yogis even the apparently happy life of men, devas and brahmas are considered as subjected to *dukkha*, a term commonly translated as suffering. In this human world, even though a man feels that he is quite happy, he is actually burdened by his *khandhās* which he has to feed and nurture all his life. This in itself is misery. This will be more apparent when he falls sick. A man who has nothing to do with him would not care to nurse him. Of course he may hire a nurse to look after him paying attendance fees; but even then it is doubtful if she can attend him every day for a length of time, even when he continues paying her huge sums of money. When we speak of the life of devas we may not be able to say with certainty because we have never seen them. But consider them enjoying a sensuous life. They too will have the *dukkha* of satisfying their sensual desires. The King of devas is reputed to have many female attendants. But he may not be able to satisfy their wants and desires all the time. When they remain unfulfilled, misery will get the better of the devas. Brahmas do not live

## DUKKHA AS SEEN BY WISE MEN AND YOGIS

in sensuality. But even then they will have the trouble with their conditioning volitional activities, *sankhāra*, for, they are always busy whiling away their time in thinking this or that as they carry the burden of their *khandhās*. A wise man or a *yogi* considers this state of affairs as *dukkha* or suffering. If one were to sit the whole day long without doing anything, one would feel weary. If one were to be sitting and ruminating for a month one would feel miserable. Then what shall we say about those brahmas sitting up for hundreds or thousands of years doing nothing but cogitating. Consider that this cogitation last for eons! This is *sankhāra dukkha*...the misery of indulging in mental activities. When a brahma dies, he again gets into the world of human beings which is waiting for him with all the concomitants of human miseries. When circumstances are not favourable even a brahma can be reborn an animal or a *peta*, or he may go down to the nether worlds, if worst comes to the worst. So from the point of view of a wise man or a *yogi*, the state of being a brahma is unenviable, for he too has to bear the brunt of the five *khandhās* which portend *dukkha*. So on the eve of *parinibbāna*, the arahats used to contemplate:

For how long shall I be shouldering this burden of the *khandhās* which portend suffering?

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Kīwa ciraṃ nukho ayam dukkhabāro  
vahitabbo.

### BHAVATAṆHĀ

Having dealt with *kāmatanḥā*, I now come to *bhavatanḥā*. There are two wrong views held by worldlings about life. One is called *sassata-diṭṭhi*, eternalistic view of existence while the other is *uccheda-diṭṭhi*, nihilistic view of existence. *Bhavatanḥā*, craving for existence, arises conjointly with the eternalistic view which assumes that pleasures are indestructible since living substance knows no death continuing throughout eternity. The physical part of the body may become decayed or destroyed, but the spiritual part of it lives as it migrates from one body to the other, giving rise to a new entity. The universe may get destroyed, but the spirit or living substance lives on. It is permanent. It is eternal. Outside the teaching of Buddhism this view is the most popular. Some who hold this view presume that when a man dies, he is raised to heaven where he lives eternally, or alternately, he is consigned to hell, also eternally, according to the will of god. Others would like to believe that one's spirit migrates from one body to another and renews itself according to the working of one's *kaṃma*. Another belief is that life is predetermined and fixed and it goes on eternally according to that predetermination. Briefly



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stated, a belief in eternity of the substance of life is *sassata-diṭṭhi*. Under such a notion, life is like unto a bird hopping from tree to tree as the old tree on which it has first perched falls into decay. When the physical body dies, the living matter moves out to another new body.

Under the influence of *bhavataṇhā* supported by the idea of eternity, an individual is gratified with the thought that *atta*, self, abides by him permanently. He feels that what now exists is himself, confident that what he is now enjoying can also be enjoyed in his future lives. Hence his attachment to all what he sees, hears, tastes, smells, touches and thinks grows stronger and stronger throughout existence. He not only delights in sense-objects which he experiences in the present life but also in those which he hopes to experience hereafter. He wants to enjoy life now and he desires to continue enjoying it in his next existence. Having led a happy life as a human being, he goes even further than that, hoping for happiness as a divinity. Thus grows desire. So some would like to be males in all their existences, while others aspire to be females. All such longings are the work of *bhavataṇhā*. Yearning for the sense-objects to which one has become attached means acceptance of the burden of the *khandhās*. *Bhavataṇhā* is, therefore,

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craving for sensual pleasures with the belief that the living substance is eternal.

### VIBHAVATAṆHĀ

Briefly put, *uccheda-diṭṭhi* is a belief in no hereafter. Everything perishes after death. It is the doctrine preached by Ajita who flourished during Buddha's time. It runs thus:

An individual is made up of primary elements of earth, water, fire and air. When he dies, the earth-element goes into the mass of the earth; the water-element flows into the mass of water; the fire-element changes into heat; the air-element flows into the mass of air. All organs of the senses....of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and thinking.... disappear into space. When an individual, be he a wise man or a fool, dies, his body is destroyed and annihilated. Nothing is left after death.

While residing in the living body, the earth-element manifests itself in the form of hardness or softness; but when the body dies, it leaves it merging itself with the earth outside it. In other words, the earth-element in the dead body turns into the material earth, *pathavī rūpa*, from which trees and plants grow. In like manner, water-element in the dead body assumes wetness and fluidity of the material water.

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The nihilists of Ajita school do not recognize the existence of consciousness. All the faculties of seeing, hearing, etc., are conditioned by matter. So when they referred to these faculties they used the term *indriya*, organ of sense. So, when a man dies, his matter is annihilated. His faculties of the senses fritter away in space. No matter who dies, whether a wise man or a fool, his existence is "cut off" or snuffed out. When a fool dies, there will be no rebirth and so he need not have any qualms of remorse for his *akusala kamma*, evil deeds, just as the wise man is unaffected by his *kusala kamma*, wholesome deeds.

