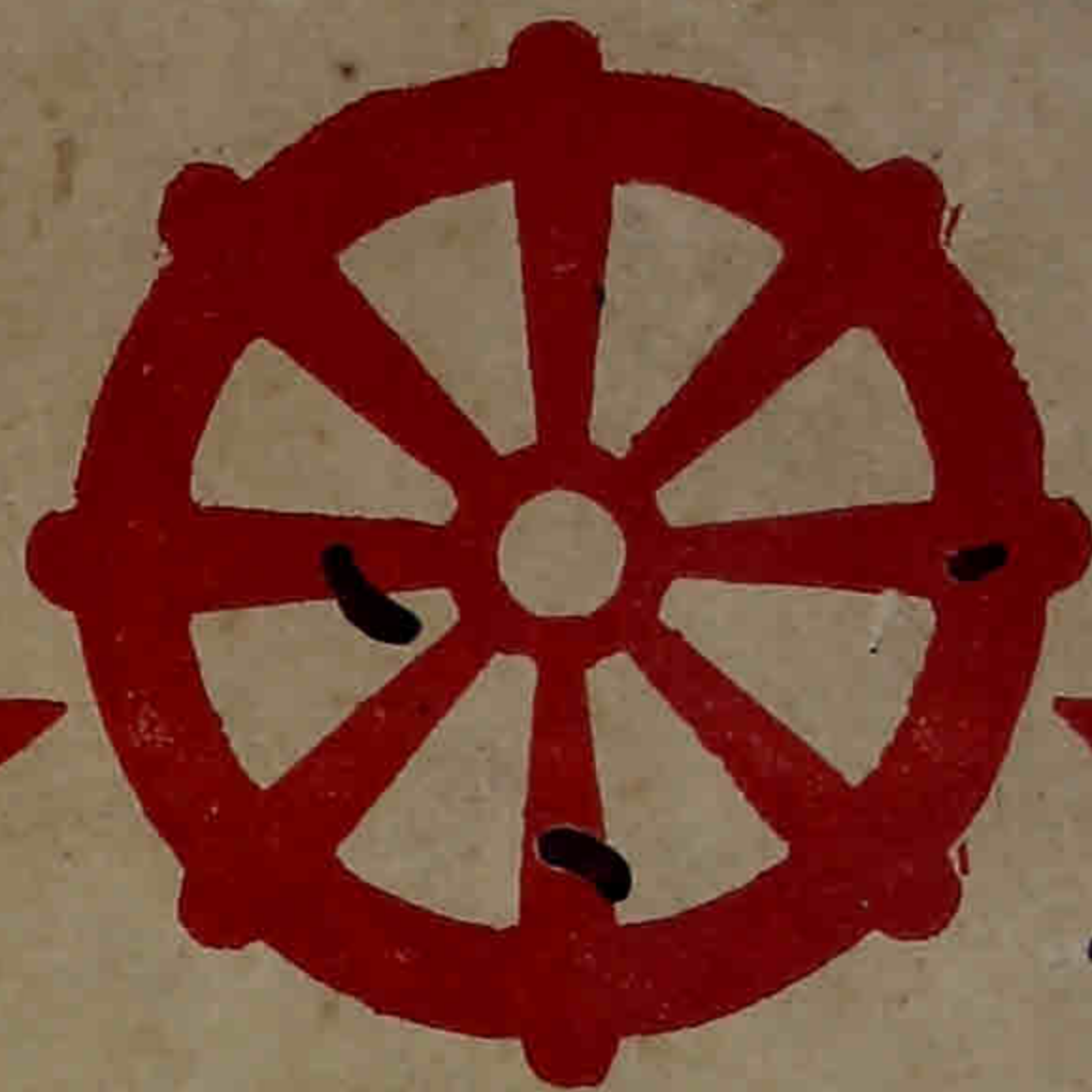


ပိဋကတ်
ဇန်နဝါရီ
၁၉၁၁

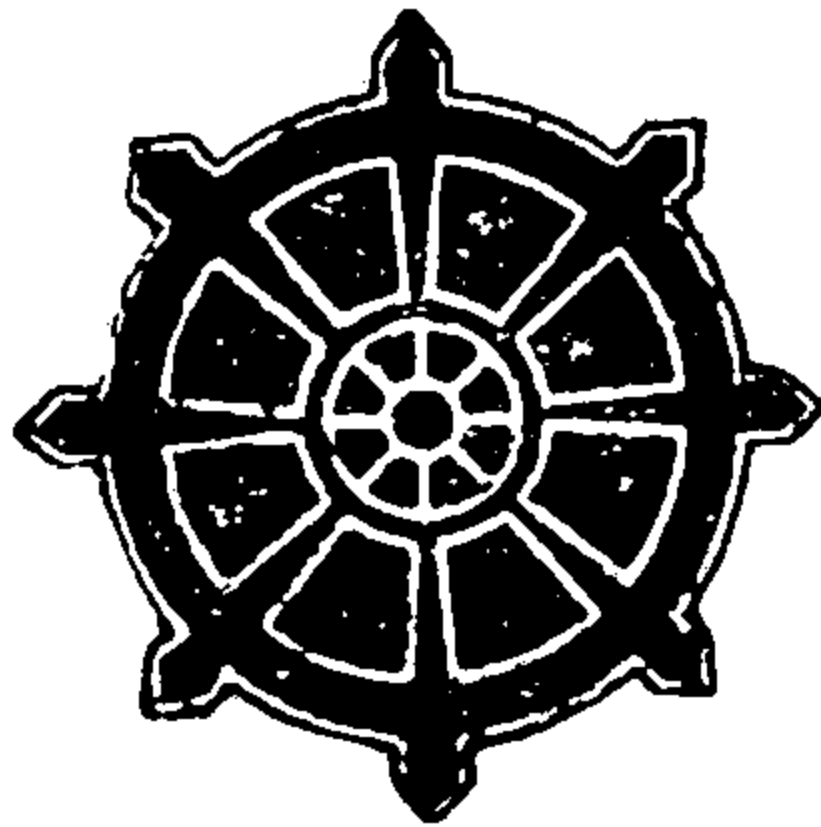


THE WHEEL

Volume VI

Numbers 101 to 120

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY



With compliments
of
Buddhist Publication Society

P. O. BOX 61

KANDY

CEYLON

Write to the above address for
FREE ENGLISH LITERATURE ON BUDDHISM

THE WHEEL

VOL. VI

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Box 61

KANDY

CEYLON

THE WHEEL PUBLICATIONS

VOL. VI

No:

- 101 The Greater Discourse on the Elephant-Footprint
Simile. (Majjh. 28)
- 102/103 Buddhist Reflections on Death.
V. F. Gunaratna
- 104 Early Buddhism and the Taking of Life
I. B. Horner
- 105/106 The Four Nutriments of Life.
Selected Texts, Transl. by Nyanaponika Thera
- 107/109 An Anthology from the Samyutta Nikaya.
Transal. by J. D. Ireland
- 110 Ratthapala Sutta. Majjhima Nikaya No. 82
- 111 Buddhism and Comparative Religion, and
other Essays by Prof. Dr H. V. Glasenapp
- 112 The Buddha's Last Request A Translation
from the Chinese Tripitaka
Ed. by Bhikkhu Khantipalo
- 113/114 Buddhist Commentarial Literature.
Lakshmi R. Goonesekere
- 115 Lives of the Disciples, Part 1
Dr. Helmuth Hecker
- 116 Practical Advice for Meditators
Bhikkhu Khantipalo
- 117/118/119 Nirvana, Nihilism and Satori
Dr. Douglas M. Burns
- 120 Kutadanta Sutta. Digha Nikaya Nos. 5
Trans. by T. W. Rhys Davids

**The Greater Discourse on the
ELEPHANT – FOOTPRINT SIMILE**

From the Majjhima Nikāya

**With Introduction and Notes
edited by**

Nyanaponika Thera

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
Kandy 1966 Ceylon

Introduction

THE Greater Discourse on the Elephant-footprint Simile (*Mahā-hatthipadopama Sutta** is the 28th Sutta of the Majjhima-Nikāya (Middle Collection).** This Discourse was spoken by the great chief disciple of the Buddha, the Venerable Sāriputta, whose wisdom, it is said, was surpassed only by that of the Buddha Himself.

It may well have been intended as a formal recognition of that fact when the Master chose the Venerable Sāriputta to repeat to the monks the gist of His first discourse, the Sermon of Benares, in which the Four Noble Truths were for the first time proclaimed to humanity, Sāriputta's version of it is recorded in the Discourse called 'Analysis of the Truths' (*Sacca-vibhaṅga Sutta; Majjh, 141*).

How profoundly the Great Elder had understood the vast range of these Four Noble Truths*** is illustrated by the Discourse translated in the following pages. To impress upon his hearers the all-comprehensive scope of the Four Noble Truths, the Venerable Sāriputta begins by comparing these Truths with the great footprint of the elephant, which can encompass the foot mark of

* The 'Lesser Discourse' was spoken by the Buddha. A translation of it has been published in the series '*Bodhi Leaves*' No. B 5 (Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy).

** On this Discourse see also 'The Life of Sāriputta', by Nyānaponika Thera (The Wheel No. 90/92), p. 40f.

*** See 'The Four Noble Truths', by Francis Story (The Wheel No. 34/35).

any smaller being. Similarly, the Four Noble Truths comprise, as the Elder says, all that is beneficial; i.e., all that is truly worth knowing and following after. This he illustrates by making explicit some of the insights contained in the Truths and the practical conduct deriving from those insights.

The way in which the two great strands of the Teaching, Knowledge (*viññā*) and Conduct (*caraṇa*), are subtly interwoven in the development of the theme is characteristic of this Discourse, and of the Great Elder's mastery of exposition. It is shown how, from a detailed meditative analysis of the four elements of matter can issue the challenge and the strength to stand firm in personal afflictions, and how such afflictions can be made the starting-point of liberating Insight (*vipassanā*).

In a wide sweep, the impermanence of the physical elements is shown in this tiny body of ours as well as in the cataclysmic destruction of our planet caused by these very elements. If the significance of that universal impermanence is fully comprehended, any concern with anger, fear or self-assertion will be seen as quite incongruous. It will vanish; and the mind thus become unperturbed will be able to view all factors of any given situation in their true light – as conditioned and transient phenomena. (§ 11).

Situations of adversity are then taken as a reminder of the Three Gems, the Buddha, His Teaching and the Community; and the recollection of them serves to arouse a sense of urgency to maintain or to recover the equanimity of mind required for the development of Insight (§ 13).

All that sequence of thought and practice is repeated with each of the four elements.

The Truth of the Origin of Suffering is derived from

the sixfold process of perception (§ 37) and the Five Aggregates (§ 38) involved in it and forming the First Truth (see § 4). It is the desire for these which constitutes Craving (*taṇhā*), and this, according to the Second Truth, is the originator of suffering.

The removal of that desire for the six fields of perception (internal and external) is the Cessation of Suffering, the Third Noble Truth. And with that the Discourse ends.

This development of the Second and Third Truth out of the sixfold sense activity was also stated, in a different way, by the Master Himself in the Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, in the section on the Truths:

‘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 visual forms, sounds eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness . . . these are delightful and pleasurable; there this craving arises and takes root. This, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

‘But where may this craving be abandoned, where may it be extinguished? Wherever there are in the world delightful and pleasurable things, there this craving may be abandoned, there it may be extinguished. Eye, ear are delightful and pleasurable; there this craving may be abandoned, there it may be extinguished. This, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.’

In both texts – the above utterance of the Master and the Venerable Sāriputta’s Discourse – the intention is to show how the Four Noble Truths may be applied

to our constant encounter with the world of bodily and mental experience. And such, or similar, application may be made by the earnest disciple whenever he feels that the Four Noble Truths are in danger of becoming for him an all too familiar and lifeless formula.*

To those who wish to explore the wide reaches of the Four Truths or to contemplate their depth dimension, this Discourse of the Great Disciple is recommended for close and repeated study.

For the present version of the Discourse, the late Venerable Nānamoli Thera's translation of the Majjhima Nikāya (in unpublished manuscript) has been used in parts. For some sections and terms, however, the Editor's own rendering has been used, and the notes are also supplied by him. The Venerable Nānamoli's translation, as he left it, was obviously in an experimental stage, as indicated by pencilled alternatives in the ink-written manuscript. He had, for instance, experimented with newly-coined renderings of doctrinal terms to be used consistently, which in the progress of translation, however, did not seem to be applicable throughout. Hence it was not feasible to use his version in full.

Nyanaponika Thera.

* In the commentary to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Four Noble Truths are applied to all meditation exercises given in the Sutta. See *The Way of Mindfulness*, by Soma Thera, pp. 52, 57 etc.

The Greater Discourse on the **Elephant = footprint Simile**

1. Thus I heard.

On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. There the Venerable Sāriputta addressed the bhikkhus thus, "Friends, bhikkhus," — "Friend," they replied. The Venerable Sāriputta now said this:

2.* "Friends, just as the footprint of any breathing thing that walks can be placed within an elephant's footprint, and so the elephant's footprint is declared the chief of them because of its great size, so too, whatever beneficial ideas there are can all be included in the four Noble Truths. What four?

3. In the Noble Truth of suffering, in the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering, in the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering, and in the Noble Truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

4.* And what is the Noble Truth of suffering? Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering;

* An asterisk (*) after the paragraph number refers to the Notes at the end of the Discourse.

not to get what one wants is suffering; in short the five aggregates affected by clinging are suffering.

5.* And what are the five aggregates affected by clinging? They are the form aggregate affected by clinging, the feeling aggregate affected by clinging, the perception aggregate affected by clinging, the mental-formations aggregate affected by clinging, and the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging.

6.* And what is the form aggregate affected by clinging? It is the four great primaries and any form derived from the four primaries.

7. What are the four great primaries? They are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.

EARTH

8.* And what is the earth element? The earth element is both in oneself and external.

What is the earth element in oneself? Whatever in oneself, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified and clung-to, that is to say, head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, bowels, entrails, gorge, excrements, or whatever else in oneself, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified and clung-to: this is called earth element in oneself.

Now earth element in oneself and external earth element are simply earth element. That should be seen as it actually is with right understanding thus, 'This is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself'. When a man

sees it thus with right understanding as it actually is, he becomes dispassionate towards the earth element, he makes lust for the earth element fade out of his mind.

9.* There is a time when the external water element is disturbed and then the external earth element vanishes.

10.* For even this external earth element, great as it is, can be seen as impermanent, can be seen as liable to destruction, liable to fall, liable to change; so what of this body, which is clung-to by craving and lasts but a while? There can be no (considering) that as 'I' or 'mine' or 'I am'.

11.* So then, (thus having seen this element as it actually is,) if others abuse and scold and curse and threaten a bhikkhu, he understands thus, 'This painful feeling born of ear-contact has arisen in me. That is dependent, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on contact'. Then he sees that contact is impermanent, that feeling is impermanent, that perception is impermanent, that mental formations are impermanent, and that consciousness is impermanent. And his mind enters into that very object (taking it just as an impersonal) element, and acquires confidence, steadiness and decision (herein).

12.* Now if others attack that bhikkhu with the undesirable, unpleasant and disagreeable contact of fists, clods, sticks or knives, he understands thus, 'This body is of such a nature that contact of fists, clods, sticks or knives can occur to it. But this has been said by the Blessed One in his Discourse on the Simile of the Saw: "Even if bandits brutally severed limb from limb with a two-handled saw, he who entertained hate in his heart on that account, would not be one who carried out

my teaching". So tireless energy shall be aroused in me, unremitting mindfulness established, my body shall be tranquil and unexcited, my mind shall be concentrated and unified. And now let contact with fists, clods, sticks or knives occur to this body; for this, indeed, (is an occasion when) the Enlightened One's teaching must be put into effect!

13.* If when he thus recollects the Enlightened One, the Teaching (Dhamma), and the Community (Saṅgha), equanimity with the beneficial as its support, does not persist in him, then he arouses a sense of urgency thus, 'It is a loss for me, it is no gain for me, it is bad for me, it is no good for me, that when I recollect the Enlightened One, the Teaching and the Community thus, equanimity with the beneficial as its support, does not persist in me'. Just as when a daughter-in-law sees her farther-in-law, she has a sense of urgency (to please him), so, too, if a bhikkhu recollects the Enlightened One and equanimity does not persist in him, then he arouses a sense of urgency

14.* But if, when a bhikkhu recollects the Enlightened One, the Teaching and the Community, equanimity with the beneficial as its support, becomes established in him, then he is satisfied. And at that point, friends, much has been done by the bhikkhu.

WATER

15. What is the water element? The water element is both in oneself and external.

What is the water element in oneself? Whatever in oneself, belonging to oneself, is water, watery, and

clung-to, that is to say, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil-of-the-joints, urine, or whatever else in oneself, belonging to oneself, is water, watery and clung-to: this is called water element in oneself.

Now water element in oneself and external water element are simply water element. That should be seen as it actually is with right understanding thus, 'This is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself'. When a man sees it thus with right understanding as it actually is, he becomes dispassionate towards the water element, he makes lust for the water element fade out of his mind.

16. There is a time when the external water element is disturbed. It carries away village, town, city, district, and country. There is a time when the waters in the great ocean sink down a hundred leagues, two hundred leagues five hundred leagues, six hundred leagues, seven hundred leagues. There is a time when the waters in the great ocean stand seven palm trees deep, six palm trees deep, five , four , three , two palm trees deep, only a palm tree deep. There is a time when the waters in the great ocean stand seven fathoms deep, six fathoms deep, five , four , three , two fathoms deep, only a fathom deep. There is a time when the waters in the great ocean stand half a fathom deep, only waist deep, only knee deep, only ankle deep. There is a time when the waters in the great ocean are not enough to wet even the joint of a finger.

17. For even this external water element, great as it is, can be seen as impermanent, can be seen as liable to destruction, liable to fall, liable to change; so what of this body, which is clung-to by craving and lasts but a while? There can be no (considering) that as 'I', or 'mine' or 'I am',

18-21. So then (thus having seen this element as it actually is), if others abuse (*repeat §§ 11-14*) much has been done by that bhikkhu.

FIRE

22. What is the fire element? The fire element is both in oneself and external.

What is the fire element in oneself? Whatever in oneself, belonging to oneself, is fire, fiery, and clung-to, that is to say, that whereby one is warmed, ages, and is consumed, and whereby what is eaten, drunk, chewed and tasted gets completely digested, or whatever else in oneself, belonging to oneself, is fire, fiery, and clung-to: this is called fire element in oneself.

Now fire element in oneself and external fire element are simply fire element. That should be seen as it actually is with right understanding thus, 'This is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself'. When a man sees it thus with right understanding as it actually is, he becomes dispassionate towards the fire element, he makes lust for the fire element fade out of his mind.

23. There is a time when the external fire element is disturbed. It burns up village, town, city, district, and country. It only goes out when it comes to green grass, or to a road or to a rock or to water or to a fair open space, for want of fuel. (But) there are also times when people have to try making a fire even with fowls' claws or hide-parings.

24. For even this external fire element, great as it is, can be seen as impermanent, can be seen as liable to destruction, liable to fall, liable to change; so what of

this body, which is clung-to by craving and lasts but a while? There can be no (considering) that as 'I' or 'mine' or 'I am'.

25-28. So then (thus having seen this element as it actually is), if others abuse (*repeat §§ 11-14*) much has been done by that bhikkhu.

AIR

29.* What is the air element? The air element is both in oneself and external.

What is the air element in oneself? Whatever in oneself, belonging to oneself, is air, airy, and clung-to, that is to say, up-going air, down-going air, air in the belly, air in the bowels, air that pervades all the limbs, in-breath and out-breath, or whatever else in oneself, belonging to oneself, is air, airy, and clung-to: this is called air element in oneself.

Now air element in oneself and external air element are simply air element. That should be seen as it actually is with right understanding thus, 'This is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself'. When a man sees it thus with right understanding as it actually is, he becomes dispassionate towards the air element, he makes lust for the air element fade out of his mind.

30. There is a time when the external air element is disturbed. It sweeps away village, town, city, district and country. (But) there are also times when in the last month of the hot season people seek to produce wind by means of a fan or bellows, and even straws in the drip-fringe of the thatch do not stir.

31. For even this external air element, great as it is, can be seen as impermanent, can be seen as liable to destruction,

liable to fall, liable to change; so what of this body, which is clung-to by craving and lasts but a while? There can be no (considering) that as 'I' or 'mine' or 'I am'.

32. So then, (thus having seen this element as it actually is), if others abuse and scold and curse and threaten a bhikkhu, he understands thus, 'This painful feeling born of ear-contact has arisen in me. That is dependent, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on contact.' Then he sees that contact is impermanent that feeling is impermanent, that perception is impermanent, that mental formations are impermanent, and that consciousness is impermanent. And his mind enters into that very object (taking it just as an impersonal) element, and acquires confidence, steadiness and decision (herein).

33. Now if others attack that bhikkhu with the undesirable, unpleasant and disagreeable contact of fists, clods, sticks or knives, he understands thus, 'This body is of such a nature that contact of fists, clods, sticks and knives can occur to it. But this has been said by the Blessed One in the Discourse on the Simile of the Saw: "Even if bandits brutally severed limb from limb with a two-handled saw, he who entertained hate in his heart on that account, would not be one who carried out my teaching". So tireless energy shall be aroused in me, unremitting mindfulness established, my body shall be tranquil and unexcited, my mind shall be concentrated and unified. And now let contact with fists, clods, sticks or knives occur to this body; for this, indeed, (is an occasion when) the Enlightened One's teaching must be put into effect!'

34. If when he thus recollects the Enlightened One, the Teaching and the Community, equanimity, with the beneficial as its support, does not persist in him, then

he arouses a sense of urgency thus, 'It is a loss for me, it is no gain for me, it is bad for me, it is no good for me, that when I recollect the Enlightened One, the Teaching, and the Community thus, equanimity, with the beneficial as its support, does not persist in me'. Just as when a daughter-in-law sees her father-in-law, she has a sense of urgency (to please him). so, too, if a bhikkhu recollects the Enlightened One and equanimity does not persist in him, then he arouses a sense of urgency

35. But if, when a bhikkhu recollects the Enlightened One, the Teaching, and the Community, equanimity, with the beneficial as its support, becomes established in him, then he is satisfied. And at this point, friends, much has been done by the bhikkhu.

36.* Just as when a space is equipped with timber and creepers and straw and clay, there comes to be the term 'house'. so too, when a space is equipped with bones and sinews and flesh and skin, there comes to be the term '(bodily) form'.

37.* If the eye in oneself were intact but no external forms came within its range and there were no appropriate (conscious) engagement, then there would be no appearance of the appropriate class of consciousness. If the eye in oneself were intact and external forms came within its range, but there were no appropriate (conscious) engagement, there would (still) be no appearance of the appropriate class of consciousness. But it is owing to the fact that the eye in oneself is intact and that external forms come within its range, and that there is the appropriate (conscious) engagement, that there is appearance of the appropriate class of consciousness.

38.* Any form in what has thus come to be, is included, in the form aggregate affected by clinging. Any feeling in what has thus come to be, is included in the feeling aggregate affected by clinging. Any perception in what has thus come to be, is included in the perception aggregate affected by clinging. Any mental formations in what has thus come to be, are included in the mental-formations aggregate affected by clinging. Any consciousness in what has thus come to be, is included in the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging.

He understands thus, 'In such a way, so it is said, there is an including, a gathering and classifying (of phenomena) into these five aggregates affected by clinging. Now this has been said by the Blessed One, "He who sees dependent origination sees the Teaching (*dhamma*); he who sees the Teaching sees dependent origination". And these five aggregates affected by clinging are dependently arisen. The desire for, attachment to, approval or acceptance of, these five aggregates affected by clinging is the origin of suffering. The removal of desire and lust for them is the cessation of suffering'. And at this point too, friends, much has been done by the bhikkhu.

39 - 40. If the ear in oneself were intact but no external sounds came within its range . . . (as in §§ 37-38) . . . much has been done by the bhikkhu.

41 - 42. If the nose in oneself were intact but no external odours came within its range . . . (as in §§ 37-38) . . . much has been done by the bhikkhu.

43 - 44. If the tongue in oneself were intact but no external tastes came within its range . . . (as in §§ 37-38) . . . much has been done by the bhikkhu.

45 - 46. If the body in oneself were intact but no external tangibles came within its range . . . (as in §§ 37-38) . . . much has been done by the bhikkhu.

47.* If the mind in oneself were intact but no external idea came within its range and there were no appropriate (conscious) engagement, then there would be no appearance of the appropriate class of consciousness. If the mind in oneself were intact and external ideas came within its range, but there were no appropriate (conscious) engagement, there would (still) be no appearance of the appropriate class of consciousness. But it is owing to the fact that the mind in oneself is intact and external ideas come within its range, and that there is the appropriate (conscious) engagement, that there is appearance of the appropriate class of consciousness.

48. Any form in what has thus come to be, is included in the form aggregate affected by clinging. Any feeling in what has thus come to be, is included in the feeling aggregate affected by clinging. Any perception in what has thus come to be, is included in the perception aggregate affected by clinging. Any mental formations in what has thus come to be, are included in the mental-formations aggregate affected by clinging. Any consciousness in what has thus come to be, is included in the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging.

He understand thus, 'In such a way, so it is said, there is an including, a gathering and classifying (of phenomena) into these five aggregates affected by clinging. Now this has been said by the Blessed One: "He who sees dependent origination sees the Teaching; he who sees the Teaching sees dependent origination". And these five aggregates affected by clinging are dependently

arisen. The desire for, attachment to, approval and acceptance of, these five aggregates affected by clinging is the origin of suffering. The removal of desire and lust for them is the cessation of suffering'. And at this point too, friends, much has been done by the bhikkhu."

That is what the venerable Sāriputta said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and they delighted in his words.

NOTES

Abbreviations :— Cy.: Buddhaghosa's Commentary (*Papañca-sūdanī*),
SubCy.: Sub-Commentary (*Majjhima-ṭīkā*).

Figures refer to the paragraph numbers of Discourse

2. **Beneficial ideas** (*kusalā dhammā*); or wholesome, salutary things.

4. **The five aggregates affected by clinging** (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). Alternative renderings used by Nāṇamoli Thera: “aggregates (as objects) of clinging” (in *Path of Purification*), “categories of clinging's objects” (in *The Wheel No. 17*); by Nyanatiloka Thera: “groups of existence forming the objects of attachment”.

5. **Mental formations aggregate** (*saṅkhāra-kkhandha*). On *sankhāra* see *Buddhist Dictionary*, by Nyanatiloka (2nd ed., Colombo 1956), p. 148.

6. **Form aggregate** (*rūpa-kkhandha*); the aggregate, or group, of corporeality.

The four great primaries (*mahā-bhūta*), also called *dhātu*, the primary elements of matter.—The *Vīśuddhi-Magga* (“Path of Purification”, p. 381) says that the meditation subject of “Defining of the Elements” (*dhātu-vavatthāna*) is given in brief in the Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāra Sutta (Dīgha-N. 22), and is explained in detail in the Greater Discourse on the Elephant – footprint Simile and in the Mahā Rāhulovāda Sutta (Majjh. 62; translated in *The Wheel No. 33*).

8. **Clung-to** (*upādiṇṇa*), Cy: Strictly spoken, only that corporeal form which is produced by Kamma (*kamma-samuṭṭhāna*), is called 'clung-to' (or 'karmically acquired', Ven. Nyanatiloka's rendering). But, in a general sense, as here, it is a designation for the entire bodily frame. The bodily frame, namely, may be either 'clung-to' ('karmically acquired', *upādiṇṇa*) or 'not clung-to' (not karmically acquired, *anupādiṇṇa*; see *Dhammasaṅgani* §653-4). But because the whole body is clung-to [tenaciously], grasped at [as 'mine'], and misapprehended [as an Ego]* [namely by way of conceit, craving and wrong views; *māna*, *taṇhā*, *diṭṭhi*], the bodily frame in its entirety is here said to be 'clung-to' (by Craving).**

For the **external** (*bāhira*) earth element, the *Dhātu-vibhaṅga* of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka gives as examples various metals, precious stones, rock, wood and soil.

Cy: While the 'earth element in oneself' has been explained in detail by giving twenty modes of it, the external earth element is treated very briefly in the Discourse. Why is that so? Because it is to the solid element in one's own body that beings have a strong attachment, therefore the Buddhas and their disciples speak of it in detail, for removing that attachment to it.

Cy: are simply earth element (*paṭhavidhātur-ev-esa*). Though the earth element is of two kinds, one's own and external, the Elder shows it to have the common characteristic of being stiff, hard and coarse. In the case of the external earth element, its inanimate nature is clear, but not so with the 'earth element in oneself'.

* *ādinna-gahita-parāmaṭṭha*.

** Additions in square brackets are taken from the SubCy.

But if one takes the latter together with the external earth element, one can easily understand that both are equally inanimate. It is as if an untamed oxen is yoked together with a tame one, the untamed animal may wriggle and struggle for a few days, but before long it will become tame. Similarly, if one takes the internal earth element together with the external, their common inanimate nature may not be apparent for a few days, but before long it will become quite clear.

9. According to ancient Indian cosmological conceptions, the earth may have its cyclical destruction either by water, by fire or by wind.

10. **Clung-to by craving** (*taṇhupādinna*). Cy: Clung-to, grasped at and misconceived by craving (see Note to §5). — The words in the Discourse, 'I', 'mine', 'I am', represent again the threefold clinging to personality, belief, due to conceit (*māna*), craving (*taṇhā*) and wrong views (*diṭṭhi*).

11. **So then, if others . . . abuse . . . that bhikkhu.** Cy: This refers to a bhikkhu who, as shown before, practises the meditation on the elements (*dhātu-kammaṭṭhāniko*). The paragraph under consideration shows the strength of his mind in applying his meditative comprehension of reality to occurrences at the sense-door of hearing (i. e. when he hears words of abuse). — The SubCy adds that this also illustrates the powerful influence which a subject of meditation may have (on one's attitude to everyday happenings; *kammaṭṭhānassa ānubhāvaṃ dasseti*). The bhikkhu's strength is that of imperturbability achieved by seeing that the 'earth element in oneself' is as inanimate as the external one, and

this makes him as imperturable as a tree that is being abused or struck.

acquires . . . decision (*ādhimuccati*). Cy: that is, as to its true nature, by seeing it as an impersonal element, and hence the bhikkhu has neither attachment nor aversion concerning it.

And his mind enters into that very object (taking it just as an impersonal) element (*Tassa dhātārammaṇam eva cittaṃ pakkhandhati*); lit.: enters into that very element-object. — The rendering chosen here is based on an explanation in the Commentary which is reproduced here in the following when commenting on the words “acquires decision”. According to that explanation the above textual passage refers to the “auditory object”, that is the words of abuse; and the word “element” (*dhātu*) is to be taken in the sense of an impersonal element in general, not as primary element of matter. The SubCy, however, says that the term “object-element” (*dhātārammaṇa*) refers to the Earth-Element which the bhikkhu had contemplated earlier. In the present context this would mean that the bhikkhu is supposed to return to his original subject of meditation, the Earth Element. This explanation, though likewise feasible, is perhaps less likely than the earlier interpretation which relates the term to the “auditory object”.

acquires . . . decision (*adhimuccati*). Cy: That is, he comes to a decision (as to its true nature), by seeing it as an (impersonal) element (*dhātu-vasena*) and hence the bhikkhu has neither attachment nor aversion concerning it. This monk, that is to say, applies here to the auditory object, his comprehension (*pariggaha*) by way of the ‘accurate knowledge of the root’ (*mūla-pariññā*) and by way (of contemplating the casual (*āgantuka*) and

temporary (*tāvakālika*) state of the object, as described in detail in the Commentary to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.* There, however, it is explained with regard to the sense-door of the eye, but here with regard to the sense-door of the ear.

When in such a way correct comprehension has been applied by one who practises the element-meditation, even if (SubCy: due to long habituation in the beginningless Samsāra) unwise Adverting (or Attention; *ayoniso āvajjanaṃ*)** occurs with a visual or other perception, then there will be three alternative reactions: (1) In the case of one with strong insight (*balavā-vipassanā*), the cognitive series will reach the stage of Determining (*voṭṭhapana*), occurring once or twice, and after that the consciousness will just fall into Bhavaṅga, and there will be no arising of greed, etc. So it is with one of keen Insight who has reached its culmination (*koṭipatto tikkha-vipassako*).— (2) In the case of another meditator, Impulsion (*javana*) impels the mind (only) once, by way of greed, etc. But because at the end of that (single moment of) Impulsion, he becomes aware***, ‘Impulsion has impelled me by way of greed, etc.,’ the object is (then) correctly comprehended (*pariggahitam eva*), and Impulsion does not arise again in that way. @ — (3) Again, in the case

* See *The Way of Mindfulness* by Soma Thera, p. 79ff

** Here and in the following, reference is made to the Abhidhamma teaching of the cognitive series, or process of cognition (*citta-vithi*), on which see ‘The Wheel’ No. 67/64 “Aids to Abhidhamma Philosophy”, p. 21ff. and Chart II.

*** *āvajjato*; lit.: because his mind adverts,

@ SubCy: By his establishing thus that Impulsion and its object have vanished after having existed, it has become a legitimate subject of meditation (*sārammaṇassa javanassa “hutvā-abhāva”-vavatthāpanassa kammaṭṭhānabhāvato*).

of another whose mind has adverted once, yet Impulsion arises for a second time by way of greed, etc. But because at the end of that second Impulsion, he becomes aware as stated above, the object is then correctly comprehended and impulsion does not arise for a third time in that way.

The Insight of the first person is very keen; that of the third person is very slow; as to the second, his nature should be understood as explained in the “Simile of the Quail” (*Lakuṭakopama Sutta*, M. 66) ‡ and as in the Discourse on the “Cultivation of the Sense-faculties” (*Indriya-bhāvanā Sutta*, M. 151).

Enters into . . . acquires confidence, steadiness and decision (*pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhati adhimuccati*). — This sequence of terms occurs so frequently in the Discourses that the following illuminating explanations given in the SubCy may be found helpful to students of the Pali scriptures. The SubCy, however, reads the last of the above terms as *vimuccati* (“is freed”) instead of *adhimuccati* (“acquires decision”). This reading is also found in other text editions (e. g., the Siamese) of the present Discourse and in parallel passages of other Suttas.

SubCy: Enters into (*pakkhandati*): The mind engaged in Insight meditation penetrates (its object) by way of comprehending it as impermanent, also as suffering, and also as not-self (*vipassanā-cittam*) *aniccan’ti pi dukkhan’*

‡ In the “Simile of the Quail” it is said: “While he is practicing for the abandoning of clinging, towards the discarding of clinging, memories and thoughts connected with clinging beset him from time to time, due to confusion. Slow, Udāyi, is the arising of mindfulness, but quickly he abandons that (clinging), dispels it, makes an end of it, brings it to destruction.”

ti pi anattan'ti pi sammasanavāsena anupavisati). Hereby the absence of distractions from outside is stated.

Acquires confidence (*pasīdati*), Hereby is indicated that the meditation is progressing smoothly on its road (*kammaṭṭhānassa vīthi-paṭipannatam*).

Is freed (*vimuccati*), by loosening the grip of craving, conceit and wrong views.

12. **Now if others attack that bhikkhu with fists . . .**“
Cy: In the preceding section the inner strength of a meditating bhikkhu was shown on the occasion when there were undesirable objects at the sense-door of hearing; now the same is illustrated with occurrences at the sense-door of the body. For, when one is confronted with an undesirable experience, there may be failure (in mind-control) in two ways, at the sense-door of hearing and that of the body.

The Great Elder proceeds here like a farmer who makes the round of his field, and whenever he notices that he has not put sufficient earth (at the sides of the irrigation channel), he cuts the ground with his mammy and, at the weak spots only, he puts some lumps of earth together with grass. Similarly, the Great Elder introduces this section of his discourse for the purpose of strengthening the monks' mind-control (*samvara*) at those two sense-doors only. He did so with the wish: 'May those noble sons of the future, who are desirous of training themselves, and engage in meditative effort, make speedily an end of birth, decay and death, after establishing firm control at those sense-doors!'

13. **If, when he thus recollects the Enlightened One, the teaching and the Community . . .** Cy: There is

Recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*) not only by way of (reciting the traditional text): “This indeed is the Blessed One. . .” (*Iti pi so Bhagavā*), but also if (as here) a saying of His is remembered. There is Recollection of the Dhamma not only by way of (reciting) “Well proclaimed is the Teaching. . .”, but also when the Admonition called the Simile of the Saw is remembered (as done here). And there is Recollection of the Sangha not only by way of reciting “Of good conduct is the Order of the Blessed One. . .”, but also when remembering the virtue of a monk who patiently endures even when assaulted with a saw.

Equanimity, with the beneficial as its support, does not persist in him (*upekkhā kusalanissitā na saṅghāti*), — Cy: Here the equanimity of (still mundane) insight (*vipassanupekkhā*) is meant. — SubCy: He has not yet obtained equanimity of outlook (*ajjhupekkhatā*) with regard to everything conditional.

14. Equanimity, with the beneficial as its support, becomes established in him. — Cy: This refers to the Sixfold Equanimity (*chaḷangupekkhā*). Though this type of equanimity arises (strictly speaking, only) in the canker-free Saint who has neither attachment nor aversion with regard to the six sense-objects, be they desirable or undesirable; yet in the case of the monk spoken of here, through the strength of his energy (*virīya-bala*) and the potency of his meditation (*bhāvanā siddhi*), his Insight approximates to the Sixfold Equanimity of a canker-free Saint.

29. Here and in the following, the Pāli term is *vātā*, lit. ‘winds’.

36. Just as when a space is equipped with timber . . . , there comes to be the term 'house', so too, when a space is equipped with bones . . . , there comes to be the term '(bodily) form'.

Cy: Hereby the impersonal nature of the great elements spoken of before, is shown.— House is a mere concept (*paññatti-matta*). If timber, etc., is placed separately in heaps, it is called just a "heap of timber", etc.. — Just as a house that is so termed on account of timber etc., may be called a 'nobleman's house' or a 'brahmin's house', similarly one speaks of the body of a nobleman or a brahmin; but no abiding being (*satta*) or soul (*jīva*) is found here.

37. If the eye in oneself were intact.— Cy: Why has this subject matter been introduced here? In the preceding part of this discourse, materiality derived (from the four elements; *upādā-rūpa*), the four mental Aggregates, and (the last) three of the four Noble Truths have not been dealt with as yet; for speaking of them now, this present exposition is being introduced here.

Appropriate (conscious) engagement (*taṃ jjo saman-nāhāro*).—*Appropriate*, i. e. suitable (*anurūpa*) for the arising of visual consciousness (SubCy). — (*Conscious*) *engagement*. — Cy: This refers to (initial) attention (*manasikāra*), which, dependent on eye and visual objects, arises after having deflected the life-continuum (*bhavaṅgam āvaṭṭetvā*). It belongs to the class of consciousness called 'functional Mind-element' (*kiriya-manodhātu-citta*), which is capable of deflecting the (subconscious) Life-continuum. When no visual objects enter the range of perception, it does not arise with objects of another type. (This

last statement is made for emphasizing again the term 'appropriate'.— Ed.)

38. **Any form in what has thus come to be** (*yaṃ tathāblūtaṃ rūpaṃ*). Cy: In this section and in the following, the Four Truths are explained by way of the sense-doors.

In what has thus come to be. Cy: (The entire complex of bodily and mental processes) that have arisen together with visual consciousness as its adjuncts (*samaṅgino*).

Any form (*yaṃ rūpaṃ*). Cy: Because visual consciousness is not a producer of form (material processes), form (materiality) with (only) three (of the four) producers (*ti-samuṭṭhāna-rūpa*) applies here at the moment of visual consciousness (that is, without the fourth Producer, mind; the other three being temperature, kamma and nutriment). But in the subsequent moment of consciousness, all four producers of materiality obtain.*

Any feeling . . . perception . . . mental formations: these are those conjoined with visual consciousness; and **consciousness** is that very visual consciousness. *Mental Formations:* this refers in particular to volition (*cetanā*); (though also contact, attention, vitality and mental stability belong here to the Aggregate of Formations: SubCy).

“He who sees dependent origination, sees the Teaching (dhamma); he who sees the Teaching, sees dependent origination”.

* See *Visuddhi-Magga*, ch. XIV, §75.

Cy: He who sees conditions, sees also the things dependently arisen; and he who sees the things conditionally arisen, sees also the conditioning things.

Here, in the canonical text, three Truths are mentioned, while the fourth, the Path Truth, has to be taken by implication. It is the Penetration by Meditation and Cultivation (*bhāvanā-paṭivedha*)* applied to those three items (the first three Truths) which constitutes the (Eightfold) Path, namely by way of (right) understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration.

47. Cy: As to the mind-door, the mind in oneself is the life-continuum consciousness (*bhavaṅga-citta*). If it has ceased (to function) and thus is incapable of being a condition of the Adverting Consciousness (*āvajjana-citta*); and also if it proceeds in an enfeebled state (as in deep sleep: *SubCy*), it is called **not intact** (or **damaged**, *paribhinna*). When capable of being a condition of Adverting, it is called **intact** (or **undamaged**, *aparibhinna*).

