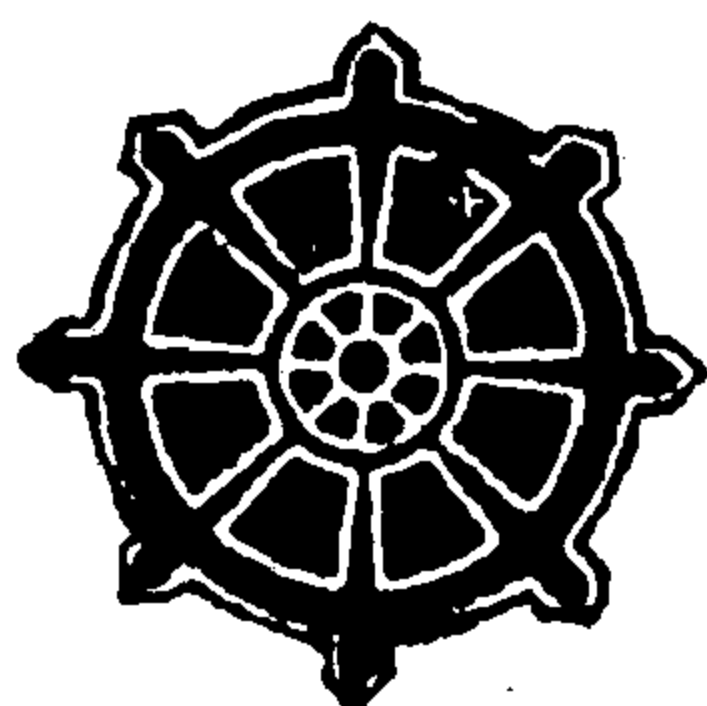


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THE WAY
of
THE NOBLE

T. H. PERERA

THE WHEEL PUBLICATION No, 126

THE WAY OF THE NOBLE

by

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*Homage to that Blessed One, the Perfect One,
the Buddha Supreme!*

THE WAY OF THE NOBLE

“Yea, by my troth this have I seen, no hearsay this,
In one communion bound of holy life
A thousand (saints who had) abandoned death;
Disciples of these too, five hundred yea,
And more, ten hundred, yea, and ten times that
Who all had reached the Stream, the Holy Way”.¹

The title of this essay is the English rendering of the Pāli term *Ariya Magga* – the Noble Way or Path. The *Ariya-Atthaṅgika-Magga* is the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism, which leads to the state of an Ariya, or Noble One. The Buddha Dhamma claims no affinity to the word ‘Aryan’ which is used to distinguish a stock of the human species from other stocks of the same species on the basis of colour and race. The Buddha-Dhamma views with disfavour adventitious distinctions such as the colour or caste of a man, for the satisfying reason that, born of the knowledge of the real nature of phenomenal existence, it embraces in a compassionate oneness all living things in the entire universe with an all pervading loving-kindness.

The word Aryan comes from the Pali word *ariya* (*Skr.; ārya*) which means pure or noble. The Buddha-Dhamma recognizes one who has cleaned himself of the

impurities of mind as noble or pure. In this respect, Lord Buddha is acclaimed as the Greatest Ariya. Hence, the Four Eternal Verities which he discovered are called the Four Noble Truths (*ariya sacca*). The disciples of the Buddha who had understood and realised the Four Noble Truths are called the Noble Ones (*ariya-puggala*). The word *ariya*, also, means one who sees things as they truly are.² It is only when one sees this psycho-physical (*nāma-rūpa*) combination called a being, as it really is, that he gets an aversion for existence, and is urged to take the “*ascent*” leading to the Ariyan Way, the exclusive *via sacra* of the Noble Ones.

In this Essay I shall confine myself to the first stage of the Ariyan Way – the first stage of the Way that leads to full sanctitude, Arahantship. A person who steps on the first stage of the Ariyan Way is also called a Stream-Winner. The Pali word *sota* means a stream. He wins or attains the stream (*sotāpatti*), and is, then, a Stream-Winner (*sotāpanna*). He is taken up the Stream that leads to Nibbāna. He is rewarded with a glimpse of Nibbāna, for the first time, in the ups and downs of his *samsāric* (the process of repeated births) existence.

This supreme achievement, the initial step to cross over the turbulent waters of the cosmic ocean of births and deaths demands of the aspirant to the Way a systematic, sustained and steadfast preparation anterior to its consummation—a consummation which is possible only by putting forth “human strength, human energy and human striving”.³

What is it that prompts us to embark on this great spiritual adventure on “the sea of the six senses with its waves and whirlpools, its sharks and demons (symbolis-

ing its dangers and temptations)”?* It is suffering (*dukkha*) inherent in life. The Buddha-Dhamma alone, of all religions, positively affirms that life is suffering, life wherever it exists from the highest Brahma world to the uttermost hell is suffering. Life in the immeasurable past was suffering and life yet to come will also entail suffering. This is samsāric suffering (*bhava-dukkha*). The present suffering is visible in so many ways as: physical and mental suffering, as man’s conflict with his environment and as the result of man’s insatiate desire to pamper his “I”, his Ego. We have plenty of evidence in the Buddhist Canon⁴ to establish the suffering inherent in the process of Becoming (*bhava*). Based on this knowledge and on the suffering now being felt, and with implicit confidence (*saddhā*) in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, Buddhists genuinely interested in overcoming suffering embark on this great adventure.

Now, let us discuss the prior preparations that he, we shall call him the Pilgrim on the Way, has to make for the purpose of stepping on the Ariyan Way. *The Saṃgīti Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (No: 33) mentions four necessary conditions for Stream entry (*sotāpattiyaṅga*). They are:-

1. Association with the good (*sappurisa saṃseva*)
2. Hearing the good Teaching (*saddhamma savanaṃ*)
3. Wise reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*)
4. Practice in those things that lead up to the Teaching and its corollarics (*dhammānudhamma paṭipatti*).

* *The Basic Position of Sila* by Miss I. B. Horner, published by the Bauddha Sahitya Sabha.

I. Association with the good

It will be admitted on all hands that through association with the good, the Pilgrim on the Way enriches his mind with all that is wholesome and noble. In the galaxy of the good Lord Buddha shines without a peer. He has passed away, but His Teaching is with us, in its pristine purity, as a living symbol to speak to us of the exceeding rare goodness which permeated His entire vigorous, radiant personality. Here are His own words in support:-
“Therefore, O Bhikkhus, you to whom the truths I have perceived have been made known by me—having thoroughly made yourselves masters of them, practise them, meditate upon them, and spread them abroad, in order that the pure religion may last long and be perpetuated, in order that it *may continue to be for the good and happiness of the great multitudes, out of pity for the world, to the good and the gain and the weal of gods and men*’ “. ⁵

The Noble Ones who have gained the four stages of Holiness and their respective Fruition (*phala*) are also among the good. Those worldings who are treading the mundane Noble Eightfold Path with a view to gaining Deliverance come next. Those individuals who have dedicated their lives to ameliorate human suffering such as philanthropists and social service workers are also among the good. The *Dhammanāda*⁶ advises us not to associate with friends who are evil-doers, or with friends whose lives are blameworthy; on the other hand, to associate with friends who are good, the best of men. There are two conspicuous characteristics visible in the good, namely: gratitude (*kataññutā*) in its manifestation by word and deed. Lord Buddha gazed steadfastly for seven days at the Bodhi Tree beneath whose shade He gained Supreme Enlightenment.

2. Hearing the Teaching.

The benefits gained by hearing the Good Law are so obvious that their recapitulation here seems to me rather superfluous. In the long ago days the mode of receiving the Dhamma was by hearing. The word *sāvaka* meaning a disciple of the Buddha has its origin in the word *savanam*. The *Mahā Mangala Sutta* hails the hearing of the Dhamma as a Blessing (*kālena dhamma savanam etaṃ mangala muttamam*), and immediately after in the next verse the Sutta proceeds to hail religious discussions (*dhamma sākacchā*) as a Blessing. These twin tasks invariably reinforce and strengthen Confidence, already referred to, which our Pilgrim carries as his staff till the goal of the holy life is reached. In modern times there are many books on various aspects of the Buddha - Dhamma. In Buddhist countries the radio is also a very useful medium in the dissemination of the Dhamma. Despite these modern facilities the time honoured custom of hearing the Dhamma, seated cross-legged at the feet of venerable monks, awakens a deep sense of piety and a spiritual exhilaration. *The Dhammapada* pays this excellent tribute to those who hear the Dhamma: "He who imbibes the Law lives happily; his mind is serene. The wise always rejoice in the Law, well-proclaimed by the Buddha".⁷

Knowledge of the Dhamma (*pariyatti*) leads to its practice (*paṭipatti*) and practice leads to the realisation (*paṭivehda*) of Nibbāna, the end of suffering. Wherefore, "the Dhamma is well-expounded by the Buddha, to be self-realised, with immediate fruit, inviting investigation, leading to Nibbāna, to be comprehended by the wise, each for himself". (*The Mirror of the Dhamma*)

3. Wise Reflection.

The Dhamma that has been either heard or read has to be wisely reflected upon, and then acted upon. It is, indeed, a matter for much concern and regret that most Buddhists listen to or read the Dhamma as a matter of course and then resign it to oblivion. Thereafter they turn once again to chase after pleasure. Let them wisely reflect on this quotation from the *Sutta Nipāta*, verse 62 (Tr. by Lord Chalmers):

“ Be sure
pleasure's a chain, brief bliss,
short rapture, long drawn woe,
a baited hook for fish”.

Wise Reflection has to be clearly distinguished from Unwise Reflection (*ayoniso-manasikāra*). Wise Reflection functions as a wholesome agent. Says the Buddha: “thus employed, O monks, it leads to the Highest” – the Highest which is the very opposite of the recurrent process of births and deaths. On the other hand, Unwise Reflection does nobody any good. It is the womb which gives birth to unwholesome things. Says the Buddha: “Monks, I have not seen (with the Buddha eye) any single thing which conduces more to the arising of wholesome things that have not yet arisen, and to the expulsion of unwholesome things that have already arisen, than Wise Reflection”. In this context Wise Reflection shortens the process of Becoming, while Unwise Reflection lengthens this sorrow-fraught process.

Wise Reflection, with Mindfulness keeping guard, brought to perfection by sustained and indefatigable endeavour, leads to mental synthesis, to mental equipoise

and one-pointedness of mind, the prelude to Insight, which then illumines the Pilgrim's vision to see things as they truly are. More of this later. The *Dhammapada* encourages the Pilgrim thus :—

“He who dwells in the Law, delights in the Law.
meditates on the Law, reflects on the Law, that
Bhikkhu will never fall away from the true Law”⁸

4. Practice in those things that lead up to the Teaching and its corollaries.

The Buddha=Dhamma, it should be noted here, is not meant for the purpose of exhibiting one's intellectual legerdemain; nor is it for the purpose of displaying one's dialectical skill; nor does it encourage salvation by proxy through prayerful appeals by a sinner to a supernatural being; nor does it preach a vicarious salvation. The Buddha Dhamma is a practice (*patipadā*) a gradual practice upon a well-mapped and tested Path, based on the ethical potential of man, for the one and only purpose of crossing over and going beyond the confines of the space-time cosmos. And for the purpose of crossing over, the Pilgrim has to walk the Path himself by his own efforts and energy, and without taking a wrong turning. The Buddhas merely show the Way. The *Dhammapada* at Verse 276 is quite emphatic on this point :—

“Striving should be done by yourselves, the Tathāgatas (Buddhas) are only teachers. The meditative ones who enter the Way are delivered from the bonds of Māra”.

The Buddha Dhamma is a discovery. The Buddha Gotama rediscovered the Ancient Path which the Buddhas of the past trod to gain Deliverance. The Ancient Path

is the Noble Eightfold Path: "This is the Middle Path; which the Perfect One has discovered, which makes one both to see and to know, and which leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment and to Nibbāna".⁹

The Blessed One, on the occasion of sending forth His first mission of sixty Arahants, spoke about the Ancient Path in this manner. "Preach, O Bhikkhus, the Dhamma excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, and excellent in the end".¹⁰ The Dhamma is excellent in the beginning (*ādi kalyāna*), which is Morality (*sīla*), exhorting to avoid all evil (*sabba pāpassa akaranam*). It is excellent in the middle (*majjhima kalyāna*), which is Concentration (*samādhi*), exhorting to do good (*kusalassa upasampadā*). It is excellent in the end (*pariyosāna kalyāna*), which is Wisdom (*paññā*) exhorting to cleanse one's mind (*sacitta pariyodapanam*). And this is the Ancient Path.

This is the triple division of the Noble Eightfold Path, in which the Pilgrim has to train himself anterior to his stepping on the Ariyan Way or winning the Stream. The training is gradual, step by step, "for the attainment of Wisdom does not come at once, but by a gradual training, a gradual working out of cause, a gradual practice (*anupubba-sikkhā, anupubba-kriyā, anupubba-paṭipadā*)"¹¹

It would be relevant, at this point, to set side by side the factors of the Noble Path and the triple training in Morality, Concentration and Wisdom :—

<i>Factors of the Path</i>	<i>Triple Training</i>
3. Right Speech (<i>sammā vācā</i>)	} Morality (<i>sīla</i>)
4. Right Action (<i>sammā kammantā</i>)	
5. Right Livelihood (<i>sammā ājīva</i>)	
6. Right Effort (<i>sammā vāyāma</i>)	} Concentration (<i>samādhi</i>)
7. Right Mindfulness (<i>sammā sati</i>)	
8. Right Concentration (<i>sammā samādhī</i>)	
1. Right Understanding (<i>sammā diṭṭhi</i>)	} Wisdom (<i>paññā</i>)
2. Right Thought (<i>sammā sankappa</i>)	

The sequence of the Path Factors has been here transposed for indicating that this is the order in which the perfecting of the Noble Eightfold Path has to proceed. Nevertheless, a degree of Right Understanding is indispensable at the very start, for giving the right and cogent motivation for one's endeavour.

I make bold to say that the Tripitaka or the Three Baskets containing the entirety of the Teaching of the Buddha, is devoted to this triple training. I am fortified in my view in that the Blessed One says: "Just as, O Bhikkhus, the mighty ocean is of one taste, the taste of salt; even so, O Bhikkhus, this Dhamma is of one taste, the taste of Deliverance (*vimutti*)".¹² And, in the Dhammapada He says: "Following upon this Path you will put an end to suffering".¹³

The Dhamma has to be lived in and practised according to the above triple training. There is absolutely no deviation from this training. The mastery of Morality (*sīla*) makes possible the mastery of Concentration (*samādhi*) and this of Wisdom (*paññā*). No skipping of

any of the factors is allowed. We are advised not to follow the technique of the jumping frog. There is no short-cut to Nibbāna.

There are no special occasions on which to practise the Dhamma, nor is it confined to the four poya days only. The Dhamma is part and parcel of one's life, and is closely associated with oneself. Wherefore, the Buddha says: "Abide with oneself as an island, with oneself as a refuge, abide with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge. Seek not for external refuge."¹⁴

The Pilgrim is warned not to seek external refuge. Why? The Buddha, in conversation with his last convert Subhadda, told him that it was only in His Dispensation that the Noble Eightfold Path existed, and, hence the four true Samanas. He further added that other schools of thought did not contain the Noble Eightfold Path, and therefore they were devoid of the four true Samanas.

The four Samanas are: i. The Stream-Winner (*sotāpanna*), ii. the Once-Returner (*sakadāgāmi*), iii. the Never-Returner (*anāgāmi*), and iv. the Perfect One (*arahant*). These four stages and their respective Fruitions (*phala*) together with Nibbāna are the Nine Transcendental Dhammā (*nava lokuttara dhamma*) which every genuine Buddhist ardently endeavours to consummate ere long.

The Pilgrim should always bear in mind the fact that he has taken Refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha in order to gain a clear understanding and per-

* The four phases of a lunar month. The Sinhala term for Uposatha Days.

** Another term for Noble disciples.

ception of the Four Noble Truths:- This is Misery. This is the Origin of Misery. This is the Cessation of Misery. This is the Path leading to the cessation of Misery - the Noble Eightfold Path. It is only by the realisation of the Four Noble Truths by the Pilgrim that he can cry a halt to this incessant turning on the Wheel of Life, and attain the end of suffering.¹⁵

The Pilgrim, therefore, is advised not to go off the Path by seeking refuge elsewhere, for in the words of the Buddha: "Men, driven by fear, go to many a refuge - to mountains and forests, to groves, to fanes and trees".¹⁶ The Buddha, in no uncertain terms, assures the Pilgrim that in none of them is found a refuge, and that none of them can ever deliver him from the woes of recurrent existence.¹⁷

There is one other aspect in the practice of the Dhamma, which to my mind is of paramount importance. I mean the practice of the Dhamma in its spirit and in its letter is of far greater importance than the mere external manifestations of Devotion (*bhakti*). I certainly do not frown at the traditional modes of worshipping the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha by visiting temples. The thought processes that run across the mind during these moments of devotion are undoubtedly wholesome (*kusala*). They provide the Pilgrim with spiritual nutriment to support him on the Way.

However, these acts of devotion and piety by themselves will not tend to purify his inner being. They are powerless to crush the might of Māra (Death). And the successful conquest of Māra is the conquest of one's self through internal purification. "Though one should conquer a million men in the battlefield, yet he, indeed,

is the noblest victor who has conquered himself".¹⁸ The same idea is again amplified: "One's own self conquered is better than all other people conquered; not even a god, Brahma or Māra can change into defeat the victory of a man who has conquered himself",¹⁹ And this conquest of one's self is one's own business. It is achieved by wisdom. The Buddha Dhamma teaches deliverance of mind by Wisdom, and definitely not by following mere tradition, purposeless rites and unreasoning dogma.

Turn wherever you will, the Buddhist texts insist on the inner purification of the being. And this inner purification is only possible through external ethical behaviour or moral conduct (*sīla*). The Dhamma provides a number of precepts²⁰ or moral observances or pledges which a lay person takes upon himself to promote his moral well-being. These precepts are not commands. Their observance is left to the individual with himself as tribunal, on the assumption that their observance is good for himself as well as to the society of which he is a member, and in regard to our Pilgrim the observance of the precepts is the initial step of his training.

The Pilgrim, having established himself well and truly on Morality, now proceeds to train his mind—the fickle and restless mind. As he has already controlled the sense doors which provide nutriment to the mind, he will find his task not so difficult. His task is to purge the mind of all impure states by employing the four great efforts,²¹ so that the mind could be tranquillized²² and stabilised to hold on to one object, and exclude all other objects that enter his mental periphery.

This done, the Pilgrim enters upon the third stage of his training to gain Insight-Wisdom (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) which is the sole monopoly of the Buddha-Dhamma.

This helps him to penetrate phenomenal existence, which then presents him with Reality or the true nature of all existence: its impermanency (*anicca*), its imperfectness (*dukkha*) and its impersonality (*anattā*). He has thus completed the triple training which could be summed up as: the training of his body's actions, the training of his mind and the acquisition of Insight-Wisdom.

This triple training has yet another important aspect which deserves to be mentioned here. It is an aspect which is a natural growth and it synchronises with the training. I have in mind the Seven Stages of Purity²³ contained in the *Rathavinīta Sutta (Majjhima)*²⁴, which is illustrated by the simile of a grand state drive laid out in seven stages. I do not propose to dwell on this Sutta here, but I shall draw from it relevant matter in the course of developing this essay.

There is one more significant matter which I should touch upon before I close this fourth condition preparatory to the Pilgrim's "Ascent". I am referring to the Nine Great Insight Knowledges (*nava mahā vipassanā ñāṇa*), each of which is a fundamental asset in the development of the Pilgrim's mind leading up to Maturity Knowledge (*gotrabhu-ñāṇa*), at which point he gains Purity of Insight into the four Paths of Holiness (*ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*).

Let us now follow the Pilgrim on the Way. He has arrived at Right Concentration on the mundane Path. With mind tranquillised and stabilised and with one-pointedness of mind, known as "attainment" Concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), he penetrates this fathom-long body and perceives the three characteristics already

mentioned above, characteristics common to all compounds (*sankhāras*). Furthermore, wherever he turns, he sees these three characteristics everywhere, throughout the entire universe.

Engaged in this deep contemplation on the evanescent nature of all phenomena, a day arrives, when the Pilgrim notices an aura (*obhāsa*) radiating from his body. His whole personality is permeated with a joy and happiness never before felt by him. While in this ecstatic state he may believe that he has attained enlightenment. However, a little while later, his mind clears itself and he realises through Purity of Insight regarding the right and wrong path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) the distinction between the mundane Noble Eightfold Path of the worldling and the supramundane Noble Eightfold Path of the Noble One.

Perceiving the Right Path, the Pilgrim pursues his contemplation on the three characteristics, with added zeal and vigour. This confers upon him Purity of Insight into the Path of Progress (*patipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*). At this point the Pilgrim obtains, step by step, a clearer and more comprehensive knowledge of his progress on the Path heading for the Ariyan Way. This knowledge is ninefold as I have already mentioned. I shall give here a bare summary without which the reader will fail to understand the gradual evolution of the Pilgrim's mind to the supramundane.

The Pilgrim, who has perceived the arising and passing away of all conditioned things, takes hold of the passing away of things, which is more conspicuous than their arising. He directs his mind to the dissolution (*bhanga*) of things and perceives that both mind and

matter which make up the so-called being are a constant flux, not remaining the same for two consecutive seconds. This knowledge of the dissolution of things creates in his mind a fear, a terror (*bhaya*) for the five aggregates of existence. This knowledge that views existence with fear leads him to grasp the misery and vanity (*ādinava ñāṇa*) of existence. This knowledge leads to aversion, to disgust (*nibbida ñāṇa*), which, in turn, leads to the will for Deliverance from existence (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*): Thus willed, he proceeds to develop the three characteristics of the impermanency, the imperfectness and the impersonality of all things (*paṭisankhā-ñāṇa*). This knowledge results in an attitude of neither attachment nor aversion to the things of the world—he looks at everything with complete equanimity (*sankhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*).

Arriving at this point of his spiritual culture, the Pilgrim takes one of the three characteristics of existence, whichever appeals to him most, and begins to develop it to the utmost degree. He is gradually drawn towards the Stream (*sota*), and prepares to take the plunge, for he knows that at any moment the Path will reveal itself. He tightens his grip on the particular characteristic he has chosen, and awaits the event. Behold! his mind-door alerts and a *Javana* (Impulsion) thought process runs thus :-

1	2	3	4	5	6&7
<i>parikamma</i>	<i>upacāra</i>	<i>anuloma</i>	<i>gotrabhu</i>	<i>magga</i>	<i>phala</i>
(preliminary)	(access)	(adaptation)	(maturity knowledge)	(path)	(fruit)

The Pilgrim has now arrived on the Ariyan Way, having taken the “ascent” with the knowledge associated

with Purity into the Four Paths of Holiness (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*). He is now no more a worldling (*puthujjana*). He has transcended the mundane consciousness (*lokiya citta*) and has gained the supramundane consciousness (*lokuttara citta*). He has entered the Stream. He is a Stream-Winner (*sotāpanna*) and is taken up the Stream to Nibbāna. He is a Noble One (*ariya puggala*). He gets a glimpse of Nibbāna, for the first time in the ups and downs of his samsāric existence. The Stream Winner becomes conscious of Fruition (*phala*) immediately after, with no interval between (*samādhimānantarikaññamahu*) the Path and the Fruition of Stream entry.

Our Pilgrim, if he fails to attain Nibbāna in this life itself, will be born seven times at the most, and never an eighth time. He will not be born in the four states of woe. He will not commit the five weighty (*garuka*) crimes, namely: i. parricide, ii. matricide, iii. killing an arahant, iv. shedding blood from the Buddha's body and v. causing a schism in the Sangha.

Our Pilgrim, on entering the Stream, breaks the first three fetters (*samyojana*) that bind him to the Wheel of Life.

They are :-

i. Self-Illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). This is the belief that there exists in the individual a permanent, stable and an abiding entity called a soul*. The Buddha dismissed the soul-theory as untenable in the light of His minute analysis of the five aggregates which make up the so-called individual. 2. Doubts

* The *Dhammasangani* lists twenty soul-theories.

Also see: The Truth of Anattā by Dr. Malalasekera (Wheel Publication No. 94)

(*vicikicchā*). They are doubts in regard to (i) the Buddha, (ii) the Dhamma, (iii) the Sangha, (iv) the monastic rules of conduct, (v) the past, (vi) the future, (vii) both the past and future (leading to *Kamma* and *vipāka*) and (viii) Dependent Origination (*paticca-samuppāda*).

3. The belief in the efficacy of ceremonies and rites (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*). This is the view held by ascetics and brahmīns that purification can be gained by rules of moral conduct or by rites or by both rules of moral conduct and rites.

Although it was my intention to follow the Pilgrim up to the moment he stepped upon the Ariyan Way, I now feel that I should follow him as he graduates through the remaining three stages of the Path of Holiness. Accordingly I shall briefly provide the reader with the basic information regarding his further progress on the Path.

The noble Pilgrim, encouraged by a glimpse of Nibbāna, renews his contemplation on the three characteristics again and again. He also reviews the Seven Stages of Purity. In the fifth thought moment of the supramundane *javana* thought-process he attains the state of a Once-Returner (*sakadāgāmi*). Thereby he neutralises the force of seven births assigned to a Stream-Winner and limits it to one birth only, i. e. within the sense-sphere. He gets a vision of Nibbāna in its Fruition consciousness (*maggā-phala*). He attenuates or weakens the fourth and fifth fetters, namely: sense-desires (*kāma-rāga*) and ill-will (*patigha*), two powerful fetters that had bound him to existence from a beginningless past.

Thereafter, the noble Pilgrim, now a Once-Returner, develops, as before, the contemplation on the three characteristics and reviews the Seven Stages of Purity. In the supramundane thought-process at the fifth thought-moment, he gains the state of a Never-Returner (*anāgāmi*). He destroys the force present in a Once-Returner of being born once. As a Never-Returner he destroys completely the fetters of sense-desires and ill-will. Hence, he does not return to this planet nor does he seek a celestial abode. If he fails to attain Nibbāna in this life, he is reborn in the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*), a special reserve for Anāgāmis. There he attains full sanctitude (arahat-hood), and on passing from there is reborn no more.

Our noble Pilgrim, as before, pursues his contemplation and reviews the Seven Purities. At the fifth moment of the supramundane thought-process, cankerless²⁴ he attains the supreme goal of the Holy Life—that of a Perfect One (*Arahant*). A Perfect One totally eradicates the five higher Fetters of (i) the desire for the Form World (*rūpa-rāga*), (ii) the desire for the Formless World (*arūpa-rāga*), (iii) conceit (*māna*), (iv) restlessness (*uddhacca*) and (v) ignorance (*avijjā*). Our noble Pilgrim now comprehends: “Destroyed is birth, done is what was to be done, and there is no more of being such or such”.

I have now to make a few observations regarding the Stream-Winner, who is, in fact, the theme of this Essay. As I indicated earlier, the fifth supramundane *javana* thought-moment is the Path-consciousness (*magga-citta*), and the two succeeding thought-moments, the sixth and the seventh are the Stream-entry Fruition-consciousness (*sotāpatti-phala-citta*). It is during this

infinitesimally short period of time that a Stream-Winner gets a glimpse of Nibbāna.

At the moment when the Pilgrim wins the Stream he comprehends the Four Noble Truths: This is Suffering: This is the Origin of Suffering: This is the Cessation of Suffering: This is the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. This knowledge concerning the Four Noble Truths helps him to steer clear of the rocks and shoals; that is, the numerous views (*diṭṭhi*) which he comes across on the Stream.

1. The knowledge of Suffering (*dukkha-ñāṇa*) helps him to steer clear of the views: (i) the view of an abiding self or soul and (ii) the view that the aggregates are lasting, beautiful, pleasurable and self.

2. The knowledge of the Origin of Suffering (*dukkha samudaya ñāṇa*) steers him clear of (i) the view that there is no birth after death (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*), (ii) that there is a Creator-God and (iii) the view that everything comes into being spontaneously without a cause (*ahetuka vāda*).

3. The knowledge of the Cessation of Suffering (*dukkha nirodha-ñāṇa*) steers him clear of, (i) the view of Eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*), (ii) the view that the Realm of Neither Perception nor non-Perception is Nibbāna and (iii) that the sphere of beings devoid of consciousness (*asañña-satta*) is Nibbāna.

4. The knowledge of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*dukkha nirodha gāminī patipadā ñāṇa*) steers him clear of (i) the view that there is no effect (*vipāka*) in giving (alms), nor reward for good deeds nor punishment for evil deeds (*akiriya diṭṭhi*), (ii) that there is neither this world nor a world beyond, there is no moral

obligation toward father and mother and that in this world there are no recluses or brahmins of virtuous conduct, who with wisdom revealed and proclaimed the true nature of things (*natthika-vāda*) and (iii) the view that eternal happiness can be had by following either self-indulgence or self-mortification.

The knowledge of winning the Stream (*sotāpatti-ñāṇa*) is spoken in terms of “all that is bound to arise is bound to cease”, or, in other words, whatever is born must die (*uppāda vaya dhammino*). This realistic view of the transiency of all compound things is best illustrated in the tragic story of the young mother Kisā Gotami which is found in the commentary to the *Anguttara Nikāya*. Almost demented at the loss of her first-born baby boy, she ran along the streets of Sāvatthi crying: “Give me medicine for my son”. A kindly person directed her to the Buddha, who sensing the spiritual maturity in her, sent her on a mission to fetch a few grains of mustard from any house where no one had ever died. She failed to obtain the grains of mustard in the manner instructed by the Buddha. While returning to the Buddha, it suddenly dawned upon her that her son was not the only one that death has overcome, and that that was a law common to all mankind. She then took her dead child to the charnel ground.

When she stood before the Buddha, he gently asked her: “Gotami, did you get the tiny grains of mustard seed?” “Done, reverend Sir, is the business of the mustard seed”. She had gained the knowledge of Stream-entry.

The Sangiti Sutta (mentioned earlier) speaks of four qualities or accomplishments found in a Stream-Winner (*sotapannassa-aṅgani*). They are born of an unshakable

confidence (*aveccappasāda*) in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. He has realised (i) that the Buddha is, indeed, that Blessed One, Worthy, Fully Enlightened, endowed with knowledge and virtue, Well-gone; Knower of the three worlds, Incomparable Charioteer of Beings to be tamed, Guide of gods and men, the Enlightened Lord.

He has realised (ii) that the Dhamma is well-expounded by the Lord, is visible, immediate, inviting to come and behold, leading to Deliverance and to be understood through experience by the wise.

He has realised (iii) that the Sangha is on the Path to final happiness, on the straight Path, on the Path of wisdom, on the Path of correct living; has attained the four Paths (of holiness) and their fruitions; is worthy of offerings brought from afar, is worthy of hospitality, of gifts, is worthy of reverence, is an incomparable field of merit to the world.

He is also conscious of the fact that (iv) the Stream-Winner is possessed of the purest virtue, (*ariyakantehi sīlehi samannāgato hoti*) leading to supramundane concentration.

What, then, is this purest virtue? it is virtue that is unbroken and continuous at the beginning, the middle and the end, and wherein the precepts are not broken at any point, but are observed throughout in their natural order; it is a virtue where the precepts are not broken here and there; it is a virtue free from craving; it is a virtue praised highly by the wise; it is a virtue unadulterated by desire and false views; it is a virtue that induces neighbourhood (*upacāra*) and attainment (*appana*) concentration.

As I conclude this Essay, I must repeat, with all the emphasis at my command, that inner purification is productive of greater good than evanescent material possessions or temporary celestial comforts. For as the Blessed One says:—

“ Better than absolute sovereignty over the earth, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over all the worlds is the Fruit of a Stream-Winner”.²⁵

Everyone should ask himself the question: What is the meaning of life? To the materialist who worships at the altar of Hedonism, the meaning of life is: “Eat, drink and enjoy, for tomorrow we die”. To the Buddhist, who understands the Law of Causality, “he who sees uprising by way of cause sees Dhamma; he who sees Dhamma sees uprising by way of cause” (*yo paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati, yo dhammaṃ passati so paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati*)²⁶. To him the meaning of life is to gain Insight and see himself as he really is. To this end he treads the Noble Eight-fold Path as taught by the Shower of the Way. Insight rewards him with entry into the Stream. May you with stirred up energy, with human strength and with determined zeal, strive to gain the Stream here and now.

With this fervent and sincere appeal we dedicate this Essay to our readers. If in the perusal of it they obtain the inspiration and earnestness to embark on this great spiritual adventure possible to man, we can then have the satisfaction of knowing that our labours have been worthwhile, and by that they are fully compensated.

“ Great is the goal. that the man of
stirred up energy, remote from evil,
unfavourable things, can make perfect”.

(Saṃyutta ii, 29)

Notes

- 1 This quotation is from the Brahma Suttas of the *Samyutta Nikāya* vi, 2, 3, Brahma Sahampati visits the Buddha, who was living with the Magadhese at Andhakavinda. He notices a large assemblage of monks seated in front and on either side of the Buddha. Among them are a large number of Arahants (saints), and, also, a numerically larger number of those who have reached “the Stream, the Holy Way”, the subject of this Essay.
- 2 It is Insight Wisdom (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) that helps to reveal phenomenal existence as it really is: its impermanency (*anicca*), its imperfectness (*dukkha*) and its impersonality (*anattā*).
- 3 *Samyutta Nikāya*, ii, 28, 29.
- 4 *Majjhima Nk.* i, 173. Also *Samyutta Nk.* xv, i; xv, 3; xv, 13.
- 5 *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*, *Dīgha Nk.* xvi.
- 6 *Dhammapada*, verse 78.
- 7 Ibid. Verse 79.
- 8 Ibid. Verse 364.
- 9 *Samyutta Nk.* LVI, ii.
- 10 *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 10.
- 11 *Majjhima Nk.* i, 479.
- 12 *Udāna*, p. 67.
- 13 *Dhammapada* verse 275
- 14 *Maha Parinibbāna Sutta*, *Dīgha* xvi, p. 108.

- 15 The *raison d'être* of the Buddha - Dhamma is the Four Noble Truths. It is only by a clear understanding and perception of the Four Noble Truths that one can call a halt to the process of Becoming. "By not seeing the Aryan Truths as they really are,
Long is the path that is traversed through
many a birth,
When these are grasped, the cause of
rebirth is removed,
The root of sorrow is uprooted, and
then there is no more birth".
(*Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*)

16 *Dhammapada* verse 188.

17 Ibid. Verse 189.

18 Ibid. Verse 103.

19 Ibid. Verse 105.

- 20 While admitting that the monastic-rules (*pātimokkha*) are more exacting and demanding so far as monks are concerned, however, the fact remains that the precepts laid down by the Buddha for monk or layman have one underlying motive behind them, namely: the successful Walk on the Way resulting in the purification of vision. The initial step to gain this all too important vision is Morality (*sīla*) consisting in purity of body's actions, in purity of speech and in purity of living.

Those who criticise the negative aspects of the precepts should be told of the dynamics of the Dhamma. For example the Buddha-Dhamma breathes the spirit of loving-kindness and compassion toward all living beings; the spirit of charity (*dāna*) instead of stealing; the spirit

of chastity instead of unbridled passion; the spirit of reconciliation instead of slander; the spirit of truth instead of lying etc. It should be noted that the ten unwholesome actions (*dasa-akusala kamma patha*) have their corresponding wholesome actions (*dasa kusala kamma patha*).

- 21 The Four Great Efforts are: (i) The Effort to avoid the arising of evil, unwholesome things that have not yet arisen; (ii) The Effort to overcome the evil, unwholesome things that have already arisen; (iii) The Effort to arouse wholesome things that have not yet arisen; (iv) The Effort to maintain the wholesome things that have already arisen, and to bring them to growth, to maturity and to perfection.
- 22 It is by employing the technique called Mental Development (*bhāvanā*) that mental tranquility is produced. Mental tranquility is the precursor to the development of Wisdom (*pañña-bhāvanā*) or clear Insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). For further information please read Ch. iv of “Fundamentals of Buddhism” by the late Venerable Nyanatiloka Maha Thera.
- 23 The Seven Stages of Purity are: (i) Purity of Morality (*sīla visuddhi*), (ii) Purity of Mind (*citta visuddhi*), (iii) Purity of Views (*diṭṭhi visuddhi*), (iv) Purity consisting in overcoming all doubts (*khankhā vitaraṇā-visuddhi*). (v) Purity of Insight regarding the Right and Wrong Path (*maggāmagga ñāṇa dassana visuddhi*), (vi) Purity of Insight regarding the Path of Progress (*patipadā ñāṇa dassana visuddhi*), (vii) Purity of Insight into the Four Paths of Holiness (*ñāṇadassana visuddhi*).

- 24 Cankerless. It is by totally destroying the Cankers (*āsava*), also called the floods (*ogha*), that the Anāgāmin attains the state of an Arahant. Vide: The Four Cankers — Bodi Leaves No. B. 34 by the present writer.
- 25 *Dhammapada*, 178.
- 26 *Majjhima Nk.* i, 190 - 191.

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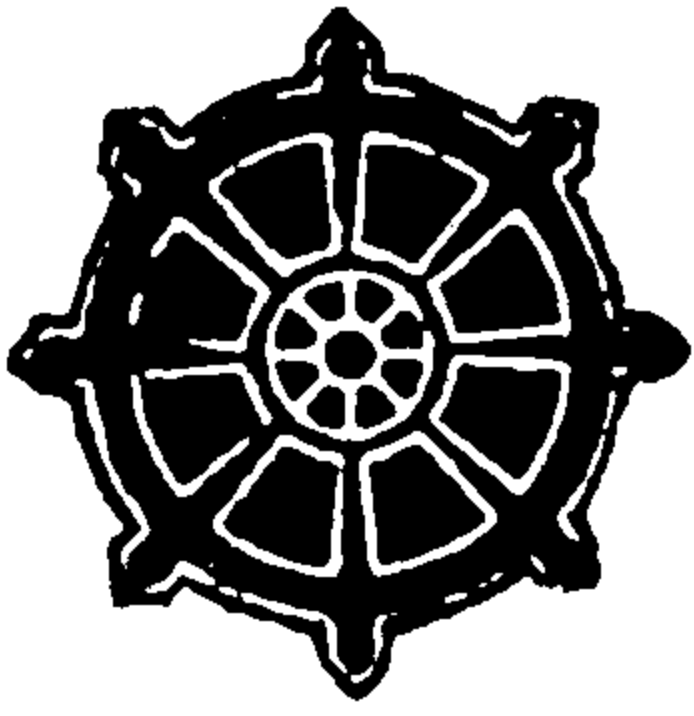
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The Power of Mindfulness

Nyanaponika Thera

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THE POWER OF MINDFULNESS

An Inquiry into the Scope of Bare Attention and the Principal Sources of its Strength

Nyanaponika Thera

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THE POWER OF MINDFULNESS

[S mindfulness actually a power in its own right as claimed by the title of this essay? Seen from the view-point of the ordinary purposes of life it does not seem so. From that angle, mindfulness, or attention, has a rather modest place among many, and seemingly more important, mental faculties that serve the purposes of variegated wish-fulfilment. There, mindfulness means just “to watch one’s steps” so that one may not stumble or miss a chance in the pursuit of one’s aims. Only in the case of specific tasks and skills mindfulness is sometimes cultivated more deliberately, but here too it is still regarded as a subservient function, and its wider scope and possibilities are not recognised.

Even if one turns to the Buddha’s doctrine, taking only a surface view of the various classifications and lists of mental factors in which mindfulness appears, one may be inclined to regard this faculty just “as one among many”, and may get the impression that here too it has a rather subordinate place and is easily surpassed in significance by other faculties.

Mindfulness, in fact, has, if we may personify it, a rather unassuming character. Compared with it mental factors like devotion, energy, imagination or intelligence are certainly ‘more colourful personalities’, making an immediate and strong impact on people and situations. Their conquests are sometimes rapid and vast, though often insecure. Mindfulness, on the other hand, is of an unobtrusive nature. Its virtues shine inwardly, and in ordinary life most of its merits are passed on to other

mental faculties, which receive generally all the credit. One must know it well and cultivate its acquaintance before one can appreciate the value and the silent penetrative influence of mindfulness. Mindfulness walks slowly and deliberately, and its daily task is of a rather humdrum nature. Yet, where it places its feet it cannot easily be dislodged, and it acquires and bestows true mastery of the ground it covers.

Mental faculties of such a nature are, like actual personalities of a similar type, often overlooked or underrated. In the case of mindfulness it required a genius like the Buddha to discover the 'hidden talent' in the modest garb and to develop the vast inherent power of that potent seed. It is, indeed, the mark of a genius to perceive, and to harness, the power of the seemingly small. Here, truly, it happens that "what is little becomes much." A revaluation of values takes place. The standards of greatness and smallness change. Through the master mind of the Buddha, mindfulness is finally revealed as the archimedal point from where the vast revolving mass of world's suffering is levered out of its two-fold anchorage in Ignorance and Craving.

The Buddha spoke of the power of Mindfulness in a very emphatic way :

"Mindfulness, I declare, is all-helpful."

(Samy. Nik. 46, 55)

"All things can be mastered by Mindfulness."

(Angutt. Nik.. Atthaka Nip.. 83)

And further, that solemn and weighty utterance opening and concluding the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness :

“This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of pain and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbāna, namely the four Foundations of Mindfulness.”

Bare Attention

If, in ordinary life, mindfulness, or attention, is directed to any object, it is rarely sustained long enough for the purpose of factual observation. Generally it is followed immediately by emotional reaction, discriminative thought, reflection, purposeful action, etc. Also in life and thought governed by the Dhamma, mindfulness (*sati*) is mostly linked with Clear Comprehension (*sampajañña*) of the right purpose, of reality, etc. But for tapping the actual and potential *power* of mindfulness it is necessary to understand and deliberately cultivate it in its basic, unalloyed form, which we shall call *Bare Attention*.

By Bare Attention we understand the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens *to* us and *in* us, at the successive moments of perception. It is called “bare” because it attends to the bare facts of a perception without reacting to them by deed, speech, or mental comment. Ordinarily, that purely receptive state of mind is, as we have remarked, just a brief phase of the thought process of which one is often scarcely aware. But in the methodical development of mindfulness, aiming at the unfolding of its latent powers, Bare Attention is sustained for as long a time as one’s strength of concentration permits. Bare Attention is the key to the meditative practice of Satipaṭṭhāna, opening the door to mind’s mastery and final liberation.

Bare Attention is developed in two ways: (1) as a methodical meditative-practice with selected objects; (2) applied, as far as practicable, to the normal events of the day, together with a general attitude of Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension. The details of the practice have been described elsewhere, and need not be repeated here*.

The purpose of these pages is, in the first instance, to meet any doubts as to the efficacy of this method, *i. e.* as to the actual power of mindfulness. Particularly in an age like ours, with its supersititious worship of ceaseless external activity, there will be those who ask: "How can such a passive attitude of mind as that of Bare Attention possibly lead to the great results claimed for it?" In reply, one may be inclined to suggest to the questioner not to rely on the words of others, but to put those assertions of the Buddha to the test of personal experience. But those who do not yet know the Buddha's teaching well enough to accept it as a reliable guide, may hesitate to take up, without good reasons, a practice that, just on account of its radical simplicity, may appear strange to them. In the following, a number of such "good reasons" are therefore proffered for the reader's scrutiny. They are also meant as introduction into the general spirit of Satipaṭṭhāna and as pointers to its wide and significant perspectives. Furthermore it is hoped that he who has taken up the methodical training will recognise in the following observations certain features of his own practice and be stimulated in their deliberate cultivation.

* See Nyanaponika, "The Heart of Buddhist Meditation" London 1962, Rider & Co.

Four Sources of Power in Bare Attention

We shall now deal with four aspects of Bare Attention, which are the mainsprings of the Power of Mindfulness. They are not the only sources of its strength but they are the principal ones to which the efficacy of this method of mental development is due. These four are :—

1. The functions of 'tidying-up' and 'naming', exercised by Bare Attention;
2. its non-violent, non-coercive procedure;
3. the capacity of stopping and slowing-down;
4. the directness of vision bestowed by Bare Attention.

I. The Functions of 'Tidying' and 'Naming'

Tidying-up the mental household.

If anyone whose mind is not harmonized and controlled through methodical meditative training, should take a close look at his own every-day thoughts and activities he will meet with a rather disconcerting sight. Apart from the few main channels of his purposeful thoughts and activities, he will everywhere be faced with a tangled mass of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, casual bodily movements, etc., showing a disorderliness and confusion which he would certainly not tolerate, *e. g.*, in his living-room. Yet this is the state of affairs that he takes for granted within a considerable portion of his waking life and normal mental activity. Let us now look at the details of that rather untidy picture.

First we meet a vast number of casual sense-impressions, sights, sounds, etc., that pass constantly through our mind. Most of them remain vague and fragmentary,

and some are even based on faulty perceptions, misjudgements, etc. Carrying these inherent weaknesses they often form the untested basis for judgements and decisions on a higher level of consciousness. True, all these casual impressions need not and cannot be objects of focussed attention. A stone on our road that happens to meet our glance, will have a claim on our attention only if it obstructs our progress or is of interest to us for any other reason. Yet, if we neglect too much these casual impressions, we may stumble over many an actual, or figurative, stone, and overlook many a gem lying on our road.

Next, there are those more significant and definite perceptions, thoughts, feelings, volitions, etc., which have a closer connection with our purposeful life. Here too we shall find that a very high proportion of them is in a state of utter confusion. Hundreds of cross currents flash through the mind, and everywhere there are 'bits and ends' of unfinished thoughts, stifled emotions, passing moods, etc. Many of them meet a premature death owing to their innate feeble nature, our lack concentration, or through being suppressed by new and stronger impressions. If we observe our own mind, we shall notice how easily diverted our thoughts are, and how often they behave like indisciplined disputants constantly interrupting each other and refusing to listen to the other side's arguments. Again, many lines of thought remain rudimentary or are left untranslated into will and action, because courage is lacking to accept the practical, moral or intellectual consequences of these thoughts. If we continue to examine closer the reliability of our average perceptions, thoughts or judgements we shall have to admit that many of them are just the products of habit, led by prejudices of intellect and

emotion, by our pet preferences or aversions, by laziness and selfishness, by faulty or superficial observations, and so on.

Such a look into long-neglected quarters of the mind will come as a wholesome shock to the observer. It will convince him of the urgent need for methodical mental culture extending not only to a thin surface-layer of the mind, but also to those vast twilight regions of consciousness to which we have paid now a brief visit. The observer will then become aware of the fact that a reliable standard of the inner strength and lucidity of consciousness in its totality cannot be derived from the relatively small sector of the mind that stands in the intense light of purposeful will and thought, nor can it be judged by a few optimal results of mental activity achieved in brief, intermittent periods. The decisive factor in determining the quality of individual consciousness is the circumstance whether that dim awareness characteristic of our every-day mind and the uncontrolled portion of every-day activity tend to increase or decrease.

It is the daily little negligence in thoughts, words and deeds going on for many years of our life (and as the Buddha teaches, for many existences), that is chiefly responsible for creating and tolerating that untidiness and confusion in our minds which we have described. The old Buddhist Teachers said: "Negligence produces a lot of dirt and dust, even a whole heap of refuse. It is as if in a house only a very little dirt collects in a day or two; but if this goes on for many years, it will grow into a vast heap of refuse."*

* Comy. to Sutta-Nipāta v. 334.

It is the dark, untidy corners of the mind where our most dangerous enemies dwell. From there they attack us unawares, and much too often they succeed in defeating us. That twilight world peopled by frustrated desires and suppressed resentments, by vacillations and whims and many other shadowy figures, forms a background from which upsurging passions—greed and lust, hatred and anger—may derive powerful support. Besides, the obscure and obscuring nature of that twilight region is the very element and mother-soil of the third and strongest of the Roots of Evil (*akusala-mūla*), *i. e.*, Ignorance or Delusion.

Attempts at eliminating mind's main defilements—greed, hate and delusion—must fail as long as these defilements find refuge and support in these uncontrolled dim regions of the mind; as long as the close and complex tissue of those half-articulate thoughts and emotions forms the basic texture of mind into which just a few golden strands of noble and lucid thought are woven. But how to deal with that unwieldy, tangled mass? Man usually tries to ignore it, and to rely on the counteracting energies of his surface mind. But the only safe remedy is just to face it—with mindfulness. Nothing more difficult is needed than to acquire the habit of noticing these rudimentary thoughts as often as possible, *i. e.* to direct Bare Attention to them. The working principle here is the simple fact that there cannot exist two thoughts at the same time: if the clear light of mindfulness is present, there is no room for mental twilight. When sustained mindfulness has secured a firm foothold, it will be a matter of, comparatively, secondary importance in which ways the mind will then deal with those rudimentary thoughts, moods and emotions. It may just dismiss them and replace them by

purposeful thoughts; or it may allow them, and even compel them, to complete what they have to say. In the latter case, they will often reveal how poor and weak they actually are; and it will then not be difficult to dispose of them, once they are forced into the open. This procedure of Bare Attention is very simple and effective; the difficulty here is only the persistence in applying it.

Observing a complex thing means identifying its component parts, singling out the separate strands forming that intricate tissue. If this is applied to the complex currents of mental and practical life, automatically a strong regulating influence will be noticeable. As if ashamed in the presence of the calmly observing eye, the course of thoughts will proceed in a less disorderly and wayward manner; it will not so easily be diverted and will resemble more and more a well-regulated river.

During decades of the present life and throughout millenniums of traversing the Round of Existence, there has been steadily growing within man a closely fitted system of instinctive and reflex actions (beneficial and harmful ones), of prejudices of intellect and emotions—in brief, of bodily and mental habits that are no longer questioned as to their rightful position and useful function in human life. Here again it is the application of Bare Attention that loosens the hard soil of these often very ancient layers of the human mind, preparing thus the ground for sowing the seed of methodical mental training. Bare attention identifies and pursues the single threads of that closely interwoven tissue of our habits. It sorts out carefully the subsequent justifications of passionate impulses and the pretended motives of our prejudices; it questions fearlessly old habits often grown

meaningless, and by uncovering their roots it helps in abolishing all that is seen to be harmful. In brief, Bare Attention lays open the minute crevices in the seemingly impenetrable structure of unquestioned mental processes. Then the sword of Wisdom wielded by the strong arm of constant meditative practice will be able to penetrate these crevices, and finally to break up that structure where it is required. If the inner connections between the single parts of a seemingly compact whole become intelligible, then it ceases to be inaccessible.

If the facts and details of its conditioned nature become known, there is a chance of effecting fundamental changes in it. In that way, not only those hitherto unquestioned habits of the mind, its twilight regions and its normal processes as well, but even those seemingly solid, indisputable facts of the world of matter—all of them will become “questionable” and lose much of their self-assurance. By that bland self-assurance of assumed “solid facts” many people are so impressed and intimidated that they are reluctant to take up any spiritual training, doubting that it can effect anything worthwhile at all. The results of applying Bare Attention to the task of tidying and regulating the mind will therefore greatly encourage those who are still hesitant to enter a spiritual path.

In conclusion, we wish to point out that the tidying or regulating function of Bare Attention is of fundamental importance for that “purification of beings”, mentioned by the Buddha as the first aim of Satipaṭṭhāna. It refers of course to the purification of their minds, and here the very first step is to bring an initial order into the way of functioning of the mental processes. We have seen how this is done by Bare Attention. In that

sense, the Commentary to the Discourse on Mindfulness explains the words “for the purification of beings” as follows :

“It is said : ‘Mental taints defile the beings; mental clarity (*citta-vodāna*) purifies them.’ That mental clarity comes to be by this Way of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna-magga*).”

Naming

We have mentioned before that the tidying or regulating function of Bare Attention takes the form of sorting out and identifying the various confused strands of the mental process. That identifying function is, like any other mental activity, connected with a verbal formulation. In other words, “identifying” proceeds by way of expressly “naming” the respective mental processes.

There is an element of truth in the “word-magic” of primitive men. “Things that could be named had lost their secret power over man, the horror of the unknown. To know the name of a force, a being or an object was (to primitive man) identical with the mastery over it.”* That ancient belief in the magical power of “knowing the name” appears also in many fairy tales and myths where the power of a demon is broken just by facing him courageously and pronouncing his name.

In the practice of Bare Attention, one will find a confirmation of that power of naming. Particularly, the “demons of the twilight region” of the mind cannot bear the simple, but clarifying question about their “names”,

* Anagarika B. Govinda : “The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy” (Rider & Co.)

much less the knowledge of these names, which alone is often sufficient to diminish their strength. They cannot bear the calmly observing glance of the Wanderer on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness. That glance, however, has not the effect of driving them back into their hiding places, but it has, on the contrary, the magical power to force these demons of our passionate impulses and obscure thoughts into the open, into the day light of consciousness. There they will feel embarrassed and obliged to justify themselves, though, at this stage of Bare Attention, they have not yet even been subjected to any closer questioning except that about their "names", their identity. If forced into the open, while still in an incipient stage, they will be incapable of withstanding scrutiny, and will just dwindle away. Thus a first victory over them may be won, even at an early stage of the practice.

The appearance in the mind of undesirable and ignoble thoughts, even if they are very fleeting and only half-articulate, is an unpleasant experience to one's self-esteem. Therefore such thoughts are often shoved aside, unattended and unopposed. Often, also, they are camouflaged by more pleasing and respectable labels which hide their true nature. Thoughts disposed of in either of these two ways, will increase the accumulated power of ignoble tendencies in the subconscious. Furthermore, the procedure adopted will weaken one's will to resist the arising and the dominance of mental defilements, and it will strengthen the tendency to evade the issues. But by applying the simple method of clearly and honestly 'naming', that is registering, any undesirable thoughts, these two harmful devices, ignoring and camouflaging, are excluded, and their detrimental consequences on the structure of subconsciousness and on our conscious mental effort, are avoided.

Calling those ignoble thoughts, or one's shortcomings such as laziness, by their right names, will arouse in one's mind a growing inner resistance and even repugnance against them, which may well succeed in keeping them in check and finally eliminating them. Even if these undesirables are not fully brought under control by such means, they will carry with them the impact, that is the recollection, of a repeated resistance against them, and this will weaken them in cases of their reappearance. If we may continue to personify them, we may say that they will no longer feel to be unopposed masters of the scene, and this diffidence of theirs will make it considerably easier to deal with them. It is the power of moral shame (*hiri-bala*) that has been mustered here as an ally, and it is methodically strengthened by these simple, yet subtle psychological means.

The naming and registering extends of course also to noble thoughts and impulses which will be encouraged and strengthened by it. Without such deliberate attention to them, they may often pass unnoticed and remain barren, while a clear awareness of them will stimulate their growth.