This, briefly, is the way of thinking of Ajita. His doctrine appeals to those who revel in committing evil, finding it irksome to do good. As it postulates that there is no life after death, it may be argued that there is *life* before death. If that be so, it may further be asked: "What is life before death?" The answer, according to the line of reasoning of Ajita and his ilk, would be the living *atta* (self), or *satta* (being). It suggests that, despite its views on the four primary elements, *atta* or *satta* exists. This is attachment to self pure and simple. Those who hold nihilistic view stipulate that one should not waste time doing meritorious deeds for forthcoming existences (which will not be forthcoming), but occupy

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oneself with full enjoyment of the present existence, the only existence one will have.

Craving arising out of this view of non-existence is *vibhāvatanhā* which promotes enjoyment of pleasures while they last since everything perishes after death. Naturally this ideology has a great appeal to those who delight in evil, shrinking from the practice of morality and other meritorious ways of life. Since nothing happens after death, there is no necessity to acquire merit. Those getting enamoured of this view do not like the idea that life is being constantly renewed and that the effects of good or bad *kamma* follow them in their trail. If no new life occurs after death, all their evil actions will come to an end with the end of their existence, and they will not be held responsible for any consequences, good or bad. In fact evil deeds done by them will be expunged when they pass away, emerging from them as innocent as a lamb, *Vibhāva taṇhā* always finds satisfaction in the idea of total annihilation. A man possessed by it is always eager to enjoy all the pleasures of life without any restraint in the commitment of sins. This acceptance of pleasures in the present existence tantamounts to the acceptance of the *khandhās* that will arise in the next existence. Evil actions that accumulate in this life are *akusala kammās* to which the dying man gets attached; and by dint of these *kammās*, new *khandhā* will arise.

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For so long as craving persists, new existence is inevitable notwithstanding the nihilistic view. Medical advice says that the patient should not take any food unsuitable to his health; but the patient cannot restrain himself and takes what has been forbidden. The result is that his condition worsens. He might even die. The man afflicted with *uccheda-diṭṭhi* is like that patient. Although he believes in no-hereafter, his craving for pleasurable objects are so intense that he "becomes" again, whatever his philosophy says. His new existence will hardly stand him in good stead for he has never done any meritorious deeds before. Every evil action produces evil result. (It may even be put forward that to every evil action there is an opposite evil reaction.) His philosophy has all along been the fulfilment of selfish desires regardless of adverse consequences to others. Let others die so that he may live; so he considers. He has no qualms of remorse for his actions that harm others. As he develops only bad *kammas* in this way, he will have nothing to hope for except inferior and miserable existences throughout the future of this *samsāra*.

To repeat, *vibhāvataṇhā* is craving for sense-objects in a life which is believed to have no hereafter. One who is afflicted with this kind of craving indulges in pleasures without restraint in, what he considers, the happy notion that, as

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all things perish with death one will not have to answer for actions good or bad during his life-time.

Let me say again what has been put forward earlier.

What is the heavyburden? *Khandhās* are the heavy burden.

Who carries the heavy burden? The individual made up of *khandhās* carries the heavy burden.

Who accepts the heavy burden for transportation?

*Taṇhā* accepts the heavy burden for transportation.

### THROWING DOWN THE BURDEN

Now I shall come to the subject of how to throw down this heavy burden, which is the most important part of this discourse.

Regarding throwing down the burden, Buddha has this to say:

O bhikkhus! What does throwing down the burden mean?

It means completely annihilating, renouncing, abandoning, releasing and disengaging desire.

Katamañca bhikkhave bharanikkhepanam?  
Yo tassa yeva taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho,  
cāgo, paṭinissaggo, mutti, anālayo,  
Idam bhikkhave bhāranikkhepanam.

## THROWING DOWN THE BURDEN

As soon as *taṇhā* is rejected, the burden will fall off one's shoulders. The rejection can be effected through the application of knowledge relating to insight-meditation and to realization of the Noble Path. *Taṇhā* recedes from such knowledge as darkness recedes from light. When it becomes extinguished, there shall be no cause for the *khandhās* to arise.

*Arahatta-magga*, the Path of the Worthy Ones, brings about complete annihilation of all forms of craving. At the stage of *anāgāmi-magga*, the Path of the Never-Returner, all cravings for sensual pleasures or lust (*Kāmarāga*) is extinguished. Because of the absence of that kind of craving, an *anāgāmi* is released from *kamma-bhava*, active process of becoming, and so he will not be reborn either as a human being or a divinity to shoulder the burden of the five aggregates of man or deva. *Sagadāgāmi-magga*, the Path of the Once-returner, can also exterminate lust completely. So he can also throw down the burden finally after two existences. At the stage of *sotāpatti-magga*, the Path of the Stream-winner, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, self-illusion, and *vicikicchā*, doubt, become extinguished. These two fetters or *saṃyojanas* are much the same as craving. Once these fetters are removed there will be no opportunity for *khandhās* of the nether world to arise. So a *sotāpanna* shall never suffer in hell. He is prepared to throw down the burden after seven existences.

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In order to illustrate the advantages gained by a *sotāpanna*, who can avoid suffering born out of the five aggregates, Buddha employed the metaphor of sand. He collected a quantity of sand and placing it on his finger-nail showed it to the monks asking: "Which is greater in quantity...sands on my finger-nail or sands of this earth?" On being replied by the monks that sands on his finger-nail are infinitesimal compared to the sands of this earth, he admonished the monks that the suffering arising out of "becoming" before a yogi attained the state of *sotāpanna* was uncountable like sands of the earth; and that, however, after the attainment of the Path and its fruition, what suffering that would remain for his last seven existences would be infinitesimal, compared to what he had encountered before. He, therefore, urged his disciples to strive for the inward realization of the Four Noble Truths.