There would still be no appearance of the appropriate class of consciousness. Cy: This applies only to the phase of the Life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*).—As to the second instance (given in the Discourse), this refers to a case when (the mind is preoccupied) by something else, e. g. with reviewing a familiar *jhāna*, or with attention to a familiar subject of meditation or with the recitation of a familiar Buddha-word. (In such a case, though the sense-organs are intact and

* The word *bhāvanā* has here both these meanings, meditation and cultivation.

sense-objects are present, the mind will not be 'engaged, by them, being fully absorbed by the aforementioned activities. — Ed.)

Here, (*bodily*) *form* has all four Producers, as mind-consciousness can produce bodily processes. *Feeling, perception* and *formations* are those conjoined with mind-consciousness. *Consciousness* is that very mind-consciousness. But the *formations* included here are contact and volition. (SubCy: These are mentioned because they are the most prominent; not because the others are absent.)

After the Great Elder had first considered only one part (of the Four Truths and of the Five Aggregates as stated at the beginning), and having reached now this point of his Discourse, he now deals with everything he had omitted above, namely in the context of the respective sense-door, and thus concludes the Suttanta in accordance with the sequence of meaning (outlined before).

The Structure of the Discourse

as explained in the Commentary

Suppose there is a skilled craftsman who fashions bamboo goods. First he selects a well-grown bamboo and cuts it into four. Putting aside three sections he takes the fourth and divides it into five parts. Of these, again, he lays aside four, takes the fifth and splits it into five pieces. Again he puts away four pieces, takes the fifth and splits it into a lower and a top portion. Laying aside the top portion, he takes the lower one (being softer) and fashions of it various kinds of bamboo goods. But this does not mean that he will not utilize for his work the remaining portions of the bamboo, that is, the top portion, the other four small pieces, the larger four parts and the original three sections. He cannot make use of them all at once, but he utilizes them gradually.

Likewise the Venerable Sāriputta, too, when starting his great Discourse takes up as the main subject (*mātikā*) the four Truths, corresponding to the bamboo worker's first four sections. Then, as the man puts aside three of them, takes the fourth and divides it into five parts, similarly the Great Elder lays aside three of the Truths, takes one, the Truth of Suffering, and gives it a fivefold division, by way of the five Aggregates (*khandha*). Then, again similar to the bamboo worker, he puts aside four of them, the four mental Aggregates, and takes one, the Aggregate of Form (*rūpa-kkhandha*) and gives it a fivefold classification, namely as the four Great Elements and form derived from the four Great Elements (*cattāro ca mahābhūtāni catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāya rūpaṃ*). Again, as the bamboo

worker puts aside four pieces, takes the fifth and splits it into a top and lower portion, so the Elder lays aside derivatory form and three of the elements and divides the remaining one, the Earth Element, into two, as being *in oneself* (*ajjhatta*) and *external* (*bāhira*). As the craftsman puts aside the top portion and makes various bamboo articles from the lower portion, so the Great Elder, laying aside the external Earth Element, divides the "*Earth Element in oneself*" into twenty modes, namely in the Discourse passage beginning "*What is Earth Element in oneself?*". And finally, just as the man utilizes gradually the remaining sections, parts, pieces and portions for his work, as he could not use them all at once, so the Venerable Sāriputta, too, gradually explains also the remaining parts of his subject matter namely: the external Earth Element, the other three Elements, derivatory form,* the four mental Aggregates and the other three Noble Truths,** as he could not do so all at once.

* *Derivatory Form* (*upādāya-rūpa*) is mentioned in the Discourse by way of a prominent part of it, i. e. the six sense organs and their objects (§ 37-46).

** The Fourth Truth of the Path is not stated explicitly in the Discourse. But the sections concerned with conduct and meditation extend to all three divisions of the Noble Eightfold Path, i.e. Virtue, Concentration and Wisdom. The moral restraint of the bhikkhu when insulted or assaulted, shows his Virtue (*sīla*). The sections referring to his firmness of mind and to various meditations (on the four Elements, recollection of the Triple Gem), indicate the practice of Concentration (*samādhi*). The Wisdom-group (*paññā*) of the Path is represented in the meditator's Insight-practice (*vipassanā*) when seeing the Elements as void of self (§10) and the five Aggregates as conditioned and impermanent (§11). (*Ed.*)

Buddhist Reflections on Death

V. F. GUNARATNA

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Kandy

1966

Ceylon

The Wheel Publication No. 102/103

BUDDHIST REFLECTIONS ON DEATH

ERRATA

- P. 3 L. 4 from bottom. Instead of “grasping”
insert “gasping”.
- P. 12 L. 10 instead of “experience” insert
“experencer”.
L. 11 instead of “experencer” insert
“experience”.
- P. 12 L. 8 from the bottom insert “Committing”
“instead of “Commit”.
- P. 17 L. 6 between the words “mode” and “change”
insert the word “of”.
- P. 27 L. 2 instead of “mental” insert “metal”.
- P. 31 L. 2 from bottom instead of “*citta*” insert
“-*viññāna*”.
- P. 33 L. 9 from bottom instead of “clothes” insert
“cloth”.
L. 3 from bottom after the word “available”
insert a comma instead of the full-stop
and instead of a Capital “T” for the
word “the” insert a simple “t”.

THOUGHTS SUCH AS THESE ARE ...

these inquiring thoughts, if wisely pursued, that will ultimately unfold the potentialities inherent in the human mind to receive the highest truths.

BUDDHIST REFLECTIONS ON DEATH

TO THE average man death is by no means a pleasant subject for talk or discussion. It is something dismal and oppressive — a veritable kill-joy, a fit topic for a funeral house only. The average man immersed as he is in the self, ever seeking after the pleasurable, ever pursuing that which excites and gratifies the senses, refuses to pause and ponder seriously that these very objects of pleasure and gratification will some day reach their end. If wise counsel does not prevail and urge the unthinking pleasure-seeking man to consider seriously that death can knock at his door also, it is only the shock of a bereavement under his own roof, the sudden and untimely death of a parent, wife or child that will rouse him up from his delirious round of sense-gratification and rudely awaken him to the hard facts of life. Then only will his eyes open, then only will he begin to ask himself why there is such a phenomenon as death. Why is it inevitable? Why are there these painful partings which rob life of its joys?

To most of us, at some moment or another, the spectacle of death must have given rise to the deepest of thoughts and profoundest of questions. What is life worth, if able bodies that once performed great deeds now lie flat and cold, senseless and lifeless? What is life worth, if eyes that once sparkled with joy, eyes that once beamed with love are now closed forever, bereft of movement, bereft of life? Thoughts such as these are not to be repressed. It is just these inquiring thoughts, if wisely pursued, that will ultimately unfold the potentialities inherent in the human mind to receive the highest truths.

According to the Buddhist way of thinking, death, far from being a subject to be shunned and avoided, is the key that unlocks the seeming mystery of life. It is by understanding death that we understand life; for death is part of the process of life in the larger sense. In another sense, life and death are two ends of the same process and if you understand one end of the process, you also understand the other end. Hence, by understanding the purpose of death we also understand the purpose of life. It is the contemplation of death, the intensive thought that it will some day come upon us, that softens the hardest of hearts, binds one to another with cords of love and compassion, and destroys the barriers of caste, creed and race among the peoples of this earth all of whom are subject to the common destiny of death. Death is a great leveller. Pride of birth, pride of position, pride of wealth, pride of power must give way to the all-consuming thought of inevitable death. It is this levelling aspect of death that made the poet say:—

“Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade”.

It is the contemplation of death that helps to destroy the infatuation of sense-pleasure. It is the contemplation of death that destroys vanity. It is the contemplation of death that gives balance and a healthy sense of proportion to our highly over-wrought minds with their misguided sense of values. It is the contemplation of death that gives strength and steadiness and direction to the erratic human mind, now wandering in one direction, now in another, without an aim, without a purpose. It is not for nothing that the Buddha has, in the very highest terms, commended to his disciples the practice of mindfulness regarding death. This

is known as “*marañānussati bhāvanā*”. One who wants to practise it must at stated times, and also every now and then, revert to the thought *marañam bhavissati* — “death will take place.” This contemplation of death is one of the classical meditation-subjects treated in the *Visuddhi Magga* which states that in order to obtain the fullest results, one should practise this meditation in the correct way, that is, with mindfulness (*sati*), with a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) and with understanding (*ñāṇa*). For example, suppose a young disciple fails to realize keenly that death can come upon him at any moment, and regards it as something that will occur in old age in the distant future, his contemplation of death will be lacking strength and clarity, so much so that it will run on lines which are not conducive to success.

How great and useful is the contemplation of death can be seen from the following beneficial effects enumerated in the *Visuddhi Magga*:— “The disciple who devotes himself to this contemplation of death is always vigilant, takes no delight in any form of existence, gives up hankering after life, censures evil doing, is free from craving as regards the requisites of life, his perception of impermanence becomes established, he realizes the painful and soulless nature of existence and at the moment of death he is devoid of fear, and remains mindful and self-possessed. Finally if in this present life he fails to attain to Nibbāna, upon the dissolution of the body he is bound for a happy destiny”. Thus it will be seen that mindfulness of death not only purifies and refines the mind but also has the effect of robbing death of its fears and terrors, and helps one at that solemn moment when he is grasping for his last breath, to face that situation with fortitude and calm. He is never unnerved at the thought of death but is always prepared for it. It is such a man that can truly exclaim “O death, where is thy sting?”

II

IN THE *Anguttara Nikāya* the Buddha has said, “Oh Monks, there are ten ideas, which if made to grow, made much of, are of great fruit, of great profit for plunging into Nibbāna, for ending up in Nibbāna.” Of these ten, one is death. Contemplation on death and on other forms of sorrow such as old age, and disease, constitutes a convenient starting point for the long line of investigation and meditation that will ultimately lead to Reality. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Buddha. Was it not the sight of an old man followed by the sight of a sick man and thereafter the sight of a dead man that made Prince Siddhattha, living in the lap of luxury, to give up wife and child, home and the prospect of a kingdom, and to embark on a voyage of discovery of truth, a voyage that ended in the glory of Buddhahood and the bliss of Nibbāna?

The marked disinclination of the average man to advert to the problem of death, the distaste that arouses in him the desire to turn away from it whenever the subject is broached, are all due to the weakness of the human mind, sometimes occasioned by fear, sometimes by *taṇhā* or selfishness, but at all times supported by ignorance (*avijjā*). The disinclination to understand death, is no different from the disinclination of a man to subject himself to a medical check-up although he feels that something is wrong with him. We must learn to value the necessity to face facts. Safety always lies in truth. The sooner we know our condition the safer are we, for we can then take the steps necessary for our betterment. The saying, “where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise” has no application here. To live with no thought of death is to live in a fool’s paradise. *Visuddhi Magga* says,

“Now when a man is truly wise,
His constant task will surely be,
This recollection about death,
Blessed with such mighty potency.”

Now that we have understood why such potency attaches itself to reflections on death, let us proceed to engage ourselves in such reflections. The first question that the reflecting mind would ask itself will be, “What is the cause of death?” Ask the physiologist what is death, he will tell you that it is a cessation of the functioning of the human body. Ask him what causes the cessation of the functioning of the human body, he will tell you that the immediate cause is that the heart ceases to beat. Ask him why the heart ceases to beat, he will tell you that disease in any part of the human system, if not arrested, will worsen and cause a gradual degeneration and ultimate breakdown of some organ or other of the human system, thus throwing an undue burden on the work of the heart — the only organ that pumps blood. Hence it is disease that ultimately cause the cessation of the heart beat. Ask the physiologist what causes disease, he will tell you that disease is the irregular functioning (dis-ease) of the human system in some part or other and can be caused in a variety of ways, such as by the entry of a germ into the human body, or by the violation of rules of healthy living or by an accident — each of which can impair some part or other of the human system, thus causing disease. Ask the physiologist what causes the entry of a germ or the violation of health rules or the occurrence of an accident. He will have to answer, “I do not know, I cannot say”. Certainly the physiologist cannot help us at this stage of our reflections of death, since the question is beyond the realm of physiology and enters the realm of human conduct. When two persons are exposed to germ infection, why should it sometimes be

the man of lower resistance power who escapes the infection while the man of greater resistance succumbs to it? When three persons tread the same slippery floor, why should one slip and fall and crack his head and die, while the second slips and sustains only minor injuries, while the third does not slip at all? These are questions which clearly show that the answer is not to be expected from the physiologist whose study is the work of the human body only. Nor is the answer to be expected from a psychologist whose study is the work of the human mind only. Far, far beyond the confines of physiology and psychology is the answer to be sought. It is here that Buddhist philosophy becomes inviting. It is just here that the law of Kamma, also called the law of Cause and Effect or the law of Action and Reaction makes a special appeal to the inquiring mind. It is Kamma that steps in to answer further questions. It is Kamma that determines why one man should succumb to germ-infection while the other should not. It is Kamma that decides why the three men treading the same slippery floor should experience three different results. Kamma sees to it that each man gets in life just what he deserves, not more, nor less. Each man's condition in life with its particular share of joys and sorrows is nothing more nor less than the result of his own past actions, good and bad. Thus we see that Kamma is a strict accountant. Each man weaves his own web of fate. Each man is the architect of his own fortune. As the Buddha said in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, "Beings are the owners of their deeds. Their deeds are the womb from which they spring. With their deeds they are bound up. Their deeds are their refuge. Whatever deeds they do, good or evil, of such they will be heirs". As actions are various, reactions also are various. Hence the varying causes of death to various persons under various situations. Every cause has its particular effect. Every action has its particular reaction. This is the unfailing law

When Kamma is referred to as a law, it must not be taken to mean something promulgated by the state or some governing body. That would imply the existence of a law-giver. It is a law in the sense that it is a constant way of action. It is in the nature of certain actions that they should produce certain results. That nature is also called law. It is in this sense that we speak of the law of gravitation which causes a mango on the tree to fall to the ground, not that there is a supreme external power or being which commands the mango to fall. It is in the nature of things, the weight of the mango, the attraction of the earth, that the mango should fall. It is again a constant way of action. Similarly, in the realm of human conduct and human affairs, the law of cause and effect, of action and reaction, operates. (It is then called Kamma or more properly Kamma Vipāka.) It is not dependent on any extraneous arbitrary power, but it is in the very nature of things that certain actions should produce certain results. Hence the birth and the death of a man is no more the result of an arbitrary power than the rise and fall of a tree. Nor is it mere chance. There is no such thing as chance. It is unthinkable that chaos rules the world. Every situation, every condition is a sequel to a previous situation and a previous condition. We resort to the word 'chance' when we do not know the cause.

Sufficient has been said for us to know that in Kamma we find the root cause of death. We also know that no arbitrary power fashions this Kamma according to its will or caprice. It is in the result of our own actions. “*Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ*” — as we sow, so shall we reap. Kamma is not something generated in the closed box of the past. It is always in the making. We are by our actions, every moment contributing to it. Hence, the future is not all conditioned by the past. The present is also conditioning it.

If you fear death, why not make the wisest use of the present so as to ensure a happy future? To fear death on the one hand and on the other, not to act in a way that would ensure a happy future, is either madness or mental lethargy. He who leads a virtuous life, harming none and helping whom he can, in conformity with the Dhamma, always remembering the Dhamma, is without doubt laying the foundation of a happy future life. “*Dhammo have rakkhati dhamma cāriṃ*” — the Dhamma most assuredly protects him who lives in conformity with it. Such conformity is facilitated by the contemplation of death. Death has no fears for one who is thus protected by Dhamma. Then shall he, cheerful and unafraid, be able to face the phenomenon of death with fortitude and calm.

III

ANOTHER approach to the understanding of death is through an understanding of the law of aggregates or Sankhāras which states that everything is a combination of things and does not exist by itself as an independent entity. “Sankhāra” is a Pali term used for an aggregation, a combination, or an assemblage. The word, is derived from the prefix “*San*” meaning “together” and the root “*kar*” meaning “to make”. The two together mean “made together” or “constructed together” or “combined together”. “All things in this world,” says the Buddha, “are aggregates or combinations.” That is to say, they do not exist by themselves, but are composed of several things. Any one thing, be it a mighty mountain or a minute mustard seed, is a combination of several things. These several things are

themselves combinations of several other things. Nothing is a unity, nothing is an entity, large or small. Neither is the sun nor moon an entity, nor is the smallest grain of sand an entity. Each of them is a Sankhāra, a combination of several things.

Things seem to be entities owing to the fallibility of our senses — our faculties of sight, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting, and even thinking. Science has accepted the position that our senses are not infallible guides to us. A permanent entity is only a concept, only a name. It does not exist in reality. In the famous dialogues between King Milinda and Thera Nāgasena, the latter wishing to explain to the King this law of aggregates, enquired from the King how he came there, whether on foot or riding. The King replied that he came in a chariot.

“Your Majesty”, said Nāgasena, “if you came in a chariot, declare to me the chariot. Is the pole the chariot?” “Truly not”, said the King. “Is the axle the chariot” asked Nāgasena. “Truly not”, said the King. “Is the chariot-body the chariot?” — “Truly not”, said the King. “Is the banner staff the chariot?” — “Truly not”, said the King. “Is the yoke the chariot?” — “Truly not”, said the King. “Are the reins the chariot?” — “Truly not”, said the King. “Is the goading stick the chariot?” — “Truly not”, said the King.

“Where then, Oh King”, asked Nāgasena, “is this chariot in which you say you came? You are a mighty king of all the continent of India and yet speak a lie when you say there is no chariot”. In this way by sheer analysis, by breaking up what is signified by chariot into its various component parts, Nāgasena was able to convince the King that a chariot as such does not exist, but only component parts exist. So much so that the King was able to answer thus, —

“Venerable Nāgasena, I speak no lie. The word ‘chariot’ is but a figure of speech, a term, an appellation, a convenient designation for pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body and banner staff.”

Similarly, “human being”, “man”, “I” are mere names and terms, not corresponding to anything that is really and actually existing. In the ultimate sense there exist only changing energies. The term “Sankhāra” however refers not only to matter and properties of matter known as “corporeality” (*rūpa*), but also to mind and properties of mind known as “mentality” (*nāma*). Hence, the mind is as much a combination or aggregate as the body.

When it is said that the mind is a combination of several thoughts, it is not meant that these several thoughts exist together simultaneously as do the different parts of the chariot. What is meant is a succession of thoughts, an unending sequence of thoughts, now a thought of hatred, thereafter a thought of sorrow, thereafter a thought of duty near at hand and thereafter again the original thought of hatred etc., etc., in endless succession. Each thought arises, stays a while and passes on. The three stages of being are found here also — *uppāda*, *ṭhiti*, *bhanga* — arising, remaining and passing away. Thoughts arise, one following the other with such a rapidity of succession that the illusion of a permanent thing called “the mind” is created, but really there is no permanent thing but only a flow of thoughts. The rapid succession of thoughts is compared to the flow of water in a river (*nadī soto viyā*), one drop following another in rapid succession that we seem to see a permanent entity in this flow. But this is an illusion. Similarly there is no such permanent entity as the mind. It is only a succession of thoughts, a stream of thoughts that arise and pass away.

If I say that I crossed a river this morning and recrossed it in the evening, is my statement true as regards what I crossed and what I recrossed? Was it what I crossed in the morning that I crossed in the evening? Is it not one set of waters that I crossed in the morning, and a different set of waters that I crossed in the evening? Which of the two is the river, or are there two rivers, a morning river and an evening river? Had I recrossed at mid-day, then there would also be a mid-day river. Asking oneself such questions one would see that every hour, every minute it is a different river. Where then is a permanent thing called 'river?' Is it the river bed or the banks? You will now realize that there is nothing to which you can point out and say, "This is the river". "River" exists only as a name. It is a convenient and conventional mode of expression (*vohāra vacana*) for a continuous unending flow of drops of water. Just such is the mind. It is a continuous stream of thoughts. Can you point to any one thought that is passing through the mind and say, "This truly is my mind, my permanent mind?" A thought of anger towards a person may arise in me. If that thought is my permanent mind how comes it that on a later occasion a thought of love towards the same person can arise in me? If that too is my permanent mind, then there are two opposing permanent minds. Questioning on these lines one comes to the inevitable conclusion that there is no such thing as a permanent mind; it is only a convenient expression (*vohāra vacana*) for an incessant and variegated stream of thoughts that arise and pass away. "Mind" does not exist in reality. It exists only in name as an expression for a succession of thoughts. Chariot—river—body and mind—these are all combinations. By themselves and apart from these combinations they do not exist. There is nothing intrinsically stable in them, nothing corresponding to reality, nothing permanent, no eternally abiding substratum or soul.

Thus if body is only a name for a combination of changing factors and the mind is likewise only a name for a succession of thoughts, the psycho-physical combination called “man” is not an entity except by way of conventional speech. So when we say a chariot moves or a man walks it is correct only figuratively or conventionally. Actually and really, in the ultimate sense there is only a movement, there is only a walking. Hence has it been said in the *Visuddhi Magga*:

“There is no doer but the deed
There is no experience but the
experiencer.
Constituent parts alone roll on.
This is the true and correct view.”

Now, how does this cold and relentless analysis of mind and body become relevant to the question of death? The relevancy is just this. When analysis reveals that there is no person but only a process, that there is no doer but only a deed, we arrive at the conclusion that there is no person who dies, but that there is only a process of dying. Moving is a process, walking is a process, so dying is also a process. Just as there is no hidden agent back and behind the process of moving or walking, so, there is no hidden agent back and behind the process of dying. If only we are capable of keeping more and more to this abhidhammic view of things, we will be less and less attached to things, we will be less and less commit the folly of identifying ourselves with our actions. Thus shall we gradually arrive at a stage when we can grasp the view, so difficult to comprehend, that all life is just a process. It is one of the grandest realisations that can descend on deluded man. It is so illuminating, so enlightening. It is indeed a revelation. With the appearance of that realisation there is a disappearance of all worries and fears regarding death. That is a logical sequence. Just as

with the appearance of light darkness must disappear, even so the light of knowledge dispels the darkness of ignorance, fear and worry. With realisation, with knowledge, these fears and worries will be shown as being empty and unfounded. It is so very easy to keep on declaring this. What is difficult is to comprehend this. Why is it so difficult? Because we are so accustomed to thinking in a groove, because we are so accustomed to overlook the fallacies in our thinking, because we are so accustomed to wrong landmarks and wrong routes in our mental journeyings, we are reluctant to cut out a new path. It is we who deny ourselves the benefits of *Sammā Diṭṭhi* (Right views). The inveterate habit of identifying ourselves with our actions is the breeding ground of that inviting belief that there is some subtle “ego” back and behind all our actions and thoughts. This is the arch mischief maker that misleads us. We fail to realise that the ego-feeling within us is nothing more than the plain and simple stream of consciousness that is changing always and is never the same for two consecutive moments. As Professor James said, “The thoughts themselves are the thinkers”. In our ignorance we hug the belief that this ego-consciousness is the indication of the presence of some subtle elusive soul. It is just the mind’s reaction to objects. When we walk we fail to realize that it is just the process of walking and nothing else. We hug the fallacy that there is something within us that directs the walking. When we think, we hug the fallacy that there is something within us that thinks. We fail to realize that it is just the process of thinking and nothing else. Nothing short of profound meditation on the lines indicated in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** can cure us of our “*micchā diṭṭhi*” (false belief). The day we are able by such meditation to rid ourselves of these cherished

* See the author’s “The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and its Application to Modern Life” (*The Wheel* No. 60).

false beliefs against which the Buddha has warned us times without number, beliefs which warp our judgment and cloud our vision of things, shall we be able to develop that clarity of vision which alone can show us things as they actually are. Then only will the realization dawn on us that there is no one who suffers dying, but that there is only a dying-process just as much as living is also a process. If one can train himself to reflect on these lines, it must necessarily mean that he is gradually giving up the undesirable and inveterate habit of identifying himself with his bodily and mental processes and that he is gradually replacing that habit by a frequent contemplation on *Anattā* (*N'etaṃ mama*, this does not belong to me). Such contemplation will result in a gradual relaxation of our tight grip on our "fond ego". When one thus ceases to hug the ego-delusion, the stage is reached when there is complete detachment of the mind from such allurements. Then shall one be able cheerful and unafraid, to face the phenomenon of death with fortitude and calm.

IV

WE have seen how reflections on the great law of Kamma and the great law of Aggregates or Sankhāras can assist us to form a correct view of death and help us to face death in the correct attitude. Now there is a third great law, a knowledge of which can assist us in the same way, namely the law of change or *Anicca*. It is the principle behind the first noble truth, the truth of *Dukkha* or Disharmony. It is precisely because there is change or lack of permanency in anything and everything in this world, that there is suffering

or disharmony in this world. This principle of change is expressed by the well known formula *Aniccā vata sankhārā*—“all sankhāras are impermanent.” Nothing in this world is stable or static. Time moves everything whether we like it or not. Time moves us also whether we like it or not. Nothing in this world can arrest the ceaseless passage of time and nothing survives time. There is no stability anywhere. Change rules the world. Everything mental and physical is therefore transitory and changing. The change may be quick or the change may be slow, but change there certainly is. The change may be perceptible or it may be imperceptible. We live in an ever changing world, while we ourselves are also all the while changing.

A *sankhāra*, we have learnt, is a combination of several factors. These factors are also subject to the law of change. They are changing factors. Hence a Sankhāra is not merely a combination of several factors. It is a changing combination of changing factors, since the combination itself is changing. It is because there is change that there is growth. It is because there is change that there is decay. Growth also leads to decay because there is change. Why do flowers bloom only to fade? It is because of the operation of the law of change. It is this law that makes the strength of youth give way to the weakness of old age. It is on account of the operation of this law that though great buildings are erected towering towards the sky, some distant day will see them totter and tumble. It is this aspect of the law of change, the process of disintegration, that causes colour to fade, iron to rust, and timber to rot. It is such reflections that must have led the poet Gray contemplating a burial ground in a country church yard to say,

“The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
All that beauty, all that wealth ever gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour.
The path of glory leads but to the grave”.

Sometimes the working of this law is not apparent. Even that which looks so solid and substantial as a rocky mountain will not always remain as such. Science tells us, that may be after thousands of years, it will wear down by the process of disintegration, and that where a lake now is, a mountain once was. If things arise they must fall, *Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti*, says the Buddha — “having arisen, they fall”. Aeons and aeons ago the earth and the moon were one. Today while the earth is still warm and alive, the moon is cold and dead. The earth too, science tells us, is very slowly, but surely losing its heat and water. Gradually and slowly it is cooling down. Aeons and aeons hence it will cease to support life. It will be a cold and lifeless planet. It will be a second moon. This is just one of several instances where the mighty law of change works imperceptibly. The Buddha also has foretold the end of the earth.

Just as the law of change can cause decline and decay it can also cause growth and progress. Hence it is that a seed becomes a plant and a plant becomes a tree, and a bud becomes a flower. But again there is no permanency in growth. Growth again gives way to decay. The plant must die. The flower must wither. It is an unending cycle of birth and death, integration and disintegration, of rise and fall. Hence it is that Shelley has aptly said,

“Worlds on worlds are rolling over from creation to
decay,
Like bubbles on a river, sparkling, bursting, borne away”.

It is no arbitrary power that brings about these changes, progressive and retrogressive. The tendency to change is inherent in all things. The law of change does not merely declare that things change but also declares that change is of the very essence of the things. Think of anything, and you will find it to be a mode^{of} change and a condition of change. Change (*aniccatā*) is the working hypothesis of the scientist. One of the mightiest tasks of the scientist, also his proudest boast, was to destroy the idea of stability and fixity in the organic world. We have heard of the supposed entity of the atom being shown up as a combination of energies. While science has applied the law of change to the physical domain to split up unity into diversity, the Buddha has applied the self-same law to the entire mind-body complex and split up the seeming unity of being into the five aggregates known as "*Pañcakkhandha*." The Buddha has gone further and explained why this aggregate is temporary, why it should some day disintegrate and why a fresh integration should arise upon the disintegration. Everything works upon a triple principle of *Uppāda*, *Ṭhiti* and *Bhanga* — arising, remaining and passing away. Even in the case of a thought these three stages are present.

When the Buddha dealt with the four chief elements of the world of matter and showed that they too are subject to the great law of change, he proceeded to show that the human body which is also formed of the same elements must necessarily be subject to the same great law of change. "What then of this fathom-long body" asked the Buddha. "Is there anything here of which it may rightly be said, 'I' or 'mine' or 'am?' Nay verily nothing whatsoever".

The sooner one appreciates the working of this law of change, the more will he be able to profit by it, attuning

himself to that way of living, that way of thinking and speaking and acting, where this law will work to his best advantage. The man who knows the subtle working of this law of change, will also know how '*nāma*' (mentality) can change by purposeful action. However deeply he gets involved in evil, he will not regard evil as a permanent obstruction because he knows that the evil mind can also change. He knows that by constant contemplation on what is good, good thoughts tend to arise in the mind. The constant contemplation of good will cause *Kusala Sankhāras* (good tendencies) to arise in the mind and these *Kusala Sankhāras* will dislodge the *Akusala Sankhāras* (evil tendencies) — a process which hitherto appeared to him to be impossible. When his thoughts and tendencies change for the better, when his mind is permeated thus with good tendencies, his speech and deeds automatically change for the better — a pleasant surprise for him. With purer and purer conduct (*sīla*) thus acquired, deeper and deeper concentration (*samādhi*) is possible. Increased power to concentrate accelerates the pace towards the achievement of that Highest Wisdom known as *Paññā*. Thus the bad in him changes into good. A bad man changes into a good man. By purposeful action the law of change is made to operate to his highest benefit. He now becomes a good man in the truest sense of the word. The good man is always a happy man. He has no fear of death because he has no fear of the life beyond. Of such a man has it been said in the Dhammapada:—

“The doer of good rejoices in this world.
He rejoices in the next world.
He rejoices in both worlds.”

The powerful change brought about in his life will ensure upon its dissolution, the birth of a more fortunate being — a result which he can confidently expect at his dying

moment. Not for him then are the fears and terrors of death. Furthermore when one follows minutely the working of the Law of Change in respect of one's own body and mind and also in respect of another's body and mind, one begins to acquire so close a familiarity with change that death will not appear as something untoward and unnatural. It will appear as just one more example of the process of change to which one has been subject all along since birth. It will appear as something to be expected, something that must occur to fit in with what had occurred earlier. To one who can thus reflect on death, there is nothing to fear. Cheerful and unafraid, he can face the phenomenon of death with fortitude and calm.

V

THERE is another angle from which we can study death and that is from the angle of the law of conditionality which is closely akin to the law of *Anicca* or Change. Not only are *Sankhāras* made up of several things but they are also conditioned by several factors, and when these conditioning factors cease to exist, the conditioned thing also ceases to exist. This is the law of conditionality and has been thus expressed in very general terms:— *Imasmim sati, idam hoti* — when this exists, that exists, *Imassa uppādā, idam uppajjati* — when this arises, that arises. *Imasmim asati, idam na hoti* — when this is not, that is not. *Imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati* — when this ceases that ceases. As this principle is of universal applicability, the working of the process of life and death also comes within its operation. The chain of life-conditioning factors consists of twelve links or *Nidānas*

which together are known as the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* or Law of Dependent Origination. A knowledge of this law is most necessary. In the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, Buddha addressing Ananda said, “It is through not understanding, through not penetrating this doctrine, that these beings have become entangled like a ball of thread.”

The formula of Dependent Origination runs as follows:—

Conditioned by ignorance, activities arise.

Conditioned by activities, consciousness arises.

Conditioned by consciousness, mentality and corporeality arise.

Conditioned by mentality and corporeality, the six faculties arise.

Conditioned by the six faculties, contact arises.

Conditioned by contact, sensation arises.

Conditioned by sensation, craving arises.

Conditioned by craving, grasping arises.

Conditioned by grasping, becoming arises.

Conditioned by becoming, rebirth arises.

Conditioned by re-birth, old age and death arise.

This is the process that goes on and on ad infinitum. Hence has it been said:—

“Again and again the slow wits seek re-birth,
Again and again comes birth and dying comes,
Again and again men bear us to the grave”.

This important law is easier told than understood. This is one of the profoundest doctrines preached by the Buddha. It is only frequent and hard thinking on it that will bring out its deepest meanings. This is not the place to explain

these twelve links in full*, but in order to dispel some of the misconceptions surrounding the notion of death, it is necessary to make some observations on the first link--*Avijjā*, or Ignorance, and thereafter on the second and third links, viz. activities and consciousness, because it is these two links that involve death and re-birth.

These twelve links, it must be understood, do not represent a pure succession of cause and effect, a straight line of action and reaction. It is wrong to call this a causal series, as it is not a chain of causes in strict sequence of time. Some of the links (though not all) arise simultaneously, and the nexus or connection between one factor and the next is of condition rather than cause. There are 24 modes of conditioning (*paccayā*) which may operate in the relation of one factor to another. Each factor is both conditioning (*paccaya dhamma*) and conditioned (*paccayuppanna dhamma*). Many of these factors are both simultaneously and interdependently working.

A few observations now, on the first link of *Avijjā* or ignorance. When it is said that Ignorance is the first link, it does not mean that Ignorance is the first cause of existence. The Buddha has definitely said that the first cause, the ultimate origin of things is unthinkable. *Anamataggāyam saṅsāro, pubbā-koṭi na paññāyati*, "Beginningless, O monks, is this course of existence. A starting point is not to be found". Bertrand Russell has stated, "There is no reason to suppose that this world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is really due to the poverty of our imagination". Ignorance then is not the primary origin of things but is the originating factor of suffering in the

* See "Dependent Origination" by Piyadassi Thera (*The Wheel No. 15 a/b.*)

10913

Religious Affairs Department

L. B. R. A. R. Y. 21

Kaba Aye, Rangoon.

process of life and death so far as man is concerned. All the twelve factors are continuing factors. It is only if we ponder deeply that we will be convinced of this truth, namely, that there can really be no beginning to a process that has no end.

What is meant by Ignorance as being the first link in the series? By Ignorance is here meant the Ignorance of the essentially fundamental facts of existence, namely, the fact of suffering or disharmony, the fact of the origin of suffering or disharmony, the fact of the cessation of suffering or disharmony, and the fact of the way leading to the cessation of suffering or disharmony. In other words it is the ignorance of that which the Buddha has called the Four Noble Truths. Ignorance is always a dangerous condition. In such a condition you are at the mercy of every one and everything.

“’Tis Ignorance that entails the dreary round
Now here now there — of countless births and deaths.
But no hereafter waits for him who knows”.

The second link is Activities. By Activities is here meant volitional activities, called in Pali *Sankhārā*. The formula states — “Dependent upon Ignorance arise activities”. This means that ignorance of the essentially fundamental facts of life becomes a conditioning factor for the volitional activities of man. It is only a knowledge and a realisation of the Four Noble Truths that, according to the Buddha, enables a man to see things as they actually are. In the state of ignorance of these Truths man, prevented as he is from seeing things as they actually are, adopts various courses of action. These activities are not merely the outcome of ignorance once and for all, but ignorance continues to condition these volitional activities so long as existence continues. These volitional activities or mental energies are

multifarious. In the context of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, “*Sankhārā*” can therefore be said to signify “*Kamma*” or “Kammic Volition”. The first link of Ignorance and the second link of Activities refer to the past birth. The next eight links refer to the present existence and the last two refer to the future existence.

The third link is *Viññāṇa* or Consciousness. The formula states — “Dependent upon Activities arises Consciousness”. By consciousness is here meant re-linking consciousness or re-birth consciousness. By this formula is therefore meant that the conscious life of man in his present birth is conditioned by his volitional activities, his good and bad actions, his *Kamma* of the past life. To put it in another way, the consciousness of his present life is dependent on his past *Kamma*. This formula is highly important since it involves a linking of the past life with the present and thereby implies re-birth. Hence this third link is called *paṭisandhi viññāṇa* or re-linking consciousness or re-birth consciousness.

It may be wondered how activities of the past life can condition a present birth. Material sciences seek to explain birth on the premises of the present existence only. The biologist says, that it is the union of father with mother that conditions birth. According to the Buddha, these two conditioning factors by themselves are insufficient to result in birth, otherwise every complete union of father with mother should result in birth. These two are purely physical factors and it is illogical to expect that a psycho-physical organism, a mind-body combination known as man could arise from two purely physical factors without the intervention of a psychical or mental factor. Therefore, says the Buddha, a third factor is also necessary in addition to the two purely physical factors of the sperm and the ovum.

This third factor is *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* or re-linking consciousness. The wick and the oil will not alone produce a flame. You may drown a wick in gallons of oil but there will never be a flame. You may use a wick of the most inflammable type but there will never be a flame. Not until a bright spark of light comes from elsewhere will the action of the oil and the wick produce a flame. We have considered that the activities of the past, are certain energies — mental energies. The Kamma of the past releases these energies which are potent enough to create the condition for the being to be reborn in an appropriate place according to the nature of activities performed. These energies it is that produce the *paṭisandhi viññāṇa*, the third factor. It will thus be seen that these potential energies work in co-operation with the physical laws to condition the natural formation of the embryo in the mother's womb. Just as sleep is no bar to the continuance of bodily operations in consequence of the principle of life continuing within it, even so death is no bar to the continuance of the operation of being which is only transformed to another suitable realm or plane there to be reborn and to re-live, in consequence of the will-to-live remaining alive and unabated at the moment of dissolution. The life-stream, the process of being thus continues, while the Kammic forces it generates give it shape and form in the appropriate sphere of existence, investing it with its new characteristics and securing for it "a local habitation and a name". A seed coming in contact with the soil produces a plant, but the plant is not born of the seed and the soil only. There are other factors drawn from unseen extraneous sources that come into play, such as light and air and moisture. It is the combined presence of all these factors that provide the opportunity for the birth of the plant. The unseen extraneous factor where the birth of a being is concerned is the terminating kammic energy of

the dying man, or, to express it in another way, the reproductive power of the will-to-live.

Is there any need to doubt the potency of the past Kamma to create a present existence? Do you doubt that the activities of one existence can condition consciousness in another existence? If so, calmly reflect on the incessant and multifarious nature of human activities, the one feature of human life, the unfailing characteristic of every moment of individual existence. When you have sufficiently grasped the fact of the incessant and multifarious nature of human activities, ask yourself the question who or what propels these activities? A little reflection will reveal that the activities of man are propelled by a myriad desires and cravings which ultimately spring from the desire to live. This will-to-live by whatever name you may call it, motivates all activities. We eat, we earn, we acquire, we struggle, we advance, we hate, we love, we plot, we plan, we deceive, — all in order that we may continue living. Even the desire to commit suicide, paradoxical as it may seem, arises from the desire to live — to live free from entanglements and disappointments. Just consider the cumulative effect of hundreds of desire-propelled activities performed by us, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute for a long period of years. These are all Kammas, these are all energies released. These are all strong creative forces that are generated. It is difficult to imagine that with the present life will end all the desire-forces it has brought into existence. There will always be at any given moment an outstanding balance of unexpected Kammic energies. These powers, energies or forces contain within themselves the potentialities of attracting for themselves the conditions for further existence. These energies or forces are potent enough to create the conditions for re-living when the body which sustained these forces ceases to live.

These then will constitute the terminating Kammic energy of the dying man, or to express the same idea in another way, this is the reproductive power of the will-to-live. In short, the will-to-live makes it possible to re-live. Now we see how the terminating Kammic energy of the dying man becomes the third factor, the psychical factor which along with the two physical factors of the sperm and the ovum, conditions future birth. It is this relinking consciousness that becomes the nucleus of a new *nāma-rūpa* or mind-body combination. This is the resultant terminal energy generated by the volitional activities of the past. Science teaches us that energy is indestructible but that it can be transmuted into other forms of energy. Why then cannot these powerful energies of the past Kamma, impelled as they are by the pulsation of craving and motivated as they are by the will-to-live, continue to exert their potent influences albeit in some other manner and in some other sphere? What is it that travels from one existence to another, you may ask. Do activities (Kammic energies) travel or do their resultant forces travel? Or does consciousness itself travel? The answer is an emphatic, “No”. None of these travel, but the Kammic energy of actions performed is a tremendous force or power which can make its influence felt and to effect this influence distance is no bar. Distance is never a bar to Kammic energies making themselves felt. In the *Mahā-Taṇhā-Sankhaya Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha strongly reprimanded the bhikkhu Sāti for declaring as the Buddha’s teachings that *Viññāṇa* or consciousness travels from existence to existence. “Foolish man”, said the Buddha, “has not consciousness generated by conditions been spoken of in many a figure of speech by me saying ‘apart from conditions there is no origination of consciousness’?” No physical contact is necessary for mind to influence matter. Sir William Crooke, in his Edinburgh lectures on mental science has said, “It has

also been proved by experiment that by an act of will the mind can cause objects such as mental levers to move". When the matter on which mental energies act is situated far away. in other planes and spheres of existence, we are only employing a figure of speech when we say that Kamma has travelled or that energy has travelled. Many a simile has been employed by the Buddha to show that nothing travels or transmigrates from one life to another. It is just a process of one condition influencing another. The resultant Kammic energies of human activity, not yet expanded, are so powerful that they can condition the formation of an embryo in another world and give it consciousness.