It is one of the most beneficial features of Right Mindfulness, and in particular of Bare Attention, that it enables us to utilize for our progress all external events and all inner processes of mind. Even the unsalutary can be made a starting point for the salutary if, through the device of 'naming' or 'registering', it becomes an object of detached knowledge.

In several passages of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* the function of "naming" or "bare registering" seems to be indicated through formulating the respective statements by way of direct speech. There are not less than four such instances in the Discourse:

- (1) “When experiencing a pleasant feeling, he knows, ‘I experience a pleasant feeling’ ”, etc.;
- (2) “He knows of a lustful (state of) mind, ‘Mind is lustful’ ”, etc.;
- (3) “If (the hindrance of) sense desire is present in him, he knows, ‘Sense desire is present in me’ ”, etc.;
- (4) “If the enlightenment factor Mindfulness is present in him, he knows, ‘The enlightenment factor Mindfulness is present in me’ ”, etc.

In conclusion, it may briefly be pointed out that the *tidying-up* and the *naming* of mental processes is the indispensable preparation for fully understanding them in their true nature, which is the task of Insight (*vipassanā*). These functions, exercised by Bare Attention, will help in dispelling the illusion of compactness (*ghana-vinibbhoga*) of mental processes ; they will also be helpful in tracing their specific nature or characteristics, and in noticing their momentary arising and disappearing.

2. The Non-coercive Procedure

BOTH the world surrounding us and the world of our own mind are full of unwanted experiences and frustrations, of hostile and conflicting forces. Man knows from his own bitter experience that he is not strong enough to meet and conquer in open combat, each one of these antagonistic forces around him and within him. He knows that, in the external world, he "cannot have everything as he wants it", and that, in the inner world of his mind, passions and impulses, whims and fancies, are often victorious over the voices of duty, reason and higher aspirations.

Man knows further that often an undesirable situation will even worsen if excessive pressure is used against it. Thus passionate desires may grow in intensity if one tries to silence them by sheer force of will. Disputes and quarrels will go on endlessly and grow fiercer, if they are fanned again and again by angry retorts or by vain attempts to crush the other man's position entirely. A disturbance during work, rest or meditation, will be felt more strongly and will have a longer-lasting impact if one reacts to it by resentment, anger, or by attempts to suppress it.

Again and again man will meet with situations in life where he cannot *force* issues. But there are ways of mastering some of the vicissitudes of life and many of the conflicts of mind, without an application of force, by non-violent means, which may often succeed where attempts of coercion, internal or external, have failed. Such a way of non-violent mastery of life and of mind is *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

By the methodical application of Bare Attention, being the basic practice in the development of Right Mindfulness, all the latent powers of a non-coercive approach will gradually unfold themselves, with their beneficial results and their wide and unexpected implications. Here, in this context, however, we are mainly concerned with benefits for the mastery of mind and for progress in meditation that may result from a non-coercive procedure. But we shall also throw occasional side glances to the repercussions on every-day life. It will not be difficult for a thoughtful reader to make more detailed application to his own problems.

The antagonistic forces that appear in meditation, and are liable to upset its smooth course, are of three kinds :—

1. external disturbances, as noise, etc.;
2. mental defilements (*kilesa*), including lust, anger, dissatisfaction, sloth, etc., which may arise at any time during meditation;
3. various incidental stray thoughts, surrender to day-dreaming, etc.

The occurrence of these distractions is the great stumbling block for a beginner in meditation who has not yet acquired sufficient dexterity to deal with them effectively. To give thought to those disturbing factors only when they actually arise at the very time of meditation, will be quite insufficient. If caught unprepared in one's defence, one will struggle with them in a more or less haphazard and ineffective way, and with a feeling of irritation which will form an additional impediment. If disturbances of any kind and an unskilful reaction to them occur several times

during one session, one will feel utterly frustrated and irritated, and may have to give up further attempts of meditating at least for the present occasion.

In fact, even meditators who are quite well informed, by books or teacher, about all details concerning the subject of meditation chosen, are often lacking in instruction how to deal skilfully with those varieties of disturbance mentioned above. The feeling of helplessness in face of them is the most formidable initial difficulty for a beginner in meditation. Many have accepted defeat at that point, abandoning prematurely any further effort in methodical meditation. As in worldly affairs so in meditation, one's way of dealing with the "initial difficulties" will often be decisive for success or failure.

When faced by inner and outer disturbances, the inexperienced or uninstructed beginner will generally react in two ways: he will first try to shove them away lightly, and if he fails in that, he will try to suppress them by sheer force of will. But these disturbances are like insolent flies: by whisking—first lightly and then with increasing vigour and anger—one may succeed (or not) in driving them away for a while, but mostly they will return with an exasperating constancy, and the effort and vexation of "whisking" will have produced only an additional disturbance of one's composure.

Satipaṭṭhāna, through its method of Bare Attention, offers a non-violent alternative to those futile and even harmful attempts at suppression by force.

A successful non-violent procedure in mind-control has to start with the right mental attitude. There must be first the full cognizance and sober acceptance of the fact that those three antagonistic forces or disturbing

factors are co-inhabitants of the world we live in, whether we like it or not. Our disapproval of them will not alter the fact. With some of them we shall have to come to terms, and concerning others—the mental defilements — we have to learn how to deal with them effectively until they are finally conquered.

1. Since we are not the sole inhabitants of this densely populated world, there are bound to be *external disturbances* of various kinds, as noise, interruption by visitors, etc. We cannot always live in 'splendid isolation', 'from noise of men and dogs untroubled', or on 'ivory towers' high above the crowd. Right meditation is not escapism; it is not meant for providing hiding places of temporary oblivion. Realistic meditation has the purpose of training man's mind to face, to understand and to conquer this very world in which we live and which also includes numerous obstacles to the life of meditation.

2. A Satipaṭṭhāna Master, the Venerable U Sobhana Mahāthera (Mahāsi Sayadaw) of Burma, said: In an unliberated worldling *mental defilements* are sure to arise again and again. He has to face that fact, and he should know these defilements well, in order to apply again and again the appropriate remedy of Satipaṭṭhāna. Then they will grow weaker, more short-lived, and will finally disappear. To know the occurrence and nature of defilements is therefore as important for a meditator as to know the occurrence of his noble thoughts.

By facing one's own defilements one will be stirred to increase the effort to eliminate them. On the other hand, by trying to avert one's glance when they arise, out of a false shame or pride, one will never truly join issue with them, and always evade the final and

decisive encounter; and by hitting blindly at them, one will only exhaust, or even hurt, oneself. But by observing carefully their nature and behaviour when they arise in one's own mind, one will be able to meet them well prepared, to forestall them often, and finally to banish them fully. Therefore meet your defilements with a free and open glance! Be not ashamed, afraid or discouraged!

3. The third group of intruders disturbing the meditator's mind are the stray thoughts and day dreams which may consist of various memories and images of the recent or remote past, including those emerging from subconscious depths; thoughts of the future: planning, imagining, fearing, hoping; the casual sense-perceptions that may occur at the very time of meditation, often dragging after them a long trail of associated ideas. Whenever concentration and mindfulness slacken, stray thoughts or day dreams will appear and fill the vacuum. Though they seem insignificant in themselves, they are, through their frequent occurrence, a most formidable obstacle, not only for the beginner, but in all cases when the mind is restless or distracted. Like the mental defilements, they will be entirely excluded only when, at the stage of holiness (Arahatta), perfect mindfulness has been obtained, keeping unfailing watch at the door of the mind. But it can certainly be achieved that, even for long continuous periods of meditation, these invaders are kept at bay.

To all these facts about the three kinds of disturbing factors full weight must be given and the facts must be fully absorbed by our mind, if they are to shape our mental attitude. Then, in these three disturbing factors, the Truth of Suffering will manifest itself to the meditator very incisively through his own personal experience: "Not

to obtain what one wants, is suffering". Also the three other Noble Truths should be exemplified by reference to that very situation. In such a way, even when dealing with impediments, the meditator will be within the domain of Satipaṭṭhāna: he will be engaged in the mindful awareness of the four Noble Truths, being a part of the Contemplation of Mental Objects (dhammānupassanā).^{*} It is a characteristic of Right Mindfulness, and one of its tasks, to relate the actual experiences of life to the truths of the Dhamma, and to use them as opportunities for its practical realisation. Already here, at this preliminary stage devoted to the shaping of a correct and helpful mental attitude, we have the first successful test of our peaceful weapons: by understanding our adversaries better, we have consolidated our position which was formerly weakened by an emotional approach; and by transforming these adversaries into teachers of the Four Noble Truths we have won the first advantage over them.

If mentally prepared by a realistic view of these three factors antagonistic to meditation, one will be less inclined to react at once by irritation when they actually arise. One will be emotionally in a better position to meet them with the non-violent weapons of which we shall now speak.

There are three devices of countering disturbances which should be applied in succession whenever the preceding device has failed to dispose of the disturbance. All three are applications of Bare Attention, differing

^{*} See "The Way of Mindfulness" by Bhikkhu Soma (8rd. ed., Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy), p. 52, last para of the Section on Breathing.

in the degree or intensity of attention given to the disturbance. The guiding rule here is: to give no more mental emphasis to the respective disturbance than actually required by circumstances.

1. First one should notice the disturbance clearly, but lightly; that is, without emphasis and without attention to details. After that brief act of noticing, one should try to return to the original object of meditation, and one may well succeed in it if the disturbance is weak by nature, or one's preceding concentration of mind was fairly strong. If, at that stage, we are careful not to get involved in any "conversation" or argument with the intruders, we shall, on our part, not give them a reason to stay long; and, in a good number of cases, the disturbances will depart soon, like visitors who do not receive a very warm welcome. That curt dismissal of them may often enable us to return to our original meditation, without any serious disturbance to the composure of mind.

The non-violent device is here: to apply Bare Attention to the disturbance, but with a minimum of response to it, and with a mind bent on withdrawal. This is the very way in which the Buddha himself dealt with inopportune visitors, as described in the *Mahāsuññatā-Sutta* (*Majjh. 122*): "... with a mind bent on seclusion . . . and withdrawn, his conversation aiming at dismissing (those visitors)". Similar was Sāntideva's advice how to deal with fools: if one cannot avoid them one should treat them "with the indifferent politeness of a gentleman".

2. If, however, the disturbance persists, one should repeat the application of Bare Attention again and again

patiently and calmly; and it may well be that the disturbance will vanish when it has spent its force. Here the attitude is: to meet the repeated occurrence of a disturbance by a reiterated 'No', by a determined refusal to be deflected from one's course. It is the attitude of patience and firmness. The capacity of watchful observation has to be aided here by the capacity to wait and to hold one's ground.

These two devices will generally be successful with incidental stray-thoughts, day-dreams, etc., which are feeble by nature, but also the other two types of disturbances, the external ones and defilements, may yield quite often.

3. But if, for some reason or other, they do *not* yield, one should now turn one's full and deliberate attention to the respective disturbance, accept it as an object of knowledge, and transform it thus from a *disturbance* of meditation to a legitimate *object* of meditation. One may continue with that new object until the external or internal cause for attending to it has ceased, or one may even retain it for that session of meditation, if it proves satisfactory.

If there is, for instance, disturbance by persistent noise, we should give to it our undivided attention. But we should take care to distinguish it well from any reaction of ours concerning it, e. g. by resentment, which likewise should be clearly recognized in its own nature, whenever it arises. In doing so, we shall have undertaken the Contemplation of Mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*), according to the following passage of the Discourse: 'He knows the ear [and sounds, and the fetter (e. g. resentment) arising through both]'. If the

noise is intermittent or of varying intensity, one will be easily able to discern the rise and fall (*udayabbaya*) in its process, and to add, in that way, to one's direct insight into impermanency (*aniccatā*).

The attitude towards recurrent mental defilements, as thoughts of lust, restlessness, etc., should be similar. One should face them squarely, but distinguish them from one's reaction to them, e. g. connivance, fear, resentment, irritation. In doing so, one is making use of the device of "naming", and one will reap its benefits which have been outlined before. In the recurrent waves of passion or restlessness one will likewise learn to distinguish gradually phases of "high" and "low", their "ups and downs", and may also gain other helpful knowledge about their behaviour. By that procedure, one again remains entirely within the range of Satipaṭṭhāna, by practising the Contemplation of the State of Mind (*cittānupassanā*) and of Mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*; i. e. attention to the Hindrances).

This method of transforming disturbances of meditation into objects of meditation, as simple as as ingenious, may be regarded as the culmination of non-violent procedure. It is a device very characteristic of the spirit of Satipaṭṭhāna, by making use of all experiences as aids on the Patb. In that way, enemies are turned into friends, because all these disturbances and antagonistic forces have become our teachers; and teachers, whoever they may be, should be regarded as friends.

We cannot forgo to quote here from a noteworthy little book, which is a moving human document of fortitude and practical wisdom acquired by suffering: it is *The Little Locksmith* by Katherine Butler Hathaway :—

“I am shocked by the ignorance and wastefulness with which persons who should know better throw away the things they do not like. They throw away experiences, people, marriages, situations, all sorts of things because they do not like them. If you throw away a thing, it is gone. Where you had something you have nothing. Your hands are empty, they have nothing to work on. Whereas, almost all those things which get thrown away are capable of being worked over by a little magic into just the opposite of what they were, . . . But most human beings never remember at all that in almost every bad situation there is the possibility of a transformation by which the undesirable may be changed into the desirable.”

We have said before that the occurrence of the three disturbing elements cannot always be prevented. They are parts of our world, and their coming and going follows its own laws irrespective of our approval or disapproval. But by applying Bare Attention we can well prevent our being swept away or dislodged by them. By taking a firm and calm stand on the secure ground of Mindfulness, we shall repeat in a modest degree, but in an essentially identical way, the historic situation under the Bodhi Tree when Māra* at the head of his army claimed in vain possession of the soil on which the seat of Enlightenment rested (as he will claim every inch of the world's surface). Trusting in the power of mindfulness, we may confidently repeat the Master's aspiration before his Enlightenment: *Mā maṃ thānā acavayi!* “May he (Māra) not dislodge me from this place” (*Padhāna Sutta*).

* The personification of the forces antagonistic to Enlightenment.

Let the intruders come and go, like any other members of that vast, unceasing procession of mental and physical events that passes along before our observant eyes, in the practice of Bare Attention.

Our advantage here is the quite obvious fact that two thought moments cannot be present at one and the same time. Attention refers, strictly spoken, not to the present but to the moment that has just passed away. Thus, as long as mindfulness holds sway, there will be no 'disturbance' or 'defiled thought'. This gives us the chance to hold on to that secure ground of an 'observer's post', to the potential 'throne of enlightenment'.

By the quietening and neutralizing influence of detached observation as applied in our three devices, the interruptions of meditation will increasingly lose the sting of irritation, and, thereby, their disturbing effect. This will prove to be an act of true *Virāga* ('dispassion') which literally means 'decolouring'. That is to say, these experiences will lose their emotional tinge that excites towards lust, aversion, etc., and they will appear as 'bare phenomena' (*suddha-dhammā*).

The non-violent procedure of Bare Attention endows the meditator with a "light but sure touch" that is so essential for handling the sensitive, evasive and refractory nature of our mind, as well as for dealing with various difficult situations and obstacles in life. When speaking of the even quality of energy required for attaining to the meditative absorptions, the "Path of Purification" (*Visuddhi-magga*) illustrates it by describing a test which the ancient students of the art of surgery had to undergo as a proof of their skill. A lotus leaf was placed in a bowl of water, and the pupil

had to make an incision through the length of the leaf, without cutting it entirely or submerging it. He who applied an excess of force, either cut it into two or pressed it into the water, while the timid one did not even dare to scratch it. In fact, it is something like the gentle but firm hand of the surgeon that is required in mental training, and this skilful and well-balanced touch will be the natural outcome of the non-violent procedure in the practice of Bare Attention.

3. Stopping and Slowing Down

For a full and unobstructed unfoldment of the mind's capacities, the influence of two complimentary forces is needed: of *activating* and *restraining*. That two-fold need was recognized by the Buddha, the great knower of mind. He advised that the Faculties of Energy (*viriy'indriya*) and of tranquil Concentration (*samādh'indriya*) should be kept equally strong and well balanced.¹ Furthermore, He recommended three of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) as suitable for rousing the mind², and another three for calming it³. In both cases, among the Spiritual Faculties and

1. For the teaching on the Balance of the Spiritual Faculties see *Anguttara-Nik.* VI, 55; *Visuddhi-Magga*, Ch. IV — Comy. to *Sati-paṭṭhāna Sutta* (in 'Way of Mindfulness', by Bhikkhu Soma p. 134).

2. These three are: the Enlightenment Factors of Truth-investigation, Energy and Rapture. See *Samy.-Nik.* 46, No. 53, quoted in *Vis. Magga*, Ch. IV.

3. These three are: the Enlightenment Factors of Tranquillity, Concentration and Equanimity. See *Samy.-Nik.* 46, No. 51.

the Enlightenment Factors, it is Mindfulness (*sati*) that not only watches over their equilibrium, but actively stimulates the growth of their activating as well as their restraining power.

Mindfulness, though seemingly of a passive nature, is in fact also an activating force. It makes the mind alert, and alertness is indispensable for all purposeful activity. In the present inquiry, however, we shall be mainly concerned with the *restraining* power of mindfulness. We shall examine how it makes for disentanglement and detachment, and how it positively helps in the development of the mental qualities required for the work of Deliverance.

In practising Bare Attention, we *keep still* at the mental and spatial place of observation, amidst the loud demands of the inner and outer world. There is in it the strength of tranquillity, the capacity of deferring action and applying the brake, of *stopping* rash interference, of suspending judgment while *pausing* for observation of facts and wise reflection on them. There is also a wholesome *slowing down* in the impetuosity of thought, speech and action. Keeping still and stopping, pausing and slowing down—these will be our key words when speaking now of the restraining effect of Bare Attention.

An ancient Chinese book says :—

“ In making things end, and in making things start, there is nothing more glorious than *keeping still*. ”

In the light of the Buddha's teaching, the true “end of things” is Nibbāna which is called the “*stilling of formations*” (*saṅkhārānaṃ vūpasamo*), that is their final

end or cessation. It is also called "the Stopping" (*nirodha*). The "things" or "formations" meant here, are the conditioned and impersonal phenomena rooted in their twofold cause, craving and ignorance. The end of formations comes to be by the end of "forming", *i. e.* by the end of world-creating kammic activities. It is the "end of the world" and of suffering, which, as proclaimed by the Buddha, cannot be reached by walking, by migrating or transmigrating, but is to be found only within ourselves. That "end of the world" is heralded by each deliberate act of *keeping still, stopping* or *pausing*. "Keeping still", in that highest sense, means: stopping the accumulation of Kamma. It means: refraining from perpetually adding to our entanglements in Samsāra, abstaining from our unceasing concern with evanescent things. By following the Way of Mindfulness, and training ourselves to keep still, or pause, in the attitude of Bare Attention, we refuse to take up the world's persistent challenge to our dispositions for greed or hatred. We protect ourselves against rash and delusive judgements; we refrain from blindly plunging into the labyrinths of interfering action with all its inherent dangers.

"He who abstains from interfering, is everywhere in security."

(*Sutta-nipāta*, verse 953)

"He who keeps still (or: knows where to stop) will not meet danger."

(*Tao-Te-King*, Chapter 44)

The Chinese saying quoted earlier, says in its second part that there is nothing more glorious in *making things start* than keeping still. Explained in the Buddhist sense, these things effectively started by keeping still, are "the

things (or qualities) making for decrease of kammic accumulation" (*apacayagāmino dhammā*), and, in dealing with them, we may follow the traditional division of mental training into Morality (or Conduct), Concentration (or Tranquillity) and Wisdom (or Insight). All three are decisively helped by the attitude of *keeping still*, as cultivated by Bare Attention.

1. *Conduct*. How can we improve our conduct, its moral quality and its skill in taking right decisions? If we earnestly desire such an improvement, it will generally be the wisest to choose the line of least resistance. We might suffer discouraging defeat if we turn too early against those short-comings which have deep roots in old habits or in powerful impulses. We shall be better advised to pay attention first to those blemishes of our actions or speech and to those errors of judgment which are caused by thoughtlessness and rashness, and there are many of them. There are numerous instances in the lives of most of us where one short moment of reflection may have prevented a false step, and thereby warded off a long chain of misery or moral guilt that started with a single moment of thoughtlessness. But how can we curb our rash reactions and replace them by moments of mindfulness and reflection? This will depend on our capacity to *stop and pause*, to apply the brakes at the right time, and that we can learn well by practising Bare Attention. In that practice we shall train ourselves "to look and wait", to suspend, or slow down, reactions. We shall learn it "in the easy way", in situations of our own choice, within the limited field of experiences met with during the periods of meditative practice. When facing again and again the incidental sense-impressions, feelings or stray thoughts

which interrupt our concentration; when curbing again and again our desire to respond to them in some way or other; when succeeding again and again in keeping still in face of them,—then we shall be well prepared for preserving that inner stillness also in the wider and unprotected field of everyday life. We shall have acquired a presence of mind that will enable us to pause and stop, even if we are taken by surprise, or are suddenly provoked or tempted.

Our present remarks refer to those blemishes of conduct which are liable to arise through thoughtlessness and rashness, but might more or less easily be checked through mindfulness. Dexterity in dealing with them will, however, also affect those more obstinate deviations from moral conduct which are rooted in strong passionate impulses or in deeply ingrained bad habits. The increased tranquillity of mind achieved in keeping still for Bare Attention, will restrain the impetuosity of passions, and the acquired habit of “pausing and stopping” will act as a brake to the unquestioned repetition of bad habits.

By being able to keep still for Bare Attention, or to pause for wise reflection, very often the first temptation to lust, the first wave of anger, the first mist of delusion will disappear without causing serious entanglement. At which point the current of unwholesome thought-processes is stopped, will depend on the quality of mindfulness. If mindfulness is keen, it will succeed in calling a stop at a very early point of a series of defiled thoughts or actions, before we are carried along by them too far. Consequently, the respective defilements will not grow beyond their initial strength, less effort will be required

to check them, and less kammic entanglements, or none, will follow.

Let us take the example of a pleasant visual object which has aroused our liking. At first that liking might not be very active and insistent. If already here the mind is able to keep still for detached observation or reflection, it will be easily possible to divest the visual perception of its still very slight admixture of lust, and to register it as “just something seen that has caused a pleasant feeling”; or the effect of the attraction felt is sublimated into quiet aesthetic pleasure. If that earliest chance has been missed, the liking will grow into attachment and into desire to possess. If now a stop is called, the thought of desire may gradually lose its strength; it will not easily turn into an insistent craving, and no actual attempts to get possession of the object of desire will follow. But if the current of lust is still unchecked, the thought of desire (= *akusala-mano-kamma*, “unwholesome mental kamma”) may express itself by speech (= *akusala-vacī-kamma*, “unwholesome verbal kamma”): one asks for the desired object, or even demands it with impetuous words. A refusal will cause the original current of lust to branch out into additional streams of mental defilements, either of sadness or of anger. But if even at that late stage one can stop for quiet reflection or Bare Attention and, accepting the refusal, renounce wish-fulfilment, further complications will be avoided. But if clamouring words are followed by action (= *akusala-kāya-kamma*, “unwholesome bodily kamma”): if, driven by craving, one tries to get possession of the object of one’s desire by stealth or force, then the kammic entanglement is complete, and the full impact of its consequences will be experienced by

the doer. Still, if even after the completion of the evil act, the doer stops for reflection, *i. e.* if mindfulness takes the form of remorseful retrospection, it will not be in vain: it will preclude a hardening of character and may prevent a repetition of the same course of action.

The Exalted One said once to His son Rāhula:

“Whatever action you *intend* to perform, by body, speech or mind, you should consider that action . . . If, in considering it, you realise: ‘This action which I intend to perform will be harmful to myself, or harmful to others, or harmful to both; it will be an unwholesome action, producing suffering, resulting in suffering’—then you should certainly not perform that action.

“Also *while* you are performing an action, by body, speech or mind, you should consider that action . . . If, in considering it, you realize: ‘This action which I am performing, is harmful to myself, or harmful to others, or harmful to both; it is an unwholesome action, producing suffering, resulting in suffering’—then you should desist from such an action.

“Also *after* you have performed an action, by body, speech or mind, you should consider that action . . . If, in considering it, you realize: ‘This action which I have performed, has been harmful to myself, or harmful to others, or harmful to both; it was an unwholesome action, producing suffering, resulting in suffering’—then you should in future refrain from it.” (*Majjh. 61*)

2. *Tranquillity*— We shall now consider how the stopping for Bare Attention is also a helper in attaining or strengthening Tranquillity (*samatha*) in its double

sense: of peace of mind in general, and of meditative concentration and calm.

By growing a habit of pausing and stopping for Bare Attention, it will become increasingly easier to withdraw into one's own stillness when unable to escape bodily from the loud and insistent noises of the outer world; it will be easier to forego useless reaction to foolish speech or deeds of others. Also when the blows of fate are particularly hard and incessant, a mind trained in Bare Attention will find it easier to take refuge in the haven of apparent passivity, or watchful non-action, and to wait patiently until the storms have passed. There are situations in life when it is best to allow things to come to their natural end. He who is able to keep still and wait will often succeed where aggressiveness or busy activity is vanquished. Not only in critical situations, but also in the normal course of life, the experience won by observant Keeping Still will convince us that it is not at all necessary to make an active response to every impression received, or to regard every encounter with people or things as a challenge to our interfering activity.

By refraining from busying ourselves unnecessarily, external frictions and, thereby, internal tensions will be reduced. Greater harmony and peace will pervade the life of every-day, and the sometimes considerable contrast of normal life to the tranquillity of meditation will be reduced. Then there will be less of those disturbing inner reverberations of everyday restlessness which, in a coarse or subtle form, invade the hours of meditation and produce bodily and mental unrest. Consequently, the Hindrance of Agitation (*uddhacca-*

nīvaraṇa), which is a chief obstacle of concentration, will be less often evident, or it will be easier to overcome it.

By cultivating the attitude of Bare Attention as often as opportunity offers, the centrifugal forces of mind, making for mental distraction, will be reduced, and the centripetal tendency, turning the mind inward and making for concentration, will be strengthened. The craving for a variety of changing objects of thought, or objects of desire, will be effectively checked.

Furthermore, regular practice of sustained attention to a continuous series of events will prepare for sustained concentration on a *single* object or a limited number of objects in the strict practice of meditation. Firmness, or steadiness, of mind, being another important factor in concentration, will likewise be cultivated in that way.

Thus, by keeping still, pausing and stopping for Bare Attention, several salient components of meditative tranquillity are fostered: calmness, concentration, firmness, reduction of the multiplicity of objects. The average level of normal consciousness is raised and brought closer to the level of the meditative mind. This is an important point, because it happens often that too wide a gap between these two levels of mind will frustrate again and again attempts of mental concentration or the achieving of smooth continuity in meditative practice.

In the sequence of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment we find that the enlightenment-factor Tranquillity (*passadhi-sambojjhaṅga*) precedes that of Concentration (*samādhī-sambojjhaṅga*): and, expressing the same fact,

it was said; "If tranquillized within, the mind will become concentrated." Now, in the light of our previous remarks, we shall better understand these statements.

3. *Insight*.— It has been said by the Exalted One: "He whose mind is concentrated sees things as they really are." Therefore all those ways by which Bare Attention strengthens concentration of mind, will also be a supporting condition of the development of insight. But there is also a more direct and specific help which Insight receives from "Keeping still at Bare Attention".

Apart from (supposedly) disinterested scholarly or scientific research, man is generally more concerned with "handling" and utilizing things, or defining their relations to himself, than with knowing them in their true nature. He is therefore mostly satisfied with registering the very first signal conveyed to him by an outer or inner perception. Through deeply ingrained habit, that first signal will evoke standard responses by way of judgments like good—bad, pleasant—unpleasant, useful—harmful, right—wrong; which again will lead to further reactions by word or deed in accordance with these judgments. It is very rare that attention will dwell any longer upon an object of a common, or habitual type, than for receiving that very first signal, or the first few. Thus, mostly only one single aspect of the object, or a selected few, will be perceived (and sometimes misconceived), and only the very first phase (or little more) of the object's life-span will come into the focus of attention. One may not even be consciously aware that the respective process has an extension in time (origination and end);

that it has many aspects and relations beyond those at first sight connected with the casual observer or the limited situation; that, in brief, it has a kind of evanescent individuality of its own. A world that has been perceived in that superficial way, will, to that extent, consist of rather shapeless little lumps of experiences marked by a few subjectively selected (and sometimes misapplied) signs or symbols which have significance mainly for the individual's self-interest. Parts of that rather shadow-like world are not only things and persons of one's environment, but even a good part of one's own bodily and mental processes which are often conceived in a similar superficial way. When thus the seal of self-reference is stamped again and again upon the world of everyday experience, the basic misconception 'This belongs to me' (*attaniya*) will steadily continue to grow subtle, but firm [and wide-spread roots (comparable to the hair-roots of plants), which will scarcely be shaken by mere intellectual convictions about the non-existence of a self (*anattā*).

These grave consequences issue from that fundamental perceptual situation we have mentioned: on receiving a first signal from his perceptions, man rushes into hasty or habitual reactions which so often commit him to the four misapprehensions of reality: taking the impure for pure, the impermanent for lasting, the painful and pain-bringing for pleasant, and the impersonal for a self or something belonging to the self.

But if one musters the restraining forces of one's mind and pauses for Bare Attention, the material and mental processes that form the objects of mind at the given moment will reveal themselves more fully and

more truly. If they are no longer dragged at once into the whirlpool of self-reference, but allowed to unfold themselves before the watchful eye of mindfulness, the diversity of their aspects and the wide net of their correlations and interconnections will appear: the narrow and often falsifying connection with self-interest will recede into the background and will be dwarfed by the wider view now gained. Birth and death, rise and fall of many of the observed processes will be clearly discerned, in their serial occurrence or in their component parts. Thereby the facts of Change and Impermanence will impress themselves on the mind with growing intensity. By the same discernment of rise and fall, many false conceptions of unity in the processes which had been created under the influence of the egocentric attitude will be dissolved. Self-reference uncritically overrides diversity, and lumps things together under the preconceptions of *being* a self (*attā*) or *belonging* to a self (*attaniya*). But Bare Attention reveals these sham unities as impersonal and conditioned phenomena. Facing thus again and again the evanescent, dependent and impersonal nature of life processes within and without, their monotony and unsatisfactory nature will become marked; in other words, the Truth of Suffering inherent in them will appear. In that way, all three Characteristics, or Signata, of Existence will open themselves to penetrative Insight (*Vipassanā*), by the simple device of slowing down, pausing and keeping still for Bare Attention.

Spontaneity

An acquired or strengthened habit of pausing mindfully before acting will not exclude or paralyze spontaneity of response where it is beneficial. On

the contrary, the pausing, the stopping and the keeping still for Bare Attention will, through training, become quite spontaneous themselves. They will grow into a "selective mechanism" of the mind that, with an increasing reliability and swiftness of response, will prevent the upsurge of evil or unwise impulses which may have been intellectually realised by us as unwholesome, but, by their own powerful spontaneity, still continue to defeat our better knowledge and nobler intention. The practice of mindful pausing serves, therefore, to replace unwholesome spontaneity or habits, by wholesome ones.

Just as certain reflex moments are an automatically operating protection of the body, similarly a spontaneously working spiritual and moral self-protection will be a vital function of the mind. A person of average moral standard will instinctively shrink from theft or murder, without any long reflection. With the help of the method of Bare Attention, the range of such spontaneously functioning moral brakes can be greatly extended and ethical sensitivity heightened. Also false thought-habits can be broken in the same way and replaced by correct ones.

In an untrained mind, noble tendencies or right thoughts often succumb to the spontaneous outbreak of passions or prejudices, or they can assert themselves only with difficulty, after a struggle of motives. But if the spontaneity of the Unwholesome is checked or greatly reduced, as described above, our good impulses and wise reflections will have greater scope and they will be able to express themselves freely and spontaneously. Their spontaneous flow will give greater confidence in the power of the good within

us and will carry more conviction for others. That spontaneity of the good will not be of an erratic nature, but will have deep and firm roots in previous methodical training. Here appears a way by which the ‘premeditated good’ (*sasañkhārika-kusala*) may be transformed into ‘spontaneously arising good thought’ (*asañkhārika-kusala-citta*) which, if combined with knowledge, takes the first place in the scale of ethical values, according to the psychology of the Abhidhamma. Hereby we shall get practical understanding of a saying in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*:* ‘If one attains intentionally to an unintentional state one has comprehension’. This saying just invites a paraphrase in Pāli terms: *Sasañkhārena asañkhārikaṃ pattabbhaṃ*. ‘By premeditated intentional effort spontaneity can be won.’

If the numerous aids to mental growth and liberation, found in the Buddha’s teachings, are wisely utilized, there is actually nothing that can finally withstand the Satipaṭṭhāna Method; and this method starts with the simple but in its effects far-reaching practice of learning to pause and stop for Bare Attention.

Slowing-down

Against the impetuosity, rashness and heedlessness of the untrained mind, practice of Pausing and Stopping sets a deliberate slowing-down. The demands of modern life, however, make it impracticable to introduce such a slow-down of functions into the routine of the average working-day. But as an antidote against the harmful consequences of the hectic speed of

* A treatise of Chinese Mahāyāna, strongly influenced by Taoism.

modern life, it is all the more important to cultivate that practice in one's leisure hours and especially in periods of strict Satipaṭṭhāna practice. It will also give the worldly benefits of greater calm, efficiency and skill in one's daily round of work.

For the purposes of meditative development, Slowing-down serves as an effective training in heedfulness, sense-control and concentration. But apart from that, it has also more specific significance for meditative practice. In the commentary to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, for instance, it is told how the slowing-down of movements may help in *regaining lost concentration* on a chosen object. A monk, so we read, had bent his arm quickly without remembering his subject of meditation, as his rule of practice demanded. On becoming aware of that omission, he took his arm back to its previous position and repeated the movement mindfully. The subject of meditation referred to was probably 'clearly comprehending action' (*sampajāna-kāra*), and especially the one mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as follows: 'In bending and stretching he acts with clear comprehension' (*Sammiñjite pasārite sampajānakāri hoti*).

The slowing-down of certain bodily movements during strict meditative training is also of great help in gaining *Insight-knowledge* (*Vipassanā-ñāṇa*) by one's own experience, and especially the direct awareness of change (*anicca*) and impersonality (*anattā*). It is, to a great extent, the rapidity of movement that strengthens the illusion of unity, identity and substantiality of what is actually a complex and evanescent process. Therefore, in the strict practice of Satipaṭṭhāna, the slowing down of walking or bending and stretching

and thereby discerning the several phases of each movement, is an exercise very helpful for direct insight into the three characteristics of all phenomena. It will make an impression of increasing force and significance on the meditator, to notice clearly how each partial phase of the process observed arises and ceases by itself, and nothing of it "goes over" or "transmigrates" to the next phase.

Also the average rhythm of our every-day actions, speech and thoughts will become more quiet and peaceful under the influence of that practice. Slowing-down the hurried rhythm of life means that thoughts, feelings and perceptions will be able to complete the entire length of their natural life-time. Full awareness will extend up to their end-phase: to their last gentle vibrations and reverberations. Too often that end-phase is cut off by an impatient grasping at new impressions, or by hurrying on to the next stage of a line of thought before the earlier one has been clearly comprehended. This is one of the main reasons for the disorderly state of average consciousness which is burdened by a vast amount of indistinct or fragmentary perceptions, of stunned emotions and unfinished or undigested ideas. Slowing-down will prove an effective device of recovering the fulness and clarity of consciousness. A fitting simile, and at the same time an actual example of it, is the procedure in the practice of Mindfulness on Breathing (*ānāpānasati*) where mindfulness has likewise to cover the whole extent of the breath, its beginning, middle and end. This is what is meant by the passage of the Discourse, saying "Experiencing the *whole* (breath-) body, I shall breathe in and out". Similarly, the entire "breath", or rhythm of our life will become deeper and fuller,

if, through slowing-down, we get used to sustained attention.

The habit of prematurely cutting off processes of thought, or slurring over them, has assumed serious proportions in the man of modern city civilization. His restlessness clamours for ever new stimuli, in an ever increasing speed of succession, having its counterpart in the increasing speed of our means of locomotion. This rapid bombardment of impressions will gradually blunt man's sensitivity, and consequently the new stimuli will have to be still more loud, coarse and variegated—a process which, if not checked, can only end in disaster. This state of affairs also explains the decrease of finer aesthetic susceptibility and the growing incapacity of genuine natural joy. The place of both is taken by a hectic, short-breathed excitement which does not leave any true aesthetic or emotional satisfaction. "Shallow mental breath" is to a great extent responsible for the growing superficiality and coarseness of "civilised man" and for the frightening spread of nervous disorders in the West. It may well become the start of a general deterioration of human consciousness in its qualitative level, its range and its strength. This danger threatens all those, in the East as well as in the West, whom the impact of technical civilization finds without an adequate spiritual protection. Satipaṭṭhāna can make an important contribution to remedying that situation, in the way we have indicated here briefly. Thus, also from the worldly point of view, the method will prove beneficial.

Here, however, we are chiefly concerned with the psychological aspects and their significance for meditative development. Sustained attention, being helped by Slowing-down, will affect the quality of consciousness

mainly in three ways: (a) the intensity of consciousness, (b) the clarity of the object's characteristic features, and (c) it will reveal the object's "relatedness".

(a) An object of *sustained* attention will exert a particularly strong and long-lasting impact on the mind, not only throughout the thought-series immediately following the respective perception, but its influence may also extend far into the future. It is that causal efficacy which is the measure of the *intensity of consciousness*.

(b) The first impression conveyed by any new sense-object or idea will be what is most striking in it, subjectively or objectively, and it will dominate the mind up to the culminating point of the impact. But there are sure to be other aspects, characteristics or functions of the respective object which may not be obvious or are less interesting to the cognizing subject but which are no less, or even more, important. There will also be cases where the first impression is entirely deceptive. Only if attention is sustained beyond that first impact, will the respective object reveal itself more fully. It is only at the downward course of the first perceptual wave (its end-phase), when the prejudicing force of the first impact lessens, that the object will yield a wider selection of detail, an all-round picture of itself. It is therefore, only by sustained attention that a greater *clarity of an object's characteristic features* can be obtained.

(c) Among the characteristic features of a physical or mental object there is one class which is often overlooked by hasty or superficial attention, and therefore we list it here separately: it is the *relatedness* of the

object, extending to its past (origin, causes, reasons, logical precedents, etc.), and its present manifestation (environment, "background", presently active influences, etc.). An event cannot be said to be fully understood, if it is viewed in artificial isolation. It must be seen as a part of a wider pattern, in its conditioned and conditioning nature; and this can be done only with the help of sustained attention.

The influence of slowing-down and sustained attention on subconsciousness, memory and intuition

It need hardly be pointed out how important all these three aforementioned points are for "seeing things according to reality", in other words, for the development of Insight (*vipassanā*). Their *direct* influence is obvious, but there is also an *indirect one* which is no less powerful and important. Those three results of sustained attention, achieved with the help of Slowing-down, are also instrumental in influencing the quality and nature of *subconsciousness, memory and intuition* which, on their part, will again be aiding, nourishing and consolidating the progress of *liberating Insight*. Insight aided by them will be like the mountain lake (of the canonical simile) that is fed not only from without, by the rains, but also by springs welling up within its own depth. Similarly Insight will be nourished not only through external experience but also from the "subterraneous", *i. e.* subliminal resources of the mind: by memories, other subconscious material, and by the strengthened faculty of intuition. Meditative results of an Insight that has such deep roots will not be lost easily, even with unliberated worldings (*puthujjana*) who are subject to relapse.

1. If perceptions or thoughts which have been objects of sustained attention, sink into *subconsciousness*, they will occupy there a special position by reason of their stronger impact on the mind and the greater distinctness of their characteristic features. As to the first reason: it will certainly not remain without any effect upon the structure of subconsciousness, if the end-phase of a moment of consciousness or of a cognitive series, being immediately followed by subconsciousness, is not weak but of a strength equal to that of the preceding phases. As for the second reason: if an impression or idea, marked by numerous and distinct characteristics, sinks into subconsciousness, it will not so easily be absorbed into the vagueness of other subconscious contents or dragged into false subconscious associations with superficial similarities of passionate biases. And also the last of the aforementioned three facts—the correct comprehension of the object's "relatedness"—will have similar effects: there will be a greater resistance against a merging with inadequate subconscious material. If perceptions or thoughts of that level of intensity and clarity sink into subconsciousness, they will be more "articulate" and more "accessible" than contents of subconsciousness originating from hazy or "stunned" impressions; they will be more easily "convertible" into full consciousness, and less unaccountable in their hidden effects upon it. If, through an improvement in the quality and range of mindfulness, the number of such "matured" impressions increases in the mind, it seems quite possible that a subtle change in the structure of subconsciousness can be achieved in that way.

2. It will be evident from our earlier remarks that those impressions which we have called "matured" or

“more easily accessible and convertible”, will lend themselves more easily and more correctly to recollection. More easily: because of their greater intensity; more correctly: because of their clearly marked features which will give them a fair degree of protection against being distorted by false associative images or ideas. If, in addition, they are remembered in their “context” and “relatedness”, it will work both ways, for easier and more correct recollection. In that way, *Sati* in its meaning and function of Mindfulness, will help to strengthen *Sati* in its meaning and function of *Memory*.

3. From that very influence on subconsciousness and memory also a deepening and strengthening of the faculty of intuition will naturally follow, and particularly of intuitive insight which concerns us here chiefly. Intuition is not “a gift from the unknown”, but, as any other mental faculty, it arises out of specific conditions which, in this case, are primarily the latent memories of perceptions and thoughts “stored” in the subconscious. It is obvious that memories which have the aforementioned qualities of greater intensity, clarity and richness of distinctive marks, and thereby of greater accessibility, will provide the most fertile soil for the growth of intuition. Here too the preserved “relatedness” of the respective impressions will contribute much. Recollections of that type will have a more organic character than memories of bare or vague, isolated facts, and they will easier fall into new patterns of meanings and significance. These more “articulate” memory-images will be a strong stimulation and aid for the intuitive faculty. Silently and in the hidden depths of the subliminal mental processes, the work of collecting and organizing the subconscious material of experience and knowledge goes on until it is ripe to emerge as, what we call an *intuition*. The breaking-

through of that intuition is sometimes occasioned by quite ordinary happenings which, however, may have a strong evocative power, if, in previous occurrence they had been made objects of sustained attention. Slowing-down and pausing for Bare Attention will discover the depth-dimension of the simple things of every day, and will thus provide potential stimuli for the intuitive faculty. This applies also to the intuitive penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the four Noble Truths that culminates in Holiness (*arahatta*). Many instances are recorded of monks where the flash of intuitive penetration did not strike them when they were engaged in the meditative practice of insight proper, but on quite different occasions: when stumbling, when seeing a forest fire, a fata-morgana, a lump of froth in a river, etc.

We have met here another confirmation of that seemingly paradoxical saying that 'intentionally' an unintentional state may be won, or at least aided, by deliberately turning the full light of mindfulness even on the smallest events and actions of every-day life.

Sustained attention not only provides the nourishing soil for the *growth* of intuition, it also makes possible the fuller utilization and even repetition of the intuitive moment. Men of inspiration in various fields of creative activity have often related and deplored their common experience that the flash of intuition strikes so suddenly and vanishes so quickly that frequently the slow response of the mind scarcely catches the last glimpse of it. But if the mind has been trained in observant Pausing, in Slowing-down and sustained attention, and if — as indicated above—also the subconsciousness has been influenced by it, then the intuitive moment, too,

might gain that fuller, slower and stronger rhythm. This being the case, its impact will be strong and clear enough for making full use of that flash of intuitive insight. It might even be possible to lead its fading vibrations upward again to a new culmination, similar to the rhythmic repetition of a melody rising again, in harmonious development, out of the last notes of its first appearance.

The full utilization of a single moment of intuitive insight might be of decisive importance for one's progress toward full realization. If one's mental grip is too weak and those elusive moments of intuitive insight are allowed to slip away without being utilized fully for the work of liberation, then it might well happen that they will not recur before many years have passed, or perhaps not at all during the present life. Skill in sustained attention, however, will allow the full use of opportunities, and slowing-down and pausing during meditative practice, is an important aid in acquiring that skill.

Through our now concluded treatment of Pausing, Stopping and Slowing-down, one of the traditional definitions of Mindfulness found in the Pāli Scriptures will have become more intelligible in its far-reaching implications: that is its function of *anapilāpanatā*, meaning literally, 'not floating (or slipping) away',—'like pumpkins on the surface of water', add the commentators; and they continue: 'Mindfulness enters deeply into its object', instead of hurrying over its surface only. Therefore "non-superficiality" will be an appropriate rendering of the above Pāli term, and a befitting characterization of Mindfulness.

4. Directness of Vision

“I wish I could disaccustom myself from everything, so that I might see anew, hear anew, feel anew: Habit spoils our philosophy.”

G. Chr. Lichtenberg (1742-1799)

In an earlier section; we spoke about the impulsive spontaneity of the Unwholesome (*akusala*). We have seen how the stopping for bare and sustained attention is able to counter, or reduce, the occurrence of rash impulsive reactions, thus allowing us to face any situation with a fresh mind, with *a directness of vision*, unprejudiced by those first spontaneous responses.

By *directness of vision* we understand a direct view of reality, without any colouring or distorting lenses, without the intrusion of emotional or habitual pre-judication and intellectual biases. It means: coming face to face with the bare facts of actuality, seeing them as vivid and fresh as if they had occurred for the first time.

The Force of Habit

Spontaneous reactions which so often stand in the way of direct vision, do not derive only from passionate impulses, but are very frequently the product of *habit*; and, in that form, they generally have an even stronger and more tenacious hold on man, which may work out either for the good and useful or for the bad and harmful. The influence for the *good*, exercised by habits is seen in the ‘power of repeated

practice" by which man's achievements and skills, of a manual or mental, worldly or spiritual kind, are protected against loss or forgetfulness, and are converted from a casual short-lived and imperfect acquisition into the more secure possession of a quality thoroughly mastered. The *detrimental* effect of habitual, spontaneous reactions is manifest in what is called, in a derogative sense, the "force of habit": its deadening, stultifying and narrowing influence, productive of compulsive behaviour of various kinds. In our present context, we shall be concerned only with that negative aspect of habit as impeding and obscuring the directness of vision.

As remarked earlier, the influence of habitual reactions is generally stronger than that of impulsive ones. Passionate impulses may disappear as suddenly as they have arisen. Though their consequences may well be very grave and extend far into the future, it is mostly the influence of habit which is longer lasting and deeper reaching. Habit spreads its vast and closely meshed net over wide areas of our life and thought, trying to drag in more and more of it. Passionate impulses too, might be caught into that net of habit and thus be transformed from passing outbursts into traits of character. A momentary impulse, an occasional indulgence, a passing whim may by repetition become a habit difficult to uproot, a desire hard to control, and finally an automatic function that is no longer questioned. By repeated gratification of a desire, habit is formed, and habit grows into a compulsion.

It may well be the case that some activity, behaviour or mental attitude to which one has become

accustomed is, considered by itself, quite unimportant to the individual concerned, and also morally quite indifferent or inconsequential. At the start it might have been quite easy to abandon it or even to exchange it for its very opposite, since neither one's emotions nor reason had any strong bias towards either side of a possible choice. But by repetition, the continuance of the chosen way of acting, behaving or thinking will gradually become equivalent with "pleasant", "desirable", "correct" or even "righteous"; and it will be finally identified, more or less consciously, with one's so-called character or personality. Consequently, any change in it—a break in that routine—will be felt as "unpleasant" or as "wrong", and any interference with it from outside will be greatly resented and even regarded as hostile towards "one's vital interests and principles". In fact, primitive minds, at all times, be they "civilised" or not, have looked at a stranger with his "strange customs" as an enemy, and have felt his mere unaggressive existence as a challenge or threat to themselves.

In the cases aforementioned, when the specific habit was originally not of great importance to the individual, the attachment which is gradually formed is not so much to the object proper, as to the pleasantness of undisturbed routine. The strength of that attachment to routine derives partly from the force of physical and mental inertia which is so powerful in man. About another cause of it we shall speak presently. By force of habit, the respective concern (any material object, activity, behaviour or way of thinking) is invested with such an increase of emotional emphasis that the attachment to quite unimportant or

banal things may become as tenacious as that to the fundamental passions in man. Thus, even the smallest habits, if, by lack of conscious control, they become uncontested masters of their respective realms, may dangerously contribute to the rigidity and self-limitation of character, narrowing its "freedom of movement" (environmental, intellectual and spiritual). Thus, often quite unnecessarily, new fetters are forged for the individual, and nourishing soil is provided for the growth of new attachments and aversions, prejudices and predilections, that is to say, for new suffering. Therefore, when considering the following words of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, we should also think of the important part played by habit in the formation of fetters:

"...and what fetter arises dependent on both (*i.e.* the sense-organs and sense-objects), that he knows well. In what manner the arising of the not arisen fetter comes to be, that he knows well."

In Buddhist parlance, it is pre-eminently the Hindrance of Sloth and Torpor (*thīna-middha-nīvaraṇa*) which is strengthened by the "force of habit", and mental faculties like agility and pliancy of mind (*kāya-* and *citta-lahutā, mudutā*, etc.)* are weakened.

The danger for spiritual development, involved in the dominating influence of habit, is all the more serious since its tendency towards expansion is parti-

* About these important 'qualitative constituents' of good, wholesome (*kusala*) consciousness, see the author's "Abhidhamma Studies", p. 51f.

cularly noticeable in our present age of increasing specialisation and standardization in various spheres of life and thought.

The roots of that tendency of habits to extend their range, are anchored in the very nature of consciousness. Certain active types of consciousness, if possessing a fair degree of intensity, tend to repeat themselves, though that tendency is never quite undisputed, *e.g.*, by new cognitions claiming man-attention. This tendency towards repetition stems not only from the aforementioned passive force of inertia, but in many cases from an active "will to dominate and to conquer". Even in quite peripheral or subordinate types of consciousness, there seems to exist an urge to gain ascendancy, to become by themselves ever so small centres around which other, weaker mental and physical states revolve, adapting themselves to that centre and becoming subservient to it. This is a striking parallel to the self-assertion and the domineering tendency of an egocentric individual in his contact with society. Among biological analogies, we may mention the tendency towards expansion by cancer and other pathological growths; and for the tendency towards repetition, we may think of the freak mutations which loom as a grave danger at the horizon of our atomic age.

Out of that "will to dominate", inherent in many types of consciousness, a passing whim may grow into a relatively constant trait of character, and, if still not satisfied with its position, it may tend to break away entirely from the present combination of life forces till, finally, in the process of rebirths, it becomes the very centre of a new so-called personality.

There are within us countless seeds for new lives, for innumerable potential "beings", all of which we should vow to liberate from the wheel of Saṃsāra, as the Sixth Zen Patriarch expressed it.*

Detrimental physical or mental habits may grow strong, not only if fostered deliberately, but also if left unnoticed or unopposed. From minute seeds planted in a long-forgotten past, has grown much of what has now strong roots in our nature (see the Simile of the creeper in Majjhima-Nik. 45). This growth of morally bad or otherwise detrimental habits can be effectively checked by gradually developing another habit that will counter them: that of attending to them mindfully. Doing deliberately what had become a mechanical performance, and, perhaps, previous to it, pausing for a while for bare attention and reflection—this will give a chance for scrutinizing the habit in the light of Clear Comprehension of Purpose, and of Suitability (*sātthaka-*, and *sappāya-sampajañña*). It will allow a fresh assessment of the situation, a *direct vision* of it, unobscured by the mental haze surrounding a habitual activity, which conveys the feeling: "It is right because it was done before." Even if a detrimental habit cannot be broken at once, or soon, in that way; it will then lose a good deal of its unquestioned spontaneity of occurrence; it will carry the stamp of repeated scrutiny and resistance, and at its reoccurrence it will be weaker and prove more amenable to our attempts to change or abolish it.

* This may well be a somewhat ironical reference by that great sage to the fact that the well-known Mahāyānic Bodhisattva Vow of liberating all beings of the universe, is often taken much too lightly by many of his fellow Mahāyānists.

It needs hardly to be mentioned: habit (which was rightly called "the wet-nurse of man") cannot and should not disappear from our life. Let us only remember what a relief it is particularly in the crowded day and complex life of a city-dweller, that he can do a great number of things fairly mechanically, with, as it were, only "half-powered attention". It means a considerable simplification of his life. It would be an unbearable strain, if all that had to be done with deliberate effort and close attention. In fact, many products of manual labour, much of the *technique* in art, and even standard procedure in complex intellectual work, will generally bring better and more even results through skilled routine performance. Yet, also that evenness of habitual performance will reach its dead point where it declines. It will show symptoms of fatigue, if it is not enlivened by the creation of new interest in it.

There is, of course, no question of our advocating here the abolishment of all our little habits as far as they are innocuous or even useful. But we should regularly convince ourselves whether we have still control over them, that is, whether we can give them up, or alter them, whenever wanted. We can make sure of it, firstly, by attending to them mindfully for a certain period of time, and secondly, by actually giving them up temporarily in cases where this will not have any harmful or disturbing effects upon ourselves or others. If we turn on them the light of *direct vision*, looking at them or performing them, as if seen or done for the first time, these little routine activities, and the habitual sights around us, will assume a new glow of interest and stimulation.

This holds good also for our professional occupation and its environment, and for our close human relationships if they should have become stale by habit. The relations to one's marriage partner, to friends, colleagues, etc., may thus receive a great rejuvenation. A fresh and direct vision will also discover that one can react to people, or do things, in a different and more beneficial way, than done before habitually.

An acquired capacity to give up *little* habits will prove its worth in the fight against more dangerous proclivities, and also at times when we are faced with serious changes in our life which by force deprive us of very fundamental habits. Loosening the hardened soil of our routine behaviour and thoughts, will have an enlivening effect on our vital energy, our mental vigour, our power of imagination, and, what is most important, into that loosened soil we shall be able to plant the seeds of vigorous spiritual progress.