### CAST AWAY THE BURDEN BY PRACTISING VIPASSANĀ

So far I have shown that the burden can be thrown away by means of the four *ariyamaggas*, Noble Paths. But to get to the Path one must acquire knowledge of insight-meditation. One who chooses to reject the burden must strive for that knowledge.

When you are unmindful of what you see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think, you will not know the true nature of the sense-objects.



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Your knowledge about them would be perfunctory and, therefore, wrong. You might regard what is impermanent as permanent, what is unsatisfactory as satisfactory and what is unsubstantial as substantial. That is to say, you will never realize the concept of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. Not knowing all things are wrong is *avijjā*, ignorance or delusion. It is delusion which allures us to getting stuck to pleasurable objects, just as we get attached to our physical selves. This is the nature of craving; and every time this craving rears its head, we have to accept the heavy burden of the *khandhās*. Because of craving (*taṇhā*), attachment (*upādāna*) arises, and attachment activates *kamma*, action or activity, and *saṅkhāra*, conditioning, and thereby a new *khandhā* comes into being.

The moment one neglects to practise insight-meditation and fails to note the sense-objects, craving will rear its head. It may arise in consonance with seeing or hearing, or it may lie low for sometime waiting for favourable conditions to be forthcoming. That is why we must seize the moment when mind comes into contact with the sense-objects; for, if we miss doing so, craving, accompanied by delusion will gain the upper-hand. In that case we shall have to accept the new *khandhā* and do according to its dictates. Therefore we must deny it the chance to assert itself by noting the arising and passing away of *nāma* and

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*rūpa* whenever we see or hear a thing. As we note the phenomena in this way our faculties of concentration will become well-developed and strong and thereby we can realize their true nature. We will then come to know that the knowing subject *nāma*, is distinct from the known object, *rūpa*, and that the former arises anew soon after it has passed away, just as the latter also does. Conversely each of them passes away soon after arising. Both are in a state of flux. When you observe this you will come to realize that nothing is permanent but transitory, and that, therefore, all are subject to the law of *anicca*. That which comes into being perishes is not a happy state of affairs that can be deemed satisfactory, and so this unsatisfactoriness is *dukkha*. All things happen in their own sweet will, *atta* or self having no control or suzerainty over them. This is unsubstantiality or *anatta*. To have realized that *nāma* and *rūpa* are all subject to the law of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta* means the realization of *vijjā* knowledge. It denotes enlightenment. So we say that insight-meditation has helped us to gain the light of wisdom having dispelled delusion. At this stage we are able to reject the wrong notion that what is pleasurable is to be desired. Craving is dispelled at the very moment of our noting the sights and sounds that present themselves to our minds. While we are thus noting, there is no opportunity for craving or desire to occur. It cannot make itself felt

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even when we later try to recall what we have seen or heard. So we say that one is entirely free from the feeling of *taṇhā* or craving for one thought-moment. So when *kusala dhamma* is established for that one thought moment, craving does not arise. It means rejection of craving desires or *taṇhā* that may arise at every moment of effective noting or that may arise hereafter, by virtue of *kusala dhamma* gained through *vipassanā*.

Rejection of craving everytime we note the phenomena of arising and passing away of *nāma* and *rūpa* means throwing down the burden of the *khandās*, for, such noting enlightens us on the realities of the facts of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and unsubstantiality; and it is this knowledge which facilitates us in the throwing down of the burden.

When one notes the rising and falling of the abdomen, or the movements such as sitting, standing, bending or stretching, one is looking himself inward. When one realizes the actual development, stage by stage, of all these activities of one's body, craving for pleasurable sensations fail to occur. But if one cannot grasp the true nature of the phenomena, one is misled to the notion that what is rising and falling is one's own abdomen. "It is my abdomen" is, after all, a delusion. Because of this delusion, one feels, "What is mine is pleasant." It leads one to do

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things in the interest of all that one holds it to be his. Then *kamma* and *saikhāra* are brought into play. It is because of these two activating factors that new *khandkās* arise. How do they originate? They originate by *taṇha*'s machination. When one is forgetful about the arising and passing away of *nāma* and *rūpa*, one feels pleasant with the notion that it is one's abdomen that is working. As soon as this notion comes up, craving is developed. When one meditates on the phenomena of *nāma* and *rūpa*, it disappears, and so we say that rejecting it means throwing down the burden.

Sometimes it so happens that as you are meditating and noting the phenomenon of the rising and falling of your abdomen, you may fall into thinking. This thinking leads to its corollary intentions or desires. For instance, as you are thinking of an object, it might have occurred to you that you would like to do something, or have something. Whether your intentions are realized or not, whether your desires are fulfilled or not, it does not matter as long as you are pleased with thinking about them. Such thinking is so pleasurable that even yogis in meditation may not like the suggestion that one must note the phenomenon of thinking that occurs while one is noting the rising and falling of the abdomen. But in practice the working of your mind should also be noted.

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For, if you fail to take note of your thinking, you may have developed attachment to it, pleased with the idea that it is you who are thinking. This is how the idea of self comes in. Once this idea takes hold of you, you would like to strive only for the good of "self." Then *kamma* and *saṅkhāra* will be brought into play, and these two will operate new *khandhās* to arise. So, whenever you fail to take note of what you are thinking about, you are accepting the new *khandhās*.