One important point must not be overlooked. The *Paṭi-sandhi-viññāṇa* or re-linking consciousness arises only in the unborn child. In the pre-natal stage the re-linking consciousness may be said to exist only passively (in the *bhavaṅga* state) and not actively, since the child is still part of the body of the mother and has no separate, independent existence nor does it contact the external world. When however the child is born and assumes a separate existence and begins to contact the external world, then it may be said that the *bhavaṅga* nature of the pre-natal state of mind gives way for the first time to a fully conscious mind process, the *Vīthi-citta*.

Distance is no bar to the sequence of cause and effect. Reference had already been made to the Buddha's reprimand of a bhikkhu called Sāti for declaring as having been taught by the Buddha that consciousness passes from existence to existence. In the re-linking consciousness arises the whole energy of the previous consciousness, and thus the embryo while inheriting the characteristics of the new parents inherits also the impressions of the past experiences of the

dying man. How else can one explain characteristics not accounted for by heredity? How else can one account for different characteristics in twins born of the same parents and growing under the same environment?

We have now studied death from several angles. From whatever angle we may look at death it is an integral part of the great process of life. Death is like the break up of an electric bulb. The light is extinguished but not the current, and when a fresh bulb is fixed the light re-appears. Similarly there is a continuity of life current, the break up of the present body does not extinguish the current of Kammic energy which will manifest itself in an appropriate fresh body. The simile is not on all fours with life. Whereas there is nothing to bring the electric current and the fresh bulb together (a conjunction left to chance), the type of life led, the nature of thought entertained, the quality of deeds performed will be strong enough to cause an immediate re-linking consciousness of like nature to arise, on the principle that like attracts like. Thus the dying man is drawn to an environment, good or bad, which he has created for himself by his thought, word and deed, for on these depend the nature of our future life. Every moment we are creating our future. Every moment then we must be careful.

If we can visualize the immensity of the past and the immensity of the future, the present loses its seemingly compelling importance. If we could but visualize the vistas of innumerable births and deaths through which we have passed and vistas of innumerable births and deaths through which we will pass in the future, we should not, we could not fear just this one death out of the endless series of births and deaths, rises and falls, appearances and disappearances which constitute the ceaseless process of sansāric life.

VI

THERE is yet another law the understanding of which helps in the understanding of death. It is the Law of Becoming or *Bhava* which is a corollary to the Law of Change or *Anicca*. Becoming or *Bhava* is also one of the factors in the scheme of Dependent Origination. According to Buddhism the Law of Becoming like the Law of Change is constantly at work and applies to everything. While the Law of Change states that nothing is permanent but is ever changing, the Law of Becoming states that everything is always in the process of changing into something else. Not only is everything changing but the nature of that change is a process of becoming something else, however short or long the process may be. Briefly put, the Law of Becoming is this:—"Nothing is, but is becoming". A ceaseless becoming is the feature of all things. A small plant is always in the process of becoming a big tree, and a big tree is always in the process of becoming an old tree. There is no point of time at which anything is not becoming something else. Rhys Davids in his American lectures has said, "In every case as soon as there is a beginning, there begins also at that moment to be an ending".

If you stand by the sea and watch how wave upon wave rises and falls, one wave merging into the next, one wave becoming another, you will appreciate that this entire world is also just that — becoming and becoming. If you can stand by a bud continuously until it becomes a flower, you will be amazed to see that the condition of the bud at one moment appears to be no different from its condition at the next moment and so on, until before your very eyes, the change has taken place though you could not discern it at all. The process is so gradual, one stage merging into the next so imperceptibly. It is a becoming. If you close your eyes to this process, if you see the bud one day and then see it a day later, then

only will you see a change. Then only will you speak in the terms of “buds” and “flowers” and not in terms of a process, of a becoming.

If you can keep on looking at a new-born babe without a break for ten years you will not perceive any change. The baby born at 10 a.m. appears just the same at 11 a.m. or at 12 noon. Each moment shows no difference from the next. One condition merges into the next so imperceptibly. It is a becoming, a continuous process of becoming. Close your eyes to this process and see the baby once a month. Then only will you perceive a change. Then only can you speak in terms of “baby” and “boy” and not in terms of a process or a becoming.

If you think you can watch minutely the progress of time, see whether you can divide it into present, past and future as do the grammarians speaking of present tense, past tense and future tense. In the view of Buddhist philosophy, time is one continuous process, each fragmentary portion of time merging into the other and forming such an unbroken continuity that no dividing line can precisely be drawn separating past time from present, or present time from future. The moment you think of the present and say to yourself ‘this moment is present time’ it is gone — vanished into the past before you can even complete your sentence. The present is always slipping into the past, becoming the past, and future is always becoming the present. Everything is becoming. This is an universal process, a constant flux. It is when we miss the continuity of action that we speak in terms of things rather than processes or becomings.

Biology says that the human body undergoes a continual change, all the cells composing the body being replaced every seven years. According to Buddhism, changes in the

body are taking place every moment. At no two consecutive moments is the body the same. In the last analysis, it is a stream of atoms or units of matter of different types which are every moment arising and passing away. The body is thus constantly dying and re-living within this existence itself. This momentary death (*khaṇika maraṇa*) takes place every moment of our existence.

In the *Visuddhi Magga* it is said that in the ultimate sense, the life span of living beings is extremely short, being only as much as the duration of a single conscious moment. “Just as a chariot wheel” continues the *Visuddhi Magga* “when it is rolling, touches the ground at one point only of the circumference of its tyre, so too the life of living beings lasts only for a single conscious moment. When that consciousness has ceased, the being is said to have ceased”. Thus we see that every moment of our lives we are dying and being reborn. This being so why should we dread just one particular moment of death, the moment that marks the end of this existence? When there are innumerable moments of death, why fear the occurrence of one particular moment? Ignorance of the momentary nature of death makes us fearful of the particular death that takes place at the last moment of existence here, especially as the next moment of living is not seen nor understood. The last moment in this existence is just one of the innumerable moments of death that will follow it.

It is not life in this existence only that is a process of becoming. The process of becoming continues into the next existence also, because there is a continuity of consciousness. The last consciousness (*cuti-citta*) in one life is followed by what is known as a re-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-citta*) in the next life. The process of one consciousness giving rise to another continues unbroken, the only difference

being a change in the place where such consciousness manifests itself. Distance is no bar to the sequence of cause and effect. Life is a process of grasping and becoming, and death is a change of the thing grasped leading to a new becoming. Grasping is a continuous feature where human living is concerned. It is this grasping that leads to becoming. What causes grasping? Where there is thirst, there is grasping. It is this thirst, this desire, this craving, this will-to-live, this urge which is known as *Taṇhā* that causes grasping. The Kammic energy resulting from this *Taṇhā* is like fire. It always keeps on burning and is always in search of fresh material upon which it can sustain itself. It is ever in search of fresh conditions for its continued existence. At the moment of the dissolution of the body, that unexpended desire-energy, that residuum of Kamma, grasps fresh fuel and seeks a fresh habitation where it can sustain itself. Thus proceeds the continuous flux of grasping and becoming which is life.

Let us now examine the unduly dreaded dying moment which marks the end of man's present existence, only to commence another. The physical condition of any dying man is so weak, that the volitional control by the mind at the dying moment lacks the power to choose its own thoughts. This being so, the memory of some powerfully impressive and important event of the dying man's present existence (or his past existence) will force itself upon the threshold of his mind, the forcible entry of which thought he is powerless to resist. This thought which is known as the *maraṇāsanna-javana* thought and precedes the *cuti citta* or terminal thought, can be one of three types. Firstly it can be the thought of some powerfully impressive act done (*kamma*) which the dying man now recalls to mind. Secondly the powerfully impressive act of the past can be recalled by way of a symbol of that act (*Kamma nimitta*) as for instance if he had stolen

money from a safe, he may see the safe. Thirdly, the powerfully impressive act of the past may be recalled by way of a sign or indication of the place where he is destined to be re-born by reason of such act as for instance when a man who has committed murder sees hell-fires or when a man who has done great charitable acts hears beautiful divine music. This is called *Gati nimitta* or the sign of destination. It is symbolic of his place of re-birth. These three types of thought-objects which he cannot consciously chose for himself, are known as death signs and any one of them, as the case may be, will very strongly and vividly appear to the consciousness of the dying man. Then follows the *cuti citta* or terminal thought or death consciousness. This last thought series is most important since it fashions the nature of his next existence, just as the last thought before going to sleep can become the first thought on awakening. No extraneous or arbitrary power does this for him. He does this for himself unconsciously as it were. The most important act of his life it is, good or bad, that conditions the last thought moment of a life. The kamma of this action is called *Garuka kamma* or weighty Kamma. In the majority of cases the type of act which men habitually perform and for which they have the strongest liking becomes the last active thought. The ruling thought in life becomes strong at death. This habitual kamma is called *Āciṇṇa Kamma*.

The idea of getting a dying man to offer clothes (*Paṇsukūla*) to the Sangha or the idea of chanting sacred texts to him is in order to help him to obtain a good terminal thought for himself by way of *Āsanna Kamma* or death-proximate Kamma, but the powerful force of inveterate habit can supervene and in spite of the chantings by the most pious monks available, The memory of bad deeds repeatedly performed may surge up to his consciousness and become the terminal thought.

The reverse can also occur. If the last few acts and thoughts of a person about to die are powerfully bad, however good he had been earlier, then his terminal thought may be so powerfully bad that it may prevent the habitually good thought from surging up to his consciousness, as is said to have happened in the case of Queen Mallika, the wife of King Pasenadi of Kosala. She lived a life full of good deeds but at the dying moment what came to her mind was the thought of a solitary bad deed done. As a result she was born in a state of misery where she suffered, but it was only for seven days. The effects of the good Kamma were suspended only temporarily.

There is a fourth type of Kamma that can cause the terminal thought to arise. This last type prevails when any of the foregoing three types of Kamma is not present. In that event one of the accumulated reserves of the endless past is drawn out. This is called *Kaṭattā Kamma* or stored-up Kamma. Once the terminal thought arises, then follows the process of thought moments lawfully linked with it. This terminal thought process is called *maraṇāsanna javana vīthi*. The terminal thought goes through the same stages of progress as any other thought, with this difference that whereas the apperceptive stage of complete cognition known as *Javana* or impulsion, which in the case of any other thought occupies seven thought-moments, in this instance it occupies only five thought-moments. At this apperceptive stage the dying person fully comprehends the death-sign. Then follows the stage of registering consciousness (*tadālabhāna*) when the death-sign is identified. This consciousness arises for two thought moments and passes away. After this comes the stage of death consciousness (*cuti citta*). Then occurs death. This is what happens in this existence.

Now let us consider what happens in the next existence. Already the preliminaries for the arrival of a new being are in preparation. There is the male parent and there is the female parent. As explained previously a third factor, a psychic factor, is necessary to complete the preliminaries for the arising of a live embryo, and that is the relinking consciousness (*Paṭisandhi-Viññāṇa*) which arises in the next existence in the appropriate setting — the mother's womb. On the conjunction of these three factors, life starts in the mother's womb. There is no lapse of time, no stoppage of the unending stream of consciousness. No sooner has the death-consciousness in the dying man passed away than rebirth consciousness arises in some other state of existence. There is nothing that has travelled from this life to the next. Even the terminal thought did not travel. It had the power to give rise to the passive or *bhavaṅga* state. At the moment of birth which marks a separate existence, through contact with the outer world, the unconscious or sub-conscious *bhavaṅga* state gives way to the *vīthi-citta* or conscious mind. From birth onwards activity again comes into play, propelled by desire in some form or another. So proceeds the onward course of the life-flux, desire-propelled and desire-motivated. Now what is the relevancy of a knowledge of the law of conditionality to the question of our attitude towards death? Once we thoroughly comprehend the fact that the will to live proceeds from life to life, we come to appreciate the view that this life and the next is but one continuous process. So also the life following and the next thereafter. To one who understands life thus as nothing more nor less than a long continuous process, there is no more reason to grieve at death than at life. They are part of the same process — the process of grasping, the process of giving effect to the will-to-live. Death is only a change in the thing grasped. The man enriched with the knowledge of the

law of conditionality comprehends that birth induces death and death induces birth in the round of sansāric life. He therefore cannot possibly be perturbed at death. To him birth is death and death is birth. An appreciation of the law of conditionality will reveal to him the importance of living his life well and when he has lived his life well, death is the birth of greater opportunities to live a still better life. That is how he regards death. It all depends on the way one looks at death. Suppose there is only one gate to a house, is that an exit gate or an entrance gate? To one who is on the road side of the gate it is an entrance gate. To the inmate of the house it is an exit gate, but for both of them it is the self-same gate which is thus differently viewed. As Dahlke says, 'Dying is nothing but a backward view of life, and birth is nothing but a forward view of death'. In truth, birth and death are phases of an unbroken process of grasping. Death is a departure to those whom the dying man leaves behind. It is also an arrival to the members of the new family into which he is re-born. It is death or birth according to the way we look at it, but we can only be one-way observers. If we observe the death-process we are not in a position to observe the birth process, and if we observe the birth process, we are not in a position to observe the death process. So, birth and death do not get co-ordinated in our minds as one connected process. By our failure to see the close sequence of the two processes, the co-ordination of birth with death or death with birth, we are led to the illusion or at least the wish that we can have the one (birth) without the other (death). We want life but we do not want death. This is an impossibility. Clinging to life is clinging to death. The salient feature of life is clinging-grasping — and the logical result of clinging according to the law of conditionality is death. If you want to avert death, you have to avert life, you have to reverse the process of conditionality. This can only be

done by abandoning the desire to cling, the desire to grasp. Let there be no attachment to life. If you attach yourself unduly to the things of life, happiness you may have for a brief time, but some day when the things to which you have attached yourself disintegrate and disappear as they must, by virtue of that mighty law of change working in conjunction with the equally mighty law of conditionality, then the very objects of joy become objects of sorrow. To your disappointment and disgust you will find that all sources of earthly joy are sources of sorrow. You will then agree with the poet who said "Earth's sweetest joy is but pain disguised". As great was the joy of attachment so great will be the sorrow of detachment. Is not this suffering? Is not this wearisome — one day to pursue a phantom with excitement, next day to abandon it with disgust, one day to be exalted and the next day to be depressed? How long will your sense of self-respect allow you to be thrown up and down this way and that, like a foot-ball? Is it not far more satisfactory, far more dignified, far safer and far wiser to go through life unattached? If misfortune has to come, it will; if sickness has to come, it will. We cannot change the events of life but we can certainly change our attitude towards them. The laws of change and conditionality will help us here. Fears and sorrows will change into hopes and joys. To such a one living a life of calm and peace, viewing life with equanimity, death holds no fears and terrors. Cheerful and unafraid, he can face the phenomenon of death with fortitude and calm.

VII

LET us now consider the cases of two persons who were overpowered with grief at the bereavement they had to

suffer. First let us consider the case of *Paṭācārā*. She lost her husband who was bitten by a snake. She was too weak to cross a river with both her children — a new-born babe and a child about one year old. So she left the elder child on the bank and waded through the water with her new-born babe with the greatest difficulty. Having reached the thither shore and having left the new-born babe there, she was returning through the water to reach the elder child. She had hardly reached mid-stream when a hawk swooped down on the new-born babe and carried it away thinking it to be a piece of flesh. When *Paṭācārā* seeing this cried out in frantic grief raising both her hands, the elder child on the other bank thinking that his mother was calling him, ran into the river and was drowned. Alone, weeping and lamenting, she was proceeding now to her parental home whither she had intended going with her husband and her two children, when one by one these calamities occurred. As she was proceeding she met a man returning from her home town and inquired from him about her parents and her brother. This man gave the dismal news that owing to a severe storm the previous day her parental house had come down, destroying both her father and her mother and also her brother. As he spoke he pointed to some smoke rising into the air far away and said, “That is the smoke rising from the one funeral pyre in which are burning the bodies of your father, mother and brother”. Completely distracted with grief, she ran about like a mad woman regardless of her falling garments. Agony was gnawing at her heart, agony of the most excruciating type. Advised to go to the Buddha, she goes and explains her plight. What did the Buddha tell her? “*Paṭācārā*, be no more troubled. This is not the first time thou hast wept over the loss of a husband. This is not the first time thou hast wept over the loss of parents and of brothers. Just as today, so also through this round of existence thou hast

wept over the loss of so many countless husbands, countless sons, countless parents and countless brothers, that the tears thou hast shed are more abundant than the waters of the four oceans.” As the Buddha spoke these words of wisdom and consolation, Patācārā’s grief grew less and less intense and finally, not only did her grief leave her altogether, but when the Buddha preached to her and concluded his discourse, Patācārā reached the stage of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), the first stage of sainthood.

Now what is it that contributed to the removal of grief from the mind of Patācārā? It is the keen realization of the universality of death. Patācārā realized that she had lived innumerable lives, that she had suffered bereavement innumerable times, and that death is something which is always occurring.

While Patācārā realized the universality of death by reference to her own numerous bereavements in the past, Kisāgotamī realized it by reference to the numerous bereavements occurring to others around her in this life itself. When her only child died, her grief was so great that she clung to the dead body, not allowing any one to cremate it. This was the first bereavement she had ever experienced. With the dead child firmly held to her body she went from house to house inquiring for some medicine that would bring back life to her child. She was directed to the Buddha who asked her to procure a pinch of white mustard seed, but it should be from a house where no death had taken place. She then went in search of this supposed cure for her child which she thought was easy to obtain. At the very first house she asked for it but when she inquired whether any death had taken place under that roof she received the reply “What sayest thou, woman? As for the living, they be few, as for the

dead they be many". She then went to the next house. There also she came to know that death had made its visit to that house as well. She went to many houses and in all of them she was told of some father who had died or of some son who had died or of some other relative or friend who had died. When evening came she was tired of her hopeless task. She heard the word "death" echoing from every house. She realized the universality of death. She buried the dead child in the forest, then went back to the Buddha and said "I thought it was I only who suffered bereavement. I find it in every house. I find that in every village the dead are more in number than the living". Not only was Kisāgotamī cured of her grief, but at the end of the discourse which the Buddha delivered to her, she too attained the stage of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*).

Let us now contrast the cases of Patācārā and Kisāgotamī with that of the ignorant rustic farmer the Bodhisatta was in a former life as mentioned in the *Uraga Jātaka*. Rustic though he was he practised mindfulness on death to perfection. He had trained himself to think every now and then "Death can at any moment come to us". This is something on which the majority of us refuse to do any thinking at all. Not only did he make it a habit to think so, but he even saw to it that all members of his household did the same. One day while he was working with his son in the field, the latter was stung by a snake and died on the spot. The father was not one bit perturbed. He just carried the body to the foot of a tree, covered it with a cloak, neither weeping nor lamenting, and resumed his ploughing unconcerned. Later he sent word home, through a passer-by, to send up one parcel of food instead of two for the mid-day meal and to come with perfumes and flowers. When the message was received his wife knew what it meant but she too did not give way to expressions

of grief; neither did her daughter nor her daughter-in-law nor the maid-servant. As requested they all went with perfumes and flowers to the field, and a most simple cremation took place, with no one weeping. Sakka the chief of gods came down to earth and proceeding to the place where a body was burning upon a pile of firewood, inquired from those standing around whether they were roasting the flesh of some animal. When they replied that it was the body of a man, Sakka wanted to know whether it was the body of an enemy. The father replied "It is no enemy but our own son". "Then he could not have been a son dear to you" said Sakka. "He was a very dear son" replied the father. "Then", asked Sakka, "why do you not weep?" The father in reply uttered this stanza:—

"Man quits his mortal frame, when joy in life is past.
Even as a snake is wont its worn out slough to cast.
No friends' lament can touch the ashes of the dead.
Why should I grieve? He fares the way he had to tread".

Similar questions were asked from the dead son's mother who replied thus:—

"Uncalled he hither came, unbidden soon to go.
Even as he came he went, what cause is here for woe?
No friends' lament can touch the ashes of the dead.
Why should I grieve? He fares the way he had to tread".

"Sisters surely are loving to their brothers. Why do you not weep?" asked Sakka of the dead man's sister. She replied:

"Though I should fast and weep, how would it profit me?
My kith and kin alas would more unhappy be.
No friends' lament can touch the ashes of the dead.
Why should I grieve? He fares the way he had to tread."

Sakka then asked the dead man's wife why she did not weep. She replied thus:—

“As children cry in vain to grasp the moon above,
So mortals idly mourn the loss of those they love.
No friends' lament can touch the ashes of the dead.
Why should I grieve? He fares the way he had to tread”.

Lastly Sakka asked the maid-servant why she did not weep, especially as she had stated that the master was never cruel to her but was most considerate and kind and treated her like a foster child. This was her reply:—

“A broken pot of earth, ah, who can piece again?
So too, to mourn the dead is nought but labour vain.
No friends' lament can touch the ashes of the dead.
Why should I grieve? He fares the way he had to tread”.

Early Buddhism and the Taking of Life

I. B. Horner

M. A., D. Litt.

President, Pali Text Society

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
Kandy 1967 Ceylon

This article is reprinted, with
a few minor alterations, from
B. C. Law Volume, Part I
(Calcutta, 1945)

EARLY BUDDHISM AND THE TAKING OF LIFE

The Indian genius we are often, and rightly, told is for religion; and when the religion we now call Buddhism arose in the sixth century B. C. in India, the tradition and exercise of religious thought, speculation and livelihood were strong, and they were protected. Kings were patrons of religion, and the men of religion commanded much respectful attention and enjoyed kindly and honourable treatment alike from kings, ruling chieftains, their ministers and the ordinary people. There abounded, as early Buddhist and Jain text show, all kinds of ascetics, *tāpasas*, numerous wandering teachers and students, *paribbājakas*, and a diversity of sects, *tiṭṭhiyas*, many of them brahminical. Among the most famous of all the religious groups were the Jains, whose doctrines were already well developed by the time of the rise of Buddhism.

In India in the sixth century B. C. there was thus much that went by the name of religion; and there was much besides that masqueraded under a religious guise. For example, there was the offering of sacrifices, partly made for temporal gains, and which might involve the taking of life. There were, on the other hand, various other habits and customs which, while no attempt was made to attribute their origin, observance or perpetuation to any religious source, yet also depended on the taking of life. Impelled, perhaps by a mixture of motives, two of the greatest religious systems flourishing in these times, Jainism and Buddhism, both made an indelible

impression not only on the India of their day but, in the case of Buddhism, on the lands where it has since spread, by the firm stand they took against the prevalence of practices which deprived creatures of life. The object of this paper is to discuss in a general way the attitude adopted by Early Buddhism to a practice which it deplored.

There is no doubt that in the lay-world of the Early Buddhist epoch life was frequently deliberately and knowingly destroyed. Human life was taken by kings and their armies in battle. It was taken again by murderers who, after all, broadly speaking, do in an unorganised way what armies do in an organized way. Animal life was taken by kings and their attendants when out for the pleasure of hunting. It was taken, although unintentionally, by farmers ploughing and by agriculturists digging. It was taken by any one who felled a tree¹, or destroyed vegetable growth¹, who trampled down crops and grasses², and who dug the soil³. For according to the Indian way of thinking, as this is expressed in the Pali Canon, a certain form of life called "one-facultied", *ekindriya jīva*, inhabits trees, plants and the soil, and even water may have creatures or "breathers" (*sappānaka udaka*), in it⁴. Again, animal life was taken by hunters and trappers, by butchers and fishermen for human consumption and other human needs. And it was taken by brahmin priests for sacrificial purposes, as was perhaps, although certainly to a lesser extent, human life⁵. Thus slaughter took place under four major forms: in battle, in agriculture, for eating meat and fish, and for sacrifice.

1. Vin. iv, 34. 2. Vin. i, 137, 138, iv. 296.

3. Vin. iv, 32 - 33. 4. Vin. iv, 49, 125

5. Cf. A; B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads*, p. 347, and C. H. I., vol. I, p. 106.

The emergence in India of the notion of *ahiṃsā*, non-harming, non-injury, is historically speaking not clear. Its origin cannot be attributed to a definite date or to any particular teacher, social reformer or law-giver. The problem of the birth of the idea of non-injury is indeed as obscure as that of “leaving the world”⁶, of forsaking home for homelessness. Non-injury, which includes the principle of sparing life, of not taking it, of not depriving man or beast of it, receives much emphasis in the surviving Jain texts; but whether the notion actually sprang up under the Jains or whether they exploited some life-saving tradition already there we do not know. Although the birth of the notion may be hidden to us, the magnitude of the stress the Jains lay on doing anything so calamitous as taking life has the appearance of a protest; a protest against an existent and more or less widespread slaughter of creatures of which it was impossible to be unaware.

Buddhism also was aware of this state of things; and was very much alive to the divers purposes for which life was destroyed. If it did not use the word *ahiṃsā* and the verbs connected with it as frequently as the contemporary Jains, it all the same fostered the scruple against the taking of life as much as they did. Other sects which inhabited the Valley of the Ganges at the same time, while not making such a mark on the thought and custom of the day, nevertheless contributed to this new or revived scruple and upheld it by themselves practising non-injury under the form of vegetarianism.⁷

But in spite of teaching, precept and example, the evil persisted for some two hundred and fifty years at

6. This latter problem is discussed by Mrs. Rhys Davids in Ch. II of *Poems of Cloister and Jungle*.

7. M i, 80.

least after the Buddha's lifetime until it was given, not a mortal, but a severe blow by the Emperor Asoka. His Rock Edict I is a revelation of the terrible slaughter of animals that went on daily so that the royal kitchen could feed hundreds of people and the king's popularity thereby be increased. But Asoka, who became exceedingly sensitive to the taking of animal life, abolished this communal feeding, first of all reducing the number of animals to be slain daily to three, and for use only at the royal table itself, and then decreed on the rock that "even those three living creatures shall not be slain in the future". The Emperor's conviction of the sanctity of animal life culminated in his Pillar Edict V, assigned to the date 234 B. C. This lays down "an elaborate code of regulations restricting the slaughter and mutilation of animals throughout the empire. Those regulations were imposed upon all classes of the population without distinction of creed, social customs, or religious sentiment"⁸. The broad principles of Buddhist teaching on compassion to all that lives and breathes here find concrete, detailed and definite expression. Asoka applied this teaching to his times, he lived it, and he spread it through the unusual medium of hard rock and polished pillar.

It may have been acquaintance of the fact that during the early Buddhist epoch some control was exercised over the unchecked slaughter of animals which emboldened Asoka to restrict their destruction or mutilation on certain days: on holy days. Although we have little knowledge of any such previous interdictions, Asoka's Pillar Edict would suggest in some form these had existed before his time, and that therefore he was continuing a practice, perhaps expanding it, but not innovating it. A

8. Vincent Smith, *Asoka*, 3rd edn., 1920, p. 57.

brief reference is found in the *Vinaya* to a “non-slaughter day.” In the story of the lay woman follower Suppiyā, it appears that before she cut a piece of flesh from her own thigh for an ill monk to whom she had promised some broth, she had a search for meat made throughout Benares. But she was told that none was to hand, “for today is not a slaughter day”, *māghāto ajja* ⁹. The *Jātaka* mentions the “drum of no-slaughter” being sounded through a town, ¹⁰ and as having been heard by kings of old ¹¹, and it mentions a zemindar who had laid an interdiction upon the slaughter of animals. ¹²

It is tempting to suppose that some of these no-slaughter days coincided with the *uposatha*, or Observance days, days of the new and the full moons when monks in each “residence” recited their body of *Pātimokkha* rules, and when lay people were meant to abstain from some of their more congenial activities. And for such a coinciding there is support from a *Jātaka* in which it is said that a man was unable to get meat, not merely because it was a no-slaughter day but, with greater precision, because it was “an Observance day on which there was no slaughter”, *uposathamāghāta*. ¹³ This may well have been the case, but yet it throws little light upon any early connection made between such a restriction and special days. For the *Jātaka* prose is comparatively late, and was probably composed nearer to Asoka’s time than to the Buddha’s.

There is plenty of evidence however to show that, before Asoka’s reign, the Buddha had protested against the taking of life. His surviving talks and prohibitions and “allowances” (*anujānāmi*) too are addressed mainly to monks for these after all formed his most malleable as

9. Vin. i, 217. 10. Jā. iii, 428, 434. 11. Jā. iii, 428

12. Jā. iv, 115 13. Jā. vi. 346.

well as his most vulnerable material since they were under the control and discipline of the Order, of which he was, as the Canon shows, particularly the *Vinaya*, the fountain head. Yet records are not lacking where the Buddha is portrayed as either directly or by implication trying to drive home to lay people too his abhorrence of taking life.

In one respect, he was not unsuccessful. For he was instrumental in bringing about a decrease in the popularity of great animal sacrifices. But in the three other ways—that is, in warfare, agriculture and meat-eating with its attendant trades of hunting, trapping and butchery, it may be said that he met with only a limited success. There is no means of assessing the number of those who turned to the humaner way of life presented to them by the Buddha. It would however be reasonable to suppose that some of his contemporaries responded to his gifts of persuasion and, further inspired by a feeling for *ahimsā*, refrained from activities which involved destroying animal or human life. For this has been the case later and in other Buddhist lands. On the other hand, there is no doubt that even if warfare, agriculture and meat-eating diminished somewhat as lay occupation in the Buddha's times, they were by no means abolished nor even largely renounced. And for this two chief reasons may be adduced: in the first place, kings and people did not want to give up these ways of ministering to their ambitions, livelihood or pleasure; and in the second, since the Buddha was not a temporal ruler, he had no actual power to impose a body of restrictive regulations and penalties on the laity as he had on his monastic followers.

With blood-sacrifice the case was different. The times were ripe for its virtual abolition; and it only needed some authoritative lead, some champion, and the

support of a strong-minded, convinced and articulate opponent for the perhaps already dying brahminical customs of animal sacrifice and of such human sacrifice as there was to fall into decay. The Buddha entered the arena; and according to passages in the Canon, however infrequent, he spoke with vigour. Of his protests, I will mention two: the one serious, the other revealing a delightful sense of humour. Both are well known. The serious protest is found in verses occurring in the *Samyutta*, *Āṅguttara*, *Suttanipāṭa* and *Itivuttaka*.¹⁴

The sacrifices called the Horse, the Man,
 The Peg-thrown Site, the Drink of Victory,
 'The Bolts Withdrawn, and all the mighty fuss:-
 These are not rites which bring a rich result.
 Where divers goats and sheep and kine are slain,
 Never to such a rite as that repair
 The noble seers who walk the perfect way,
 But rites where there is no bustle nor no fuss
 Are offerings meet, bequests perpetual,
 Where never goats and sheep and kine are slain.
 To such a sacrifice as this repair
 The noble seers who walk the perfect way.
 These are the rites entailing great results.
 These to the celebrant are blest, not cursed.
 The oblation runneth o'er; the gods are pleased.

This is serious and persuasive. Yet the half humorous way which is chosen to convey the protest made in the *Kūṭadanta Suttanta*¹⁵ does nothing to militate against its fundamental earnestness. In his Introduction to this *Suttanta* which, as he points out,¹⁶ consists of a legend

14. S. i. 76, A. ii. 42, iv. 151, Sn. 303, It. 21.

15. D. i. 127ff. 16. Dial. i. 162.

obviously invented *ad hoc*, Rhys Davids wrote: “having laughed the brahmin ideal of sacrifice out of court . . . the author or authors of the Suttanta go on to say what they think a sacrifice ought to be. Far from exalting King-Wide-Realm’s (Mahavijita) procedure, they put his sacrifice at the very bottom of a long list of sacrifices each better than the other, and leading up to the sweetest and highest of all, which is the attainment of Arahatsip”.¹⁷ King-Wide-Realm’s sacrifice, although it never took place except in the half serious, half comic legend told for the sake of its moral, is as described, typically Vedic in character. There would have been the slaughter of cows, goats, cocks and pigs. As it was, in the legend, only ghee, oil, butter, milk, honey and molasses were used, and largesse was distributed in the four quarters. Rhys Davids thinks that the battle over the Vedic form of sacrifice “was really won by the Buddhists and their allies. And the combined ridicule and earnestness of our Suttanta will have had its share in bringing about the victory”.¹⁸

At all events it is sufficiently clear that strictures such as these did not fall upon deaf ears. The people were sympathetic, broad-minded and not completely dominated by the priestly superstition. In a word, they provided excellent material on which to work in the matter of suppressing the destruction of animals for quasi-religious purposes, and the growing realisation that large-scale sacrifice was both spiritually and economically unsound will have played a decisive part in stamping it out.

This potent stand against a mistaken custom may have been further backed by the feeling, even by the knowledge, that in India animals had not always been offered up on the sacrificial altar (*vedi*). There would appear to

17. Dial. i. 164

18. Ibid. 165

be a contrast between the religion of the Aryan invaders and the attitude adopted, in particular to the cow, by the cattle-breeding inhabitants of the overrun territory. Horse ¹⁹ and cattle sacrifices were characteristic of the Vedic tribes; by their own religion they were enjoined to sacrifice cattle to their gods and to slay them for guests, the actual worship of the cow as such not being found in Rig-Veda. ²⁰ But, on the other hand, it would appear as though among the indigenous population a certain reverence for the cow had gone back to a remote antiquity. The *Suttanipāta*, in a very remarkable Sutta, ²¹ speaks of the brahmins of old as having regarded the cow as their parents, brothers and kin, as their best friend and as the source of all healthful things. So in gratitude they never slaughtered cows. ²² But then there came a change. The brahmins became greedy and avaricious. Fired by the huge gifts they obtained from the king by instigating him to offer horses and human beings in sacrifice, their next choice fell upon cows. And Okkāka, the king, doomed hundreds and thousands of cows to be slain. A sense of the injustice and wickedness of this, felt by the teller of this story :-

The cows that do no hurt with horn or hoof,
yes, gentle lamblike cows that fill the pail,
he bade be taken by the horn and slain ²³

was shared by others at the time when of old this outrage (*adhamma*) began :

19. *RV.* I 162, 163 were used at horse-sacrifices in Vedic ritual.

20. A. B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, p. 191.

21. *Sn. Brāhmaṇadhammikasutta* (No. 7 in *Cūlavagga*).

22. *Sn.* 295-297. 23. *Sn.* 309.

Tis wrong! 'tis wrong! arose th'united wail
of Brahmas, Indra, titans, demons too,
as cows were butchered for the sacrifice ²⁴

as it was by other and still later people presumed to be
the contemporaries of the story-teller :

Thus, thus the wise condemn this ancient guilt,
and folk condemn the sacrificers' crime. ²⁵

This outstanding Sutta doubtless refers in its thirty-two verses to some ancient tradition of brahmin degeneracy. Instead of their former life of zeal and rectitude which needed no animal sacrifices to abet it, later, in the lust for wealth, brahmin priests procured the sacrifice of horses, men, and finally of cows. But sacrifice in its turn succumbed to the force of public opinion. Substantiation for such popular disapprobation may be found in the outcry the people made at the prospect of the sacrifice of elephants, horses, bulls and other four-footed creatures, which is recorded in a *Jātaka* story.²⁶ The evidence provided by Pali "literature" for the suppression of great animal sacrifices suggests that, outside brahminical circles, this practice was not one particularly cherished by the ordinary people.

This degeneration from harmless rites to blood-sacrifices is noticed by Buddhaghosa in the *Saṃyutta Commentary* ²⁷ and by Dhammapāla in the *Itivuttaka Commentary* ²⁸ in their exegesis on the verses beginning: "The sacrifices called the Horse, the Man," already quoted. Formerly, so these Commentaries tell us, the *assamedha*, horse-sacrifice, was *sassa-medha*, a corn or crops festival; the *purisa-medha*, human sacrifice, took the form of a six

24. *Sn.* 310. *Sn.* 313. 26. *Jā.* No. 403. *SA.* i. 144ff.

28. *It A.* I. 93.

months gift of food and wages to great soldiers; the throwing of the peg, *sammāpāsa*, was then called a bond to bind men's hearts; people addressed one another in affectionate language, *vācapeyya*, the word being later altered to *vājapeyya*, a sacrificial drink; ²⁹ and they were so pleasant that there was no need to bolt the doors of the houses. ³⁰ But, so the commentaries go on with no doubt the *Suttanipāta* in mind, in the time of the former king, Okkāka (who is there regarded as in part responsible for the brahmin ascendancy), the brahmins upset all this happy arrangement, and the "four bases of popularity" and contentment in the realm took on the aspect of sinister sacrifices and orgies. ³¹

In speaking of human sacrifice, *purisamedha*, which in the verses quoted is mentioned with *assamedha*, horse-sacrifice, and three other rites which did not involve death for the victim, the question should be borne in mind of whether it was in early times ever more than a symbolic ceremony. No reference to the practice can be established in the Rig-Veda; ³² the Brāhmaṇas do not

29 On Vājapeya, or Drink of Strength, see A. B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, p. 339; and for mention of the *assamedha* and the "*Vājapeya* (soma sacrifice), associated with secular Brahmanism" as being "two forms of sacrifice having a political significance" see B. C. Law, *India as described in Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism*, p. 205.

30. Cf. Megasthenes, *Fragm.* XXVII (McCrindle, *Ancient India*, p. 70): "their houses and property they generally leave unguarded."

31 Cf. *G. S.* ii. 50, n. 1, to which I am indebted.

32. A. B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, p. 347; and *C. H.* I. vol. I, p. 106, 136.

describe a rite of an actual slaying of a man; ³³ “there is in the Satapatha and Taittiriya Brāhmaṇas and their Sūtras merely the symbolic offering of men,” as is the case in the Yajurveda. ³⁴ Indeed evidence for a human sacrifice on the lines of the horse-sacrifice appears to be provided only by two of the later Sūtras.

This does not mean however that on occasion a man may not have been slain for some sacrificial purpose. In the *Takkāriya Jātaka* ³⁵ one brahmin proposes the slaughter of another so as to make an oblation with his flesh and blood when a new gateway for a town was to be built. Rouse, in his translation of this *Jātaka*, ³⁶ has an interesting note on the persistence of traditions about human sacrifice at the founding of a building and so on, so as “to propitiate the spirits disturbed by the digging,” and he refers to the rumours current at the time of many young children being immured in the foundations of the Hooghly Bridge at Calcutta. Keith, in discussing the later Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas, alludes to the building of an altar for the sacred fire. He says, “in one sense no doubt this was an ancient and simple rite, accompanied as so often by the slaying of a man in order to secure the abiding character of the structure.” ³⁷ Even if there was some tradition, as the Pali Canon and commentaries may suggest, for a full scale Human Sacrifice similar to the Horse Sacrifice, evidence is lacking for any actual slaying of a human victim or victims. The more casual, and far less costly, sacrifice of one man on occasions when buildings were being erected appears to be better attested.

33. Keith, *Religion*, p. 347.

34. A. B. Keith, *C. H. I.* vol. I, pp. 123, 136.

35. *Jā.* iv. 246. 36. *Jā. Transl.* iv 155.

37. *C. H. I.*, vol I, p. 142.

There is no ground for believing however that it was customary to offer human beings on such occasions; there are more grounds for believing that in early Buddhist times any form of human sacrifice was much less common than animal sacrifice. Yet however progressive and enlightened was the bulk of the population, there was always a backward element to contend with, the element which, for example, made oblations (*balikamma*) of deer and swine to *yakkhas*.³⁸

It would moreover seem as if animal sacrifice had been superimposed, partly as a royal and priestly undertaking, on an older tradition of harmlessness, breaking it, cutting into it, it is true, but not crushing it into oblivion. The survival, the memory, of this tradition, denying to animal sacrifice the status of an unbroken custom, must be regarded as a further reason why any difficulties which the Early Buddhists may have met in fighting for the abolition of the sacrifice of horses and cattle in particular, were by no means insuperable.

The Early Buddhist attitude to warfare, agriculture and meat-eating was more mixed than was its attitude to blood-sacrifices. It made no whole-hearted condemnation of these three practices although they all entail the taking of life. But it did what it could to lessen their incidence and popularity. The most fertile field for reform was the monastic Order. Monks were forbidden to have more than the minimum to do with armies³⁹ on pain of committing offences which needed confession as their expiation; and no one who was a soldier, subsumed under the heading "in a king's pay," was allowed to "go forth"⁴⁰ from home into homelessness, that is, to

38. *Jā.* iv. 115. 39. *Vin.* iv. 104-108, *Pāc.* 48-50.

40. *Vin.* i. 74.

take the first step to becoming a monk. Further, monks were forbidden to dig the soil or to get another to do so,⁴¹ a rule which presumably could have been companioned by another to cover ploughing. But because monks were entirely supported by the laity, and because apparently they had not attempted to plough, there was no occasion to formulate such a prohibition. But a different set of considerations was entailed in regard to eating meat, the result of which was that monks were allowed to eat meat and fish provided that it was “pure” in three respects, which means a monk had neither seen, heard nor suspected that it had been killed on purpose for him;⁴² and further, provided that it was not the flesh of certain animals which it was made unallowable to eat.⁴³

I will say a little more about these three practices in turn and will begin with warfare. But I have written about the early Buddhist views on this subject elsewhere.⁴⁴ I will here only point out that the Buddha is represented neither as having glossed over nor as having passed by its existence without a word of censure. On the contrary, he faced the fact of fighting openly and frankly, and in three main ways. In the first place, there are verses, attributed to him, depicting the utter futility and inconclusiveness of war,⁴⁵ and more verses contrasting the use of force with the exercise of *dhamma*,⁴⁶ conscience, what ought to be done because it is right. Yet, although the love of fighting is deeply embedded in

41. *Vin.* iv, 33, *Pāc.* 10.