Associative Thought

Mental habituation to standard reactions, to sequences of activity, to judgments of people or things, etc., proceeds by way of associative thinking. From things or ideas, situations or people that we encounter, we select certain of their distinctive characteristics or marks, and associate, *i.e.* connect these marks with our own response to them. If these encounters recur. they are associated first with those marks selected earlier, and then with our original, or strongest, response. So these marks become a signal for releasing a standard reaction which may consist of quite a long sequence of connected acts or thoughts, well mastered or known through

repeated practice of experience. That way of functioning relieves man of the necessity to apply ever-renewed effort and painstaking scrutiny to each single step of such sequences of thought and action. This certainly means a great simplification of life and a release of energy for other tasks. In fact, in the evolution of the human mind, associative thinking has been a progressive step of decisive importance. It was indispensable for acquiring the capacity to learn from experience, and led up to the discovery and application of causal laws.

Yet, it is easy to see that, close to these benefits of associative thinking, there lurk as many and grave dangers in this, now basic, procedure of mental activity, if it is faultily applied or not carefully watched. Let us draw up a list of these danger points (though not an exhaustive one):

1. Initial faulty or incomplete observations, errors of judgment, emotional prejudices (love, hate, pride), etc., may be easily perpetuated and strengthened by the mechanism of associative thinking, through being carried over to re-occurrences of similar situations.

2. Incomplete observations and restricted view-points in judgments, etc., which may have been sufficient for meeting a particular situation, may, if mechanically applied to changed circumstances, prove quite inadequate and may entail grave consequences.

3. Not infrequent are cases where, by misdirected associative thinking, a strong instinctive dislike is felt for things, places or persons which, in some way, are merely reminiscent of unpleasant experiences.

These but briefly stated instances show how vital it is to scrutinize from time to time these mental grooves of our associative thoughts, and the various habits and stereotype reactions deriving from them. In other words, we must step out of the ruts for a while, regain a direct vision of things and make a fresh appraisal of them in the light of that vision.

If we look once again over the list of potential dangers deriving from uncontrolled associative thinking, we shall better understand the Buddha's insistence of getting to the bedrock of experience. For instance, in these profound and terse stanzas called "The Cave", included in the Sutta Nipāta, He says that the "full penetration of *sense-impression (phassa)* will make one free from greed" and that, | "by understanding *perception (saññā)* one will be able to cross the flood of *Samsāra*" (Stanza 778f).^{*} By placing mindfulness, as a guard, at the very first gate through which experience enters, we shall be able to control the incomers much more easily, and shut out unwanted intruders. Thus the purity of "luminous consciousness" can be maintained against "adventitious defilements" (see *Anguttara-Nik.*, I).

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta provides a systematic training for inducing direct, fresh and undistorted vision, covering the entire personality in its physical and mental aspects, and including the entire world of experience. The methodical application of the several exercises to oneself (*ajjhata*), to others (*bahiddhā*) and alternately to both, will be very helpful in discovering false

^{*} Compare also the passage on the significance of sense impression (or contact; *phassa*) in the concluding sections of *Brahmajāla Sutta* (*Digha Nikāya*, Sutta, 1).

conceptions due to misdirected associative thinking or misapplied analogies.

The principal types of false associative thinking are covered, in the terminology of the Dhamma, by the four kinds of *misapprehensions* or *perverted views* (*vipallāsa*) which wrongly take (1) what is impermanent, for permanent, (2) what is painful, or conducive to it, for happiness, (3) what is not-self and unsubstantial, for a self or an abiding substance, (4) what is impure, for beautiful. These perverted views of reality arise through a one-sided and incomplete selection, or entirely false apprehension, of the characteristic marks of things or ideas, and through “associating” them closely with one’s passions and false theories. By gradually “dissociating” our perceptions and impressions from these misapprehensions, with the help of Bare Attention, we shall make steady progress in the *direct vision* of “bare processes” (*suddha-dhammā*).

The Sense of Urgency (saṃvega)

He who is being stirred (*saṃviṇṇa*) to a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) by things which are deeply moving to one of clear and direct vision, will experience a release of energy and courage that is able to break through his timid hesitations and his rigid routine of life and thought. If that sense of urgency is kept alive, it will bestow the earnestness and persistence (*appamāda*) required for the work of liberation.

Thus said the teachers of old:

“This very world here is our field of action.
It harbours the unfoldment of the Holy Path,
And many things to break complacency.

Be stirred by things which may well move the heart.

And being stirred strive wisely and fight on!"

*Ayaṃ kammabhūmi, idha maggabhāvanā,
thānāni saṃvejaniyā bahu idha,
Saṃvega saṃvejaniyesu vatthūsu,
saṃvegajāto'va payuñja yoniso.**

Our nearest neighbourhood is full of stirring things, but generally we do not perceive them as such, because habit has made our vision dull and our heart insensitive. Even the Buddha's teaching which, when we first encountered it consciously, was a powerful intellectual and emotional stimulation, will gradually lose for us its original freshness and impelling force, unless we constantly renew it by turning to the fullness of life around us which illustrates the Four Noble Truths in ever new variations. A direct vision will impart new life-blood even to the commonest experiences of everyday, so that their true nature appears through the dim haze of habit, and speaks to us with a fresh voice. It may well be just the long-accustomed sight of the beggar at the street-corner, or a weeping child or the illness of a friend, which startles us afresh, makes us think, and stirs our sense of urgency in treading resolutely the Path that leads to the Cessation of Suffering.

We know the beautiful old account of Prince Siddhattha's coming face to face with old-age, illness and death, when he drove in his chariot through the

* Quoted in the *Commentary to the Saṃyutta Nikāya, Salāyatana-Saṃyutta, Devadaha-vaggo catuttho Sutta No. 2.*

Wishing you
the
Peace and Happiness
of
Vesak

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Visakha

This is the day on which the world's great Sun
Of Light transcending every other light,
Rose on the darkness of a world foredone,
And broke the spell of black Avijjā's night.

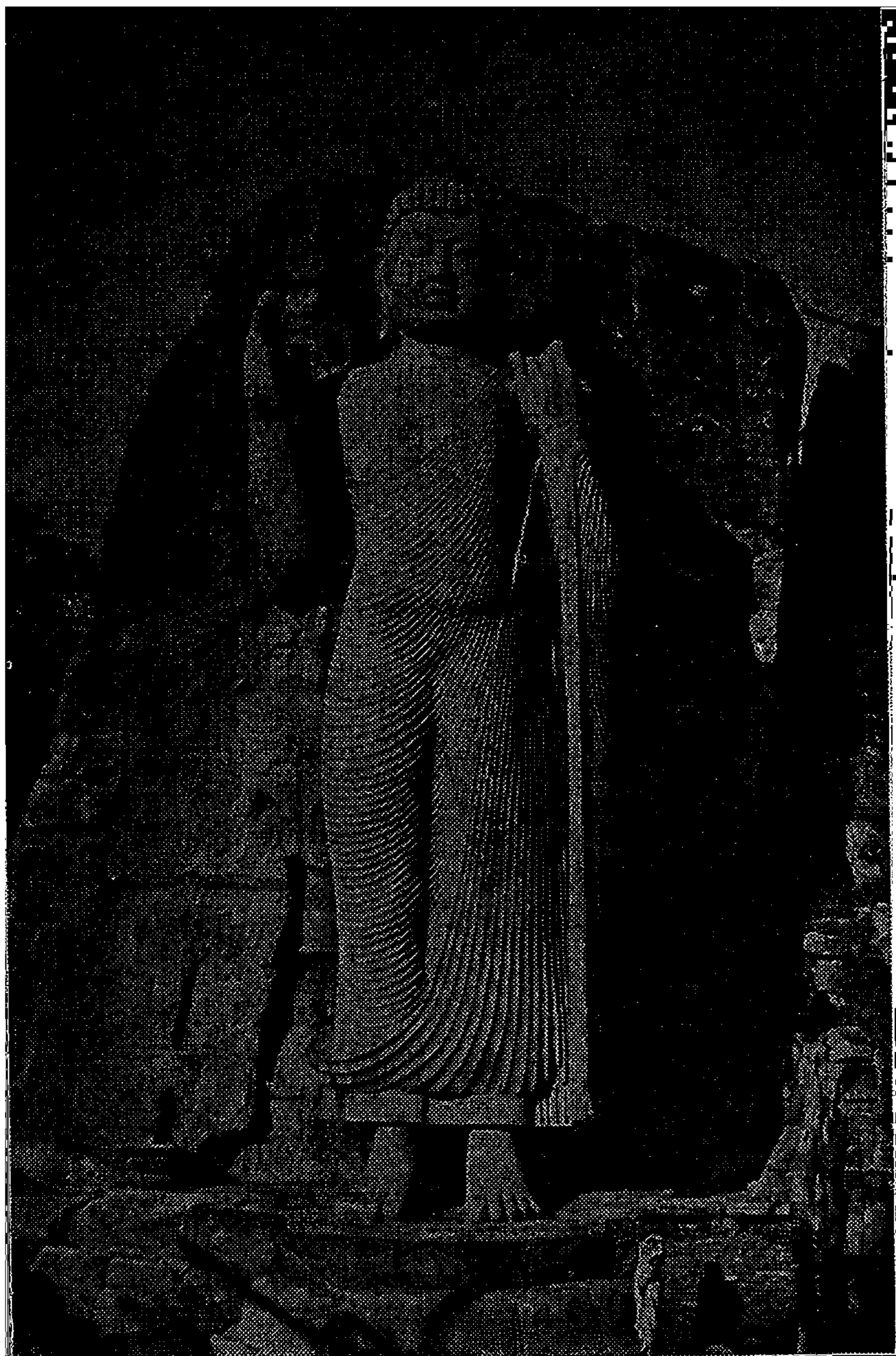
This is the day on which that Sun rose high
To the last heights of Insight, Wisdom, Love,
And from the zenith of pure Vijjā's sky
Poured his free rays on all that live and move.

This is the day when all his labour ended,
Sank to his rest our glorious Sun. Yet lo!
Behind he leaves a radiance matchless, splendid,
Even his Law that in our skies does glow,

And still shall glow till dawns another Light,
The Buddha of a new world's opening day,
And raying Mettā — Kindness infinite,
Flings ope once more the new old ancient Way.

To all the Buddhas of the times to come,
To all the Buddhas of the times before,
To Him, our Buddha, Teacher, Refuge, Home,
We bow our hearts this day and evermore.

Bhikkhu Silacara



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Archaeological Department of Ceylon

Buddha image at Avukana, Ceylon.

Height 40 foot.

Dated between the fifth and eight century C. E.

paternal city, after a long time of isolation in a make-believe world. This ancient story may well be historical fact, because we know that in the lives of many great ones often events occur which gain a symbolic significance or have great consequences far beyond their ordinary appearances. Great minds find significance in the seemingly common and invest with a far-reaching efficacy the fleeting moment. But, without conflicting with the inner truth of that old story, it may well have happened that the young prince had actually seen before, with his fleshly eye, old and sick people and those who had succumbed to death. But, on all these earlier occasions, it may not have touched him very deeply—as it is the case with most of us, most of the time. That earlier lack of sensitivity may have been due to the carefully protected, artificial seclusion of his petty (though princely) happiness into which his father—the hereditary routine of his life—had placed him. Only when he broke through that golden cage of easy-going habits, the facts of suffering struck him as forcibly as if he had seen them for the first time. Then only was he stirred by them to a sense of urgency that led him out of the home life and set his feet firmly on the road to Enlightenment.

The more *clearly* and *deeply* our minds and hearts respond to the Truth of Suffering as appearing in the very common facts of our existence, the less often we shall need a repetition of the lesson learned, the shorter will be our migration through Saṃsāra.* The *clarity* of perception

* Saṃsāra: 'Round of Rebirth' lit. 'perpetual wandering'. is a name for the sea of life ever restlessly heaving up down, the symbol of this continuous process of ever again and again being born, growing old, suffering and dying. More precisely put: Saṃsāra is the unbroken chain of the five-fold Khandha-combinations, which, constantly changing from moment to moment, follow continuously one upon the other through inconceivable periods of

evoking our response, will come from an undeflected directness of vision, bestowed by Bare Attention (*sati*); and the *depth* of experience will come from wise reflection or Clear Comprehension (*sampajañña*).

The Road to Insight.

Directness of Vision is also a chief characteristic of the methodical practice of insight-meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). There it is identified with the direct or experiential knowledge (*paccakkha-ñāṇa*) bestowed by meditation, as distinguished from the inferential knowledge (*anumāna-ñāṇa*) obtained by study and reflection. In the meditative development of insight, one's own physical and mental processes are directly viewed, without the interference of abstract concepts or the filtering screens of emotional evaluation, which, in this context, will only obscure, or camouflage, the naked facts, and detract from the immediate strong impact of reality. Conceptual generalisations from experience (though very useful elsewhere), if they interrupt the meditative practice of Bare Attention, tend to "shove aside", or dispose of, the respective particular fact, by saying, as it were: "It is nothing else but . . .". Generalizing thought inclines to become impatient with a recurrent type, and finds it soon boring after having it classified. Bare Attention, however, being the key instrument of methodical insight, keeps to the particular. It follows keenly the rise and fall of successive physical and mental processes, and, though all phenomena of a given

time. Of this Samsāra, a single lifetime constitutes only a tiny fraction; hence to be able to comprehend the first Noble Truth of universal suffering, one must let one's gaze rest upon the Samsāra, upon this frightful chain of rebirths, and not merely upon one single lifetime, which, of course, may be sometimes less painful.

"Buddhist Dictionary" Nyanatiloka

series may be “true to type” (e.g. inhalations and exhalations), Bare Attention regards each of them as a distinct “individual”, and conscientiously registers, as it were, its separate birth and death. If mindfulness remains alert, these repetitions of type will, by their multiplication, exert not a reduced but an intensified impact on the mind. The three signata or characteristics (change, misery and voidness), inherent in the process observed, will stand out more and more clearly, appearing in the light shed by the phenomena themselves, and not in a *borrowed* light (borrowed not even from the Buddha, though He is the peerless and indispensable guide to these experiences). These physical and mental phenomena, in their “self-luminosity”, will then convey a growing sense of urgency to the meditator: revulsion, dissatisfaction, awareness of danger will arise concerning them, followed by detachment—though, certainly, joy, happiness and calm, too, will not be absent throughout the practice. Then, if all other conditions of inner maturity are fulfilled, the first direct vision of final liberation will dawn, with the Stream-winner’s (*sotāpanna*) indubitable knowledge: ‘Whatever has the nature of arising, has the nature of vanishing.’

Thus, in the unfoldment of the four-fold power of mindfulness, Satipaṭṭhāna will prove itself as the true embodiment of the Dhamma of which it was said:

“ Well proclaimed is the Dhamma by the Blessed One, visible here end now, not delayed, inviting of inspection, onward-leading, and directly experiensable by the wise.”



For further reading on

Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation

The Way of Mindfulness. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and Commentary. Transl. with Intro., by Soma Thera. 3rd edition. 152 pages. (Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy)

The Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta). Transl., with Intro. & Notes, by Nyanasatta Thera (The Wheel No. 19)

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and its Application to Modern Life. V. F. Gunaratna. (The Wheel No. 60)

Protection Through Satipaṭṭhāna. Nyanaponika Thera. (Bodhi Leaves No B. 34)

The Progress of Insight through the Stages of Purification. Mahasi Sayadaw. Pali text, with Engl. transl. and Notes, by Nyanaponika Thera. (The Forest Hermitage, Kandy).

The Heart of Buddhist Meditation. A Handbook of Mental Training based on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness. Nyanaponika Thera. (Rider & Co., London)

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2

The Significance of the Four Noble Truths

V. F. GUNARATNE

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

V. F. Gunaratne

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

I am happy to be able to speak to you this evening on a subject which forms the very heart and core of Buddhism. It is the realisation of the eternal verities of life which the Buddha had gained by attainment to Enlightenment beneath the spreading branches of the Bodhi tree in Gaya, that he proclaimed over 2500 years ago to a suffering world, in just four formulae or enunciations, which he himself called the Four Noble Truths. These Truths were made known by him in his very first sermon¹ delivered seven weeks after his Enlightenment, and they constitute the essence of the Dhamma pervading every aspect and every part of it.

There is first the Noble Truth of Dukkha (suffering.) Secondly there is the Noble Truth of the cause of Dukkha. Thirdly there is the Noble Truth of the cessation of Dukkha, and fourthly there is the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of Dukkha.

In this lecture I propose first to dwell on the general nature of these Four Noble Truths as distinguished from their specific contents, and thereafter to proceed to consider their contents and their significance.

¹ Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta, S. V. 420

GENERAL NATURE OF THE TRUTHS

At the outset, one may be tempted to ask why these Truths are called Noble (The Pāli word is Ariya), and why they are only four in number, not less, not more. The well-known commentator the Ven. Buddhaghosa in his Visuddhi Magga has answered both these questions. They are called “Noble” Truths for three reasons – because they have been discovered by the Noble One – the Buddha, because they can be fully realized only by the Noble Ones such as the Buddhas, the Pacceka Buddhas and the Arahants, and also because they are real and not unreal; they deal with Reality.

As regards the reason why there are only Four Truths, not less, not more, the explanation is that no other Truth can harmoniously exist side by side with these Four Truths, and not one of these Truths can be eliminated without loss of meaning. If one of these Truths is eliminated, the sequence suffers, the chain of reasoning breaks and the meaning in its fullness is lost. If one more Truth is added, that Truth is bound to be of a different significance and different type covering a different field, and will not fit in with the existing Truths. Hence it is not possible to conceive of either supplementing them or reducing their number. Dukkha – Dukkha’s cause – Dukkha’s cessation – and the path leading to this cessation – so constitute a certain totality, a definite unity of logical considerations, that they must remain at four, not less, not more.

Not only do these Four Truths form the heart and core of Buddhism, these Truths are also so far-

reaching – touching life at every point, so encompassing-taking in every aspect of life, that no amount of thinking on them can ever be deemed sufficient or complete until such thinking reaches the level of a definite spiritual experience, as distinguished from a mere theoretical understanding of them. One has only to glance through the pages of the 12th part of the Saṃyutta Nikāya known as the Sacca Saṃyutta or Kindred Sayings about the Truths, to realize the importance of repeatedly pondering on these Truths. Here, these Four Noble Truths are regarded as the topic of all topics, the one topic which appertains to Reality and leads to the awakening of the Highest Wisdom, the one topic for the complete realization of which “householders in the past have rightly gone forth from home to the homeless life”¹ This is the one line of thought worth cultivating, worth meditating on. “All other thoughts”, says the Buddha, “are not concerned with real profit, they are not the rudiments of the Holy life, they conduce not to revulsion, to cessation, to tranquility, to full understanding, to perfect wisdom. They conduce not to Nibbāna”²

How very vital these Four Truths are to man’s spiritual development can be gauged from this significant remark of the Buddha appearing in the Sacca Saṃyutta.—

“O monks, if there are any for whom you have any fellow feeling, if there are any who may deem you worth listening to, your friends and colleagues, your kinsmen and blood - relations, it is your duty

1. Kindred Sayings V. p. 352

2. Ibid p. 354, p. 355, p. 378

to rouse them, admonish them, and establish them in the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths".¹ Hence, every occasion for hearing these Truths should be regarded as an additional aid, a further approach, to the process of realizing the wisdom of these inestimable Truths.

Those who have intently contemplated these Truths will tell you that a wonderful feature about these Truths is, that each time you ponder deeply on them, some new aspect of these Truths, some new feature, some new point of view will present itself before you. In short you will know that you have learnt something new. This is so, because it takes time to comprehend fully these Truths; they are so vast, so wide, so full and so profound, while man's ability to comprehend them and realize them is so weak and so poor.

It is said that nothing is more interesting to man than the study of man. Viewed in this light a study of the Four Noble Truths should be of the deepest interest to us since they are all about us, they concern us, and are dependent on us. These Truths involve a consideration, of not so much the external world, as the internal world of mind. Actually, the external is a reflection of the internal. There is no external world to be viewed, if there is no internal world which can view it. The physical is always a manifestation of the mental. Hence it is that the Buddha in the Rohitassa Sutta said : "In this one fathom long body along with its perceptions and thoughts do I proclaim the world, the origin of the

1. Ibid p. 368

world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation of the world.¹ The word “world” here means the world of Dukkha (suffering) and Dukkha is an experience of the internal world of self. It should therefore be our aim, meditating on these Truths, to be able to see in ourselves, in the everyday affairs of our lives in every event and circumstance connected with ourselves, an exemplification of these Four Noble Truths until they become a definite living experience - a spiritual experience which is quite different from a theoretical understanding of these Truths.

Another feature about these Truths, which those who contemplate them intently will tell you, is that when the First Noble Truth is comprehended by any one, the Second Noble Truth suggests itself to him, and when the Second Noble Truth is comprehended, the Third Noble Truth suggests itself, and similarly the Fourth. The Buddha is reported to have mentioned this, as stated by the Monk Gavampati in the Sacca Samyutta.² These Truths thus constitute a progressive series, each Truth leading up to the next and each throwing light on the next.

It is the failure to understand these Truths that is responsible for the distressing position in which man finds himself, tossed about as he is in a state of conflicting emotions, passions and desires. In the Kotigama Vagga of the Samyutta Nikāya the Buddha has said: “O Monks, it is through not understanding,

1. Kindred Sayings I. p. 86

2. Kindred Sayings V. p. 369

not penetrating these Four Noble Truths that we have run on, wandered on, this long, long road, both you and I".¹

One feature about these Truths, which needs special mention and which for practical purposes is perhaps the most important, is the urgency of understanding and realizing them. Many are the illustrations employed by the Buddha to emphasize this urgency. I shall content myself with mentioning just one. It is recorded in the Sacca Saṃyutta that the Buddha on one occasion asked this question: "O Monks, when one's turban is ablaze or one's head is ablaze what should be done?" The monks answered "Lord, when one's turban is ablaze or head is ablaze, for the extinguishing thereof, one must put forth extra desire, extra effort, extra endeavour, extra impulse, extra mindfulness, extra attention." "Monks," rejoined the Buddha, "It is just such an extra desire, effort, endeavour, impulse, mindfulness and attention that one should put forth for the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths."² Can the urgency of realizing these Truths be brought home more forcefully and more vividly?

THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH

Now that we have considered from several angles the Nature of the Four Noble Truths, let us proceed to consider the contents of these Truths and their significance.

1. Ibid 5 p. 365

2. Kindred Sayings V. p. 372

The first Noble Truth deals with the indisputable fact of Dukkha, that ever present feature of existence, and rightly therefore, the starting point of the Dhamma. I say it is rightly the starting point, because the one aim of the Dhamma of the Buddha is to show a way of escape from Dukkha. Hence has he said:-

“Dukkham c’eva paññapemi
Dukkhasacca nirodham”¹

“One thing only do I teach
Sorrow and its end to reach.”

Let us understand this Truth in the way enunciated by the Buddha. “This, O Monks,” said the Buddha, “is the Noble Truth of Dukkha. Birth is Dukkha. Decay is Dukkha. Death is Dukkha. Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief and Despair are Dukkha. Association with the unloved, separation from the loved, that is also Dukkha. Not to get what one desires, that is also Dukkha. In a word, this five-fold mass which is based on grasping - that is Dukkha.”² Except the last example just mentioned, to which reference will be made later, the others are examples of the obvious manifestations of Dukkha.

Now what exactly is Dukkha? The word “Dukkha” is made up of two words “Du” and “Kha”, “Du” is a prefix meaning bad, low, mean, base or vulgar. “Kha” means empty or hollow. The two words taken together therefore refer to that which is bad because it is empty, unsubstantial, unsatisfactory or illusory. It refers to a state of unsatisfactoriness if one may

1. M. N. 1 No. 22

2. S. V. 421

use the expression. The popular rendering of Dukkha as "suffering" is not quite satisfactory since the word "suffering" is likely to convey the idea of pain only and does not introduce the idea of unsubstantiality or illusoriness. The word "Dukkha" must awaken in our minds not only thoughts of pain and distress, but also all those thoughts about the unsatisfactory and illusory nature of the things of this world, their unsubstantiality, their failure to satisfy completely, and their inevitable ending in disappointment, sorrow and disharmony. Dukkha consists of that state of unbalance, that continued agitation and disturbance to which all beings are subject by reason of the absence of stability and permanence in this world by reason of the never ending rise and fall of things leading to a universal "unsatisfactoriness" or disharmony. Perhaps the word "Disharmony" can be regarded as the closest equivalent of Dukkha. If however we prefer to use the word "suffering", we still may do so, giving it however a wider connotation, so as to include the other shades of meaning to which I have just referred.

However obvious the fact of universal Dukkha may be, there are many among us who refuse to believe that this world is a world of disharmony and suffering, and are quick to condemn Buddhism as a doctrine of pessimism. Nor is this to be wondered at. The Buddha himself hesitated to preach these Truths to an ignorant and doubting world, for he knew that they cannot be easily grasped. There is present in the human mind, a tendency to resent the intrusion of a thought or idea which is likely to upset its own comforting view of things to which it has been long

accustomed. It is for a similar reason that one might refuse to test one's temperature with a thermometer, or refuse to be medically checked up, for there is an aversion to the discovery that something is wrong within oneself. One likes to continue in the fond thought that all is well. Thus, it so happens that many refuse to accept the Truth of Dukkha, because they resent the idea that they are suffering from the universal malady of Dukkha. They close their eyes to these views which are disturbing and distressing, and are quick to placate themselves with the seemingly comforting thought that all is well, or else that all will somehow end well. Where ignorance is bliss, they prefer not to be wise. When, however, subsequent events and circumstances compel them to realize, with what ease friends can turn enemies, with what ease health can turn into sickness, with what ease secure possessions can turn insecure, with what ease youth inclines in one direction only - the direction of old age, with what ease old age inclines in one direction only - the direction of decay and death, are they not then thoroughly disillusioned? Can they then be heard to say "This earth-life really satisfies us?" Then and then only, through sheer bitterness of experience, do they develop a sane approach to the understanding of the Truth of Dukkha, and, if they steadily persist in this line of thinking and pursue it, they will find little difficulty in some day appreciating the fact that all things of this earth-life are involved in Dukkha, wedded to Dukkha and are productive of Dukkha, and that this earth-life itself, in the last resort, is empty, illusory, and unsubstantial.

We have only to look around us with observant eyes and thoughtful mind to be convinced of the Truth

of Dukkha. Which is the man whose course of life from birth to death has run undisturbed, like the unruffled waters of a placid stream, without even a single upheaval of worry, fear or grief to disturb that gentle drift? Which is the home that has not mourned the loss of a near and dear relative? Where in this world are the lips from which the cry of pain has never been heard? Where is the heart that has not heaved a sigh, and has not felt within itself the agony of sorrow at some time or other? Just at this moment, even as I am speaking and you are listening, can you visualize how many hundred thousands – nay how many millions – of sick men in this wide world are tossing about on beds of pain, in homes and in hospitals? How many millions of patients are, even at this precise moment, lying stretched on tables in operating theatres of hospitals, hovering perilously between life and death? How many millions, having arrived at the end of life's fitful journey, are this very moment gasping for the breath that is deserting them, gasping their last gasp? And how many millions of bereaved parents and bereaved children are weeping, pining for them that will not, and cannot, ever return? Not to see is not to know, except for the thoughtful. Then, consider the extent of poverty and unemployment in this world, and the terrible suffering they cause. Are not these unmistakable indications of universal Dukkha? As Jacob Boehme once remarked — "If all the mountains were books and if all the lakes were ink and if all the trees were pens, still they would not suffice to depict all the misery in this world."

But the critic will now interpose a question :-

“What Dukkha is there to the man blessed with health and wealth and the other good things of life?” Yes, he too is a victim of Dukkha. He is no favoured exception to the rule of Dukkha. The man blessed with health and wealth and the other good things of life, so long as he lives in this world, is part of this world, and as such, he will have to live and move with the rest of the world, for man is a gregarious animal. This means that he will have to associate with those who do not possess these good things of life. This invariably leads to situations of unpleasantness, to situations of jealousy and enmity, to situations of conflict—conflict between the haves and the have nots, to the innumerable conflicts between the interests of labour and capital. Are not all these Dukkha to the man who is said to be enjoying the good things of life?

Then what of the endless care and anxiety necessary to maintain oneself in health, to preserve unimpaired one's wealth and the other good things of life? Is not this an agony? - the agony of maintenance? and is not this agony another form of Dukkha? Then what of the agony of apprehension? - the apprehension that all his good things of life may not stay long? “What safeguards shall I adopt to protect my properties from the onslaughts of robbers and enemies, and also to protect them from the inroads of decay? How long shall I be fortunate enough to enjoy my possessions?” These are the headaches, not of the “have nots” but of the “haves.” Are not all these indicative of Dukkha? And when the protective methods adopted fail to answer their purpose, what of the agony of disappointment and the agony of loss? Where does not Dukkha reign supreme?

I am now gradually leading you, from cases of obvious Dukkha known as Dukkha dukkhatā, to cases of Dukkha not so obvious, which occur as a result of the operation of the law of change. These latter are called “Viparināma Dukkhatā.” “Viparināma” means change. The Buddha once used an expression of just four words which meant very much:- “Yadaniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ”! “Where there is change, there is Dukkha.” Just consider, when everything is changing and nothing is stable, what is the logical outcome but disharmony? The very incidence of change bespeaks Dukkha or heralds the approach of Dukkha. Therefore change itself is Dukkha because there is the potentiality of disharmony and suffering. Is there any one who has given us a guarantee that fortune will not turn into misfortune, that satisfactory conditions will continue to be satisfactory? There will always remain the possibility and potentiality of change. As long as this bare possibility exists, so long will there be fear and anxiety about the continuance of satisfactory conditions. This is one aspect of Viparināma Dukkhatā. The very insecurity of the good things of life has from the earliest dawn of human history bespoken Dukkha. The monarch fears for the security of his kingdom. Despite all his Royal splendour he has his painful problems. We have heard it said “Uneasy lies the head that wears a Crown.” The subject fears for the security of his life. The capitalist fears for the security of his wealth. The labourer fears for the security of his employment. If everything is changing and nothing is at rest, there can be no peace, no security in this world. If there is no peace, no security in this world, what will there be in their stead? There will be fear and insecurity. This again is Dukkha. The fear of economic upheavals,

the fear of unemployment, the fear of epidemics, the fear of wars, the fear of revolutions and the fear of many a world crisis bespeak Dukkha. Most of them result from world conditions of insecurity. Is not Dukkha then a necessary evil in this world? - a cosmological necessity? In this sense Dukkha may be said to have an existence apart from man's awareness of it. Can we forget that two of the three great characteristics of all world-phenomena as declared by the Buddha are Anicca (impermanence) and Dukkha (disharmony)?

We can now appreciate the extent to which this element of change or Viparināma can undermine all worldly happiness. When conditions change, as change they must, the very sweetness of the pleasure of sense-gratification turns into the bitterness of Dukkha. It is the same with every other form of worldly happiness. The joys of family life may be comforting, the joys of friendship may be exhilarating but, conditions changing, the break up of the ties of family life, the tearing asunder of the bonds of friendship, through so many possible causes as misunderstanding, ill-feeling, acts of third parties and lastly through death, are bound to produce as great a sorrow as was the original joy. In short, great as was the joy of attachment, so great will be the sorrow of loss or even greater. The greater the height from which you fall, the greater is the pain you will experience. The axe of impermanence is always there to fell the tree of joy. It hangs over all worldly joys like Damocles' sword. Mark you-it is not for nothing that the all-knowing Buddha has proclaimed - "Nandipi dukkha". "Joy itself is sorrow."

Not only are the things enjoyed constantly changing, but what is more-the person enjoying them is also

constantly changing. He too is subject to the inexorable law of change. We thus witness the amusing spectacle of a changing being pursuing a changing object. This brings us to the third aspect of Dukkha known as Sankhara Dukkha. ¹We have already dealt with Dukkha Dukkha the obvious aspect of Dukkha. Then we dealt with Viparinama Dukkha that aspect of Dukkha which results from change or the possibility of change. Now we shall deal with the Sankhara aspect of change. Sankhara, a word which has many secondary meanings, in its original sense refers to that which is formed by many things joining together, a composition, a group or aggregate or mass. In the present context it refers to the human being regarded not as an entity but as a mass or Collection of Five Groups or Aggregates. These constitute the being called man. Of these Five Groups or Aggregates ("Panchakkhanda" is the Pali word) which constitute the composite man, one is the physical factor of Rūpa - the body, and the other four are the mental factors of Vedanā - the sensations, Saññā - the perceptions, Sankhāra - the volitions and Viññāna - the states of consciousness. They are called Groups or Aggregates because each is again a combination of several other factors. None of these Aggregates or component factors is self-existing. They arise out of a cause. They are conditioned. That is to say, their existence depends on certain conditions and when these conditions and causes cease to exist, they too cease to exist. Thus the human body is constantly undergoing a kind of metabolic change. Old cells are continually taking their place. Physiology concedes this. Often owing to the imperceptibly slow pace of this change, it is not per-

1. For this three fold classification of Dukkha vide D 111. I, 217

ceived as change but nevertheless there is change. Hence the human body is not an entity but a process. Infancy, boyhood, youth, old age, are but stakes in this process. The human mind - Nāma - is also not an entity. It is also constantly changing. It is just a flow or succession of never ending sensations, perceptions, volitions and states of consciousness all of which mental factors are collectively called Nāma or Mind. In this flow of mental factors, each follows the other with such a rapidity of succession, that what is in reality a plurality assumes the semblance of an entity or unity, even as the fire in a lighted stick, made to turn round and round, assumes the semblance of a circle or ring of fire, whereas in reality there was only a succession of positions taken up by the fire of the lighted stick. So there only *seems* to be a static thing called, mind whereas, what exists is just a process or flow of mental factors. The mind is correctly said to be "Nadi soto viya" i. e. like the flow of a river, and is never the same for two consecutive moments. The river one crosses in the morning is not the river he recrosses in the evening. Each time, each moment, it is a different set of waters that flow. Similarly where the mind is concerned, each time it is a different sensation or perception or volition or consciousness that exists, only to pass away giving rise to another. Psychology concedes this. So we arrive at the all-important conception that the Nama-Rupa or Mind-Body combination which constitutes the composite being called man, is not a permanent self-existing unity but a process. It is a conditioned process, i. e. it comes into existence on account of certain causes and conditions. When these causes and conditions cease to exist, the process also ceases to exist. As

has been aptly said in the Samyutta Nikaya,¹ “hetu paticca sambhūtan” - by reason of a cause they came to be, “hetu bhangā nirujjhati” - by rupture of a cause they die away. Being a process, it is something that is changing and is not permanent. For that very reason, it is Dukkha. So we see that Dukkha is inherent in the very formation of the human being. This is Sankhārā Dukkhatā. This is that last example of Dukkha that was referred to by the Buddha when in his enunciation of the First Noble Truth he said “This five-fold mass which is based on grasping - that is Dukkha ” It is in the very nature of this mass of Groups or Aggregates to suffer Dukkha. The being itself is Dukkha. In its very formation it is Dukkha. In this sense, one may say that Dukkha is a biological and psychological necessity.

THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH

Now that we have understood the First Noble Truth and its significance, let us proceed to the Second Noble Truth which points out the cause of Dukkha. The First Noble Truth is like the diagnosis of a disease by a physician. The Second Noble Truth is like physician's discovery of the cause of the disease. The Third Noble Truth is like the assurance of the physician that there does exist a cure for the disease, and the Fourth Noble Truth is like the physician's prescription for the cure of the disease.

Let us understand this Second Truth in the way it has been enunciated by the Buddha-“What now O, Monks, is the Noble Truth of the cause of suffering? It is this

1. S. 1. 134

Tanha or Craving which leads from birth to birth, which accompanied by pleasure and greed, finds ever fresh delight now here, now there.”¹ Craving is here shown as the great motivating factor back and behind all actions of deluded man, driving him now in one direction, now in another.

All Dukkha is rooted in this selfish craving for the things of the world, in this inordinate attachment, this passionate clinging which is known as Tanha. The word “Tanha” is often inadequately rendered as “desire,” but the word “desire” hardly conveys all that is connoted by the Pali word “Tanha.” The word “desire” can sometimes refer to some very laudable human inclination such as the yearning to be good or to serve mankind. But in the Pali word “Tanha” (Sanskrit Trishna) there is always present the element of selfishness. The word “Craving”, therefore, is the best rendering of “Tanha”.

It is this element of selfishness in “Tanha” that creates all the havoc for man. Craving can never be completely satisfied. Craving gratified begets further craving, even as the attempt to quench one’s thirst with salt water only re-doubles the thirst. Craving is a powerful urge. It is a dangerous urge. It is responsible for nearly all the ills of this world. The political upheavals of the various countries of this world, their social and economic problems can almost all be traced to the nefarious influence of this powerful Tanha. This selfish craving is the mainspring of almost all human activity - the prime causative factor of nearly all the struggles and efforts of deluded man. What

1. S. V. 421

is it that makes the murderer raise his hands against his victim? What is it that makes the thief remove another's goods? What is it that makes one man jealous of another's success? Clearly it is selfish craving - one's love of self, manifesting itself in some form or other, and looking at things only from the point of view of self and not from the point of view of others. Sometimes the manifestation of selfishness is obvious, sometimes it is subtle.

Now the love of a lover to his beloved is often a good example of selfishness manifesting itself in a subtle form. A lover's love is seldom a selfless love. It is a love which craves for recognition and claims a return. In short, it emanates from a love of self. In the generality of cases, a man loves another because he loves himself better, and craves to give himself the pleasure of loving and being loved. Intrinsically therefore, he is out to please himself, and his love for another is but self-love disguised. Otherwise, love cannot so easily and suddenly turn into hatred as it sometimes does when the love offered is rejected. Have we not heard of instances where the lover is the murderer of his beloved? These incidents can happen only when love springs from selfishness. When it was reported to the Buddha that Queen Mallika wife of King Pasenadi of Kosala had in answer to the King said that she loves herself more than any one else, in the world and that King Pasenadi also being similarly questioned by the Queen had said that he loves himself more than any one else in the world, the Buddha was not surprised. He replied as follows:— “You may traverse the whole wide world in all directions with your thought but you will nowhere find any

one more dear to man than his own self.”¹ So man’s craving or Tanha in whatever way you may look at it, and in whatever form it appears, is man’s attempt to gratify himself.

Now - one may be tempted to ask - “Why does this Tanha or craving bring Dukkha in its wake”? It is because Tanha is a hankering after that which is itself changing, a hankering after the unreal. When man pursues a goal which is elusive, a goal which continually recedes and retreats as often as he attempts to approach it, what else can he expect but the disharmony of Dukkha?

It may now be asked - “Why do we hanker after the unreal?” Our ignorance (Avijjā) makes us mistake the unreal for the real, the shadow for the substance, and makes us pursue the shadow. The Dhammapada says :—

“In the unreal they see the real. In the real they see the unreal. Those who abide in the pasture-ground of wrong thoughts never arrive at the real.”²

As long as we fail to develop that intuitive Highest Wisdom (Panna) which is latent in us and which if developed would enable us to see things as they really are and in their correct perspective, so long shall we continue to mistake the unreal for the real. Thus do we pursue the gratification of the senses, little knowing that we are pursuing a phantom and hoping that this will give a lasting satisfaction. Our eyes crave for pleasant sights. Our ears crave for pleasant sounds. Our tongues crave for pleasant tastes. Our noses crave for pleasant

1. S. I., Udana V. 1. 75

2. Dhammapada Verse 11

smells. Our bodies crave for pleasant contacts. Our minds crave for pleasant thought - impressions. But these various objects of sense are constantly changing, and to cling to that which is changing is as foolish and painful as to cling to a perpetually moving wheel. Thus craving misleads us. Craving confuses. Craving misrepresents. Craving also consumes us as if it were a fire. "Natthi rāga samo aggi"¹, said the Buddha once. This means - "There is no fire like lust." It is so consuming.

Self-evident facts are often apt to be overlooked. Hence the Buddha employed so many different similes to portray the transitoriness, the illusiveness, the unworthiness and the dangers of craving. It is not only to a consuming fire that craving has been compared by the Buddha. He has compared it to a net that ensnares and clings to one,² to the onrushing current of a river which carries away everything that comes before it³ and to a seamstress who brings two ends together and binds them.⁴ Each one of these similes reveals some particular aspect of Tanha.

So far we have considered the reaction of man's craving on himself. Let us now consider the reaction of craving on others - on the outside world. Nowhere has this been so vividly described by the Buddha as in the Majjhima Nikaya. "Verily, O Monks," said the Buddha, "due to sensuous craving, kings fight with kings, princes with princes, priests with priests, citizens with citizens; the mother quarrels with the son, the son quarrels with the mother; father quarrels with the son, the son quarrels with the father, brother with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend."⁵

1. Dhammapada Verse 251

2. Gradual Sayings II p. 225

3. Itivuttaka 114

4. Gradual Sayings III p. 286

5. Middle Length Sayings I p. 114

Craving thus is a malignant growth. It spreads its roots far and deep. Its career is "to have and to hold"—as the notarial expression goes. Hear then the voice of the Buddha who cried halt to this mad careering when he exclaimed "Tanhaya mulam kanatha".⁶ Dig up the very roots of Tanha"—not otherwise are we safe.

One may venture to say that it was the Buddha, who for the first time in the history of religious thought, expounded the cause of Dukkha without reference to any external or supernatural agency. My sufferings are due to **my** actions, and **my** actions are due to **my** craving or Tanha. In the Second Truth are therefore involved two doctrines - the doctrine of Kamma and the doctrine of Rebirth. The former deals with the law of action and reaction. The latter deals with the law of reproductive thought.

THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH

We will now proceed to dwell on the Third Noble Truth, which declares that with the cessation of Tanha or Craving, Dukkha ceases to exist. You can see for yourself that the Third Noble Truth is a corollary to the Second Noble Truth. If Craving is the cause of Dukkha, then surely the cessation of craving must mean the cessation of Dukkha. Kill the germ and the disease is killed. Remove the cause and the effect is removed. This is the import of the Third Noble Truth. If there was no Third Noble Truth, well might Buddhism have been called a doctrine of pessimism and gloom but with the Third Noble Truth followed by the Fourth, it is a doctrine radiating with hope and joy.

1. Dhammapada Verse 337

Let us understand the Third Noble Truth in the way it has been enunciated by the Buddha. "What now O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering? "Yo tassa yewa tanhaya asesā viraga nirodho"- it is the Cessation of Craving without a trace of it left behind, cāgo - the abandonment of it, patinissaggo - the renunciation of it, mutti - the liberation from it, anālayo - the detachment from it. "Idan vuccati Bhikkhave Dukkha Nirodhan Ariya Saccaṃ". This, O Monks, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering."¹

As a result of this string of words employed in this enunciation to emphasize more or less the same idea from different aspects, a few conclusions emerge. The first is that the renunciation of craving can be complete. The next is that, judging from the words used - cessation, abandonment, renunciation, liberation, detachment - what is contemplated is not a forcible control or suppression of craving but a voluntary abandon, a letting go. The thought also emerges that craving is a dangerous burden to carry with us in the journey of life, a hurtful appendage which must be abandoned and dropped without the slightest delay in order to ensure a comfortable journey. It is this Third Truth which affirms that Craving is not an inseparable appendage but that it can be abandoned and dropped. The very expression "Dukkha Nirodha" - cessation of suffering - implies this.

Let us consider the effects on the mind of this complete abandon of Craving, this complete renunciation. A person who has completely ceased to crave is none other than an Arahant and therefore in considering the

1. S. V. 421

effects on the mind of the cessation of craving, we are considering the nature of the Arahant - mind. It is a psychological marvel.

The Arahant cannot create Kamma, i. e. moral or immoral actions which produce a reaction, in as much as with the complete cessation of craving there is no "cetana" or worldly intention which could motivate his actions. The mind is completely freed from all that is temporal, earthly or gross. Of him it is said:- "Pāpanca punnanca ubho sangam upaccagā."¹ That is to say - he has transcended the attachments of both good and evil. It is not only evil that has to be transcended but even good. Further reference to this view will be made later.

Another result of the complete cessation of craving is the beautiful and perfect tranquility of mind that the Arahant enjoys. Says the Dhammapada:-²

"Calm is the mind, calm is the speech, calm is the deed of him who, rightly understanding and perfectly placid, has gained liberation."

Complete freedom from grief and fear is another result of the cessation of craving. Grief and fear are states of mind which can arise only when there is craving. Says the Dhammapada:-³

"From craving springs grief. From craving springs fear. For him who is freed from craving, there is no grief. Whence fear?"

1 Dhammapada Verse 412

2. Verse 96

3. Verse 216

The Arahant is also supremely happy. An expression used to describe them is “pīti bhakkā” i. e. feeders on joy, How the Arahants refer to their own happiness is expressed in the Dhammapada:-¹

“Ah! Happily do we live without craving among those who crave. Among the men who crave we live without craving.”

The Arahant's freedom from craving and his consequent domination of his senses is so complete, that he can look at all beings, all things, all conditions unaffected and unmoved. He is not attached by anything. He is not repelled by anything. Perfect equanimity reigns supreme in his mind.

Not only is he unmoved by all contacts and sensations, he has also within him - paradoxical though it may seem - the ability to consider pleasant sensations as unpleasant, and unpleasant sensations as pleasant, or view them all with complete indifference. This is because he has transcended the sense-level. In the Samyutta Nikaya the Buddha makes pointed reference to this two-fold ability by using the following two expressions:-

“Appatikule patikula sanne” seeing the pleasant in the unpleasant and “Patikule appatikula sanne” seeing the unpleasant in the pleasant.²

This ability to control the sense — data comes only to those who have completely renounced craving.

When the Buddha meditating under the Bodhi tree at Gaya in the last watch of that memorable night reached this glorious and blessed state of the cessation

¹Vorse 199

². D. 111, 112

of all Craving, and realized that it was Craving that motivated Life, in triumphant joy he uttered a beautiful stanza containing a very exquisite and vivid allegory. It is one of the best allegories in all the world's literature. It is in the form of an imaginary address to craving whom he regards as a house - builder, - the builder of the House of Existence.

“Anekajati sansāram, sandhāvisam anibbisam
Through many a birth in Sansara have I, without
success, wandered
Gahakāraṇaṃ gavesanto
Searching for the builder of this House.
Dukkhaṃ jati punappunam
Painful indeed is repeated birth.
Gahakaraṇaṃ ditthosi
Now, O House builder, thou art discovered.
Punagehaṃ na kāhasi
Never shalt thou build again for me.
Sabbāte phāsukā bhaggā
broken are all thy rafters.
Gahakūṭaṃ visankhitaṃ
Thy ridge pole is shattered,
Visankhāraṃ gatam cittaṃ
My mind has attained to the unconditioned.
Tanhānaṃ khayamajjhagā
Achieved is the cessation of craving.’¹

How exactly the cessation of craving brings about the cessation of Dukkha, and how exactly existence can come to an end, can only be understood by a close study of the doctrine of Dependent Origination known as the Paticca Samuppada. Suffice it for the present to

1. Dhammapada Verses 153, 154

follow a simile used by the Buddha in the Majjhima Nikāya² - "Suppose, ye monks, the light of an oil lamp is burning, generated by oil and wick, but no one from time to time pours oil or attends to the wick, then, ye monks, according as the fuel is used up and no new fuel is added, the lamp for want of nourishment will become extinct. Even so, ye monks, in him who contemplates the transitoriness of existence, Craving ceases. Through the cessation of Craving, Grasping ceases. Through the cessation of Grasping, Becoming ceases. Through the cessation of Becoming, Rebirth ceases. Through the cessation of Rebirth, Old age, Sickness, Death, Pain, Lamentation, Suffering, Sorrow and Despair cease. Such is the cessation of the whole chain of Dukkha.

We can appreciate this phenomenon if we picture the sight of a creeper that is entwined round a tree, a creeper that is just uprooted. The creeper has been spreading from branch to branch. The tender tendrils of this creeper will no more reach out to contact any further branch so as to cling to it and grasp it and help it to continue its existence. The process of clinging and grasping having ceased, the creeper will just cease to grow, will gradually wither away and perish never to regain life any more. The roots of the creeper have dried up because they now lack the nutriment of the soil, which is necessary to sustain the creeper.

So it is with human life, which is also a process of living by clinging and grasping and willing to live. A thought tends to reproduce itself. It is by reason of this reproductive power of thought, that the will to live makes man re-live, or as Dalbke put it "we live eternally through

1. M III No. 140 Dhatuvibhanga Sutta

our lust to live". Clinging to life makes life cling to us. The Pali word to express this clinging and grasping is "Upādāna". Like the physical creeper, the creeper of human life needs nutriment to sustain it. Craving is this nutriment. Craving is that which causes Upadana or Grasping and thus helps to maintain the onward movement of the creeper of human life. By Grasping is meant not grasping by the hand only. The Pali word "Upadana" refers to six kinds of Grasping which correspond to the six senses. Thus there is Grasping by the eye of sights, there is Grasping by the ear of sounds, there is Grasping by the nose of smells, there is Grasping by the tongue of tastes. There is Grasping by the body of tangible things. In Buddhist psychology there are six senses, not five. Therefore, sixthly, there is Grasping by the mind of thought-impressions and ideas. These acts of grasping are mental energies or forces set in motion. Energy is indestructible. No energy therefore is ever lost. So the mental energies released by these graspings combined with the residual Kammic energy at the moment of death, make for the continuity of life in any appropriate sphere or plane, when it ends here. Along with the parental sperm and ovum they condition the foundations for the arising of another life. Contact of seed with soil is not sufficient to engender plant life. There must be a third element — the outside element of light and air. Similarly, the outside element where the engendering of human life is concerned are these energies released by craving, and distance is no bar to the operation of these energies. In the degree therefore in which you reduce Craving, fewer and fewer things will be grasped by you, fewer and fewer sense objects will attract you. As craving continues to decrease, Grasping becomes weaker and weaker and like the tendrils of the uprooted creeper, will

gradually lose their strength and power to grasp, until finally the whole creeper fades away. When craving completely ceases, the power to grasp also completely ceases; the creeper of human existence then will lie dried up at its root. Indeed, at the moment of death, it is only such a one as Arahant, who has completely shed every trace of craving and grasping, who can triumphantly exclaim:

Oh Life! to thee I no more cling
“Oh Death! where is thy sting?”

The question is always asked “What happens after death to the Arahant who has destroyed all craving? Does he exist or does he not exist? If he does exist, where does he exist? If he does not exist, how can you speak of the bliss of Nibbana which he is said to be enjoying after death?” All these questions appertain to the nature and condition of Nibbana. In the questioner’s question lies an assumption that he is capable of understanding Nibbana. But, Nibbana is said to be “atakkā vacara” which means “cannot be reached by logic and reason”. Reason is not the highest faculty of man. Reason has its limitations. Nibbana and like matters are realized not through a higher faculty called Panna lying dormant in us but which we all can arouse and develop by means of meditation. With the arising of this intuitive or supernormal or supramundane knowledge, this highest wisdom, one is able to sense the Truth as naturally and easily as one would sense cold or heat. It is so different from that arduous process of reasoning at the end of which also, one is still in doubt whether one has realized the whole Truth or not. Where this higher faculty is concerned, there is no effort to comprehend. The understanding just dawns on one. Some prefer to call it revelation, others call it intuition yet others call it a latent sixth sense, but whatever name is given to

it, whatever label is appended to it, it is a source of understanding that works independently of the senses and the reasoning faculty. It is a transcendental faculty lying dormant in us. The finite can never grasp the Infinite, but by meditation we can transcend the finite. Nibbana is Reality itself. It is the Infinite. It is the Absolute, and the Absolute cannot be explained in terms of the relative. As some one has aptly remarked, reason cannot be more reasonable than ceasing to reason on things beyond reason.

This very question as to what happens to an Arahant after his death was put to the Buddha by one Upasiva as mentioned in the Sutta Nipata¹ and the Buddha's answer was as follows:-

“Of one who's passed away there is no measure
Of him, there is naught, whereby one may say aught.
When once all things have wholly been removed,
All ways of saying too have been removed.”

And elsewhere he has said, “Akāseva sakuntanan padan tassa durannayan”² The path of the Arahant after death cannot be traced, it is like the path of birds in air.”

All that which the limited faculty of reason can suggest, is that the existence of Nibbana appears to be logically sound and that it appears to be a cosmic necessity. Everything is seen to exist in pairs of opposites. If there is hot, there is cold. If there is small, there is large. Hence if there is the finite, there must be the infinite. If there is the relative, there must be the absolute. If there is that which is born, that

1, SN V. VI. 8 No. 1076

2, Dhammapada verse 93

which is become, that which is made, that which is compounded, there must also be the opposite of it. And it is to this opposite that the Buddha referred when speaking of Nibbana. In the Udana he has said :-

“There is, O Monks, a not - born,
A not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded.”¹

Beyond such considerations, logic and reason cannot carry us any further in our attempt to understand Nibbana, precisely because it is something beyond the scope of logic and reason. It must be left to the intuitive or supramundane faculty of Panna to help us to understand Nibbana. This faculty is latent in us but it has to be aroused and developed by meditation. We can then understand Nibbana not as a theoretical exposition but with the flavour of immediate experience.

As Radakrishnan has said.

“Then great truths of philosophy are not proved but seen..... In moving from intellect to intuition, we are not moving in the direction of unreason but are getting into the deepest rationality of which human nature is capable. In it we see more truly and not simply measure things by the fragmentary standards of intellect.”²

1. Verses of plift p 98

2. “An idealist view of life” by Radakrishnan p 120

THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH

We now come to the Fourth and last Truth, the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of Dukkha. This is the prescription of the All-knowing Buddha for the ills of life. By this Truth the Buddha prescribes a way of life which is calculated to bring about a complete cessation of that powerful urge of Tanha ever present in man. This way of life is the Noble Eightfold Path.

It is only if we are thoroughly convinced that all life is ill, that all life is Dukkha, that we will welcome any suggestion of a way of escape from Dukkha-not otherwise. Hence it is that to some the noble Eight-fold Path has no attraction at all, to some the attraction is mild, often only of an academic nature, while to just a handful it is something absorbingly vital, something wonderfully energizing and uplifting, something very dear and personal. To this handful the treading of the Path even in its initial stages brings with it inspiration and joy which later lead to a profound spiritual experience.