A yogi who watches what he is thinking about will be mindful of the fact that his thinking does not denote his *atta* or self, but only a phenomenon which comes naturally. As he notes "thinking, thinking," the activity of thinking will cease. As he notes "intending, intending," or "desiring, desiring," his intentions and desires will disappear. Then he will come to realize that such thoughts, intentions and desires were not there before, and that they just come up now, and that subsequently they would disappear. He will come to know these intuitively, without making efforts to know them. He no longer takes delight in his thoughts, intentions and desires, and so he becomes detached from them, not recognizing them as products of his *atta*. This signifies the extermination of *taṇhā*, craving; and when craving ceases to exist, *khandhās* originating from it also

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ceases. So, whenever you note your thinking, you are throwing away the burden. This will be made clear when I speak presently about *bhaṅga ñāṇa*, knowledge with regard to dissolution of things.

A *yogi* who has attained *bhaṅga ñāṇa* finds that both the sense-objects (*rūpa*) and the mind (*nāma*) that takes note of them get dissolved one after another as soon as both have arisen. When he notes the rising of the abdomen, the rising abdomen together with the noting mind get dissolved during his observation. They never remain constant. Their images cannot be seen. They give no sign of their presence. Their existence is fleeting. They are not permanent. Hence there is absolutely no reason for any one why he should take delight in the *khandhīs* as "my body", or the abdomen as "my abdomen," or in the mind as "my mind." No attachment can, therefore, be developed. As attachment cannot arise, neither can *taṇhā*, nor *upādāna*, nor *kamma*, active process of becoming. When noting all other phenomena such as falling of the abdomen, or bending or stretching of the body, he will feel that the object known, *rūpa*, and the subject that knows, *nāma*, get dissolved in pairs without leaving any trace of their form and substance. They are all transitory. These phenomena, therefore, cannot be perceived as "my abdomen, my hand,

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my leg or my body." Craving is now annihilated. With its annihilation, *upādāna*, *kamma* and *saikhāra* cannot operate. With the cessation of their activities, the *khandhās* fail to arise. In this way the burden is thrown away.

Then, there is the practice of noting *vedanā*, sensation. You may feel tired, or hot, or painful as you sit for meditation. Note all these sensations. As you are noting the phenomena of *nāma* and *rūpa* arising and passing away, you will find such sensations disappear together in pairs. Concentrate on hotness felt in one part of your body. Ordinary persons would think that this hotness happens continuously. But when you note the feeling of hotness in accordance with the method of insight-meditation, you will find that this hotness occurs as a series of hot sensations, now appearing, now vanishing, now appearing again and now vanishing again. There are breaks in the chain of sensations. To a vipassanā yogi each break is palpable while to an ordinary person the whole chain of sensations is continuous with no break whatsoever. This applies not only to sense-objects that produce sensations but also to the mind watching them. At one moment the mind cognizes the sensation and then this cognition disappears. Then another moment arrives when the successor to the previous mind cognizes the new sensation that appears and this cognition

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also disappears as before. And this goes on *ad infinitum* for so long as this sensation lasts.

The sensation of hotness under observation is not "I." The mind that takes note of this sensation is also not "I." What is not "I" is not a thing to be delighted with. As soon as this thought occurs, craving ceases to exist. With the cessation of craving, *taṇhā* and its concomitants, *upādāna*, *kamma* and *saṅkhāra* cease to operate. In the absence of operational activities new *khandhās* fail to come up. So, every time you are noting the sensations that occur, you are throwing away the burden. This is said in relation to pleasant sensations. But be it noted that the same remarks apply to unpleasant sensations and sensations which are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. As you practise noting the phenomena, you will come to realize that sensations do not happen continuously, but that each part of them arises and passes away repeatedly for so long as they last. In the example given about hotness, the sensation of hotness can be divided into parts, moment by moment. As one takes note of *dukkha vedanā*, unpleasant sensation, *sūkha vedanā*, pleasant sensation, *upekkhā vedanā*, neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant sensation, one gets detached from the idea of a permanent "I," a suffering "I" or a happy "I." This detachment brings an end to *upādāna*, *kamma* and *saṅkhāra* and *khandhā* and ultimately, the burden is lifted off



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one's shoulders. With the cessation of *khandhās*, old age, disease and death cannot arise. In alluding to this Buddha said that yogi would be hidden away from death as soon as he had laid aside his burden.

One who looks down on the world of *khandhās* as devoid of substance like a bubble or a mirage cannot be noticed by the King of Death.

Yathā pubbulakam passe,  
Yathā passe marīcikaṃ;  
evaṃ lokam avekkhantaṃ,  
maccurājā na passati.

A bubble bursts soon after it has been formed. A mirage conjures up an image of reality which disappears on close examination. There is absolutely no substance in both of them. This is common knowledge. As we know their true nature so also must we know the true nature of the phenomena. When a yogi acquires knowledge of concentration through the observance of the dissolution of *khandhās*, he will discover that the known object and the knowing mind are all in a state of flux, now appearing, now vanishing. They are transitory. There is no essence or substance worthy to be named "mine," in them. They signify only the processes of becoming and dissolution. Death cannot discover him who possesses this realization. He is said to have

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been liberated from it at the moment of practising insight-meditation. When, as he practises it, he gains *arahatta magga*, the Path of the Worthy Ones, he will be liberated from it forever.

The metaphor that death cannot discover the yogi used in that verse is in accord with the saying in this Bhāra Sutta that as *taṇhā* has no opportunity to arise, one is able to throw down the burden off one's shoulders. Here death is personified with a view to excite the sense of fear. At that particular moment when a yogi has done away with *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *kamma* and *saṅkhāra*, he is said to have laid down his burden for that particular moment.