42. *Vin.* i. 238, ii. 197, iii. 171, *M.* i. 369.

43. *Vin.* i. 219f.

44. *Ceylon Daily News*, *Vesak Number*, 1939; and (briefly) *B. D.* ii, *Intr.* p. xxxii.

45. *S.* i. 85. 46. *Dhp.* 256, 257.

the human heart, there were apparently some people in the times to which the *Vinaya* purports to refer who regretted that they had to have anything to do with an army.⁴⁷ It was their karma which drove them to this means of livelihood, and in a vicious circle this means of livelihood set up a new bad karma for them. Many classes of people, as the *Suttanipāta* enumerates, including the farmer, *kassaka*, the fighting man, *yodhājīva*, and the sacrificer, *yājaka*, are what they are because of their deeds, *kammanā*.⁴⁸

Again, it is interesting to notice that public opinion⁴⁹ and the opinion of the pious monks,⁵⁰ as well as that ascribed to the Buddha,⁵¹ was against monks talking *tiracchānakathā*,⁵² low, inferior talk concerned with mundane matters, and that two out of its twenty-seven specified forms are talk about armies and talk about fights. Such talk is said to be neither connected with the goal nor to tend to the highest form of godly life.⁵³ In substituting ten topics of conversation the Buddha is made to say to the listening monks that if they would engage in these they would outshine in brilliance the moon and sun—not to mention the wanderers, followers of other sects who, as other records show, were prone to indulge in *tiracchānakathā*.⁵⁴

In the second place, it adds greatly to the Buddha's fame as a leader of humanitarian thought and practice that he was able to eliminate warfare as an occupation for his monastic followers who, after all, formed a

47. *Vin* iv. 104, 105, 107. 48. *Sn*. 650-652.

49. *Vin* iv. 164. 50. *Vin*. i. 188. 51. *A*. v. 128-129.

52. Also mentioned at *D*. i. 7, 178, iii. 54; *M*. i. 513, ii, 1, 23. In all these passages, except *D*. i. 7, wanderers are spoken of as talking *tiracchānakathā*.

53. *S*. v. 420. 54. *A*. v. 129.

considerable proportion of the population. In this respect Eastern monachism differs strikingly from Western, where monks not only regarded themselves as soldiers of Christ but saw nothing wrong or incongruous in resorting to arms. Fighting was automatically closed to Buddhist monks by their third Parajika rule: if they deprived a human being of life or incited him to commit suicide or instigated another person to murder him, they committed an offence of the utmost gravity whose penalty was expulsion from the Order. They were further debarred from fighting by other rules which made it an offence, although of lesser kind, knowingly to take animal life.⁵⁵ And since two of the four "wings" of an army consisted of elephants and horses, these were in as much danger as the infantry (*patti*) of being targets for destruction in battle.

The third way in which the Buddha faced the fact of fighting was, however strange this may seem, by expressing a certain admiration for the soldier. Although metaphors from warfare are less frequent in Buddhist than in Christian literature,⁵⁶ there are several similes which are military in nature, their point usually being to encourage monks to be steadfast in endeavour as soldiers are steadfast in battle and to wage spiritual battles as they wage armed ones. Discipline was the aim for both. On the other hand unstable monks are likened to the (five kinds of) warriors who lose heart: as the latter falter at various (preliminary) stages of the battle

55. *Vin.* iv. 33, 35, 49, 125.

56. *Pss. Breth.*, p. 144, n. 1. But see T. R. Glover, *The Disciple*, 1942, who, in his chapter on The Soldier, points out that in Paul's Epistles the soldier and the athlete are 'sometimes confused by English readers'.

so the former falter if they are unable to steer quite clear of women.⁵⁷ Thus soldiers, even cowardly ones, have their uses as pegs on which to hang various aspects of Buddhist teaching for monks.

And the same may be said of the soldier's various battle adjuncts: the warrior - elephant and horse. The former especially is used in metaphor. But it is interesting to find that the ways in which a monk is compared to a battle - elephant represent as a rule quite initial stages in his spiritual training. For example, when monks are compared to elephants who falter when going forth to battle because each of their five senses is afflicted by disagreeable sensations—a metaphor which resembles that of the soldiers who lose heart almost before the battle begins—it is to show that such monks are not yet immune to the lure of the five senses.⁵⁸ Again, as the elephant, entering battle, destroys all parts of the fourfold army and endures the blows of weapons, so should a monk destroy all sensual thinking and endure physical discomfort.⁵⁹ Both these metaphors point to stages where a monk is not far advanced in his training.

A verse from the *Theragāthā*⁶⁰ further suggests that only the early stages of the training were envisaged where warrior - elephant similes are used. This verse is ascribed to the former soldier, Soṇa, Poṭṭiriya's son.⁶¹

57. *A.* iii. 89, 100. 58. *A.* iii. 157.

59. *A.* ii. 116, iii. 161. 60. *Thag.* 194.

61. *Thag.* and *Vin.* evince some discrepancies. This is one, for *Vin.* i. 74 forbids monks to allow anyone in the king's pay to go forth. Again, *Vin.* i. 79 decrees that monks shall not let a youth under fifteen years of age go forth. But six "boy - theras" are mentioned in *Thag.*, all of them recorded in the *Comy.* to have "gone forth" when seven years old, including Sivali, who lay in his mother's womb for seven years before being born, but who "went forth" on the seventh day after this event (*Thag.* *A.* i. 147).

After having gone forth, he remained so sluggish and did not apply his mind to meditation that the Buddha had to admonish him. He thereupon reflecting upon his shortcomings and working for insight ⁶² uttered this verse :

“If in the fight my warrior-elephant
Advanced, ‘twere better, fallen from his back,
Dead on the field and trampled I should lie,
Than beaten live a captive to the foe.”

This is a verse which comes well from a former soldier; and it may be only accidental that Soṇa compares his own almost desperate state after he had turned monk with his imagined desperate state in battle due to being dislodged from his elephant. But, on the other hand, this comparison may be deliberate since in other similes battle-elephants are apt to be connected with weak or elementary attainments in the life of religion.

Agriculture does not involve the taking of human life, but in the process of ploughing and digging small animals and insects may be destroyed. Now in regard to taking life, Early Buddhism drew two distinctions. In the first place, there was a distinction between taking it deliberately and taking it unintentionally. Thus if monks took human or animal life in the latter way there was no offence for them. ⁶³ But if they took it knowingly and intentionally there was, as I have already indicated, the most serious penalty in the case of human life, and a penalty also, though less severe, in the case of animal life. For in the second place, Early Buddhism recognized a distinction between men and animals. But since this was in degree rather than in kind, it therefore held it as a

62. *Thag* A. ii. 62.

63. *Vin.* iii. 79ff., iv. 33, 35, 49, 125.

principle of right behaviour for monks that they should destroy neither the one nor the other.

Agriculture certainly opened the door to the danger of taking life. A farmer could hardly avoid killing or maiming small creatures in the soil. Yet, because he did not destroy them of set purpose, the evil of taking life was not the point of the Buddha's famous ploughing talk with the farmer Bhāradvāja.⁶⁴ The point was that *his* kind of ploughing—that of the mind and spirit—was richer in result than the farmer's ploughing of the land, and it was meant to show how much finer were the activities of those who were able to devote themselves to a spiritual instead of a mundane way of life.

But agriculture had been practised from time immemorial. Moreover, it was, in the India of the Buddha's days as it had been for centuries previously, not only the economic mainspring of the people and by far the greatest industry, but its results were vital to the life, health and prosperity of the entire population. So vividly had this been realized even in remotest antiquity, and in lands far apart, that ceremony and ritual were then connected with the chief agricultural operations of the year. However, it looks as though any ancient festival to celebrate the ripening of the grain had given place by the Buddha's times to the practical and careful attention which by common consent was bestowed upon the growing crops, but which had nothing ritual about it. The dying out, if this were indeed the case, either of this festival or of that held at sowing time in no way impaired the popular determination to keep the land productive. Crops were regarded as supremely valuable by the lay contemporaries of the early Buddhist monks, and agriculture was ranked

64. S. i. 172, Sn. 76-80.

in the *Vinaya*, which was intended principally and one might say almost exclusively for the use of monks, as one of the three “high works” or activities.⁶⁵ It was not therefore an occupation which would yield easily or extensively to the Buddha’s deprecations of it.

He realized that while people remained in the world, no radical alteration could be made in many of their activities. It was only when any member of the laity felt the call to come apart and decided to renounce the world and to become a monk that prohibitions, made partly for the sake of protecting living creatures and partly for the sake of the monks’ moral welfare, could be enforced and made fruitful. The monk-world had a different code from the lay-world, for it was one of as complete non-harming as it was possible to achieve. But in the completeness of this there was a curious anomaly connected with some of the foods that a monk might eat.

The eating of neither fish nor meat was banned for monks; and if not positively encouraged was likewise not positively discouraged. Indeed fish and meat formed two out of the five permissible “soft foods” the other three being different cereals.⁶⁶ It looks as if, because the laity were neither stopped from growing grain, which after all did not involve the intentional taking of life, nor from occupations which made the eating of meat possible, so similarly the monks were allowed to partake of cereals, fish and meat. But we have seen that in the case of the last two, certain restrictions were imposed: meat, and fish, had to be “pure” in the three respects, and meat had to be “the meat of those (animals) whose meat is

65. *Vin.* iv. 6. 66. e. g. at *Vin.* iv. 83.

allowable.”⁶⁷ Gifts to the Order were made allowable, *kappakata*, by the donor uttering some phrase to the effect that he was giving, for, with a few minor exceptions, it was an offence to take anything not given.⁶⁸ But, especially in times of scarcity, monks had a right to ask, and in fact incurred an offence of wrongdoing if they did not, whether the meat that was being given to them was that of certain animals: of an elephant, horse, dog, serpent, lion, tiger, leopard, bear or hyena.⁶⁹ For the meat of these animals came to be unallowed. But the reasons for this ban do not in the least imply that for monks or laity meat - eating was thought to be wrong in itself. Elephants and horses are attributes of royalty; dogs and serpents are revolting and disgusting; while to eat any of the wild animals mentioned, including again the serpent, might involve the monks in personal danger.

Many other passages show, although almost incidentally, that the eating of meat was thought of as customary, and monks are recorded to have done so often enough to give meat the appearance of having been a fairly constant article of their diet. There was the monk to whom Suppiyā promised broth, already referred to, and to whom she sent a piece of her own thigh, having prepared it, *sampādetvā*. There was the nun Uppala-vaṇṇā who got as a gift some meat from a cow killed by a robber chief which after she had prepared it, *sampādetvā*, she wished to present to the Buddha.⁷⁰ And there were the monks who were allowed to take and eat the kills of wild animals, which of course would be other animals,⁷¹ and they had these cooked, *pacāpetvā*, before eating them. Only in the case of a strange non-human disease

67. *Vin.* iv. 88.

68. *Pārājika* II.

69. *Vin.* i. 218ff.

70. *Vin.* iii. 208.

71. *Vin.* iii. 58.

were monks allowed the remedy of the raw flesh and blood of pigs.⁷² These are instances taken only at random.

While injunctions survive showing which animals' flesh was forbidden, there are none specifying which was allowed. Thus, in the absence of any definite rulings, we have to piece together our knowledge of those early times from any source that seems helpful or suggestive. We have just seen that if monks ate beef or the kills of wild animals or, in certain circumstances, the raw flesh of pigs no objection was made. Similes which depict the cattle-butcher and his apprentice displaying piecemeal at the cross-roads the carcass of the ox they have slain,⁷³ hacking at the inwards,⁷⁴ or flinging a bare bone to a famished dog who has made his way to the slaughter house,⁷⁵ all indicate the cattle-butcher to have been a well known part of the existing social fabric, ministering to the needs of those who had no objection to eating beef. There is too the simile which compares the life of man, insignificant, trifling and full of ill and trouble, to the cow about to be slaughtered, and who with every step she takes while being driven to the shambles, comes nearer to her death destruction.⁷⁶

References to sheep, although often to their wool and the purposes which this served,⁷⁷ point to these animals as forming a useful part of the animal population of India then as now. And from further reference to the cattle-butcher, the sheep-butcher, the pork-butcher, the deer-hunter and the fowler,⁷⁸ and also to the fishermen,

72. *Vin.* i. 202-3. 73. *D.* ii. 294, *M.* i 58.

74. *M.* i. 244, *S.* iv. 56, *A.* iii. 380. 75. *M.* i. 364.

76. *A.* iv. 138. 77. E. g. *Vin.* iii. 225-7, 233, 234.

78. *Vin.* iii. 104ff. = *S.* ii. 254ff.

all selling their wares, 79 it would seem beyond all doubt that the laity ate the flesh of cows, sheep, pigs, deer and game-birds as well as fish. Such are the animals which (not including fish) perhaps yielded “the meat of those whose meat is allowable”, and hence might be eaten by the monks if offered them, so long as the other necessary conditions were fulfilled.

There is a verse in the *Theragāthā* 80 which speaks of snaring a monkey by means of some sticky stuff, *lepa*, glue or pitch. The process is explained in the *Samyutta* 81 where finally the hunter, having caught the monkey, spits him then and there and prepares him for eating, *avasajjeti*, over charcoal embers. We hear of a monk keeping a female monkey, 82 and of another monkey which was confined in captivity. 83 But there is no evidence that monkeys ever formed any part of a monk’s diet. They were probably only eaten by such low people as hunters.

Although the eating of meat by laity and monks alike is tacitly condoned, the bloody trades which bring animals to destruction for this purpose by no means escape condemnation. Verses ascribed to the nun Puṇṇā 84 speak of sheep - butchers, pork - butchers, fishermen and trappers, together with executioners and thieves, as evil - doers who cannot be freed from their evil deeds by the rite of ablution. 85 For then all aquatic creatures would go to heaven, which is clearly absurd. She is speaking to a brahmin who believes in the efficacy of purification by water, but her verses plainly show the

79. *Ibid* and *A.* iii. 301ff. 80. *Thag.* 454.

81. *S.* v. 148f. 82. *Vin.* iii. 21. 83. *Thag.* 125f.

84. *Thīg.* 241-2. 85. *Cf.* *M.* i. 39 for (heretical) notion of purification by water.

conviction that Butchers, fishermen and trappers are doers of wrong. The *Aṅguttara*, in knitting beings to their deeds, ⁸⁶ posits one of two bourns and uprisings for those who make onslaught on creatures (restraint from which is the first of the moral habits or silas), who are hunters, bloody-handed, given over to killing and slaying: either downright woe in hell, or rebirth in the womb of an animal. Again, horribly painful consequences in after-lives are ascribed to those who in this life had been butchers, hunters and trappers. ⁸⁷ But similar painful consequences for their cruel deeds here are also ascribed to animal tamers, slanderers, frauds, adulterers and fortune - tellers. It is therefore impossible to say that slayers of animals, although considered as wrong - doers and liable to very uncomfortable rebirth, were worse thought of than the other wrong - doers here named.

But monks did not, or should not, themselves actually take animal life. They did not act as butchers, they did not fish, hunt or trap. All their food was provided for them by the laity. Yet, unlike those recluses and brahmins who are recorded to have lived on jujube fruits, sesamum, beans or uncooked rice, ⁸⁸ they were able to receive gifts of fish and meat, provided they observed the restrictions and safeguards of not receiving more food than their one begging bowl would hold; ⁸⁹ of not eating more than once a day; ⁹⁰ of establishing that the fish and meat was “pure”; and that it was not the meat of certain prohibited animals.

86. *A.* v. 288; and *cf.* *M.* i. 387ff., iii. 203.

87. *Vin.* iii. 203. 88. *M.* i 80.

90. *Cf.* *Sekhiyas* 28, 30, 32. 90 *Vin.* iv. 85.

But the broad principle remained whereby monks aroused no criticism or contumely if they ate meat. A variety of causes have led to this leniency where we might have expected a greater stringency. For example, a difference was made between oneself killing and oneself eating what another person had killed. Moreover the Buddha advocated an adequate diet for his monks, and was opposed to fasting and bodily mortification as he was to greed and luxury, for he saw in these no true way to achieve the highest goal, *paramattha*. Since cereals, in particular rice, with some meat, fish, fruit and dairy products formed the staple foods of the population, these were most likely to have been bestowed by them upon monks. Monks, therefore, since none of these foods was prohibited to them, obtained sufficient "to keep themselves going" and did not go short of almsfood. And, in addition, by accepting an offering of food, by not rejecting it, they would neither have appeared rude to the donor nor would they have spoiled his chance to acquire merit by his gift. To have rejected an offering of food would moreover have opened the door to picking and choosing, not only between what went into the begging bowl,⁹¹ but between the houses visited on the almsround.⁹² This in its turn would have prevented some of the laity from setting up merit, and it would have given a handle to greedy and gluttonous monks to indulge their tastes and preferences.⁹³

91. Cf. *Sekhiyas* 34-36, where however (in 34, 35) monks choose what they most fancy from what is already in the bowl.

92. Cf. *Sekhiyas* 33. 93. *Vin.* iv. 88.

Again, it is possible that the habits of other sects were taken into consideration. There were, on the one hand, the Jains, ultra - scrupulous in their avoidance of taking life; and no doubt the bovine ascetics ate,⁹⁴ or affected to eat only grass.⁹⁵ There was, on the other hand, the important class of Naked Ascetics, called Ājivikas, who apparently were not strict vegetarians,⁹⁶ but abstained from fish and meat now and again with a view to “schooling their bodies”, or “making to become by bodily means”, *kāyabhāvanā*, rather than from humanitarian reasons or because they saw in such a diet anything intrinsically wrong.

Yet perhaps the reason which weighed most heavily in the condonation of fish and meat - eating was the strong conviction that it was not material things which made or marred a man. Early Buddhism did not agree with the supposition that purity comes through food.⁹⁷ Purification comes, it held, by restraint over such bodily, mental and moral conduct as could defile a man, and with the possession of moral habit.⁹⁸ It did not consider it to be his outward signs: his wearing his hair matted in the braids of an ascetic, his birth or his clan which made a man a true brahmin.⁹⁹ It was not these things, nor his abstinence from fish and meat, which cleansed a man who had not crossed over doubt.¹⁰⁰ For it was not the eating of meat, *na hi mamsabhojanam*, which sullied him and was his defilement, *āmagandha*, but any one out of a long array of wrongs which he might perpetrate by conduct, thought or speech.¹⁰¹ He was neither defiled nor purified by what he ate, nor was he cleansed by fasting.¹⁰²

94. *M.* i. 387. 95. *MA.* iii 100. 96. *M.* i 238,
 97. *M.* i. 80. 98. *A.* i. 221. 99. *Dhp.* 393, and *cf.* 141.
 100. *Sn.* 249. 101. *Sn.* 241-247. 102. *Dhp.* 141.

In conclusion, it need only be said that no clear picture of the world in which Early Buddhist monasticism flourished can be obtained if the feature of life taking is ignored. And nor can a clear picture of this monasticism be obtained if its attempts to crush the desire to destroy life are left out of account. There was a strong movement to remedy, even to eradicate, what was regarded by several leaders of contemporary religious thought as an undesirable practice. The remedy was a life-sparing scruple. To the birth of this there is no historical clue. We only know that it was strong under Jainism, fostered by Early Buddhism, observed by some contemporary sects, and that it then culminated under Asoka.

Early Buddhism's advocacy of non-injury cannot, I think, be attributed to any one cause, for there were monks, laity, brahmins and other sects as well as the animals to consider. And no doubt a mixture of motives operated. Such championship may have seen in non-harming a way to increase the moral welfare of the monks; it may have been part of a disinterested social reform movement; it may have been, as in the case of the sacrifice, polemical in nature, anti-brahminical; and it may have been due to the presumption that animals have as much right to their lives, and to compassion, as have human beings.

Whatever the motives which led Early Buddhism to stand firm in the cause of non-injury, the results are in the main sufficiently clear. Some control was imposed over monks in the matter of meat-eating, but they were not made to give it up. Warfare and agriculture were, however, entirely ruled out as a monastic occupations. Sacrifice, as ordinarily understood, seems never to have been practised by monks, for they had no gods to whom to make

offerings: “Only within burneth the fire I kindle ” 103 Therefore their discipline does not comment on outward sacrifice one way or the other. The laity, on the other hand, continued in meat-eating, warfare and agriculture, although the killing of animals for human consumption was probably restricted, at all events on certain days, before Asoka’s reign. Agriculture could not be so strongly condemned as warfare, since in its operations creatures are not killed deliberately. The surprise is that not more opportunities were taken roundly to condemn fighting. It is likely that no way to its eradication was seen, that no tide was turning in this direction as it was to abolish blood-sacrifices. The suppression of the great organised sacrifices had the popular support: the ordinary people knew that they were the losers and not the gainers through them. But any effective blow dealt to their trades, industries and occupations would have spelt a blow to their livelihood. Householders therefore continued to practise meat eating, warfare and agriculture, and to indulge in many “pleasures of the senses” which, because of their different way of life, came to be denied to monks.

103. S. i. 169. Cf. A. K, Coomarasamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 56, for this being the Internal Agnihotra of the Brahminical *Aranyaka*.

Abbreviations

A.	Aṅguttara-nikāya
B.D.	<i>Book of the Discipline</i>
C.H.I.	<i>Cambridge History of India</i>
D.	Dīgha-nikāya
Dhp.	Dhammapada
Dial.	<i>Dialogues of the Buddha</i>
G. S.	<i>Gradual Sayings</i>
It.	Itivuttaka
It.A.	Commentary on Itivuttaka
Jā.	Jātaka
M.	Majjhima-nikāya
MA.	Commentary on M.
Pāc.	Pācittiya
Pss. Breth.	<i>Psalms of the Brethren</i>
Thag.	Theragāthā
Thag. A	Commentary on Thag.
RV.	Ṛg-veda
S.	Saṃyutta-nikāya
SA.	Commentary on S.
Sn.	Suttanipāta
Vin.	Vinaya-piṭaka

By the same author:

Women in Early Buddhist Literature,
(The Wheel No. 30)

The Challenge of Dhamma. (Bodhi Leaves No. A. 12)

THE WHEEL

A Series of Buddhist Publications

Selection from 100 issues

6. The Four Sublime States. *Nyanaponika Thera.*
7. The Practice of Lovingkindness. *Nyanamoli Thera.*
14. Everyman's Ethics. *Narada Thera.*
16. Buddhism and Christianity. *Prof. H. v. Glasenapp.*
34 35. The Four Noble Truths. *Francis Story.*
39 40. Purification of Character and View. *Bhikkhu Vimalo.*
Purification of Views. *Dr. C. B. Dharmasena.*
41. Buddhism and Peace. *Dr. K. N. Jayatilleke.*
44. The Contribution of Buddhism to World Culture.
Soma Thera.
50a b. Knowledge and Conduct. Buddhist Contributions to
Philosophy and Ethics.
55. The Five Precepts. Essays by *Dahlke, Silacara, etc.*
65 66. The Way of Wisdom (The Five Faculties).
Dr. Edward Conze.
67 69. The Last Days of the Buddha (Mahā-Parinibbāna Sutta).
80 81. Dialogues on the Dhamma. *Francis Story.*
90/92. The Life of Sāriputta. *Nyanaponika Thera.*
100. Buddhism in Ceylon. Its Past and Present.
H. R. Perera. Triple Number.

Please write for our complete Book List

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
P.O. Box 61 KANDY CEYLON

THE FOUR NUTRIMENTS OF LIFE

Nyanaponika Thera

“ALL BEINGS subsist on nutriment” — this, according to the Buddha, is the one single fact about life that, above all, deserves to be remembered, contemplated and understood.¹ If understood widely and deeply enough, this saying of the Buddha reveals indeed a truth that leads to the root of all existence and also to its uprooting. Here, too, the Buddha proved to be one who “saw to the root of things” (*mūla-dassāvī*).² Hence, it was thought useful to collect His utterances on the subject of Nutriment (*āhāra*), together with the instructive explanations by the Teachers of Old, the commentators of the Pāli scriptures.

The laws of nutriment govern both biological and mental life, and this fact was expressed by the Buddha when speaking of *four* kinds of nutriment: edible food, sense-impressions, volitions, and consciousness. It is hunger that stands behind the entire process of nutrition,

1. See Text 1, 2. Sutta-Nipāta v. 1043.

wielding its whip relentlessly. The body, from birth to death, craves ceaselessly for material food; and mind hungers as eagerly for its own kind of nourishment, for ever new sense-impressions and for an ever expanding universe of ideas.

Craving (*taṇhā*) is the principal condition of any "in-take" or "up-take" (*upādāna*),³ that is, of nutriment in its widest sense. This is the first factor common to all types of nutriment, be they physical or mental.

The second common factor is the process of the *assimilation* of food. In the process of eating and digesting, what was external becomes absorbed in the internal; what was foreign matter becomes "one's own" and is identified with one's personality. A German proverb says: "*Der Mensch ist, was er isst*", "Man is what he eats". And this applies as well to mental nourishment. Our mind also feeds on "external" material: on sense-impressions and variegated experiences; on the contents of the store-house of knowledge accumulated by the race; and on the precipitate derived from all these sources. Also our memories when they become objects of mind, are as "external" to the present thought-moment as the ideas read in a book. What cannot be absorbed by the system is discarded, and thus, in the body as well as in the mind, there is a constant process of grasping and rejecting, assimilating and dissimilating, identifying with oneself and alienating. When we look closely at this process of nutrition, physical and mental, we shall notice that it is not only the eater who consumes the food, but, in the course of assimilation, also the food devours the eater. There is thus mutual absorption

3. See Translator's Note to Text 3 (a), and 'The Wheel' No. 17, page 19 under 'Clinging'.

between them. We know how much people can be changed (for better or worse) by ideas they have absorbed and which finally have absorbed and consumed *them*.

These laws governing nutriment (physical and mental) are indeed sufficient to convince a thoughtful observer how illusory the conception of an abiding self or substance is. This alone should be enough to vindicate the Anattā doctrine, the Buddha's deeply revolutionizing teaching of Not-self.

Individualized life is, as Paul Dahlke says, "neither a meta physical "I"-identity (pure spirit, pure subject, according to the soul-theory of the religions) nor a mere physical process (pure body, pure object, according to scientific materialism), but a nutrimental process and as such it is neither something which is in and by, itself nor something caused by another, but something that is *maintaining* itself: and all these so-called higher faculties of thinking and feeling are different forms of eating, of maintaining oneself."

But in addition to the vindication of the Anattā doctrine (Not-self), Nutriment is likewise a convincing teacher of the two other characteristics of life, Impermanence and Suffering.

Change, or Impermanence (*anicca*), is at the very root of the nutritive process which cries for constant replenishment of the food consumed. The bottomless gaping hole has to be filled again and again as long as the being lives. And it is not different with our mental hunger that craves for change and variety.

This repetitive monotony of the process of nutrition kept going by the urge to preserve life — this is enough to reveal the "dukkha" — nature of life, the tiresomeness of the tedious round of eating and being hungry again. Hence a medieval Jewish sage was moved to say, "I

am fed up with being hungry again and again, and I hunger after final satiety".⁴

This is the Suffering inherent in the very function of eating, though mostly hidden by the habituation to this most elementary feature of routine life. The concrete suffering and pain involved in the search for food and its acquisition, is obvious enough to all and this misery was, is and will be life's constant companion. There is the mute suffering in the animal world where "devouring each other is the law" (and man joining in it by even rearing animals for food); we also know of primitive man's fight for pasture land (basically the same as modern man's wars for "world markets"); we also know of the pangs of hunger among the poor, and of starving children the world over. And though the resources for feeding humanity have grown considerably in our days, man still has not controlled famine, even where it would be in his power to do so; and all progress in the field of food-production threatens to be dwarfed by the rapid growth of world population. This problem looms large on the horizon of present-day humanity and may well become desperate if the disparity between available food and increasing population reaches a critical point. Should that critical point be

4. Abraham ben Chisdai, in "*Ben-hamelekh we-hanasir*" ("The Prince and the Ascetic"). This is an old Hebrew version of the "Barlaam and Joasaph" story which unwittingly carried the main features of the Buddha's life story through a major part of the medieval world. The Hebrew version has several distinct traces not only of the Buddha's life story, but also of Buddhist ideas, like the one quoted above. Only a comparison of the numerous versions of the "Barlaam and Joasaph" story could decide on whether these ideas were part of the tradition and common to other versions, or whether they originated in the Hebrew author's mind.

reached, we do not know what dire consequences may follow from that situation, unless a united mankind can solve the problem by concerted action and peaceful means. Hence, also for mankind's future, what the Dhamma teachers of old said remains true: that the search for food (*āhāra-pariyeṭṭhi*) is an ever-present source of suffering (*vattamāna dukkha*) and as such it can stir man's sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) when he considers, in the light of 'nutriment', man's own nature, his incessant needs and his situation in the world.

This contemplation of the *dukkha*-aspect of nutriment leads us to a formulation of the Four Noble Truths in terms of nutriment, as given in the last text (No. 7) of this anthology. The four nutriments of life stand for the first truth of Ill; the craving for the four nutriments is the Origin of Ill, the second Truth; the stopping of that craving is the cessation of the continued process of grasping for material and mental food, which is the End of Ill, the third Truth; and the Noble Eightfold Path is the way to that cessation.

It is because the process of nutrition (material and mental) demonstrates the conditioned nature of all existence that we have found it to cover those salient features of the Dhamma — the Three Signata (impermanence, suffering, not-self) and the Four Truths.

We shall now consider each of the four kinds of nutriments singly.

I. Edible Food

Simile: A couple, foodless in the midst of a desert, eat their little child, to enable them to reach their destination.

Just like the husband and wife in the Buddha's simile, mankind ever since it emerged on this planet, has traversed the desert of life where food is the most urgent concern. And again as in that story, the stilling of man's hunger has often been a heart-rending business — if not for the sometimes quite callous "eater", then for his prey and for a sensitive observer. Often, in his search for food, man has destroyed what is commonly dearest to him, be it relatives and friends or the ideals of his youth. True, this is only *one* aspect of life: life is not "desert" entire; it has a goodly number of oases where travellers can rest and enjoy themselves to such an extent that they are prone to forget the surrounding desert, which often encroaches on the tiny oasis and buries it.

The couple in the Buddha's story, coming near starvation, eat their own beloved child. It is a gruesome and seemingly fantastic story indeed. But knowing from the records of history that, at times of famine, war or shipwreck, men *did* resort to cannibalism, we have to admit that what our story tells may have substantially happened ever so often, in one way or another. In his incessant search for food, or for better food or for control of food resources, — how often has man not

killed, cruelly crushed or exploited his fellow creatures, even those who are close to him by common blood or common race! And is there not close kinship between *all* that lives? These last words are not merely a sentimental phrase (as which they are mostly used); but they are also a hard and cruel fact. Are we not akin to the voracious greed, the cruel rage and the destructive stupidity, which we encounter in life and of which we become victim or perpetrator in the struggle for food or power? If we were not akin to it, *could* we encounter it, in one way or another? For an unfathomable time, caught in the ever-turning Wheel of Life, we have been *everything*: the prey and the devourer of all, parent and child of all. This we should consider when contemplating the Nutriment of Edible Food and the Buddha's simile for it.

If we wish to eat and live, we have to kill or tacitly accept that others do the killing for us. When speaking of the latter, we do not refer merely to the butcher or the fisherman. Also for the strict vegetarian's sake, living beings have to die under the farmer's ploughshare, and his lettuce and other vegetables have to be kept free of snails and other "pests", at the expense of these living beings who, like ourselves, are in search of food. A growing population's need for more arable land deprives animals of their living space and, in the course of history, has eliminated many a species. It is a world of killing in which we live and have a part. We should face this horrible fact and remain aware of it in our Reflection on Edible Food. It will stir us to effort for getting out of this murderous world by the ending of craving for the four nutriments.

In one short life time, how many train loads of food have passed in and out of our puny body! How

many people have had to labour in the production, preparation and distribution of that food, for keeping unbroken the "traffic line" that runs straight through our body! It is a grotesque picture if we visualize it.

There is yet another aspect of that "life-giving" function of eating. To illustrate it, let us think of a silo, or a store house or food bag: after it has been emptied, a few grains or other tiny morsels of food will mostly remain in it. Similarly there will always be left some tiny remnants of food in our body that are neither assimilated nor expelled but remain and putrify. Some physiologists say that it is this putrefaction of residual food that ultimately brings about the ageing and death of the organism if there are no other causes. If they are right, then food is not only life-giving but also death-bestowing, and it appears that we have in this life of ours the choice between death by starvation or by putrefaction. "The food devours the eater!" This close connection between nutriment and death is very poignantly expressed in Greek myth, according to which Demeter is the Goddess of corn (that is, food) and of Death as well. Bachofen, that great explorer and interpreter of classic myth, has expressed the significance of it very succinctly: "She feeds man as a prey to her".

People, as far as they give any thought to the humdrum act of eating, have taken very different attitudes towards food. Some who became tired of the dull routine of eating dull food, have made a "fine art" of it and became gourmands. To them the Buddha says, "All nutriment is miserable, even divine food". Others, keenly aware of the importance of food for good health, have devised various ideas about "pure food": we have here the dietetic rules of several religions, and the belief of ancient and modern sects in man's "purification by

nutriment" (*āhāra - parisuddhi*), of which already the Buddha made mention (adversely, of course), down to our own days with their "Ersatz"-religions of numerous food-reformers. Others again, have tried to solve the problem of the body's dependence on food by reducing nourishment below sustenance level and by long periods of fasting. This harsh and futile method of self-mortification the Buddha, too, had tried out and rejected before His Enlightenment, and had vividly described his experience in the Discourse on the Noble Quest (*Ariya-pariyesana Sutta*). Also later on, the Buddha never recommended periods of fasting, beyond the abstention from solid food after noon enjoined upon *bhikkhus*, and in the periodic observance of the Eight or Ten Precepts. What the Buddha, as a teacher of the Middle Way, advised was moderation in eating, non-attachment to the taste of food, and wise reflection on Nutriment.

2. Sense-impression

Simile: A skinned cow, wherever she stands, will be ceaselessly attacked by the insects and other creatures living in the vicinity.

Like a skinned cow, man is helplessly exposed to the constant excitation and irritation of the sense-impressions, crowding upon him from all sides, through all six senses.

The Pāli word *phassa* rendered here by Sense-impression, means literally 'touch' or 'contact'. But it is not a physical impact that is meant here, but a mental

contact with the objects of all six senses, including the mind. Sense-impression, together with attention (*manasi-kāra*), is mind's first and simplest response to the stimulus exercised by the world of material objects and ideas. According to Buddhist Psychology, Sense-impression is a constituent factor in each and every state of mind, the lowest and the highest, occurring also in dream and in subliminal states of consciousness.

Sense-impression is a basic nutriment, that is a sustaining condition of life, and what is nourished or conditioned by it are Feelings or Sensations (*vedanā*) which are living on that multitude of constantly occurring sense-impressions and assimilating them as pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent. This relationship has also a place in the formula of Dependent Origination: "Conditioned by sense-impression is feeling (*phassa-paccayā vedanā*)". As long as there is craving (*taṇhā*) for sense-impressions—which arises from unguarded Feelings (*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*) — there will be an unlimited supply of that food-stuff to be digested by Feeling. In an unending stream and in rapid alternation, forms, sounds, smells, flavours, bodily impacts and ideas impinge upon us as long as we live. It is the poignant awareness of that constant bombardment by sense-impressions that induced the Buddha to choose for the Sense-impressions the simile of a skinned cow whose raw flesh is the target of swarms of insects that cause intensely painful feelings to the animal. According to the Buddha, any type of feeling is bound to cause suffering and conflict in him who has not yet freed himself from attachment. Painful feeling is suffering in itself; pleasant feeling brings suffering through its transiency and its unsatisfying and unsatisfactory nature; worldly indifferent feeling produces suffering through the dullness and boredom involved in

it. It is Sense-impression that is the constant feeder of these feelings.

A monk of old, yearning to see still more vividly the burning and irritating nature of sense-impressions, was moved to exclaim:

“ When shall I with calm endowed
Wisely see as caught in raging blaze
The countless forms, sounds, scents, and tastes,
And contacts and mental things?”

*Theragatha v. 1099 (Tālapuṭa)**

Though man is amply aware of the host of impressions that cause painful sensations in him, yet he is quite willing to pay that price for his pleasurable experiences, nay, for almost any sort of ‘experiencing’ which he prefers to no sensation at all, unless the pain it causes comes too close to tolerance level. What is at the psychological root of that situation is man’s hunger for ever-new experiences. If that hunger is not temporarily but regularly satisfied, it leaves him empty, starved and helpless. From that comes man’s wish for change and novelty, and his longing for a close contact with life that for its own sake becomes a habituation and makes solitude unbearable for most men.

The nutriment Sense-impression feeds the ‘World as Enjoyment’ or the ‘World as Enjoyment of Experience’. It feeds the craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*). This

* Transl. by Soma Thera in “His Last Performance, Verses of Tālapuṭa Thera” (Colombo 1943); available from Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy).

See also the ‘Fire Sermon’ (The Wheel No. 17): “The eye is burning, forms are burning, eye — consciousness is burning, eye contact is burning. The ear mind is burning, ideas are burning. . . .”

habitual craving can be broken only if one ceases to identify oneself with the stream of impressions and learns to stand back as an observer wherever one can dispense with active response. Then Feeling that is nourished by Sense-impression will cease to turn into Craving, and the Dependent Origination of Suffering has been severed at this point.*

3. Volitional Thought

Volitional Thought means here chiefly Kamma, i. e., rebirth-producing and life-affirming action, and the Buddha has compared it with a man dragged by two others towards and into, a pit of glowing embers.

The two dragging forces are man's kammic actions, good (but still deluded) and evil. It is our kammic proclivities, our life-affirming volitions, our plans and ambitions, that drag us irresistibly to that deep pit of Samsāra with its glowing embers of intense suffering. Hence it was said that Volitional Thought, in the sense of Kamma, is the nutriment for rebirth on the three planes of existence.

The nutriment Volitional Thought manifests itself in man's incessant urge to plan and to aspire, to struggle and conquer, to build and to destroy, to do and to undo, to invent and to discover, to form and to transform, to organize and to create. This urge has sent man into the depth of the ocean and into the vastness of space. It has made him the most vicious of predatory animals and also enabled him to reach the lofty heights of a genius of creative art and thought.

* See 'The Wheel' No. 15: Dependent Origination, p. 24 ff,

The restlessness that is at the root of all that lust for activity and of the creative urge, is the constant hunger for all four nutriments of life and for a variety of them on different levels of coarseness and sublimity. It is Volitional Thought that has to go foraging to provide man with the other kinds of nutriment he craves for. It is an incessant task, yielding a conquest of but short duration, and one that again and again ends in defeat.

In Volitional Thought, the world appears as Will and Power, and as creative force. Nourished by this powerful nutriment, the process of world-building and world destruction will go on until Samsāra is seen in its true nature as a pit of glowing embers, the bottomless depth of which cannot be filled by our plunging into it again and again in whatever guise we assume in our migrations.

4. Consciousness

The nutriment Consciousness has been compared with the punishment of a criminal who thrice daily is pierced with three hundred spears.

The sharp shafts of conscious awareness, the punitive results of past cravings and delusions, inflicted on us at all times of the day, pierce our protective skin and lay us open to the impact of the world of objects.

This shockingly harsh image of Consciousness as a punishment, reminds us of one of Franz Kafka's main motifs so often appearing in his work — the hidden, unknown, intangible and seemingly quite amoral guilt of man inherent in his very existence, for which he is inscrutably punished and which punishment in the depth of

his being, he accepts as just (see, e.g., 'The Trial', 'The Castle, and 'In the Penal Colony').

The desire for conscious awareness has the same character as that for sense-impressions: the craving to be alive, to *feel* alive in the constant encounter with the world of objects present to consciousness (or present within consciousness — as the idealists prefer to say).

But there is still more meaning than that to be derived from the description of Consciousness as a nutriment if we consider that it is explained primarily as *Rebirth* consciousness. This Rebirth Consciousness, which is a single moment's occurrence, feeds (or conditions the mind-body process (*nāma-rūpa*) of the present existence; and it is the arising of such moments of Rebirth Consciousness at the beginning of each successive life [that continues the interminable chain of future births, deaths and sufferings. Growth or Proliferation is a characteristic feature of all consciousness. Each rebirth consciousness, though its direct link is with the life immediately preceding it, has behind it the inexhaustible store-house of the beginningless past, a vast granary of potential seeds of life. Fed from the dark unfathomable recesses of the past, lurks consciousness, an octopus with not eight but a thousand arms, ready to grasp and take a hold wherever it finds a chance, and there to procreate a fresh breed of beings with grasping tentacles.

The writer once visited large subterranean caverns which had long passages and high-roofed temple-like halls with huge stalactites and stalagmites resembling the lofty columns of a cathedral. For the convenience of the numerous visitors to the caverns, electric light was installed, and where the bulbs were low enough one could see around them a small spread of lichen, the only trace of organic life amidst the barren rocks. Life

springs up wherever it gets the slightest chance through favouring conditions like warmth, moisture and light. In the spectator's mind this little harmless proliferation of primitive plant life assumed the menacing features of a best of prey that, having lurked long under the cover of darkness, at last got the chance for its hungry leap.