At the outset of this aspect of the subject, it is important to appreciate why this remedy for Dukkha is referred to as a Path (in Pali, Magga). It might have been called the Eight-fold Remedy or the Eight-fold Cure, but why Eight-fold Path? A remedy or a cure may or may not have been used by any one before it is offered to us. There is nothing in the word "Remedy" or in the word "cure" to suggest that it has been tried and tested earlier, but not so when the word "Path" is used. A path must have been treaded by some one before it can be called a Path. There is inherent in the connotation of the word "Path" or "Magga" the idea that some one had treaded

it before. A Path cannot come into existence all of a sudden. Some one must have first cut through a jungle, cleared a way and walked along it. Similarly the Noble Eight-fold Path has been treaded before by many a Buddha in the past. It has also been treaded before by many a Pacceka Buddha and many an Arahant. The Buddha only discovered the Path but did not create it, since it existed from the ancient past. Indeed it is an Ancient Path (Purana Magga) as was described by the Buddha himself in the Samyutta Nikaya. Here he has said:- "Just as if, O Monks, a man faring through the forest sees an ancient Path, an ancient road traversed by men of former days and he were to go along it and going along it should see an ancient city, even so I, O Monks, have seen an ancient Path, an ancient road traversed by the rightly Enlightened Ones of former times. And what, O Monks, is that ancient Path, that ancient road traversed by the rightly Enlightened ones of former times? It is just this Noble Eight-fold Path I have gone along that Path, and going along that Path, I fully came to know Activities, the uprising of Activities, the cessation of Activities and the way leading to the cessation of Activities."¹ You will thus appreciate the psychological importance of using the word "Path" which is calculated to inspire the highest confidence (Saddhā) in the remedy that has been prescribed.

This Path is also called the Middle Path (Majjhima Patipada) because it steers clear of two extremes. It avoids on the one hand, the debasing indulgence of the sensualist and the laxity of the pleasure - seeking Epicurean, and on the other hand, it avoids the absurd austerities and

1. Kindred Sayings II p 74

meaningless self-mortification of religious fanatics. The Middle Path proclaimed by the Buddha, however, is a Path of reason and prudence.

This Fourth Noble Truth is not a mere enunciation of a fact. It is a Path and so it must be trodden. It is something essentially practical. To know this Truth properly one must tread the Path. This Truth contains a careful and wise collection of all the important ingredients necessary for the spiritual development of man. These ingredients are well known to every Buddhist, viz. *Sammā Diṭṭhi* - Right understanding, *Sammā Sankappa* - Right Thought, *Sammā Vācā* - Right Speech, *Sammā Kammanta* - Right Action, *Sammā Ājīva* - Right Livelihood, *Sammā Vayāma* - Right Effort, *Sammā Sati* - Right Mindfulness and *Sammā Samādhi* - Right Concentration.

These eight factors constitute the very essence of the ideal Buddhist life. It is a carefully considered programme of purification of thought, word and deed ultimately resulting in the complete cessation of Craving and the consequent dawning of the Highest Wisdom.

An important feature to be noted in regard to this Path is that these eight factors are interrelated and interdependent. Hence they are not to be cultivated one by one in the order in which they are listed, as if they were a series of successive steps that have to be taken one after another. They are not mutually exclusive. They are mutually supporting factors. Development of one factor therefore helps in the development of other factors and what is more, the perfection of one factor coincides with the perfection of all the other factors. Thus, ultimately, at the highest level all these factors will be seen to function simultaneously. Hence one is free to

develop these factors in whatever degree he likes. It is useful to keep in mind the Ven. Bhikkhu Silacara's most instructive comparison¹ of these eight factors to eight different strands that are closely intertwined in one rope which a man is attempting to climb. Each time the climber grasps the rope, his fingers will come into closer contact with one particular strand than with any other. At the next moment the contact will be with another strand. Yet all the while he is climbing. Similarly in the treading of the Eightfold Path, sometimes one may concentrate on one factor, at other times on another, with however no loss of progress at any time.

Another feature in regard to these eight factors is that they fall into three different groups or categories of *Sīla*, *Samādhi* and *Pañña* i. e. virtue, Concentration and Wisdom. This is known as the threefold division of the Eightfold Path. This three-fold division is very important for practical purposes. It represents the three stages of spiritual progress. In the *Majjhima Nikāya*² it is said that the three divisions are not arranged in accordance with the Eightfold Path but that the Eightfold Path is arranged according to the three divisions.

Sīla (virtue) refers to normal discipline or purity of conduct and under this category appear three of the eight factors, viz. Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. *Sīla* is the *sine qua non* for spiritual development. It is the first step. It is the foundation for further progress along the Path. Right Speech is essential for *Sīla*. Man possesses the power of speech, unlike animals. This is man's channel of

1. The Noble Eightfold Path by Bhikkhu Silacara p. 21

2. MN No. 44

expression of thought and he should not abuse it but use it in a manner so as to cause good thoughts to arise in others and not bad thoughts. He should speak in a manner so as not to cause harm or hurt or loss to others. The factor of Right Speech thus conduces to Sila or purity of conduct by ensuring abstention from falsehood, tale - bearing, harsh speech and idle gossip. Similarly man's ability to act should not be abused. He can act in so many more and more effective ways than could animals. He should not make use of this ability to cause harm or hurt or loss to others. So the factor of Right Action conduces to purity of conduct by ensuring abstention from killing, from stealing and from wrongful sex indulgence. The factor of Right Livelihood is also important. Man's struggle for existence, his pressing necessity to procure the material needs of life to maintain himself and his family, compel him to regard the business of earning a livelihood as his most important task in life and therefore there is the great urge to go to any length in order to achieve this end. Considerations of fairplay and justice are all thrown to the winds, and considerations of resultant loss or harm to others are apt to be lightly overlooked. This is a temptation to be guarded against if purity of conduct is to be maintained at all costs. Hence the factor of Right Livelihood conduces to purity of conduct by ensuring abstention from trading in arms, from trading in animals for slaughter, from trading in human beings, from trading in intoxicating drinks and from trading in poisons. There is a popular belief that these are the only forms of wrong livelihood. It is not so. In the Majjhima Nikāya,¹ practising "trickery, cajolery, insinuation, dissembling, rapacity for gain

¹ Middle Length Sayings III 118

upon gain" are considered as wrong livelihood. In general terms, as mentioned in the Digha Nikāya,² Right livelihood means the avoidance of a wrong way of living and the obtaining of a livelihood by a right way of living—*Micchājīvena pahāya sammā jīvitam kappeti*. Thus by the development of these three factors of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, purity of conduct (*Sīla*) is ensured. One knows of no other religion where there is a code of ethical conduct so comprehensive in its details, and so exacting in its requirements. All this is necessary in order to ensure perfect purity of conduct.

But in Buddhism purity of conduct is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. Perfect conduct divorced from a purpose, not directed to a desirable end, has but little meaning from the Buddhist point of view—a very lofty point of view, not easy to comprehend. Not only evil but also good must be transcended. They are both of this world (*lokiya*) and do not appertain to things that transcend this world (*lokuttara*). Even the Dhamma has to be transcended. The Buddha has compared Dhamma to a raft to be used by us *nissaranatthāya* i. e. for the purpose of crossing over in safety, and—*nagahanatthāya* - i. e. not for the purpose of retention. Once we have reached the other shore, we do not have to carry the raft with us. It has to be put aside.³ So, the next two categories after *Sīla*, namely *Samādhi* and *Pañña*, show the direction in which lies the purpose of *Sīla*. The purpose of *Sīla* then is to help in the development of mental concentration and the realization of the Highest Wisdom. The purer one's conduct is, the purer is one's mind, and the purer one's mind is, the

I DN 11 312

2 Middle Length Sayings I p. 175

greater is his ability to concentrate. Then purity of conduct and purity of mind help in the realization of Wisdom. An impure mind can never be a fitting receptacle for the highest Truths of life.

Into the second category of Samādhi fall three factors namely Right Effort (Sammā Vāyama), Right Mindfulness (Sammā Sati) and Right Concentration (Sammā Samādhi).

Right Effort here has a very special meaning, since it is concerned with the development of the mind. Right Effort then is the effort to prevent the arising of evil states of mind that have not arisen, the effort to overcome evil states of mind that have already arisen, the effort to produce good states of mind that have not arisen, and the effort to develop further the good states of mind that have already arisen. This classification will show you how vast, how penetrating and how stupendous is the mental effort that is needed for progress in Samādhi. Can there be any doubt then, that this will some day lead to mind-mastery and wisdom?

The next factor in this category of Samādhi is Sammā Sati or Right Mindfulness. Right Mindfulness is the quality of awareness. It ensures complete awareness of all the activities of the body as they occur (Kāyānupassanā), complete awareness of all sensations and feelings as they occur (Vedanānupassanā), complete awareness of all activities of the mind as they occur (Cittānupassanā) and complete awareness of all mental objects when the appropriate situations arise (Dhammānupassanā). This attitude of complete awareness brings about powerful results. It sharpens to the finest degree

man's powers of observation, induces the deepest calm and ensures that nothing is said or done or thought unguardedly or hastily, mechanically or without deliberation. He who develops this factor is able to take count of every single and minute activity of the mind, even such activities as are generally considered to occur when the mind is passive and receptive; so penetrating and powerful is his sense of awareness.

The last factor in this category of Samādhi is Right Concentration which ensure one-pointedness of mind (ekaggatā). It is the ability to focus steadily one's mind on any one object and one only, to the exclusion of all others. There are many exercises in mind-concentration which space does not permit me to mention, much less to describe. Long continued practice of mental concentration makes the mind highly penetrative. It becomes like a high-powered light which can thoroughly illuminate any object on which it is focussed. Hence any object of thought which presents itself to such a mind is thoroughly penetrated and comprehended through and through. Now this concentration of the mind, like Sīla, is not an end in itself. The purpose of developing this Samādhi or Concentration is to make use of its penetrative power to understand existence and thereby to realize the Highest Wisdom (Paññā.)

We now come to the third category namely, Paññā or Wisdom. When this highly concentrated mind, abiding in Samādhi, is made to focus its attention on the three great characteristics of existence namely Anicca (impermanence), Dukkha (Disharmony) and Anattā (Egolessness or Soullessness,) the mind is able to see things as they actually are (Yathābhūtañāna). The result is the dawning

of that Highest Understanding - *Sammā Diṭṭhi*. One sees Reality. This coincides with the cessation of Craving and the attainment of *Nibbāna*. So *Sammā Diṭṭhi* is one of the factors in the category of *Pañña*. This is *Sammā Diṭṭhi* at its highest level. *Sammā Diṭṭhi* at its lower levels is a general understanding of the nature of existence and the understanding of Right and Wrong. This modicum of *Sammā Diṭṭhi* is helpful at the start to begin the practice of *Sīla*. Without this modicum of *Sammā Diṭṭhi* there will be no proper incentive to the practice of *Sīla*. It will thus be seen that Right Understanding becomes the beginning as well as the end of the Eightfold Path.

The other factor that falls within the category of *Pañña* is *Sammā Sankappa* or Right Thought. Thoughts are all important. Words and deeds are nothing but expressions of thought. Thought rules the world. The power to think is greatest in man - not so in the lower animals. It should therefore be man's endeavour to make the best use of this power of thought which he is privileged to possess and to think none but the best of thoughts. From the point of view of Buddhism the best of thoughts are threefold, - thoughts of renunciation (i. e. thoughts free from craving), thoughts of benevolence, and thoughts of compassion. The practice of *Sammā Sankappa* therefore ensures freedom from lust, freedom from hatred and freedom from cruelty or harm. Even this factor is developed for a purpose to make it possible for the mind when purified to see Reality, to gain the Highest Wisdom.

The description of the Eightfold Path is now over. It will be seen that this is a Path of progressive

self-culture leading from purity of conduct to concentration of mind and from concentration of mind to wisdom. But it does not mean that complete Sīla must first be achieved before Samādhi is begun or that Samādhi must be completed before Paññā is begun. There are different levels of these qualities and the practice of one helps the other and the level of each rises. This is what was meant when it was earlier stated that these factors are interdependent and mutually supporting. This view is of great practical importance and cannot be over emphasized. The Buddha has expressed this view forcefully and vividly in regard to the inter dependence of Sīla and Paññā. In the Sonadanda Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya¹ He has said “As one might wash hand with hand and foot with foot, even so, wisdom is purified by virtuous conduct and virtuous conduct is purified by wisdom. (Sīlan paridhoto paññā paridhoto sīlan). Further, the Buddha continues:-

“Yattha sīlan, tattha paññā.
Yattha paññā tattha sīlan”²

“Where virtue is, there Wisdom lies
Where Wisdom is, there virtue lies.”

CONCLUSION

I have reached the end of my discourse. I have endeavoured to give some understanding of the Four Noble Truths, not to satisfy any intellectual curiosity, not to provoke argument but with the sole purpose of giving an incentive to the treading of the Path. Once you do so, you can then see for yourselves the result, as

1. D 1 No. 4

2. Ibid

you proceed. Idle speculation and hair-splitting arguments are to no purpose. The Buddha has strongly condemned the study of the Dhamma for the sake of criticism or vain talk.¹ What is needed is not talking about the Path, but walking it. “Ehi passiko” is an epithet of the Dhamma. It means:- “Come and see for yourselves.” The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it, not in any learned chemical analysis of its component parts.

Some may fear that the mental training involved in the treading of the Path is too severe and is doomed to failure. But, it must be remembered that the more the mind is exercised the more it gains in strength and the more it becomes controllable. The Buddha has said in the Anguttara Nikāya² – “Monks, I know not of any other single thing so tractable as the cultivated mind.” Hence it is that the number of brain cells that can arise in a man is unlimited.

Finally, I would wish to say that if all the wisdom of the Four Noble Truths can for practical purposes boil down to one single instruction, to one single admonition, to one single dictate, that instruction, admonition and dictate is contained in the words once uttered by the Buddha viz. “Taṇhāya mūlaṃ khanatha” – dig up the very roots of Taṇhā. Without the elimination of this pernicious element craving no true happiness can ever come to man. It has been amply shown how potently this law of change is operating at all times, in all places, in all ways, in this world and how everything in this world without a single exception is subject to its inexorable rule. It is this phenomenon of change that strikes

1. M., No. 22,

2. AN. I. 4.

at the root of all worldly happiness. Viewed against this background of shifting situations and shifting scenes, worldly happiness is just a passing show. The entire world is in a state of perpetual change and unrest, and so is its inhabitant-man. It is tension everywhere. Hence man's search for worldly happiness is nothing but an empty race, a futile rush, a maddening thirst that is never quenched.

Man's search for happiness has gone on from age to age but it can never be found in the way it is sought - in merely adjusting the conditions of the external world, ignoring the internal world of mind. The history of the world proves this. Social reforms, economic reforms, legal reforms, and political reforms, however well-intentioned and well-calculated they may have been, never brought complete and genuine happiness to man. Why? When one set of unsatisfactory conditions that have appeared have been eliminated, another rears its head, and when that is eliminated yet another appears. This appearance and re-appearance, this rise and fall is of the essence of all mundane things and conditions. There can never be any mass production of true happiness. It is something personal and individual. It comes from within and not without. It is not so much the external world that one has to explore in the search for happiness as the internal world of mind.

The modern scientific age with its brilliant scientists and its wonderful inventions, has no doubt economized labour, shattered distance and captured time. But, I ask you, has science invented one single machine, one single instrument or other contrivance to shatter Dukkha? The modern scientific age is transplating hearts and trans-

porting or attempting to transport men to the moon. But, I ask you, is not the moon but another earth subject to the same infirmities, the same limitations and the same lamentations as are prevailing on earth? What is the great gain to man, I ask you, by adding one or more of these revolving planets to man's possession of this Dukkha--laden earth? Why should he saddle himself with the problems of the moon, when he has not as yet, solved the problems of this earth. What is needed is not an extension or furtherance of the sphere of human existence but a deliverance from existence itself. And as for the change of heart, I ask you is not the best change of heart the change that results. not from the surgical removal of the physical heart, but the psychic removal of Taṇhā or Craving.? The change of heart that thereby results is a glorious achievement. We are our own surgeons to effect that change of heart. In those surgical removals, the operation will succeed but the patient may succumb. In these psychic removals, if the operation succeeds there is greater success and glory to the patient.

Sisters and brothers, I thank you for the attention you have given me. May you – one and all - some happy day in your lives get the urge to contemplate seriously these Four Noble Truths and may that contemplation bring you pure joy ending finally in the attainment to that Reality, that Highest Wisdom, that Ever-lasting Peace and Security and Happiness which is called Nibbāna.

To that Nibbāna may you all attain.

Abbreviations

(References are to the Pāli Text Society Editions)

S. Saṃyutta Nikāya.

M. Majjhima Nikāya.

D. Dīgha Nikāya.

SN. Sutta Nipāta.

AN. Anguttara Nikāya.

* * *

For further reading

Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha,

Transl. by Nanamoli Thera (The Wheel No. 17)

The Four Noble Truths. Francis Story

(The Wheel No. 34/35)

The Buddha's First Discourses, Pali text and translation.

(Bodhi Leaves B. 1)

The Word of the Buddha. Nyanatiloka Mahathera.

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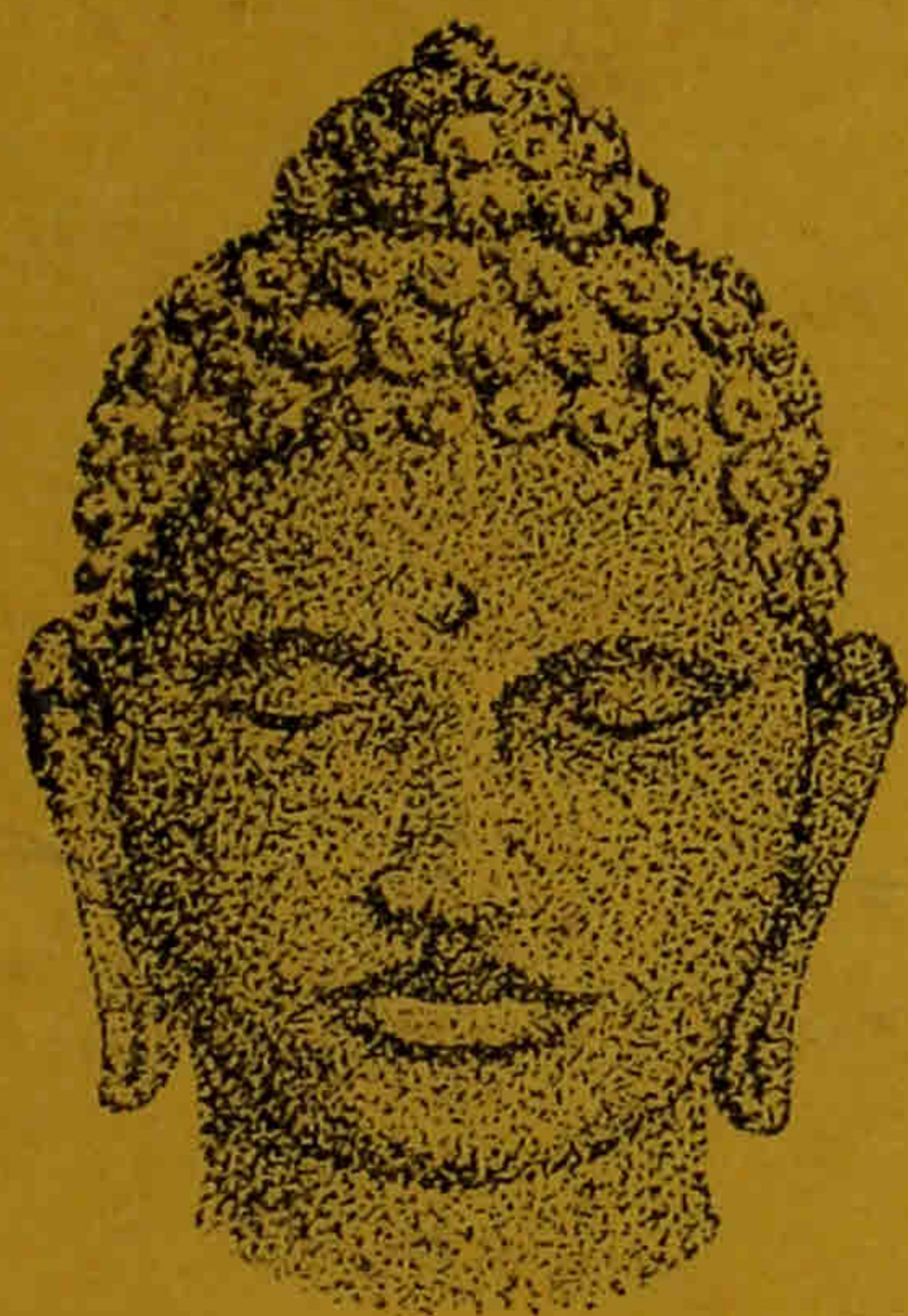
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5
THE WORD OF
THE BUDDHA



Nyanatiloka

THE WORD OF THE BUDDHA

THE WORD OF THE BUDDHA

An Outline of the teaching of
the Buddha in the words of the
Pali Canon

Compiled, translated and explained by
NYANATILOKA
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PREFACE

The *Word of the Buddha*, published originally in the German language, was the first strictly systematic exposition of all the main tenets of the Buddha's Teachings presented in the Master's own words as found in the *Sutta-Piṭaka* of the Buddhist Pali Canon.

While it may well serve as a first introduction for the beginner, its aim is, however, to give the reader who is already more or less acquainted with the fundamental ideas of Buddhism, a clear, concise and authentic summary of its various doctrines, within the framework of the all-embracing 'Four Noble Truths', i.e. the Truth about Suffering (inherent in all existence), its Origin, its Extinction, and the Way leading to its extinction. From the book itself it will be seen how the teachings of the Buddha all ultimately converge upon the one final goal : Deliverance from Suffering. It was for this reason that on the title page of the first German edition there was printed the passage from the *Anguttara-Nikāya* which says :

‘ Not only the fact of Suffering do I teach,
but also the deliverance from it ’.

The texts, translated from the original Pali, have been selected from the five great collections of discourses which form the *Sutta-Piṭaka*. They have been grouped and explained in such a manner as to form one connected whole. Thus the collection, which was originally compiled for the author's own guidance and orientation in the many voluminous books of the *Sutta-Piṭaka*, will ever prove a reliable guide for the student of Buddhism. It should relieve him from the necessity of working his way through all these manifold Pali

scriptures, in order to acquire a comprehensive and clear view of the whole ; and it should help him to relate to the main body of the doctrine the many details he will encounter in subsequent studies.

As the book contains many definitions and explanations of important doctrinal terms together with their Pali equivalents, it can, with help of the Pali Index provided here, serve as a book of reference and a helpful companion throughout a study of the Buddha's doctrine.

After the first German edition had appeared in 1906, forty-six years ago, the first English version was published in 1907, and this has since run to ten editions, including an abridged students' edition (Colombo, 1948, Y.M.B.A.) and an American edition (Santa Barbara, Cal., 1950, J. F. Rowny Press). It has also been included in Dwight Goddard's *Buddhist Bible*, published in the United States of America.

Besides subsequent German editions, translations have been published in French, Czech, Finnish, Japanese, Hindi and Bengali. The original Pali of the translated passages was published in Sinhalese characters (edited by the author, under the title *Sacca-Sangaha*, Colombo, 1914) and in Devanagari script in India.

The present 11th edition has been revised throughout. Additions were made to the Introduction, and to the explanatory notes, and also some texts have been added.

This new, revised edition has been sponsored by the ' Sāsanadhāra-Kāntha-Samitiya ', Colombo (' Ladies ' Association for Promoting Buddhism '). This opportunity is taken to express appreciation to all those, by whose work and generous assistance the present publication, in a large issue, has been rendered possible.

In conclusion, I have also to thank my pupil, Nyanaponika Thera, for the great help he has rendered me in thoroughly revising and, here and there, enlarging the work, and carefully preparing the text for this new edition.

NYANATILOKA

‘ Island Hermitage ’,
 Dodanduwa, Ceylon,
 1st April, 1952.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface	iii
Abbreviations	viii
The Pronunciation of Pāli	ix
Introduction :—Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha— The Threefold Refuge—The Five Precepts	xi
THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS	I
I. THE NOBLE TRUTH OF SUFFERING	3
II. THE NOBLE TRUTH OF THE ORIGIN OF SUFFERING	16
III. THE NOBLE TRUTH OF THE EXTINCTION OF SUFFERING	22
IV. THE NOBLE TRUTH OF THE PATH THAT LEADS TO THE EXTINCTION OF SUFFERING	26
1. Right Understanding	29
2. Right Thought	48
3. Right Speech	50
4. Right Action	53
5. Right Livelihood	55
6. Right Effort	57
7. Right Mindfulness	61
8. Right Concentration	78
GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE EIGHTFOLD PATH IN THE PROGRESS OF THE DISCIPLE	83
Buddhist Literature	90
Works of the Author	94
Index of Pali Terms	95

ABBREVIATIONS

- D.—Dīgha-Nikāya (the number refers to the Sutta).
M.—Majjhima-Nikāya (the number refers to the Sutta).
A.—Anguttara-Nikāya (the Roman number refers to the main division into Parts or Nipātas; the second number, to the Sutta).
S.—Saṃyutta-Nikāya (the Roman number refers to the division into 'Kindred Groups' (Saṃyutta), e.g. Devatā-Saṃyutta = 1, etc.; the second number refers to the Sutta).
Dhp.—Dhammapada (number refers to the verse).
Ud.—Udāna (the Roman number refers to the Chapter, the second to the Sutta).
Snp.—Sutta-Nipāta (number refers to the verse).
VisM.—Visuddhi-Magga ('The Path of Purity').
-

- B. Dict.—*Buddhist Dictionary*, by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera.
Fund.—*Fundamentals of Buddhism*, by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera.

THE PRONUNCIATION OF PĀLI

Adapted from the American edition

THE VOWELS

a is pronounced as u in the English word shut ;
never as a in cat, and never as in take.

ā as in father ; never as in take.

e is pronounced long as a in stake ; but, before
doubled consonants, short as e in met.

i as in pin.

ī as in machine ; never as in fine.

o is long as in hope ; but short, as in off, before
doubled consonants.

u as in put or oo in foot.

ū as oo in boot ; never as in refuse.

THE CONSONANTS

c as ch in chair ; never as k, never as s, nor as c in
center, city.

g as in get ; never as in general.

h is always pronounced, even in positions immediately following consonants or doubled consonants ; e.g. *bh* as in cab-horse ; *ch* as chh in ranch-house ; *dh* as in handhold ; *gh* as in bag-handle ; *jh* as dgh in sledge-hammer, etc.

j as in joy.

ṁ the so-called 'nasalizer' is in Ceylon usually pronounced as ṅg in sung, sing, etc.

s always as in this ; never as in these.

ñ as ny in canyon (Spanish cañón), or as gn in Mignon.

ph as in haphazard ; never as in photograph.

th as in hot-house ; never as in thin nor as in than.

y as in yes.

t, *tʰ*, *d*, *dʰ* are lingual sounds ; in pronouncing, the tongue is to be pressed against the palate.

Doubled consonants : each of them is to be pronounced ; e.g. *bb* as in scrub-board ; *tt* as in cat-tail.

INTRODUCTION

I. BUDDHA or 'Enlightened One—lit. Knower or Awakened One—is the honorific name, given to the Indian Sage, Gotama, who discovered, and proclaimed to the world the Law of Deliverance, known to the West by the name of Buddhism.

He was born in the 6th century B.C., at Kapilavasthu, as the son of the king who ruled the Sakya country, a principality situated in the border area of modern Nepal. His personal name was Siddhattha, and his clan name Gotama (Sanskrit: Gautama). In his 29th year he renounced the splendour of his princely life and his royal career, and became a homeless ascetic in order to find a way out of what he had early recognised as a world of suffering. After a six year's quest, spent under various religious teachers, and in a period of fruitless self-mortification, he finally attained to Perfect Enlightenment (sammā-sambodhi), under the Bodhi tree at Gayā (today: Buddh-Gayā). Four and forty years of tireless preaching and teaching followed and at last, in his 84th year, there passed away at Kusinara that 'undeluded being that appeared for the blessing and happiness of the world'.

The Buddha is neither a god nor a god's prophet or incarnation, but a supreme human being that, through his own effort, attained to Final Deliverance and Perfect Wisdom, and became 'the peerless teacher of gods and men'. He becomes a 'Saviour' only to those who actually follow to the end the Path trodden and shown by him. In the consummate harmony of Wisdom and Compassion attained by the Buddha, he embodies the universal and timeless ideal of Man Perfected.

II. The DHAMMA is the Teaching of Deliverance in its entirety, as discovered, realized and proclaimed by the Buddha. It has been handed down in the ancient Pali language, and preserved in the three great collections of books, called *Ti-Piṭaka*, i.e. the Three Baskets, namely: (I) the Vinaya-Piṭaka, or Collection of Discipline, containing the rules of the monastic order; (II) the Sutta-Piṭaka, or Collection of Discourses, consisting of various books of discourses, dialogues, verses, stories, etc., and dealing with the doctrine proper as summarized in the Four Noble Truths; (III) the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka, or Philosophical Collection, presenting the teachings of the *Sutta-Piṭaka* in strictly systematic and philosophical form.

The Dhamma is not a doctrine of revelation, but the teaching of Enlightenment, based on the clear comprehension of actuality. It is the teaching of the Fourfold Truth dealing with the fundamental facts of life and with liberation attainable through man's own effort towards purification and insight. The Dhamma offers a lofty, but realistic system of ethics, a penetrative analysis of life, a profound philosophy, practical methods of mind training—in brief, an all-comprehensive and perfect guidance on the Path to Deliverance. By answering the claims of both heart and reason, and by pointing out the liberating Middle Path that leads beyond all futile and destructive extremes in thought and conduct, the Dhamma has, and will have, a timeless and universal appeal wherever there are hearts and minds mature enough to appreciate its message.

III. The SANGHA—lit. the Assembly, or Community—is the Order of Bhikkhus, or Mendicant Monks, founded by the Buddha and, still existing in its original form in Burma, Siam, Ceylon, Cambodia,

and Chittagong (Bengal). It is along with the Order of the Jain monks, the oldest monastic order in the world. Amongst the most famous disciples in the time of the Buddha were : Sāriputta who, after the Master himself, possessed the profoundest insight into the Dhamma ; Moggallāna, who had the greatest supernatural powers ; Ananda, the devoted disciple and constant companion of the Buddha ; Mahā-Kassapa, the President of the Council held at Rajagaha immediately after the Buddha's death ; Anuruddha, of divine vision, and master of Right Mindfulness ; Rāhula, the Buddha's own son.

The Sangha provides the outer framework and the favourable conditions for all those who earnestly desire to devote their life entirely to the realisation of the highest goal of Deliverance, unhindered by worldly distractions. Thus the Sangha, too, is of universal and timeless significance wherever religious development reaches maturity.

THE THREEFOLD REFUGE

The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, are called 'The Three Jewels' (*ti-ratana*) on account of their matchless purity, and as being to the Buddhist the most precious objects in the world. These 'Three Jewels' form also the 'Threefold Refuge' (*ti-saraṇa*) of the Buddhist, by which he professes, or re-affirms, his acceptance of them as the guides of his life and thought.

The Pali formula of Refuge is still the same as in the Buddha's time :

Buddham saraṇam gacchāmi
Dhammam saraṇam gacchāmi
Sangham saraṇam gacchāmi.

I go for refuge to the Buddha
 I go for refuge to the Dhamma
 I go for refuge to the Sangha.

It is through the simple act of reciting this formula three times* that one declares himself a Buddhist.

THE FIVE PRECEPTS

After the formula of the Threefold Refuge follows usually the acceptance of the Five Moral Precepts (*pañca-sīla*). Their observance is the minimum standard needed to form the basis of decent life and of further progress towards Deliverance.

1. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
 I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from killing living beings.
2. *Adinnādānā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
 I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from taking things not given.
3. *Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
 I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. *Musāṇadā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
 I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from false speech.
5. *Surāmeraya-majja-pamāṇatthkānā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
 I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.

*At the second and third repetition the words *Dutiyampi* and *Tatiyampi* (' for the second/third time ') respectively are added before each sentence.

THE WORD OF THE BUDDHA OR THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

Thus has it been said by the Buddha, the Enlightened One :—

¹It is through not understanding, not realizing four things, that I, Disciples, as well as you, had to wander so long through this round of rebirths. And what are these four things? They are :

The Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha*) ;

The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*) ;

The Noble Truth of the Extinction of Suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*) ;

The Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the Extinction of Suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāmini-paṭi-padā*).

²As long as the absolutely true knowledge and insight as regards these Four Noble Truths was not quite clear in me, so long was I not sure, whether I had won that supreme Enlightenment which is unsurpassed in all the world with its heavenly beings, evil spirits and gods, amongst all the hosts of ascetics and priests, heavenly beings and men. But as soon as the absolutely true knowledge and insight as regards these Four Noble Truths had become perfectly clear in me, there arose in me the assurance that I had won that supreme Enlightenment unsurpassed.

1. D. 16. 2. S. LVI. 11.

¹ And I discovered that profound truth, so difficult to perceive, difficult to understand, tranquillizing and sublime, which is not to be gained by mere reasoning, and is visible only to the wise.

The world, however, is given to pleasure, delighted with pleasure, enchanted with pleasure. Truly, such beings will hardly understand the law of conditionality, the Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) of every thing; incomprehensible to them will also be the end of all formations, the forsaking of every substratum of rebirth, the fading away of craving, detachment, extinction, Nibbāna.

Yet, there are beings whose eyes are only a little covered with dust : they will understand the truth.

THE FIRST TRUTH

THE NOBLE TRUTH OF SUFFERING

¹ What, now, is the Noble Truth of Suffering ?

Birth is suffering ; Decay is suffering ; Death is suffering ; Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief, and Despair are suffering ; not to get what one desires, is suffering ; in short : the Five Groups of Existence are suffering.

What, now, is Birth ? The birth of beings belonging to this or that order of beings, their being born, their conception and springing into existence, the manifestation of the Groups of Existence, the arising of sense activity :—this is called birth.

And what is Decay ? The decay of beings belonging to this or that order of beings ; their getting aged, frail, grey, and wrinkled ; the failing of their vital force, the wearing out of the senses :—this is called decay.

And what is Death ? The departing and vanishing of beings out of this or that order of beings, their destruction, disappearance, death, the completion of their life-period, dissolution of the Groups of Existence, the discarding of the body :—this is called death.

And what is Sorrow ? The sorrow arising through this or that loss or misfortune which one encounters, the worrying oneself, the state of being alarmed, inward sorrow, inward woe :—this is called sorrow.

And what is Lamentation ? Whatsoever, through this or that loss or misfortune which befalls one, is wail and lament, wailing and lamenting, the state of woe and lamentation :—this is called lamentation.

And what is Pain ? The bodily pain and unpleasantness, the painful and unpleasant feeling produced by bodily impression :—this is called pain.

And what is Grief ? The mental pain and unpleasantness, the painful and unpleasant feeling produced by mental impression :—this is called grief.

And what is Despair ? Distress and despair arising through this or that loss or misfortune which one encounters, distressfulness, and desperation :—this is called despair.

And what is the ' Suffering of not getting what one desires ?' To beings subject to birth there comes the desire : ' O, that we were not subject to birth ! O, that no new birth was before us ! ' Subject to decay, disease, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, the desire comes to them : ' O, that we were not subject to these things ! O, that these things were not before us ! ' But this cannot be got by mere desiring ; and not to get what one desires, is suffering.

THE FIVE KHANDHAS, OR GROUPS OF EXISTENCE

And what, in brief, are the Five Groups of Existence ? They are corporeality, feeling, perception, (mental) formations, and consciousness.

¹All corporeal phenomena, whether past, present or future, one's own or external, gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near, all belong to the Group of Corporeality ; all feelings belong to the Group of Feeling ; all perceptions belong to the Group of Perception ; all mental formations belong to the Group of Formations ; all consciousness belongs to the Group of Consciousness.

These Groups are a fivefold classification in which the Buddha has summed up all the physical and mental phenomena of existence, and in particular, those which appear to the ignorant man as his ego or personality. Hence, birth, decay, death, etc. are also included in these five Groups which actually comprise the whole world.

THE GROUP OF CORPOREALITY

(*rūpa-khandha*)

¹What, now, is the ' Group of Corporeality ? ' It is the four primary elements, and corporeality derived from them.

THE FOUR ELEMENTS

And what are the four Primary Elements ? They are the Solid Element, the Fluid Element, the Heating Element, the Vibrating (Windy) Element.

The four Elements (*dhātu* or *mahā-bhūta*), popularly called Earth, Water, Fire and Wind, are to be understood as the elementary qualities of matter. They are named in Pali, *paṭhavī-dhātu*, *āpo-dhātu*, *tejo-dhātu*, *vāyo-dhātu*, and may be rendered as Inertia, Cohesion, Radiation, and Vibration. All four are present in every material object, though in varying degrees of strength. If, e.g., the Earth Element predominates, the material object is called ' solid ', etc.

The ' Corporeality derived from the four primary elements ' (*upādāya rūpa* or *upādā rūpa*) consists, according to the Abhidhamma, of the following twenty-four material phenomena and qualities : eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, visible form, sound, odour, taste, masculinity, femininity, vitality, physical basis of mind (*hadaya-vatthu* ; see *B. Dict.*), gesture, speech, space (cavities of ear, nose, etc.), agility, elasticity, adaptability, growth, continuity, decay, change, and nutriment.

Bodily impressions (*phoṭṭhabba*, the tactile) are not especially mentioned among these twenty-four, as they are identical with the Solid, the Heating and the Vibrating Element which are cognizable through the sensations of pressure, cold, heat, pain, etc.

1. What, now, is the ' Solid Element ' (*paṭhavī-dhātu*) ? The solid element may be one's own, or it may be external. And what is one's own solid element ? Whatever in one's own person or body there exists of karmically acquired hardness or firmness, such as the hairs of head and body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, stomach, bowels, mesentery, excrement and so on—this is called one's own solid element. Now, whether it be one's own solid element, or whether it be the external solid element, they are both just the solid element.

And one should understand, according to reality, and true wisdom :—' This does not belong to me ; this am I not ; this is not my Ego '.

2. What, now, is the ' Fluid Element ' (*āpo-dhātu*) ? The fluid element may be one's own, or it may be external. And what is one's own fluid element ? Whatever in one's own person or body there exists of karmically acquired liquidity or fluidity, such as bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-grease, saliva, nasal mucus, oil of the joints, urine, and so on—this is called one's own fluid element. Now, whether it be one's own fluid element, or whether it be the external fluid element, they are both just the fluid element.

And one should understand, according to reality, and true wisdom :—' This does not belong to me ; this am I not ; this is not my Ego '.

3. What, now, is the ' Heating Element ' (*tejo-dhātu*) ? The heating element may be one's own, or it

I. SUFFERING

may be external. And what is one's own heating element? Whatever in one's own person or body there exists of karmically acquired heat or hotness, such as that whereby one is heated, consumed, scorched, whereby that which has been eaten, drunk, chewed, or tasted, is fully digested, and so on—this is called one's own heating element. Now, whether it be one's own heating element, or whether it be the external heating element, they are both just the heating element.

And one should understand, according to reality, and true wisdom—' This does not belong to me ; this am I not ; this is not my Ego '.

4. What, now, is the ' Vibrating (Windy) Element ' (*vāyo-dhātu*) ? The vibrating element may be one's own, or it may be external. And what is one's own vibrating element? What in one's own person or body there exists of karmically acquired wind or windiness, such as the upward-going and downward-going winds, the winds of stomach and intestines, the wind permeating all the limbs, in-breathing and out-breathing, and so on—this is called one's own vibrating element. Now, whether it be one's own vibrating element or whether it be the external vibrating element, they are both just the vibrating element.

And one should understand, according to reality, and true wisdom : ' This does not belong to me ; this am I not ; this is not my Ego '.

Just as one calls ' hut ' the circumscribed space which comes to be by means of wood and rushes, reeds, and clay, even so we call ' body ' the circumscribed space that comes to be by means of bones and sinews, flesh and skin.

THE GROUP OF FEELING

(vedanā-khandha)

¹ There are three kinds of Feeling: pleasant, unpleasant, and neither pleasant nor unpleasant (indifferent).

THE GROUP OF PERCEPTION

(saññā-khandha)

² What, now, is Perception? There are six classes of perception: perception of forms, sounds, odours, tastes, bodily impressions, and of mental objects.

THE GROUP OF MENTAL FORMATIONS

(sankhāra-khandha)

What, now, are Mental Formations? There are six classes of volitions (*cetanā*): will directed to forms (*rūpa-cetanā*), to sounds, odours, tastes, bodily impressions, and to mental objects.

The 'Group of Mental Formations' (*sankhāra-khandha*) is a collective term for numerous functions, or aspects, of mental activity which, in addition to feeling and perception, are present in a single moment of consciousness. In the Abhidhamma, fifty Mental Formations are distinguished, seven of which are constant factors of mind. The number and composition of the rest varies according to the character of the respective class of consciousness (see Table in *B. Dict.*). In the Discourse about Right Understanding (M. 9) three main representatives of the 'Group of Mental Formations' are mentioned: volition (*cetanā*), sense impression (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Of these again, it is volition which, being a principal 'formative' factor, is particularly characteristic of the Group of Formations, and therefore serves to exemplify it, in the passage given above.

About other applications of the term *sankhāra* see *B. Dict.*

THE GROUP OF CONSCIOUSNESS

(viññāṇa-khandha)

¹ What, now, is consciousness ? There are six classes of consciousness : consciousness of forms, sounds, odours, tastes, bodily impressions, and of mental objects (lit. : eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc.).

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Now, though one's eye be intact, yet if the external forms do not fall within the field of vision, and no corresponding conjunction takes place, in that case there occurs no formation of the corresponding aspect of consciousness. Or, though one's eye be intact, and the external forms fall within the field of vision, yet if no corresponding conjunction takes place, in that case also there occurs no formation of the corresponding aspect of consciousness. If, however, one's eye is intact, and the external forms fall within the field of vision, and the corresponding conjunction takes place, in that case there arises the corresponding aspect of consciousness.

² Hence, I say : the arising of consciousness is dependent upon conditions ; and without these conditions, no consciousness arises. And upon whatsoever conditions the arising of consciousness is dependent, after these it is called.

Consciousness, whose arising depends on the eye and forms, is called 'eye-consciousness' (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*).

Consciousness, whose arising depends on the ear and sounds, is called 'ear-consciousness' (*sota-viññāṇa*).

Consciousness, whose arising depends on the olfactory organ and odours, is called 'nose-consciousness' (*ghāṇa-viññāṇa*).

Consciousness, whose arising depends on the tongue and taste, is called 'tongue-consciousness' (*jivhā-viññāṇa*).

Consciousness, whose arising depends on the body and bodily contacts, is called 'body-consciousness' (*kāya-viññāṇa*).

Consciousness, whose arising depends on the mind and mind objects, is called 'mind-consciousness' (*mano-viññāṇa*).

¹ Whatsoever there is of 'corporeality' (*rūpa*) on that occasion, this belongs to the Group of Corporeality. Whatsoever there is of 'feeling' (*vedanā*), this belongs to the Group of Feeling. Whatsoever there is of 'perception' (*saññā*), this belongs to the Group of Perception. Whatsoever there are of 'mental formations' (*sankhāra*), these belong to the Group of Mental Formations. Whatsoever there is of 'consciousness' (*viññāṇa*), this belongs to the Group of Consciousness.

DEPENDENCY OF CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE FOUR OTHER KHANDHAS

² And it is impossible that any one can explain the passing out of one existence, and the entering into a new existence, or the growth, increase and development of consciousness, independent of corporeality, feeling, perception, and mental formations.

THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTENCE (*ti-lakkhaṇa*)

³ All formations are 'transient' (*anicca*); all formations are 'subject to suffering' (*dukkha*); all things are 'without a self' (*anattā*).

¹Corporeality is transient, feeling is transient, perception is transient, mental formations are transient, consciousness is transient.

And that which is transient, is subject to suffering ; and of that which is transient and subject to suffering and change, one cannot rightly say :—‘ This belongs to me ; this am I ; this is my Self ’.

Therefore, whatever there be of corporeality, of feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness, whether past, present or future, one’s own or external, gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near, one should understand according to reality and true wisdom :—‘ This does not belong to me ; this am I not ; this is not my Self ’.

THE ANATTĀ DOCTRINE

Individual existence, as well as the whole world, are in reality nothing but a process of ever-changing phenomena which all are comprised in the five Groups of Existence. This process has gone on from time immemorial, before one’s birth, and also after one’s death it will continue for endless periods of time, as long, and as far, as there are conditions for it. As stated in the preceding texts, the five Groups of Existence,—either taken separately or combined,—in no way constitute a real Ego-entity or subsisting personality, and outside of these Groups too, no self, soul or substance can be found as their ‘ owner ’. In other words, the five Groups of Existence are ‘ not-self ’ (*anattā*), nor do they *belong* to a Self (*anattaniya*). In view of the impermanence and conditionality of all existence, the belief in any form of Self must be regarded as an illusion.

Just as that what we designate by the name of ‘ chariot ’, has no existence apart from axle, wheels, shaft, carriage, and so forth ; or, as the word ‘ house ’

is merely a convenient designation for various materials put together after a certain fashion so as to enclose a portion of space, and there is no separate house-entity in existence :—in exactly the same way, that which we call a ' being ', or an ' individual ', or a ' person ', or by the name ' I ', is nothing but a changing combination of physical and psychical phenomena, and has no real existence in itself.

This is, in brief, the Anattā Doctrine of the Buddha, i.e. the teaching that all existence is void (*suñña*) of a permanent self or substance. It is the fundamental Buddhist doctrine, not found in any other religious teaching or philosophical system. To grasp it fully, not only in an abstract and intellectual way, but by constant reference to actual experience, is an indispensable condition for the true understanding of the Buddha-Dhamma and for the actual realization of its goal. The Anattā-Doctrine is the necessary outcome of the thorough analysis of actuality, undertaken, e.g., in the Khandha Doctrine of which, through the texts included here, only a bare indication could be given.

For a detailed survey of the Khandhas see *B. Dict.*

¹ Suppose, a man who is not blind, were to behold the many bubbles on the Ganges as they drive along ; and he should watch them, and carefully examine them. After carefully examining them, they will appear to him empty, unreal and unsubstantial. In exactly the same way does the monk behold all the corporeal phenomena, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and states of consciousness —whether they be of the past, or the present, or the future, far or near. And he watches them, and examines them carefully ; and, after carefully examining them, they appear to him empty, void, and without a Self.

² Whoso delights in corporeality, or feeling, or perception, or mental formations, or consciousness, he delights

in suffering ; and whoso delights in suffering, will not be freed from suffering. Thus I say.

1 ' How can you find delight and mirth.
Where there is burning without end ?
In deepest darkness you are wrapped !
Why do you not seek for the light ?

' Look at this puppet here, well rigged,
A heap of many sores, piled up,
Diseased, and full of greediness,
Unstable, and impermanent !

' Devoured by old age is this frame,
A prey to sickness, weak and frail ;
To pieces breaks this putrid body,
All life must truly end in death '.

THE THREE WARNINGS

2 Did you never see in the world a man, or a woman, eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old, frail, crooked as a gable-roof, bent down, resting on crutches, with tottering steps, infirm, youth long since fled, with broken teeth, grey and scanty hair, or bald-headed, wrinkled, with blotched limbs ? And did the thought never come to you that also you are subject to decay, that also you cannot escape it ?

Did you never see in the world a man, or a woman, who, being sick, afflicted, and grievously ill, and wallowing in their own filth, was lifted up by some people, and put to bed by others ? And did the thought never come to you that also you are subject to disease, that also you cannot escape it ?

Did you never see in the world the corpse of a man, or a woman, one or two or three days after death,

swollen up, blue-black in colour, and full of corruption ? And did the thought never come to you that also you are subject to death, that also you cannot escape it ?

SAMŚĀRA

¹ Inconceivable is the beginning of this Saṃsāra ; not to be discovered is any first beginning of beings, who, obstructed by ignorance, and ensnared by craving, are hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths.

Saṃsāra—the wheel of existence, lit. the ‘ Perpetual Wandering ’,—is the name given in the Pali scriptures to the sea of life ever restlessly heaving up and down, the symbol of this continuous process of ever again and again being born, growing old, suffering, and dying. More precisely put : Saṃsāra is the unbroken sequence of the fivefold Khandha-combinations, which, constantly changing from moment to moment, follow continually one upon the other through inconceivable periods of time. Of this Saṃsāra a single life time constitutes only a tiny fraction. Hence, to be able to comprehend the first Noble Truth, one must let one’s gaze rest upon the Saṃsāra, upon this frightful sequence of rebirths, and not merely upon one single life time, which, of course, may be sometimes not very painful.

The term ‘ suffering ’ (*dukkha*), in the first Noble Truth, refers, therefore, not merely to painful bodily and mental sensations due to unpleasant impressions, but it comprises, in addition, everything productive of suffering, or liable to it. The Truth of Suffering teaches that, owing to the universal law of impermanence, even high and sublime states of happiness are subject to change and destruction, and that all states of existence are, therefore, unsatisfactory, carrying in themselves, without exception, the seeds of suffering.

Which do you think is more : the flood of tears, which weeping and wailing you have shed upon this

long way—hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths, united with the undesired, separated from the desired—this, or the waters of the four oceans ?

Long time have you suffered the death of father and mother, of sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters. And whilst you were thus suffering, you have, indeed, shed more tears upon this long way than there is water in the four oceans.

¹Which do you think is more : the streams of blood that, through your being beheaded, have flowed upon this long way, these, or the waters of the four oceans ?

Long time have you been caught as robbers, or high-waymen, or adulterers ; and, through your being beheaded, verily, more blood has flowed upon this long way than there is water in the four oceans.

But how is this possible ?

Inconceivable is the beginning of this Saṃsāra ; not to be discovered is any first beginning of beings, who, obstructed by ignorance and ensnared by craving, are hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths.

²And thus have you long time undergone suffering, undergone torment, undergone misfortune, and filled the graveyards full ; truly, long enough to be dissatisfied with all the forms of existence, long enough to turn away and free yourselves from them all.

THE SECOND TRUTH

THE NOBLE TRUTH OF THE ORIGIN OF SUFFERING

¹ What, now, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering? It is that craving which gives rise to fresh rebirth, and, bound up with pleasure and lust, now here, now there, finds ever fresh delight.

THE THREEFOLD CRAVING

There is the 'Sensual Craving' (*kāma-taṇhā*), the 'Craving for (Eternal) Existence' (*bhava-taṇhā*), the 'Craving for Self-Annihilation' (*vibhava-taṇhā*).

'Sensual Craving' (*kāma-taṇhā*) is the desire for the enjoyment of the five sense objects.

'Craving for Existence' (*bhava-taṇhā*) is the desire for continued, or eternal, life, referring, in particular, to those higher worlds called Fine-material and Immaterial Existence (*rūpa-*, and *arūpa-bhava*). It is closely connected with the so-called 'Eternity-Belief' (*bhava-*, or *sassata-diṭṭhi*), i.e. the belief in an absolute, eternal Ego-entity persisting independently of our body.

'Craving for Self-Annihilation' (lit., 'for non-existence'; *vibhava-taṇhā*) is the outcome of the 'Belief in Annihilation' (*vibhava-*, or *uccheda-diṭṭhi*), i.e. the delusive materialistic notion of a more or less real Ego, which is annihilated at death, and which does not stand in any causal relation with the time before death, and the time after death.

ORIGIN OF CRAVING

But, where does this craving arise and take root? Wherever in the world there are delightful and pleasurable things, there this craving arises and takes root.

Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, are delightful and pleasurable : there this craving arises and takes root.

Visual objects, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily impressions, and mind-objects, are delightful and pleasurable : there this craving arises and takes root.

Consciousness, sense impression, feeling born of sense impression, perception, will, craving, thinking, and reflecting, are delightful and pleasurable : there this craving arises and takes root.

If, whenever perceiving a visual object, a sound, odour, taste, bodily impression, or a mind-object, the object is pleasant, one is attracted ; and if unpleasant, one is repelled.

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION OF ALL PHENOMENA

Thus, whatever kind of ' Feeling ' (*vedanā*) one experiences,—pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent—one approves of, and cherishes the feeling, and clings to it ; and while doing so, lust springs up ; but lust for feelings means ' Clinging ' (*upādāna*) ; and on clinging depends the (present) ' Process of Becoming ' ; on the process of becoming (*bhava* ; here *kamma-bhava*, Karma-process) depends (future) ' Birth ' (*jāti*) ; and dependent on birth are ' Decay and Death ', sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Thus arises this whole mass of suffering.

This is called the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

The formula of the ' Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) of which, in the preceding passage, only some of its twelve links have been mentioned, may be regarded as a detailed explanation of the Second Truth.

PRESENT KARMA-RESULTS

¹ Truly, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving, kings fight with kings, princes with princes, priests with priests, citizens with citizens ; the mother quarrels with the son, the son with the mother, the father with the son, the son with the father ; brother quarrels with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. Thus, given to dissension, quarrelling and fighting, they fall upon one another with fists, sticks, or weapons. And thereby they suffer death or deadly pain.

And further, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving, people break into houses, rob, plunder, pillage whole houses, commit highway robbery, seduce the wives of others. Then, the rulers have such people caught, and inflict on them various forms of punishment. And thereby they incur death or deadly pain. Now, this is the misery of sensuous craving, the heaping up of suffering in this present life, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, caused by sensuous craving, entirely dependent on sensuous craving.

FUTURE KARMA-RESULTS

And further, people take the evil way in deeds, the evil way in words, the evil way in thoughts ; and by taking the evil way in deeds, words and thoughts, at the dissolution of the body, after death, they fall into a downward state of existence, a state of suffering, into perdition, and the abyss of hell. But this is the misery of sensuous craving, the heaping up of suffering in the

future life, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, caused by sensuous craving, entirely dependent on sensuous craving.

¹ ' Not in the air, nor ocean-midst,
Nor hidden in the mountain clefts,
Nowhere is found a place on earth,
Where man is freed from evil deeds '.

KARMA AS VOLITION

² It is volition (*cetanā*) that I call ' Karma ' (action).
Having willed one acts by body, speech, and mind.

There are actions (*kamma*) ripening in hell . . .
ripening in the animal kingdom . . . ripening in the
domain of ghosts . . . ripening amongst men . . . ripening
in heavenly worlds.

The result of actions (*vipāka*) is of three kinds :
ripening in the present life, in the next life, or on future
occasions.

INHERITANCE OF DEEDS (KARMA)

³ Owners of their deeds (*kamma*, *Skr*: *karma*) are the
beings, heirs of their deeds, their deeds are the womb
from which they sprang, with their deeds they are bound
up, their deeds are their refuge. Whatever deeds they
do—good or evil—of such they will be the heirs.

⁴ And wherever the beings spring into existence, there
their deeds will ripen ; and wherever their deeds ripen,
there they will earn the fruits of those deeds, be it in
this life, or be it in the next life, or be it in any other
future life.

1. Dhp. 127. 2. A. VI. 63. 3. A. X. 205. 4. A. III. 33.

¹ There will come a time, when the mighty ocean will dry up, vanish, and be no more. There will come a time, when the mighty earth will be devoured by fire, perish, and be no more. But, yet there will be no end to the suffering of beings, who, obstructed by ignorance, and ensnared by craving, are hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths.