### A SOTĀPANNA IS RELIEVED OF THE BURDEN

With the gradual maturity and accomplishment of knowledge of insight-meditation leading to the realization of *sotāpanna magga*, the Path of the Stream-winner, the yogi can spiritually conceive *nibbāna*, where *nāma*, *rūpa* and *saṅkhāra* become totally extinct. He can actually feel the sensation of peace with the termination of volitional activities that condition the sense-objects and meditation. Where all phenomena cease, there is absolute peace. He is released from self-allusion which takes mind and matter for *atta*, self, or *satta*, being. That which sees, hears, tastes, smells, touches or thinks constitutes

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only the aggregates of mind and matter. Bending, stretching or moving denotes the activity of these aggregates. All behaviour, physical, verbal or mental originates in the same aggregates. Before meditation, the yogi might have thought that all activity and behaviour constitute himself, so he might have asserted: "It is I who see. I see. I hear." He had taken all phenomena of the mind and body for a living substance that resided in him. Now that he has been enlightened by the knowledge of the Path of the stream-winner, self-allusion disappears with the realization that all seeing, hearing etc., are but the manifestations of the phenomena of *nāma* and *rūpa* arising and passing away. This describes the process of eliminating *sakkāya diṭṭhi*, self-allusion.

The moment self-allusion is eliminated, knowledge becomes unfolded; and the yogi dispels all doubts about the reality of the Three Refuges, Buddha, Dhamma (the Doctrine) and Sangha (the Order), and the sanctity of *sīla*, morality, *samādhi*, concentration, *paññā*, wisdom and *sikkhā*, moral training. Here, for the sake of brevity, I shall leave moral training aside; but it must be borne in mind that once a yogi has established himself in the Three Refuges, it naturally follows that he has developed faith in moral training. In the practice of the Path its fruition, morality, concentration and wisdom are of paramount importance. A sangha means a personage who practises three *dhammas*.

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With the elimination of doubt and self-allusion, *kilesā*, defilement of the mind, is removed. It comprises greed, anger and ignorance among others because of which a non-*sotāpanna* is born and reborn for more than seven existences.

Any individual failing entirely or partly to practise insight-meditation will fail to attain the Path, and, therefore, he is liable to suffer in the nether worlds as a result of bad *kamma*. Were he a lesser *sotāpanna*, he may perhaps, be able to avoid hell in his next existence; but in his third existence he is liable to be caught in the whirligig of the *samsāra*, endlessly passing through births as man or divinity. But if he practises insight-meditation during any one of his existences having had the opportunity to get the benefit of Buddha's teachings, he can aspire to the Path and its fruition within the short space of a few more existences to come, even though he has missed the chance in his present existence. It means that a limit has been set to his rebirths. This is the advantage to be gained by a *vipassanā* yogi over an individual who does not practise meditation. Delusion and craving prevent worldlings from limiting the number of existences to which they are destined throughout the *samsāra*. Here is what Buddha said:

O bhikkhus! *Samsāra*, round of rebirths, is incomprehensible. It has delusion for obstructing (the Path); it has craving for

## A SOTĀPANNA IS RELIEVED OF THE BURDEN

binding beings to continued existence. Hence one passes from one life to another in this *samsāra*, the beginning of which is unknowable.

Ordinary knowledge about seeing, hearing etc., by the *khandhās* composed of mind and matter is not true knowledge. It is *avijjā*, delusion. It creates a deception of permanence of things seen or heard. It hoodwinks us into believing that an object is wholesome, good and beautiful. It misleads us into the idea of self. "It is I, it is he, it is a being," so we think. It covers up the true nature of the *khandhās*, and so we are led into thinking that an object is pleasing or good, thereby becoming attached to it. This is how craving works in collusion with delusion. It is like a tether. The tethered cattle can move about as much as the length of the tether allows, unable to go beyond limit. In much the same way beings are tethered to craving, and they circumvent around it, unable to get away from it. They are born and reborn, again and again, in different forms or *khandhās*, without end. Inasmuch as they cannot break away from the *khandkās*, they cannot break away from the *samsāra*. In fact they cannot even think about it. So *khandhās* arise again and again for millions and millions of world-cycles, and there is no knowing when they begin arising. They will continue to arise until the realization of *sotāpanna magga*. When the Path is realized, one may

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assume new *khandhās* for the space of only seven existences, after which there will be no "becoming". Eternal peace will be finally established. This is how the burden is laid aside.

In the Pali Text of Niddesa, the following is mentioned:

By dint of *sotāpanna magga*, the Path of the stream-winner, accumulation of *kamma*, merit and demerit, ceases, and with this cessation, all *nāma* and *rūpa* which would have arisen indefinitely throughout the *saṃsāra*, had not the Path reached, will be annihilated and extinguished after seven existences.

Just like the disease that is cured by administration of medicine, the realization of the Path (metaphorically speaking, *sotāpanna magga* medicine) would save him from endless rebirths, which he would otherwise have to undergo. Now that he will escape the endless rounds of rebirth and will not have more than seven existences after which no further rebirths will take place. This shows the way how the burden is to be removed and rejected by means of the knowledge of the Path.

THE BURDEN CAN ALSO BE THROWN AWAY  
AT HIGHER STAGES OF THE PATH

With the realization of the knowledge of *sakadāgāmi magga*, the Path of the Once-Returner, one will be able to throw away the burden at

## THE BURDEN CAN ALSO BE THROWN AWAY

the end of the next existence, for one is destined to be born again only once. The *anāgāmi*, however, can dispense with rebirth in his present final existence, either in the Form Sphere or in the Formless Sphere. Existence cannot be counted as lives, because in the Form Sphere one can be reborn up to five times in the five *suddhāvāsa*-Pure Abodes. In the Formless Sphere there are four abodes, and so one can be reborn four times in those four abodes. This interpretation applies also to references made in connection with *sakadāgāmis* and *sotāpannas*. They relate to planes of existences and not to rebirths. This is explained in Mula Tikā and is a matter for the learned to discuss.