Life is always in readiness to spring up and its most prolific manifestation is consciousness. Seen from our limited viewpoint, it is consciousness that contributes most to the "expanding universe" of Saṃsāra. Hence the Enlightened One warned, "Do not be an augmentor of worlds!" (Dhammapada v. 167). It is by our insatiable and greedy feeding on Consciousness and the other nutriments that the world 'grows'; and the potentialities of its growth are endless. Also the end of the world of Consciousness cannot be reached by walking. Seen from that world-wide perspective, Consciousness appears as the feeder and procreator of innumerable beings all of whom undergo that daily ordeal of life's piercing spears. Such a visualization of the reach of consciousness will increasingly lead to revulsion, to turning-away and dispassion, [undeceived by the magician's enchanting illusions with which the Aggregate Consciousness was compared by the Buddha.

Looking back to the Buddha's similes for the Four Nutriments, we are struck by the fact that all four evoke pictures of extreme suffering and danger. They depict quite unusual situations of greatest agony. Considering the fact that the daily process of nutrition, physical and mental, is such a very humdrum function in life, those extraordinary similes are very surprising and even

deeply disturbing. And they obviously were meant to be disquietening. They are meant to break through the unthinking complacency in which these so common functions of life are performed and viewed: eating, perceiving, willing and cognizing.

The contemplations on the Four Nutriment as presented in these pages, cut at the very roots of the attachment to life. To pursue these contemplations radically and methodically, will be a grave step, advisable only for those who are determined to strive for the final Cessation of Craving and, therefore, are willing to face all consequences which that path of practice may bring for the direction of their present life and thought.

But apart from such full commitment, also a less radical pursuit but serious and repeated thought given to this teaching of the Four Nutriment will be beneficial to any earnest follower of the Buddha. To those who feel it premature for themselves to aim straight at the Cessation of Craving, the Dhamma has enough teachings that will soothe the wounds received in the battle of life, and will encourage and help a steady progress on the Path. Though gentle guidance will often be welcome amidst the harshness of life, yet when there is only such gentleness and when, for a while, the winds of fate blow softly and pleasantly, there will be the danger that man settles to a comfortable routine and forgets his precarious situation in this world, which the Buddha so often described. Hence there is the need that man, and especially a Buddhist, should face now and again such stern teachings as those on the Nutriment, which will keep him alert and will strengthen his mental fibre so that he can fearlessly meet the unveiled truth about the world in which he lives.

The contemplation on the Four Nutriments of Life can do this for him. From that contemplation, man can learn "not to recoil from the real and not to be carried away by the unreal". He will learn from it that it is Suffering which is nourished and pampered by the four nutriments. He will more deeply understand that

"Only Suffering arises where anything arises and only suffering ceases where any thing ceases."

And another word of the Master will gain fresh significance and increasing weight:

"This only do I teach: suffering and its end."

THE FOUR NUTRIMENTS OF LIFE

Text 1

One Thing

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

What one thing? 'All beings subsist by nutriment.' When a monk becomes entirely dispassionate towards this one thing (nutriment), when his lust for it entirely fades away, when he is entirely liberated from it, and when he sees the complete ending of it, then, O monks, he is one who, after fully comprehending the Goal, makes an end of suffering here and now.

Anguttara-Nikāya, Dasaka Nipāta (The Tens),
Sutta No 27.

Text 2

The Discourse on “Son’s Flesh” or The Similes for the Four Nutriments (a) The Discourse

At Sāvatthi.

“There are, O monks, four nutriments¹ for the sustenance of beings born, and for the support of beings seeking birth.² What are the four?

“Edible food, coarse and fine;³ secondly, sense-impression;⁴ thirdly, volitional thought;⁵ fourthly, consciousness.⁶

“How, O monks, should the nutriment *Edible Food* be considered? Suppose a couple, husband and wife, have set out on a journey through the desert, carrying

1 Pāli: *āhāra*; from *āharati*, to take up, to take on to oneself; to bring, carry, fetch.

2 *Of beings born*—*bhūtānam*; lit.: of those who have come to existence. — *Of beings seeking birth*—*bhavesinam*, lit.: of those seeking existence. The latter term refers, according to the Commentary, in the case of egg-born and womb-born beings, to the period before they have emerged from the egg shell or the membraneous sheath. Beings born of moisture (*sedaja*) or spontaneously (*opapātika*) are called ‘seeking birth’ at their first thought moment.

3 ‘Edible food’, *kabaliṅkāro āhāro*, lit.: ‘morsel-made food’.—Comy: “It is a term for the nutritive essence (*ojā*) of which boiled rice etc., is the (coarse) basis (*vatthu*).”

4 ‘Sense-impression’ (or contact; *phassa*) is sixfold: through eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.

5 ‘Volitional Thought’, *mano-sancetanā*, is according to Comy. identical with *cetanā*, and refers here to *kammic* volition.

6 ‘Consciousness’ (*vinñāṇa*) refers to all types of consciousness.

only limited provisions. They have with them their only son, dearly beloved by them. Now, while these two travelled through the desert, their limited stock of provisions ran out and came to an end: but there was still a stretch of desert not yet crossed. Then the two thought: 'Our small stock of provisions has run out, it has come to an end; and there is still a stretch of desert that is not yet crossed. Should we not kill our only son, so dearly beloved, prepare dried and roasted meat, and eating our son's flesh, we may cross in that way the remaining part of the desert, lest all three of us perish?'

"And these two, husband and wife, killed their only son, so dearly beloved by them, prepared dried and roasted meat, and, eating their son's flesh, crossed in that way the remaining part of the desert. And while eating their son's flesh, they were beating their breast and crying: "Where are you, our only and beloved son? Where are you, our only and beloved son?"

"What do you think, O monks? Will they eat the food for the pleasure of it, for enjoyment, for comeliness' sake, for (the body's) embellishment?"⁷ —

"Certainly not, O Lord." —

"Will they not rather eat the food merely for the sake of crossing the desert?" —

"So it is, O Lord." —

7 The same phrases occur in the monk's Reflection on his alms food, e. g. at Majjh. 2; explained in *Visuddhi Magga*, transl. by Nāṇamoli, p. 31ff.

“In the same manner, I say, O monks, should edible food be considered. If, O monks, the nutriment Edible Food is comprehended, the lust for the five sense-objects is (thereby) comprehended. And if lust for the five sense-objects is comprehended, there is no fetter by which enchained a noble disciple might come to this world again.⁸

“And how, O monks, should the nutriment *Sense-impression* be considered? Suppose, O monks, there is a skinned cow that stands close to a wall, then the creatures living in the wall will nibble at the cow; and if the skinned cow stands near a tree, then the creatures living in the tree will nibble at it; if it stands in the water, the creatures living in the water will nibble at it; if it stands in the open air, the creatures living in the air will nibble at it. Wherever that skinned cow stands, the creatures living there will nibble at it.

“In that manner, I say, O monks, should the nutriment ‘Sense-impression’ be considered. If the nutriment ‘Sense-impression’ is comprehended, the three kinds of feeling⁹ are thereby comprehended. And if the three kinds of feeling are comprehended, there is, I say, no further work left to do for the Noble Disciple.¹⁰

“And how, O monks, should the nutriment *Volitional Thought* be considered? Suppose, O monks, there is a

8 That is, he has become a Non-returner (*anāgāmi*) by eradicating the Fetter of Sensuous Desire (*kāmarāga-samyojana*) which, according to Comy. forms a unit with those other Fetters which are given up (*pahānekattha*) at this stage, i.e., personality belief, sceptical doubt, attachment to rites and rituals, ill-will,

9 Pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feeling.

10 This refers to the attainment of Sainthood (*arahatta*).

pit of glowing embers, filled to cover a man's height, with embers glowing without flames and smoke. Now a man comes that way, who loves life and does not wish to die, who wishes for happiness and detests suffering. Then two strong men would seize both his arms and drag him to the pit of glowing embers. Then, O monks, far away from it would recoil that man's will, far away from it his longing, far away his inclination. And why? Because the man knows: 'If I fall into that pit of glowing embers, I shall meet death or deadly pain.'

"In that manner, I say, O monks, should the nutriment 'Volitional Thought' be considered. If the nutriment 'Volitional Thought' is comprehended, the three kinds of craving¹¹ are thereby comprehended. And if the three kinds of craving are comprehended, there is, I say, no further work left to do for the Noble Disciple.

"And how, O monks, should the nutriment *Consciousness* be considered? Suppose, O monks, people have seized a criminal, a robber, and brought him before the king saying: 'This is a criminal, a robber, O Majesty! Mete out to him the punishment you think fit!' Then the king would tell them: 'Go, and in the morning strike this man with a hundred spears!' And they strike him in the morning with a hundred spears. At noon the king would ask his men: 'How is that man?' — 'He is still alive, Your Majesty.' — 'Then go and strike him again at noon time with a hundred spears!' So they did, and in the evening the king asks them again: 'How is that man?' — 'He is still alive.' — 'Then go and

¹¹ Sensual craving, craving for (eternal) existence, craving for self-annihilation.

in the evening strike him again with a hundred spears!’
And so they did.

“What do you think, O monks? Will that man, struck with three hundred spears during a day, suffer pain and torment owing to that?” — “Even if he were to be struck only by a single spear, he would suffer pain and torment, owing to that. How much more if he is being struck by three hundred spears!”

“In that manner, I say, O monks, should the nutriment ‘Consciousness’ be considered. If the nutriment ‘Consciousness’ is comprehended, Mind and Body are thereby comprehended. And if Mind and Body are comprehended, there is, I say, no further work left to do for the Noble Disciple.”

Saṃyutta-Nikāya, vol. II:
Nidāna-Saṃyutta, Sutta 63.

2 (b). Commentary to the Discourse on ‘Son’s Flesh’

Taken from
the Venerable Buddhaghosa’s *Sārattha-ppakāsinī*,
the Commentary to the Saṃyutta-Nikāya

In explaining the ‘need arisen’ (*atthupatti*), i. e. the particular reason for the Buddha giving this discourse, the commentator says that, at that time, the Community of Monks received abundant support by way of alms food and other requisites. Considering this, the Master asked himself:

“Will the Bhikkhus be able, or will they not be able, to eat the alms food and still keep to that mindfulness and clear comprehension which lays hold (of the true nature) of nutriment? Will they be detached, and free of desire and greediness?” And He saw that there were some sons of good families, recently ordained, who ate the alms food without due reflection. Seeing this, He thought: “When I practised the Perfections (*pārami*) for four Incalculable Periods and a hundred thousand kalpas, I did not do so for the sake of the requisites, such as robes, alms food etc., but for the sake of the Highest Fruition, of Sainthood, did I practise them. Also these bhikkhus who went forth under me, did not go forth for the sake of these requisites, but for the very sake of attaining Sainthood did they go forth. And now they take the unessential for the essential, the worthless for what is worthy!” Such concern arose in Him, and He thought further: “If it were possible to declare a fifth Grave Offence (*pārājika*), the monks, partaking of food without due reflection should be made a fifth Grave Offence. It is, however, not possible to do so, because food is constantly used by beings. But I shall speak to them in such a way that they will consider (such thoughtlessness) as if it were a fifth Grave Offence. I shall place before them a Mirror of the Dhamma for their self-control and restraint, so that, contemplating on it again and again, the bhikkhus of times to come will make use of the four requisites only after due reflection.”

* * *

Nutriment (*āhāra*) has the meaning of ‘condition’ (*paccaya*); because conditions carry (*āharanti*) their own results.

. . . . Here an objection may be raised: "If the meaning of Nutriment is that of condition, why are only four of them mentioned here, though living beings are conditioned also in other ways?" In reply it is said: "Because these four are prominent conditions for the individual life-continuity."

For beings living on material food, 'edible food' is an important condition for their physical organism (*rūpa-kāya*). As to their mental organism (*nāma kāya*), Sense-impression is an important condition of feeling, Volitional Thought of consciousness, and Consciousness of mind-and body (*nāma-rūpa*). Accordingly it was said: "Just as this body subsists on nutriment, subsists because of nutriment, does not subsist without nutriment, — in the same way, O monks, are feelings conditioned by sense-impression, is consciousness conditioned by kamma-formations (*saṅkhāra=cetanā*, 'karmic volition'), is mind-and-body conditioned by consciousness."

What is it, now, that is fed (or conditioned) by each of the four nutriments? *Edible Food* feeds and conditions the set of corporeal qualities that have nutritive essence as their eighth factor.* The nutriment *Sense-impression* feeds and conditions the three kinds of feeling. The nutriment *Volitional Thought* feeds and conditions the three states of existence. The nutriment *Consciousness* feeds and conditions mind-and-body at rebirth.

In which way does this take place? *Edible-Food*, immediately it is placed in the mouth, produces the eight corporeal qualities.* And each morsel that is chewed

* *ojaṭṭhamaka-rūpāni*, the 'basic corporeal octad' (*suddhaṭṭhaka-kalāpa*), consisting of the four material elements, and colour, smell, taste and nutritive essence.

and swallowed produces again a set of the same eight qualities. Thus it is that Edible Food feeds and conditions the eight corporeal qualities that have nutritive essence as their eighth factor.

The nutriment *Sense-impression* that is liable to be felt as pleasant, immediately on its arising feeds and conditions a pleasant feeling. And it is similar with sense-impressions liable to be felt as unpleasant or neutral. So does the nutriment Sense-impression in all its types (visual impression, auditory, etc.) feed and condition the three kinds of feeling.

The nutriment *Volitional Thought* when occurring as Kamma leading to rebirth on the Sensuous Plane, feeds and conditions Sensuous Existence. When occurring as Kamma leading to rebirth on the Fine-material or Immaterial Plane, it feeds and conditions the corresponding existence. So does the nutriment Volitional Thought in all cases feed and condition the three states of existence.

The nutriment *Consciousness*, at the moment of rebirth, feeds and conditions the three other mental Groups (*khandha*), conjoined with it; and by way of conascence-condition, etc., it feeds and conditions the thirty corporeal processes that arise in a triple continuity (*ti-santati*).* So does the nutriment Consciousness feed and condition mind-and-body at rebirth.

* At the moment of conception of a human being, three units (*kalāpa*) of corporeal processes arise in continuity: the body-decad, the sex-decad and the heart-decad. These decads have in common 9 factors: the basic eight (see above) and physical vitality; to these, as the varying tenth factor, is added: body (*i e.* bodily sensitivity; *kāya*), sex differentiation (*bhāva*), heart (*hadaya*; the physical basis of mental activity).

When saying that “Volitional Thought feeds and conditions the three states of existence”, only karmically wholesome and unwholesome volition, subject to the Taints (*sāsava-kusala-akusala*), is spoken of; and when saying that “Consciousness feeds and conditions mind-and-body at rebirth”, only rebirth-consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) is meant. But in general application these four are called ‘nutriments’ (*āhāra*) because they carry or feed the mental processes associated with these nutriments, and the corporeal processes produced by them (*taṃ-sampayutta-taṃ-samuṭṭhāna-dhammānaṃ āharaṇato*).

The Functions. Among these four nutriments, Edible Food fulfils the function of nourishing, by way of sustaining (*upatthambhento*); Sense-impression, by touching (providing contact; *phusanto*); Volitional Thought, by accumulating (Kamma; *āyūhamāno*); Consciousness, by cognizing (*vijānantam*). In which way?

The nutriment *Edible Food*, sustaining* the body by fortifying it, serves for the (bodily) stability of beings. Though this body is produced by Kamma, it is through being sustained by Edible Food that it lasts for 10 years or 100 years, until the end of a being’s normal life span. This may be compared, firstly, to a child that, though brought forth by the mother, is nourished by the wet-nurse at the breast, and is nurtured in other ways; and reared thus it lives long. Secondly it is like a (dela-pidated) house propped up by supports. As it was said.

* *Sub-Comy*: “It is by way of sustaining (*upatthambhento*; lit.: propping up) that ‘food’ is said to be a ‘producer’ of corporeality’ (*rūpam samuṭṭhāpeti*). Its function of sustaining consists in the production of the Basic Octad, with nutritive essence as its eighth factor (*ojatṭhamaka-rūpa*).

“Just as a house that is about to fall, will not fall when supported by timber, so, O great king, is this body sustained by nutriment and persists because of nutriment” (*Milinda-pañhā*).

Similarly it is by sustaining that the nutriment *Edible Food* fulfils its function of nourishing. In fulfilling that function, it is a condition to two kinds of corporeal continuity: that produced by nutriment (*āhāra-samuṭṭhāna*) and that karmically acquired (*upādiṇṇaka*; due to clinging in a former life). For kamma-born (*kammaja = upādiṇṇaka*) corporeal processes, Edible Food is a condition by way of being their preserver (*anupālaka*); and for those produced by nutriment, by way of being their originator (*janaka*).

The nutriment *Sense-impression*, by establishing contact with an object that is the basis of pleasure, etc., makes for the sustenance of beings by causing the occurrence of pleasant feelings, etc.

The nutriment *Volitional Thought*, in accumulating wholesome and unwholesome Kamma makes for the sustenance of beings by generating the root of existence.

The nutriment *Consciousness*, in its cognizing function, serves the sustenance of beings by causing the occurrence of mind-and-body.

The Dangers. In these four nutriments, thus fulfilling their respective functions of sustaining, etc., there are four kinds of danger (*bhaya*) which should be known.

In the nutriment Edible Food¹, desire* is the danger;

* Sub Cy: “This is said because the craving for taste is strong when taking Edible Food. By being the cause of much harm, it is a danger.”

in Sense-impression, approaching (an object)* is the danger; in Volitional Thought, accumulation (of Kamma and rebirths) is a danger;** in (Rebirth) Consciousness, manifestation (of a new mind-and-body) is the danger.†

For what reasons are they a danger? Having desire for the nutriment *Edible Food*, people, taking up various crafts for the sake of food, undergo many hardships, like enduring cold, etc. Others, having become monks in this Dispensation, seeking food in a way wrong for a monk, engage themselves in a physician's work, etc., and thereby incur blame in this very life; and hereafter they become hungry monk-ghosts as described in the *Lakkhaṇa-Saṃyutta*: "with his robe aburning and ablaze". For these reasons, it should be understood that desire is an element of danger in Edible Food.

Those who are fond of *sense-impressions*, may in their approach to sense-impression, offend against others' property which is under their guard and protection, or they may offend against the wives of others, etc. Then the owners of that property will seize the offenders and the goods (stolen), cut those thieves into pieces and throw them on the rubbish heap; or the owners will hand them over to the king who will punish them, inflicting various tortures on them. And after the break-up

* Sub Cy: "'Approach' is the coming-together (*sarigati*) of object, sense-organ and consciousness, or of object and consciousness. By being the cause of arising of feeling, etc., it is a danger."

** Sub Cy: "The danger lies in its being the cause of the origination of existence."

† Sub Cy: "The danger in Consciousness is its being a root-cause of all those harmful phenomena which are the originators of a new existence."

of the body, a bad destiny awaits the offenders. Thus all kinds of danger occur here and hereafter, which are rooted in fondness for sense impressions. For this reason, (active) approach is the danger in sense-impression.

All danger that occurs in the three states of existence, is rooted in the accumulation of wholesome and un-wholesome Kamma. Hence the danger in the nutriment *Volitional Thought* is the accumulation of Kamma.

In whatever place rebirth-consciousness becomes manifest, there it arises along with the mind-and-body existing at the moment of rebirth. And with the arising of that mind-and-body, all dangers have arisen because they have their roots in it. It is for this reason that manifestation (in a mind-and-body) is the danger in the nutriment *Consciousness*. Thus it should be understood.

I. The Nutriment Edible Food

The Simile of the Son's Flesh

Based on the bare factual account (in the Discourse), the meaning of the simile may in brief be explained as follows:

Once, it seems, a couple, husband and wife, together with their little son, set out for a journey through a desert of 100 Yojanas extent, taking with them only few provisions. Having traversed 50 Yojanas, their provisions came to an end. Feeble from hunger and thirst, they sat down in a sparse patch of shade, and the man spoke to his wife: "My dear, for 50 Yojanas from here, in any direction, there is not a single village or hamlet.

Therefore I cannot do now what is a man's work, like tilling a field or raising cattle, (for seeing to your needs). Hence, you had better kill me, eat half of the flesh, and taking the other half with you as provision, you can safely cross the desert, together with our child." But she said: "My lord, I too cannot do now a wife's duty towards you, like weaving and other work. So please kill me, eat half of the flesh, and with the other half as provision you can safely get through the desert, together with our boy." He replied: "My dear, if the mother dies, it means death of two. This delicate little boy cannot live without his mother. But if we two remain alive, we may get another child. Hence let us kill the child, take the flesh and thus escape from the desert." Thereupon the wife told the child: "Go, my dear, to your father!" And the child went. But the father said: "To bring up this child, I took up on me the great suffering and fatigue of a farmer's work. I cannot kill the child. You may kill it!" And he sent it back to the mother. But she said: "Longing for a son I went through much hardship by offering prayers and undertaking severe vows; to say nothing about the pains I suffered when bearing it in my womb. I cannot kill my son." And she told the child: "Go to your father, dear!" While thus being sent to and fro, the feeble child died. Seeing it dead, the parents took the flesh, ate of it and continued their trek through the desert.

This food of their son's flesh, being loathsome for nine reasons, was not eaten by them for pleasure and enjoyment, nor for comeliness' sake and for the body's embellishment, but solely to enable them to cross the desert. What are the nine reasons of its loathsomeness? Its being flesh of the same, i. e. human, species; the

flesh of a relative, their own son; the flesh of a beloved son; its being tender, raw, tasteless, unsalted, unsmoked. When partaking of their son's flesh, so loathsome for those nine reasons, they did not eat it with gusto and full of greed for it, but ate it in a detached way, without lust and desire. When eating they did not leave aside what was attached to bone, sinew and skin, selecting only the choice, substantial pieces; but they ate just what came to their hands. They did not take their fill, gorging themselves, but they took only very little of it, just sufficient to sustain them for a day. They did not grudge or envy each other the food, but free from the stain of selfishness they ate it with a pure heart. They did not eat it with the illusion that it was deer's meat or peacock's meat, but they were well aware that it was the flesh of their beloved son. They did not eat it with the longing, 'Oh, may we again eat such flesh of our son!', but they ate it without any such longing. They did not hoard a portion of it, thinking: 'That much we shall eat in the desert, and the remainder we shall eat when we are out of the desert, adding to it salt and spices.' But having reached the end of the desert and fearing that the town people would see it, they would have buried any remainder in the ground or burned it. They did not harbour any such pride and conceit as: 'There is none like us who has the chance of eating such meat!'; but they rather ate it with quite the opposite of such pride (that is, with shame and humility). They did not eat it with disdain, 'Oh that saltless, tasteless and evil-smelling thing!'; but they ate it without such disdain. They did not quarrel with each other, 'This is your share, that is my share! It is your son! It is my son!', but they ate in concord and harmony.

Now, the Master, considering in such food its aspect of being taken without greed and attachment, wanted also the community of monks to appreciate that aspect, and said: “*What do you think, monks, will they eat the food for the pleasure of it.....?*”

“In the same manner”, that is, similar to the flesh of a beloved son, should edible food be considered by way of its nine loathsome aspects. What nine? A monk takes edible food reflecting on the repulsiveness of having to go out (on almsround), of having to search (for the almsfood) and of the partaking of it; the repulsiveness of the bodily secretion (while ingesting), of the food’s bodily receptacle, of its digested and undigested condition (in the stomach), of smearing and evacuation. These nine are explained in detail in ‘The Path of Purification’, in the section on ‘The Perception of the Repulsiveness in Nutriment’.*

Hence food should be taken, after applying the simile of the son’s Flesh by way of those nine reasons of loathsomeness.

Here follows a lengthy section in which the statements about the couple not eating their son’s flesh with gusto and greed, etc., are applied to a monk’s attitude towards his alms-food. This is treated in full up to the last item on “not quarrelling”.

Comprehension. “*If the nutriment Edible Food is comprehended (pariññāte)....*”, i. e., if comprehended by the three kinds of comprehension (*pariññā*): comprehension as the known, as investigating, and abandoning.** In which way?

* Transl. by Nāṇāmoli, p. 372ff.

** ib., p. 704f, and Ledi Sayadaw, *A Manual of Insight* (The Wheel No. 31/32), pp. 52-82.

1. Herein a monk understands: What is called the 'nutriment Edible Food' is the 'material group with nutritive essence as the eighth factor', (i. e., nutritive essence) with (the other component factors of) its material basis.* This material octad, where does it impinge? At the tongue-sensitivity (*jīvhā-pasāda*). On what is the tongue-sensitivity based? On the four great primaries of matter (the Elements). Hence, (on this occasion of eating), the material octad with nutritive essence as its eighth factor, tongue-sensitivity, and the conditions of it, the four great primaries,—these things constitute the Aggregate of Corporeality (*rūpakkhandha*). The group of mental factors having Contact (sense-impression) as the fifth factor,† which takes it up (i.e. the Aggregate of Corporeality), these are the four mental Aggregates. All these (phenomena constituting the) five Aggregates are just 'mind-and-matter' (*nāma-rūpa*). Thus he understands (the ultimate facts underlying the act of eating).

Having defined these phenomena according to their individual functions and characteristics, he searches for their conditionality and finds it in the Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), in its ascending and descending order.§

* *savatthukavasena*. Bracketed explanation, according to SubComy.

† *phassa-pancamaka-dhammā*, the Pentad of Sense-impression, Feeling, Perception, Volition and Consciousness. See Nyanaponika Thera, *Abhidhamma Studies*, 2nd ed., Kandy 1964 (Buddhist Publication Society), p. 47ff.

§ SubComy: "The condition of the 5 Aggregates, here defined as Mind-and-Matter, is Consciousness; and the latter's condition is Karma-formations; and the condition of that is Ignorance." See The Wheel No. 15a/b.

By such correct understanding of Mind-and-Matter with its Conditions, in the instance of the nutriment Edible Food, the latter has in so far been comprehended (*pariññāta*) 'as known' (*ñāta-pariññā*; i. e., as an object of knowledge in ultimate terms).

2. To that very (instance of) mind-and-matter with its conditions, he now applies the three Signata'—Impermanence, Suffering and Not-self—and discerns it (*samma-sati*) by way of the Seven Contemplations.* Hereby the nutriment Edible Food has been comprehended by way of the Investigating Comprehension consisting in the full penetration of the three Signata and the knowledge of discernment (*sammasana-ñāṇa*).

3. By discarding attachment and desire in regard to that very mind-and-matter, and comprehending it through the attainment of the Path of Non-returning, the nutriment Edible Food has been comprehended by Comprehension as Abandoning (*pahāna-pariññā*).

For explaining the same statement in the Discourse, that is, "*If the nutriment Edible Food is comprehended, the lust for the five sense-objects is thereby comprehended*", there is another set of three kinds of Comprehension, namely: Single Comprehension (*eka-pariññā*), Total Comprehension (*sabba-pariññā*) and Root-comprehension (*mūla-pariññā*).

1. What is Single Comprehension? If a monk fully understands the single (fact of) craving for taste occurring at the sense-door of the tongue, thereby (all) lust for the five sense-objects is comprehended. Why? Because

* See 'Path of Purification', p. 705.

that craving arises (on that occasion) at all five sense doors. This very craving when arising at the eye door, is called 'lust for visual objects' (*rūpa-rāga*); when arising at the door of the ear, etc., it is called 'lust for sounds,' etc. It is as with a robber who does his misdeeds on five roads; if he is caught on one of these roads and subsequently beheaded, then all five roads will be safe. Similarly, if the craving for taste is comprehended at the tongue sense-door, the entire lust for the five sense-objects is thereby comprehended. This is the Single Comprehension.

2. What is Total Comprehension? In a single food morsel that has been placed into the monk's almsbowl, all fivefold sense-desire obtains. How? By first looking at the food's clean, bright appearance, there is lust for visual objects. When hot ghee is poured over it, there is a sizzling sound; or when chewing hard food, there is also a sound; and when enjoying such sounds, there is lust for sounds. When enjoying the food's smell, there is lust for odours. Through its pleasant taste there is lust for taste objects. When enjoying the softness of the food, there is lust for touch objects. When in such a way the food is considered with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati - sampajañña*), and is being eaten without greed and attachment, then there is a Total Comprehension of it.

3. What is Root Comprehension? The nutriment Edible Food is the root or basis of the lust for the five sense-objects. Why? Because when the former exists, the latter arises. It is told that (in Ceylon) during the famine at the time of the Brahmin Tissa's rebellion, for twelve years husband and wife did not even look at each other with sensuous thoughts. And why? Because

of the scarcity of food. But when the famine had subsided, the whole isle of Ceylon was like a single large festival of children's birth celebrations. If nutriment is thus comprehended as being the root, also the lust for the five sense - objects is hereby comprehended. This is Root Comprehension.

2. The Nutriment Sense-Impression

Just as the skinned cow, exposed to the danger of being attacked by the creatures living in various places, has no wish for honour and attention paid to her, nor for bodily care given to her by cleaning her back and massaging, — similarly the monk, considering that he is exposed to the danger coming from those devouring creatures, the mental defilements, that are rooted in the nutriment Sense-impression, has no desire for the sense-impressions of the three planes of existence.

Here, too, there are three Comprehensions:

1. In this case, Sense-impression represents the Formation Aggregate (*sankhāra-kkhandha*); the feeling conjoined with it, is the Feeling Aggregate; perception is the Perception Aggregate; Consciousness (*citta*) is the Consciousness Aggregate (*viññāṇa-kkhandha*); the (respective) organ base and its objects are the Corporeality Aggregate (*rūpa-kkhandha*). Such correct understanding of mind-and-matter with its condition is 'comprehension as the known'.

2. The application to it of the three Signata and the examining of it as impermanent, etc., by way of

the seven Contemplations, — this is 'Comprehension as Investigating'.

3. The Path of Sainthood (*arahatta-magga*) that discards attachment and desire for that very (combination of) mind-and-body, — this is 'Comprehension as Abandoning'.

If the nutriment Sense-impression is thus comprehended in a threefold way, the three kinds of feeling are likewise comprehended thereby, because they have their root in Sense-impression and are conjoined with it (*sampayutta*).

In such a way, the exposition of the nutriment Sense-impression has been led up to the attainment of Sainthood.

3. The Nutriment Volitional Thought

The application of the simile of the pit of glowing embers is as follows:

The pit of glowing embers is the Round of Existence in its three spheres. The man desirous to live, is a foolish worldling attaching himself to the Round of Existence. The two strong men are the wholesome and the unwholesome kamma. Their dragging the man to the pit is the accumulation of kamma (or karmic effort; (*kammāyūhana*), because if Kamma is accumulated it drags into rebirth. The pain inflicted by the pit of embers is the saṃsāric suffering inflicted by kamma.

The connection with the threefold Comprehension is the same as in the case of Sense-impression.

·*‘If the nutriment Volitional Thought is comprehended, the three kinds of Craving are thereby comprehended’*·, i. e. the sensual craving, the craving for (eternal) existence and the craving for self-annihilation. Why is this so? Because Volitional (kammic) Thought has its root in Craving, and if the cause is not abandoned, the result cannot be abandoned.

In such a way, the exposition of the nutriment Volitional Thought has been led up to the attainment of Sainthood.

4. The Nutriment Consciousness

In the application of the simile of the criminal pierced by spears, the king should be understood as Kamma. The criminal is the foolish worldling attaching himself to the Round of Existence. The 300 spears are the rebirth-consciousness. The order of the king to pierce the criminal with 300 spears, corresponds to the King of Kamma seizing the foolish worldling attached to Samsara, and flinging him into rebirth. Though, herein, the 300 spears have been compared to rebirth consciousness, there is no pain in the spears themselves, but the pain originates from the wound caused by the spears' piercing. Similarly, there is no suffering in rebirth itself; but there is kamma-resultant suffering (*vipāka-dukkha*) arising during the life-process in a given rebirth, as corresponding to the painful wound caused by the spears.

Here, too, the threefold Comprehension should be understood as in the case of the nutriment Sense-impression.

“....Mind - and - Body are thereby comprehended”: mind - and - body as conditioned by consciousness (according to the Dependent Origination). If Consciousness is comprehended, also Mind - and - Body are comprehended, being rooted in consciousness and arising together with it.

In such a way, also the exposition of the nutriment Consciousness has been led up to the attainment of Sainthood.

Text 3

The Conditioned Nature of Nutriment

(a) Discourse

At Sāvattbī.

“There are, O monks, four nutriments for the sustenance of beings born, and for the support of beings seeking birth. What are the four?

“Edible food, coarse and fine; secondly, sense-impression; thirdly, volitional thought; fourthly, consciousness.

“Of these four nutriments, O monks, what is their source, what is their origin, from what are they born, what gives them existence?

“These four nutriments, O monks, have craving as their cause, have craving as their origin, are born of craving, and craving gives them existence.

“And this craving, O monks, what is its source, what its origin, from what is it born, what gives it existence? Craving has feeling as its source and origin, it is born of feeling, and feeling gives existence to it.

“And this feeling, O monks, what is its source and origin, from what is it born and what gives existence to it? Feeling has sense-impression as its source and origin

“And this sense-impression, O monks, what is its source . . . ? Sense-impression has the six sense-bases as its source and origin

“And these six sense-bases, O monks, what is their source ? The six sense - bases have mind - and - body as their source and origin

“And this mind - and - body, O monks, what is its source ? Mind - and - body has consciousness as its source and origin

“And this consciousness, O monks, what is its source ? Consciousness has kamma-formations as its source and origin

“And these kamma-formations, O monks, what is their source and origin, from what are they born, what gives existence to them? Kamma-formations have ignorance as their source and origin, they are born of ignorance and ignorance gives existence to them.

“Thus, O monks, through ignorance conditioned are kamma - formations, through the kamma - formations conditioned is consciousness, through consciousness conditioned is mind-and-body, through mind-and-body conditioned are the six sense-bases, through the six sense-bases

conditioned is sense-impression, through sense-impression conditioned is feeling, through feeling conditioned is craving, through craving conditioned is clinging, through clinging conditioned is becoming, through becoming conditioned is birth, through birth conditioned are decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Thus arises this whole mass of suffering."

Saṃyutta Nikāya, vol. II:
Nidāna-Saṃyutta, Sutta 11

Translator's Note

In this Discourse, the origin of the four Nutriment is traced to Craving (*taṇhā*), and the conditioned arising is pursued further back, in terms of the Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).* But while, in the usual formula of the Dependent Origination, it is Clinging (or Grasping, *upādāna*) that is conditioned by Craving, here, in this text, Nutriment (*āhāra*) takes the place of Clinging. So it also does in the *Mahā-taṇhāsankhaya Sutta* (Majjh. 38), while the *Cūla-Sīhanāda Sutta* (M. 11) has here the four-fold division of Clinging, with, otherwise, the same wording as our present text.

Both Pāli words, *āhāra* (nutriment) and *upādāna* (clinging) have originally the same meaning of 'taking up', 'seizing', and both are also used to signify the fuel of a fire or a lamp (see *Khandha Saṃyutta* No. 88).

3 (b) Commentary

Here the statement in the Discourse that the four Nutriments have Craving as their source, should be understood to mean that cravings in a former life are

* See The Wheel No. 15a/b: *Dependent Origination* by Piyadassi Thera.

the source of the Nutriments, or in other words, of the (present) individual (*attabhāva*), from (the moment of) rebirth (i. e. conception) onwards. How? At the moment of rebirth, there is present 'nutritive essence' (*ojā*) that has originated within the corporeality arisen by way of seven units of corporeal continua (*satta-santati*),* in the case of beings with complete sense faculties; or in the case of other beings,** with the appropriate reduction of the continua. This 'nutritive essence' constitutes the karmically acquired Nutriment 'Edible Food' (*upā-diṇṇaka - kabalīṅkārāhāra*) that has (past) craving as its source. The sense-impression and volition associated with the rebirth-consciousness, as well as that consciousness itself, — these are the karmically acquired nutriments Sense-impression, Volitional Thought and Consciousness which have Craving as their source. This so far refers to the nutriments arising at rebirth and having as their source the craving in a former life. The same applies also to the nutriments arising later, at the first moment of *Bhavaṅga*, and so forth.

But because the Exalted One not only knows the source of the nutriments which is Craving, but also the latter's source which is feeling, and so forth,—therefore the Discourse continues "*And this craving, O monks, what is its source.....?*", showing by this method the Samsāric Cycle (*vaṭṭa*) and (implicitly) the stopping of that cycle (*vivaṭṭa*).

* This refers to seven Decads of corporeal factors, consisting of of nine constant factors, i. e. the Basic Octad (see Note to p. 25) and vitality; as the tenth, one of the following seven is added to form seven decads of corporeal continua: eye-sensitivity, ear-, nose-, tongue-sensitivity, bodily sensitivity, sex and heart-basis (the physical basis of mind).

** Those blind, deaf or sexless, (SubComy.)

Here, however, the exposition is given under the aspect of the Past, and accordingly the Cycle of Kamma and Kamma Result has been described in terms of past (existence).* How? This (present) individual is conceived (as a product of) the four nutriments.

[Among the factors of the Dependent Origination given here], Craving (*taṇhā*) is the generative kamma (*janaka-kamma*) for this (present) individual. "Feeling, sense-impression, sixfold sense-base, mind-and-body, and consciousness" are the factors present in the individual (of the past) that performs that (past) kamma; they have been mentioned here for indicating [this latter fact].

Thus the individual (of the present and the past) has been indicated here in two places (i. e., by mentioning the nutriments and by mentioning feeling, etc.); and in two places the generative kamma of that (past and present individual) has been indicated (namely by mentioning craving and by mentioning ignorance and kamma-formations). In such a way, two things have been shown here in brief, Kamma and Kamma result; and in doing so, the exposition has been given under the aspect of the past, and accordingly the Samsāric Cycle has been described here in terms of past (existence).**

But one should not think that this exposition of the Dependent Origination is incomplete because it does not extend to its future part. [Though the future is not dealt with expressly] it is implied by indicating the

* Additions in round brackets () are from the Sub-commentary.

** Sub Comy: "By the mention of Kamma, reference to a past birth is implied; that is, to the existence where that Kamma has been accumulated. Hereby the beginninglessness of the Samsaric Cycle is illustrated."

method [applicable also to the future], and therefore it should be understood that this exposition is quite complete.

This is a simile for it: Suppose a clear-sighted man sees a crocodile lying on the water's surface. At the foremost part of it he sees the throat, further on the back and at the end the root of the tail. But when looking at the belly, he does not see the rest of the tail nor the four legs which are submerged in the water. Yet, for that reason, he does not think that the crocodile is incomplete; but by methodical inference he takes it to be complete.

The application of this simile is as follows. The crocodile lying on the surface of the water is like the Samsāric Cycle on its three levels. The clear-sighted man standing on the shore, is the meditator. The time when the man sees the crocodile on the surface of the water, corresponds to the time when the meditator understands this individual existence by way of the nutriments. Seeing the throat as the foremost part is like seeing Craving as the generative force for this individual. Seeing the crocodile's back, is like the seeing of feeling, etc. in that existence where the Kamma called Craving has been performed. Seeing the root of the tail is like seeing Ignorance and Kamma-formations being the generative factors of this individual's existence. Looking at the belly below, and, though not seeing the end of the tail and the legs, yet not assuming that the crocodile is incomplete, but taking it as complete, by methodical inference, — this is like accepting the exposition to be complete and not believing it to be incomplete, if in a canonical passage this or that section of the cycle of conditions is not mentioned.

There is here one link (of fruit and cause) between Nutriment and Craving; one link (of cause and fruit) between Craving and Feeling; and one link (of fruit and cause) between Consciousness and Kamma-formations. Thus the cycle (of conditions) has been shown in three links (*sandhi*) and four sections (*sankhepa*).^{*}

Text 4 Moliya - Phagguna

“There are, O monks, four nutriments (as above p. 19).”

After these words, the venerable Moliya-Phagguna addressed the Exalted One as follows:

“Who, O Lord, consumes¹ the nutriment Consciousness?”

“The question is not correct,” said the Exalted One. “I do not say that ‘he consumes’.² If I had said so, then the question ‘Who consumes?’ would be appropriate. But since I did not speak thus, the correct way to ask the question, will be: ‘For what is the nutriment Consciousness (the condition)?’³ And to that the correct

^{*} See ‘Path of Purification’, p. 669.

1 *Consumes or eats* (*āharati*).—The commentators say that this monk believed that he understood the three other kinds of nutriment, but concerning Consciousness he had conceived the notion that there was a ‘being’ (*satta*) that takes consciousness onto himself as nutriment.

2 Comy: “I do not say that there is any being or person that consumes (or eats).”

3 Comy: “That means: ‘For what (impersonal) state (or thing; *katamassa dhammassa*) is the nutriment Consciousness a condition (*paccaya*)?’ ” The term *dhamma*, in the sense of an impersonal factor of existence, is here contrasted with the questioner’s assumption of a being or person performing the respective function. By re-formulating the question, the Buddha wanted to point out that there is no reason for assuming that the nutriment consciousness ‘feeds’ or

reply is: 'The nutriment Consciousness⁴ is a condition for the future arising of a renewed existence;⁵ when that has come into being, there is (also) the sixfold sense-base; and conditioned by the sixfold sense-base is sense-impression'.⁶ —

"Who, O Lord, has a sense-impression?"—

"The question is not correct," said the Exalted One.