Craving (*taṇhā*), however, is not the only cause of evil action, and thus of all the suffering and misery produced thereby in this and the next life ; but wherever there is craving, there, dependent on craving, may arise envy, anger, hatred, and many other evil things productive of suffering and misery. And all these selfish, life-affirming impulses and actions, together with the various kinds of misery produced thereby, here or thereafter, yea, all the five groups of phenomena constituting life :—everything is ultimately rooted in blindness and ignorance (*avijjā*).

KARMA

The second Noble Truth serves also to explain the causes of the seeming injustice in nature, by teaching that nothing in the world can come into existence without reason or cause, and that not only our latent tendencies, but our whole destiny, all weal and woe, result from causes (Karma), which we have to seek partly in this life, partly in former states of existence. These causes are the life-affirming activities (*kamma*, Skr: *karma*) produced by body, speech and mind. Hence it is that threefold action (*kamma*) that determines the character and destiny of all beings. Exactly defined, Karma denotes those good and evil volitions (*kusala-akusala-cetanā*), together with their concomitant mental factors, that produce, or influence, rebirth. Thus, existence, or better, the Process of Becoming (*bhava*), consists of an active and conditioning ' Karma Process ' (*kamma-bhava*), and of its result, the ' Rebirth Process ' (*uppati-bhava*).

Here, too, when considering Karma, one must not lose sight of the impersonal nature (*anattatā*) of existence. Taking the case of a storm-swept sea, it is not an identical wave that hastens over the surface of the ocean, but it is the rising and falling of quite different masses of water. In the same way it should be understood that there are no real Ego-entities hastening through the ocean of rebirth, but merely life-waves, which, according to their nature and activities (good or evil), manifest themselves here as men, there as animals, and elsewhere as invisible beings.

Once more the fact may be emphasized here that, correctly speaking, the term 'Karma' signifies only the aforementioned kinds of action themselves, but does not mean, or include, their results.

For further details about Karma see *Fund.* and *B. Dict.*

THE THIRD TRUTH

THE NOBLE TRUTH OF THE EXTINCTION OF SUFFERING

¹ What, now, is the Noble Truth of the Extinction of Suffering ? It is the complete fading away and extinction of this craving, its forsaking and giving up, the liberation and detachment from it.

But where may this craving vanish, where may it be extinguished ? Wherever in the world there are delightful and pleasurable things, there this craving may vanish, there it may be extinguished.

² Be it in the past, present, or future, whosoever of the monks or priests regards the delightful and pleasurable things in the world as 'impermanent' (*anicca*), 'miserable' (*dukkha*), and 'without a Self' (*anattā*), as a disease and cancer, it is he who overcomes craving.

DEPENDENT EXTINCTION OF ALL PHENOMENA

³ And through the total fading away and extinction of 'Craving' (*taṇhā*), 'Clinging' (*upādāna*) is extinguished ; through the extinction of clinging the 'Process of Becoming' (*bhava*) is extinguished ; through the extinction of the (karmic) process of becoming 'Rebirth' (*jāti*) is extinguished ; and through the extinction of rebirth 'Decay and Death', sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair are extinguished. Thus comes about the extinction of this whole mass of suffering.

⁴ Hence, the annihilation, cessation and overcoming of corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations,

1. D. 22.

2. S. XII. 66.

3. S. XII. 43.

4. S. XXII. 30

and consciousness, this is the extinction of suffering, the end of disease, the overcoming of old age and death.

The undulatory motion which we call a wave—and which in the ignorant spectator creates the illusion of one and the same mass of water moving over the surface of the lake—is produced and fed by the wind, and maintained by the stored-up energies. Now, after the wind has ceased, and no fresh wind again whips up the water of the lake, the stored-up energies will gradually be consumed, and thus the whole undulatory motion will come to an end. Similarly, if fire does not get new fuel, it will, after consuming all the old fuel, become extinct

Just so, this Five-Khandha-process—which in the ignorant worlding creates the illusion of an Ego-entity—is produced and fed by the life-affirming craving (*taṇhā*), and maintained for some time by means of the stored-up life-energies. Now, after the fuel (*upādāna*), i.e. the craving and clinging to life, has ceased, and no new craving impels again this Five-Khandha-process, life will continue as long as there are still life-energies stored up, but at their destruction at death, the Five-Khandha-process will reach final extinction.

Thus, *Nibbāna*, or 'Extinction' (Sanskrit : *nirvāna* ; from nir + √vā, to cease blowing, become extinct) may be considered under two aspects, namely as :

1. 'Extinction of Impurities' (*kilesa-parinibbāna*), reached at the attainment of Arahatsip, or Holiness, which generally takes place during life-time ; in the Sutta it is called : ' *sa-upādi-sesa-nibbāna* ', i.e. ' Nibbāna with the Groups of Existence still remaining '.

2. 'Extinction of the Five-Khandha-process' (*khandha-parinibbāna*), which takes place at the death of the 'Arahat', called in the Sutta : ' *an-upādi-sesa-nibbāna* ', i.e. ' Nibbāna without the Groups remaining '.

NIBBĀNA

¹This, truly, is Peace, this is the Highest, namely the end of all Karmaformations, the forsaking of every

substratum of rebirth, the fading away of craving, detachment, extinction, Nibbāna.

¹ Enraptured with lust, enraged with anger, blinded by delusion, overwhelmed, with mind ensnared, man aims at his own ruin, at others' ruin, at the ruin of both parties, and he experiences mental pain and grief. But, if lust, anger, and delusion, are given up, man aims neither at his own ruin, nor at others' ruin, nor at the ruin of both parties, and he experiences no mental pain and grief. Thus is Nibbāna immediate, visible in this life, inviting, attractive, and comprehensible to the wise.

² The extinction of greed, the extinction of anger, the extinction of delusion : this, indeed, is called Nibbāna.

THE ARAHAT, OR HOLY ONE

³ And for a disciple thus freed, in whose heart dwells peace, there is nothing to be added to what has been done, and naught more remains for him to do. Just as a rock of one solid mass remains unshaken by the wind, even so neither forms, nor sounds, nor odours, nor tastes, nor contacts of any kind, neither the desired nor the undesired can cause such an one to waver. Steadfast is his mind, gained is deliverance.

⁴ And he who has considered all the contrasts on this earth, and is no more disturbed by anything whatever in the world, the peaceful One, freed from rage, from sorrow, and from longing, he has passed beyond birth and decay.

THE IMMUTABLE

⁵ Truly, there is a realm, where there is neither the solid, nor the fluid, neither heat, nor motion, neither this world, nor any other world, neither sun nor moon.

1. A. III.55. 2. S. XXXVIII. 1. 3. A. VI.55. 4. A. III.32.
5. Ud. VIII. 1.

This I call neither arising, nor passing away, neither standing still, nor being born, nor dying. There is neither foothold, nor development, nor any basis. This is the end of suffering.

¹There is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed. If there were not this Unborn, this Unoriginated, this Uncreated, this Unformed, escape from the world of the born, the originated, the created, the formed, would not be possible.

But since there is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed, therefore is escape possible from the world of the born, the originated, the created, the formed.

THE FOURTH TRUTH

THE NOBLE TRUTH OF THE PATH THAT LEADS TO THE EXTINCTION OF SUFFERING

THE TWO EXTREMES, AND THE MIDDLE PATH

¹ To give oneself up to indulgence in *Sensual Pleasure*, the base, common, vulgar, unholy, unprofitable; and also to give oneself up to *Self-mortification*, the painful, unholy, unprofitable: both these two extremes, the Perfect One has avoided and found out the *Middle Path*, which makes one both to see and to know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

It is the Noble Eightfold Path, the way that leads to the extinction of suffering, namely:

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Right Understanding
<i>Sammā-ditṭhi</i> | } | III. Wisdom
<i>Paññā</i> |
| 2. Right Thought
<i>Sammā-sankappa</i> | | |
| 3. Right Speech
<i>Sammā-vācā</i> | } | I. Morality
<i>Sīla</i> |
| 4. Right Action
<i>Sammā-kammanta</i> | | |
| 5. Right Livelihood
<i>Sammā-ājīva</i> | | |

- | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| 6. Right Effort
<i>Sammā-vāyāma</i> | } | II. Concentration
<i>Samādhi</i> |
| 7. Right Mindfulness
<i>Sammā-sati</i> | | |
| 8. Right Concentration
<i>Sammā-samādhi</i> | | |

This is the Middle Path which the Perfect One has found out, which makes one both to see and to know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

(*Ariya-aṭṭhangikamagga*) .

The figurative expression 'Path' or 'Way' has been sometimes misunderstood as implying that the single factors of that Path have to be taken up for practice, one after the other, in the order given. In that case, Right Understanding, i.e. the full penetration of Truth, would have to be realized first, before one could think of developing Right Thought, or of practising Right Speech, etc. But, actually, the three factors (3-5) forming the section 'Morality' (*sīla*) have to be perfected first; after that one has to give attention to the systematic training of mind by practising the three factors (6-8) forming the section 'Concentration' (*samādhi*); only after that preparation, man's character and mind will be capable to reach perfection in the first two factors (1-2) forming the section of 'Wisdom' (*paññā*).

An initial minimum of Right Understanding, however, is required at the very start, because only a certain grasp of the facts of suffering, etc., will provide convincing reasons, and the incentive, for a diligent practice of the Path. A certain measure of Right Understanding is also required for helping the other Path-factors to fulfil intelligently and efficiently their individual functions in the common task of liberation. For that reason, and to emphasize the importance of that

factor, Right Understanding has been given the first place in the Noble Eightfold Path.

That initial understanding of the Dhamma, however, has to be gradually developed, with the help of the other Path factors, until it reaches finally that highest Clarity of Insight (*vipassanā*) which is the immediate condition for entering the four Stages of Holiness (*see* p. 35 f.) and for attaining Nibbāna.

Right Understanding is therefore the beginning as well as the culmination of the Noble Eightfold Path.

¹ Free from pain and torture is this path, free from groaning and suffering : it is the perfect path.

² Truly, like this path there is no other path to the purity of insight. If you follow this path, you will put an end to suffering.

³ But each one has to struggle for himself, the Perfect Ones have only pointed out the way.

⁴ Give ear then, for the Immortal is found. I reveal, I set forth the Truth. As I reveal it to you, so act ! And that supreme goal of the holy life, for the sake of which sons of good families rightly go forth from home to the homeless state : this you will, in no long time, in this very life, make known to yourself, realize, and make your own.

FIRST STEP

RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

(*Sammā-dī hi*)

¹What, now, is Right Understanding ?

UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR TRUTHS

1. To understand suffering ; 2. to understand the origin of suffering ; 3. to understand the extinction of suffering ; 4. to understand the path that leads to the extinction of suffering : This is called Right Understanding.

UNDERSTANDING MERIT AND DEMERIT

²Or, when the noble disciple understands what is karmically wholesome, and the root of wholesome karma, what is karmically unwholesome, and the root of unwholesome karma, then he has Right Understanding.

What, now, is ' karmically unwholesome ' (*a-ku-sala*) ?

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Destruction of living beings
is karmically unwholesome | } | Bodily Action
(<i>kāya-kamma</i>) |
| 2. Stealing is karmically unwholesome | | |
| 3. Unlawful sexual intercourse
is karmically unwholesome | | |
| 4. Lying is karmically unwholesome | } | Verbal Action
(<i>vacī-kamma</i>) |
| 5. Tale-bearing is karmically unwholesome | | |
| 6. Harsh language is karmically unwholesome | | |
| 7. Frivolous talk is karmically unwholesome | | |

- | | |
|--|--|
| 8. Covetousness is karmically un-
wholesome | } Mental Action
(<i>mano-kamma</i>) |
| 9. Ill-will is karmically unwhole-
some | |
| 10. Wrong views are karmically
unwholesome. | |

These ten are called ' Evil Courses of Action ' (*akusala-kamma-patha*).

And what is the root of unwholesome karma ? Greed (*lobha*) is a root of unwholesome karma ; Hatred (*dosa*) is a root of unwholesome karma ; Delusion (*moha*) is a root of unwholesome karma.

Therefore, I say, these demeritorious actions are of three kinds : either due to greed, or due to hatred, or due to delusion.

As ' karmically unwholesome ' (*a-kusala*) is considered every volitional act of body, speech, or mind, which is rooted in greed, hatred, or delusion. It is regarded as *akusala*, i.e. unwholesome or unskillful, as it produces evil and painful results in this, or any future, existence. The state of will or volition is really that which counts as action (*kamma*). It may manifest itself as action of the body, or of speech ; if it does not manifest itself outwardly, it is counted as mental action.

The state of greed (*lobha*), as well as that of hatred (*dosa*), is always accompanied by ignorance (or delusion ; *moha*), being the primary root of all evil. Greed and hatred however, cannot co-exist in one and the same moment of consciousness.

What, now, is ' karmically wholesome ' (*kusala*) ?

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. To abstain from killing is kar-
mically wholesome | } Bodily Action
(<i>kāya-kamma</i>) |
| 2. To abstain from stealing is
karmically wholesome | |
| 3. To abstain from unlawful
sexual intercourse is karmi-
cally wholesome | |

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4. To abstain from lying is karmically wholesome | } Verbal Action
(<i>vacī-kamma</i>) |
| 5. To abstain from tale-bearing is karmically wholesome | |
| 6. To abstain from harsh language is karmically wholesome | |
| 7. To abstain from frivolous talk is karmically wholesome | |
| 8. Absence of covetousness is karmically wholesome | } Mental Action
(<i>mano-kamma</i>) |
| 9. Absence of ill-will is karmically wholesome | |
| 10. Right understanding is karmically wholesome. | |

These ten are called 'Good Courses of Action' (*kusala-kamma-patha*).

And what is the root of wholesome karma? Absence of greed (*a-lobha* = unselfishness) is a root of wholesome karma; absence of hatred (*a-dosa* = kindness) is a root of wholesome karma; absence of delusion (*a-moha* = wisdom) is a root of wholesome karma.

UNDERSTANDING THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS (*ti-lakkhaṇa*)

¹ Or, when one understands that corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness are transient [subject to suffering, and without a Self], also in that case one possesses Right Understanding.

UNPROFITABLE QUESTIONS

² Should any one say that he does not wish to lead the holy life under the Blessed One, unless the Blessed One

first tells him whether the world is eternal or temporal, finite or infinite ; whether the life-principle is identical with the body, or something different ; whether the Perfect One continues after death, etc.—such an one would die ere the Perfect One could tell him all this.

It is as if a man were pierced by a poisoned arrow, and his friends, companions or near relations should send for a surgeon ; but that man should say : ‘ I will not have this arrow pulled out, until I know, who the man is that has wounded me : whether he is a noble man, a priest, a tradesman, or a servant ’ ; or : ‘ what his name is, and to what family he belongs ’ ; or : ‘ whether he is tall, or short, or of medium height ’. Truly, such a man would die ere he could adequately learn all this.

¹Therefore, the man who seeks his own welfare, should pull out this arrow—this arrow of lamentation, pain, and sorrow.

²For, whether the theory exists, or whether it does not exist, that the world is eternal, or temporal, or finite, or infinite—certainly, there is birth, there is decay, there is death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, the extinction of which, attainable even in this present life, I make known unto you.

FIVE FETTERS

(*Samyojana*)

³There is, for instance, an unlearned worldling, void of regard for holy men, ignorant of the teaching of holy men, untrained in the noble doctrine. And his heart is possessed and overcome by Self-Illusion, by Scepticism, by Attachment to mere Rule and Ritual, by Sensual Lust, and by Ill-will ; and how to free himself from these things, he does not really know.

Self-Illusion (*sakkāya-ditthi*) may reveal itself as :—

1. 'Eternalism'—*bhava-* or *sassata-ditthi*, lit. 'Eternity-Belief'—i.e. the belief that one's Ego, Self or Soul exists independently of the material body, and continues even after the dissolution of the latter.

2. 'Annihilationism'—*vibhava-* or *uccheda-ditthi*, lit. 'Annihilation-Belief'—i.e. the materialistic belief that this present life constitutes the Ego, and hence that it is annihilated at the death of the material body.

About the ten 'Fetters' (*samyojana*), see p. 35.

UNWISE CONSIDERATIONS

¹Not knowing what is worthy of consideration, and what is unworthy of consideration, he considers the unworthy, and not the worthy.

And unwisely he considers thus : 'Have I been in the past ? Or, have I not been in the past ? What have I been in the past ? How have I been in the past ? From what state into what state did I change in the past ?—Shall I be in the future ? Or, shall I not be in the future ? What shall I be in the future ? How shall I be in the future ? From what state into what state shall I change in the future ?'—And the present also fills him with doubt ; 'Am I ? Or, am I not ? What am I ? How am I ? This being, whence has it come ? Whither will it go ?'

THE SIX VIEWS ABOUT THE SELF

And with such unwise considerations, he falls into one or other of the six views, and it becomes his conviction and firm belief : 'I have a Self' ; or : 'I have no Self' , or : 'With the Self I perceive the Self' , or : 'With that which is no Self, I perceive the Self' ; or : 'With the Self I perceive that which is no Self'.

1. M. 2.

Or, he falls into the following view : ' This my Self, which can think and feel, and which, now here, now there, experiences the fruit of good and evil deeds : —this my Self is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, and will thus eternally remain the same '.

¹If there really existed the Self, there would be also something which belonged to the Self. As, however, in truth and reality, neither the Self, nor anything belonging to the Self, can be found, is it not therefore really an utter fools' doctrine to say : ' This is the world, this am I ; after death I shall be permanent, persisting, and eternal ' ?

²These are called mere views, a thicket of views, a puppet-show of views, a toil of views, a snare of views ; and ensnared in the fetter of views the ignorant worldling will not be freed from rebirth, from decay, and from death, from sorrow, pain, grief and despair ; he will not be freed, I say, from suffering.

WISE CONSIDERATIONS

The learned and noble disciple, however, who has regard for holy men, knows the teaching of holy men, is well trained in the noble doctrine, he understands what is worthy of consideration, and what is unworthy. And knowing this, he considers the worthy, and not the unworthy. What suffering is, he wisely considers. What the origin of suffering is, he wisely considers ; what the extinction of suffering is, he wisely considers ; what the path is that leads to the extinction of suffering, he wisely considers.

THE SOTAPAN OR ' STREAM-ENTERER '

And by thus considering, three fetters vanish, namely ; *Self-illusion*, *Scepticism*, and *Attachment to mere Rule and Ritual*.

¹ But those disciples, in whom these three fetters have vanished, they all have ' *entered the Stream* ' (*sotâ-panna*), have for ever escaped the states of woe, and are assured of final enlightenment.

² ' More than any earthly power,
More than all the joys of heaven,
More than rule o'er all the world,
Is the *Entrance to the Stream* '.

THE TEN FETTERS

(*Samyojana*)

There are ten ' Fetters '—*saṃyojana*--by which beings are bound to the wheel of existence. They are :—1. Self-Illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). 2. Scepticism (*vicikicchā*). 3. Attachment to mere Rule and Ritual (*sīlabbata-parāmaṣa*). 4. Sensual Lust (*kāma-rāga*). 5. Ill-Will (*vyāpāda*). 6. Craving for Fine-Material Existence (*rūpa-rāga*). 7. Craving for Immaterial Existence (*arūpa-rāga*). 8. Conceit (*māna*). 9. Restlessness (*uddhacca*). 10. Ignorance (*avijjā*).

THE NOBLE ONES

(*Ariya-puggala*)

One who is freed from the first three Fetters is called a *Sotapan*, in Pali *Sotâpanna*, lit. ' Stream Enterer ', i.e. one who has entered the stream leading to Nibbāna. He has unshakable faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, and is incapable of breaking the Five Moral Precepts. He will be reborn seven times, at the utmost, and not in a state lower than the human world.

One who has overcome the fourth and the fifth Fetters in their grosser form, is called a *Sakadāgāmī*, lit. ' Once-Returner ', i.e. he will be reborn only once more in the Sensuous Sphere (*kāma-loka*), and thereafter reach Holiness.

An *Anāgāmī*, lit. ' Non-Returner ', is wholly freed from the first five Fetters which bind one to rebirth in the Sensuous Sphere ; after death, while living in the Fine-Material Sphere (*rūpa-loka*), he will reach the goal.

An *Arahat*, i.e. the perfectly 'Holy One', is freed from all the ten Fetters.

Each of the aforementioned four stages of Holiness consists of the 'Path' (*magga*) and the 'Fruition' (*phala*); e.g. 'Path of Stream Entry' (*sotāpatti-magga*) and 'Fruition of Stream Entry' (*sotāpatti-phala*). Accordingly there are eight types, or four pairs, of 'Noble Individuals' (*ariya-puggala*).

The 'Path' consists of the single moment of entering the respective attainment. With 'Fruition' are meant those moments of consciousness, which follow immediately thereafter as the result of the 'Path', and which, under circumstances, may repeat for innumerable times during life-time.

For further details, see *B. Dict.*: *ariya-puggala*, *sotāpanna*, etc.

¹Therefore, I say, Right Understanding is of two kinds :

MUNDANE AND SUPERMUNDANE UNDERSTANDING

1. The view that alms and offerings are not useless : that there is fruit and result, both of good and bad actions ; that there are such things as this life, and the next life ; that father and mother, as also spontaneously born beings (in the heavenly worlds), are no mere words ; that there are in the world monks and priests, who are spotless and perfect, who can explain this life and the next life, which they themselves have understood :—this is called the 'Mundane Right Understanding' (*lokiya-sammā-dittṭhi*), which yields worldly fruits and brings good results.

2. But whatsoever there is of wisdom, of penetration, of right understanding conjoined with the 'Path' (of the *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi*, or *Arahat*)—the mind being turned away from the world

and conjoined with the path, the holy path being pursued :—this is called the ‘ Supermundane Right Understanding ’ (*lokuttara-sammā-diṭṭhi*), which is not of the world, but is supermundane and conjoined with the path.

Thus, there are two kinds of the Eightfold Path :

1. The ‘ mundane ’ (*lokiya*), practised by the ‘ Worldling ’ (*puthujjana*), i.e. by all those who have not yet reached the first stage of Holiness ;
2. The ‘ supermundane ’ (*lokuttara*), practised by the ‘ Noble Ones ’ (*ariya-puggala*).

CONJOINED WITH OTHER STEPS

Now, in understanding wrong understanding as wrong, and right understanding as right, one practises ‘ *Right Understanding* ’ (1st step) ; and in making efforts to overcome wrong understanding, and to arouse right understanding, one practises ‘ *Right Effort* ’ (6th step) ; and in overcoming wrong understanding with attentive mind, and dwelling with attentive mind in the possession of right understanding, one practises ‘ *Right Mindfulness* ’ (7th step). Hence, there are three things that accompany and follow upon right understanding, namely : Right Understanding, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness.

FREE FROM ALL THEORIES

¹ Now, if any one should put the question, whether I admit any view at all, he should be answered thus :—

The Perfect One is free from any theory, for the Perfect One has understood what corporeality is, and how it arises and passes away. He has understood what feeling is, and how it arises and passes away. He has understood what perception is, and how it arises and

passes away. He has understood what the mental formations are, and how they arise and pass away. He has understood what consciousness is, and how it arises and passes away. Therefore I say, the Perfect One has won complete deliverance through the extinction, fading-away, disappearance, rejection, and getting rid of all opinions and conjectures, of all inclination to the vain-glory of 'I' and 'mine'.

THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS

¹ Whether Perfect Ones (Buddhas) appear in the world, or whether Perfect Ones do not appear in the world, it still remains a firm condition, an immutable fact and fixed law: that all formations are 'impermanent' (*anicca*); that all formations are 'subject to suffering' (*dukkha*); that everything is 'without a Self' (*an-attā*).

In Pali: *Sabbe sankhārā aniccā, sabbe sankhārā dukkhā, sabbe dhammā anattā*.

The word 'sankhāra' (formations) comprises here all things that are conditioned or 'formed' (*sankhata-dhamma*), i.e. all possible physical and mental constituents of existence. The word 'dhamma', however, has a still wider application and is all-embracing, as it comprises also the so-called Unconditioned ('unformed', *asankhata*), i.e. *Nibbāna*.

For this reason, it would be wrong to say that all dhammas are impermanent and subject to change, for the *Nibbāna-dhamma* is permanent and free from change. And for the same reason, one has to say that not only all the *sankhāras* (= *sankhata-dhamma*), but that *all the dhammas* (including the *asankhata-dhamma*) lack an Ego (*an-attā*).

² A corporeal phenomenon, a feeling, a perception, a mental formation, a consciousness, that is permanent

and persistent, eternal and not subject to change, such a thing the wise men in this world do not recognise ; and I also say there is no such thing.

¹ And it is impossible that a being possessed of Right Understanding should regard anything as the Self.

VIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE EGO

² Now, if someone should say that feeling is his Self, he should be answered thus : ‘ There are three kinds of feeling : pleasurable, painful, and indifferent feeling. Which of these three feelings, now, do you consider as your Self ? ’ Because, at the moment of experiencing one of these feelings, one does not experience the other two. These three kinds of feeling are impermanent, of dependent origin, are subject to decay and dissolution, to fading-away and extinction. Whosoever, in experiencing one of these feelings, thinks that this is his Self, will, after the extinction of that feeling, admit that his Self has become dissolved. And thus he will consider his Self already in this present life as impermanent, mixed up with pleasure and pain, subject to rising and passing away.

If any one should say that feeling is not his Ego, and that his Self is inaccessible to feeling, he should be asked thus : ‘ Now, where there is no feeling, is it there possible to say : “ This am I ” ? ’

Or, someone might say : ‘ Feeling, indeed, is not my Self, but it also is untrue that my Self be inaccessible to feeling ; for it is my Self that feels, my Self that has the faculty of feeling ’. Such a one should be answered thus : ‘ Suppose, feeling should become altogether totally extinguished ; now, if there, after the extinction of

feeling, no feeling whatever exists, is it then possible to say : “ This am I ” ? ’

¹To say that the mind, or the mind-objects, or the mind-consciousness, constitute the Self, such an assertion is unfounded. For an arising and a passing away is seen there ; and seeing the arising and passing away of these things, one should come to the conclusion that one’s Self arises and passes away.

²It would be better for the unlearned worldling to regard this body, built up of the four elements, as his Self, rather than the mind. For it is evident that this body may last for a year, for two years, for three, four, five, or ten years, or even for a hundred years and more ; but that which is called thought, or mind, or consciousness, continuously, during day and night, arises as one thing, and passes away as another thing.

³Therefore, whatsoever there is of corporeality, of feeling, of perception, of mental formations, of consciousness, whether past, present or future, one’s own or external, gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near : there one should understand according to reality and true wisdom : ‘ This does not belong to me ; this am I not ; this is not my Self ’.

To show the impersonality and utter emptiness of existence, *Visuddhi-Magga XVI* quotes the following verse :—

‘ Mere suffering exists, no sufferer is found.
The deed is, but no doer of the deed is there.
Nirvāna is, but not the man that enters it.
The Path is, but no traveller on it is seen ’.

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

⁴If, now, any one should ask : ‘ Have you been in the past, and is it untrue that you have not been ? Will

1. M. 148. 2. S. XII. 62. 3. S. XXII. 59. 4. D. 9.

you be in the future, and is it untrue that you will not be? Are you, and is it untrue that you are not?—you may say that you have been in the past, and that it is untrue that you have not been; that you will be in the future, and that it is untrue that you will not be; that you are, and that it is untrue that you are not.

In the past only the past existence was real, but unreal the future and present existence. In the future only the future existence will be real, but unreal the past and present existence. Now only the present existence is real, but unreal the past and future existence.

¹ Verily, he who perceives the ‘ Dependent Origination ’ (*paṭicca-samupphāda*), perceives the truth; and he who perceives the truth, perceives the Dependent Origination.

² For just as from the cow comes milk, from milk curd, from curd butter, from butter ghee, from ghee the scum of ghee; and when it is milk, it is not counted as curd, or butter, or ghee, or scum of ghee, but only as milk; and when it is curd, it is only counted as curd:—just so was my past existence at that time real, but unreal the future and present existence; and my future existence will be at one time real, but unreal the past and present existence; and my present existence is now real, but unreal the past and future existence. All these are merely popular designations and expressions, mere conventional terms of speaking, mere popular notions. The Perfect One, indeed, makes use of these, without, however, clinging to them.

³ Thus, he who does not understand corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness according to reality (i.e. as void of a personality, or Ego)

nor understands their arising, their extinction, and the way to their extinction, he is liable to believe, either that the Perfect One continues after death, or that he does not continue after death, and so forth.

THE TWO EXTREMES (ANNIHILATION- AND ETERNITY-BELIEF) AND THE MIDDLE DOCTRINE

¹ Truly, if one holds the view that the vital principle (*jīva* ; ' Soul ') is identical with this body, in that case a holy life is not possible ; or, if one holds the view that the vital principle is something quite different from the body, in that case also a holy life is not possible. Both these two extremes the Perfect One has avoided, and he has shown the Middle Doctrine, which says :

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

(*Paṭicca-samuppāda*)

² On ' Delusion ' (*avijjā*) depend the ' Karma-Formations ' (*sankhāra*).—On the karma-formations depends ' Consciousness ' (*viññāṇa* ; starting with re-birth-consciousness in the womb of the mother).—On consciousness depends the ' Mental and Physical Existence ' (*nāma-rūpa*).—On the mental and physical existence depend the ' Six Sense-Organs ' (*saḷ-āyatana*).—On the six sense-organs depends ' Sensorial Impression ' (*phassa*)—On sensorial impression depends ' Feeling ' (*vedanā*).—On feeling depends ' Craving ' (*taṇhā*).—On craving depends ' Clinging ' (*upādāna*).—On clinging depends the ' Process of Becoming ' (*bhava*).—On the process of becoming (here : *kamma-bhava*, or karma-process) depends ' Rebirth ' (*jāti*).—On rebirth depend ' Decay and Death ' (*jarā-maraṇa*), sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Thus arises this whole mass

of suffering. This is called the noble truth of the origin of suffering.

' No god, no Brahma, can be called
The maker of this wheel of life :
Empty phenomena roll on,
Dependent on conditions all '.

(Quoted in *Visuddhi-Magga XIX*).

¹ A disciple, however, in whom Delusion (*avijjā*) has disappeared and wisdom arisen, such a disciple heaps up neither meritorious, nor demeritorious, nor imperturbable Karma-Formations.

The term *sankhāra* has been rendered here by ' Karma-Formations ' because, in the context of the Dependent Origination, it refers to karmically wholesome and unwholesome volition (*celanā*), or volitional activity, in short, Karma.

The threefold division of it, given in the preceding passage, comprises karmic activity in all spheres of existence, or planes of consciousness. The ' meritorious karmaformations ' extend also to the Fine-Material Sphere (*rūpāvacara*), while the ' imperturbable karmaformations ' (*aneñj'ābhisankhāra*) refer only to the Immaterial Sphere (*arūpāvacara*).

² Thus, through the entire fading away and extinction of this ' Delusion ', the ' Karma-Formations ' are extinguished. Through the extinction of the karmaformations, ' Consciousness ' (rebirth) is extinguished. Through the extinction of consciousness, the ' Mental and Physical Existence ' is extinguished. Through the extinction of the mental and physical existence, the six ' Sense-Organs ' are extinguished. Through the extinction of the six sense-organs, ' Sensorial Impression ' is extinguished. Through the extinction of sensorial impression, ' Feeling ' is extinguished. Through the extinction of feeling, ' Craving ' is extinguished.

Through the extinction of craving, 'Clinging' is extinguished. Through the extinction of clinging, the 'Process of Becoming' is extinguished. Through the extinction of the process of becoming, 'Rebirth' is extinguished. Through the extinction of rebirth, 'Decay and Death', sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are extinguished. Thus takes place the extinction of this whole mass of suffering. This is called the noble truth of the extinction of suffering.

REBIRTH-PRODUCING KARMA

¹ Truly, because beings, obstructed by delusion (*avijjā*), and ensnared by craving (*taṇhā*), now here, now there, seek ever fresh delight, therefore does there continually come to be fresh rebirth.

² And the action (*kamma*) that is done out of greed, anger and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*), that springs from them, has its source and origin there:—this action ripens wherever one is reborn; and wherever this action ripens, there one experiences the fruits of this action, be it in this life, or the next life, or in some future life.

CESSATION OF KARMA

³ However, through the fading away of delusion, through the arising of wisdom, through the extinction of craving, no future rebirth takes place again.

⁴ For the actions which are not done out of greed, anger and delusion, which have not sprung from them, which have not their source and origin there:—such actions are, through the absence of greed, anger and delusion, abandoned, rooted out, like a palm-tree torn out of the soil, destroyed, and not liable to spring up again.

¹In this respect one may rightly say of me : that I teach annihilation, that I propound my doctrine for the purpose of annihilation, and that I herein train my disciples ; for certainly I do teach annihilation—the annihilation, namely, of greed, anger and delusion, as well as of the manifold evil and unwholesome things.

The *Paṭicca-Samuppāda*, lit. the Dependent Origination, is the doctrine of the conditionality of all physical and mental phenomena, a doctrine which, together with that of Impersonality (*anattā*), forms the indispensable condition for the real understanding and realization of the Buddha's teaching. It shows that the various physical and mental life processes, conventionally called personality, man, animal, etc., are not a mere play of blind chance, but the outcome of causes and conditions. Above everything else, the *Paṭicca-Samuppāda* explains how the arising of rebirth and suffering is dependent upon conditions ; and, in its second part, it shows how, through the removal of these conditions, all suffering must disappear. Hence, the *Paṭicca-Samuppāda* serves to elucidate the second and the third Noble Truths, by explaining them from their very foundations upwards, and giving them a fixed philosophical form.

The following diagram shows at a glance how the twelve links of the formula extend over three consecutive existences, past, present, and future :

Past Existence	1. Delusion (<i>avijjā</i>)	Karma Process (<i>kamma-bhava</i>) 5 causes : 1, 2, 8, 9, 10
	2. Karma-Formations (<i>sankhāra</i>)	
Present Existence	3. Consciousness (<i>viññāṇa</i>)	Rebirth-Process (<i>uppatī-bhava</i>) 5 results : 3-7
	4. Mental and Physical Existence (<i>nāma- rūpa</i>)	
	5. 6 Sense Organs (<i>āyatana</i>)	
	6. Sense-Impression (<i>phassa</i>)	
	7. Feeling (<i>vedanā</i>)	
	8. Craving (<i>taṇhā</i>)	
Future Existence	9. Clinging (<i>upādāna</i>)	Karma-Process (<i>kamma-bhava</i>) 5 causes : 1, 2, 8, 9, 10
	10. Process of Existence (<i>bhava</i>)	
	11. Rebirth (<i>jāti</i>)	
	12. Decay and Death (<i>jarā-maraṇa</i>)	

The links 1-2, together with 8-10, represent the Karma-Process, containing the five karmic causes of rebirth.

The links 3-7, together with 11-12, represent the Rebirth-Process, containing the five Karma-Results.

Accordingly it is said in the *Paṭisambhida-Magga* :

' Five causes were there in the past,
Five fruits we find in present life.

Five causes do we now produce,
Five fruits we reap in future life '.

(Quoted in *Vis. Magga XVII*).

For a full explanation see *Fund. III* and *B. Dict.*

SECOND STEP

RIGHT THOUGHT

(*Sammā-saṅkappa*)

¹ What, now, is Right Thought ?

1. Thoughts free from lust (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*).
2. Thoughts free from ill-will (*avyāpāda-saṅkappa*).
3. Thoughts free from cruelty (*avihiṃsā-saṅkappa*).

This is called Right Thought.

² Now, Right Thought, I tell you, is of two kinds :—

MUNDANE AND SUPERMUNDANE THOUGHT

1. Thoughts free from lust, from ill-will, and from cruelty :—this is called ‘ Mundane Right Thought ’ (*lokiya-sammā-saṅkappa*), which yields worldly fruits and brings good results.

2. But, whatsoever there is of thinking, considering, reasoning, thought, ratiocination, application—the mind being holy, being turned away from the world, and conjoined with the path, the holy path being pursued ;—these ‘ verbal operations ’ of the mind (*vacī-saṅkhāra*) are called the ‘ Supermundane Right Thought ’ (*lokuttara-sammā-saṅkappa*), which is not of the world, but is supermundane, and conjoined with the path.

CONJOINED WITH OTHER STEPS

Now, in understanding wrong thought as wrong, and right thought as right, one practises *Right*

Understanding (1st step) ; and in making efforts to overcome evil thought, and to arouse right thought, one practises *Right Effort* (6th step) ; and in overcoming evil thought with attentive mind, and dwelling with attentive mind in possession of right thought, one practises *Right Mindfulness* (7th step). Hence there are three things that accompany and follow upon Right Thought, namely : Right Understanding, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness.

THIRD STEP

RIGHT SPEECH

(*Sammā-vācā*)

What now, is Right Speech ?

ABSTAINING FROM LYING

1. ¹There, someone avoids lying, and abstains from it. He speaks the truth, is devoted to the truth, reliable, worthy of confidence, not a deceiver of men. Being at a meeting, or amongst people, or in the midst of his relatives, or in a society, or in the king's court, and called upon and asked as witness, to tell what he knows, he answers, if he knows nothing : ' I know nothing ', and if he knows, he answers : ' I know ' ; if he has seen nothing, he answers : ' I have seen nothing ', and if he has seen, he answers : ' I have seen '. Thus he never knowingly speaks a lie, either for the sake of his own advantage, or for the sake of another person's advantage, or for the sake of any advantage whatsoever.

ABSTAINING FROM TALE-BEARING

2. He avoids tale-bearing, and abstains from it. What he has heard here, he does not repeat there, so as to cause dissension there ; and what he has heard there, he does not repeat here, so as to cause dissension here. Thus he unites those that are divided ; and those that are united, he encourages. Concord gladdens him, he delights and rejoices in concord ; and it is concord that he spreads by his words.

ABSTAINING FROM HARSH LANGUAGE

3. He avoids harsh language, and abstains from it. He speaks such words as are gentle, soothing to the

ear, loving, as go to the heart, and are courteous and friendly, and agreeable to many.

In Majjhima-Nikāya, No. 21, the Buddha says :
 ' Even, O monks, should robbers and murderers saw through your limbs and joints, whoso gave way to anger thereat, would not be following my advice. For thus ought you to train yourselves :

' Undisturbed shall our mind remain, no evil words shall escape our lips ; friendly and full of sympathy shall we remain, with heart full of love, and free from any hidden malice ; and that person shall we penetrate with loving thoughts, wide, deep, boundless, freed from anger and hatred '.

ABSTAINING FROM VAIN TALK

4. ¹He avoids vain talk, and abstains from it. He speaks at the right time, in accordance with facts, speaks what is useful, speaks about the law and the discipline ; his speech is like a treasure, uttered at the right moment, accompanied by arguments, moderate and full of sense.

· This is called Right Speech.

MUNDANE AND SUPERMUNDANE SPEECH

Now, Right Speech, I tell you, is of two kinds :—

1. Abstaining from lying, from tale-bearing, from harsh language, and from vain talk ; this is called ' Mundane Right Speech ' (*lokiya-sammā-vācā*), which yields worldly fruits and brings good results.

2. But the abhorrence of the practice of this four-fold wrong speech, the abstaining, withholding, refraining therefrom, the mind being holy, being turned away from the world, and conjoined with the path, the holy

path being pursued ;—this is called the ‘ Supermundane Right Speech ’ (*lokuttara-sammā-vācā*), which is not of the world, but is supermundane, and conjoined with the path.

CONJOINED WITH OTHER STEPS

Now, in understanding wrong speech as wrong, and right speech as right, one practises *Right Understanding* (1st step) ; and in making efforts to overcome evil speech and to arouse right speech, one practises *Right Effort* (6th step) ; and in overcoming wrong speech with attentive mind, and dwelling with attentive mind in possession of right speech, one practises *Right Mindfulness* (7th step). Hence, there are three things that accompany and follow upon Right Speech, namely : Right Understanding, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness.

FOURTH STEP

RIGHT ACTION

(*Sammā-kammanta*)

¹ What, now, is Right Action ?

ABSTAINING FROM KILLING

1. There, someone avoids the killing of living beings, and abstains from it. Without stick or sword, conscientious, full of sympathy, he is anxious for the welfare of all living beings.

ABSTAINING FROM STEALING

2. He avoids stealing, and abstains from it ; what another person possesses of goods and chattels in the village or in the wood, that he does not take away with thievish intent.

ABSTAINING FROM UNLAWFUL SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

3. He avoids unlawful sexual intercourse, and abstains from it. He has no intercourse with such persons as are still under the protection of father, mother, brother, sister or relatives, nor with married women, nor female convicts, nor, lastly, with betrothed girls.

This is called Right Action.

² Now, Right Action, I tell you, is of two kinds :—

MUNDANE AND SUPERMUNDANE ACTION

1. Abstaining from killing, from stealing, and from unlawful sexual intercourse :—this is called the

(*lokuttara-sammā-ājīva*), which is not of the world, but is supermundane, and conjoined with the path.

CONJOINED WITH OTHER STEPS

Now, in understanding wrong livelihood as wrong, and right livelihood as right, one practises *Right Understanding* (1st step) ; and in making efforts to overcome wrong livelihood, to establish right livelihood, one practises *Right Effort* (6th step) ; and in overcoming wrong livelihood with attentive mind, and dwelling with attentive mind in possession of right livelihood, one practises *Right Mindfulness* (7th step). Hence, there are three things that accompany and follow upon Right Livelihood, namely : Right Understanding, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness.

SIXTH STEP

RIGHT EFFORT (*Sammā vāyāma*)

¹What, now, is Right Effort ?

There are Four Great Efforts: the effort to avoid, the effort to overcome, the effort to develop, and the effort to maintain.

I. THE EFFORT TO AVOID (*Samvara-ppadhāna*)

What, now, is the effort to *Avoid* ? There, the disciple incites his will to avoid the arising of evil, unwholesome things that have not yet arisen ; and he strives, puts forth his energy, strains his mind and struggles.

Thus, when he perceives a form with the eye, a sound with the ear, an odour with the nose, a taste with the tongue, an impression with the body, or an object with the mind, he neither adheres to the whole, nor to its parts. And he strives to ward off that through which evil and unwholesome things, greed and sorrow, would arise, if he remained with unguarded senses ; and he watches over his senses, restrains his senses.

Possessed of this noble ' Control over the Senses ' he experiences inwardly a feeling of joy, into which no evil thing can enter.

This is called the effort to avoid.

2. THE EFFORT TO OVERCOME (*Pahāna-ppadhāna*)

What, now, is the effort to *Overcome* ? There, the disciple incites his will to overcome the evil,

1. A. IV. 13, 14.

unwholesome things that have already arisen; and he strives, puts forth his energy, strains his mind and struggles.

He does not retain any thought of sensual lust, ill-will or grief, or any other evil and unwholesome states that may have arisen; he abandons them, dispels them, destroys them, causes them to disappear.

FIVE METHODS OF EXPELLING EVIL THOUGHTS

¹ If, whilst regarding a certain object, there arise in the disciple, on account of it, evil and unwholesome thoughts connected with greed, anger and delusion, then the disciple (1) should, by means of this object, gain another and wholesome object. (2) Or, he should reflect on the misery of these thoughts: 'Unwholesome, truly, are these thoughts! Blamable are these thoughts! Of painful result are these thoughts!' (3) Or, he should pay no attention to these thoughts. (4) Or, he should consider the compound nature of these thoughts. (5) Or, with teeth clenched and tongue pressed against the gums, he should with his mind restrain, suppress and root out these thoughts; and in doing so, these evil and unwholesome thoughts of greed, anger and delusion will dissolve and disappear; and the mind will inwardly become settled and calm, composed and concentrated.

This is called the effort to overcome.

3. THE EFFORT TO DEVELOP

(*Bhāvanā-ppadhāna*)

² What, now, is the effort to *Develop*? There, the disciple incites his will to arouse wholesome things that have not yet arisen; and he strives, puts forth his energy, strains his mind and struggles.

Thus he develops the 'Elements of Enlightenment' (*bojjhanga*), based on solitude, on detachment, on extinction, and ending in deliverance, namely: 'Mindfulness' (*sati*), 'Investigation of the Law' (*dhamma-vicaya*), 'Energy' (*viriya*), 'Rapture' (*pīti*), 'Tranquillity' (*passaddhi*), 'Concentration' (*samādhi*), and 'Equanimity' (*upekkhā*).

This is called the effort to develop.

4. THE EFFORT TO MAINTAIN (*Anurakkhaṇa-ppadhāna*)

What, now, is the effort to *Maintain*? There, the disciple incites his will to maintain the wholesome things that have already arisen, and not to let them disappear, but to bring them to growth, to maturity and to the full perfection of development (*bhāvanā*); and he strives, puts forth his energy, strains his mind and struggles.

Thus, for example, he keeps firmly in his mind a favourable object of concentration that has arisen, as the mental image of a skeleton, of a corpse infested by worms, of a corpse blue-black in colour, of a festering corpse, of a corpse riddled with holes, of a corpse swollen up.

This is called the effort to maintain.

¹ Truly, the disciple who is possessed of faith and has penetrated the Teaching of the master, he is filled with the thought; 'May rather skin, sinews and bones wither away, may the flesh and blood of my body dry up: I shall not give up my efforts so long as I have not attained whatever is attainable by manly perseverance, energy and endeavour!'

This is called Right Effort.

1 ' The effort of Avoiding, Overcoming,
Of Developing and Maintaining :
These four great efforts have been shown
By him, the scion of the sun.
And he who firmly clings to them,
May put an end to all the pain '.

SEVENTH STEP

RIGHT MINDFULNESS

(*Samma-sati*)

What, now, is Right Mindfulness ?

THE FOUR FUNDAMENTALS OF MINDFULNESS

(*Satipatthāna*)

1 The only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering upon the right path and the realization of Nibbāna, is the ' Four Fundamentals of Mindfulness '. And which are these four ?

There, the disciple dwells in contemplation of the Body, in contemplation of Feeling, in contemplation of the Mind, in contemplation of the Mind-Objects, ardent, clearly comprehending them and mindful, after putting away worldly greed and grief.

1. Contemplation of the Body

(*kāyānupassanā*)

But, how does the disciple dwell in contemplation of the body ? There, the disciple retires to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to a solitary place, seats himself with legs crossed, body erect, and with mindfulness fixed before him.

WATCHING OVER IN- AND OUT-BREATHING

(*ānāpāna-sati*)

Mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out. When making a long inhalation, he knows : ' I make a long inhalation ' ; when making a long

exhalation, he knows: ' I make a long exhalation '. When making a short inhalation, he knows: ' I make a short inhalation ' ; when making a short exhalation, he knows: ' I make a short exhalation '. ' Clearly perceiving the entire [breath-] body, I shall breathe in ' : thus he trains himself, ' clearly perceiving the entire [breath-] body, I shall breathe out ' : thus he trains himself. ' Calming this bodily function (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), I shall breathe in ' : thus he trains himself ; ' calming this bodily function, I shall breathe out ' : thus he trains himself.

Thus he dwells in contemplation of the body, either with regard to his own person, or to other persons, or to both. He beholds how the body arises ; beholds how it passes away ; beholds the arising and passing away of the body. ' A body is there '—

' A body is there, but no living being, no individual, no woman, no man, no self, and nothing that belongs to a self ; neither a person, nor anything belonging to a person ' (Comm.)

this clear awareness is present in him, to the extent necessary for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives independent, unattached to anything in the world. Thus does the disciple dwell in contemplation of the body.

' Mindfulness on Breathing ' (*ānāpāna-sati*) is one of the most important meditative exercises. It may be used for the development of Tranquillity (*samatha-bhāvanā*), i.e. for attaining the four Absorptions (*jhāna* ; see p. 79 f.), for the development of Clear Insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), or for a combination of both practices. Here, in the context of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, it is principally intended for tranquillization and concentration preparatory to the practice of Clear Insight, which may be undertaken, in the following way.

After a certain degree of calm and concentration, or one of the Absorptions, has been attained through regular practice of mindful breathing, the disciple proceeds to examine the origin of breath. He sees that the inhalations and exhalations are conditioned by the body consisting of the four material elements and the various corporeal phenomena derived from them, e.g. the five sense organs, etc. Conditioned by fivefold sense-impression arises consciousness, and together with it the three other 'Groups of Existence', i.e. Feeling, Perception and Mental Formations. Thus the meditator sees clearly: 'There is no ego-entity or self in this so-called personality, but it is only a corporeal and mental process conditioned by various factors'. Thereupon he applies the Three Characteristics to these phenomena, understanding them thoroughly as impermanent, subject to suffering, and impersonal.

For further details about *Ānāpāna-sati*, see *M.* 118, 62; *Visuddhi Magga VIII*, 3.

THE FOUR POSTURES

And further, whilst going, standing, sitting, or lying down, the disciple understands [according to reality] the expressions: 'I go'; 'I stand'; 'I sit'; 'I lie down'; he understands any position of the body.

'The disciple understands that there is no living being, no real Ego, that goes, stands, etc., but that it is by a mere figure of speech that one says: "I go", "I stand", and so forth' (Comm.)

MINDFULNESS AND CLEAR COMPREHENSION

(*sati-sampajañña*)

And further, the disciple acts with clear comprehension in going and coming; he acts with clear comprehension in looking forward and backward; acts with clear comprehension in bending and stretching (any part of his body); acts with clear comprehension in

carrying alms bowl and robes ; acts with clear comprehension in eating, drinking, chewing and tasting ; acts with clear comprehension in discharging excrement and urine ; acts with clear comprehension in walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, awakening ; acts with clear comprehension in speaking and keeping silent.

In all that the disciple is doing, he has a clear comprehension : 1. of his intention ; 2. of his advantage ; 3. of his duty ; 4. of the reality. (Comm.)

CONTEMPLATION OF LOATHSOMENESS

(*paṭikkūla-saññā*)

And further, the disciple contemplates this body, from the sole of the foot upward, and from the top of the hair downward, with a skin stretched over it, and filled with manifold impurities : ‘ This body has hairs of the head and of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, stomach, bowels, mesentery, and excrement ; bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, lymph, tears, skin-grease, saliva, nasal mucus, oil of the joints, and urine ’.

Just as if there were a sack, with openings at both ends, filled with various kinds of grain—with paddy, beans, sesamum and husked rice—and a man not blind opened it and examined its contents, thus : ‘ That is paddy, these are beans, this is sesamum, this is husked rice ’ : just so does the disciple investigate this body.

ANALYSIS OF THE FOUR ELEMENTS

(*dhātu*)

And further, the disciple contemplates this body, however it may stand or move, with regard to the elements : ‘ This body consists of the solid element, the liquid element, the heating element and the vibrating

element'. Just as if a skilled butcher or butcher's apprentice, who had slaughtered a cow and divided it into separate portions, were to sit down at the junction of four highroads : just so does the disciple contemplate this body with regard to the elements.

In *Visuddhi Magga XIII*, 2 this simile is explained as follows :

When a butcher rears a cow, brings it to the place of slaughter, binds it to a post, makes it stand up, slaughters it and looks at the slaughtered cow, during all that time he has still the notion 'cow'. But when he has cut up the slaughtered cow, divided it into pieces, and sits down near it to sell the meat, the notion 'cow' ceases in his mind, and the notion 'meat' arises. He does not think that he is selling a cow or that people buy a cow, but that it is meat that is sold and bought. Similarly, in an ignorant worldling, whether monk or layman, the concepts 'being', 'man', 'personality', etc., will not cease until he has mentally dissected this body of his, just as it stands and moves, and has contemplated it according to its component elements. But when he has done so, the notion 'personality', etc., will disappear, and his mind will become firmly established in the Contemplation of the Elements.

CEMETERY MEDITATIONS

1. And further, just as if the disciple were to see a corpse thrown to the burial-ground, one, two, or three days dead, swollen up, blue-black in colour, full of corruption,—he draws the conclusion as to his own body : 'This my body also has this nature, has this destiny, and cannot escape it'.

2. And further, just as if the disciple were to see a corpse thrown to the burial-ground, eaten by crows, hawks or vultures, by dogs or jackals, or gnawed by all kinds of worms,—he draws the conclusion as to his own

body : ' This my body also has this nature, has this destiny, and cannot escape it ' .

3. And further, just as if the disciple were to see a corpse thrown to the burial-ground, a frame-work of bones, flesh hanging from it, bespattered with blood, held together by the sinews ;

4. A frame-work of bones, stripped of flesh, bespattered with blood, held together by the sinews ;

5. A frame-work of bones, without flesh and blood, but still held together by the sinews ;

6. Bones, disconnected and scattered in all directions, here a bone of the hand, there a bone of the foot, there a shin bone, there a thigh bone, there the pelvis, there the spine, there the skull,—he draws the conclusion as to his own body : ' This my body also has this nature, has this destiny, and cannot escape it ' .

7. And further, just as if the disciple were to see bones lying in the burial-ground, bleached and resembling shells ;

8. Bones heaped together, after the lapse of years ;

9. Bones weathered and crumbled to dust ;—he draws the conclusion as to his own body : ' This my body also has this nature, has this destiny, and cannot escape it ' .

Thus he dwells in contemplation of the body, either with regard to his own person, or to other persons, or to both. He beholds how the body arises ; beholds how it passes away ; beholds the arising and passing away of the body. ' A body is there ' : this clear awareness is present in him, to the extent necessary for knowledge and mindfulness ; and he lives independent, unattached to anything in the world. Thus does the disciple dwell in contemplation of the body.

ASSURED OF TEN BLESSINGS

¹Once the contemplation of the body is practised, developed, often repeated, has become one's habit, one's foundation, is firmly established, strengthened and perfected, one may expect ten blessings :

1. Over Delight and Discontent one has mastery ; one does not allow oneself to be overcome by discontent ; one subdues it, as soon as it arises.

2. One conquers Fear and Anxiety ; one does not allow oneself to be overcome by fear and anxiety ; one subdues them, as soon as they arise.

3. One endures cold and heat, hunger and thirst ; wind and sun, attacks by gadflies, mosquitoes and reptiles ; patiently one endures wicked and malicious speech, as well as bodily pains, that befall one, though they be piercing, sharp, bitter, unpleasant, disagreeable, and dangerous to life.

4. The four ' Absorptions ' (*jhāna*), which purify the mind, and bestow happiness even here, these one may enjoy at will, without difficulty, without effort.

SIX ' PSYCHICAL POWERS '

(*abhiññā*)

5. One may enjoy the different ' Magical Powers ' (*iddhi-vidhā*).

6. With the ' Heavenly Ear ' (*dibba-sota*), the purified, the super-human, one may hear both kinds of sounds, the heavenly and the earthly, the distant and the near.