With the revelation of the *Arahatta magga ñāṇa*, knowledge of the Path of the Worthy Ones, the arahat does not "become" again after his *parinibbāna*, all aggregates having come to total extinction. This kind of *parinibbāna* is to be described as *anupādisesa parinibbāna*, which means that nothing (of the *khandhās*) remains.

Hence the saying of the Buddha as follows:

O bhikkhus! When craving becomes totally extinct, leaving no traces, when it is completely abandoned, when it is finally rejected, when it is discharged or released, and when it is detached, such an annihilation means throwing down the burden of *upādānakkhandhās*, the aggregates of clinging.

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So, the elimination of craving means throwing down the burden.

If one fails to take note of the sense-objects that appear at the six sense-doors whenever one sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches or thinks, craving, conjointly with delusion, gets the upper hand momentarily or retrospectively. Allowing it to arise means acceptance of the burden. When one notes what is happening at the six sense-doors, one gets familiar with the reality of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*; and such knowledge of impermanence, etc., dispels craving for the moment. Hence every moment of noting the phenomena means throwing down the burden instantaneously. When one achieves the four *ariya maggas*, knowledge of the Path of the Noble Ones, one annihilates craving. Hence if you sincerely desire to abandon the burden, you must practise insight-meditation which leads you to the attainment of the Path.

### THE BURDEN VIEWED FROM THE LIGHT OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

Discourse on Bhāra Sutta in plain prose is now complete. But let us apply this dhamma to the Four Noble Truths. The five aggregates of clinging constitute the Noble Truth of Suffering, *dukkha sacca*. It has been shown that the porter who carries the burden of the *khandhās*, is an individual, which is but a name. He has



## THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

no entity when viewed from the standpoint of truth in its highest sense. Considered in this light, the individual remains beyond the pale of the Four Noble Truths. In other words, in this discussion, individuals are not taken into account. It is craving which is the cause of suffering. Accepting this fact we come to the Truth of the Cause of Suffering, *samudaya saccā*. I have already told you about the method of exterminating craving, which is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, *nirodha saccā*. But in Bhāra Sutta, the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering, *maggā saccā*, is left unsaid. However, if Buddha gives us the knowledge about the cessation of suffering, we must be able to adduce the fact that the task relating to the practice of the Path leading to its cessation is included in *nirodha saccā*. Therefore, in the course of my discussions I have purposely made references to insight-meditation and the four *ariya maggas*. So, please note the following:

The burden means the five aggregates of clinging. It reveals the Truth of Suffering.

The acceptor of the burden is craving. It reveals the Truth of the Cause of Suffering.

Throwing down the burden means annihilation of craving. It reveals the Truth of Cessation of Suffering.

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Insight-meditation and the four *ariya maggas* are a means to the annihilation of craving. They reveal the Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

### MOMENTOS

Coming to the conclusion of Bhāra Sutta in prose, Buddha spoke in some *gāthās* (verses) to serve the audience as aids to their memory. This has been recorded by the Council of the Sangha as follows:

Having preached (this Bhāra Sutta), Buddha, who always used to speak the truth for the benefit of his audience as Teacher of men and devas, composed two *gāthās* as the gist of what he had preached.

Now I shall give you the two *gāthās*, the first of which is as follows:

Bhārā have pañcakkhandhā,  
bhārahāro ca puggalo;  
Bhārādānaṃ dukhaṃ loke,  
bhāranikkhepanaṃ sukhaṃ.

Heavy, indeed, is the burden of the five *khandhās*. One who carries it is the individual (who is also a bundle of the five *khandhās*). In this world of beings, accepting the burden is misery. Happy is he who lays down the burden (applying the knowledge of insight-meditation and the Path of the *ariyās*.)

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The heaviness of the burden is daily felt by the carrier of the burden as he daily serves his own body with food and preparations for his toilet. This is all the more apparent with those whose *kammas* are deficient. The diseased and the aged also feel the weight of the burden of their bodies. Those in the *peta* world or nether worlds suffer worst. Their miseries are of the highest magnitude and yet they cannot get away from them. Animals are no better. With them food is an eternal problem. They are unprotected from all kinds of dangers. They run and hide themselves, in order to keep their body and soul together, since they are liable to be eaten up by other predatory animals. Chickens, ducks, pigs, goats, etc., live in fear, ever anxious of the dangers that would befall them. While trying to protect themselves they get killed for food. They have no saviour. The case with cattle is more heart-rending, for they work, rain or shine, for their masters while they are hale and hearty, but they meet their end at the slaughter-house. It is because of their bodies (*khandhās*) they suffer. If they do not have them, they would not have been killed and eaten. But even among mankind, we used to come across the strong victimizing the weak. So what more can be said of poor animals?.

Regarding the meaning of *puggala*, individual, mentioned in the *gāthā*, the word is used in *paññatta desanā*, for there is no individual in the

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abstract in *paramattha desanā*. Alluding to the five *khandhās* we say in conventional language that one is an individual, a being, a man, a woman, etc. They are but names. In the abstract an individual does not exist; it is the *khandhās* which bear the weight of the burden. Even tending to his physical well-being or caring for his health is in effect carrying the burden.

Accepting the burden is suffering, and rejecting it is conducive to happiness. Craving arises when we fail to note the phenomena of seeing, hearing, etc., in meditation. It arises at the moment of seeing or hearing, or it may lie dormant for sometime to arise on the subject's reflection later. In whatever way it arises it brings with it *upādāna*, *kamma* and *saṅkhāra* which in their turn create new *khandhās*. Then comes suffering. When we note the phenomena of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking as each of them occurs, we will realize their true nature, and with this realization we can exterminate craving together with its supporter, delusion. When *ariya magga* is achieved this extermination offers no opportunity for *upādāna*, *kamma* and *saṅkhāra* to operate; and so *khandhās* cease to "become" again. Finally suffering comes to an end, and happiness is established. Hence to throw down the burden having eliminated craving means the achievement of happiness.