"I do not say that 'he has a sense-impression'. Had I said so, then the question 'Who has a sense-impression?' would be appropriate. But since I did not speak thus, the correct way to ask the question will be 'What is the condition of Sense-impression?' And to that the correct reply is: 'The sixfold sense-base is a condition of sense-impression, and sense-impression is the condition of feeling'. —

"Who, O Lord, feels?"—

"The question is not correct," said the Exalted One. "I do not say that 'he feels'. Had I said so, then the question 'Who feels?' would be appropriate. But since I did not speak thus, the correct way to ask the question will be 'What is the condition of feeling?' And to that the correct reply is: 'Sense-impression is the condition of feeling; and feeling is the condition of craving'. —

conditions any separate person hovering behind it; but that consciousness constitutes just one link in a chain of processes indicated by the Buddha in the following,

4 The nutriment Consciousness signifies here the rebirth-consciousness.

5 *āyatim punabbhavābhinibbatti*; Comy: "This is the mind-and-body (*nāma-rūpa*) coascent with that very (rebirth) consciousness." This refers to the 3rd link of the Dependent Origination: "Through (Rebirth) Consciousness conditioned is Mind-and-Body" (*vinṇāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpam*).

6 Comy: "The Exalted One said this for giving to the monk an opening for a further question."

“Who, O Lord, craves?”—

“The question is not correct,” said the Exalted One. “I do not say the ‘he craves’. Had I said so, then the question ‘Who craves?’ would be appropriate. But since I did not speak thus, the correct way to ask the question will be ‘What is the condition of craving?’. And to that the correct reply is: ‘Feeling is the condition of craving, and craving is the condition of clinging’.”—

“Who, O Lord, clings?”—

“The question is not correct,” said the Exalted One. “I do not say that ‘he clings’. Had I said so, then the question ‘Who clings?’ would be appropriate. But since I did speak thus, the correct way to ask the question will be ‘What is the condition of clinging?’. And to that the correct reply is: ‘Craving is the condition of clinging; and clinging is the condition of the process of becoming’. Such is the origin of this entire mass of suffering.”⁷

“Through the complete fading away and cessation of even these six bases of sense-impression, sense-impression ceases;⁸ through the cessation of sense-impression, feeling ceases; through the cessation of feeling, craving ceases; through the cessation of craving, clinging ceases; through the cessation of clinging, the process of clinging,

7 Comy: “Why does not the monk continue to ask; ‘Who becomes?’ Because as one cherishing wrong views, he believes that ‘A being has become, has come to be.’ Hence he does not question further, because it would conflict with his own beliefs. And also the Master terminates here the exposition, thinking: ‘However much he questions, he will not be satisfied. He is just asking empty questions.’”

8 Comy: “Here the Master takes up that very point from where he started the exposition: ‘Through the sixfold sense (-organ) base conditioned is sense-impression’; and here he now turns round the exposition (to the cessation of the Cycle of Dependent Origination).

“In this Discourse, there is one link (of cause and fruit) between Consciousness and Mind-and-Body; one link (of fruit and cause)

the process of becoming ceases; through the cessation of the process of becoming, birth ceases; through the cessation of birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering.”

Samyutta-Nikāya, vol. II
Nidāna-Samyutta, Sutta 12

Text 5

If there is Lust....

At Sāvatthi.

“There are, O monks, four nutriments for the sustenance of beings born, and for the support of beings seeking birth. What are the four?

“Edible food, coarse and fine; sense-impression is the second; volitional thought, the third; and consciousness, the fourth.

between Feeling and Craving, and one link (of cause and fruit) between the Process of Becoming and Birth.”

Sub Commentary: “Since, in the words of the Discourse, ‘The nutriment Consciousness is a condition for the future arising of a renewed existence’, (Consciousness is regarded) as being a condition in a former existence for a future existence, and as being a principal cause (*mūla-kāraṇa*), therefore the Commentary says that ‘there is a link (of cause and fruit) between Consciousness and Mind - and - Body’. Hence it should be understood that by the term Consciousness, also the ‘Kamma-forming consciousness’ (*abhiśaṅkhāra-vinnāṇa*) is implied” (i.e. apart from being resultant Rebirth Consciousness, as in the passage from the Commentary quoted here in Note 4).

If, O monks, there is lust for the nutriment Edible Food, if there is pleasure in it and craving for it, then consciousness¹ takes a hold² therein,³ and grows.⁴ Where consciousness takes a hold and grows, there will be occurrence of mind-and-body.⁵ Where there is occurrence of mind-and-body, there is⁶ growth of kamma-formations.⁷ Where there is growth of kamma-formations, there is a future arising of renewed existence.⁸ Where there is a future arising of renewed existence, there is future birth, decay and death. This, I say, O monks, is laden with sorrow, burdened with anguish and despair.

If, O monks, there is lust for the nutriment Sense-impression . . . Volitional Thought Consciousness, if there is pleasure in it and craving for it, then consciousness takes a hold therein and grows. Where consciousness takes a hold and grows, there will be occurrence of mind-and-body. Where there is occurrence of mind-and-body, there is growth of kamma-formations. Where there is growth of kamma-formations, there is a future arising of renewed existence. Where there is a future arising of renewed existence, there is future birth, decay and death. This, I say, O monks, is laden with sorrow, burdened with anguish and despair.

1 Sub Comy: kamma-forming consciousness.

2 Sub Comy: it attains to (or: can express) its own nature (*laddha-sabhāva*).

3 In the nutriment, or in the cycle of rebirths.

4 Sub Comy: it obtains growth (or maturity) for producing its fruit.—Comy: Kamma takes a hold and comes to growth in its capacity to drag (beings) to rebirth and it thus accelerates (the process of Becoming; *javāpetvā*).

5 *nāmarūpassa avakkanti*.

6 In the present resultant sector of the Cycle (*vipāka vaṭṭa*).

7 Kamma-formations causing the future Cycle.

8 See Note 5 to Text 4.

Suppose there is a dyer or a painter. Having some dye or lac, (yellow) turmeric, (blue) indigo or crimson, he wou'd depict, on a well-smoothed wooden tablet, on a wall or a piece of cloth, the figure of a woman or a man, with all the major and minor features (of the body). Similarly, O monks, if there is lust for the nutriments Edible Food, Sense-impression, Volitional Thought and Consciousness . . . then consciousness takes a hold therein and grows. Where consciousness takes a hold and grows, there is occurrence of mind-and-body. Where there is occurrence of mind-and-body, there is growth of kamma-formations. Where there is growth of kamma-formations, there is a future arising of renewed existence. Where there is a future arising of renewed existence, there is future birth, decay and death. This, I say, O monks, is laden with sorrow, burdened with anguish and despair.⁹

9 Comy: "This is the application of the simile: the dyer or painter is the Kamma with its adjuncts. The wooden tablets, the wall or the piece of cloth, correspond to the three planes of existence in the cycle of rebirths. As the painter produces a figure on a clean surface, so Kamma with its adjuncts produces forms (*rūpa*) in various existences. If the painter is unskilled, the figures he paints will be ugly, misshapen and not pleasing; similarly, if a person performs a Kamma with a mind devoid of knowledge (*nāṇa-vippayuttena cittena*), then that Kamma will produce a (bodily) form that does not lend beauty to the eye, etc., but will be ugly, misshapen and not pleasing even to father and mother. But if the painter is skilful, the figures he produces will be beautiful, of attractive shape and pleasing; similarly if a person performs Kamma in a state of mind imbued with knowledge (*nāṇasampayutta*), then the bodily form produced by that Kamma, will give beauty to the eye, etc., will be attractive and well-shapen, like a finished work of art.

"Here, taking Nutriment together with Consciousness, there is one link (of cause and fruit) between Nutriment and Mind-and-Body. Including Mind-and-Body in the section of the resultants there is one link (of fruit and cause) between Mind-and-Body and Kamma-formations. Finally, there is one link (of cause and fruit) between Kamma-formations and the future existence."

But if, O monks, there is no lust for the nutriments Edible Food, Sense-impression, Volitional Thought and Consciousness, if there is no pleasure in them and no craving for them, then consciousness does not take a hold therein and does not grow. Where consciousness does not take a hold nor grow, there will be no occurrence of mind-and-body. Where there is no occurrence of mind-and-body, there is no growth of kamma-formations. Where there is no growth of kamma-formations, there is no future arising of renewed existence. Where there is no future arising of renewed existence, there is no future birth, decay and death. This, I say, O monks, is free of sorrow, of anguish and despair.

“Suppose, O monks, there is a gabled house or a gabled hall, with windows at the northern, southern and eastern sides. Now when, at sunrise, a ray of the sun enters through a window, where would it find a hold?” — ‘On the western wall, O Lord.’ — “But if there were no western wall, O monks, where would it find a hold?” — “On the earth, O Lord.” — “And if there were no earth, where would it find a hold?” — “On the water,¹⁰ O Lord.” — “And if there were no water, where would it find a hold?” — “It would not find any hold whatsoever, O Lord.” —

“Similarly, O monks, if there is no lust for the nutriments Edible Food, Sense-impression, Volitional Thought and Consciousness, if there is no pleasure in them and no craving for them, then consciousness does not take hold therein and does not grow. Where consciousness does not take a hold nor grow, there will be no occurrence of mind-and-body, there is no growth

¹⁰ According to Indian cosmology, the earth rests on water.

of kamma-formations. Where there is no growth of kamma-formations there is no future arising of renewed existence. Where there is no future arising of renewed existence, there is no future birth, decay and death. This, I say, O monks, is free of sorrow, of anguish and despair.”

Samyutta-Nikāya, vol. II
Nidāna-Samyutta, Sutta 64

Text 6

Come to be

.....

“‘This has come to be’¹ — do you see that, Sāriputta?”—

“‘This has come to be’² — that, O Lord, one sees with true wisdom,³ as it really is. And having seen, with true wisdom, as it really is, that ‘this has come to be’, one is on the way⁴ towards revulsion from what has come to be, towards dispassion and cessation.

“‘Produced by such nutriment’ — that one sees, with true wisdom, as it really is. And having seen, with true wisdom, as it really is, that ‘this has been produced by such nutriment’, one is on the way towards revulsion from its production by nutriment, towards dispassion and cessation.

1 *Bhūtam idan’ti.*

2 Comy: This refers to the five Aggregates (*panca-kkhandha*).

3 Comy: This refers to the wisdom bestowed by the Paths (of Stream-entry, etc.) together with the Insight (leading to it; *sahavipassanāya magga-pannā*) a).

4 Comy: From the observance of morality up to the Path(-moment) of Sainthood (*arahatta-magga*) one is “on the way” (*paṭipanno*).

“‘By the cessation of nutriment, that what has come to be is bound to cease’⁵ — that one sees with true wisdom, as it really is. And having seen, with true wisdom, as it really is, that ‘By the cessation of that nutriment, what has come to be is bound to cease’, one is on the way towards revulsion from what is liable to cease, towards dispassion and cessation. Thus, O Lord, is one in Higher Training.”⁶

“And how, O Lord, is one a Comprehender of Dhamma?”⁷

“‘This has come to be’ — that, O Lord, one sees with true wisdom, as it really is. And having seen with true wisdom, as it really is, that ‘this has come to be’, then, through revulsion from what has come to be, through dispassion (concerning it) and the cessation (of it), one is liberated without any clinging.”⁸

“‘Produced by such nutriment’ — that one sees with true wisdom, as it really is. And having seen with true wisdom, as it really is, that ‘this has been produced by such nutriment’, then, through revulsion from its production by nutriment, through dispassion (concerning it) and the cessation (of it), one is liberated without any clinging.

“‘By the cessation of nutriment, that what has come to be is bound to cease’ — that one sees with true wisdom, as it really is. And having seen with true wisdom,

5 *Tad-āhāra-nirodhā yam bhūtam tam nirodha-dhamman’ ti.*

6 *Sekho*, that is one who has attained to the four Paths and three lower Fruitions.

7 *Sankhāta-dhammo*. This is one who has attained to the fourth and highest Fruition of Sainthood (*arahatta-phala*), an Arahant or *Asekha*, ‘one Beyond Training’.

8 *anupādā vimutto*.

as it really is, that ‘by the cessation of that nutriment, what has come to be is bound to cease’, then, through revulsion from what is liable to cease, from dispassion (concerning it) and the cessation (of it), one is liberated without any clinging.— Thus, O Lord, is one a Comprehender of Dhamma.”—

“Well spoken, Sāriputta, well spoken,” said the Exalted One.

Extract from;
Saṃyutta-Nikāya, vol. II,
Nidāna-Saṃyutta, Sutta 31

Text 7

Nutriment as Basis of Right Understanding

. . . . Then the monks put another question to the venerable Sāriputta: “Friend, could there be another way in which a Noble Disciple can be said to be One of Right Understanding, whose view is upright, who is possessed of steadfast confidence in the Dhamma, who has attained to this Good Teaching?”—

“There could be, friends. If, friends, a noble disciple knows nutriment, knows the origin of nutriment, knows the ceasing of nutriment, and knows the way leading to the ceasing of nutriment, then he is, in so far, one of Right Understanding, whose view is upright, who is possessed of steadfast confidence in the Dhamma, who has attained to this Good Teaching.

“And what is nutriment? There are four nutriments for the sustenance of beings born, and for the support of

beings seeking birth. What are the four? Edible food, coarse and fine; sense-impression is the second; volitional thought, the third; and consciousness, the fourth.

“Through the origin of craving, there is origin of nutriment. Through the ceasing of craving, there is ceasing of nutriment. The way leading to the ceasing of nutriment is the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

“Friends, if a noble disciple thus knows nutriment, knows the origin of nutriment, the ceasing of nutriment and the way leading to the ceasing of nutriment, he entirely abandons the inner tendency to lust, he casts off the inner tendency to ill-will, eliminates the inner tendency to the opinion-and-conceit of ‘I am’, he discards ignorance, produces knowledge, and becomes an ender of suffering here and now.”

From the Discourse “Right Understanding”,
(Sammā-ditṭhi Sutta), Majjhima-Nikāya,
Sutta 9.

The Wheel Publication No. 107—109.

INTRODUCTION

The Saṃyutta Nikāya is one of the five great divisions of the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pāli Canon, the Ti-piṭaka or 'Three Baskets' of doctrine, constituting the Buddha-word for Theravada Buddhism. The meaning of 'Saṃyutta Nikāya' is 'The Collection of Grouped Discourses' and it is so called because its material is arranged into groups (saṃyuttas) according to subject, of which there are fifty-six. These again are placed into five vaggas, sections or chapters, corresponding to the five divisions of this anthology. In the Pāli Text Society's complete edition (under the title "Kindred Sayings") the whole work is contained in five volumes, covering over 1,650 pages, so it will be realised that the anthology is a very small selection indeed of the complete Saṃyutta Nikāya.

The present anthology differs from others that have appeared in that it is not arranged in any special order, merely following the order of the text itself, and that it is confined to just one part of the Pāli Ti-piṭaka. As regards the choice of material, an attempt was made to make it as representative as possible of the whole collection, but personal preference could not be ignored. Choice tended to fall upon the more striking discourses, the avoidance of passages that were too repetitive and the inclusion of those that contained similes and parables, so profoundly illuminating and easily remembered.

John D. Ireland

CONTENTS

Number in this
Anthology

Part One: The Verse Section (Sagatha Vagga)

I.	Devatā Saṃyutta	
	1, 10; 2, 1; 2, 2; 6, 9; 7, 3	1—5
II.	Devaputta Saṃyutta	
	1, 6	6
III.	Kosala Saṃyutta	
	1, 4; 3, 5	7—8
IV.	Māra Saṃyutta	
	3, 1	9
V.	Bhikkhunī Saṃyutta	
	8; 10	10—11
VI.	Brahma Saṃyutta	
	2, 2	12
VII.	Brāhmaṇa Saṃyutta	
	2, 2	13
XI.	Sakka Saṃyutta	
	2, 1; 2, 9	14—15

Part Two: The Section on Causation (Nidana Vagga)

XII.	Nidāna Saṃyutta	
	1; 2; 20; 23; 34; 61; 65	16—22
XIII.	Abhisamaya Saṃyutta	
	1	23
XIV.	Dhātu Saṃyutta	
	14; 16	24—25
XV.	Anamatagga Saṃyutta	
	9; 14—19	26—27

XVI.	Kassapa Saṃyutta	
	11	28
XVII.	Lābha—sakkāra Saṃyutta	
	1	29
XX.	Opamma Saṃyutta	
	1; 3; 7	30—32
XXI.	Bhikkhu Saṃyutta	
	1	33

**Part Three: The Section on the Aggregates
(Khandha Vagga)**

XXII.	Khandha Saṃyutta	
	5, 15, 18, 23, 26, 33, 58, 71, 76, 79, 94, 95, 100, 101, 102,	34—48
XXIII.	Rādha Saṃyutta	
	2	49
XXVII.	Kilesa Saṃyutta	
	10	50

**Part Four: The Section on the Sixfold-base
(Salayatana Vagga)**

XXXV.	Salāyatana Saṃyutta	
	23, 53, 60, 71, 84, 88, 135, 188, 197, 200, 205	51—61
XXXVI.	Vedanā Saṃyutta	
	4	62
XXXVIII.	Jambukhādaka Saṃyutta	
	1	63

Part Five: The Great Section (Maha Vagga)

XLV.	Magga Saṃyutta	
	2, 4, 8	64—66

XLVI.	Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta	
	3	67
XLVII.	Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta	
	18, 35, 37	68—70
XLVIII.	Indriya Saṃyutta	
	9	71
LII.	Anuruddha Saṃyutta	
	9	72
LV.	Sotāpatti Saṃyutta	
	1, 16, 51	73—75
LVI.	Sacca Saṃyutta	
	13, 35, 38.	76—78

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA

Part One: The Verse Section (Sagātha Vagga)

I

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvacchi, at the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now when night was passing a certain devatā, lighting up the whole Jeta Grove with her surpassing beauty, approached the Lord. Having drawn near and prostrated herself she stood to one side. 1 *

Standing there the devatā said :

“Those living in the forest,
Peaceful and calm, of pure life,
Eating but one meal a day:
How is it they appear so radiant ? ”

The Lord replied :

“They sorrow not for what is past,
They have no longing for the future,
The present is sufficient for them :
Hence it is they appear so radiant.

* Figures refer to the Notes appearing at the end of each Part

By having longing for the future,
 By sorrowing over what is past,
 By this fools are withered up
 As a cut down tender reed."

(I. 1. 10)

2

Once, bhikkhus, a certain devatā of the Heaven of the Thirty-three,² while wandering in the Nandana Grove surrounded by a group of celestial nymphs and possessing and enjoying the fivefold heavenly sense pleasures, recited at that time this verse :

"They know no bliss who see not Nandana,
 Abode of celestial beings, the glorious thirty-three ! "

To these words another devatā retorted with this verse :

"Fool, you know not the Arahants' saying: ³
 impermanent are all conditioned things,
 Of a nature to arise and then decay.
 Having arisen they soon cease;
 To be relieved of them is bliss.' " ⁴

(I. 2. 1.)

3 5

(Devatā:) "Possessing children one finds pleasure in them,
 A herdsman is pleased with his cattle;
 Man's possessions bring pleasure to him,
 Without possessions he finds no pleasure."

(The Lord:) "Possessing children one grieves for them,
 A herdsman grieves for his cattle;
 Man's possessions bring grief to him,
 Without possessions he has no grief."

(I. 2. 2.)

4

(Devata:) “What is man’s (good) companion ?
What is it that instructs him ?
And what enjoying is a mortal
From all suffering released ? ”

(The Lord:) “Faith is man’s (good) companion,
It is wisdom that instructs him,
And Nibbāna enjoying, a mortal
From all suffering is released. ”

(I. 6. 9.)

5

(Devatā:) “By what is the world led ?
By what is it defiled ?
And what is that one thing
Controlled by which all follow ? ”

(The Lord:) “The world is led by craving,
By craving it is defiled,
And craving is that one thing
Controlled by which all follow. ”⁶

(I. 7. 3.)

6

... Standing at one side Kāmada devaputta⁷ said to the Lord :

“It is difficult to do, Lord, very difficult to do ! ”—

“Yet what is difficult to do they do—
Disciples⁸ virtuous with collected minds.
For those who enter in the homeless state
There is contentment bringing bliss.”

“It is difficult to attain, Lord, this contentment !”—

“Yet what is difficult to attain they attain,
Those devoted to stilling the mind.
For them both day and night
The mind delights in meditation.”

“It is difficult, Lord, to concentrate the mind !”—

“Yet what is difficult to concentrate they concentrate,
Those devoted to controlling the senses.
Breaking through Death’s net those
Noble Ones⁹ walk freely, Kāmada.”

“It is difficult, Lord, going on an uneven path !”—

“Yet along this uneven path they walk,
Those Noble Ones, Kāmada.
On the uneven the ignoble fall headlong,
But the way is even for the Noble,
For over the uneven they walk evenly.”

(II. 1. 6.)

7

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvatti at the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then king Pasenadi of Kosala approached the Lord. Having drawn near and prostrated himself he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there king Pasenadi said to the Lord :

“When, Sir, I had retired and was alone this was the reflection that arose in my mind: Who loves himself? Who does not love himself? And then, Sir, I thought: Those who practice wrong conduct by body, speech and thought, they do not love themselves. Even though they should say, ‘We love ourselves,’ yet they do not love

4

t

v

t

a

s

t

v

t

(Devata:) “What is man’s (good) companion ?
What is it that instructs him ?
And what enjoying is a mortal
From all suffering released ? ”

(The Lord:) “Faith is man’s (good) companion,
It is wisdom that instructs him,
And Nibbāna enjoying, a mortal
From all suffering is released. ”

(I. 6. 9.)

5

(Devatā:) “By what is the world led ?
By what is it defiled ?
And what is that one thing
Controlled by which all follow ? ”

(The Lord:) “The world is led by craving,
By craving it is defiled,
And craving is that one thing
Controlled by which all follow. ”⁶

(I. 7. 3.)

6

... Standing at one side Kāmada devaputta⁷ said to the Lord :

“It is difficult to do, Lord, very difficult to do ! ”—

“Yet what is difficult to do they do—
Disciples⁸ virtuous with collected minds.
For those who enter in the homeless state
There is contentment bringing bliss.”

(Addressed to King Pasenadi of Kosala)

“What do you think, O King? Suppose a loyal and reliable man were to come from the east and approaching you should say: ‘Your majesty, you should know I have come from the east and there saw a great mountain as tall as the sky, moving forward and crushing all living creatures in its path. Do whatever you deem right, sire.’

And then a second man were to come from the west . . . a third from the north . . . a fourth from the south and approaching you should say: Your majesty, you should know I have come from the south and there saw a great mountain as tall as the sky, moving forward and crushing all living creatures in its path. Do whatever you deem right, sire.’

And in such a situation, O King, when a great danger of terrible destruction to human life has arisen and when considering that a human birth is so difficult to obtain ¹², what is it you could do ? ”

“In such a situation, Sir, a great danger of terrible destruction to human life having arisen and a human birth being so difficult to obtain, what else could be done but to practise Dhamma ¹³, to live calmly, to do good and to make merit.”

“I tell you, O King, I put it to you: old age and death will come upon you. Since old age and death are coming, what is it you can do ? ”

“Since old age and death are coming upon me what else can be done but to practise Dhamma, to live calmly, to do good and to make merit ? ”

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying among the Sakyas at Silāvati and a large number of bhikkhus were dwelling close by, diligent and energetic, devoting themselves (to the practice of meditation).

Now Māra, the evil one ¹⁴, assuming the appearance of a brāhmaṇa, with a great pile of matted hair on his head and wearing a leopardskin cloak, an old man, bent like a roof-beam, breathing heavily and grasping an udumbara - wood staff approached those bhikkhus and said :

“You ascetics are still boys ! Young and blackhaired, in the flush of youth ! You are in the prime of life and have not yet amused yourselves with (worldly sensual) pleasures, Enjoy (natural) human pleasures, good sirs ! Do not abandon what is visible here and now and run after distant things.”

“We have not abandoned what is visible here and now, brāhmaṇa, nor are we running after distant things. We have abandoned what is distant and run towards what is visible here and now. The Lord has said (worldly) pleasures are distant (of uncertain result), produce much suffering and despair and are a continual disappointment. But this Dhamma is visible here and now, immediate (in result), inviting one to come and see, guiding one onward and capable of being experienced by the wise” ¹⁵

When they had so spoken, Māra, the evil one, departed shaking his head, lolling out his tongue, frowning and leaning on his staff. Then those bhikkhus approached the Lord . . . (and told Him all that had occurred and thereupon the Lord said :)

“That was no brāhmaṇa, bhikkhus, that was Māra, the evil one, come to cloud your clarity of vision.”

Then the Lord, having realised the meaning of it, spoke at that time this verse :

“Who suffering and its source has seen
How could such a being look to pleasures?
Knowing attachment ¹⁶ as a bondage in the world
A being should train himself for its removal.”

(IV. 3. 1.)

10

In the Sakya - clan was born
A Buddha, an Unequaled one,
Conquering all, defeating Māra,
In every place unvanquished He.

Completely free and unattached,
One with vision, seeing all,
Come to exhaustion of all Kamma ¹⁷,
By destruction of attachment ¹⁸ freed.

That Lord is my teacher,
Of His teaching I approve.

(V. 8.)

II

At Sāvattthī. Now the bhikkhunī ¹⁹ Vajirā, having robed herself and taken her bowl and upper robe, entered Sāvattthī before noon to collect food. Having wandered through Sāvattthī and returned after her meal, she entered the Andha Grove and sat down at the foot of a certain tree to rest during the heat of midday. Then Māra, the evil one, approached the bhikkhunī Vajira and desiring to cause fear and consternation, to make her hair stand on end and cause her to fall away from concentration of mind, addressed her with this verse :

“By whom was this being made ?
 Where is the maker of the being ?
 From where does a being arise ?
 Where does a being cease ?”

Then the bhikkhunī Vajirā thought, ‘Who is this human or non-human being who speaks this verse ?’ And then she thought, ‘It is Māra, the evil one, desiring to cause me fear and consternation, to make my hair stand on end and cause me to fall away from concentration of mind.’ ‘So the bhikkhunī Vajirā, realising that it was Māra, the evil one, replied to him in verse:

“A being ! Why seize upon this word ?
 A wrong view Māra surely has ?
 A mere heap of conditions this,
 Where no ‘being’ can be found.

As when, with all its parts assembled,
 ‘Chariot’ is the word then used,
 So when the aggregates ²⁰ exist
 One speaks of ‘being’ by convention.

It is just suffering that arises,
 Suffering that stays and disappears.
 Nothing but suffering arises,
 Suffering ceases and nothing else.” ²¹

And Māra, the evil one, thinking, ‘The bhikkhunī Vajirā recognises me’, vanished away, grieved and dejected. ²²

12

Make an effort and renounce !
 Be devoted to the Buddha's teaching !
 Shake off Death's ²³ army as an elephant
 Tosses aside a hut of reeds.

Whoever in this Dhamma - discipline
 Should with diligence abide,
 Will the round of births forsaking,
 Make an end of suffering here.

(VI. 2. 2.)

13

Again and again they sow the seed,
 Again and again the sky - king rains,
 Again and again do farmers plough the field,
 Again and again the land produces grain.

Again and again do beggars come and beg.
 Again and again the liberal donors give,
 Again and again just by the donors' giving,
 Again and again they come to the heavenly state.

Again and again they milk the herds,
 Again and again the calf goes to its mother,
 Again and again one wearies and one toils,
 Again and again the stupid come to birth.

Again and again one is born and dies,
 Again and again one is carried to the cemetery,
 But by gaining the path for not again - becoming ²⁴,
 Not again and again is a man of wisdom born.

(VII. 2. 2.)

14

Formerly, bhikkhus, when Sakka, Lord of the devas, was a human being, he undertook to practise unremittingly seven rules of conduct, by reason of which he attained his position of honour. What seven ?

As long as I live may I support my mother and father ;
 As long as I live may I respect the elders of my family;
 As long as I live may I speak kindly and gently ;
 As long as I live may I not speak maliciously ;

As long as I live may I dwell in my house with my mind free from the taint of selfishness, generous, open - handed, pleased to relinquish (possessions), accessible to entreaties, enjoying giving and sharing with others;

As long as I live may I speak truthfully;

As long as I live may I control my anger and if anger arises in me may I quickly dispel it.

(XI. 2. 1.)

15

He who is perfectly Enlightened
 Here in this world with all its gods,
 The Teacher honoured above all—
 Him I revere, O Mātali. 25

He in whom thoughts of greed and hate
 And ignorance are cut away—
 All taints destroyed, the Arahāt—
 Him I adore, O Mātali. 26

Those with greed and hate dispelled,
 Those overcoming Ignorance,
 Disciples, ⁸ not gathering attachments,
 But training with all diligence—
 Those I revere, O Mātali.

(XI. 2. 9.)

NOTES

1. A *devatā* (or *deva*) is an inhabitant of one of the several heavens. The word means 'a shining one' and is related to the English words: deity, divinity, etc. The body of a *devatā* is purer and more subtle than a human being's and radiates light. The period before dawn is the usual time for these beings to visit the Buddha, one of whose titles, it should be remembered, is *sattthā devamanussānāni*, the teacher of gods and men'.

2. The heaven of the Thirty-three Gods (*tāvatinīsa*) belongs to the Sensuous Sphere (*kāmāvacara*) and is ruled over by Sakka (Skr: Indra), their leader. These heavens of the Sensuous Sphere are the reward for good deeds done on earth (see Text 14). Although a celestial being's life span is much longer than a human being's, they are still subject to death and rebirth.

3. *Arahats* are saints. Here it refers to the Buddhas, the Enlightened Ones or Awakened Ones.

4. This is a famous verse which was repeated by Sakka, the Lord of Devas, on the occasion of the Buddha's Passing-away (Parinibbāna). See The Wheel No. 67/69, 'Last Days of the Buddha', p. 77.

5. The introduction to the verses here and in the next two texts is identical with Text No. 1.

6. In the Discourse preceding this text in the Pali original (not included here), the word 'mind' (*citta*) is substituted for 'craving'.

7. *Devaputta* means a son of a deva or a young (or new) celestial being. According to the commentary, Kāmada was a bhikkhu in the previous life. He was remorseful for not striving hard enough as a human being and the Buddha is gently chiding him for it.

8. *Disciples* stands for the Pāli term *sekha*, 'a learner', 'one in Higher Training', denoting those who have attained to the first three of the four stages of Sanctitude, beginning with Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). He who has attained the fourth stage, the Saint (*arahat*) is called *asekha*, 'one beyond (the need for) training'.

9. The Noble Ones (*ariyā*) are the Buddhas and their Arahant disciples.

10. The Buddha repeats King Pasenadi's reasonings and adds the verses. The whole then becomes a saying of the Buddha.

11. 'The Ender' (*antakara*, 'end-maker') is Māra or death personified.

12. In Buddhism a human birth is regarded as the result of former good acts; it is difficult to obtain because few beings have predominantly good Kamma and is valuable because it is from here that one may best work for Enlightenment.

13. Here the word 'Dhamma' means 'truth' or 'righteousness.'

14. Māra, the evil one, is the personification of those things which deflect one from the purpose of gaining Enlightenment. He can either be taken literally or interpreted symbolically, nevertheless he is a very real obstacle to many when they reach a certain stage in their progress on the path.

15. This is the standard definition of the Dhamma as doctrine. It is difficult to reproduce Māra's argument and the reply in translation. There is a play on the meaning of the words 'kālika' (temporal), translated as 'distant', and 'akālika', immediate, timeless or transcendent. Māra is trying to make the monks believe that they are wasting their time, that Nibbāna is something distant and vague, or even nonexistent, and not worth bothering about. He is trying to confuse them with his words and also his appearance, for an elderly brāhmana should be one to command respect and be an authority on religious matters.

16. Upadhi, the basis for rebirth and suffering in the future.

17. Actions, good and bad, leading to a future result.

18. Upadhi see note (16).

19. *Bhikkhuni* is the designation for Nuns in the Buddhist Order.

20. For the aggregates (Khandhā) see Part Three.

21. These famous and often quoted verses demonstrate the Buddhist doctrine of anattā, not-self or impersonality. They avoid the extreme view of nihilism, it is important to note, of which Buddhism is sometimes wrongly accused: it is not a 'being' which passes, but merely suffering,—a subtle difference!

22. Māra is defeated when he is recognised for what he is.
23. Or Māra in his aspect of Lord of the (spiritually) Dead.
24. Non renewal of existence or no rebirth.
25. Mātali is Sakka's companion and charioteer.
26. There are four taints or *āsavā*, literally, outflows or leakages or dissipations of energy: sensual desire, desire for continuation of existence (becoming), (wrong) views and unknowing or ignorance.

Part Two: The Section on Causation (Nidana Vagga)

16

The Lord said: “Bhikkhus, I will teach you Dependent Arising¹, listen, attend carefully and I will speak.”

“Yes, Sir,” those bhikkhus replied to the Lord.

The Lord said: “Now what, bhikkhus, is Dependent Arising? With Ignorance as condition, bhikkhus, volitional activities come to be; with volitional activities as condition, consciousness comes to be; with consciousness as condition, mind-and-body come to be; with mind-and-body as condition, the sixfold sense-field comes to be; with the sixfold sense-field as condition, contact comes to be; with contact as condition, feeling comes to be; with feeling as condition, craving comes to be; with craving as condition, grasping comes to be; with grasping as condition, becoming comes to be; with becoming as condition, birth comes to be; with birth as condition, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. That is how there is an origin to this whole mass of suffering. And this, bhikkhus, is called Dependent Arising.

But from the complete disappearance and cessation of ignorance, volitional activities cease; from the cessation of volitional activities, consciousness ceases; from the cessation of consciousness, mind-and-body ceases; from cessation of mind-and-body, the sixfold sense-field ceases; from the cessation of the sixfold sense-field contact ceases; from the cessation of contact feeling ceases; from the cessation of feeling, craving ceases; from the cessation of craving, grasping ceases; from the cessation of grasping, becoming ceases; from the cessation of becoming, birth ceases; from the cessation of birth, ageing-and-death, sorrow, lamen-

tation, pain, grief and despair cease. That is how there is a ceasing of this whole mass of suffering ”

(XII. 1)

17

Now what, bhikkhus, is ageing-and-death ?

That which, for these and those beings, in this and that group of beings, is ageing, becoming old, decayedness, greying of the hair, wrinkling of the skin, drawing to an end of the life-span, failing of the sense-faculties: this is called ageing.

That which, for these and those beings, in this and that group of beings, is passing away, breaking up, disappearance, mortality and dying, making an end, the separation of the aggregates, the casting away of the body: this is called death. This is ageing and this is death and these, bhikkhus, are called ageing-and-death.

And what, bhikkhus, is birth ?

That which, for these and those beings, in this and that group of beings, is birth, being born, conception, reproduction, the appearing of the aggregates, the acquiring of the (sense) bases : this, bhikkhus, is called birth.

And what, bhikkhus, is becoming ?

There are these three becomings : sensuous (-realm) becoming, form (-realm) becoming and formless (-realm) becoming. This, bhikkhus, is called becoming. ³

And what, bhikkhus, is grasping ?

There are these four graspings : grasping at sense objects, grasping at (wrong) views, grasping at rituals and observances ⁴ and grasping at a soul-theory ⁵. This, bhikkhus, is called grasping.

And what, bhikkhus, is craving ?

There are these six groups of craving : craving for visible objects, sounds, scents, tastes, tangible objects and objects of mind. This, bhikkhus, is called craving.

And what, bhikkhus, is feeling ?

There are these six groups of feeling born of eye-contact and mind-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, bodily-contact and mind-contact. This, bhikkhus, is called feeling.

And what, bhikkhus, is contact ?

There are these six groups of contact : eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, bodily-contact and mind-contact. This, bhikkhus, is called contact.

And what, bhikkhus, is the sixfold sense-field ? ⁶

Eye-base, ear-base, nose-base, tongue-base, tactile-base and mind-base. This, bhikkhus, is called the sixfold sense-field.

And what, bhikkhus, is mind-and body ?

Feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention : this is called mind. The four great elements ⁷ and the material form assumed by the four great elements: this is called mind-and-body.

And what, bhikkhus, is consciousness ?

There are these six groups of consciousness : eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness. This, bhikkhus, is called consciousness.

And what, bhikkhus, are volitional activities ?

There are these three volitional activities: a volitional activity of body, a volitional activity of speech, a volitional activity of mind. These, bhikkhus, are called volitional activities ⁸.

And what, bhikkhus, is ignorance?

Whatever is absence of knowledge⁹ into suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the way leading to cessation of suffering. This, bhikkhus, is called ignorance.

(XII. 2.)

18

I will teach you dependent arising, bhikkhus, and phenomena (dhamma) that are dependently arisen . . .

Now what, bhikkhus, is Dependent Arising?

With birth as condition, ageing-and-death comes to be. Whether Tathāgatas¹⁰ appear or do not appear, this nature of things continues, this relatedness of phenomena, this regularity of phenomena, this law of conditionality. A Tathāgata fully awakens and penetrates to it. Having fully awakened and penetrated to it He announces it, teaches it, makes it known, presents it, discloses it, analyses it and explains it. 'See' He says, 'with birth as condition, ageing-and-death comes to be. With becoming as condition, birth comes to be. Whether Tathāgatas appear or do not appear . . .

. . . 'See', He says, 'With ignorance as condition, volitional activities come to be.'

So, bhikkhus, that which herein is a reality and not an unreality and not otherwise, this law of conditionality—this, bhikkhus, is called Dependent Arising.

Now what, bhikkhus, are dependently arisen phenomena?

Ageing-and-death, bhikkhus, is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen; of a nature to decay, to pass away, to be destroyed and to cease.

Birth ... Becoming ... Grasping ... Ignorance, bhikkhus, is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen; of a nature to decay, to pass away, to be destroyed and to cease. These, bhikkhus, are called dependently arisen phenomena.

When a Noble Disciple has well seen this dependent arising and those dependently arisen phenomena according to actuality with perfect wisdom, it does not occur to him that he should run back to the past, saying 'Did I exist in the past?' 'Did I not exist in the past?' 'What was I in the past?' 'What was I like in the past?' 'Having been what, what did I become in the past?'

Nor that he should run ahead to the future, saying, 'Shall I exist in the future?' 'Shall I not exist in the future,' 'What shall I be in the future?' 'What shall I be like in the future?' 'Being what, what shall I become in the future?'

Nor that he should now in the present have doubts within himself, saying, 'Am I?' 'Am I not?' 'What am I?' 'What am I like?' 'This being (that is myself), where did it come from, where will it go to?'

What is the reason? It is because the Noble Disciple has well seen this dependent arising and these dependently arisen phenomena according to actuality with perfect wisdom.

(XII. 20)

19

Bhikkhus, when it is raining heavily on a mountain-top the water, flowing down the slope, fills the mountain grottos, clefts and gullies, these being filled the small hollows are filled, these being filled the lakes are filled, these being filled the streams are filled, these being filled the large rivers are filled, these being filled the great sea, the ocean, is filled.

Similarly, bhikkhus, ignorance is the condition ¹¹ for volitional activities, volitional activities are the condition for consciousness, consciousness is the condition for mind-and-body, mind-and-body is the condition for the sixfold sense-field, the sixfold sense-field is the condition for contact, contact is the condition for feeling, feeling is the condition for craving, craving is the condition for grasping, grasping is the condition for becoming, becoming is the condition for birth, birth is the condition for suffering, suffering is the condition for faith, faith is the condition for gladness, gladness is the condition for joy, joy is the condition for tranquillity, tranquillity is the condition for bliss, bliss is the condition for concentration, ¹³ concentration is the condition for knowledge and clear-seeing according to actuality, knowledge and clear-seeing according to actuality is the condition for disenchantment ¹⁴, disenchantment is the condition for detachment, detachment is the condition for liberation and liberation is the condition for knowledge of exhaustion ¹⁵.

(XII, 23; extract)

20

Bhikkhus, I will teach you the seventy-seven sources of knowledge . . . Now what, bhikkhus, are the seventy-seven ?

The knowledge that ageing-and-death is conditioned by birth; the knowledge that there being no birth there is no ageing-and-death;

the knowledge that in the past ageing-and-death was conditioned by birth ;

the knowledge that had there been no birth there would have been no ageing-and-death ;

the knowledge that in the future ageing-and-death will be conditioned by birth ;

the knowledge that if there is no birth there will be no ageing-and-death;

the knowledge that whatever there is of knowledge concerning the relatedness of phenomena, this is also of a nature to decay, to pass away, to be destroyed and to cease ¹⁶.

(XII. 34.)

21

An uninstructed ordinary person, bhikkhus, might well be dispassionate towards this body, made of the four great elements, might well detach himself and be released from it. For what reason? It is seen how this body grows and decays, is taken up and laid aside. Therefore an uninstructed ordinary person might well be dispassionate towards it, might well detach himself and be released from it. But this, bhikkhus, which is called mind, is called thought, is called consciousness, — towards this an uninstructed ordinary person is not able to be dispassionate, is not able to be detached and released. What is the reason? For a long time this has been that with which he identifies himself, to which he has been attached and has held on to, thinking, 'This is mine,' 'I am this,' 'This is myself.' Therefore an uninstructed ordinary person is not able to be dispassionate towards it, to be detached and released from it

It would be better, bhikkhus, if an uninstructed ordinary person regarded this body, made of the four great elements, as himself rather than the mind. For what reason? This body is seen to continue for a year, for two years, five years, ten years, twenty years, fifty years, a hundred years and even more. But of that which is called mind, is called thought, is called consciousness, one moment arises as

another ceases continually both day and night. Just as a monkey wandering in a big forest seizes a branch and letting go of it seizes another, similarly, bhikkhus, of that which is called mind, is called thought, is called consciousness, one moment arises as another ceases continually both day and night.