7. With the mind one may obtain ' Insight into the Hearts of Other Beings ' (*parassa-cetopariya-ñāṇa*), of other persons.

8. One may obtain 'Remembrance of many Previous Births' (*pubbe-nivāsānussati-ñāṇa*).

9. With the 'Heavenly Eye' (*dibba-cakkhu*), the purified, the super-human, one may see beings vanish and reappear, the base and the noble, the beautiful and the ugly, the happy and the unfortunate; one may perceive how beings are reborn according to their deeds.

10. One may, through the 'Cessation of Passions' (*āsava-kkhaya*), come to know for oneself, even in this life, the stainless deliverance of mind, the deliverance through wisdom.

The last six blessings (5-10) are the so-called 'Psychical Powers' (*abhiññā*). The first five of them are mundane (*lokiya*) conditions, and may therefore be attained even by a so-called 'worldling' (*puthujjana*), whilst the last *Abhiññā* is 'supermundane' (*lokuttara*) and exclusively the characteristic of the Arahāt, or Holy One.—It is only after the attainment of all the four Absorptions (*jhāna*) that one may fully succeed in acquiring the five worldly 'Psychical Powers'.—There are four *iddhipāda*, or 'Bases for obtaining Magical Powers', namely: concentration of Will, concentration of Energy, concentration of Mind, and concentration of Investigation.

2. Contemplation of the Feelings (*vedanānupassanā*)

¹But how does the disciple dwell in contemplation of the feelings?

In experiencing feelings, the disciple knows: 'I have an agreeable feeling', or: 'I have a disagreeable feeling', or: 'I have an indifferent feeling'; or:

‘ I have a worldly agreeable feeling ’, or : ‘ I have an unworldly agreeable feeling ’, or : ‘ I have a worldly disagreeable feeling ’, or : ‘ I have an unworldly disagreeable feeling ’, or : ‘ I have a worldly indifferent feeling ’, or : ‘ I have an unworldly indifferent feeling ’.

Thus he dwells in contemplation of the feelings, either with regard to his own person, or to other persons, or to both. He beholds how the feelings arise ; beholds how they pass away ; beholds the arising and passing away of the feelings. ‘ Feelings are there ’ : this clear awareness is present in him, to the extent necessary for knowledge and mindfulness ; and he lives independent, unattached to anything in the world. Thus does the disciple dwell in contemplation of the feelings.

The disciple understands that the expression ‘ I feel ’ has no validity except as a conventional expression (*vohāra-vacana*) ; he understands that, in the absolute sense (*paramattha*), there are only feelings, and that there is no Ego, no person, no experiencer of the feelings.

3. Contemplation of the Mind (*cittānupassanā*)

But how does the disciple dwell in contemplation of the mind ?

There, the disciple knows the greedy mind as greedy, and the not greedy mind as not greedy ; knows the angry mind as angry, and the not angry mind as not angry ; knows the deluded mind as deluded, and the undeluded mind as undeluded. He knows the cramped mind as cramped, and the scattered mind as scattered ; knows the developed mind as developed, and the undeveloped mind as undeveloped ; knows the surpassable mind as surpassable, and the unsurpassable

mind as unsurpassable ; knows the concentrated mind as concentrated, and the unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated ; knows the freed mind as freed, and the unfreed mind as unfreed.

Citta (mind) is here used as a collective term for the *cittas*, or moments of consciousness. *Citta* being identical with *viññāṇa*, or consciousness, should not be translated by 'thought'. 'Thought' and 'thinking' correspond rather to the so-called 'verbal operations of the mind': *vitakka* (thought-conception) and *vicāra*, (discursive thinking) which belong to the *Sankhāra-kkhandha*.

Thus he dwells in contemplation of the mind, either with regard to his own person, or to other persons, or to both. He beholds how consciousness arises ; beholds how it passes away ; beholds the arising and passing away of consciousness. 'Mind is there': this clear awareness is present in him, to the extent necessary for knowledge and mindfulness ; and he lives independent, unattached to anything in the world. Thus does the disciple dwell in contemplation of the mind.

4. Contemplation of the Mind-Objects (*dhammānupassanā*)

But how does the disciple dwell in contemplation of mind-objects ?

There, the disciple dwells in contemplation of the mind-objects, namely of the 'Five Hindrances'.

THE FIVE HINDRANCES (*nīvaraṇa*)

1. He knows when there is 'Lust' (*kāmacchanda*) in him : 'In me is lust' ; knows when there is 'Anger' (*vyāpāda*) in him : 'In me is anger' ; knows when

there is 'Torpor and Sloth' (*thīna-middha*) in him: 'In me is torpor and sloth'; knows when there is 'Restlessness and Mental Worry' (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) in him: 'In me is restlessness and mental worry'; knows when there are 'Doubts' (*vicikicchā*) in him: 'In me are doubts'. He knows when these hindrances are not in him: 'In me these hindrances are not'. He knows how they come to arise; knows how, once arisen, they are overcome; knows how, once overcome, they do not rise again in the future.

For example, 'Lust' arises through unwise thinking on the agreeable and delightful. It may be suppressed by the following six methods: fixing the mind upon an idea that arouses disgust; contemplation of the loathsomeness of the body; controlling one's six senses; moderation in eating; friendship with wise and good men; right instruction. Lust and anger are for ever extinguished upon attainment of Anāgāmī-ship.—'Restlessness' is extinguished by reaching Arahantship; 'Mental Worry', by reaching Sotāpanship.

THE FIVE GROUPS OF EXISTENCE

(*khandha*)

And further: the disciple dwells in contemplation of the mind-objects, namely of the five 'Groups of Existence'. He knows, what 'Corporeality' (*rūpa*) is, how it arises, how it passes away; knows what 'Feeling' (*vedanā*) is, how it arises, how it passes away; knows what 'Perception' (*saññā*) is, how it arises, how it passes away; knows what the 'Mental Formations' (*sankhāra*) are, how they arise, how they pass away; knows what 'Consciousness' (*viññāṇa*) is, how it arises, how it passes away.

THE SENSE-BASES

(āyatana)

And further : the disciple dwells in contemplation of the mind-objects, namely of the six ' Subjective-Objective Sense-Bases '. He knows eye and visual objects, ear and sounds, nose and odours, tongue and tastes, body and bodily impressions, mind and mind-objects ; and the fetter that arises in dependence on them, he also knows. He knows how the fetter comes to arise, knows how the fetter is overcome, and how the abandoned fetter does not rise again in future.

THE SEVEN ELEMENTS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

(bojjhanga)

And further : the disciple dwells in contemplation of the mind-objects, namely of the seven ' Elements of Enlightenment '. He knows when there is in him ' Mindfulness ' (*sati*), ' Investigation of the Law ' (*dhammavicaya*), ' Energy ' (*viriya*), ' Enthusiasm ' (*pīti*), ' Tranquillity ' (*passaddhi*), ' Concentration ' (*samādhi*), and ' Equanimity ' (*upekkhā*). He knows when it is not in him, knows how it comes to arise, and how it is fully developed.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

(ariya-sacca)

And further : the disciple dwells in contemplation of the mind-objects, namely of the ' Four Noble Truths '. He knows according to reality, what Suffering is ; knows according to reality, what the Origin of suffering is ; knows according to reality, what the Extinction of suffering is ; knows according to reality, what the Path is that leads to the extinction of suffering.

Thus he dwells in contemplation of the mind-objects, either with regard to his own person, or to other persons,

or to both. He beholds how the mind-objects arise, beholds how they pass away, beholds the arising and passing away of the mind-objects. 'Mind-objects' are there: this clear awareness is present in him, to the extent necessary for knowledge and mindfulness; and he lives independent, unattached to anything in the world. Thus does the disciple dwell in contemplation of the mind-objects.

The only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering upon the right path, and the realization of Nibbāna, is these four fundamentals of mindfulness.

These four contemplations of *Satipaṭṭhāna* relate to all the five Groups of Existence, namely: 1. The contemplation of corporeality relates to *rūpakkhandha*; 2. the contemplation of feeling, to *vedanākkhandha*; 3. the contemplation of mind, to *viññāṇakkhandha*; 4. the contemplation of mind-objects, to *saññā-* and *sankhāra-kkhandha*.

For further details about *Satipaṭṭhāna* see the Commentary to that discourse, translated in *The Way of Mindfulness*, by Bhikkhu Soma (Colombo 1949).

NIBBĀNA THROUGH ĀNĀPĀNA-SATI

1' 'Watching over In- and Out-breathing' (*ānāpāna-sati*), practised and developed, brings the Four 'Fundamentals of Mindfulness' to perfection; the four fundamentals of mindfulness, practised, and developed, bring the seven 'Elements of Enlightenment' to perfection; the seven elements of enlightenment, practised and developed, bring 'Wisdom and Deliverance' to perfection.

But how does Watching over In- and Out-breathing, practised and developed, bring the Four ' Fundamentals of Mindfulness ' (*satipaṭṭhāna*) to perfection ?

I. Whenever the disciple (1) is mindfully making a long inhalation or exhalation, or (2) making a short inhalation or exhalation, or (3) is training himself to inhale or exhale whilst feeling the whole [breath-] body, or (4) whilst calming down this bodily function (i.e. the breath)—at such a time the disciple is dwelling in ' contemplation of the body ', full of energy, clearly comprehending it, mindful, after subduing worldly greed and grief. For, inhalation and exhalation I call one amongst the corporeal phenomena.

II. Whenever the disciple is training himself to inhale or exhale (1) whilst feeling rapture (*pīti*), or (2) joy (*sukha*), or (3) the mental functions (*citta-sankhāra*), or (4) whilst calming down the mental functions—at such a time he is dwelling in ' contemplation of the feelings ', full of energy, clearly comprehending them, mindful, after subduing worldly greed and grief. For, the full awareness of in- and out-breathing I call one amongst the feelings.

III. Whenever the disciple is training himself to inhale or exhale (1) whilst feeling the mind, or (2) whilst gladdening the mind, or (3) whilst concentrating the mind, or (4) whilst setting the mind free—at such a time he is dwelling in ' contemplation of the mind ', full of energy, clearly comprehending it, mindful, after subduing worldly greed and grief. For, without mindfulness and clear comprehension, I say, there is no Watching over In- and Out-breathing.

IV. Whenever the disciple is training himself to inhale or exhale whilst contemplating (1) impermanence,

or (2) the fading away of passion, or (3) extinction, or (4) detachment,—at such time he is dwelling in ‘ contemplation of the mind-objects ’, full of energy, clearly comprehending them, mindful, after subduing worldly greed and grief.

Watching over In- and Out-breathing, thus practised and developed, brings the four Fundamentals of Mindfulness to perfection.

But how do the four Fundamentals of Mindfulness, practised and developed, bring the seven ‘ Elements of Enlightenment ’ (*bojjhanga*) to full perfection ?

1. Whenever the disciple is dwelling in contemplation of body, feelings, mind and mind-objects, strenuous, clearly comprehending them, mindful, after subduing worldly greed and grief,—at such a time his mindfulness is undisturbed ; and whenever his mindfulness is present and undisturbed, at such a time he has gained and is developing the Element of Enlightenment ‘ Mindfulness ’ (*sati-sambojjhanga*) ; and thus this element of enlightenment reaches fullest perfection.

2. And whenever, whilst dwelling with mindfulness, he wisely investigates, examines and thinks over the ‘ Law ’ (*dhamma*)—at such a time he has gained and is developing the Element of Enlightenment ‘ Investigation of the Law ’ (*dhammavicaya-sambojjhanga*) ; and thus this element of enlightenment reaches fullest perfection.

3. And whenever, whilst wisely investigating, examining and thinking over the law, his energy is firm and unshaken—at such a time he has gained and is developing the Element of Enlightenment ‘ Energy ’ (*viriya-sambojjhanga*) ; and thus this element of enlightenment reaches fullest perfection.

4. And whenever in him, whilst firm in energy, arises super-sensuous rapture—at such a time he has gained and is developing the Element of Enlightenment 'Rapture' (*pīti-sambojjhanga*); and thus this element of enlightenment reaches fullest perfection.

5. And whenever, whilst enraptured in mind, his spiritual frame and his mind become tranquil—at such a time he has gained and is developing the Element of Enlightenment 'Tranquillity' (*passaddhi-sambojjhanga*); and thus this element of enlightenment reaches fullest perfection.

6. And whenever, whilst being tranquillized in his spiritual frame and happy, his mind becomes concentrated—at such a time he has gained and is developing the Element of Enlightenment 'Concentration' (*samādhi-sambojjhanga*); and thus this element of enlightenment reaches fullest perfection.

7. And whenever he looks with complete indifference on his mind thus concentrated—at such a time he has gained and is developing the Element of Enlightenment 'Equanimity' (*upekkhā-sambojjhanga*); and thus this element of enlightenment reaches fullest perfection.

The four Fundamentals of Mindfulness, thus practised and developed, bring the seven elements of enlightenment to full perfection.

But how do the seven elements of enlightenment, practised and developed, bring Wisdom and Deliverance (*vijjā-vimutti*) to full perfection?

There, the disciple is developing the elements of enlightenment: Mindfulness, Investigation of the Law, Energy, Rapture, Tranquillity, Concentration and Equanimity, based on detachment, on absence of desire, on extinction and renunciation.

Thus practised and developed, do the seven elements of enlightenment bring wisdom and deliverance to full perfection.

¹Just as the elephant hunter drives a huge stake into the ground and chains the wild elephant to it by the neck, in order to drive out of him his wonted forest ways and wishes, his forest unruliness, obstinacy and violence, and to accustom him to the environment of the village, and to teach him such good behaviour as is required amongst men :—in like manner also should the noble disciple fix his mind firmly to these four Fundamentals of Mindfulness, so that he may drive out of himself his wonted worldly ways and wishes, his wonted worldly unruliness, obstinacy and violence, and win to the True, and realize Nibbāna.

EIGHTH STEP

RIGHT CONCENTRATION

(*Sammā-samādhī*)

¹ What, now, is Right Concentration ?

ITS DEFINITION

Having the mind fixed to a single object (*citt-ekaggatā*, lit. 'One-pointedness of mind') :—this is concentration.

'Right Concentration' (*sammā-samādhī*), in its widest sense, is that kind of mental concentration which is present in every wholesome state of consciousness (*kusala-citta*), and hence is accompanied by at least Right Thought (2nd step), Right Effort (6th step) and Right Mindfulness (7th step). 'Wrong Concentration' is present in unwholesome states of consciousness, and hence is only possible in the sensuous, not in a higher sphere. *Samādhī*, used alone, always stands in the Suttas for *sammā-samādhī*, or Right Concentration.

ITS OBJECTS

The four 'Fundamentals of Mindfulness' (7th step) :—these are the objects of concentration.

ITS REQUISITES

The four 'Great Efforts' (6th step) :—these are the requisites for concentration.

ITS DEVELOPMENT

The practising, developing and cultivating of these things :—this is the development (*bhāvanā*) of concentration.

Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhī*) has two degrees of development : 1. ' Neighbourhood Concentration ' (*upacāra-samādhī*), which approaches the first absorption without, however, attaining it ; 2. ' Attainment Concentration ' (*appanāsamādhī*), which is the concentration present in the four Absorptions (*jhāna*). These Absorptions are mental states beyond the reach of the fivefold sense-activity, attainable only in solitude and by unremitting perseverance in the practice of concentration. In these states all activity of the five senses is suspended. No visual or audible impressions do arise at such a time, no bodily feeling is felt. But, although all outer sense-impressions have ceased, yet the mind remains active, perfectly alert, fully awake.

The attainment of these Absorptions, however, is not a requisite for the realization of the four Supermundane Paths of Holiness ; and neither Neighbourhood-Concentration nor Attainment-Concentration, as such, possess the power of conferring entry to the four Supermundane Paths ; hence, they really have no power to free one permanently from evil things. The realization of the Four Supermundane Paths is only possible at the moment of deep ' Insight ' (*vipassanā*) into the Impermanency (*aniccatā*), Miserable Nature (*dukkhatā*) and Impersonality (*anattatā*) of this whole phenomenal process of existence. This ' Insight ', again, is attainable only during Neighbourhood-Concentration, not during Attainment-Concentration.

He who has realized one or other of the Four Supermundane Paths without ever having attained the Absorptions, is called *Sukkha-vipassaka*, or *Suddhavi-passanā-yānika*, i.e. ' one who has taken merely Insight (*vipassanā*) as his vehicle '. He, however, who, after cultivating the Absorptions, has reached one of the Supermundane Paths, is called *Samatha-Yānika*, or ' one who has taken Tranquillity (*samatha*) as his vehicle (*yāna*) '.

About *samatha* and *vipassanā* s. *Fund. IV.* and *B. Dict.*

THE FOUR ABSORPTIONS

(jhāna)

¹ Detached from sensual objects, detached from evil things, the disciple enters into the first Absorption, which is accompanied by Thought Conception and Discursive Thinking, is born of detachment, and filled with Rapture and Happiness.

This is the first of the Absorptions belonging to the Fine-Material Sphere (*rūpāvacarajjhāna*). It is attained when, through the strength of concentration, the fivefold sense activity is temporarily suspended, and the five Hindrances are likewise eliminated.

See *B. Dict.* : *jhāna*, *kaṣiṇa*, *nimitta*, *samādhi*.

² This first Absorption is free from five things, and five things are present. When the disciple enters the first Absorption, there have vanished (the five Hindrances): Lust, Ill-Will, Torpor and Sloth, Restlessness and Mental Worry, Doubts; and there are present: Thought Conception (*vitakka*), Discursive Thinking (*vicāra*), Rapture (*pīti*), Happiness (*sukha*), and Concentration (*citt'ekaggatā* = *samādhi*).

These five mental factors present in the first Absorption are called Factors (or Constituents) of Absorption (*jhānanga*).—*Vitakka* (initial formation of an abstract thought) and *vicāra* (discursive thinking, rumination) are called 'verbal functions' (*vacī-sankhāra*) of the mind; hence they are something secondary compared with consciousness. In *Visuddhi-Magga*, *vitakka* is compared with the taking hold of a pot, and *vicāra* with the wiping of it. In the first Absorption both of them are present only in a weak degree, and are entirely absent in the following Absorptions.

And further: after the subsiding of Thought-Conception and Discursive Thinking, and by the gaining

of inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he enters into a state free from Thought-Conception and Discursive Thinking, the second Absorption, which is born of Concentration (*samādhi*), and filled with Rapture (*pīti*) and Happiness (*sukha*).

In the second Absorption, there are three Factors of Absorption : Rapture, Happiness, and Concentration.

And further : after the fading away of Rapture, he dwells in equanimity, mindful, with clear awareness ; and he experiences in his own person that feeling of which the Noble Ones say : ‘ Happy lives he who is equanimous and mindful ’—thus he enters the third Absorption.

In the third Absorption there are two Factors of Absorption : equanimous Happiness (*upekkhā-sukha*) and Concentration (*citt’ekaggatā*).

And further : after the giving up of pleasure and pain, and through the disappearance of previous joy and grief, he enters into a state beyond pleasure and pain, into the fourth Absorption, which is purified by equanimity and mindfulness.

In the fourth Absorption there are two Factors of Absorption : Concentration and Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

In *Visuddhi-Magga* forty subjects of meditation (*kammatthāna*) are enumerated and treated in detail. By their successful practice the following Absorptions may be attained :

All four Absorptions : through Mindfulness on Breathing (see *Vis.M.VIII*, 3) ; the ten Kasina-exercises (*Vis.M. IV*, *V*, and *B. Dict.*) ; the contemplation of Equanimity (*upekkhā* ; being the practice of the fourth Brahma-vihāra ; *Vis.M. IX*, 4).

The first three Absorptions : through the development of Loving-Kindness (*mettā*), Compassion (*karuṇā*)

and Sympathetic Joy (*muditā*), being the practice of the first three Brahma-vihāras ; *Vis.M. IX*, 1-3) ;

The first Absorption : through the ten Contemplations of Impurity (*asubha-bhāvanā* ; i.e. the Cemetery Contemplations, which are ten according to the enumeration in *Vis.M. VI*) ; the Contemplation of the Body (i.e. the 32 parts of the body ; *Vis.M. VIII*, 2) ;

' Neighbourhood-Concentration ' (*upacāra-samādhi*) : through the Recollections on Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, on Morality, Liberality, Heavenly Beings, Peace (= Nibbāna) and Death (*Vis.M. VI, VII*) ; the Contemplation on the Loathsomeness of Food (*Vis.M. XI*, 1) ; the Analysis of the Four Elements (*Vis.M. IX*, 2) ;

The four Immaterial Absorptions (*arūpa-jjhāna* or *ārūppa*), which are based on the fourth Absorption, are produced by meditating on their respective objects from which they derive their names : Sphere of Unbounded Space, of Unbounded Consciousness, of Nothingness, and of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception.

The entire subject of Concentration and meditation is treated in *Vis.M. III-XIII* ; see also *Fund. IV*.

¹Develop your concentration : for he who has concentration, understands things according to their reality. And what are these things ? The arising and passing away of corporeality, of feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness.

²Thus, these five Groups of Existence must be wisely penetrated ; Delusion and Craving must be wisely abandoned ; Tranquillity (*samatha*) and Insight (*vipassanā*) must be wisely developed.

³This is the Middle Path which the Perfect One has discovered, which makes one both to see and to know, and which leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

⁴And following upon this path, you will put an end to suffering.

GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE EIGHTFOLD PATH IN THE PROGRESS OF THE DISCIPLE

• CONFIDENCE AND RIGHT-THOUGHT (SECOND STEP)

¹Suppose, a householder, or his son, or someone reborn in any family, hears the law ; and after hearing the law he is filled with confidence in the Perfect One. And filled with this confidence, he thinks : ' Full of hindrances is household life, a refuse heap ; but pilgrim life is like the open air. Not easy is it, when one lives at home, to fulfil in all points the rules of the holy life. How, if now I were to cut off hair and beard, put on the yellow robe and go forth from home to the homeless life ? ' And in a short time, having given up his possessions, great or little, having forsaken a large or small circle of relations, he cuts off hair and beard, puts on the yellow robe, and goes forth from home to the homeless life.

MORALITY (THIRD, FOURTH, FIFTH STEP)

Having thus left the world, he fulfils the rules of the monks. He avoids the killing of living beings and abstains from it. Without stick or sword, conscientious, full of sympathy, he is anxious for the welfare of all living beings.—He avoids stealing, and abstains from taking what is not given to him. Only what is given to him he takes, waiting till it is given ; and he lives with a heart honest and pure.—He avoids unchastity, living chaste, resigned, and keeping aloof from sexual intercourse, the vulgar.—He avoids lying and abstains from

it. He speaks the truth, is devoted to the truth, reliable, worthy of confidence, no deceiver of men.—He avoids tale-bearing and abstains from it. What he has heard here, he does not repeat there, so as to cause dissension there ; and what he has heard there, he does not repeat here, so as to cause dissension here. Thus he unites those that are divided, and those that are united he encourages ; concord gladdens him, he delights and rejoices in concord ; and it is concord that he spreads by his words.—He avoids harsh language and abstains from it. He speaks such words as are gentle, soothing to the ear, loving, as go to the heart, and are courteous, friendly, and agreeable to many.—He avoids vain talk and abstains from it. He speaks at the right time, in accordance with facts, speaks what is useful, speaks about the law and the discipline ; his speech is like a treasure, uttered at the right moment, accompanied by arguments, moderate and full of sense.

He takes food only at one time of the day (forenoon), abstains from food in the evening, does not eat at improper times. He keeps aloof from dance, song, music and the visiting of shows ; rejects flowers, perfumes, ointment, as well as every kind of adornment and embellishment. High and gorgeous beds he does not use. Gold and silver he does not accept.—He does not accept raw corn and meat, women and girls, male and female slaves, or goats, sheep, fowls, pigs, elephants, cows or horses, or land and goods. He does not go on errands and do the duties of a messenger. He eschews buying and selling things. He has nothing to do with false measures, metals and weights. He avoids the crooked ways of bribery, deception and fraud. He has no part in stabbing, beating, chaining, attacking, plundering and oppressing.

He contents himself with the robe that protects his body, and with the alms bowl by means of which he keeps himself alive. Wherever he goes, he is provided with these two things ; just as a winged bird in flying carries his wings along with him. By fulfilling this noble Domain of Morality (*sīla-kkhandā*) he feels in his heart an irreproachable happiness.

CONTROL OF THE SENSES (SIXTH STEP)

Now, in perceiving a form with the eye—a sound with the ear—an odour with the nose—a taste with the tongue—an impression with the body—an object with the mind, he cleaves neither to the whole, nor to its details. And he tries to ward off that which, by being unguarded in his senses, might give rise to evil and unwholesome states, to greed and sorrow ; he watches over his senses, keeps his senses under control. By practising this noble ‘ Control of the Senses ’ (*indriya-samvara*) he feels in his heart an unblemished happiness.

MINDFULNESS AND CLEAR COMPREHENSION (SEVENTH STEP)

He is mindful and acts with clear comprehension when going and coming ; when looking forward and backward ; when bending and stretching his body ; when wearing his robes and alms-bowl, when eating, drinking, chewing and tasting ; when discharging excrement and urine ; when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep and awakening ; when speaking and keeping silent.

Now being equipped with this lofty ‘ Morality ’ (*sīla*), equipped with this noble ‘ Control of the Senses ’ (*indriya-samvara*), and filled with this noble ‘ Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension ’ (*sati-sampajañña*), he

chooses a secluded dwelling in the forest, at the foot of a tree, on a mountain, in a cleft, in a rock cave, on a burial ground, on a woody table-land, in the open air, or on a heap of straw. Having returned from his alms-round, after the meal, he seats himself with legs crossed, body erect, with mindfulness fixed before him.

ABSENCE OF THE FIVE HINDRANCES

(*nīvaraṇa*)

He has cast away 'Lust' (*kāmacchanda*); he dwells with a heart free from lust; from lust he cleanses his heart.

He has cast away 'Ill-will' (*vyāpāda*); he dwells with a heart free from ill-will; cherishing love and compassion toward all living beings, he cleanses his heart from ill-will.

He has cast away 'Torpor and Sloth' (*thīnamiddha*); he dwells free from torpor and sloth; loving the light, with watchful mind, with clear comprehension, he cleanses his mind from torpor and sloth.

He has cast away 'Restlessness and Mental Worry' (*uddhacca-kukkucca*); dwelling with mind undisturbed, with heart full of peace, he cleanses his mind from restlessness and mental worry.

He has cast away 'Doubt' (*vicikicchā*); dwelling free from doubt, full of confidence in the good, he cleanses his heart from doubt.

THE ABSORPTIONS (EIGHTH STEP)

He has put aside these five 'Hindrances' (*nīvaraṇa*) and come to know the paralysing corruptions of the mind. And far from sensual impressions, far from evil things, he enters into the Four Absorptions (*jhāna*).

‘ INSIGHT ’
(*vipassanā*)
(FIRST STEP)

¹ But whatsoever there is of corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness:—all these phenomena he regards as ‘ impermanent ’ (*anicca*), ‘ subject to pain ’ (*dukkha*), as infirm, as an ulcer, a thorn, a misery, a burden, an enemy, a disturbance, as empty and ‘ void of an Ego ’ (*anattā*); and turning away from these things, he directs his mind towards the Abiding, thus: ‘ This, truly, is Peace, this is the Highest, namely the end of all Karmaformation, the forsaking of every substratum of rebirth, the fading away of craving, detachment, extinction, Nibbāna ’. And in this state he reaches the ‘ cessation of passions ’ (*āsavaakkhaya*).

NIBBĀNA

² And his heart becomes free from sensual passion (*kām’āsava*), free from the passion for existence (*bhav’āsava*), free from the passion of ignorance (*avijj’-āsava*). ‘ Freed am I ! ’ this knowledge arises in the liberated one ; and he knows: ‘ Exhausted is rebirth, fulfilled the Holy Life ; what was to be done, has been done ; naught remains more for this world to do ’.

³ ‘ For ever am I liberated,
This is the last time that I’m born,
No new existence waits for me ’.

⁴ This is, indeed, the highest, holiest wisdom: to know that all suffering has passed away.

This is, indeed, the highest, holiest peace: appeasement of greed, hatred and delusion.

THE SILENT THINKER

'I am' is a vain thought ; 'I am not' is a vain thought ; 'I shall be' is a vain thought ; 'I shall not be' is a vain thought. Vain thoughts are a sickness, an ulcer, a thorn. But after overcoming all vain thoughts, one is called 'a silent thinker'. And the thinker, the Silent One, does no more arise, no more pass away, no more tremble, no more desire. For there is nothing in him whereby he should arise again. And as he arises no more, how should he grow old again ? And as he grows old no more, how should he die again ? And as he dies no more, how should he tremble ? And as he trembles no more, how should he have desire ?

THE TRUE GOAL

¹Hence, the purpose of the Holy Life does not consist in acquiring alms, honour, or fame, nor in gaining morality, concentration, or the eye of knowledge. That unshakable deliverance of the heart : that, indeed, is the object of the Holy Life, that is its essence, that is its goal.

²And those, who formerly, in the past, were Holy and Enlightened Ones, those Blessed Ones also have pointed out to their disciples this self-same goal, as has been pointed out by me to my disciples. And those, who afterwards, in the future, will be Holy and Enlightened Ones, those Blessed Ones also will point out to their disciples this self-same goal, as has been pointed out by me to my disciples.

³However, disciples, it may be that (after my passing away) you might think : 'Gone is the doctrine of our Master. We have no Master more'. But thus you should not think ; for the 'Law' (*dhamma*) and the

‘ Discipline ’ (*vinaya*), which I have taught you, will after my death be your master.

‘ The Law be your isle,
The law be your refuge !
Do not look for any other refuge ! ’

Therefore, disciples, the doctrines, which I taught you after having penetrated them myself, you should well preserve, well guard, so that this Holy Life may take its course and continue for ages, for the weal and welfare of the many, as a consolation to the world, for the happiness, weal and welfare of heavenly beings and men.

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INDEX OF PALI TERMS

- Abhiññā 67 f.
 adosa 31
 akusala 30
 alobha 30
 amoha 30
 anāgāmī 35, 71
 ānāpānasati 61; as road to Nir-
 vana 73 ff.; produces 4; jhā-
 nas 81
 anattā 11 f., 38, 87
 āneñj'ābhisankhāra 43
 anicca 38, 87
 anupādisesa-nibbāna 23
 anurakkhaṇa-ppadhāna 59
 āpo-dhātu 6
 appanā-samādhi 79
 arahat 24, 36
 ariya-puggala 35 f.
 ariya-sacca 72
 arūpa-jhāna 82; -rāga 35; arūp'-
 āvacara 43
 asankhata-dhamma 38
 āsava 87; -kkhaya 68, 87
 asubha-bhāvanā 82
 attā, see anattā
 avihimsā-sankappa 48
 avijjā 20; as saṃyojana 35; as
 obstruction 44; as link of the
 Paṭicca-Samuppāda 42;
 avijj'āsava 87
 avyāpāda-sankappa 48
 āyatana 72, 46

 Bhava, as link of the Paṭicca-
 Samuppāda 42, 46; -āsava 87;
 -diṭṭhi 16, 33; -taṇhā 42, 46;
 kamma-bhava 46; uppatti-
 bhava 46
 bhāvanā 59, 78; -ppadhāna 58
 bojjhanga 72, 75 f.; produced by
 Satipaṭṭhāna 75 f.
 brahma-vihāra 81 f.
 buddha XI f., 38

 Cetanā 8; as kamma 19; citta-
 sankhāra 43; citt'ānupassanā
 69 f.; citt'ekaggatā 78

 Dhamma, as doctrine XII; as
 a refuge XIII; as phenomena
 38; -vicaya-sambojjhanga 75;
 dhamm'ānupassanā 70 ff.
 dhātu 5 ff.
 dibba-cakkhu 68; -sota 67
 dosa 30
 dukkha 1, 14, 87

 Iddhi-pāda 68; -vidha 67
 indriya-saṃvara 85

 Jarā-maraṇa 46
 jāti 46
 jhāna 79 f.; jhān-anga 80
 jīva 42

 Kāma-cchanda 70; -loka 35;
 -rāga-saṃyojana 35; -taṇhā
 16; kām'āsava 87
 kamma = Śkr. karma 19 ff.;
 -bhava 46; -patha 30 f.; kāya-
 k. 30 f.
 kammatṭhāna 81
 karuṇā 81
 kaṣiṇa 81
 kāya-kamma 29 f.; -sankhāra 62;
 kāy'ānupassanā 61 ff.

khandha 4 ff., 71 ; -parinibbāna
23

kilesa-parinibbāna 23

kusala 30 f. ; -kamma-patha 31

Lobha 30

lokiya 68 ; -abhiñña 67 f. ; -sam-
mā-ājīva 55 ; -sammā-diṭṭhi 37 ;
-sammā-kammanta 53 ; -sam-
mā-sankappa 48 ; -sammāvācā
51

lokuttara 37, 68 ; -abhiñña 68 ;
-sammā-ājīva 56 ; -sammā-
diṭṭhi 37 ; -sammā-kammanta
54 ; -sammā-sankappa 48 ;
-sammā-vācā 52

Magga, aṭṭhangika- 27 f. ; sotā-
patti-m., etc. 35 f.

mahā-bhūta 5

māna 35

mano-kamma 30

mettā 81

moha 30

muditā 82

Nāma-rūpa 42, 46

nekkhamma-sankappa 48

nibbāna, Skr. nirvāṇa 23 ;
through ānāpānasati 73

nīvaraṇa 86

Pahāna-ppadhāna 57

pañña 26

paramattha 69

parassa-ceto-pariya-ñāṇa 67

passaddhi 76

paṭhavī-dhātu 5 f.

paṭicca-samuppāda 45 f.

paṭikkūla-sañña 64

phala : sotāpatti-ph., etc. 36

phassa 42, 46

pīti : in ānāpānasati 76 ; as boj-
jhaṅga 72 ; as jhāna-factor 80

pubbe-nivāsānussati-ñāṇa 68
puthujjana 37

Rūpa-kkhandha 5 ff. ; -loka 35 ;
-rāga 35 ; rūp'āvacara 43, 80

Sakadāgāmī 35

sakkāya-diṭṭhi 33, 35

saḷ-āyatana 46

samādhi 27 ; -sambojjhaṅga 76 ;
appanā-s. 79 ; upacāra-s. 79

samatha 82 ; -bhāvanā 62 ; -yā-
naka 79

sammā-ājīva 55 ff. ; -diṭṭhi 29 ff. ;
-kammanta 53 ff. ; -samādhi 78 ;
-sankappa 48 ; -sati 61 ; -vācā
50 ff. ; -vāyāma 57

saṁsāra 14

saṁvara-ppadhāna 57

saṁyojana 35

sangha XIII

sankhāra, as khandha 10 ; as
link of the Paṭ.-Sam. 42-46 ;
as sankhata-dhamma 38

sankhata-dhamma 38

sañña 8

sassata-diṭṭhi 16, 33

sati, -paṭṭhāna 61 ff. ; -samboj-
jhaṅga 72, 75 ; -sampajañña 63

sa-upādisesa-nibbāna 23

sīla 26 ; pañca-s. XIV

sīlabbata-parāmāsa 35

sotāpanna, sotāpatti 35 f.

suddha-vipassanā-yānika 79

sukha : in ānāpānasati 74 ; as
jhāna-factor 80

sukkha-vipassaka 79

suñña 12

Taṇhā 16, 20, 22 f. ; as link of
Paṭ.-Sam. 42, 46

tejo-dhātu 6 f.

thīna-middha 86

ti-lakkhaṇa 31

ti-ratana XIII

ti-saraṇa XIII

Uccheda-diṭṭhi 16, 33

uddhacca-saṃyojana 35; -kukkucca(nīvaraṇa)

upacāra-samādhī 79

upekkhā: as brahma-vihāra 81; -sambojjhanga 76; -sukha 81

uppatti-bhava 20, 46

Vacī-kamma 29; -sankhāra

vāyo-dhātu 7

vedanā: as khandha 8; as link of Paṭ.-Sam. 42, 46; vedan' ānupassanā 68 f.

vibhava-diṭṭhi 16, 33; -taṇhā 16

vicāra; in sankhāra-khandha 70; as jhāna-factor 80

vicikicchā: as nīvaraṇa 71; as saṃyojana 35

vinaya 89

vijjā-vimutti 76

viññāṇa = citta 70; as link of Paṭ.-Sam. 42 ff.; -kkhandha 9 f.

vipassanā 62

virīya-sambojjhanga 59

vitakka: in sankhāra-kkhandha 80; as jhāna-factor 80

vohāra 69

vyāpāda: as nīvaraṇa 70 f.; as saṃyojana 35

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE, by Her Serene Highness Princess Poon Pismai Diskul, President of The World Fellowship of Buddhists	
INTRODUCTION.....	IV
I. CARDINAL FEATURES OF BUDDHIST THOUGHT.....	1
The Realm of Change	1
Life, Living and Empiricism	5
II. THE NATURE OF NIRVANA.....	14
III. THEORIES REGARDING NIRVANA.....	25
Trance	25
Ecstasy	27
Regression	28
The Practical Solution	36
IV. ZEN ENLIGHTENMENT.....	37
Electroencephalographic Studies	38
Case Studies of the Satori Experience	40
Satori and Conversion	44
Perceptual Alteration	50
V. THE OCCURRENCE OF ARAHANTS.....	59
VI. AESTHETIC AND MORAL CRITICISMS.....	66
Apathy and Negation	66
A Selfish Goal	73
Escapist	77
VII. THE MOTIVE AND THE MEANS	80
VIII. THE BUDDHIST INSTITUTION	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	92

P R E F A C E

AS heirs of a great religious and cultural heritage covering 2,500 years of history, the Buddhists of today are faced with the challenge of a new age. In the unending quest for human fulfilment men continue to look to the mystic, the supernatural, the occult and the divine. But the new age appears as an age of reason, intellect, pragmatism and technology. Even the age-old traditions of metaphysics and philosophy appear to wither before the onslaught of science and psychology. Where once there were forests now there are farms; where once farms, now cities; where once silence, now noise. Ethics, morals and traditions, once the guide lines of human values, are now tottering and groping for new bases, new foundations other than the dogmas of antiquity, the dictates of our ancestors.

The penetrating and stirring insights of the Lord Buddha have filtered through the paths of history. Through these centuries the Buddha Dhamma has often taken on new meanings and new interpretations depending on the cultural circumstances and emotional wishes of the people who call themselves "Buddhists". True, Buddhism as the impersonal Truth is universal, transcending the bounds of race, nation or culture. But as a social, personal organization or movement the true and valuable insights of the Enlightened One sometimes were all but lost, buried in the maze of metaphysics, ritual, folklore and mythology.

We are proud that Dr. Burns' present writing is one of unique quality. It traces Buddhism back to its earliest known teachings and clearly explains them impartially, as free from cultural and personal bias as possible. It then jumps across

2,500 years of history and presents the Dhamma in its uncoloured form to the modern world. In an era where scepticism seems paramount, even the most critical reader will surely be impressed not only with the wisdom of Buddhism but also with its reasonable and practical application to the lives of all of us today.

Princess Poon Pismai Diskul

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INTRODUCTION

IT has been said, and probably correctly, that Buddhism is the least understood and most misunderstood of all major religions. To whatever extent this is true of Buddhist doctrine in general, it is doubly true of the goal toward which that doctrine is directed, Nirvāna.

Nirvāna has been variously explained as Oneness with God, Cosmic Consciousness, deep trance, self-annihilation, Pure Being, nonexistence, regression to intrauterine life and a psychedelic ecstasy. Yet none of these explanations agree with the accounts given by the Buddha and the others alleged to have realized it. Not only are we confronted with the problem of what Nirvāna is, but arising from this consideration are a number of secondary but important questions such as: Is Nirvāna really attainable, and if so, is it worth the effort? Just how is it attained, and has anyone in recent history done so? Must we have faith to realize what is yet unknown to us? Is it not a selfish goal or an escapist one? These concerns and others are discussed in detail.

In this writing I have used the Sanskrit word “Nirvāna” instead of its Pāli equivalent “Nibbāna” because the former is now widely known in the West and familiar to both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. For the same reason I have used the Sanskrit “karma” in preference to the Pāli “kamma”, but the Pāli “Dhamma” is used instead of the Sanskrit “Dharma”. However, the explanation of Buddhism presented in this writing is based upon the early Theravāda (Hinayāna) teachings, and unless otherwise indicated all of the references and quotations are attributed directly to the Buddha and his disciples as quoted in the Suttas and Vinaya of the Pāli

scriptures. The internal diversity of Mahāyāna Buddhism prohibits any all-inclusive statements as to the similarities and dissimilarities between the two schools regarding their respective views of Nirvāna. But in general it can be said that the Mahāyāna approach is heavily based upon dialectic, metaphysics and mysticism and hence contrasts sharply with the Theravādin experiential approach as discussed in the following pages.

Chapter IV concerns satori, the enlightenment of Zen Buddhism. The relationship between satori and Nirvāna is discussed as well as the relationship of satori to LSD experiences, Christian conversions and other psychological phenomena.

The references to Pāli scriptures, which follow the quotations and are listed in the bibliography, are numbered in accordance with the volumes of the Pāli Text Society, London. However, not all translations are from this source.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Ven. Khantipālo of Wat Bovoranives, Bangkok; The Ven. Nāgasena of Wat Benjamabopit, Bangkok; The Ven. Khemānando of Wat Pleng, Dhonburi, Thailand and to Mr. John Blofeld, all of whom examined the original text of this writing and offered valuable suggestions for its improvement.

Douglas M. Burns

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I. CARDINAL FEATURES OF BUDDHIST THOUGHT

The Realm of Change

TO understand the word “Nirvāna” one must be acquainted with the other major tenets of Buddhism. For on a conceptual level (but not on an experiential level) Nirvāna is an important part of a well-integrated philosophical system. Thus to begin our discussion of Nirvāna let us first speak of its antithesis, *saṃsāra*, the so-called “world of becoming”. In Buddhism the word “*saṃsāra*” designates the entire universe of physical and psychological existence — time, space, matter, thought, emotion, volition, perception, karma, etc.

The Buddhist version of the beginning of existence is unique among the world’s religions. For it teaches that there is no discernible beginning; there never was a Primal Cause which at a given instant in eternity produced or began to produce the universe. Rather the Buddha taught that every object and condition is the result of other objects and conditions which preceded it; and these in turn are the results of still earlier ones, and so on back into the beginningless past. We live in a world governed by impersonal laws of cause and effect; so it has been throughout all eternity, and so shall it be into the unending future. But while *saṃsāra* may endure forever, not one of its components can do the same. Accompanying the Buddhist doctrine of cause and effect is the equally important teaching of *anicca* or impermanence. Every living being; every thought, mood and feeling; every hill, mountain and river is a temporary phenomenon which in time will give way to new conditions, which it has helped to create. The universe then is eternally dynamic,

a never-ending process of interacting and interdependent forces and factors no one of which is eternal, static, immortal, self-formed or self-willed. Within *saṃsāra* it is only the law of change which does not change. The earth and sun themselves will in the course of time perish and be no more, but the Buddha further taught that as old earth-sun systems die out new ones evolve and come into being.¹

But cosmology is a relatively insignificant facet of the Dhamma (the teaching of the Buddha). The primary significance of the eternal principles, change and cause and effect, is the way they relate to the process of human existence; to the hopes, fears, sorrows and joys which give meaning and purpose to the lives of all conscious beings. This brings us to another important feature of *saṃsāra* — i.e., *anattā* or soullessness. The *anattā* doctrine states that all thought, emotion, memory, sensation, perception, and all other forms of our consciousness are temporary, dynamic and interdependent. Without such mental states the notion of oneself can have no meaning, and yet there is not one of these states which alone can be called one's true self, "the real I". Oneself is the composite of all of these, and of no place within these dynamic aggregates does one find some unchanging essence or other stable entity that can be designated as a soul or immutable being.

Buddhism does not deny the existence of the personality; it only states that the personality is compounded and dynamic — a process rather than an entity. Our moods, thoughts, expectations and emotions change from day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute. Is oneself at the age of two the same self one finds 10 years later at the age of 12? And is one's 12-year-old self the same person as the 20-year-old self or the 40 or 60-year-old selves? Thus from the Buddhist viewpoint, it

is more accurate to say that the two-year-old is a psycho-physical phenomenon which in the course of time will be modified by its interactions with other phenomena as well as the interactions of its own internal components. This evolution will result in the respective personalities of ages 12, 20, 40 and so forth.

When asked “Who, Lord, is it who feels?” the Buddha replied:

“It is not a fit question. I am not saying (someone) feels. If I were saying so, the question would be a fit one. But I am not saying that. If you were to ask thus: ‘Conditioned now by what, Lord, is feeling?’ this were a fit question. And the fit answer would be: ‘Feeling is conditioned by (sense) contact.’ ”

— *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* II, 13. (XII, 2; 12).

And again he is quoted:

“He who does the deed and he who experiences (its result) are the same: This, Brahmin, is one extreme. He who does the deed is not the same as he who experiences: This, Brahmin, is the other extreme. The Buddha, not approaching either of these extremes, teaches a middle doctrine.”

— *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* II, 76. (XII, 5; 46)

The Dhamma teaches that mind and body are inter-dependent. Neither can come about or endure without the other.² When the body dies the mental states which preceded death become the causes of new mental conditions that occur with the birth of a new personality. This is the Buddhist concept of postmortem survival and is termed “rebirth”.

Those psychological factors preceding death which determine the time, place and form of the new birth are known as “*karma*” (or *kamma* in Pāli).

However, karma (*kamma-vipāka*)* is not confined to the process of rebirth. Rather it is an ever-present principle of psychological cause and effect, and it can be explained by saying that each state of mind is a condition which becomes the cause of other states of mind that will arise in the future. Karma may be classified as wholesome, unwholesome and neutral (*avyākata*) which means that a given mental state is of such a nature that its results will be either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral (*adukkha-m-asukha*) respectively. Examples of unwholesome karma are greed and hatred, while wholesome karma is seen in compassion and kindness.³

Because one’s karma is complex and must act inter-dependently with other aspects of saṃsāra, some of its results will be immediate, while others will be delayed for days, months or years. Or in some cases karma is rendered inoperative by other portions of the karma of that same personality and thus produces no effect. Thus Buddhism teaches that each man is the product of what he has done or thought in the past, and his present thoughts and actions will determine the future.³ Though karma is often explained in an ethical context, it must not be confused with social mores or other cultural standards of good and evil, for it operates independently of these. Also it should not be assumed that karma accounts for all pleasant and unpleasant ex-

* In proper Pali usage *kamma* refers only to volitional actions, i.e., causes, while the effects of such actions are termed *vipāka*. However, in Hindu and recent popular Buddhist writings *karma* has widely come to mean the whole universal law of cause and effect. Thus I have used the word “*karma*” in instances where *vipāka* or *karma-vipāka* would technically be correct.

periences. In addition to one's karma, factors external to oneself act upon personality with pleasurable and displeasurable consequences.⁴

Buddhism uses the word "rebirth" to distinguish its position from the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation via an immortal soul. The distinction between the two religious teachings is best illustrated in terms of an analogy. To understand the Hindu position one may imagine a row of various kinds of containers such as a drinking glass, a cup, a bowl, a pot, etc. One takes a marble and deposits it in the first container; then lifts it out and puts it in the second and so on down to the end of the row. The marble represents the soul and the containers the various bodies successively inhabited by the soul. Though each container is different, the marble is essentially unchanged throughout the entire process. To contrast the Buddhist view, imagine that one lights a match and then with the match lights a candle at the same time extinguishing the match. Then with the candle one lights a Coleman lantern (pressure lantern) and extinguishes the candle. Now we ask the question: Is the flame which once burned in the match the same flame now burning in the lantern? One can answer the question either "yes" or "no", both replies being equally appropriate.

While the child is not the same as the adult, the food the child eats, the values he incorporates and the education he receives will strongly determine the nature of his adult existence. And similarly for successive births.

Life, Living and Empiricism

The above paragraphs briefly describe the Buddhist world view; that is, the conceptual or theoretical framework in which Buddhism has traditionally explained samsāra.

In addition there is the empirical, experiential approach to samsāra as explained in the following paragraphs. This latter approach is actually the more important, as it transcends any need for faith, dogma and theory. It is possible to explain Buddhism from either an exclusively conceptual, theoretical approach or from an exclusively experiential one. To give a complete picture, both should be mentioned. It is said that one who pursues Buddhist mental development to its maximum possible degree can have experiential certainty of the theoretical concepts.

Buddhism begins its understanding of samsāra on a strictly empirical basis — i.e., one's immediate conscious experience. Direct experience is the only absolute certainty of which man is capable, and whatever lies beyond experience can only be inferred with varying degrees of probability. For example, no matter how strongly one may believe in God (be it the Moslem Allah, the Hindu Brahma or the Christian Jehovah) one does not have complete certainty that that god exists. But the one thing of which the believer can be sure is that he believes; that is, he experiences the state of mind known as believing. Likewise a scientist may formulate a theory about the structure of a certain molecule. Since he has never seen this molecule (or any molecule), the validity of his theory is a matter of probability derived from inductive reasoning. The real certainty which the scientist has is first the existence of his *idea* or *belief* as to the molecular structure and second the existence of the memories of the facts and observations (which he assumes to be correct) that led to his theory. Or finally any given sensory experience may be either a dream, hallucination, illusion or an actual physical reality, but the one thing of which the recipient can be certain is the conscious experience itself. Or as expressed in the Buddha's own words:

“What, brethren, is everything? The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and touch, the mind and objects of mind. This, brethren, is called everything. Whoso, brethren, should say; ‘Rejecting this everything, I will proclaim another everything,’ — it would be mere talk on his part, and when questioned he could not make good his boast, and further would come to an ill pass. Why so? Because, brethren, it would be beyond his scope to do so.”

Samyutta-Nikāya IV, 15. (xxxv 3; 23).

From this it should not be assumed that Buddhism denies the reality of physical existence apart from human awareness. For such is not the case. Nor does the Dhamma state that consciousness is some sort of metaphysical absolute upon which all else is founded. On the contrary, the Buddha clearly stated that human consciousness is dependent upon a physical substrate, i.e., a body.⁵ Furthermore, while it is true that memory, emotion, sensation and thought cannot exist without consciousness; it is equally true that consciousness cannot exist without at least one of these other four (i.e., memory, etc.). To have consciousness one must be conscious *of* something. Pure consciousness is not to be found.⁶ In other words consciousness is an interdependent phenomenon, as are all other aspects of samsāra.

However, the most important aspect of conscious existence, the most significant thing in life, is that we have feelings both pleasant and unpleasant. The human mind is far more than a computer which gathers and analyzes information. From the dim awareness of an insect, fish or reptile to the most highly complex and sensitive realizations of humanity, one feature alone is paramount; that is, the pursuit of happiness, pleasure and enjoyment and conversely the avoidance of

pain, sorrow, frustration and fear. Without such feelings there would be no such thing as value, purpose, meaning and significance; motive and incentive could not exist, and there would be no reason to think, speak or act. Man is unique in this regard only in his relative ability to experience a greater diversity and complexity of pleasurable experiences, such as creativity, music and abstract contemplation. Even the most dedicated rationalists and the most self-sacrificing idealists assume their respective roles because they find some level of satisfaction, happiness or peace of mind in so doing. The Christian and Moslem conceptions of Heaven and Hell are but symbolic simplifications of this pleasure-pain principle.

According to Buddhist doctrine, it is man's thirst for pleasurable experiences that generates new karma (*vipāka*) and perpetuates his existence. Enjoyable experience itself is karmically neutral, but what does produce karma (*vipāka*) is our craving (*taṇhā*), the unquenchable yearning for repeated sensory and emotional stimulations of whatever sorts they may be.

It is craving that sustains our existence. But what does it mean to exist? In terms of experience life is nothing more than each conscious moment; The moments of reading this manuscript, of travelling, of bathing, of studying, of day-dreaming, of planning, of worrying, of rejoicing, of striving, of relaxing, of talking, of working. All these and more are life. Each endures for an instant and never again returns exactly the same as before. Which ones do we live for? Which are the ones that justify our desires for continued existence? And conversely how many are of negative value- — painful, irritating, disappointing, worrisome, boring, frustrating, empty or any of the other displeasurable states of mind all of which Buddhism groups under the one word “*dukkha*”?

All manifestations of samsāra come about through cause and effect, and the nature of life is to avoid or minimize dukkha while endeavouring to realize a maximum of rewarding or meaningful experiences. Therefore it follows that the key to living is to discover, understand and eliminate those factors which are causes of dukkha while at the same time developing and cultivating those which lead to true happiness and well-being.

On the basis of the above the Buddha repeatedly summarized his doctrine in terms of the Four Noble Truths:

1. Dukkha is an inherent aspect of samsāra.
2. The cause of dukkha is *taṇhā* or misdirected pleasure seeking.
3. It is possible to realize an end of dukkha.
4. This end is achieved by means of the Eightfold Path — the multidimensional Buddhist practice of spiritual and psychological maturation.

Thus the essence of Buddhism is its way of life. It is the fourth of the Four Noble Truths, that is, the techniques, the practices, the insights and the disciplines that restructure the personality to produce either a relative or a total end of dukkha. However, in this writing I wish to give primary concern to the Third Truth, the goal toward which the Fourth Truth is directed.

A study of the Suttas of the Pāli Canon (which are the most authentic existing records of the teachings of the Buddha) reveals that the Buddha taught there are two ways in which one can deal with the problem of existence. One is to continually act in such a manner as to create wholesome karma;

in other words, to constantly produce conditions which will enhance satisfaction, happiness and well-being. The other is to totally and completely end one's existence within samsāra, i.e., to achieve Nirvāna. The two are not entirely separate paths, for to a considerable extent they overlap. The further one progresses towards a complete realization of the former, the closer one will come to attaining the latter. However, the Buddha placed major emphasis and importance on the latter goal, the cessation of one's being in samsāra. For while dukkha can be minimized within samsāra, it can never be totally eliminated, and every situation in which one may invest one's hopes, affections and feelings will eventually perish. Furthermore, let us imagine that one acquires an understanding of samsāra and how to deal with it and is then able to carry this knowledge over into successive lives for one's continual happiness and prosperity. But even such knowledge itself is created and temporary, and thus like all other creations eventually will perish leaving the personality once again to act blindly towards those laws which mould human destiny.