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Now I come to the second *gāthā*:

Nikkhipitvā garuṃ bhāraṃ,  
aññaṃ bhāraṃ anādiya;  
Samulaṃ taṇhamabbuyha,  
nicchāto parinibbuto.

Having laid aside the heavy burden (of the five *khandhās*), having rejected new burdens to follow, having uprooted craving from its very foundation, no desires arise, and peace is established.

This *gāthā* alludes to arahats. But even an arahat has to carry the burden before his *parinibbāna* or death. He has to tend to his body, bathing it, feeding it, cleansing it, etc., and all these tasks come to an end only with death. So the arahats on the eve of their *parinibbāna* used to contemplate saying, "For how long shall I carry this burden?" To them death is a relief from that burden. But worldlings under the spell of craving take it as a sad occasion.

In fact, even Ānandā wept on the eve of the *mahāparinibbāna* of Buddha. And, there is the case of the bereaved womenfolk weeping on the eve of the *parinibbāna* of Mahāpajāpati Gotamī, step-mother of Buddha, who had to console her disciples with the words: "My daughters, do not weep! *Parinibbāna*, is no occasion for sadness. It is a time for rejoicing (*hāsa kāla*)." Indeed to the Arahats death is an occasion for joy!

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As has been already explained in earlier passages, new *khandhās* come into being because of the sense-objects conditioned by *kamma*, actions, *kamma nimitta*, sign of actions, and *gati nimitta*, sign of destiny. This is acceptance of the burden; and this acceptance is repeated existence after existence, without end. Because a porter accepts one load, he has to accept another, and still another, so that many loads fall on his shoulders, right and left. Withal he has a breather. But generally worldlings do not have even a second of rest. Even *sotāpannas* know no rest for a space of seven consecutive existences during which they have been trying unsuccessfully to extricate themselves from craving. The same goes with *sakadāgāmi* for two consecutive existences and also with *anāgāmi* for one existence in Form Sphere or Formless Sphere. An *anāgāmi* may even have to tolerate rebirths for four or five times in accordance with the number of abodes that can be met with in those Spheres. Having exterminated craving once and for all, the arahats are entirely saved from being reborn in new *khandhās* once *parinibbāna* is achieved. It is said of him that he has rejected the new burdens to be imposed on him as craving or *taṇhā* has entirely ceased in him.

Craving, like hunger, is insatiable. Worldlings possessed it. Even *sotāpannas*, *sakadāgāmis* and *anāgāmis* cannot break away completely from it. They also, like worldlings develop attachment, on the eve of death, to sense objects created by

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*kamma*, *kamma-nimitta* and *gati nimitta*. Because of such attachment new *khandhās* arise. But an arahat is he who has killed off craving with the weapon of *arahata magga*. He has uprooted it from its very foundation. What is this foundation or root? It is *avijjā*, delusion. It is, in fact, the very root of all suffering. It deludes beings into remaining in ignorance of its presence. Hence uprooting is emphasized. If one fails to note the phenomena of seeing, hearing, etc., in meditation, one is liable to take them as constituting an individual, a being, a man, a woman, etc., when craving for existence as an individual, or a being, or a man, or a woman arises. This delusion is the originating factor of craving; and so it is not enough to cut down craving only. Its foundation or root must be torn up and destroyed. If not, it would lie low to rear its head when opportunity arrives. There are instances of yogis possessing *abhiññā*, supernormal powers, losing them the moment delusion wakes up from its slumbers.

In Mudulakkhaṇa Jātaka, our Buddhisatta was a yogi possessing *abhiññā*, dissociating himself from *kāma rāga*, lust. But as craving had not yet been uprooted from its foundation with the application of the knowledge of the Path, it asserted itself when he saw Queen Mudulakkhaṇa's naked beauty which excited his lustful desires. He at once lost all his supernormal

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powers. Before that he journeyed through space to get to the King's palace; but after losing those powers he had to wend his way back to his dwelling place on foot. This incidence proves that he had only dissociated himself from *kāma tanhā*, craving for sensual pleasures, failing to have it uprooted. When a pleasant sight was in view it played havoc in his mind.

There is another similar story. In about 400 Buddhist Era, when Duṭṭhagāmaṇi was ruling in Ceylon, there was a yogi who thought he had attained arahatship because he had eliminated craving. One day, Dhammadinnā, a female yogi, who had truly attained arahatship, visited him and enquired of him for how long he had been an arahat. He told her that he had been an arahat for 60 years. He said this in the sincere belief that he had become an arahat as he had never felt craving arise in him. But she knew that he had not truly attained arahatship, that is to say, he had not really eliminated craving. So she next asked him if he could exercise supernormal powers. On being replied that he could, she insisted that he creates a lotus-pond with a huge lotus flower inside which a pretty girl would be dancing. He created the pond complete with the dancing girl, as he was requested. Then Dhammadinnā asked the so-called arahat to set his eyes on the girl of his own creation. He accordingly did so when suddenly



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he felt the urge of his lust. Then he came to his senses and admitted that his task as an aspirant to arahatship had not yet been accomplished. Therefore he asked the female arahat to show him the right way to practise dhamma to uproot craving together with delusion in order that he could become a fully fledged arahat. So far, he had been able to remove craving only temporarily like a water-pot that strikes the surface of the water removing the moss which, however, gathers again as the pot is lifted. It can be uprooted from its foundation, delusion, only when *arahatta magga* is attained. When thus uprooted no yogi could have been corrupted even by a dancing girl in flesh and blood, not to say of an imaginary one. When craving for existence is completely exterminated, no new *nāma* and *rūpa* can arise. Without *khandhās* all sufferings come to an end. I have composed a verse for the audience to enable them to remember the gist of what I have said:

If craving is uprooted, desire will be eliminated. When one throws down the old burden, no new burden can be imposed on him. Then nibbanic peace will be achieved.