Now as to this, bhikkhus, the instructed Noble Disciple gives well reasoned attention to the dependent arising thus: this being, that is; from the arising of this, that arises : this not being, that is not; from the ceasing of this, that ceases.

That is to say, with ignorance as condition, volitional activities come to be; with volitional activities as condition, consciousness comes to be . . . That is how there is an origin of this whole mass of suffering. But from the complete disappearance and cessation of ignorance, volitional activities cease . . . That is how there is the ceasing of this whole mass of suffering.

So seeing, bhikkhus, the instructed Noble Disciple is dispassionate towards body, feeling, perception, mental activities and consciousness ¹⁷. Being dispassionate he detaches himself, being detached he is released and in release is the knowledge of being released and he knows: Finished is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state.

(XII. 61.)

22

Bhikkhus, it is just as if a person wandering through the jungle, the great forest, should see an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled along by men of former times. And as if he should go along it and going along it should see an

ancient town, an ancient royal city, inhabited by men of former times, having parks, groves, ponds and walls,—a delightful place. And then that person should inform the King or the King's chief minister, saying, 'My lord, you should know that when wandering through the jungle, the great forest, I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled along by men of former times. I went along it and saw an ancient town, an ancient royal city inhabited by men of former times, having parks, groves, ponds and walls,—a delightful place. Sire, rebuild that city.' And then the king or the king's chief minister were to rebuild that city, so that in time it became rich, prosperous and well populated, expanded and developed.

So also, bhikkhus, have I seen an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled along by fully Enlightened Ones of former times. And what, bhikkhus, is that ancient path, that ancient road, travelled along by fully Enlightened Ones of former times? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, that that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

This is that ancient path, that ancient road, travelled along by fully Enlightened Ones of former times, and going along it I came to know ageing-and-death, I came to know the origin of ageing-and-death, I came to know the cessation of ageing-and-death, I came to know the way leading to cessation of ageing-and-death. Going along it I came to know birth becoming . . . grasping . . . craving I came to know volitional activities, I came to know the origin of volitional activities, I came to know the cessation of volitional activities, I came to know the line of conduct leading to cessation of volitional activities.

Having understood it (through personal experience) I have taught it to the bhikkhus, the bhikkhunis, the male and female lay-followers, so that this holy life has become rich, prosperous and wide-spread, known to many, widely known and announced by devas and men.

(XII. 65, extract.)

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī, at the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then the Lord, taking up a little dust on the tip of His nail, said "What do you think, bhikkhus, which is greater? This little dust on the tip of my nail or the great earth?"

"This great earth is surely greater, Sir. Compared with it the little dust on the tip of the Lord's nail is insignificant, it does not amount to a hundredth part, a thousandth part, a hundred thousandth part, set beside the great earth."

"Even so, bhikkhus, for a Noble Disciple who has (right) view, for a person possessing realisation, this is the greater suffering: that which is completely finished and exhausted. Insignificant is what is left over set beside the former heap of suffering that is completely finished and exhausted, it does not amount to a hundredth part, a thousandth part, a hundred thousandth part, — (being born again merely) seven times at the most.

So great a gain, bhikkhus, is realisation of the Dhamma, so great a gain is to it to obtain Dhamma-vision." 18.

(XIII. 1.)

24

It is through having like-qualities, bhikkhus, that beings associate and meet together. Beings of inferior disposition

associate and meet with beings of inferior disposition
 Beings of virtuous disposition associate and meet with
 beings of virtuous disposition. It was so in the past, it will
 be so in the future and it is so now.

(XIV. 14.)

25

Craving born of keeping company
 Is by non-association severed.
 As one embarking on a plank
 Would be in the ocean drowned,
 Even so a good man sinks
 By going with a lazy person.
 Therefore should he be shunned,
 A lazy one, of little energy.
 With noble persons, those secluded,
 Giving themselves to meditation,
 Ever strenuous, energetic, wise,—
 With these he should consort.

(XIV. 16.)

26

Just as a stick thrown up into the air sometimes falls on
 its butt, sometimes on its side and sometimes on its tip,
 similarly, bhikkhus, do beings obstructed by ignorance and
 fettered by craving migrate and go the round of births. At
 one time going from this world to another world and at
 another time coming from another world to this world.
 What is the reason?

Unimaginable, bhikkhus, is a beginning to the round of
 births (and deaths). For beings obstructed by ignorance
 and fettered by craving migrating and going the round of
 births a starting point is not evident. Thus for a long time.

bhikkhus, have you experienced suffering, pain and destruction and the cemeteries have grown. Long enough for you to have become dispassionate towards all conditioned things, long enough for you to have become detached and released from them.

(XV. 9.)

27

Unimaginable, bhikkhus, is a beginning to the round of births. For beings obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving migrating and going the round of births a starting point is not evident. It is not easy, bhikkhus, to find a being who has not formerly been one's mother . . . been one's father one's brother sister . . . son daughter during this long, long time.

(XV. 14 - 19.)

28

Therefore, Kassapa, you should train yourself thus: 'Keen shame and dread (of wrongdoing) should be present among elders, new bhikkhus and those of middle-standing.'

. . . 'Whatever Dhamma-teaching I should hear, bearing upon what is skilful and good, I will listen to all of it with interest and attention and with concentrated mind give ear to it.'

. . . 'Mindfulness of the body, giving ease and comfort, should not be forsaken by me.'

Thus should you train yourself, Kassapa.

(XVI. 11; extract)

29

Disastrous, bhikkhus, are gain, honour and fame, a bitter, severe danger to the attainment of unsurpassed security from bondage. Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus:

‘When gain, honour and fame have arisen we will renounce them and will not let them establish a hold over our hearts.’

(XVII. 1).

30

Just as the beams of a house with a peaked-roof all go to the peak, meet at the peak, are joined at the peak, similarly, bhikkhus, whatever unskilled, bad states there are, are all rooted in ignorance, meet in ignorance, are conjoined with ignorance. Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will live diligently.’

(XX. 1.)

31

Just as whatever families having many women and few men are easily plundered by robbers and thieves, similarly, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who has not developed and often practised liberation of the heart by love (mettā) ¹⁹ is easily attacked by non-human beings.

Just as whatever families having few women and many men are difficult to plunder by robbers and thieves, similarly, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who has developed and often practised liberation of the heart by love is not easily attacked by non-human beings. Therefore, bhikkhus, I say, you should train yourselves thus:

‘We will develop the liberation of the heart by love; will often practise it, make a habit of it, an objective of it; will establish it and make a thorough effort to become well acquainted with it.’

(XX 3.)

32

Formerly, bhikkhus, the Dasārahas had a summoning-drum. As the drum began to split the Dasārahas inserted one peg and then another peg until in time the summoning-drum’s old drumhead had disappeared and only a framework of pegs remained.

Even so, bhikkhus, will the bhikkhus become in the future. And those discourses spoken by the Tathāgata, profound, profound in meaning, transcendental, dealing with voidness, to these they will not listen when they are recited, they will not lend an ear, they will not set the heart upon final knowledge ²⁰ and will not consider that those things should be learnt and mastered. But those discourses made by poets, poetry, mere beautiful words and phrases, spoken by outsiders and disciples, to these they will listen . . . they will consider that these things should be learnt and mastered.

Therefore, bhikkhus, I say, you should train yourselves thus :

‘Those discourses spoken by the Tathāgatā, profound, in meaning, transcendental, dealing with voidness, to these we will listen when they are recited, we will lend an ear, we will set the heart upon final knowledge and we will consider that these things should be learnt and mastered.’

(XX. 7.)

The Venerable Sāriputta said : “When, friends, I had gone into seclusion (for meditation) this thought arose in my mind, ‘Is there anything in the world, a change and alteration in which would cause sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair to arise in me?’ And then, friends, I thought, ‘No, there is nothing . . .’”

Thereupon the Venerable Ānanda said : “But a change and alteration in the Teacher, friend Sāriputta. Would not that cause sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair to arise ?

“Even a change and alteration in the Teacher, friend Ānanda, would not cause sorrow . . . to arise in me. Nevertheless I would think in this manner : ‘May the Teacher, so influential, of so great supernormal potency and power, not depart. If the Lord were to stay for a long time it would surely be for the welfare and happiness of many people, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare and happiness of devas and men.’”

“Certainly for a long time ‘I-ness’ ‘mine-ness’ and the underlying tendency to conceit have been thoroughly eradicated from the venerable Sāriputta, in as much as even a change and alteration in the Teacher would not cause sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair to arise in the Venerable Sāriputta.”

(XXI. 2.)

NOTES

1. The doctrine of *paṭicca samuppāda*, dependent arising, dependent origination, conditioned genesis or co-production, as it is variously rendered in translation, is the central and most profound teaching of Buddhism, and unique to it. It is the key to understanding the Buddha's teaching and one might say that one's depth of understanding of the *paṭicca samuppāda* is equivalent to one's depth of understanding of Buddhism. By obtaining at least an intellectual grasp of its principles everything else should automatically fall into place and to have a full understanding of it implies one would be fully Enlightened. Broadly speaking it is the doctrine of the conditionality of all the phenomena of existence, physical, mental and moral. It shows how everything in the universe arises, is supported and passes away dependent upon a variety of conditioning factors, which themselves are likewise dependent upon other factors. Nothing can exist independently, unrelated to and unaffected by the other phenomena in its environment.

Buddhism, being practical uses this principle specifically to show the origin of suffering and its cessation by the removal of its causative and supportive conditions. For this purpose twelve conditioning factors are enumerated beginning with ignorance and defined in no. 17.

Traditionally the twelve Factors are regarded as spread over the three periods of time or past, present and future lives, and fall into groups as being active or causative and passive or resultant. There are two past active factors, ignorance and volitional activities (factors 1 and 2), giving rise to their results in this life, consciousness, mind-and-body, the sixfold sense-field, contact and feeling (factors 3-7). Craving, grasping and becoming (factors 8 to 10) are the

present causative factors with their results in a future life, represented by birth and ageing-and-death, etc. (factors 11 and 12). *

3. The word 'becoming' is used for the Pāli : 'bhava', rather than 'being' or 'existence.' The latter words are too static to bring out the meaning which is essentially dynamic. Perhaps 'evolving' might be better. It is the unfolding of the effects of past actions (kamma) and the production of new actions. In Buddhism the universe is classified into three realms : (a) the sensuous realm comprising the hells, the animal, ghost and human worlds and six heavenly or deva worlds; (b) the form realm, a subtler kind of existence enjoyed by the Brahma-gods; and (c) the formless realm, the beings of which do not have material bodies.

4. Silabbata, an outward show of ritualism and religious observances, such as ritual bathing, fasting, etc. thinking they will bring purity and release of themselves.

5. Attavāda : belief in an eternal and unchanging ego-entity, either included in or independent of mind and body.

6. Āyatana, sphere of sense, basis for sensation. There are twelve āyatana altogether, the five sense organs and their respective objects and the mind, which is regarded as a sense-organ, its object being ideas or thoughts.

7. The four great elements or qualities of matter are :

- (a) the earth-element, solidity, extension in space.
- (b) the water-element, cohesion, building matter into mass.
- (c) the fire-element, temperature either hot or cold, maturing.
- (d) the air-element, motion, vibration.

* See "Dependent Origination", by Piyadassi Thera

(The Wheel No. 15 a/b).

8. 'Volitional activity' is an interpretative rather than a literal translation of the word 'saṅkhāra,' an important technical term in Buddhist literature. The word means: formation, construction, determinant; either in the active sense of forming or putting together, or passively as what has been formed, put together or compounded. In this context the first meaning in the sense of active, Kammic volitions, is intended.

9. Knowledge (*ñāṇa*) is the understanding arising from training in meditation. It refers specifically to the knowledge gained on entering one of the stages of sanctity: Stream-entry, Once-returning, Never-returning and Arahatta or final emancipation.

10. 'Tathāgata' is a title of the Buddha. It means, 'One who has thus (*tathā*) come (*āgata*) or gone (*gata*)' to Enlightenment, as former Buddhas have done, or, 'One who has arrived at (*āgata*) the Truth (*Tatha*).' In the Pāli scriptures the word is mostly used by the Buddha when referring to himself.

11. *Uparisā*: support, cause, means, reason, condition, motive.

12. *Pīti*: joy, rapture, ecstasy, thrilling pleasure. It is an important factor that arises in meditation practice.

13. *Samādhi*: concentration, unification or one-pointedness of mind.

14. *Nibbidā*: the state of ceasing to be infatuated with conditioned existence.

15. Knowledge of exhaustion (*khaye-ñāṇa*) is the knowledge of final liberation of the Arahant or Perfected One, expressed in the words: "Exhausted (finished) is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state." (cf. no. 21.)

16. By applying the seven categories to each of the other ten stages of the formula of dependent arising the sources of knowledge total seventy-seven.

17. These are the five aggregates (khandhā) constituting the whole of phenomenal existence (see Part Three).

18. This discourse refers to the attainment of Stream-entry, the first stage of sanctity, where a disciple is unable to fall away and is assured of deliverance. A Stream-enterer is born into a state of conditioned existence only seven more times at outside before realising final liberation.

19. Mettā-bhāvanā, the meditation on love or friendliness directed impartially towards all living beings, is an important practice in Buddhism. It should be developed whatever other meditation practices are employed and in conjunction with them. The development of this love, as well as the development of faith by contemplating the qualities of the Buddha, etc., is essential in the spiritual life in as much as it gives an outlet to the emotions, directing them away from purely worldly values.

20. Aññā: the final knowledge of full liberation of the Arahant.

Part Three: The Section on the Aggregates (Khandha Vagga)

34

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī . . . and there He addressed the bhikkhus as follows :

“Develop concentration, bhikkhus; a bhikkhu who is concentrated understands according to actuality. And what does he understand according to actuality? The origin and extinction of body, the origin and extinction of feeling, the origin and extinction of perception, the origin and extinction of mental activities, the origin and extinction of consciousness”.¹

(XXII. 5.)

35

The body, bhikkhus, is impermanent. What is impermanent, that is suffering. What is suffering, that is not-self₂. What is not-self (should be considered as) ‘This is not mine’, ‘I am not this’, ‘This is not myself’: in this manner it should be seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom.

Feeling is impermanent Perception Mental activities Consciousness is impermanent. What is impermanent, that is suffering. What is suffering, that is not-self. What is not-self, should be considered, ‘This is not mine.’ ‘I am not this,’ ‘This is not myself’: in this manner it should be seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom.

(XXII. 15.)

36

The body, bhikkhus, is impermanent. That which is the cause, that which is the condition, for the appearing of body, that is also impermanent. How could the body, produced by what is impermanent, ever be permanent?

Feeling is impermanent Perception Mental activities Consciousness is impermanent. That which is the cause, that which is the condition, for the appearing of consciousness, that is also impermanent. How could consciousness, produced by what is impermanent, ever be permanent?

So seeing, bhikkhus, the instructed Noble Disciple is dispassionate towards the body, dispassionate towards feeling, dispassionate towards perception, dispassionate towards mental activities, dispassionate towards consciousness. Being dispassionate he detaches himself, being detached he is released and in release is the knowledge of being released and he knows : finished is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state.

(XXII. 18.)

37

Bhikkhus, I will teach you the things which should be fully understood and what is full understanding . . .

Now what, bhikkhus, are the things which should be fully understood? The body is a thing which should be fully understood. Feeling . . . Perception . . . Mental activities . . . Consciousness is a thing which should be fully understood.

And what, bhikkhus, is full understanding? The extinction of greed, aversion and delusion³.

(XXII. 23).

Before my Enlightenment, bhikkhus, when I was not completely enlightened, when I was a Bodhisatta⁴, I thought: What is the satisfaction and misery in regard to the body, and the release from it? What is the satisfaction and misery in regard to feeling . . . perception . . . mental activities . . . consciousness, and the release from them?

And then, bhikkhus, this occurred to me: Whatever happiness and pleasure arises dependent upon the body: this is the satisfaction of the body. Whatever there is of impermanence, suffering and changeability in the body: this is the misery of the body. Whatever there is of being rid of desire and attachment, the abandoning of desire and attachment in regard to the body: this is the release from the body.

Whatever happiness and pleasure arises dependent upon feeling . . . perception . . . mental activities . . . consciousness: this is the satisfaction of consciousness. Whatever there is of impermanence, suffering and changeability in consciousness: this is the misery of consciousness. Whatever there is of being rid of desire and attachment, the abandoning of desire and attachment in regard to consciousness: this is the release from consciousness.

As long, bhikkhus, as I did not know satisfaction as satisfaction, misery as misery, and release from the five aggregates of grasping⁵ as release from them according to actuality, so long did I not acknowledge that, in the world with its devas, māras and brāhmas⁶ with its recluses and brahmanas and mankind with its princes and (ordinary) men, I was completely enlightened with unequalled and perfect enlightenment.

But when, bhikkhus, I knew satisfaction as satisfaction, misery as misery, and release from the five aggregates of grasping as release from them according to actuality,—I then acknowledged that . . . I was completely enlightened with unequalled and perfect Enlightenment.

And the knowledge and vision arose in me: Unshakeable is my liberation of the heart, this is the final birth, there is now no further becoming.

(XXII. 26.)

39

At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī . . . and said: “What is not yours, bhikkhus, renounce it. Renouncing it will be to your good, to your happiness. And what, bhikkhus, is not yours? The body, bhikkhus, is not yours . . . Feeling . . . Perception . . . Mental activities . . . Consciousness, bhikkhus, is not yours, renounce it. Renouncing it will be to your good, to your happiness.

It is as if a person were to carry away, burn or do as he pleased with the grass, twigs, branches and foliage in this Jeta Grove. Would it occur to you to say, ‘The person is carrying us away, is burning us, is doing as he pleases with us’?”

“Certainly not, Sir.”

“For what reason?”

“Because, Lord, this is not ourselves nor what belongs to ourselves.”

“So also, bhikkhus, the body is not yours, renounce it. Renouncing it will be to your good, to your happiness. Feeling is not yours . . . Perception is not yours . . . Mental activities are not yours . . . Consciousness is not yours,

renounce it. Renouncing it will be to your good, to your happiness."

(XXII. 33.)

40

"A Tathāgata, bhikkhus, being a Perfected One is fully enlightened. Because of dispassion for the body, detachment from the body, cessation of (craving for) the body, He is called 'liberated without grasping,' 'fully enlightened'. And a bhikkhu liberated by wisdom, because of dispassion for the body, detachment from the body, cessation of the body, is called 'liberated without grasping,' liberated by wisdom."

A Tathāgata being a Perfected One is fully enlightened. Because of dispassion for feeling . . . perception . . . , mental activities . . . consciousness . . . He is called 'liberated without grasping', 'fully enlightened'. And a bhikkhu liberated by wisdom, because of dispassion for feeling . . . consciousness . . . is called 'liberated without grasping,' liberated by wisdom.' Now, bhikkhus, what is the distinction, what is the divergence, what is the difference between a Tathāgata, a Perfected One, a Fully Enlightened One and a bhikkhu liberated by wisdom?"

"For us, Sir, such things originate from the Lord, we have the Lord as our guide, the Lord as our resort. It would indeed be good, Sir, if the Lord were to explain the meaning of this utterance. Having heard the Lord the bhikkhus would then remember it."

"Then listen, bhikkhus, attend carefully and I will speak."

"Yes, Sir," those bhikkhus replied to the Lord.

The Lord said, “A Tathāgata, bhikkhus, a Perfected One, a fully Enlightened One, makes manifest an unmanifest path, He recognises an unrecognised path, He proclaims an unproclaimed path, He is the knower of the path, the discoverer of the path, is skilled in the path. And now, bhikkhus, His disciples coming afterwards live following the path.” 7

(XXII. 58.)

41

Now the Venerable Rādha approached the Lord. Having approached and prostrated himself he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, the venerable Rādha said to the Lord:

“How can we know, Sir, how can we see, that in this consciousness-endowed body and externally among all outer objects there is no I-ness, no mine-ness, no underlying tendency to conceit?”

“Whatsoever body feeling perception mental activities consciousness, Rādha, past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, is looked upon as, ‘This is not mine,’ ‘I am not this,’ ‘This is not myself’,—in this manner it is seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom. Thus knowing, thus seeing, in this consciousness-endowed body and externally among all outer objects there is no I-ness, no mine-ness, no underlying tendency to conceit.”

Then the venerable Rādha, living alone, secluded, diligent, ardent and resolute, soon realised here and now, through his own direct knowledge, that unequalled quest of the holy life, for which sons of good family rightly go forth from home to the homeless state, and entering into it abide in it. And he knew: finished is birth, lived is the holy life,

done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state.

And the venerable Rādhā became one of the Perfect Ones.

(XXII. 71)

42

Happy are the Perfect Ones :
No craving is found in them.
Rooted out is the 'I' - conceit,
The net of delusion burst through.

Attained to freedom from craving,
For them the heart is pure.
In the world unsullied are they,
Become holy and free of taints. 8

Having full knowledge of the five groups
They possess seven Dhamma-domains, 9
True men worthy of praise are they,
Own sons of the Enlightened One.

Owning the seven jewels, 10
Trained in the three trainings, 11
They wander about great heroes,
With fear and dread both gone.

Endowed with the ten factors 12,
Great beings calm of mind,
These in the world are chief,
In them no craving's found.

Arisen the knowledge of training's completion,
This body is their last,
And what the holy life's essence is,—
For that they rely not on another.

Undisturbed by the triple conceit ¹³,
 Freed from further becoming,
 Attained the stage of self-mastery,
 They are in the world victorious.

Above, across, below,—for them
 No pleasure there is found.
 They delight in the Lion's roar:
 'The Buddhas in the world are unsurpassed.'

(XXII. 76.)

43

“Those recluses or brāhmanas, bhikkhus, who remember a number of former lives, they all remember one or another of these five aggregates of grasping. ‘In the past I had this sort of body,’ thus remembering, it is just body he remembers. ‘In the past I had this sort of feeling,’ thus remembering, it is just feeling he remembers. ‘In the past I had this sort of perception,’ thus remembering, it is just perception he remembers. ‘In the past I had this sort of mental activity,’ thus remembering, it is just mental activity he remembers. ‘In the past I had this sort of consciousness,’ thus remembering, it is just consciousness he remembers.

And why, bhikkhus, do you say ‘body’? ‘It is afflicted’ (ruppati), bhikkhus, therefore it is called ‘body’ (rūpa). Afflicted by what? Afflicted by cold and heat, hunger and thirst, afflicted by coming into contact with gnats, mosquitoes, wind, sun and snakes. ‘It is afflicted,’ bhikkhus, therefore it is called ‘body’.

And why, bhikkhus, do you say ‘feeling’? ‘It is felt’ (vediyati), bhikkhus, therefore it is called ‘feeling’ (vedanā). What is felt? Pleasure is felt, pain is felt, neutral feeling is felt. ‘It is felt,’ bhikkhus, therefore it is called ‘feeling.’

And why, bhikkhus, do you say 'perception'? 'It is perceived' (*sañjānāti*), bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'perception' (*saññā*). What is perceived? Blue is perceived, yellow is perceived, red is perceived, white is perceived. 'It is perceived,' bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'perception'.

And why, bhikkhus, do you say 'mental activities'? They activate that which is formed and conditioned (*saṅkhataṃ abhisaṅkharonti*), bhikkhus, therefore they are called 'mental activities' (*saṅkhāra*) ¹⁴. What is the formed and conditioned that they activate? They activate body in its corporeal nature, feeling in its nature of feeling, perception in its perceptual nature, mental activities in their activating (directing) nature, consciousness in its cognitive nature. 'They activate that which is formed and conditioned, bhikkhus, therefore they are called 'mental activities.'

And why, bhikkhus, do you say 'consciousness'? 'It cognises' (*viñānāti*), bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'consciousness' (*viññāṇa*). What does it cognise? It cognises sour and bitter, acid and sweet, alkaline and non-alkaline, salty and non-salty. 'It cognises', bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'consciousness'.

As to this, bhikkhus, the instructed Noble Disciple reflects thus: 'I am being consumed by the body now. Just as in the past I was consumed by the body. And if in the future I should have an expectation of pleasure from the body, so in the future would I be consumed by the body just as I am now in the present' ¹⁵. Thus reflecting he has no yearning for a past body, he has no expectation of pleasure from a future body and towards the present body he cultivates dispassion, detachment, cessation.

What do you think, bhikkhus, is the body permanent or impermanent?

“Impermanent, Sir.”

“What is impermanent, is that dissatisfying or satisfying?”

“Dissatisfying, Sir.”

“What is impermanent, dissatisfying, of a nature to change, is it suitable to regard as, ‘This is mine,’ ‘I am this,’ ‘This is myself’?”

“No, Sir.”

“Is feeling perception mental activities consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, Sir.”

“What is impermanent, dissatisfying, of a nature to change, is it suitable to regard as, ‘This is mine,’ ‘I am this,’ ‘This is myself’?”

“No, Sir ”

“Therefore, bhikkhus, I say, whatsoever body feeling . . . perception . . . mental activities . . . consciousness, past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, should be looked upon as, ‘This is not mine,’ ‘I am not this,’ ‘This is not myself.’ In this manner it should be seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom.”

(XXII. 79.)

44

I do not dispute with the world, bhikkhus. The world disputes with me. A proclaimer of Dhamma does not dispute with anyone in the world. What is not believed by the wise in the world, of that I say ‘It is not so.’ What is believed by the wise in the world, of that I say ‘It is so’.

And what is it, bhikkhus, that is not believed by the wise in the world and of which I say 'It is not so'? That the body . . . feeling . . . perception . . . mental activities . . . consciousness is permanent, stable, eternal, not liable to change, is not believed by the wise in the world and I also say it is not so.

And what is it, bhikkhus, that is believed by the wise in the world and of which I say 'It is so'? That the body . . . feeling . . . perception . . . mental activities . . . consciousness is impermanent, unsatisfactory, liable to change, is believed by the wise in the world and I also say it is so.

There is, bhikkhus, in the world a world-condition which the Tathāgata has fully awakened to, has fully realised. Having fully awakened to it and fully realised it He declares it, teaches it, makes it known, establishes it, discloses it, analyses it, makes it clear. And what, bhikkhus, in the world is the world-condition which the Tathāgata has fully awakened to, has fully realised? The body, bhikkhus, feeling perception mental activities consciousness, bhikkhus, in the world is that world-condition the Tathāgata has fully awakened to, has fully realised

And whosoever, bhikkhus, when it is being declared, taught, made known, established, disclosed, analysed, made clear by the Tathāgata thus, does not understand, does not see, him, a foolish worldly person, blind, without vision, not understanding, not seeing, I can do nothing for.

Just as a water-lily or a blue lotus or a white lotus, born in water, growing in water, having arisen above the water stands unwetted by the water, similarly, bhikkhus, the Tathāgata, brought up in the world and conquering the world ¹⁶, lives unsullied by the world ¹⁷.

45

At one time the Lord was staying at Ayojjhāya on the bank of the river Ganges. There the Lord addressed the bhikkhus as follows: 'Suppose, bhikkhus, a large lump of froth was floating on this river Ganges and a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it, observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty (ritta), unsubstantial (tuccha), without essence (asāra). What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in a lump of froth ?

In the same way, bhikkhus, whatsoever body, past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, that a bhikkhu sees, observes and properly examines . . . It would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in body ?

Suppose, bhikkhus, in autumn when it is raining in large drops a bubble arises and disappears on the water and a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it, observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in a water-bubble ?

In the same way, bhikkhus, whatsoever feeling, past, future or present . . . that a bhikkhus sees, observes and properly examines . . . it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in feeling ?

Suppose, bhikkhus, in the last month of the hot season at midday a mirage appeared and a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it,

observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in a mirage?

In the same way, bhikkhus, whatsoever perception that a bhikkhu sees, observes and properly examines it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in perception?

Suppose, bhikkhus, a man, needing sound timber, going about seeking, looking for sound timber, and taking a sharp axe should enter a forest and there see a large plantain tree, straight-trunked, young, of great height. And he were to cut it down at the root. Having cut it down at the root he were to chop off the top and remove the outer skin. On removing the outer skin he would find no soft wood, not to speak of sound timber. Then a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it, observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in a plantain tree?

In the same way, bhikkhus, whatsoever mental activities a bhikkhu sees, observes and properly examines they would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in mental activities?

Suppose, bhikkhus, a magician or a magician's assistant should produce an illusion on the high road and a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it, observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in a magical illusion?

In the same way, bhikkhus, whatsoever consciousness . . . a bhikkhu sees, observes and properly examines . . . it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, bhikkhus, could there be in consciousness?

So seeing, the instructed Noble Disciple is dispassionate towards the body, towards feeling, perception, mental activities and consciousness. Being dispassionate he detaches himself, being detached he is released and in release is the knowledge of being released and he knows: Finished is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state.'

So spoke the Lord and when he had so spoken the Happy One, the Teacher, added further:

'The body's like a lump of froth,
Feeling's like a water - bubble,
As a mirage is perception,
As a plantain tree are activities,
A magical illusion consciousness :
So the Kinsman of the Ādicca¹⁸ did illustrate.

In whatever way it is observed
And properly examined,
Empty it is and unsubstantial,
To him who sees it wisely.

This body at the outset,
Was taught by Him of wisdom wide,
When abandoned of three things
Is cast aside, rejected :
Life, warmth and consciousness,
When body is bereft of these,
Then thrown away it lies
Insentient, mere food for others.

Such is the fate of it,
 A prattling illusion,
 A murderer, it is called;
 No essence here is found.

Thus should the aggregates be looked upon
 By a bhikkhu of strong energy,
 Continually both day and night,
 Clearly aware and mindful.

Let him leave behind all fetters,
 Make a refuge for himself and,
 As though his head were all afire,
 Act aspiring for the deathless state.'

(XXII. 95.)

45

"Unimaginable, bhikkhus, is a beginning to the round of births (and deaths). For beings obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, migrating and going the round of births, a starting point is not evident.

Just as a dog, bhikkhus, tied with a leash to a strong stake or post; if he moves, he moves towards that stake or post; if he stands still, he stands close to that stake or post; if he sits down, he sits close to that stake or post; if he lies down, he lies close to that stake or post.

Similarly, bhikkhus, the uninstructed ordinary person looks upon the body as, 'This is mine', 'I am this', 'This is myself,' he looks upon feeling perception mental activities consciousness as, 'This is mine,' 'I am this,' 'This is myself.' If he moves, he moves towards these five aggregates of grasping; if he stands still, he stands close to these five aggregates of grasping; if he sits down, he

sits close to these five aggregates of grasping; if he lies down, he lies close to these five aggregates of grasping.

Hence, bhikkhus, I say one should constantly reflect upon one's own mind thus : 'For a long time this mind has been corrupted by greed, aversion and delusion.' Through a corrupt mind, bhikkhus, beings are corrupted; from purity of mind beings become pure. Have you seen, bhikkhus, an elaborate painting ?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Now that elaborate painting, bhikkhus, was devised by mind. Therefore mind is even more intricate than that elaborate painting. Hence, bhikkhus, I say one should constantly reflect upon one's own mind thus : 'For a long time this mind has been corrupted by greed, aversion and delusion.' Through a corrupt mind, bhikkhus, beings are corrupted; from purity of mind beings become pure.

I perceive no other single group, bhikkhus, so diverse as the creatures of the animal world. These creatures of the animal world are diversified by mind¹⁹. Therefore mind is even more diverse than the creatures of the animal world.

Hence, bhikkhus, I say a bhikkhu should constantly reflect upon his own mind thus : 'For a long time this mind has been corrupted by greed, aversion and delusion.' Through a corrupt mind, bhikkhus, beings are corrupted; from purity of mind beings become pure,

Just as a dyer or a painter, with dye or lac or turmeric or indigo or madder, and a well-smoothed wooden panel or wall or piece of cloth, can reproduce the form (rūpa) of a woman or a man, complete in every detail,—similarly, bhikkhus, the uninstructed ordinary person brings body

(rūpa) into existence too . . . brings feeling . . . perception . . . mental activities . . . brings consciousness into existence too'' 20.

XXII. 100)

47

Just as a carpenter or a carpenter's assistant sees on his adze-handle the marks made by his fingers and thumb, but does not thereby have the knowledge, 'So much of the adze-handle was worn away by me today, so much yesterday, so much at another time,' but merely has the knowledge that it is being worn away by its wearing away,—

In the same way, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu living devoted to the practice of mind-development (bhāvanā) does not have the knowledge, 'So much of the taints (āsavā) was worn away today, so much yesterday, so much at another time.' But he has the knowledge they are being worn away by their wearing away.

Just as a sea-going boat, stranded for six months on the shore by the tide in the winter, has its rigging spoilt by wind and sun, and then, warped by a shower of rain in the rainy season, easily weakens and rots away;

in the same way, bhikkhus, for a bhikkhu living devoted to the practice of mind-development, the fetters (samyojanāni) easily weaken and rot away.

(XXII. 101.)

48

The perceiving of impermanence, bhikkhus, developed and frequently practised, removes all sensual passion, removes all passion for material existence, removes all passion for becoming, removes all ignorance, removes and abolishes all conceit of 'I am'.

Just as in the autumn a farmer, ploughing with a large plough cuts through all the spreading rootlets as he ploughs; in the same way, bhikkhus, the perceiving of impermanence, developed and frequently practised, removes all sensual passion . . . removes and abolishes all conceit of 'I am'.

(XXII. 102.

49

. . . The venerable Rādhā said to the Lord : “‘a being’ (*satto*) ‘a being’, one is called. In what respect, Sir, is one called a being ?”

“Because of being caught (*satto*) and held fast (*visatto*) by that desire, that attachment, that delight, that craving for body . . . for feeling . . . for perception . . . for mental activities . . . for consciousness, therefore one is called ‘a being’ (*satto*).

Just as when little boys or girls are playing with mud-pies. As long as they are not rid of attachment to those mud-pies, are not rid of desire, are not rid of affection, thirst, excitement and craving for them, so long do they delight in them, are amused by them, value and cherish them. But when those little boys or girls are rid of attachment to those mud-pies, are rid of desire, are rid of affection, thirst, excitement and craving for them, then with hand and foot they scatter them, destroy them, demolish them, stop playing with them.

In the same way, Rādhā, do you scatter body, destroy it, demolish it, stop playing with it, do you practise so as to end craving for it. Do you scatter feeling . . . perception . . . mental activities . . . consciousness, destroy it, demolish it,

stop playing with it, do you practise so as to end craving for it.

Indeed, Rādha, the ending of craving is Nibbāna.”

(XXIII. 2.)

50

Bhikkhus, whatever there is of desire and attachment to body,—that is a corruption of the mind. Whatever there is of desire and attachment to feeling . . . perception . . . mental activities . . . consciousness,—that is a corruption of the mind.

But when, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu has abandoned mental corruption with regard to these five, his mind is inclined towards renunciation. And a mind filled with (the thought of) renunciation is fit for realising those things to be realised by direct knowledge.

(XXVII. 10.)

NOTES

1. These are the five aggregates (khandhā) or groups constituting the whole of physical and mental existence. The Buddha's analysis of the so-called 'person' or 'being'.

- (a) Rūpa, body, form, is the four primary elements (dhātu): solidity, cohesion, heat and motion, and the corporeal phenomena derived from them.
- (b) Vedanā, feeling, is divided into three types: pleasant, painful and neutral.
- (c) Saññā, perception of sights, sounds, odours, tastes, tangible and mental impressions.

(d) Sankhārā, mental activities, include a number of mental concomitants (cetasikā), fifty-two according to the Abhidhamma, of which the chief is cetanā: will or volition. It is the same term as is used in the formula of dependent arising, but here the active as well as the passive meaning is intended (see note 8 of the previous section).

(e) Viññāṇa, consciousness, cognition, is again divided up according to the senses, as visual-consciousness, auditory-consciousness, etc.

2. Impermanence, suffering and not-self (anicca, dukkha, anatta) are the three marks or characteristics of all conditioned existence.

3. The extinction of greed, etc. is properly speaking, the result of having fully understood or 'diagnosed' (pariññāta) the body, etc. as being impermanent and so forth.

4. 'Bodhisatta' means 'Enlightenment - being' or 'a being bent upon Enlightenment' and is a term used to describe a person, in this case the man Gotama, before his attainment of full Enlightenment or Buddhahood. It came to be an important term in the later literature of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

5. The aggregates as forming the objects of grasping or being grasped at as 'a self' or 'belonging to a self'.

6. These are three kinds of heavenly beings.

7. Compare this with no. 22 of the previous section.

8. There are four āsavā or taints: sensual desire, becoming, views and ignorance.

9. 'The seven domains of the Dhamma' are: faith, shame and dread of wrongdoing, truthfulness, strenuous effort, mindfulness and wisdom.

10. The 'Seven Jewels' are the seven factors pertaining to Enlightenment (satta-bojjhanga): mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity (see no. 67).

11. The 'three trainings' (sikkhā) are the training in morality, concentration and wisdom.

12. The 'ten factors' are the ten powers of a Buddha (Tathāgata-balāni) which differentiate Him from other beings and even from His own enlightened disciples.

He knows according to actuality:

- i. causes and conditions and their results;
- ii. past, future and present deeds and their results;
- iii. the practices leading to good and bad destinies (of beings after death);
- iv. the world (of the aggregates, etc.) in all its diversity;
- v. the various (good and bad) dispositions of beings;
- vi. the state of the faculties (indriya, of faith, energy, etc.) of other beings;
- vii. the attainments in meditation;
- viii. His many former births and remembers the various experiences He had in them;
- ix. He sees beings arising and passing away according to their deeds;
- x. through the destruction of the taints (āsavā) He dwells in freedom of mind (cetovimutti) and freedom through wisdom (paññā-vimutti).

All are enumerated fully in Majjhima Nikāya, sutta 12.

13. The "triple conceit" consists of the thoughts 'I am better,' 'I am inferior,' 'I am equal' (the feeling of superiority, inferiority, and the insistence to be equal).

14. Alternatively, "They activate within a conditioned complex . . ." This is a very difficult phrase. According to the commentary, cetanā (volition) is prominent here in the meaning of sankhārā (activities) in its function of co-ordinating, organising and directing. Cetanā thus integrates the five aggregates together into an evanescent whole and directs and co-ordinates their various functions.

15. 'Consumed' means 'suffering discomfort.' 'As a person clad in a filthy robe suffers discomfort and says, "The robe eats me," so does body and the other aggregates cause one discomfort' (Commentary).

16. He conquers the world, i. e., the five aggregates, by penetrating with His perfect wisdom their true nature as impermanent and so forth.

17. Unsullied by craving and attachment to the world.

18. Ādiccabandhu, 'Kinsman of the Sun,' is another epithet of the Buddha and refers to His royal descent, but see also no. 78.

19. They are diversified by the results of Kamma, volitional acts of mind.

20. The five aggregates are produced (and reproduced) by Kamma.

**Part Four: The Section on the Sixfold-base
(Salayatana Vagga)**

51

Bhikkhus, I will teach you the All.¹ Listen, attend carefully to it and I will speak.

Now what, bhikkhus, is the All. It is just the eye and visible objects, the ear and sounds, the nose and odours, the tongue and tastes, the body and tangible objects, the mind and objects of mind.² This, bhikkhus, is called the All.

Now whoever should speak thus: 'Setting aside this All I will proclaim another All,' it would be mere talk on his part and on being questioned he would be unable to proceed and in addition, vexation will befall him. For what reason? It would not be within his scope, bhikkhus.

(XXXV. 23.)

52

Once a certain bhikkhu approached the Lord. Having drawn near and prostrated himself he sat down to one side. Sitting there that bhikkhu said to the Lord:

"How knowing, Sir, how seeing is ignorance (*avijjā*) abandoned and understanding (*vijjā*) produced?"

"By knowing and seeing the impermanence of the eye, bhikkhus, ignorance is abandoned and understanding is produced. By knowing and seeing the impermanence of visible objects . . . visual-consciousness . . . visual-contact . . . And whatever arises conditioned by visual-contact, felt as

pleasant or painful or neutral—by knowing and seeing the impermanence of that also, ignorance is abandoned and understanding is produced.

By knowing and seeing the impermanence of the ear . . . nose . . . tongue . . . , body . . . mind . . . mind-objects . . . mind-consciousness . . . mind-contact And whatever arises conditioned by mind-contact, felt as pleasant or painful or neutral—by knowing and seeing the impermanence of that also, ignorance is abandoned and understanding is produced.

It is by thus knowing and thus seeing, bhikkhu, that ignorance is abandoned and understanding is produced”.

(XXXV. 53)

53

I will teach you the Dhamma, bhikkhus, for the full understanding of all grasping . . .

Dependent upon the eye and visible-objects, visual-consciousness arises. Contact is the coming together of these three. Conditioned by contact is feeling. So seeing, bhikkhus, the instructed Noble Disciple is dispassionate towards the eye, is dispassionate towards visible-objects . . . towards visual-consciousness . . . visual-contact . . . towards feeling. Being dispassionate he is detached, being detached he is liberated, being liberated he knows, ‘Grasping has been fully understood by me’.