Thus the Buddhist version of salvation, either of the relative or absolute sort, is something resulting primarily from one's own volitions and can neither be imposed upon one nor granted to one by some external agent. The Buddha's mission was to enlighten men as to the nature of existence and advise them as to how best to behave for their own benefits and the benefits of others. Consequently Buddhist ethics are not founded upon commandments which men are compelled to follow. From the Buddhist viewpoint each conscious being is an individual free to act as it sees fit. The Buddha only advised men as to which conditions were most wholesome and conducive to long-term benefit. Rather than addressing sinners with such words as "shameful", "wicked",

“wretched”, “unworthy” and “blasphemous”, he would merely say: You are foolish and acting in such a way as to bring sorrow upon yourselves and others. Often he said “You yourselves must make the effort. Buddhas are only teachers.”” Consequently the Buddha did not condemn those who chose to enjoy sensuality and the pleasures of worldly existence. He even advised such persons on how to achieve their ends providing no harm would come to others, but he also cautioned them as to the dangers and reminded them that to maintain such pleasures they must be willing to pay the price. The price being continual effort and diligence. A good example is related in the *Vyagghapajja Sutta*:

“Once the Exalted One was dwelling amongst the Koliyans in their market town named Kakkarapatta. Then Dighajānu, a Koliyan, approached the Exalted One, respectfully saluted him and sat on one side. Thus seated, he addressed the Exalted One as follows:

“We, Lord, are laymen who enjoy worldly pleasure. We lead a life encumbered by wife and children. We use sandalwood of Kāsi. We deck ourselves with garlands, perfume and unguents. We use gold and silver. To those like us, O Lord, let the Exalted One preach the Doctrine, teach those things that lead to weal and happiness in this life and weal and happiness in future life.”

To this the Buddha replied:

“Four conditions, Vyagghapajja, conduce to a householder’s weal and happiness in this very life. Which four? The accomplishment of persistent effort, the accomplishment of watchfulness, good friendship and balanced livelihood.

“What is the accomplishment of persistent effort?

“Herein, Vyagghapajja, by whatsoever activity a householder earns his living, whether by farming, by trading, by rearing cattle, by archery, by service under the king, or by any other kind of craft — at that he becomes skilful and is not lazy. He is endowed with the power of discernment as to the proper ways and means; he is able to carry out and allocate (duties). This is called the accomplishment of persistent effort.

“What is the accomplishment of watchfulness?

“Herein, Vyagghapajja, whatsoever wealth a householder is in possession of, obtained by dint of effort, collected by strength of arm, by the sweat of his brow, justly acquired by right means — such he guards well by guarding and watching so that kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal, fire would not burn, water would not carry away, nor ill-disposed heirs remove. This is the accomplishment of watchfulness.

“What is good friendship?

“Herein, Vyagghapajja, in whatsoever village or market town a householder dwells, he associates, converses, engages in discussions with householders or householders’ sons, whether young and highly cultured or old and highly cultured, full of faith, full of virtue, full of charity, full of wisdom. He acts in accordance with the faith of the faithful, with the virtue of the virtuous, with the charity of the charitable, with the wisdom of the wise. This is called good friendship.

“What is balanced livelihood?

“Herein, Vyagghapajja, a householder knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extra-

vagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income.....”

“The wealth thus amassed, Vyagghapajja, has four sources of destruction: Debauchery; drunkenness; gambling; and friendship, companionship and intimacy with evildoers.....”

Aṅguttara-Nikāya IV, 280-282 (VIII 6; 54).

II. THE NATURE OF NIRVANA

WE now come to what is one of the most frequently asked questions in Buddhism: What is Nirvāna? In the above paragraphs we have already stated that it is the ending of rebirth, the final termination of one's existence within saṃsāra. And in the Pāli Canon we read "The ceasing of becoming is Nirvāna."⁸ The origin of the word itself carries this same implication. One common etymological explanation is: "*Nir*" means "not", and "*vāna*" can be rendered as "the effort of blowing". This was probably a simile referring to a smith's fire which goes out if not repeatedly blown upon; the implication being the extinction of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion.⁹ Thus it is not surprising that many critics of Buddhism have considered Nirvāna to be a sophisticated version of suicide, a goal of self-extinction, complete nihilism, and absolute zero.

Such a conclusion, however, is one-sided and superficial. The Buddha himself rejected and cautioned against the two extremes of philosophical dualism. One extreme being eternalism or existence and the other being annihilationism or nonexistence. Though this was usually taught with reference to the existence or nonexistence of the personality after death, it is equally appropriate to Nirvāna. The whole tradition of Theravāda Buddhism has emphatically rejected the nihilistic interpretation of Nirvāna, and a significant portion of the writings of the famed Fifth Century Theravādin scholar, Buddhaghosa, was directed at refuting the notion of Nirvāna as nonexistence.^{10 11}

Perhaps most significant is that the Buddha and many of his disciples **experienced** Nirvāna; that is, they were aware

of it, as the Buddha said, “here and now in this present life”. And in the suttas we find statements that the Buddha and the other arahants* “enjoyed the peace of Nirvāna”. It is referred to by such terms as ‘profound’, ‘deep’, ‘hard to see,’ ‘hard to comprehend’, ‘peaceful’, ‘lofty,’ inaccessible to ratiocination’, ‘subtle’, ‘the true’, ‘the other shore’, ‘to be known by the wise.’¹¹ In the *Dhammapada* the Buddha is quoted:

“There is no fire like lust,
No crime like hatred;
There is no misery like the constituents of existence,
No happiness higher than the Peace of Nirvāna.

“Hunger is the worst of diseases,
Component existence is the worst of distresses;
Knowing this as it really is (the wise realize)
Nirvāna the highest bliss.

“Health is the highest gain;
Contentment is the greatest wealth.
A trusty friend is the best of kinsmen;
Nirvāna is the supreme bliss.”

— *Dhammapada*, 202-204.

Arahantship is said to be an irreversible condition, for once achieved it is impossible that one can fall back into lust and delusion. Thus an arahant is completely incapable of greed, anger and egotism and generates no unwholesome karma. In many respects he (or she) will continue to act, think and feel as any normal person until the time of death, and his demise is sometimes termed “Parinirvāna” the complete cessation of existence in samsāra, the final end of

* *Arahant*—one who has fully realized Nirvāna.

rebirth. Nirvāna has nothing to do with occult powers or supernatural wonders, and many of the arahants at the time of the Buddha stated that they had no such abilities.¹² While with Nirvāna one is liberated from grief, sorrow, despair, worry, frustration and all other psychological forms of *dukkha*, one is still subject to physical discomforts until such time as the body passes away. Throughout the Suttas we read of occasions when the Buddha sustained a back ache,¹³ fell ill with intestinal wind,¹⁴ had his foot pierced by a stone splinter,¹⁵ etc., and in each instance there was accompanying physical pain. But never was there an emotional reaction or psychological discomfort resulting from the pain.

As best can be determined from the scriptural sources, an arahant is not experiencing Nirvāna in every waking moment but is capable of experiencing it at will. Persons who have had such an experience but are not at all times able to reproduce it and may still fall back into greed, anger and delusion are not designated as arahats; though eventually they will become such. They are known as “*sotāpanna*” or “stream-winners”, ones who have entered the stream that eventually leads to Nirvāna.

Rather than the end of craving per se, Nirvāna is that which is realized when craving is ended. Nirvāna is nothing only in that it is no thing. It is neither matter nor energy, and it has no location in space and time. It is not perceived by the senses, nor is it a thought, concept, mood or emotion. Though an arahant is conscious of Nirvāna, it is not consciousness in any sense by which we normally understand that word. It is indivisible, timeless, changeless, unborn and not compounded ; in other words the very antithesis of *samsāra*. It is thoroughly apart from *samsāra* and thus neither influences

nor is influenced by karma. In no way does it interact with samsāra or intervene into samsāra in the way Brahma or Jehovah is said to answer prayers or manifest divine intervention.

Much of the above is reiterated in the Buddha's famous "Discourse on the Snake Simile":

"A Noble One who has abandoned the conceit of self, has cut it off at the root, removed it from its soil like a palmyrah tree, brought it to utter extinction, incapable of arising again. Thus is the monk a Noble One who has taken down the flag, put down the burden, become unfettered. When a monk's mind is thus freed, O monks, neither the devas with Indra, nor those with Brahma, nor those with Pajāpati, when searching will find on what the consciousness of one thus gone (*tathāgata*) is based. Why is that? One who has thus gone is no longer traceable here and now, so I say.

"So teaching, so proclaiming, O monks, there are some recluses and brahmans who misrepresent me untruly, vainly, falsely, not in accordance with fact, saying: 'A nihilist is the ascetic Gotama; he teaches the annihilation, the destruction, the non-being of an existing individual.' As I am not and as I do not teach, therefore these worthy recluses and brahmans misrepresent me untruly, vainly, falsely, and not in accordance with fact when they say: 'A nihilist is the ascetic Gotama; he teaches the annihilation, the destruction, the non-being of an existing individual.' What I teach now as before, O monks, is suffering and the cessation of suffering.

"If for that others revile, abuse, scold and insult the Tathāgata (i.e., the Buddha), on that account, O monks, the Tathāgata will not feel annoyance, nor

dejection, nor displeasure in his heart. And if for that others respect, revere, honour and venerate the Tathāgata, on that account the Tathāgata will not feel delight, nor joy, nor elation in his heart. If for that others respect revere, honour and venerate the Tathāgata, he will think: It is towards this (mind-body aggregate) which was formerly fully comprehended, that they perform such acts.”

(The Buddha then repeats the above paragraph advising the monks to do the same when they too receive blame or praise. He then continues:)

“Therefore, monks, relinquish whatever is not yours. Your relinquishment of it will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness. What is it that is not yours? Material shape is not yours. Relinquish it. Your relinquishment of it will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness. Feeling is not yours. Relinquish it. Your relinquishment of it will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness. Feeling is not yours. Relinquish it. Your relinquishment of it will for a long time bring you welfare and happiness..... (And likewise for perception, mental formations and consciousness.)”

— *Majjhima-Nikāya* I 139-141.

(No. 22 *Alagaddūpama Sutta*).

A common source of misunderstanding about the Buddha’s use of the word “Nirvāna” originates from the Hindu usage of the same word. The Hindus give it a positive metaphysical and mystical meaning stating that Nirvāna is Union with Brahma or God, a condition of Oneness with the Cosmic Absolute in which the soul of man merges with the Infinite Soul of the

Universe. Such a misconception is furthered by the fact that some centuries after the Buddha, various schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism began to develop along mystical and metaphysical paths unknown to or even refuted by the Buddha. Consequently Mahāyāna Buddhist writings often abound with such terms as Buddha Nature, Universal Mind, the Tri-kāya and Primordial Buddha. Thus the concept of Nirvāna now has a host of mystical, religious and psychological usages quite different from its original Buddhist meaning.

The Buddha spoke relatively little about Nirvāna. One reason being that there is little which is meaningful that one can say. Within the Pāli Canon the most detailed dissertation on Nirvāna given by the Buddha is quoted as follows:

“There is, monks, a realm where there is neither earth, water, fire nor air, nor the sphere of infinite space, nor the sphere of infinite consciousness, nor the sphere of nothingness, nor the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; neither this world nor a world beyond nor sun and moon.

“There, monks, I say, there is neither coming to birth nor going nor staying nor passing away nor arising. It is without support or mobility or basis. It is the end of dukkha (suffering).

“That which is selfless, hard it is to see;
Not easy is it to perceive the truth.
But who has ended craving utterly
Has naught to cling to, he alone can see.

“There is, monks, an unborn, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded. If, monks, there were not this unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded, there

would not be an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compounded. But because there is an unborn....., therefore there is an escape.....”

— *Udāna* VIII 2-3; 80-81. (*Pāṭaligāma*).

The outstanding feature of this quotation is that it is a series of negatives. Other than the simple affirmation “there is”, not one positive description is used. Why?

The answer is not hard to find. Since Nirvāna is in no way related to anything within normal human experience, we have no words adequate to describe it. Even if we should adopt some word or phrase such as “Ultimate Reality” or “Pure Being” such would more likely than not create an illusion of understanding rather than give any true insight. Such terms would tell us no more about Nirvāna than the word “music” tells to a man born deaf, the word “passion” tells to a young child or the word “beatnik” tells to an Eskimo. Thus the value of negative terms is that they discourage one from holding to verbal symbols which quickly become illusions of reality. Or in the language of Zen: The finger pointing at the moon must not be confused with the moon itself.

As was explained on pages 6-7, the only true certainty man can have is direct experience. Consequently, the Buddha did not attempt to describe the indescribable. Rather than talk about Nirvāna, the great majority of his teachings were concerned with the techniques of psychological development, which proceed from the empirical data of one’s own states of consciousness in the immediate present. If such practices are done properly, the dimensions of one’s awareness progressively expand until Nirvāna becomes a reality on the basis of direct experience. When that happens explanations become unnecessary. Attempts at verbal descriptions

only lead to useless metaphysical conjectures which may divert one's attention and energies from the practices necessary for true realization. Consequently, when questioned on transcendental matters the Buddha would either show the futility of such inquiries or remain silent. We have for example his encounter with the young Brahman, Udāyi:

“Well then, Udāyi, what is your own teacher's doctrine?”

“Our own teacher's doctrine, venerable sir, says thus: ‘This is the highest splendour! This is the highest splendour!’ ”

“But what is that highest splendour, Udāyi, of which your teacher's doctrine speaks?”

“It is, venerable sir, a splendour greater and loftier than which there is none. That is the Highest Splendour.”

“But, Udāyi, what is that splendour greater and loftier than which there is none?”

“It is, venerable sir, the Highest Splendour greater and loftier than which there is none.”

“For a long time, Udāyi, you can continue in this way, saying, ‘A splendour greater and loftier than which there is none, that is the Highest Splendour’. But still you will not have explained that splendour. Suppose a man were to say: ‘I love and desire the most beautiful woman in this land’, and then he is asked: ‘Good man, that most beautiful woman whom you love and desire, do you know whether she is a lady from nobility or from a Brahman family or from the trader class or Sudra? And he replied ‘no’ — ‘Then, good man, do you know

her name and that of her clan? Or whether she is tall, short or of middle height, whether she is dark, brunette or golden-skinned, or in what village or town or city she dwells?’ And he replied ‘no’. And then he is asked: “Hence, good man, you love and desire what you neither know nor see?”, and he answers ‘yes’. — What do you think, Udāyi, that being so, would not that man’s talk amount to nonsense?”

“Certainly, venerable Sir, that being so, that man’s talk would amount to nonsense.”

“But in the same way, you, Udāyi, say, ‘A splendour greater and loftier than which there is none, that is the Highest Splendour’, and yet you have not explained that splendour.”

— *Majjhima-Nikāya* II, 32-33.
(No. 79, *Cula-Sakuludāyi Sutta*).

The Buddha had acquired an insight totally unrelated to that of normal persons and which in no way could be equated with any experiences in samsāra, yet he wished to reveal his discovery. The problem can be described in terms of an analogy. Let us imagine there is a man who has been blindfolded from the moment of birth and thus has never had an experience of light, vision or color. But from the words of others he comes to know that there is something which he has never realized. He may then attempt to discover this unknown quality by meditating upon it, which is analogous to the mystical approach of meditating upon God or thinking of Ultimate Being. But at best he can only echo in his mind the words “vision”, “color”, and “light” or intensify some subjective impression of what he thinks these things may be.

On the other hand our blindfolded man may reason as follows: “There is something which I don’t realize and is beyond me. Since it is beyond me it must be greater than I, and if it is greater than I, it must be able to help me. — Oh Vision! Oh Light! Please come to me. Make Yourself known unto me, Thy humble servant.” This, of course, is the devotional approach. The metaphysical approach, the approach of philosophy, is to attempt to verbally describe vision with positive phrases, skilful similes and inventive metaphors. But what words can enable a blind man to realize the difference between red and green or to comprehend any other features of visual experience? Words cannot, and to avoid creating misconceptions and illusions it is best to say either nothing at all or give only negative descriptions. Consequently, the Buddha talked about one thing and one thing only — i.e., how to take off the blindfold.

In line with the above it should be noted that the Suttas of Theravāda Buddhism make little mention of meditating upon Nirvāna. This strongly contrasts with the Hindu practice of meditating upon Brahma and similar meditations in other schools of mysticism. Buddhist meditation is of two major sorts. One is tranquillity or *samatha* in which the practitioner concentrates upon a clay or colour disk, a flame, the thought of equanimity, one’s own quiet breathing or any one of several similar things, all for the sake of stilling the mind.¹⁶ More important than *samatha* are the insight meditations or *vipassanā*, which are based on the development of full awareness of one’s actions, thoughts, feelings and emotions.¹⁷

The one exception to the preceding paragraph concerns the peace meditation. In the early Pāli writings Nirvāna is often termed “the peaceful”, and peace is considered to be

one feature of Nirvāna. Peace is also listed among the forty prescribed meditation subjects, and it is thus inferred that meditating upon peace is meditating upon an attribute of Nirvāna. This meditation, however, is but one of 40, and meditation instructors would assign it only to selected students. According to the *Visuddhimagga*, it can be of full benefit only to persons who have already glimpsed Nirvāna.¹⁸

III. THEORIES REGARDING NIRVANA

CAN Nirvāna be explained as a trance state such as occurs in deep hypnosis? Or is it a state of ecstasy as seen in mystical practices or under the effect of psychedelic drugs? Or is it regression of the personality back to prenatal existence? All three of these hypotheses have been used to explain Nirvāna. And while such contentions are distasteful to devout Buddhists, it must be admitted that one cannot flatly and dogmatically reject any one of them unless oneself has experienced Nirvāna. For how can we prove that one man's subjective experiences are either identical to or different from another's? We cannot; for as stated before, the only reality and certainty that one has is one's own immediate states of consciousness be they of subjective or objective origins. However, on the basis of the available evidence it is possible to throw serious doubt on all three of the above.

Trance

The concept of trance includes a variety and spectrum of different but overlapping states which can be classified into somewhat arbitrary groupings and which sometimes merge imperceptibly into states of ecstasy. The most common and readily observed condition of trance is hypnosis. However, as yet psychology has no satisfactory explanation for hypnosis. The best that can be done is merely to describe what happen, and that is that the subject becomes extremely suggestible to the instructions of others even to the extent of having hallucinations and some degree of control of the autonomic nervous system (which is normally beyond conscious control). Usually there is either partial or complete amnesia for the period of hypnosis, but paradoxically one can often recall

detailed events of the past not normally accessible to one's memory. So far as the subject's subjective experience is concerned, there is no characteristic feature of the trance per se. Some subjects find it mildly pleasant, others discomforting and others neutral, and the experience can be different for the same subject on different occasions. Strong emotional reactions and states of euphoria may occur but usually not unless induced by the hypnotist. Hypnosis is an alteration in one's normal states of consciousness, but since we do not know what consciousness is in the first place, it is impossible to explain its deviations and alterations.

Hypnotic trance differs from Nirvāna in several important ways. Hypnosis can be rapidly produced and produced in a wide variety of different kinds of personalities. It rarely lasts more than a few hours at most and usually produces no enduring alteration in one's psyche. Nirvāna, on the other hand, can only be achieved by a long period of restructuring the total personality with certain very definite character traits as prerequisites (absence of lust, etc.). It is an irreversible state of which one is fully conscious and is very much a unique experience. In the deepest stages of hypnosis one is unconscious, has total amnesia for the event, and subjectively the hypnotic experience has no unique features of its own.

Another category of trance states and one quite well known in Buddhism are the eight absorptions or *jhānas*. In the lower four *jhānas* one is said to be fully conscious but to have shut off awareness of all sensory impressions, stilled discursive and verbal thinking and temporarily abandoned lust, anger, agitation, torpor and doubt. Thus upon reaching the fourth *jhāna* one dwells in a state of pure equanimity and concentration. Having achieved the fourth *Jhāna*, one may then progress to the four *arūpajjhānas*. These are states

of deep samatha meditation as described on page 23 and in their successive orders of attainment they are termed “the sphere of infinite space”, “the sphere of infinite consciousness”, “the sphere of nothingness” and “the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception”.¹⁹ Though years of practice may be required to attain these states, they do not represent the complete abolition of craving nor true insight into one’s own nature. They are actually pre-Buddhist practices known to the Hindu faith as well as to Buddhism, and the Buddha himself achieved them before realizing Nirvāna.²⁰ Though the jhānas are taught in Buddhism and though the lower four are even included in the eighth step of the Eightfold Path, they are, though often helpful, not strictly necessary to the attainment of Liberation. (Highly developed mental concentration, however, is indispensable.)

Ecstasy

Like trance, the states of ecstasy also embrace a wide variety of experiences and occur in such diverse situations as the rites and rituals of cults and primitive societies, acute psychotic reactions, epilepsy, moments of solitude in forests and mountains, artistic absorption, deep contemplation, romance, religious fervour and the intoxications of various drugs such as LSD-25, mescaline and hashish.²⁰ Spontaneous cases are not uncommon, but here the word “spontaneous” must be taken to mean that the precipitating factors are not immediately discernible. All of these experiences do not belong to the same order of mental phenomena, but our very limited understanding of such states, the inadequacy of language to fully relate them, the great spectrum of human feelings which seems to lack clearly defined boundaries, and the ability of the mind to mix various levels of feelings into one experience all warrant grouping such phenomena under one heading.

What these states have in common is an intense or unusual feeling of bliss, well-being or euphoria. (Though fear or other negative emotions may also be present.) All of one's usual preoccupations and emotions are swept aside, and for the moment only the ecstasy itself seems important. One may gain the impression of a new and deeper insight into existence. Atheists and agnostics in describing the effects of LSD often use such words as "divine", "mystical" and "religious".

Like hypnosis these states differ from Nirvāna in their sudden onset, relatively brief duration and (with infrequent exceptions) the lack of any lasting influence upon the personality. Also, like hypnosis, they contrast with Nirvāna by appearing in numerous and diverse types of people regardless of the extent to which one has relinquished greed, hatred and delusion or resolved emotional conflicts. The paramount feature of ecstasy is that one is so enamoured in bliss that for the moment all else is either forgotten or seems unimportant or unreal. Consequently, at such times it is almost impossible to make sound and realistic judgments. Thus it is significant that the accounts we have of the Buddha and the other arahants reveal that they were unusually realistic and objective. Were this not the case it is unlikely that Buddhism could have won out over numerous competing systems and existed to the present day. The Suttas reveal that it was not only necessary for the Buddha and his chief disciples to maintain the order and discipline of the continually expanding body of monks; they also had to be proficient in lecture, debate, systematizing the doctrine and managing the affairs of everyday life.

Regression

Another hypothesis about Nirvāna is the psychoanalytic belief that it is a state of regression to intrauterine existence; that is, a psychological return to one's prenatal life, when the

fetus floated effortlessly in the timeless, black silence of the amniotic fluid, a time free of frustration, thought, anxiety, sensory impressions or awareness of time-space relationships. Perhaps the major proponent of this hypothesis was the well-known psychoanalyst, Dr. Franz Alexander. Two paragraphs from his manuscript, "Buddhistic Training as an Artificial Catatonia", are quoted here:

"From our present psychoanalytical knowledge it is clear that Buddhistic self-absorption is a libidinal, narcissistic turning of the urge for knowing inward, a sort of artificial schizophrenia with complete withdrawal of libidinal interest from the outside world. The catatonic conditions of the Hindu ascetics in self-absorption prove quite clearly the correctness of this contention. The mastery of the world is given up and there remains as an exclusive goal of the libido the mastery of the self. In the older pre-Buddha Yogi practice the aim is clearly a mastery of the body, while the absorption of Buddha is directed toward the psychic personality, i.e., the ego."

"The Yoga self-absorption, however, has no therapeutic goal; the mastery of the body is an end in itself. Likewise, in Buddhistic self-absorption the turning of the perceptive consciousness inward is an end in itself, a narcissistic-masochistic affair shown by the fact that the way to it leads through asceticism. Psychoanalysis turns inward in order to help the instincts to accommodate themselves to reality; it wishes to effect an alliance between consciousness and instinct, in order to make experience with the outer world useful to the instincts. The Buddhistic theory sets itself an easier task: it eliminates reality and attempts to turn the entire instinctual life away from the world, inwards, towards itself."²²

Dr. Alexander's thesis was published in 1931 and written with a limited knowledge of Buddhism. Consequently from the Buddhist position it is easy to refute several of the arguments on which he built his case. For example, he equated the lotus position of Buddhist meditation with the fetal position (in which the entire neck and trunk are curled and the wrists and knees brought up over the face). He believed the sole purpose of yogi meditation to be mastery of the body. He mistakenly believed it is only biological forms of suffering (such as old age, sickness and death) which motivate Buddhist training and not any social or emotional forms. He spoke of the end of the Buddha's doctrine "which came with a tragic crash", but since Buddhism is still very much alive in the world today, it is difficult to know just what historical event Dr. Alexander was referring to. On extremely limited data he analyzed the Buddha's disciple, Ānanda, as acting under the influence of an unresolved Oedipus complex. But perhaps most important is that his case rests heavily upon explaining Nirvāna as attained via the jhānas, and he inferred that Nirvāna is but an intensification of the fourth jhāna. As already mentioned, Buddhist doctrine teaches that attaining the jhānas is not necessary for the realization of Nirvāna,²³ and the Buddha clearly stated that Nirvāna is of a totally different order of being even up to the eighth (the highest) jhāna.

But regardless of the errors in Dr. Alexander's thesis, we are still confronted with his basic hypothesis that Nirvāna is regression to intrauterine life. Several considerations make this assumption appear doubtful.

First Alexander believed that regression can go back to the very moment of conception. Yet it is questionable whether or not such a degree of regression is possible in terms

of present-day biological theory. The concept of regression presupposes memory, and on good evidence it is generally assumed that human memory is the product of a matured and highly developed nervous system. Yet even at the time of birth the infant human brain is still undeveloped and largely nonfunctional. If early prenatal memory is possible, we then have evidence to support the Buddhist belief in a nonphysical component of the psyche which is present from the time of conception.

Second, if we assume that Nirvāna is the complete withdrawal of libido from the outside world (i.e. ,a total lack of feeling for persons and things outside oneself), then we are at a loss to explain the great emphasis which the Buddha gave to love, ethics and social improvements. Dr. Alexander himself was aware of this and states the following:

“Nowhere in the Buddhistic literature has sufficient account been taken of the deep contradiction between the absorption doctrine and Buddha’s practical ethics, so far as I am able to follow. The goal of absorption, Nirvāna, is a completely asocial condition and is difficult to combine with ethical precepts.”

However, no contradiction exists if one assumes the Buddhist interpretation of Nirvāna (see ch. VII). Only if one takes Dr. Alexander’s position does a problem arise. Thus it was up to Dr. Alexander and not Buddhism to explain the discrepancy. This he did not do.

While the Buddha advocated a state of noncraving and nonattachment, this did not mean a condition devoid of feeling, sensory perception or other forms of experience. We have, for example, the record of his encounter with

Uttara, a disciple of a Brahmin teacher named Parasariya. The Buddha inquires of Uttara as to his teacher's doctrine to which the latter replies:

“As to this, good Gotama, one should not see material shapes with the eye; one should not hear sounds with the ear. It is thus, good Gotama, that the brahman Parasariya teaches the development of the sense-organs to his disciples.”

To this the Buddha replied:

“This being so, Uttara, then according to what Parasariya the brahman says a blind man must have his sense-organ developed; a deaf man must have his sense-organ developed. For a blind man, Uttara, does not see material shape with this eye, nor does a deaf man hear a sound with his ear.....”

He then explains his own position on this matter:

“When a monk has seen a material shape with the eye there arises what is liked; there arises what is disliked; there arises what is both liked and disliked. He comprehends thus: ‘This that is liked is arising in me; this that is disliked is arising, and this that arises is because it is constructed, is gross. (But) this is the real, this the excellent, that is to say equanimity.’ So whether what is arising in him is liked, disliked or both liked and disliked, it is (all the same) stopped in him and equanimity remains.”

— *Majjhima-Nikāya* III, 298-299.
(No. 152 *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*).

An arahant is said to be wise, oriented to his environment and compassionate towards others. We need only consider the life and personality of the Buddha himself. Had he

vegetated by retreating into purely subjective existence, it would have been impossible for him to produce the very strong and lasting effect which he has made upon world history. Alexander explains this by saying that his withdrawal was not complete; one bond remained unsevered, his spiritual attachment to his disciples. Yet we must remember that at the time of his enlightenment the Buddha was living completely alone and had no disciples or companions of any sort. Also from both the Suttas and the Vinaya it is clearly apparent that he made great efforts to assure that his doctrine would reach all levels of humanity and last for many generations. After his enlightenment and the enlightenment of 60 of his followers, he gave his well-known missionary address:

“I am freed, monks, from all fetters both divine and human. You also, monks, are freed from all fetters both divine and human. Wander for the welfare and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the gain, for the welfare and happiness of gods and men. Let not two take the same course. Proclaim the Dhamma excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle and excellent in the end, in the spirit and in the letter. Proclaim ye the life of consummate purity.”

— *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* I, 105. (IV, I; 5).

If we equate the psychoanalytic concept of libido with the Buddhist concept of *taṇhā* or craving, then it may not be far from wrong to say that withdrawing libido from the world is either the same as Nirvāna or a forerunner of Nirvāna. And if we assume that because the embryo or fetus has not yet experienced the outside world, it thus has not yet invested libido into this world; then we can understand the rationale behind Dr. Alexander's reasoning: Libido remains invested in the self; hence narcissism. We must remember, however,

that Buddhist training requires the withdrawal of libido from oneself as well as from the world of sensory experience, and all states of one's thoughts and feelings must be regarded with the same detached objectivity as is the world at large. At this point the concept of "withdrawing libido" comes under question; for into what is it withdrawn? Thus Buddhism does not use such a concept, but rather deals with individual states of mind and the causative factors which produce those states.

Even though the concept of embryonic libido is somewhat problematic, Dr. Alexander's hypothesis does warrant consideration. However, in presenting his case his repeated use of the words "narcissistic", "masochistic" and "schizophrenic" gives a rather distorted and unpleasant flavour to the whole idea. Apparently his use of the word "masochistic" comes from the mistaken notion that Buddhism is a type of asceticism. Actually the Buddha rejected self-inflicted pain as being spiritually futile and as unwholesome as sensual indulgence.

The word schizophrenia covers a variety of mental disorders and certainly its most common forms do not in any way apply to an arahant. Among the prime features of most schizophrenias is a distorted perception of external reality (often with delusions and hallucinations) and a marked confusion and deterioration of logical thinking. Speech is often irrelevant, fragmented and inconsistent. This contrasts sharply with the eloquence, clarity and consistency of the Buddha's logic and oratory. Perhaps most significant was his unusual ability to see through semantic problems and thus resolve matters which were purely linguistic in origin; a feature quite opposite that of schizophrenic thinking. On a feeling level schizophrenics are often characterized by great emotional lability, inappropriate responses and difficulty in accepting

and handling emotional impulses. Again this stands in sharp contrast to the personality of the arahants. It is almost inconceivable that a schizophrenic, at least of the usual sort, could successfully institute, manage and perpetuate a complex and highly organized religious order.

It is the catatonic form of schizophrenia which Alexander specifically equates with Nirvāna; a condition of prolonged trancelike stupor, immobility and seeming unresponsiveness to the outside world. One may remain in such a state for weeks at a time without changing position, not feeding oneself and not even tending to toilet needs. At such times one is usually indifferent to pin-pricks and other forms of pain. But even catatonia manifests in a variety of ways and quite commonly is interspersed with episodes of excitement, rambling speech and hyperactivity. Persons who have recovered from catatonic stupor do not describe any particular mental state as being characteristic of this condition, nor is it necessarily pleasant. Usually thought disorders characteristic of other forms of schizophrenia are also present. Perhaps most important is that the descriptions given of the catatonic experience bear little in common with the arahants' accounts of Nirvāna. Catatonia is not a condition which one enters voluntarily; rather it is the result of social, psychological and environmental forces which overpower and are beyond one's control; such a person is a victim of samsāra, and his stupor is a prison which he cannot leave at will. If the depth and tranquillity of Buddhist meditation is a state of catatonia, then it is a condition of catatonia which one enters and leaves mindfully and willfully at one's own discretion — something unknown in the history of psychiatry. Thus Nirvāna is so different from the usual forms of catatonia, that it is doubtful that the word "catatonia" can be applied.

The Practical Solution

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, logically and scientifically, one can neither prove nor disprove with complete certainty that Nirvāna either is or is not a condition akin to trance, ecstasy or regression. But putting aside all such speculations, the best information we have about Nirvāna is the Pāli Canon of Theravāda Buddhism. If Nirvāna is real and if any person in history has actually realized Nirvāna then in all probability that person was the Buddha himself. And on the basis of the historical record we find the Buddha to be a man who dedicated over 40 years of his life to the untiring service of his fellow beings; who was widely respected for his wisdom, compassion and moral character, and who apparently did not display anger, greed or prejudice. He was a man noted for his calm and equanimity and who has strongly influenced the lives of many hundreds of millions of people during the past 2,500 years. Thus on the historical record alone one can reasonably conclude that whatever Nirvāna may be, most likely it is not undesirable.

IV. ZEN ENLIGHTENMENT

ANOTHER category of experience, which appears to belong to a class of its own is the enlightenment of Zen Buddhism, usually termed "satori". Since Zen is a school of Buddhism and employs some of the same terminology and concepts as early Buddhism, it is often assumed that Zen enlightenment (satori) and Theravāda enlightenment (Nirvāna) are the same. But apparently such is not the case. It is difficult to give a satisfactory account of satori, not only because of the elusive and paradoxical features of Zen, but also because of the different versions of enlightenment and Zen in general as presented by the various Zen sects and masters of the past 1,400 years. One can quote selected passages of Zen scriptures and other Zen writings to support just about any interpretation of Zen that one may choose to formulate. On the basis of Zen literature, however, satori seems to be very much a product of samsāra and to contain two essential features. One is a true insight into the nature of things and oneself beyond intellectual knowing. The other is a total restructuring of the psyche so that even though one remains very much involved in samsāra, one's whole perception of life and response to life situations are so radically altered that life becomes something quite different than it ever was before.²⁴ There is in Zen only scant mention of ending one's existence in samsāra. While Zen has given much concern to freeing oneself from the restrictions of intellectualizing and conceptual thinking, it says much less about altering one's feelings, motives and emotions. One occasionally reads of great Zen masters expressing anger and of persons who have realized satori and yet are more selfish than many who have not.²⁵ We are told that there are degrees of satori,

and one must ripen it and grow in it.²⁶ The renowned Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki comments on the Zen version of *jhāna* or *dhyāna* in these words:

“Dhyāna is not quietism, nor is it tranquillization; it is rather acting, moving, performing deeds, seeing, hearing, thinking, remembering.”²⁷

One may question whether or not satori is a real experience or merely a philosophical ideal which evolved in the history of Zen thought. Two independent sources of evidence indicate that there is such an experience. One source is the recent electroencephalographic (EEG or brain wave) studies of Zen meditators.²⁸ The other source is the case histories and testimonies of persons allegedly realizing satori in recent years. Both these two areas of study require further investigation before any definite conclusions can be made, and probably the characteristic Zen EEG tracings are not akin to the subjective experiences described in the case histories. In other words they appear to be two unrelated phenomena. Also, it may be that both of these recently-studied phenomena are quite different from the satori experiences of the Zen masters of old or of those Zen monks residing today in secluded and highly disciplined meditation centers.

Electroencephalographic Studies

The EEG investigations have been conducted in Japan since 1953. The subjects studied included monks with many years of meditation experience as well as nonmeditators. Two significant findings have been noted. First, during meditation in a well-lighted room and with eyes open, accomplished Zen practitioners produce a rhythmic slowing of the EEG pattern to cycles of seven or eight per second.* Usually

* This occurs in all areas but is most pronounced in the frontal and central regions of the scalp.

this is seen in nonmeditators only when the eyes are closed and is termed "alpha wave pattern". As a rule it occurs in meditators with open eyes only during and for a few minutes following meditation. However, it has occasionally been seen in nonmeditators, and as yet no studies have been done to establish a correlation between this EEG pattern and personality structure. It is known that some meditators who produce this pattern are not free of a normal intensity of sexual impulses. The Zen EEG pattern is distinctly different from those of sleep and hypnotic trance, and the meditators said that during meditation they were free from sleepiness, confusion and other mental disturbances. Normally an EEG cannot reveal a person's exact emotions, and people with identical EEG patterns may be experiencing very different states of thought and feeling. However, it was "fairly constant" that the Zen practitioners described their subjective experiences during meditation as "calm, undisturbed and serene". It is noteworthy that no mention is made of "religious", mystical, indescribable, transcendental or otherwise unusual states.

The second finding of the EEG studies revealed an alteration in the Zen practitioner's response to sensory stimuli, which suggests an alteration in the perception of one's environment. In normal persons a sudden sensory stimulus, such as a loud noise, draws attention for a brief period, but if the stimulus is repeated at regular and frequent intervals, one eventually becomes oblivious to it and takes no notice. EEG tracings taken on such occasions reveal that in normal subjects the first stimulus produces an alteration in EEG of seven seconds or more; this duration shortens with each successive distraction (in this case noises produced at 15-second intervals) until the fifth stimulus when virtually no EEG effect is seen. It is different, however, with advanced Zen practitioners. The EEG response to the first stimulus lasts

only two to three seconds and then continues to last for two to three seconds for every succeeding stimulus up to the twentieth. This suggests a greater total awareness of one's environment but with fewer strong reactions to individual stimuli. This phenomenon has been observed only during meditation and only in persons experienced in Zen training.²⁸

Satori is said to be present both in and out of meditation, and the reports of the above EEG studies make no mention of whether or not the subjects had had enlightenment. This writer knows of no EEG investigations of Theravāda meditators or Mahāyānists apart from Zen.

Case Studies of the Satori Experience

Perhaps the best published examples in English of alleged satori experiences are those described by Mr. Philip Kapleau in his book, *The Three Pillars of Zen*. Mr. Kapleau presents eight case histories in the form of personal testimonies, which describe in varying amounts of detail the experiences preceding and during enlightenment. His subjects, including himself and his wife, range from 25 to 60 years of age and include three women and five men. Four are Japanese; three are American; one is Canadian. All are laypeople, i.e., not monks or priests. In the following paragraphs I shall discuss satori as described and explained in Kapleau's writing. All eight of his cases occurred to persons who were practising under the guidance of experienced Zen masters and most, if not all, were tested and affirmed by these masters to be genuine instances of satori. However, the reader should be aware that some reputable and long-experienced Zen practitioners reject the validity of these cases.

As a psychiatrist, I find it tempting to speculate on the psychological mechanisms which produced Kapleau's case

histories, though such speculations can be hazardous on two counts. First, it may be presumptuous to assume that western psychology in its present forms is fully capable of explaining the satori experience. Perhaps it is capable, but having no close contact with persons claiming satori I cannot venture to say. Second, Kapleau's case histories do not furnish enough information to enable one to speculate with certainty as to individual psychodynamics and personality structures. Some furnish almost no such information, and it is not the primary purpose of his writing to provide this sort of data.

But while there is insufficient data to analyze most of the individual case histories of Kapleau's series, I feel that collectively there is enough information to formulate a reasonable hypothesis for explaining his examples of satori on psychological grounds. Before presenting such a hypothesis, let us first note the nature of Zen training and its subsequent satori experiences.

All but one of Kapleau's eight cases give clear indication of significant emotional disturbances which resulted in the subjects taking up Zen training. In some cases these were relatively normal reactions to stressful situations such as the death of a loved one, serious illness and the insecurity of life in Japan following the war. Other cases indicated more basic personality disturbances such as alcoholism and psychosomatic symptoms. However, in all accounts of Zen training known to this writer very little concern is given to uncovering the psychological causes of one's disturbances. The Zen practitioner is repeatedly told to see his "true self"; that is, to behold his Buddha Nature, his Oneness with the whole universe, and this must be done by dropping dualistic (i.e., subject-object) thinking and abandoning conceptualizing. For example, we read of one dialogue between a Zen trainee and a master. The trainee says she has had several insights into

herself and “felt extremely elated”. She is therefore puzzled that the master has told her that insights are *makyo* (i.e., mental distractions such as visions and fantasies). In response to this the master makes no inquiry as to what these insights are but responds “In themselves they (insights) are not harmful, they may even be beneficial in some measure. But if you become attached to or ensnared by them, they can hinder your.”²⁹

Perhaps the best example of this apparent indifference to motives and personality traits is displayed in the last case of Kapleau’s series. The subject relates that while her childhood could be called almost “ideal”, “Even from the first, though, there were recurrent periods of despair and loneliness which used to seep up from no apparent source, overflowing into streams of tears and engulfing me to the exclusion of everything else.” This is not the behaviour of a normal child, and though the source may not have been “apparent” it would be naive to assume there was no source at all. Then again “Within a few months our marriage took place and almost immediately after I awoke to find myself a widow. The violent, self-inflicted death of my husband was a shock more severe than anything I had ever experienced.”³⁰ One can only wonder what more had taken place but was left unmentioned. It is extremely unusual for a normal well-adjusted man to commit violent, self-inflicted death shortly after his marriage. And it is also unusual for a normal well-adjusted woman to marry a person predisposed to such action. Later the subject enters Zen training in Japan. We are given detailed accounts of her Zen experiences but in only five words told that during this period she marries again. There is no mention of her feelings towards her fiancé, her desires for companionship or the nature of the marital relationship. It is as though these aspects of oneself are a world apart from Zen practice and not directly concerned with “seeing into one’s True Nature”.

The essence of Zen training is *zazen* or the sitting meditation. This one practises at frequent and regular intervals often for hours at a time and extended over a period of months or years. On such occasions one sits in the company of others and gazes at a blank wall or other blank object. One is repeatedly subjected to great pressures and persuasions to strive with the utmost efforts to empty the mind, abandon intellectualizing and realize the Oneness of all things. Deliberate humiliations and painful brief beatings may be employed to encourage diligence and effort. One is told not to think about the Oneness or to have any ideas about one's yet-unrealized Buddha Nature. Nevertheless, the practitioner has already heard much about it and knows something of the enlightenment experiences of others before him.

The reactions to one's initial satori experience vary between different individuals, and it is questionable that all of these "enlightenments" represent the same mental phenomenon. Often persons break out in uncontrollable laughter and/or sobbing. Some do neither. Usually there is a sense of joy, calmness or euphoria and often a feeling of oneness with all things. How enduring these states may be is uncertain and probably varies considerably between different individuals. To determine the real value of such experiences it would be necessary to have long-term follow-up reports at regular intervals. A mystical or uplifting emotional experience can be worthwhile in itself, but if years of arduous training have been required to produce it, one should hope for a reward lasting more than a few days or weeks. In the first case of Kapleau's series (which is also the only case that gives no history of previous emotional stress) we are told only of a 48-hour period in which a Japanese executive breaks out with tears, crying and a loud uncontrollable laughter described as "inhuman". With this are great feelings of peace, happiness

and freedom. This is most likely akin to the states of euphoria described earlier, and we are given no previous history of this person and no report of his condition following the "enlightenment".

What then is the satori experience? Probably it is more than one thing, depending on whose experience we are talking about. Also, it may be presumptuous to assume that one not having had satori can fully account for it. Nevertheless, I feel that two types of phenomena are responsible for most of these experiences and such probably occur in varying degrees and combinations in different instances.

Satori and Conversion

The most striking feature of the recorded satori experiences is their strong resemblance to Christian conversion and/or salvation experiences. Readers of Buddhist writings are often predisposed to stereotyped and negative impressions of Christian experiences based mostly upon the extremely emotional and fanatic conversions so often witnessed at evangelistic revivals. But Christian conversions include a much deeper and wider range of experiences than these. William James in his well-known classic, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, covers this topic with remarkable perspicacity, drawing his material both from numerous personal testimonies and case histories as well as the psychological studies of other researchers. While each conversion is a unique experience which reflects the convictions and emotional constitution of the person involved, one cannot avoid being impressed by the number of recurrent features in Christian conversions which are equally common in alleged satoris. Usually the moment of conversion is preceded by a duration (often several years) of unhappiness, emotional

conflict or a general dissatisfaction with oneself and life in general. Often there has been a great (usually frustrated) striving to find God and to be pure and good. Yet the moment of salvation often comes at the instant one lets go and stops trying.

“ ‘Lord, I have done all I can, I leave the whole matter with thee.’ Immediately there came to me a great peace.....”³¹

Such moments often occur when one’s emotions or efforts have built up to a point that might be called a spiritual crisis. While this occurs more or less fortuitously in a Christian life, Zen induces it deliberately. In his own account of zazen meditation Kapleau relates the following:

“Suddenly the sun’s streaming into the window in front of me! The rain’s stopped! It’s become warmer! At last the gods are with me! Now I can’t miss satori! Mu, Mu, Mu!..... Again Roshi (the Zen master) leaned over but only to whisper: ‘You are panting and disturbing the others, try to breathe quietly.....’ But I can’t stop. My heart’s pumping wildly, I’m trembling from head to toe, tears are streaming down uncontrollably.Godo cracks me but I hardly feel it. He whacks my neighbour and I suddenly think: ‘Why’s he so mean, he’s hurting him.’More tears. Godo returns and clouts me again and again, shouting: ‘Empty your mind of every single thought, become like a baby again. Just Mu, Mu! right from your guts!’ — crack, crack, crack!.....” (all the spacings,..... , are Kapleau’s.)³²

And returning to Christianity we read:

“I have been through the experience which is known as conversion. My explanation of it is this: the subject

works his emotions up to the breaking point, at the same time resisting their physical manifestations, such as quickened pulse, etc., and then suddenly lets them have their full sway over his body. The relief is something wonderful, and the pleasurable effects of the emotions are experienced to the highest degree.”³³

As in Zen, the Christian experience is direct and immediate. Theology and philosophy fade out of sight at least for the moment, and in their place one may experience what appears to be a new insight into the nature of things:

“My emotional nature was stirred to its depths, confessions of depravity and pleading with God for salvation from sin made me oblivious of all surroundings. I pleaded for mercy, and had a vivid realization of forgiveness and renewal of my nature. When rising from my knees I exclaimed, ‘Old things have passed away, all things have become new.’ It was like entering another world, a new state of existence. Natural objects were glorified, my spiritual vision was so clarified that I saw beauty in every material object in the universe, the woods were vocal with heavenly music; my soul exulted in the love of God, and I wanted everybody to share in my joy.”³⁴

“Not for a moment only, but all day and night, floods of light and glory seemed to pour through my soul, and oh, how I was changed, and everything became new. My horses and hogs and even everybody seemed changed.”³⁵

And now as described by Zen devotees:

“Never before had the road been so roadlike, the shops such perfect shops, nor the winter sky so unutterably a starry sky. Joy bubbled up like a fresh spring.

‘The days and weeks that followed were the most deeply happy and serene of my life.’”³⁶

And from another Zen practitioner:

“Am totally at peace at peace at peace.
Feel numb throughout body, yet hands and feet
jumped for joy for almost half an hour.
Am supremely free free free free free free.
Should I be so happy?
There is no common man.
The big clock chimes — not the clock but Mind
chimes. The universe itself chimes.
There is neither Mind nor universe. Dong, dong,
dong!
I’ve totally disappeared. Buddha is!”³⁷

Also, as in Zen, Christian experiences can be precipitated by a simple word, a passage of scripture or nonverbal sensory experience.

It is difficult at this point to assert any essential difference between the Christian and Zen experiences. Both claim a state of certainty, a direct knowing beyond logic and argument. Perhaps the basic differences are the respective vocabularies, religious convictions and cultural settings that determine the manner in which one describes and explains them.

While such religious experiences are usually brief and of little consequence, in both the Zen and Christian traditions one finds examples of profound and long-lasting (often permanent) personality changes, usually for the better. Such instances most often are preceded by an unsatisfactory life pattern of either overt or repressed unhappiness — drunkenness, sensuality, cynicism, insecurity, etc. Apparently one’s inner

conflicts build up to such a point that there occurs a radical restructuring of the personality. The old, selfish, guilt-ridden and unrewarding tendencies are repressed and their existence denied. Simultaneously the previously denied or undeveloped feelings of companionship and love are brought into focus. Thus one indeed is reborn and is now manifesting a personality pattern which brings much greater personal rewards and brings a previously unknown sense of purpose in life. James states:

“Another American psychologist, Prof. George A. Coe, has analyzed the cases of seventy-seven converts or ex-candidates for conversion, known to him, and the results strikingly confirm the view that sudden conversion is connected with the possession of an active subliminal (i.e., unconscious) self. Examining his subjects with reference to their hypnotic sensibility and to such automatisms as hypnagogic hallucinations, odd impulses, religious dreams about the time of their conversion, etc., he found these relatively much more frequent in the group of converts whose transformation had been ‘striking’, ‘striking’ transformation being defined as a change which, though not necessarily instantaneous, seems to the subject of it to be distinctly different from a process of growth, however rapid.”⁸⁸

Obviously in many instances the fruits of both Zen and Christian experiences are highly beneficial in terms of morality, social productivity and one’s internal well-being. Yet these remarkable transformations take place with an almost total lack of insight into oneself. The old, neurotic, unwholesome tendencies are more often repressed than resolved and thus may manifest in more covert ways such as evangelical fervor, “a hatred for sin”, or religious fanaticism. This is more apt

to occur in the Christian tradition where the religious experience is made a part of a rigidly defined dogma, and the devotee is often unable to separate the experience itself from such concepts as God, salvation and Bible. One knows of examples of saintly, elderly Christians, self-sacrificing and compassionate, who for decades have won the hearts of many and epitomized Christian virtue. Yet if caught in a discussion where the fallacies of their theological convictions are laid bare, fear, anxiety and even unmasked anger break forth until again repressed in conformity with Christian ideals. This also appears to occur to some extent in Zen. We read, for example, of a dialogue between a highly respected Zen master and a pupil. The student raises a doubt about an extremely unlikely Zen teaching which claims that Zen was the Buddha's highest doctrine and was passed on by special transmission down to the present. After the student asks if this is not really a myth, the master unconditionally replies: "No, it is true. If you don't believe it, that's too bad."³⁹

Other features of Zen training can also produce desirable personality changes: There is the factor of suggestion; one hears over and over again what should happen, and thus eventually it does. The introspective nature of Zen and especially of meditation can make one aware of mental changes and states of mind which might otherwise go unnoticed though be no less present in nonmeditators. (This same can apply in part to the claims for success of all of the other numerous and divergent schools of psychotherapy besides Zen.) The move to a new environment (either to a new culture for Westerners or into a monastery for Japanese laymen) can in itself change the person and make old concerns seem unimportant; transplanted to a new world it is easier to abandon old habits, to form a new identity and to relinquish attachments. The process of growing up and maturing regard-

conflicts build up to such a point that there occurs a radical restructuring of the personality. The old, selfish, guilt-ridden and unrewarding tendencies are repressed and their existence denied. Simultaneously the previously denied or undeveloped feelings of companionship and love are brought into focus. Thus one indeed is reborn and is now manifesting a personality pattern which brings much greater personal rewards and brings a previously unknown sense of purpose in life. James states:

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less of religion and practice must be taken into account, especially when we consider that Zen training often requires several years. And finally there is the fact that Zen training is a long and arduous discipline; just as one who has survived a long journey through a wilderness or scaled a difficult mountain or withstood any prolonged stress, the sheer fact of successful endurance gives one self-confidence and a feeling of worth.

Perceptual Alteration

In addition to the above mentioned causes of Zen experiences, the nature of Zen meditation probably produces an additional state of mind not normally present in Christian conversions. This state can occur either singly or in combination with any of the other Zen experiences already noted.

Recent psychological studies have shown that prolonged concentration on simple visual objects can produce striking temporary alterations of feeling and perception. Perhaps most noteworthy are the studies of Dr. Arthur J. Deikman of Austen Riggs Center, Stockbridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.^{40 41}

Dr. Deikman's subjects were seated in front of a blue vase and instructed:

“Your aim is to concentrate on the blue vase. By concentration I do not mean analyzing the different parts of the vase, or thinking a series of thoughts about the vase, or associating ideas to the vase, but rather, trying to see the vase as it exists in itself, without any connections to other things. Exclude all other thoughts or feelings or sounds or body sensations. Do not let

them distract you but keep them out so that you can concentrate all your attention, all your awareness on the vase itself. Let the perception of the vase fill your entire mind.”

It is significant that of the more than eight persons selected for these studies apparently none had had any previous exposure to meditation nor had any contact with mystical literature. Subjects were described as “normal adults in their thirties and forties, well educated and intelligent”. After a few introductory sessions of about 10 minutes duration, the sessions were increased to 30 minutes each and held three times a week. Four of the subjects completed 30 to 40 sessions; one completed 78 sessions, and one was still continuing after 106. Though marked individual variations were noted, most, if not all, subjects experienced perceptual changes relating to the vase, modification of the state of consciousness and a general feeling that the sessions were pleasurable and valuable. Quite commonly the vase became more vivid or luminous; a loss of the third dimension was often noted. Some subjects felt a loss of ego boundaries, a confusion of the subject-object relationship as though they and the vase were merging. Such experiences occurred spontaneously and unexpectedly and were sometimes frightening. The degree of success in achieving such states appeared to correlate with one’s ability to relinquish control and accept whatever happens. In general the subjects found it difficult to describe their feelings and perceptions — “It’s very hard to put into words,” was a frequent comment. This difficulty seemed due in part to the difficulty of describing their experiences without contradictions.

Immediately following the meditation sessions, the subjects were asked to describe the experience and also to

look out the window and describe the way things now appeared to them. A few of their comments are quoted below:

“One of the points that I remember most vividly is when I really began to feel, you know, almost as though the blue and I were perhaps merging, or that the vase and I were. I almost got scared to the point where I found myself bringing myself back in some way from it.....”

“The building is a kind of very white..... a kind of luminescence that the fields have and the trees are really swaying, it's very nice.....lean way over and bounce back with a nice spring-like movement.....”

“The movements are nice, the brightness is. I would have thought it was a terribly overcast day but it isn't. It's a perception filled with light and movement both of which are very pleasurable. Nobody knows what a nice day it is except me.”

“I am looking differently than I have ever looked before. I mean it's almost as though I have a different way of seeing. It's like something to do with dimensions. It's as though I am feeling what I am looking at. It's as though I have an extension of myself reaching out and seeing something by feeling it. It's as though somebody added something, another factor to my seeing.”

“.....I've experienced.....new experiences and I have no vehicle to communicate them to you. I expect that this is probably the way a baby feels when he is full of something to say about an experience or an awareness and he has not learned to use the words yet.”

“.....It's so completely and totally outside of anything else I've experienced.”

“It was like a parallel world or parallel time.....”

The similarities between these descriptions and the descriptions of Zen experiences are so striking that little comment is needed.