When craving, together with delusion, is eliminated, desire will completely disappear. When the old body or *khandhā* is rejected, the

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burden of carrying a new body will be removed. Then miseries cease; and peace is established

### CONCLUSION

Now this discourse on Bhāra Sutta is complete, requiring only conclusion. You have seen that the five *khandhās* assuming themselves as beings are a great burden and that we are carrying the burden of these *khandhās* throughout the *samsāra*. According to the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths this burden indicates *dukkha saccā*, the Noble Truth of Suffering. You have also realized that as long as you take pleasure in sense-objects of sights and sounds, etc., you are accepting the burden, which is *dukkha* in itself. You take pleasure in them because you fail to note them to know their true nature. The more you are ignorant of their nature, the more your craving for sense-objects intensifies. Craving, which accepts the burden, is the cause of all troubles. This brings you to the conviction that craving indicates *samudaya saccā*, the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering. You have also realized that eliminating craving means laying down the burden, and this shows *nirodha saccā*, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering. Delusion brings about misunderstanding of the nature of the phenomena of seeing, hearing, etc., which you fail to realize in the process of noting in meditation. It is the genesis of craving. So whenever you try to do away

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with craving, delusion must also be done away with. This also you have come to know. When delusion is eliminated, *vijjā ñāṇa*, knowledge, blooms forth. Light has come where darkness was. This also you have understood. As knowledge is attained, you come to the stage of *nirodha śaccd* and as you further meditate on it your knowledge of insight-meditation will become developed and you will attain the four *ariyamaggas* and realize *magga saccā*, the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. If we take pleasure in sense-objects such as sights and sounds etc., craving will be developed in us, and this development amounts to accepting the heavy burden. This also you have understood. Craving is developed because we fail to recognize the real nature of the phenomena. It is this ignorance, or delusion, which accepts the burden. Craving, therefore, is the root of all troubles, and so we say that it is the cause of suffering. This also you have seen. If craving is dispelled, we will be liberated from suffering; and this means that we have arrived at the truth of the cessation of suffering. Delusion is the genesis of craving. So it must also be dispelled. It arises when we fail to be mindful of the sense-objects. If we note the arising and passing away of their phenomena while we meditate, knowledge will be developed. With the light of knowledge delusion disappears just as darkness does. In its absence craving for the burden of

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the *khandhās* cannot arise and so we have on desire to "become" again to carry on with it. As we develop the habit of noting sense-objects, insight-meditation will be developed and the four *ariya maggas* will be attained.

Of the four *ariya maggas*, if you have developed *sotāpatti magga*, you have only seven existences to suffer in the round of rebirths, after which all *khandhās* cease. This has lightened the burden to a certain extent. If, however, you like to continue practising insight-meditation, to lighten the burden still further, as you ought to, you can attain *sakadāgāmi magga* when all the burdens of the *khandhās* will be laid aside after two existences. As you perfect yourself in accordance with your *pāramī* (perfections) you will come up to the stage of *anāgāmi magga* when all the burdens can be set aside after existence in Form Sphere or Formless Sphere. Then all the five *khandhās*, which indicate *dukkha saccā*, will cease and Peace shall reign supreme.

It may be recalled here that Buddha has said to the effect that once craving is uprooted no desires arise and peace is established. If you really desire to lay down the burden and establish peace where all suffering comes to an end, you must practise what I have now taught you.

Now I conclude with the summation of aphorisms that I have earlier given:

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What is the heavy burden? *khandhās* are the heavy burden.

Who carries the burden? The individual, made up of *khandhās*, carry the heavy burden.

Who accepts the heavy burden? *Tañhā*, craving, accepts the heavy burden.

What is meant by throwing down the burden? Annihilation of *tañhā* is throwing down the burden.

Heavy is the burden of the five *khandhās*.

The individual who carries the burden is known by his or her name (in accordance with *paññātti desanā*).

Acceptance of the burden is suffering; and rejection of it is conducive to happiness.

When craving is uprooted from its very foundation, no desires arise. Old burden having been laid aside, no new burden can be imposed.

Then one enters *nibbāna*, the abode of eternal peace.

May you all who have listened to this discourse on Bhāra Sutta come to the realization that the five *khandhās* arising and passing away ceaselessly in your physical selves are a great burden to you; that your craving for sense-objects of sights and sounds, etc., means the acceptance of the burden of the new *khandhās*, to arise; that

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it is the cause of all suffering; that the rejection of it leads to peace; and that peace can be achieved with the practice of insight-meditation. Finally, I fervently pray that you all attain *nibbāna* soon, by virtue of the knowledge of insight-meditation and of the Path that you have trodden.

*sādhu!*

*sādhu!*

*sādhu!*



"Through worldly round of many births  
I ran my course unceasingly,  
Seeking the maker of the house:  
Painful is birth again and again,  
House-builder! I behold thee now,  
Again a house thou shalt not build:  
All thy rafters are broken now,  
The ridge-pole also is destroyed;  
My mind, its elements dissolved,  
The end of cravings has attained."

*Dhammapada.*

"Just as a man who tames a calf would  
tie it to a post, so here  
Should his own mind by mindfulness  
be firmly to the object tied."

*Visuddhimagga*