Dr. Deikman lists several factors which he believes account for these experiences, three of which warrant discussion here. They are de-automatization, perceptual expansion and reality transfer.

In order to explain de-automatization and perceptual expansion it is first necessary to explain the word "perception" as used in modern psychology. For simplicity, our discussion will be confined to visual perception, but the same principles also apply to auditory, tactile and olfactory perception.

Visual perception is dependent upon, but must be distinguished from, simple visual sensation. Sensation is the patterns of colors which we behold upon opening our eyes. Perception is the way in which we understand or interpret these patterns. Contrary to popular assumption, human visual perception is not innate in visual experience but rather is gradually acquired by learning as the result of repeatedly seeing visual patterns. The best and most convincing illustration of this is noted in the case of persons born blind but who in later life receive eye surgery. For all practical purposes these people obtain instant and near-perfect vision for the first time in what has been a lifetime of total blindness. They are overwhelmed by a mass of confusing colors and shapes, which they are totally at a loss to understand. They are unable to determine the difference in distance, size and quality between a full moon in the sky, a light bulb on the ceiling or a white ball placed two feet in front of them. They are just as likely to try and reach for a cloud as to reach for a piece of paper near at hand. A pencil seen from its end will not be recognized as the same object as the same pencil seen from its side. But only when the pencil has been examined over and over in one's hands (in the same manner and for the same reason as a very young child) will one come to know that these very different visual patterns actually are the same object, i.e., a pencil.⁴²

Any person raised in a Western culture who in later life learns to read a non-Romanized language, such as Chinese, Thai, Sanskrit or Arabic, will recall that in the beginning great attention had to be given to the details of shape and form of each letter or character. But once fluency is achieved, one scarcely is aware of individual letters let alone their details of shape. One can now glance at whole patterns of words and immediately comprehend the meanings; just as one competent in English reads these pages.*

*Thus perception is dependent upon memory and is inseparable from it. In Theravāda Buddhism mind (*nāma*) is divided into four groups, one of which is consciousness. Consciousness in turn is interdependent with the other three (see page 3). Of these other three the first is termed sensation or feeling (*vedanā*); the second (*saññā*) means both “memory” and “perception” and is translated into English as either one of these two words, usually the latter. The third group is mental formations (*sankhāra*) and includes conceptional formations (thinking), willing planning.⁴³ The corresponding classification used in Western psychology is sensations, perceptions, and concepts arising in that order. After perceptions have become established, the mind is able to use sound (i.e., spoken words) and figures (i.e., written words) to serve as symbols to represent respective objects, feelings and abstract relationships; this is the formation of concepts. Thus once conceptualization has developed, it no longer is necessary to see or touch a tree, for example, to know that a tree exists at a given site; the simple sound “tree” will bring to mind the perceptions which occur in actually experiencing a tree. The word “sankhāra” has a range of usages, but as applied to the above aspect of Buddhist psychology it includes conceptualization as understood in Western psychology but also includes aspects of volition and motivation.

If the reader will refer back to the instructions given to the experimental meditation subjects (page 50), it will be noted that their field of awareness is narrowed in two ways. First is by concentration on a given object to the exclusion of other concerns. Second is suppression of verbal thinking and all other forms of conceptualization. Thus the mind approaches a preconceptual level, i.e., a predominantly sensation-perception level presumably similar to that of an animal or one-year-old child. Psychological studies have shown that as a child matures the *vividness* of visual experience is reduced because vision becomes modified by the presence of perception and reflective thought.⁴⁴ Thus alteration or diminution of perception and conceptual thinking (as occurs in concentrative meditation and under LSD) increases the vividness of visual experience.

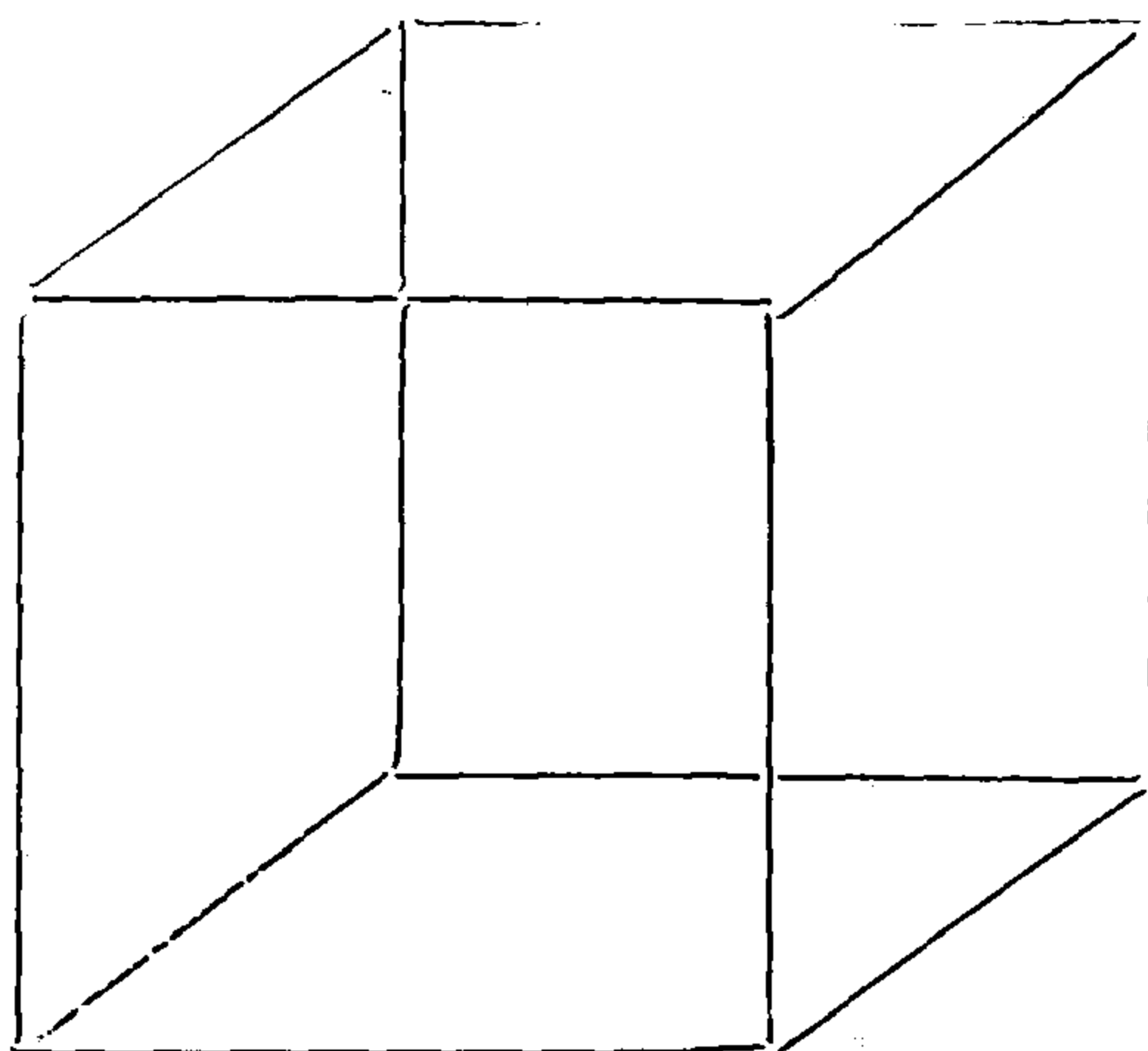
Psychology uses the word "automatization" for referring to the natural loss of awareness of the intermediate steps in perception. For example, one does not consciously give attention to the shape of each letter in the words one is reading. Automatization thus increases our mental efficiency by freeing the mind from concern for repetitious details. De-automatization is the undoing of automatization; that is, attention is again focused on minor sensory details. Perceptually, de-automatization puts one's mind momentarily on the same level as a young child. Colors become more vivid; previously unnoticed details hold the attention. Commonplace objects such as boxes, brooms and key chains may seem fascinating and beautiful.⁴⁵ Concentrative meditation is not the only way of inducing this phenomenon; sensory deprivation and drugs such as marijuana, peyote and LSD-25 are equally if not more effective de-automatizers.

The response of Zen practitioners in meditation to repeated stimuli as shown by EEG (page 39) may well be the result of de-automatization. However, it cannot at this time be concluded that the phenomena of Deikman's relatively inexperienced meditation subjects are either qualitatively or quantitatively the same as the EEG phenomena observed in Zen monks. Control studies on 22 nonmeditators failed to produce these same EEG findings. Also, the degree of EEG change correlated directly with the number of years in practice, and the most striking change (i.e., 6-7/second theta waves) was rarely if ever seen in monks with less than 20 years of experience.

Following and dependent upon de-automatization is perceptual expansion. So strong is the process of automatization that it is virtually impossible for one to see visual patterns in their true form independently of perceptual conditioning. n, for example, will be seen as the written

form of N by an American, but to a Thai it is the Siamese equivalent of a T. And what does the English-trained mind make of น, ด, or ถ?

The figure below will immediately be recognized as a cube. If one stares at the extreme upper right-hand corner of this cube, some people will perceive this corner as belonging to the front (near) side of the cube; others will see it as belonging to the back (far) side. Most people who stare at the cube for a minute or two will perceive the position of the upper right-hand corner as constantly changing; that is, first it is forward, and then back, and then forward again and so on. In reality there is no front or back side; in fact there is no third dimension at all. Perception compels us to see a third dimension that



is not really there. Under de-automatizing drugs such as hashish and LSD the figure above may appear flat, i.e., have no third dimension, and yet a moment later one may see all three possibilities (forward, backward and flat) simultaneously. This is but one example of perceptual expansion.

The artistic value of perceptual expansion, whether obtained through drugs or through concentrative

meditation, is not to be denied. No doubt it enables an artist to see previously unnoticed patterns and thus can enhance creativity. Also the experience is often accompanied by pleasant and uplifting emotions. However, it is questionable whether or not such experiences have any lasting value in terms of emotional well-being, long-term happiness or adjustment to life problems. The failures of numerous persons who have long tried Zen and/or LSD to resolve emotional and neurotic problems testifies to this fact.* Of the two subjects in Deikman's meditation experiments who both practised the longest and got the most striking results, both showed evidence of neurotic conflicts on the basis of personal history and psychological testing, though they were functioning relatively well in their environments. De-automatization experiences, whether induced through chemistry or zazen, are quite brief — a few hours at most in the case of drugs and only a few minutes following meditation. Also, we must not forget that normal perception (i.e., automatization) has a definite biological value or it would not have evolved. Its presence allows us greater efficiency in dealing with the problems of daily living. The man who quickly reads through a menu will be farther along the road to survival than one who becomes enamoured with the shape and form of the ABCs.

The reader should keep in mind that the above statements regarding meditation are concerned with only one type of meditation and do not apply to insight meditation (*vipassanā*)

*This is not to imply that LSD and related drugs have no psychotherapeutic potential at all. There are instances in which they have produced valid psychological insights and thus facilitated personality growth. However, such growth will take place only if one is emotionally and intellectually prepared to confront, understand and make use of the acquired insights.⁴⁶

as practised in Pāli Buddhism. Nor do these statements apply to the deeper tranquillity practices (jhāna) nor to the various discursive meditations.

Dr. Deikman's third factor used to explain the above meditation experiences he terms "reality transfer". This phrase refers to the fact that actual physical reality and the **sensation or feeling** of reality are not the same. In the interests of biological survival, the normal state of the mind is to invest a feeling of reality into the objects of everyday experience. However, factors which alter the mind (such as hypnosis, LSD, psychotic states and prolonged concentration) can displace this reality sensation. At such times the real world may seem unreal, while subjective states and minor sensory perceptions may appear more real than normal reality.

V. THE OCCURRENCE OF ARAHANTS

IF Nirvāna is real, why are arahants so hard to find? Has even one lived within the past century? We are told that at the time of the Buddha over 1,000 of the monks realized Nirvāna. But despite this impressive figure we are also told that the occurrence of arahants is rare in the world, and even more rare is the occurrence of an enlightened teacher who warrants the title of “Buddha”.⁴⁷

“Few among men are there indeed
Who cross to the Further Shore.
The remaining men, most of mankind
Run up and down this hither shore.

“But they who Dhamma practise
In this Dhamma well-expounded,
It is such among mankind
Who will reach the Further Shore,
Who will cross old Death’s dominions
So difficult to cross.”⁴⁸

— *Dhammapada* 85-86.

It goes without saying that the realization of Nirvāna is no easy achievement, for it requires the complete and final abolition of all attachment and craving. What is not fully appreciated, however, is that the desire to remove attachments will not in and of itself effect their removal. Wanting to abandon passion only means that one is in a state of ambivalence; that is, two contradictory or opposing feelings coexist. We have for example the well-known prayer of St. Augustine:

“I had begged chastity of Thee, and said, ‘Give me chastity and continency, only not yet!’ For I feared lest Thou shouldest hear me soon, and soon cure me of the disease of concupiscence, which I wished to have satisfied, rather than extinguished.”⁴⁸

The problem is compounded by the fact that if the desire to be free of hatred or passion is significantly stronger than the hatred or passion itself, one may unwittingly repress these unwanted feelings so as to hide them from awareness and thus not realize that they still exist. This brings us to the second major barrier to Nirvāna, which is delusion (*moha*). Delusion and desire are interdependent. It is because of desires of one sort or another that we structure delusions and unconsciously resist their relinquishment. As an example, the desire to be rid of passion is as often as not motivated by a more subtle form of pleasure seeking, which is the egotistical wish to be pure, virtuous and holy. This in turn originates in part from the delusion that one has an Ego, a true unchanging self, something special and unique which is the essence of one’s true being. But the level of self-deception goes even deeper than this; in the light of modern science and psychology many persons have come to accept that there is no immortal soul; rather man is a compounded and highly complex psycho-physical phenomenon. However, an intellectual acceptance is something quite different from a thorough emotional acceptance. Quite likely many of the most ardent materialists retain some lingering notion of a soul or even of personal immortality no matter how strongly they may repress such feelings or find them intellectually unpalatable. The same is equally true of great scholars of Buddhist thought, if their scholastic achievements have not been accompanied by successful insight (*vipassanā*) practice. Thus the realization of Nirvāna requires the maximum possible goal of psy-

choanalysis — a complete laying bare of the subconscious, the total removal of repression, rationalization and all other unconscious defense mechanisms. Ardent discipline, religious dedication and deep faith no matter how strong they may be do not guarantee that true insight will be achieved. For quite often discipline, dedication and faith originate from the very factors that obstruct one's progress towards enlightenment; common among such factors are bigotry, compulsiveness, ethnocentrism, egotism and insecurity. Thus discipline, dedication and faith are double-edged swords. Though they can be assets towards realizing Nirvāna, they must be subjected to close scrutiny and questioning.

“The faults of others are easy to see,
While hard indeed to see are one's own;
Like chaff one winnows others' faults,
Concealing carefully those of one's own;
Just as a cheating gambler hides
The ill-thrown dice from others' eyes.”

— *Dhammapada* 252

But even allowing for the great difficulty in realizing Nirvāna, one might think that among the many millions of Buddhists in the world today at least a few should win the ultimate goal. In this regard two facts must be kept in mind. First, many Buddhist regions are Buddhist in name only. During the past 2,500 years the Dhamma has spread to many lands and become mixed with numerous indigenous beliefs and superstitions, while at the same time its teachings have been radically modified by priests and scholars. Thus many millions of Buddhists have followed and are still following beliefs and practices that are the direct antithesis of the Buddha's teachings. Second, even in nations which have best retained the original teachings, too often these teachings

have been either obscured by folklore, mythology and ecclesiasticism or buried in a deluge of metaphysics, meticulous categorizations and philosophizing. Then again when one does encounter the apparently valid teachings of the Buddha, one occasionally finds that the major emphasis is either upon the correct intonations for chanting these teachings in Pāli (which has been a dead language for two millenniums) or else the primary concern is upon scriptural hair splitting, rote memorizing or argumentation.

All of this is not meant to imply that there are very few persons with an extensive and profound grasp of the Dhamma. For such is not the case. The point to be made, however, is that the quoted number of world Buddhists is a figure many times greater than the number of those who truly understand what the Buddha taught. And smaller still is the number of those who both understand and practise.

Persons not usually credulous and who are in close contact with advanced centers of Buddhist training, have stated that there are indeed arahants alive in the world today. This writer can neither deny nor affirm such claims, but two facts must be mentioned. First, the Vinaya rules, by which all Theravādin monks are bound, state that a monk must not tell a lay person of his attainment of either Jhāna or Nirvāna even though such be true.⁴⁸ Second, there are very good reasons for establishing such a rule. One familiar with Asian society need only reflect a moment on what would happen were an Arahant to make his attainment known. The results would be little short of disastrous. In the minds of uneducated lay Buddhists he would be regarded as a god and in possession of almost limitless supernatural powers. There would be pleas for cures of ailments, requests for prophecies and demands for blessings to protect one from ghosts, ill fortune

and injury. Should the announced arahant utter any statement contrary to either popular tradition or the letter of Buddhist scriptures, there would be a wail of protests rejecting his claims to enlightenment and accusing him of fraud. Undoubtedly he would be repeatedly approached by fanatics and by persons intent on challenging and testing his claim.

How then can one who has not achieved Nirvāna be assured of the attainment of one who has? This same question was once put to the Buddha:

“The king, the Kosalan Pasenadi, came to visit the Exalted One, and having saluted him, took a seat at one side. Now just then there passed by, not far from the Exalted One, seven ascetics of those who wore the hair matted, seven of the Niganthas (Jains), seven naked ascetics, seven of the Single Vestment class, and seven Wanderers, all with hairy bodies and long nails, carrying friars’ kit. Then the king, rising from his seat, and draping his robe over one shoulder, knelt down on his right knee, and holding forth clasped hands, thrice called out his name to those ascetics: ‘I am the king, your reverences, the Kosalan Pasenadi.’ And when they were gone by, he came back to the Exalted One, and saluting him, sat down as before. So seated, he asked the Exalted One:

“‘Are those persons, lord, either among the world’s arahants, or among those who are in the Path of arahantship?’ “

To this the Buddha replied:

“ ‘Hard is it, sire, for you who are a layman holding worldly possessions, dwelling amidst the encum-

brances of children, accustomed to Benares sandalwood, arrayed in garlands and perfumed unguents, using gold and silver, to know whether those are arahants, or are in the Path of arahantship.'

“ ‘It is by life in common with a person, sire, that we learn his moral character; and then only after a long interval if we pay good heed and are not heedless, if we have insight and are not unintelligent. It is by converse with another, sire, that we learn whether he is pure-minded; and then only after a long interval if we pay good heed and are not heedless, if we have insight and are not unintelligent. It is in time of trouble, sire, that we learn to know a man's fortitude and then only after a long interval, if we pay good heed and are not heedless, if we have insight and are not unintelligent.’ ”

— *Samyutta-Nikāya* I, 77-78. (III, 2; 1).

Among the commentaries to the Pāli Cannon is the following story:

“At the monastery on the Cittala Hill, there lived an elder who was a canker-freed Saint (i.e., an arahant). As his personal attendant he had a novice who got ordained in old age. One day that old novice went on almsround together with the elder, and carrying the elder's alms bowl and outer robe, he walked behind him. While they so went, the old novice asked the elder: ‘Those who are Saints, how do they look? How can we recognize them?’ The elder said: ‘There is an old person who carries a Saint's bowl and robe, fulfils all duties towards him, and even goes along with him—yet he cannot recognize Saints. So hard to know, friend, are the Saints!’ And not even then did the old novice understand.

— Commentary to the *Samyutta-Nikāya*

At this point one may ask whether or not Buddhism is a satisfactory religion, for it offers salvation to so few. But the problem is not one of “offering” salvation but rather of pointing the way for those who are able and willing to tread the path. What then of persons apparently unable to reach the goal? In this regard we must first remember that Buddhism is empirical; it is dealing with things as they are, not as we would like them to be. A religion which promises universal or easy salvation may be more emotionally satisfying, but in the long run it will tend to be an opiate which diverts our efforts from truly constructive endeavours. But the Buddha was fully aware of the needs and capabilities of the common people. Repeatedly he gave them instructions for finding comfort and happiness in everyday life.⁵⁰ Even those who strive for Nirvāna without fully attaining the goal have not wasted their efforts; for the extent to which one has freed one’s mind from greed, hatred and delusion and developed compassion and equanimity is the extent to which one finds emotional well-being and peace of mind in the present. Furthermore, such achievements are said to result in good karma, which in turn brings happiness in the future. And in the next birth, which allegedly arises as the result of the present one, one would be that much closer to Nirvāna should one choose to continue the journey. If we consider the great infinity of time as taught in Buddhism and also the fact that Nirvāna is said to be obtainable after several lifetimes of patient endeavour, then perhaps the percentage of beings reaching Nirvāna is much greater than realized. Also, the Buddha is quoted as saying that some persons who make sufficient progress towards Nirvāna will not be reborn in this world. Rather they will continue their existence on some other dimension within samsāra and in that realm attain the final goal.⁵¹

AESTHETIC AND MORAL CRITICISMS

Apathy and Negation

AS Nirvāna can be realized only by the abolition of desire and craving, it is often viewed as a condition of emotional death, a state of emptiness and apathy. Even in the minds of many Thervādin Buddhists it seems depressing, as if to say one never wins in samsāra, so the only solution is suicide. Yet suicide of the usual sort is almost invariably preceded by severe and inescapable depression. Before concluding that the quest for Nirvāna is motivated by a death-wish, we should note that the Buddha divided the types of craving one should overcome into three categories. The first two are cravings for sense pleasures and for continued existence. The third craving to be relinquished is craving for annihilation after death.⁵²

An arahant is not in a state of chronic apathy. In the Suttas the Buddha is often referred to as “the Happy One”,⁵³ and of the seven states of mind listed as conducive to Nirvāna one is happiness and two of the others are tranquillity and equanimity. (The remaining four are mindfulness, investigation of reality, energy and concentration.)⁵⁴ The Buddha is quoted:

“Happy is he contented in solitude,
Seeing the truth he has learned.
Happy is he who abstains from harming,
Living restrained towards all that lives.
Happiness true is freedom from passion
If senses’ cravings are left behind.
But highest happiness is his
Who has removed the self-conceit.”

— *Udāna* II 1. (*Mucaliṇḍa*).

The Buddha's statement "happiness is won by happiness" stands in sharp contrast to the Jain teaching that happiness is won by suffering.⁵⁶ Too often Buddhism is misunderstood as a practice of rigid asceticism intended to induce a state of euphoria. In his first sermon the Buddha contradicted this notion by advocating the famed Middle Way, the avoidance of the two extremes; one extreme being sensual indulgence and the other self-torture.⁵⁶ And in the *Kassapa-Sihanāda Sutta* the Buddha asks:

"If a man, O Kassapa, should go naked, and be of loose habits, and lick his hands clean with his tongue, and do and be all those other things you gave in detail, down to his being addicted to the practice of taking food, according to rule, at regular intervals up to even half a month — if he does all this, and the state of blissful attainment in conduct, in heart, in intellect, have not been practised by him, realised by him, then is he far from Samanaship, far from Brahmanship. But from the time, O Kassapa, when a Bhikkhu has cultivated the heart of love that knows no anger, that knows no ill-will — from the time when by the destruction of the deadly intoxications (the lusts of the flesh, the lust after future life, and the defilements of delusion and ignorance), he dwells in that emancipation of heart, that emancipation of mind, that is free from those intoxications, and that he, while yet in this visible world, has come to realise and know — from that time, O Kassapa, is it that the Bhikkhu is called a Samana, is called a Brahmana."

— *Dīgha-Nikāya* I, 167. (No. 8 *Kassapa-Sīhanāda Sutta*).

And again he is quoted:

“Now it may well be, Potthapāda, that you think: ‘Evil dispositions may be put away, the dispositions that tend to purification may increase, one may continue to see face to face, and by himself come to realise, the full perfection and grandeur of wisdom, but one may continue sad.’ Now that, Potthapāda, would not be accurate judgment. When such conditions are fulfilled, then there will be joy, and happiness, and peace, and in continual mindfulness and self-mastery, one will dwell at ease.

“And outsiders, Potthapāda, might question us thus: ‘What then, sir, is that material (or that mental, or that formless) mode of personality for the putting away of which you preach such a doctrine..... And to that I should reply: ‘Why this very personality that you see before you is what I mean.’”

— *Dīgha-Nikāya* I, 196-197. (No. 9 *Potthapāda Sutta*).

The Buddha never taught that the abolition of all feelings is a prerequisite to Nirvāna. Only those states of mind which are unwholesome (i.e., conducive to dukkha and undesirable karma) need be abandoned. Usually he classified such states into greed, hatred and delusion. On other occasions they were termed the “five mental hindrances” and enumerated as: Sensual lust, anger, sloth and torpor, agitation and worry and sceptical doubt. Sometimes the list was expanded to ten: Belief that oneself is an unchanging soul, scepticism, belief in salvation through rules and ceremonies, sensual lust, hatred, craving for existence in a heaven world, craving for the bliss of deep meditation (i.e., arūpajjhāna, see pages 21-22), conceit, restlessness and ignorance.⁵⁹

In place of the unwholesome levels of feeling the Buddha advocated the cultivation and development of the four *Brahma-vihāras*: Love (*mettā*), compassion, sympathetic joy (i.e., the happiness one experiences in perceiving the happiness of others) and equanimity.⁶⁸ The first of these four, *mettā*, is usually translated into English as “love” or “loving-kindness”, but there is no precise English equivalent. By simultaneously thinking of love, kindness and friendship we can best understand its meaning.

In Buddhist teaching there is no moral or psychological wrong in encountering and acknowledging an enjoyable experience per se. The pleasures which accompany the sweet taste of sugar and the beauty of a mountain scene are not in themselves barriers to Nirvāna. But danger arises from the craving or attachment that such experiences may produce. That is, the notion “I must have this. I must re-experience it.” Thus the Buddha said:

“If he (an arahant) feels a pleasant feeling he knows it is transient, he knows it is not clung to, he knows it has no lure for him..... (The same is then repeated for painful and neutral feelings.)..... If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels that feeling with detachment. If he feels a painful feeling, he feels that feeling with detachment.

— *Samyutta-Nikāya* II, 82. (XII 6:51).

Referring to the place at which he first realized Nirvāna, the Buddha spoke :

“Pleasant indeed and delightful is the forest grove with a flowing river of clear water, a pleasant and delightful ford and a village near by for procuring food. Indeed it is a most suitable place for a noble youth intent on spiritual exertion.”

— *Majjhima-Nikāya* I 167. (No. 26 *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*)

And on an occasion shortly before the Buddha's demise:

“So the Exalted One proceeded to the Cāpala Shrine, and when he had come there he sat down on the mat spread out for him, and the venerable Ānanda took his seat respectfully beside him. Then the Exalted One addressed the venerable Ānanda, and said: ‘How delightful a spot, Ānanda, is Vesāli, and how charming the Udena Shrine, and the Gotamaka Shrine, and the Shrine of the Seven Mangoes, and the Shrine of Many Sons, and the Sarandada Shrine, and the Cāpala Shrine!’ ”

— *Dīgha-Nikāya* II, 102.
(No. 16 *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, Ch. III).

And at another time he is quoted:

“Now I, Bhaggava, being of such an opinion, certain recluses and brahmins have falsely, emptily, mendaciously and unfairly accused me, saying: Gotama, the recluse, is all wrong, and so are his monks. He has said: Whenever one has attained to the stage of deliverance entitled the Beautiful (*subha*, a condition below both Nirvāna and arūpajjhāna), one then considers all things as repulsive. But this, Bhaggava, I have not said. What I do say is this: Whenever one attains to the stage of deliverance, entitled the Beautiful, one is then aware: Tis lovely!”

— *Dīgha-Nikāya* III, 34. (No. 24 *Pātika Sutta*).

This same appreciation of beauty was also expressed by others among the arahants. There is, for example, a poem attributed to Sabbaka after his enlightenment:

“Whene’er I see the crane, her clear bright wings
Outstretched in fear to flee the black stormcloud,
A shelter seeking, to safe shelter borne,
Then doth the river Ajakarani give joy to me.”

“Who doth not love to see on either bank
Clustered rose-apple trees in fair array
Behind the great cave (of my hermitage)
Or hear the soft croak of the frogs, well rid
Of their undying mortal foes, proclaim:
‘Not from the mountain streams is’t time today
To flit. Safe is the Ajakarani.
She brings us luck. Here is it good to be.’ ”

— “Pslams of the Brethren” *Thera Gāthā* IV; 196.

And Kassapa, another of the arahants, is allegedly the author of the following:

“Those upland glades delightful to the soul,
Where the kareri spreads its wildering wreaths,
Where sound the trumpet-calls of elephants:
Those rocky heights with hue of dark blue clouds,
Where lies embosomed many a shining tarn
Of crystal-clear, cool waters, and whose slopes
The ‘herds of Indra’ cover and bedeck:
Here is enough for me who fain would dwell
In meditation rapt, mindful and tense,”

— “Psalms of the Brethren” *Thera Gāthā* XVIII; 261, 4

However, it is only the hand which has no wound that can safely handle poison. Not uncommonly we mistakenly consider ourselves free af addictions simply because we have not been separated from the objects of gratification enough to experience the full intensity of our desires. Cigarette

smoking is one obvious example. Thus for one treading the path to Nirvāna a considerable amount of renunciation and discipline is imperative.

This brings us to another feature of the Dhamma which has given many the impression that it is life-negating, depressing and morbid. That is those passages of scripture which refer to the body or the world in general as “disgusting” or “impure” or else advocate the development of “disgust”. This is especially characteristic of the cemetery meditations that occur in *satipaṭṭhāna* practice. Here a monk is advised to meditate upon a human corpse in various stages of decay and putrefication, “swollen, blue and festering” or “being eaten by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals or by different kinds of worms”. And with each of these mental pictures the monk “then applies this perception to his own body thus: ‘Verily, also my own body is of the same nature: such it will become and will not escape it.’ ”⁵⁹ Likewise one finds meditations on food in which the meditator visualizes the digestion and decomposition of food as it proceeds through the intestines.⁶⁰

The point to remember is that Buddhism is first and foremost a series of techniques for psychological maturation rather than a philosophy about the nature of the world. Furthermore, these techniques must be varied from person to person and also varied from time to time for any one person, depending upon one’s particular state of mind.⁶¹ Thus the above meditations are specific techniques intended as antidotes for specific types of craving (in the above instances the cravings of narcissism, immortality, passion and gluttony). Their function is one of negative conditioning. It is like a man who is repeatedly told while under hypnosis that cigarette smoke tastes like ammonia. This produces the posthypnotic hallucination that cigarettes do taste like ammonia, and he

eventually loses his desire for cigarettes. Or again it is like Pavlov's dog which is given a painful electric shock every time it sees a certain food. In time all desire for that food is lost. When reading of these meditations one often gets a very depressing view of them. But if they induce depression, one has either misperceived them or one's present mental condition is not one for which these meditations are intended. In this regard the Buddha has said:

“If in the contemplation of the body, bodily agitation, or mental lassitude or distraction should arise in the meditator; then, Ānanda, he should turn his mind to a gladdening subject. Having done so, joy will arise in him.”

— *Samyutta-Nikāya* V, 155. (XLVII, III, I, X).

A Selfish Goal

Is the goal of Nirvāna a selfish one? Perhaps the most common criticism directed against Buddhism and Theravāda Buddhism in particular is that one's primary concern is one's own salvation. The whole effort and purpose of the Eightfold Path is self-development, self-purification, one's personal liberation.

In reply to the question “Is Buddhism selfish?” the answer must be “yes” in the sense that every willful action is selfish. Referring to our previous discussion of the pleasure-pain principle (pages 6-7), all human endeavours (unless purely habitual) are motivated by some attempt at achieving happiness, pleasure, love, self-respect, social approval, beauty and other enjoyable experiences; or else actions are motivated by an endeavour to escape sorrow, pain, fear, guilt, humiliation and other forms of dukkha. Even great acts of self-sacrifice

are but instances of ambivalence in which one level of feeling (e.g., love, religious dedication or a wish for self-esteem) wins out over antagonistic and less respected levels. Christianity and Islam, with their great emphases upon Heaven and Hell (regardless of the ways in which Heaven and Hell may be interpreted), provide clear examples of the pleasure-pain principle occurring in high reaches of religious thought.

Compassion originates not as a philosophical or religious ideal but rather as a feeling which motivates us to help others and is experienced as a very wholesome and rewarding state of mind. In fact loud advocations of love and compassion as ideals often indicate that they are wanting as realities; the militancy of many Bohemian peace marchers, fundamentalist clergymen and communist and socialist zealots provide clear examples.*

If, however, we take the more conventional usage of the word “selfish”, which encompasses greed and egotism but excludes love (*mettā*) and compassion, then the term does not apply to the Buddha’s teachings. As several quotations will demonstrate:

“Then, Lohicca, he who would say: ‘Suppose a Samana or a Brahmana has reached some good state (of mind), then he should tell no one else about it. For what can one man do for another? To tell others would

*One may postulate that compassion and allied feelings are divinely willed, but such an assumption immediately raises both the question of free will and the question of the origin of less wholesome feelings such as greed and hatred. Starting on an experiential basis, Buddhism acknowledges the reality of such feelings and proceeds from there. It is interesting to note in this regard that close observations of several species of higher animals suggest that love and compassion are not exclusively human.^{62 63}

be like the man who, having broken through an old bond, should entangle himself in a new one. Like that, I say, is this desire to declare to others; it is a form of lust.' He who should say thus would be putting obstacles in the way of those clansmen who have taken upon themselves the Doctrine and Discipline..... But putting obstacles in their way he would be out of sympathy for their welfare. Being out of sympathy for their welfare his heart would become established in enmity, and when one's heart is established in enmity, that is unsound doctrine."

— *Dīgha-Nikāya* I, 228-229. (No. 12 *Lohicca Sutta*).

When told that it is unbefitting for one who has renounced the world to spend his life exhorting other men, the Buddha replied:

"Whate'er the apparent cause, Sakka, whereby
Men come to dwell together none doth fit
The Wise Man's case. Compassion moves his mind.
And if, with mind thus satisfied, he spend
His life instructing other men, yet he
Thereby is nowise bound as by a yoke.
Compassion moveth him and sympathy."

— *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* I, 206. (X; 2).

And again he said:

"Monks, it is because I observe these two results therein that I am given to dwelling in lonely spots, in solitary lodging in the forest. What two? Observing my own pleasant way of living in this very life and feeling compassion for future generations. These are the two results."

— *Anguttara-Nikāya* I, 60. (II, 2; 9).

Once one of the monks lay ill but was ignored by the others so intent were they on spiritual training. At this time the Buddha admonished them:

“Whosoever, brethren, would wait upon me, whosoever, brethren, would honour me, whosoever brethren, would follow my advice, he should wait upon the sick.”

— *Vinaya, Mahāvagga* 302. (VIII, 26).

And when the Brahmin, Sangarava, said that the life of a monk was of benefit to but one person, the monk himself, the Buddha replied that one who succeeds in his practice and attains Enlightenment will become a teacher of men and can lead many thousands to the same Liberation.⁶⁴

The justification for the Buddha's great emphasis upon self-development and self-purification was explained in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said:

“Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye: and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.”

— *St. Matthew* 7:4-5.

It has been said: Men can be forgiven for the things they have done in the name of evil, but who can forgive that which has been done in the name of good? The histories of Europe, Ceylon, Mexico and numerous tribal areas provide the most tragic examples of Christian atrocities committed by men apparently sincere in the belief that they were serving God. Likewise for the Moslem faith. More recently communists

with apparently genuine convictions of the rightness of the socialist state have been equally ruthless. A more subtle but more common occurrence of this same phenomenon is seen in the everyday process of child raising. Parents convinced that their particular habits, ideals, mores and customs are the best too often attempt to mold their children into the same patterns. Sometimes the persuasions are deliberate, direct and suppressive; other times unconscious, covert and insidious. But in either case it is an attempt by one party to force its ways upon another. Sometimes this is done with relative success and harmony, but sometimes with tragedy and heartache to all concerned. Thus the Buddha advised:

“But, Cunda, that one who himself is in the mire should pull out of the mire another sunk therein, — this, verily, is an unheard-of thing. But that one himself clear of the slough should be able to lift out of the slough another foundered therein, — such a thing may well be. And that one who himself is not subdued, not disciplined, has not attained to the Extinction of Delusion, should cause others to become subdued, and disciplined, to attain to the Extinction of Delusion, — such a thing has never been known. But that one, himself controlled, trained, delivered from delusion, should lead others to become controlled and trained, lead them to Deliverance from Delusion, — such a thing may very well be.”

— *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, 45. (No. 8 *Sallekha Sutta*).

Escapist

Akin to the problem of selfishness is that of escapism. The label “escapist” is one commonly used by critics of Theravāda Buddhism, and, as with selfishness, the problem

must first be dealt with in terms of semantics. Again referring to the pleasure-pain principle, half of life is escapist in that it is an attempt to avoid dukkha (suffering). A man who takes aspirin does so to escape the pain of his headache, and a large part of obeying customs and rules is done to avoid either reproach and punishment or to avoid one's own feelings of guilt. Thus in this sense of the word, Buddhism is very decidedly escapist, for its primary concern is to free men from dukkha. However, in addition to their literal meanings the words 'escapist' and 'escapism' almost always bear connotations of cowardice or of shirking one's duty. Thus when asked whether or not his religion is escapist, a Buddhist is placed in a position where an answer to the affirmative will admit to an unstated and unwarranted value judgment.

If escapist means shirking one's duty, then let us examine the concept of duty. Duty and obedience receive little mention in the Pāli Canon and are not proclaimed as virtues.⁶⁵ In Buddhist teaching each being is free to act as it sees fit but should first be aware of the nature and consequences of its actions. Duty is not something which exists in nature but rather is a social construct more or less necessary for the preservation of family, tribe and nation. While in an absolute sense duty itself may not be real, from an experiential position what is real is the feeling or sense of duty which men acquire through social conditioning. Thus in World War I the German soldier was compelled by duty to kill Frenchmen, while the Frenchman was equally duty-bound to kill Germans. Likewise in the 1960s when an East German escapes to the West, in the eyes of the West he is a hero who undergoes dangers and hardships to realize a better way of life. But from the East German position the same man is an escapist, who for selfish motives has fled his duties to the people and the socialist state.

If a man should hold dual citizenship in two countries and finds that he must relinquish one of the two, it is easy to imagine that citizens of the rejected nation might find it difficult to be sympathetic and understanding of his choice. Such a reaction would result from ethnocentrism, provincialism and a lack of familiarity with the world beyond their own. Likewise, when a man experiences Nirvāna and chooses it in preference to samsāra, how are we, who know only the one world and not the other, able to criticize his decision?

For all that is said about one's duty to society, it is unusual to find a man whose primary concern is not his own prosperity and happiness. And when a man does loudly proclaim the virtues of duty, we may question to what extent he is only parroting contemporary mores, attempting to win social approval or reacting to guilt feelings which have resulted from the exploitation of one's fellow men. Psychiatrically it is known that those who most strongly adhere to the concept of duty suffer from compulsive personality structures. Such persons fear their own feelings and spontaneity, and thus their compulsiveness, excessive morality and preoccupation with duty are but defences used to control their own mistrusted feelings.⁶⁶ It is man's socially acquired sense of shame or guilt followed by his desire to avoid (i.e., to escape) this feeling that gives the sense of duty such powerful control over human behaviour.

If there is a higher duty than social mores, it is not duty per se, but compassion. For it is compassion that inspires us to help others regardless of the boundaries of culture, race, nation or species. The virtue performed by compassion is thus spontaneous and genuine rather than forced, premeditated or dutiful. Again if we consider the decades of tireless service to humanity as lived by the Buddha and the other arahants, how can we say they did not perform their "duty" to the world?

VII. THE MOTIVE AND THE MEANS

Throughout this essay three important matters have come into focus. First is the emphasis which Buddhism gives to experience as the basis of both knowledge and spiritual progress. Second, from this experiential background emerges the pleasure-pain principle as the primary concern of life. Thirdly, Nirvāna can be known and understood only by direct experience, and since it can only be known in this way, neither myself nor any of the readers of this essay (unless there be arahants among you) have any certainty that it is real.

With these facts in mind let us turn our attention to two remaining problems that need consideration concerning Nirvāna. First, why should one deny oneself many of life's comforts and joys and endure years of effort and discipline to attain something which may not exist? Second, if Nirvāna is realized only by the abolition of all cravings and desires, what about the desire for Nirvāna itself, the very thing which makes us seek Nirvāna; is not this, too, a selfish desire?

The problem is not one of attachment to Nirvāna per se, but rather it is a problem of being attached to the thought or *idea* of Nirvāna. Thus the Buddha comments on the mind of one who is spiritually untrained and undeveloped as follows:

“He recognizes Nirvāna as Nirvāna. Having recognized Nirvāna as Nirvāna he thinks of Nirvāna; he thinks in (the idea of) Nirvāna; he thinks (of self as) Nirvāna; he thinks: ‘Nirvāna is mine’, he is satisfied with Nirvāna. What is the reason for this? I say that it is not thoroughly understood by him.”

Then in contrast he speaks of an arahant, one for whom Nirvāna is a reality:

“He directly knows Nirvāna as Nirvāna. From directly knowing Nirvāna as Nirvāna he does not think of Nirvāna, he does not think in (the idea of) Nirvāna; he does not think (of self as) Nirvāna; he does not think; ‘Nirvāna is mine.’ He does not delight in Nirvāna. What is the reason for this? I say it is because it is thoroughly understood by him.”

— *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, 4. (No. 1 *Mulapariyāya Sutta*)

Perhaps the two above questions are best answered by letting the Pāli Canon speak for itself. In the *Majjhima-Nikāya* we find the following dialogue between the Buddha and the wanderer Māgandiya. The latter has made the accusation that the Buddha “is a destroyer of life” to which the Buddha replies:

“Māgandiya, the eye delights in material shapes, is delighted by material shapes, rejoices in material shapes; it is tamed, watched, guarded and controlled by a Tathāgata, and he teaches a Doctrine for its control. Was it on account of this, Māgandiya, that you said: ‘The recluse Gotama is a destroyer of life’?”

“Just on account of this did I say, good Gotama: ‘The recluse Gotama is a destroyer of life.’ ”

(As for eye and material shapes, the same is then repeated for sounds, smells, tastes, touch and mental states. The Buddha then continues:)

“What do you think about this, Māgandiya? Suppose someone formerly revelled in material shapes cognizable by the eye; agreeable, pleasant,

desired, enticing, connected with sensual pleasure, alluring. After a time, having known the coming to be and passing away of material shapes and the satisfaction in them, and the peril of them and the way of escape from them as it really is, getting rid of craving for material shapes, suppressing the fever for material shapes, he should live devoid of lust, his mind inwardly calmed. What have you, Māgandiya, to say of him?"

"Nothing, good Gotama."

(And again the same is repeated for sounds, smells, etc.)

"Now I, Māgandiya, when I was formerly a householder, endowed and provided with five strands of sense-pleasures, revelled in them: in material shapes cognizable by the eye, agreeable, pleasant.....in sounds cognizable by the ear.....in smells cognizable by the nose.....in tastes cognizable by the tongue.....in touches cognizable by the body, agreeable, pleasant, desired, enticing, connected with sensual pleasures, alluring. I had three palaces, Māgandiya, one for the rains, one for the cold season, one for the hot weather, During the four months of the rains, being delighted in the palace for the rains by women musicians, I did not come down from that palace. But after a time, knowing the coming to be and passing away of sense-pleasures, and the satisfaction in them and the peril of them and the way of escape from them as it really is, getting rid of the craving for sense-pleasures, suppressing the fever of sense-pleasures, I lived devoid of lust, my mind inwardly calmed. I saw other beings not yet devoid of attachment to sense-pleasures who were pursuing sense-pleasures: they were being consumed by craving for sense-pleasures, burning

with the fever of sense-pleasures. I did not envy them: I had no delight in those things. What was the reason for this? It was, Magandiya, that there is this delight which, apart from pleasures of the senses, apart from unskilled states of mind, attains and remains in a god-like happiness. Delighting in this delight, I do not envy what is low. I have no delight in that.”

— *Majjhima-Nikāya* II, 503-505. (No. 75 *Māgandiya Sutta*).

And to the monks he spoke:

“The eye is burning, visible objects are burning, eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning, also whatever is felt as pleasant or painful, or neither painful nor pleasant, that arises with eye-contact as its essential support, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of craving, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion; I say it is burning with birth, ageing and death, with sorrow, with lamentation, with pain, grief and despair.”

(And likewise for sounds, mental states, etc.)

“Monks, when a noble follower who has heard sees thus, he finds aversion in the eye, finds aversion in forms, finds aversion in eye-consciousness, finds aversion in eye-contact, and whatever is felt as painful or pleasant, or neither painful nor pleasant, that arises with eye-contact for its essential support, in that too he finds aversion.”

(And again for sounds, etc.)

“When he finds aversion, passion fades out. With the fading of passion he is liberated. When liberated there is knowledge that he is liberated: he understands: “Birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived, what was to be done has been done, of this there is no more beyond.”

— *Vinaya, Mahāvagga* 34, (I, 21).

Another version of the same theme occurs in the *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*. Here the Buddha explains how the causal law of dependent origination leads to birth and suffering. Suffering inspires one to trust in the Dhamma, and this in turn gives rise to joy. Joy results in rapture; rapture produces serenity, and serenity results in happiness, which in turn makes for concentration. From concentration arises the knowledge and vision of things as they really are, and this makes for repulsion. Repulsion creates passionlessness, and passionlessness results in Liberation.⁶⁷

Thus the scriptures quite clearly provide the solution to the two previously stated questions. One does not realize Nirvāna by becoming obsessed with the quest for a transcendental ideal. The Buddhist approach differs from that of certain of the Bhakti schools of Hinduism, for in Bhakti writings we are told that man finds divinity only when his whole being cries out in fervent emotion for the Divine, as one whose head is held under water craves in desperation for air. In contrast the Buddhist approach is one of confronting each state of consciousness with the close scrutiny of insight and mindfulness, and in so doing perceiving the unsatisfactory nature of such states and then relinquishing them for this reason alone. Unwholesome mental conditions are abandoned because of their own inherent defects and dangers, not at the bidding of supernatural revelation nor because a reward is promised in a hypothetical life to come. Nor is

there a problem of denying oneself present happiness without any compensation. The rewards are immediate. Each forward step is a goal warranted by its own intrinsic merits. And this is so, even though all we can say of Nirvāna is that those who have walked the path before us have said that if we follow the course to its maximum possible realization, then something occurs which is beyond all description; a Something well worth knowing. Nirvāna is found by fully understanding the pleasure-pain principle, stripping it of the delusions it gives rise to, and thus putting oneself beyond its influence.

Thus we have resolved St. Augustine's dilemma (page 60). Desire is not conquered by repression, nor by prayer, nor by ideology; for such techniques do not circumvent our lingering thirst for satisfaction. They cannot resolve the ambivalence which they themselves have created. Rather the solution is given by the Buddha when he says that desire is overcome by foreseeing its result, "penetrating it by insight and seeing it plain."⁶⁸ Seeing it plain is seeing its pain, and desire is thus willfully abandoned because of what it is in and of itself.

The essence of Buddhist practice rests upon the empirical facts of Samsāra — one's own experience. Faith in something which nobody has been able to experience and testify to is unnecessary; rather there must be faith in one's ability to master one's cravings and faith in the worth of the effort. An essential aspect of the Dhamma is mindfulness, the first of the seven factors of enlightenment (page 65). In simplified language it is repeatedly and persistently taking a good hard look at things, especially at oneself and one's own feelings in particular. It is the maximum possible degree of self-honesty and consequently one of the most difficult of all things to achieve.

While mindfulness which results in insight is the keynote of liberation, the problem is really more complicated than that. It is complicated because each human being is complicated. Each of us has many distinct and diverse levels to his psyche, and each of these levels must be dealt with in a manner appropriate to it alone. Our states of consciousness are continually changing from hour to hour, minute to minute, second to second, There is no single rule of practice to apply to all persons at all times. Thus the Buddha repeatedly emphasized that training can only be done now, in the immediate present.

“How is the solitary life perfected in detail? It is when that which is past is put away; when that which is future is given up, and when, with regard to present self-states that we have got, will and passion have been thoroughly mastered. It is thus that the solitary life is perfected in detail.”

— *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* II, 283. (XXI;10)

And again:

“Do not hark back to things that passed,
And for the future cherish not fond hopes:
The past was left behind by thee,
The future state has yet to come.

“But who with vision clear can see
The present which is here and now,
Such a wise one should aspire to win
What never can be lost nor shaken.’

— *Majjhima-Nikāya* III, 187. (No. 131 *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*).

With this we are now prepared to discuss one final problem regarding the Dhamma, and that is the apparent contradiction between the ideals of love and compassion and the ideal of nonattachment. The words “love” and “compassion” do not represent two single entities but rather a whole spectrum of feelings which differ from each other in ways so subtle as to often defy description. Love and compassion can be extremely pleasant and meaningful, and they can be effective antidotes to greed and hatred. Yet at other times they can carry us to unrealistic extremes or lead to frustration if situations prevent their expression. Thus the correct application of love and compassion (and also of detachment and equanimity) is a matter of judgment and timing as determined by one’s particular state of mind at a given moment. While logically and philosophically compassion and nonattachment may be contradictory ideals, when one comes to actually living and practising the Dhamma no conflict arises.

Despite the existence of dukkha (sorrow and discomfort) which is both inherent in and generated by passion and craving, there still remains the obvious fact that there is a level of pleasure in these states or at least an expectation of pleasure. And it is primarily for this reason that we find it so very difficult to relinquish them. The solution is not one that can be proved by argument, logic or science. It can be proved only by oneself and to oneself. That is to fully and mindfully note the nature and quality of those pleasures which are associated with lust and greed. One must behold them in their true form free of any social, religious or personal assumptions as to their merits and demerits. In the same manner one makes the same impartial and penetrative observations of equanimity, happiness and mettā. On the basis of

their own inherent features these latter pleasures (equanimity, etc.) are seen to be more wholesome, more meaningful and more truly satisfying than the pleasures of passion and greed. Furthermore, the very presence of greed, hatred, jealousy or lust excludes the possibility of the higher feelings existing at that same moment. Thus again one finds a true incentive to abandon desires. There is no savior but oneself; the Dhamma simply invites us to come and see. It points the way, but we must follow.

To a six-year-old child, adult existence often appears dull, spiritless and uninteresting. He is incapable of appreciating most adult interests, and if deprived of playthings, playmates and stories, he will most likely lapse into apathy or depression. But 10 years later he is an adolescent with an entirely different set of values and interests. He no longer cares for the childish things of the six-year-old; yet still adult life looks rather blank and pointless when compared with dancing, dating and drag races. Adult values will come in time and with them a natural loss of interest in adolescent pleasures. Thus the layman who finds it difficult to sympathize with the quietude and solitude of a Buddhist monk may reflect upon how his own life appears in the eyes of younger generations. Buddhism is pointing the way for maturation beyond that of the usual social norms. We advance to progressively higher and higher pleasure levels until we reach a state where even pleasure and happiness are transcended. In the *Culasuññata Sutta* the Buddha furnishes an explicit example beginning with the village life of a lay person and proceeding through a monk's life of solitude in the forest and then continuing on up through the highest states of jhāna; each level being successively relinquished for a more rewarding one, with Nirvāna as the end.⁶⁹ And in the *Anguttara-Nikāya* the Buddha is quoted:

“There are two kinds of happiness, O monks; the happiness of the householder and the happiness of the ascetic. But the greater of the two is the happiness of the ascetic.

“There are two kinds of happiness, O monks; the happiness of the senses and the happiness of renunciation. But the greater of the two is the happiness of renunciation.”

— *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* I, 80. (II, 7; 1-2).

And from the *Dhammapada*:

“If by forsaking a lesser happiness
One may behold a greater happiness,
Let the wise man renounce the lesser
Considering the greater.”

— *Dhammapada* 290.

The journey to Nirvāṇa is not a sudden one. A thorough and harmonious restructuring of one's being can only come with time and patient endeavour. Thus we read the Buddha's words:

“Just as, brethren, the mighty ocean deepens and slopes gradually down, hollow after hollow, not plunging by a sudden precipice; even so brethren, in this Dhamma-discipline the training is gradual, it goes step by step; there is no sudden penetration of insight.”

— *Udāna* V 5; 54. (*Sona*).

And again:

“By degrees, little by little, from time to time, a wise man should remove his own impurities, as a smith removes the dross from silver.”

— *Dhammapada* 239.

VIII. THE BUDDHIST INSTITUTION

In the preceding chapters our discussion of Nirvāna has led us to touch upon nearly all other features of the Dhamma—karma, rebirth, ethics, insight practice, aesthetics and epistemology. To complete the picture let us say a few words about Buddhism as a social institution. From the time of the Buddha until the present day, Buddhists have fallen into two major groupings. By far the larger group is the lay people, who for all practical purposes are much like lay people of any other religion except for their belief in Buddhist tenets. Among the laity one finds a wide range of individual variations in the extent to which they understand and practise the Dhamma. It is not unusual to meet both male and female lay Buddhists whose knowledge, discipline and meditation excel those of most monks and nuns.

The monks at the time of the Buddha were not priests. That is, they had no ecclesiastical functions, took no part in rites, ceremonies or ritual and were discouraged from practising astrology, fortune-telling and magic. The purpose of instituting the monastic order was twofold. First it was intended to provide an environment and a way of life most conducive to progress towards Nirvāna. It freed one of the usual cares and obligations of lay people and provided maximum opportunity for training, study and meditation. Second, it was a means of preserving and propagating the teaching. A study of the Vinaya Rules, by which all Theravādin Buddhist monks are bound, reveals that these rules are not primarily moral precepts. Rather they are standards of discipline conducive to one's psychological development or else regulations necessary for maintaining the harmony, preservation and integrity of a large and growing social body.

Thus from its very conception the monastic order had two missions; one was to learn and practise the Dhamma. The other was to preserve this knowledge and give it to all who wished to hear. Though magic and ritual have since become a part of nearly every Buddhist sect, we still find nations, such as Thailand and Ceylon, where the original purposes of the order are still recognized as the primary ones. One need not be a monk or nun to realize Nirvāna. The suttas list at least 21 persons who reached the goal while still laymen.^{70,71} But for one seriously intent on spiritual progress, if he can free himself of social obligations, gain family permission (from his parents if young or from his wife if married), and can meet the other standards necessary for admission to the Order (freedom from debt and freedom from insanity and contagious diseases)⁷² then the life of a monk or nun is the one which provides the best chances for realizing the goal.

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