Dependent upon the ear and sounds . . . the nose and odours . . . the tongue and tastes . . . the body and tangible objects . . .

Dependent upon the mind and objects of mind, mind-consciousness arises. Contact is the coming together of these three. Conditioned by contact is feeling. So seeing,

bhikkhus, the instructed Noble Disciple is dispassionate towards the mind towards mind-objects mind-consciousness . . . mind-contact . . . towards feeling. Being dispassionate he is detached, being detached he is liberated, being liberated he knows, 'Grasping has been fully understood by me'.

This, bhikkhus, is the Dhamma for the full understanding of all grasping.

(XXXV. 60.)

54

"Bhikkhus, whatsoever bhikkhu does not know according to actuality the arising and passing away, the satisfaction, misery and release from the six bases of contact; not lived by him is the holy life, he is far from this Dhamma and Discipline."

When this had been said a certain bhikkhu said to the Lord :

"As to this, Sir, I am in despair; for I, Sir, do not know according to actuality the arising and passing away, the satisfaction, misery and release from the six bases of contact."

"What do you think, bhikkhu, do you look upon the eye as, 'This is mine,' 'I am this,' 'This is myself'?"

"No, Sir."

"It is good, bhikkhu. Now by (looking upon) the eye as, 'This is not mine,' 'I am not this,' 'This is not myself,' it will be well understood by you according to actuality with perfect wisdom. Just this is the end of suffering.

“Do you look upon the ear . . . the body . . . the mind as, ‘This is mine,’ ‘I am this,’ ‘This is myself’?”

“No, Sir.

“It is good, bhikkhu Just this is the end of suffering,”

(XXXV. 71.)

55

. . . Sitting at one side the venerable Ānanda said this to the Lord :

“The world, the world (*loka*) they say, Sir. In what sence, Sir, is it called ‘the world’?”

“Whatever is of a nature to dissolve (*paloka*), Ānanda, this is called the world (*loka*) in the discipline of the Noble. Now what is of a nature to dissolve? The eye, Ānanda . . . visible-objects . . . visual-consciousness . . . visual-contact . . .

The ear . . . sounds . . . mind . . . mind-contact . . . And whatever arises conditioned by mind-contact, felt as pleasant or painful or neutral—that is of a nature to dissolve”.

(XXXV. 84.)

56

Once the venerable Puṇṇa approached the Lord . . . sat down to one side . . and said :

“It would be good, Sir, were the Lord to teach me the Dhamma briefly. On hearing that Dhamma from the Lord I might live alone, secluded, diligent, ardent and resolute.”

“There are, Puṇṇa, visible objects cognised by the eye . . . sounds cognised by the ear . . . mind-objects cognised by the mind, pleasing, agreeable, charming, endearing,

desirable, arousing the passions. If a bhikkhu delights in them, welcomes them, cleaves to them enjoyment (of them) arises. The origin of enjoyment is (also) the origin of suffering, I say, Puṇṇa.

. . . but if a bhikkhu does not delight in them, does not welcome them, does not cleave to them . . . enjoyment ceases. The cessation of enjoyment is the cessation (also) of suffering, I say.

Now that you have been instructed by me, Puṇṇa, with this brief instruction in what country will you live ?”

“There is, Sir, a country called Sunāparanta. I will live there.”

“The men of Sunāparanta are violent and cruel, Puṇṇa. If they were to insult and abuse you, how would it be with you ?”

“If, Sir, the men of Sunāparanta were to insult and abuse me it would be thus with me: (I should think,) ‘Good are these men of Sunāparanta, very good are these men of Sunāparanta, in that they do not strike me with their hands.’ It would be thus with me, Lord. It would be thus with me, Happy One.”

“But if the men of Sunāparanta were to strike you with their hands, how would it be with you ?”

“ . . . it would be thus with me : ‘Good are these men of Sunāparanta, very good are these men of Sunāparanta, in that they do not strike me with clods of earth’ . . .”

“But if the men of Sunāparanta were to strike you with clods of earth, how would it be with you ?”

. . . it would be thus with me : ‘Good are these men of Sunāparanta, very good are these men of Sunāparanta, in that they do not strike me with a stick’ . . .”

“But if the men of Sunāparanta were to strike you with a stick, how would it be with you?”

“... it would be thus with me: ‘Good are these men of Sunāparanta very good are these men of Sunāparanta, in that they do not strike me with a weapon’...”

“But if the men of Sunāparanta were to deprive you of your life, how would it be with you?”

“... It would be thus with me: ‘There are disciples of the Lord who, being vexed, ashamed and disgusted with body and life, seek a weapon (to commit suicide with), but I come by (my death from) a weapon that was unsought.’ It would be thus with me, Lord. It would be thus with me, Happy One.”

“It is good, it is good Puṇṇa. Being endowed with this self-mastery and composure you will be able to settle in the country of the Sunāparanta people. Do now, Puṇṇa, whatever you consider it the time for.”

Then the venerable Puṇṇa, pleased and appreciative of the Lord’s utterance, arose from his seat, prostrated himself before the Lord and, keeping his right side towards Him, departed. And having put away his bed and seat and taking his bowl and robe he set off for the country of Sunāparanta. And walking, journeying by stages, the venerable Puṇṇa arrived in the country of Sunāparanta and dwelt there.

Now the venerable Puṇṇa during that rainy season, brought in (converted) as many as five hundred lay-followers. During that rainy season he established himself in the three knowledges.³ And during that rainy season he attained final release.⁴

Then a large number of bhikkhus approached the Lord... and said: “The clansman Puṇṇa, Sir, who was instructed by the Lord with a brief instruction has died. What is his destiny? What is his future state?”

“A wise man, bhikkhus was the clansman Puṇṇa. He practised according to Dhamma and did not trouble me with queries about Dhamma. The clansman Puṇṇa, bhikkhus, has attained final release.”

(XXXV. 88.)

57

It is a gain for you, bhikkhus, it is a great gain for you, to have found the opportunity for living the holy life.

I have seen bhikkhus, the hells called the “six bases of contact.” There whatever visible object one sees with the eye, one sees only the unpleasant, never the pleasant, one sees only the disagreeable, never the agreeable, one sees only the unattractive, never the attractive. Whatever sound one hears with the ear . . . Whatever odour one smells with the nose . . . Whatever flavour one tastes with the tongue . . . Whatever tangible object one touches with the body . . . Whatever mind-object one cognises with the mind, one cognises only the unpleasant, never the pleasant, one cognises only the disagreeable, never the agreeable, one cognises the unattractive, never the attractive. It is a gain for you, bhikkhus, it is a great gain for you, to have found the opportunity for living the holy life.

I have seen, bhikkhus, the heavens, called the “six bases of contact.” There whatever visible object one sees with the eye, one sees only the pleasant, never the unpleasant, one sees only the agreeable, never the disagreeable, one sees only the attractive, never the unattractive. Whatever sound one hears with the ear . . .

Whatever mind-object one cognises with the mind, one only cognises the pleasant, never the unpleasant, one cognises only the agreeable, never the disagreeable, one cognises only the attractive, never the unattractive.

It is a gain for you, bhikkhus, it is a great gain for you, to have found the opportunity for living the holy life. 5

(XXXV. 135.)

58

‘The ocean, the ocean!’ says the uninstructed ordinary person, bhikkhus. But that is not the ocean in the Noble One’s Discipline. It is (merely) a great mass of water, a great extent of water. There are, bhikkhus, visible objects cognisable by the eye . . . sounds cognisable by the ear . . . mind-objects cognisable by the mind, pleasing, agreeable, charming, endearing, desirable, arousing the passions. This is called ‘the ocean’ in the Noble One’s Discipline. Herein this world with its devas, māras, brahmas, with its recluses and brāhmaṇas and mankind with its princes and ordinary men is almost entirely 6 immersed, is entangled like a ball of thread, has become entangled like (ropes of) muñja-grass and rushes, unable to go beyond a state of loss, a bad destination, ruination, the round of births (and deaths).

(XXXV. 188.)

59

At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthi . . . and there He addressed the bhikkhus saying :

Suppose, bhikkhus, there were four poisonous snakes, highly dangerous, extremely venomous. And a man were to come along, wishing to live, not wishing to die, desiring happiness and loathing pain. And people were to say to him: ‘Here, good man, are four poisonous snakes, highly dangerous, extremely venomous. From time to time they must be roused, bathed, fed and bedded down. But when one or the other of these four poisonous snakes . . .

becomes disturbed and angry, then you will come by your death or suffering comparable to death. So do whatever must be done, good man.'

Then suppose, bhikkhus, that man, in terror of the four poisonous snakes, might run away and people were to say to him: 'Good man, five murderers are following after you saying, "When we see him we shall kill him." So do whatever must be done, good man.'

Then suppose, bhikkhus, that man, in terror of the four poisonous snakes, in terror of the five murderers, might run away and people were to say to him: 'Good man, a sixth, a murderous robber with an upraised sword is following after you saying, "When I see him I shall cut off his head." So do whatever must be done, good man'. Then suppose, bhikkhus, that man, in terror of the four poisonous snakes, in terror of the five murderers, in terror of the sixth, the murderous robber, might run away. And he should see an empty village. Whatever house he enters he finds it bare, void and empty. Whatever vessel he handles therein he finds it bare, void and empty. Then people were to say to him: 'Good man, bandits who attack villages are going to attack this empty village. So do whatever must be done, good man.'

Then suppose, bhikkhus, that man, in terror of the four poisonous snakes, in terror of the five murderers, in terror of the sixth, the murderous robber, in terror of the village-attacking bandits, might run away. And he should see a great stretch of water, the near shore insecure and fearful, the far shore secure and free from fear, but no boat for crossing over nor a bridge for walking from one shore to the other.

Then, bhikkhus, it might occur to that man : 'Here is a great stretch of water . . . but no boat . . . nor a bridge . . . What if I were to collect grass, pieces of wood, branches and leaves, construct a raft and supported by it and labouring with hands and feet, go safely to the other shore.

Crossed over, gone beyond, the brāhmaṇa stands on dry ground. ⁷

This is my simile, bhikkhus, for showing the meaning. And this is its interpretation :

'The four poisonous snakes, highly dangerous, extremely venomous,'—this is a designation for the four great elements: the elements of earth, water, fire and air. ⁸

'The five murderers,'—this is a designation for the five aggregates of grasping: the body-aggregate of grasping, the feeling —, perception —, mental activities —, consciousness-aggregate of grasping.

'The sixth, the murderous robber with an upraised sword,'—this is a designation for enjoyment and attachment.

'The empty village,'—this is a designation for the six internal sense-bases. For if a wise, learned and intelligent man examines the eye . . . the ear . . . the mind, it appears as void, unsubstantial and empty.

'The village-attacking bandits,'—this is a designation for the six external sense-bases. For the eye is attacked (tormented) by attractive and repulsive visible objects, the ear . . . the mind is attacked by attractive and repulsive mental objects.

'The great stretch of water,'—this is a designation for the four 'floods': sensual desire, (continual) becoming, (wrong) views and ignorance ⁹.

‘The near shore insecure and fearful,’—this is a designation for the existence-group. ¹⁰

‘The far shore secure and free from fear,’—this is a designation for Nibbāna.

‘The raft,’—this is a designation for the Noble Eight-fold Path, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

‘Labouring with hands and feet,’—this is a designation for strenuous effort.

‘Crossed over, gone beyond, the brāhmaṇa stands on dry ground,’—this is a designation for the Perfected One (*arahant*).

(XXXV. 197.)

60

At one time the Lord was staying near Kosambī on the bank of the river Ganges. Now the Lord saw a large log of wood being carried along by the current of the river Ganges and on seeing it said to the bhikkhus: “Bhikkhus, do you see that large log of wood being carried along by the current of the river Ganges?”

“Yes, Sir”.

“If that log of wood, bhikkhus, does not run aground on the near bank or the far bank, does not sink in midstream, is not caught on a sandbank, is not seized by humans or non-humans, is not held in a whirlpool, does not rot from within,—then that log of wood will float down to the ocean, will be led down to the ocean, will tend towards the ocean.

Similarly, bhikkhus, if you do not run aground on the near bank or the far bank, if you do not sink in midstream, if you are not caught on a sandbank, if you are not seized by

humans or non-humans, if you are not held in a whirlpool, if you do not rot from within,—then you will float down to Nibbāna, you will be led down to Nibbāna, you will tend towards Nibbāna. What is the reason? Right view, bhikkhus, floats to Nibbāna, leads to Nibbāna, tends towards Nibbāna.”

On this being said a certain bhikkhu asked the Lord: “What, Sir, is the near bank? What is the far bank? What is sinking in midstream? What is being caught on a sandbank? What is being seized by humans? What is being seized by non-humans? What is being held in a whirlpool? What is rotting from within?”

“ ‘The near bank,’ bhikkhu, is a designation for the six internal sense-bases. ‘The far bank’ is a designation for the six external sense-bases. ‘Sinking in midstream’ is a designation for enjoyment and attachment. ‘Being caught on a sandbank’ is a designation for the ‘I am-conceit. Now what is ‘being seized by humans’? Herein a bhikkhu lives in close association with lay folk. He shares their joys and sorrows. He is happy with those who are happy, he suffers with those who suffer. He involves himself in all manner of business that goes on. This is called ‘being seized by humans.’

Now what is ‘being seized by non-humans’? Herein, bhikkhu, someone lives the holy life with the aspiration (to be born after death) among a certain group of devas. (He aspires.) ‘By this virtuous conduct or observance or austerity or holy living may I become a deva or a certain kind of deva.’ This is called ‘being seized by non-humans.’

‘Being held in a whirlpool’ is a designation for the fivefold sensual pleasures.

Now what is 'rotting from within' ? Herein, bhikkhus, someone is immoral, of an evil nature, impure, of dubious behaviour, of concealed deeds. Not a recluse though pretending to be a recluse, not one who lives the holy life though pretending to be one who does so, rotten within, full of desires, a heap of impurity. This is called 'rotting from within' "

Now at that time Nanda the cowherd was standing near the Lord . . . and said: "I, Sir, have not run aground on the near bank. I have not run aground on the far bank, I shall not sink in midstream, I shall not be caught on a sandbank, neither humans nor non-humans shall seize me, I shall not be held in a whirlpool, I shall not rot from within. Sir, may I obtain the going forth in the Lord's presence, may I obtain full ordination?"

"Nanda, you must return the cattle to their owners."

"They will go back by themselves, Sir, the cows are longing for their calves."

"Do return them, Nanda."

Then Nanda the cowherd, having returned the cattle to their owners, approached the Lord . . . and said: "Sir, the cattle are restored. May I obtain, Sir, the going forth in the Lord's presence, may I obtain full ordination?"

And Nanda the cowherd obtained the going forth in the Lord's presence, obtained full ordination. And not long after his ordination the venerable Nanda, living alone, secluded, diligent, ardent and resolute, soon realised here and now, through his own direct knowledge, that unequalled quest of the holy life . . . And the venerable Nanda became one of the Perfected Ones.

(XXXV. 200.)

61

Let us suppose, bhikkhus, that there is a king or a king's chief minister who has never heard the sound of a lute (*vīṇā*). Then, on hearing the sound for the first time, he says: "Good man, what is that sound, so exciting, so beautiful, so intoxicating, so entrancing, so captivating?"

And they say to him: "It is the sound, Sire, of what is called a lute . . ."

Thereupon he says: "Go and bring me that lute."

They bring it to him, saying: "This, Sire, is that lute, the sound of which is so exciting . . . so captivating."

But he rejoins: "Away with the lute, my man! Just bring me that sound."

Then they say to him: "This which is called a lute, Sire, is made of various parts, a great number of parts. It is because of its various parts, that it makes a sound; that is to say, owing to the belly, sounding board, arm, head, strings, plectrum and the effort of a man's fingers . . ."

The king or the king's chief minister then breaks up the lute into ten or a hundred pieces. Having broken it up he splinters it further, burns it in a fire and reduces it to ashes. Having reduced it to ashes he winnows the ashes in a strong wind or lets them be borne away on the swift current of a river. And he says: "A poor thing is this that you call a lute, my man, whatever the so-called lute may be. People have been infatuated and led astray by it for too long."

Just in this way, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu investigates body as far as body goes; he investigates feeling . . . perception . . . mental activities . . . consciousness as far as consciousness goes. So investigating whatever there may be, there is for him no "I" or "mine" or "I am" in it.

(XXXV. 205.)

The uninstructed ordinary person, bhikkhus, has a saying: 'There is a bottomless abyss in the great ocean.' But the uninstructed ordinary person speaks of what does not exist, of what is not to be found, to wit, that there is a bottomless abyss in the great ocean. A designation for painful bodily feeling, bhikkhus, is this term 'bottomless abyss.' When an uninstructed ordinary person experiences painful bodily feeling he grieves, is afflicted, laments, beats his breast, cries out loud and becomes distraught. So it is said, bhikkhus, the uninstructed ordinary person has not emerged from the bottomless abyss, has not obtained a firm foothold.

But, bhikkhus, when an instructed Noble disciple experiences painful bodily feeling he does not grieve, is not afflicted, does not lament nor beat his breast nor cry out loud nor become distraught. So it is said, bhikkhus, the instructed Noble disciple has emerged from the bottomless abyss and has obtained a firm foothold, 11

(XXXVI. 4.)

At one time the venerable Sāriputta was dwelling in (the country of) Magadha at the village of Nālaka. There the wandering ascetic Jambukhādaka approached the venerable Sāriputta and exchanged friendly greetings with him. After exchanging greetings and reminiscences he sat down to one side. Having sat down the wandering ascetic Jambukhādaka said this to the venerable Sāriputta :

“‘Nibbāna, Nibbāna!’ it is called, friend Sāriputta. But what, friend, is Nibbāna ?”

“The ending of greed, aversion and delusion, friend, is called Nibbāna.”

“But is there a path, is there a line of conduct, for the realisation of this Nibbāna?”

“There is a path, there is a line of conduct, friend, for the realisation of this Nibbāna.”

“What is the path, what is the line of conduct . . .?”

“It is just this Noble Eightfold Path . . . that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration . . .”

“It is a good path, friend, a good line of conduct for the realisation of this Nibbāna, and a sufficient reason for being diligent!”

(XXXVIII. 1.)

NOTES

1. *Sabbam* : the whole, everything that is, the totality of experience.

2. There are the twelve sense-bases (*āyatana*), six internal (subjective), the sense organs; and six external (objective), the corresponding sense objects. These present an analysis of experience complementary to that of the aggregates.

3. The three knowledges (*te vijjā*) are: i. recollection of former existences, ii. divine vision (*dibba cakkhu*) or seeing other beings arising and passing away according to their deeds, good or bad, and iii. knowledge of the extinction of the *āsavas* or taints. The possession of these three knowledges means one is an Arahant or Perfected One.

4. The attainment of final release (*parinibbata*) is a term for the death of a Perfected One, who does not grasp at another birth. Ordinarily death is merely the prelude to another birth.

5. In this discourse heaven and hell are presented as two extremes of experience, partial and incomplete. It is only as a human being when both pleasure and pain are known, that existence can be viewed objectively and wholly. Hence only in a human birth can the religious or 'holy' life (*brahmacariya*) be lived it and is a great 'opportunity' for spiritual progress.

6. All, except those who are Perfected Ones, according to the commentary.

7. This is probably an idiomatic phrase or a popular quote.

8. These are the four elements (*dhātu*) composing the body. When one or another of these elements becomes out of balance ("disturbed and angry") the body becomes sick and dies.

9. The floods (*oghā*) are identical with the taints (*āsavā*) mentioned earlier.

10. The existence - group (*sakkāya*) is a term for the group of mental and physical factors, impermanent and subject to suffering, constituting an individual existence.

11. The Noble Disciple has control over his mind. As he has had a realisation of the Four Noble Truths, he knows that pain is an exemplification of the first Noble Truth and is the result of past Kamma (deeds). If he reacts to it in the way ordinary man does, this would merely be accumulating more Kamma with its result in the future.

Part Five : The Great Section (Maha Vagga)

64

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying amongst the Sakyas, at the Sakya market town of Sakkara. Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Lord, prostrated himself and sat down to one side. Sitting there the venerable Ānanda said to the Lord :

“Half of this holy life, Lord, is friendship with the good, companionship with the good, association with the good.”

“Do not say that, Ānanda. Do not say that, Ānanda. It is the whole of this holy life, this friendship, companionship and association with the good. Of a bhikkhu, Ānanda, who is a friend, companion and associate of the good it is to be expected that he will cultivate and seriously practise the Noble Eightfold Path. And how, Ānanda, does a bhikkhu . . . cultivate and seriously practise the Noble Eightfold Path? Herein, Ānanda, a bhikkhu cultivates right view centred on detachment, centred on dispassion, centred on cessation, ending in relinquishment (of all attachments). He cultivates right thought . . . speech . . . action . . . livelihood . . . effort . . . mindfulness . . . right concentration centred on detachment, centred on dispassion, centred on cessation, ending in relinquishment.

In this manner, Ānanda, a bhikkhu who is a friend, companion associate of the good cultivates and seriously practises the Noble Eightfold Path.

It is in this manner, Ānanda, it should be understood how the whole of this holy life is friendship, companionship and association with the good.

By taking me as a good friend, beings liable to birth are released from birth, beings liable to old age are released from old age, beings liable to death are released from death, beings liable to sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair are released therefrom.

In this manner, Ānanda, it should be understood how the whole of this holy life is friendship with the good, companionship with the good, association with the good.”

(XLV. 2.)

65

Whoso has faith and wisdom yoked in harness,
With conscience as the pole, the mind as reins
And mindfulness as watchful charioteer,
Goes in a chariot equipped with virtue,
Its axle meditation, energy its wheels
Mind's equipoise its even shaft,
Desirelessness its drapery; his arms
Are freedom from all malice, harmlessness,
Detachment of the mind; his leather coat
Forbearance. Furnished thus, the chariot
Rolls on from bondage to security.

Built by oneself alone is it,
This vehicle divine and unsurpassed.
In it the wise are carried from the world,
In it they drive to certain victory.

(XLV. 4.)

66

Sāvātthi was the place (where this discourse was given).

“I will teach you, bhikkhus, the Noble Eightfold Path and analyse it. Listen, attend carefully and I will speak”.

“Yes, Sir,” those bhikkhus replied to the Lord.

The Lord said: “What, bhikkhus, is the Noble Eightfold Path? It is right view and so forth . . .

Now what, bhikkhus, is right view? Whatever is knowledge of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the way leading to cessation of suffering. This, bhikkhus, is called right view. Now what, bhikkhus, is right thought? Whatever is a thought of renunciation, a thought of friendliness, a thought of harmlessness. This, bhikkhus, is called right thought.

Now what, bhikkhus, is right speech? Whatever is abstention from lying speech, abstention from malicious speech, abstention from harsh speech, abstention from idle speech. This, bhikkhus, is called right speech.

Now what, bhikkhus, is right action? Whatever is abstention from harming living creatures, abstention from unchastity (*abrahmacariyā*). This, bhikkhus, is called right action.

Now what, bhikkhus, is right livelihood? Herein, bhikkhus, the Noble Disciple having given up a wrong livelihood lives his life by means of a right livelihood. This, bhikkhus, is called right livelihood.

Now what, bhikkhus, is right effort? Herein, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu generates desire, strives, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and struggles to prevent the arising of evil, unskilled states that have not arisen. He generates desire and strives . . . to be rid of evil, unskilled states that have not arisen. He generates desire and strives . . . to establish and not lose, for the further cultivation, abundance, development and perfection of skilled states that have arisen. This, bhikkhus, is called right effort.

Now what, bhikkhus, is right mindfulness? Herein, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives practising body-contemplation on the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. He lives practising feeling-contemplation on feelings . . . mind-contemplation on (the states of) mind . . . mind-object-contemplation on the objects of mind, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. This, bhikkhus, is called right mindfulness. Now what, bhikkhus, is right concentration? Herein, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu, secluded from unskilled things, dwells having entered the first absorption (*jhāna*), accompanied by thinking and investigation, born of detachment and (filled with) joy and bliss.

After the subsiding of thinking and investigation and by gaining inner serenity and unification of mind, he dwells having entered the second absorption, which is without thinking and investigation, is born of concentration and (filled with) joy and bliss.

After the fading away of joy he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending, and experiences in his person a bliss of which the Noble Ones say, 'He who has equanimity and is mindful lives blissfully,' and he dwells having entered the third absorption.

After the abandoning of pleasure and pain and the disappearance of former happiness and grief, he dwells having entered the fourth absorption which is without pleasure and pain and is purified by equanimity and mindfulness. This, bhikkhus, is called right concentration."

Bhikkhus, whatsoever bhikkhus possess moral virtue, possess concentration, possess wisdom, possess liberation, possess the knowledge and insight of liberation,—the (mere) seeing of those bhikkhus is of great profit, I say. To hear about those bhikkhus . . . to approach those bhikkhus . . . to associate with those bhikkhus . . . to remember those bhikkhus . . . to imitate those bhikkhus in going forth (into homelessness) is of great profit, I say. For what reason? On hearing the Dhamma¹ of such bhikkhus one lives secluded with a twofold seclusion, of body and mind. Living thus secluded one remembers the Dhamma and reflects upon it.

At whatever time, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu living thus secluded remembers and reflects upon the Dhamma, at that time the enlightenment factor² of mindfulness is aroused in that bhikkhu. At whatever time a bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness, at that time that bhikkhu's development of it comes to perfection. He living mindful thus, considers with wisdom and investigates the Dhamma and undertakes an inquiry into it.

At whatever time, a bhikkhu, living thus mindful, considers with wisdom, investigates and undertakes an inquiry into the Dhamma, at that time the enlightenment factor of reality-investigation³ is aroused in that bhikkhu. At whatever time a bhikkhu develops, the enlightenment factor of reality-investigation, at that time that bhikkhu's development of it comes to perfection. In him, considering with wisdom, investigating and undertaking an inquiry into the Dhamma, tireless energy is aroused.

At whatever time . . . tireless energy is aroused, at that time the enlightenment factor of energy is aroused in that

bhikkhu. At whatever time a bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of energy, at that time that bhikkhu's development of it comes to perfection. In one who has energy aroused non-carnal joy arises.

At whatever time, in one who has energy aroused non-carnal joy arises, at that time the enlightenment factor of joy is aroused in that bhikkhu. At whatever time a bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of joy, at that time that bhikkhu's development of it comes to perfection. In one who is joyful body and mind are tranquillised.

At whatever time . . . body and mind are tranquillised, at that time the enlightenment factor of tranquillity is aroused in that bhikkhu. At whatever time a bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of tranquillity, at that time that bhikkhu's development of it comes to perfection. One who has tranquillity of body is blissful; in one who is blissful the mind is concentrated.

At whatever time . . . the mind is concentrated, at that time the enlightenment factor of concentration is aroused in that bhikkhu. At whatever time a bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of concentration, at that time that bhikkhu's development of it comes to perfection. On his mind thus concentrated he looks with perfect equanimity.

At whatever time, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu looks with perfect equanimity on mind thus concentrated, at that time the enlightenment factor of equanimity is aroused in that bhikkhu. At whatever time a bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of equanimity, at that time that bhikkhu's development of it comes to perfection.

By developing the seven enlightenment factors and seriously practising them thus, seven fruits, seven benefits are certain. What seven fruits, what seven benefits ?

One attains final knowledge (*aññā*) here and now prior (to one's death);

if one does not attain final knowledge here and now prior (to one's death), then one attains it at the time of death;

if one does not attain final knowledge here and now . . . nor at the time of death, then by the destruction of the five lower fetters ⁴ one attains final deliverance early (in one's next existence);

if one does not attain final knowledge here and now . . . nor . . . early (in one's next existence), then by the destruction of the five lower fetters one attains final deliverance late (in one's next existence);

if one does not attain final knowledge here and now . . . nor . . . late (in one's next existence), then by the destruction of the five lower fetters one attains final deliverance without (much) effort;

if one does not attain final knowledge here and now . . . nor . . . without (much) effort, then by the destruction of the five lower fetters one attains final deliverance with (some) effort;

If one does not attain final knowledge here and now . . . nor . . . with (some) effort, then by the destruction of the five lower fetters one goes up-stream, bound for the highest gods ⁵.

By developing the seven enlightenment factors and seriously practising them thus, these seven benefits are certain.

(XLVI. 3.)

At one time the Lord was staying at Uruvela on the bank of the river Nerañjara beneath the Goatherd's Banyan

Tree, having just attained full Enlightenment. While thus alone and secluded this thought arose in the Lord's mind :

“This is the sole way for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearing of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for realising Nibbāna, namely, the four foundations of mindfulness. What are the four ?

A bhikkhu should live practising body-contemplation on the body . . . feeling-contemplation on feelings . . . mind-contemplation on mind . . . mind-object-contemplation on the objects of mind, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. This is the sole way . . . namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.”

Then Brahma Sahampati, being aware by his mind of the thought in the Lord's mind, just as a strong man might stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm, so did he disappear from the Brahma world and appear in front of the Lord. And arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he bowed down before the Lord with folded hands and said :

“So it is, Lord ! So it is, Happy One ! This is the sole way for the purification of beings . . . namely, the four foundations of mindfulness”.

So spoke Brahma Sahampati. And after these words he further said :

“The sole way ending birth He sees;
Compassionate, He knows the path.
By this path they crossed before,
Will cross and cross now the flood.” 6

69

Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu should live mindful and clearly comprehending. This is our instruction to you. And how is a bhikkhu mindful? Herein, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives practising body-contemplation on the body feeling-contemplation on feelings . . . mind-contemplation on mind mind-object-contemplation on the objects of mind, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. In this manner, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu is mindful. And how is a bhikkhu clearly comprehending?

Herein, bhikkhus, feelings are known to a bhikkhu as they arise, known as they stay, known as they come to an end. Thoughts are known as they arise, known as they stay, known as they come to an end. Perceptions are known as they arise, known as they stay, known as they come to an end. In this manner, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu is clearly comprehending.

A bhikkhu should live mindful and clearly comprehending. This is our instruction to you.

(XLVII. 35.)

70

These, bhikkhus, are the four foundations of mindfulness . . .

While he is living practising body-contemplation on the body, whatever desire there is with regard to the body is abandoned. By abandoning desire the deathless is realised.

While he is living practising feeling-contemplation on feelings . . . mind-contemplation on mind . . . mind-object-

contemplation on the objects of mind, whatever desire there is with regard to mind-objects is abandoned. By abandoning desire the deathless is realised.

(XLVII. 37.)

71

Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Now what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith?

Herein, bhikkhus, the Noble disciple has faith. He has faith in the Enlightenment of the Tathāgata thus: 'The Lord is such since He is Arahant, fully Enlightened, perfect in understanding and conduct, sublime, knower of the worlds, unsurpassed leader of men to be tamed, the Teacher of devas and men, enlightened, the Lord.' This, bhikkhus, is called the faculty of faith.

Now what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of energy?

Herein, bhikkhus, the Noble Disciple lives with energy aroused for getting rid of unskilled states and perfecting skilled states, strenuous and energetic, not giving up the effort with regard to skilled states. This, bhikkhus, is called the faculty of energy.

Now what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of mindfulness?

Herein, bhikkhus, the Noble Disciple is mindful, possessing excellent mindfulness and prudence, remembering and recollecting what was done and said long ago. This, bhikkhus, is called the faculty of mindfulness.

Now what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration?

Herein, bhikkhus, the Noble disciple, by making relinquishment (of attachment) the object of thought, obtains concentration, obtains unification of mind. This, bhikkhus, is called the faculty of concentration.

Now what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of wisdom ?

Herein, bhikkhus, the Noble Disciple is wise, possessing the wisdom (that sees) the rising and passing away (of phenomena), noble, penetrating, leading to the complete ending of suffering. This, bhikkhus, is called the faculty of wisdom.

(XLVIII. 9.)

72

At one time the venerable Sāriputta and the venerable Anuruddha were staying at Vesālī in Ambapālī's Grove. And the venerable Sāriputta, emerging from seclusion in the evening, approached the venerable Anuruddha . . . and said :

“Very clear and bright are your faculties, friend Anuruddha. Quite pure and cleansed are your features. In what state does the venerable Anuruddha mostly dwell now ?”

“I mostly dwell now, friend with the mind well established in the four foundations of mindfulness. What four ? I live practising body-contemplation on the body . . . feeling . . . mind . . . mind-object-contemplation on the objects of mind, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. I mostly dwell now, friend, with the mind well established in these four foundations of mindfulness.

Whatever bhikkhu, friend, is an Arahant, has finished with the taints, reached fulfilment, done what had to be done, laid aside the burden, attained his objective, completely finished with the fetter of becoming and is released through perfect knowledge, he mostly dwells with a mind well established in the four foundations of mindfulness.”

“It is indeed a gain for us, friend. It is indeed a great gain for us, friend, that in the presence of the venerable Anuruddha we have heard him utter this impressive speech.”⁸

(LII. 9.)

73

Bhikkhus, even though a Wheel-turning King has absolute lordship and sovereignty over the four continents, and when the body breaks up at death he arises in a good bourne, the heaven world, in companionship with the devas of the Heaven of the Thirty-three, and there in the Nandana Grove, surrounded by a group of celestial nymphs he roams about possessing and enjoying the fivefold heavenly sense-pleasures,—even so, there are four things he does not have. And thus he is not completely freed from (liability to arise in) Niraya hell, the animal womb, the realm of (hungry) ghosts, a state of loss, an evil bourne, a state of ruin.

Even though a Noble Disciple, bhikkhus, keeps himself alive with scraps of food and wears cast-off rags,—yet there are four things that he has, and is thus completely freed from Niraya hell, the animal womb the realm of (hungry) ghosts, a state of loss, an evil bourne, a state of ruin. What are the four things he has?

The Noble disciple, bhikkhus, through (having had) experience (of reality) has confidence⁹ in the Enlightened One thus: ‘The Lord is such since He is an Arahant, fully enlightened, perfect in understanding and conduct, sublime, knower of the worlds, unsurpassed leader of men to be tamed, the Teacher of devas and men, enlightened, the Lord.’

Through (having had) experience (of reality) he has confidence in the Dhamma thus: ‘Well taught is the

Dhamma by the Lord, visible here and now, immediate (in result) ¹⁰, inviting one to come and see, guiding one onward and capable of being experienced by the wise.'

Through (having had) experience (of reality) he has confidence in the Community thus: 'The community of the Lord's disciples has progressed by the good way, the community of the Lord's disciples has progressed by the straight way, the community of the Lord's disciples has progressed by the true way, the community of the Lord's disciples has progressed by the proper way, that is to say, the four pairs of men, the eight types of persons ¹¹. This community of the Lord's disciples is worthy of adoration, is worthy of hospitality, is worthy of gifts, is worthy of reverential salutation, as an unsurpassed field of merit for the world.'

He has the virtues pleasing to the Noble Ones; (virtues that are) unbroken, untorn, unblotched, unmottled, liberating, commended by the perceptive, not misapprehended, conducive to concentration.

These are the four things he has.

There is the possession of the four continents, bhikkhus, and there is the possession of these four things. But the possession of the four continents is not worth a sixteenth of the possession of these four things.

(LV. 1.)

74

Bhikkhus, those for whom you have compassion, those who think you worth listening to,—whether friends, acquaintances, kinsmen or relatives—they should be encouraged in, introduced to and established in the four factors of Stream-entry. What are the four ?

They should be encouraged in, introduced to and established in confidence in the Enlightened One . . . the Dhamma . . . the Community . . . in the virtues pleasing to the Noble Ones, unbroken, untorn conducive to concentration.

Those for whom you have compassion, those who think you worth listening to,—whether friends, acquaintances, kinsmen or relatives—they should be encouraged in, introduced to and established in these four factors of Stream-entry ¹².

(LV. 16.)

75

Whoso has faith in the Tathāgata
Unshakable and well established,
Whoso has virtue that is good,
Pleasing and commended by the Noble,

Whoso has confidence in the Community
And vision that is straight and true:
'Not poor is he,' they say,
'Not empty and not wasted is his life.'

Therefore the wise should give themselves
To faith and virtue and to confidence
In clear vision of the Dhamma,
Remembering the message of the Buddhas.

(LV. 51.)

76

There are, bhikkhus, these four Noble Truths. What four? The Noble Truth of suffering, the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering, the Noble Truth of the cessation of

suffering and the Noble Truth of the way leading to cessation of suffering.

Now what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of suffering?

It may be said to be the five aggregates of grasping, namely, the body-aggregate of grasping, the feeling-aggregate of grasping, the perception-aggregate of grasping, the mental activities-aggregate of grasping, the consciousness-aggregate of grasping. This, bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of suffering.

Now what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering?

It is that craving leading to (renewal of) becoming along with enjoyment and attachment, finding enjoyment now here, now there; namely, sensual craving, the craving for becoming, the craving for non-becoming¹³. This, bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering.

Now what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering?

It is the complete fading away and cessation of this very craving, the abandoning and rejecting of it, liberation and detachment from it. This, bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering.

Now what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the way to cessation of suffering?

It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. This, bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the way to cessation of suffering.

These, bhikkhus, are the four Noble Truths.

Therefore, bhikkhus, to realise, 'This is suffering,' an effort must be made. To realise, 'This is the origin of

suffering,' an effort must be made. To realise, 'This is the cessation of suffering,' an effort must be made. To realise, 'This is the way leading to cessation of suffering,' an effort must be made.

(LVI. 13.)

77

Suppose, bhikkhus, a man whose life-span is a hundred years, who would live a hundred years, and they were to say to him: 'Come, good man, in the morning they will strike you with a hundred spears and again at midday and in the evening. Now, good man, you whose life-span is a hundred years, who will live a hundred years, being struck daily with three hundred spears, at the end of the hundred years will penetrate (to a realisation of) the four Noble Noble Truths not penetrated before.'

Even if it were to happen like that a son of good family, bhikkhus, influenced by what is of value, might well undergo (the ordeal). For what reason? Unimaginable, bhikkhus, is the beginning to the round of births (and deaths). A starting point is not evident of (the suffering endured from) blows by spears, swords and axes. But (actually), O monks, I do not say that the penetration of the four Noble Truths is accompanied by suffering and grief, but it is accompanied by pleasure and happiness, I say . . . Therefore, bhikkhus, to realise, 'This is suffering,' an effort must be made . . . To realise, 'This is the way to cessation of suffering,' an effort must be made.

(LVI. 35.)

78

Bhikkhus, as long as moon and sun do not arise in the world, so long is there no manifestation of a great light, of

great brightness. There is then blinding darkness, a total darkness. There is no discerning of night and day, the months and half-months nor the seasons and the years.

But when moon and sun arise in the world, then there is a manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then no blinding darkness, no total darkness. Then night and day are discerned, the months and half-months and the seasons and the years.

Similarly, bhikkhus, as long as a Tathāgata, a Perfected One, a fully Enlightened One does not arise in the world, so long is there no manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then a blinding darkness, a total darkness. There is no declaring, teaching, making known, establishing, disclosing, analysing, making clear of the four Noble Truths.

But when a Tathāgata, a Perfected One, a fully Enlightened One arises in the world, then there is a manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then no blinding darkness, no total darkness. There is then a declaring, a teaching, a making clear of the four Noble Truths . . .

Therefore, bhikkhus, to realise, 'This is suffering,' an effort must be made . . . To realise, 'This is the way leading to cessation of suffering,' an effort must be made.

(LVI. 38.)

NOTES

1. 'Dhamma' is a word of several meanings. Here besides meaning 'the teaching of . . .,' it could also mean: 'the virtuous nature or conduct of . . .,' 'the (inspiring) ideal of those bhikkhus'. All these meanings of the term 'dhamma' may be taken into consideration.

2. 'These seven factors of enlightenment (*satta-bojjhanga*): mindfulness, reality-investigation (see following note), energy, joy, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity, are, according to XLVI. 5, so called because 'they lead to enlightenment' (*bodhāya samvattanti*), or else they are the constituent factors (*aṅga*) of enlightenment (*bodhi*) itself.

3. *Dhamma-vicaya*. The term 'dhamma' here does not refer to the Buddha's Teaching, but to the mental and physical phenomena (*dhammā*) presented to the mind in their real nature (ie. without emotional colouring, likes and dislikes, etc.) through the cultivation of mindfulness.

4. *Orambhāgiya-samyojana*: the five fetters belonging to the lower, the sensual realms of existence, these being,

- i. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*: views about the 'existing group' of mental and physical phenomena (ie. the five aggregates), that they constitute a 'self' or a 'person' or an 'ego' thought of as being permanent or existing in unbroken continuity from the past into the future.
- ii. *Vicikicchā*: wavering doubt.
- iii. *Sīlabbata-parāmāsa*: holding to habits and customs, mere external observances, thinking they will bring release of themselves.
- iv. *Kāmarāga*: sensual passions and attachments.
- v. *Vyāpāda*: illwill, aversion.

A person who has eliminated these five fetters is called an Anāgāmī, a Never-returner. After death he does not come back again to this world, but is born in one of the five Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsa*) of the realm of form (*rūpaloka*) and there realises final deliverance. The last five of these seven fruits refer to the five grades of Anāgāmī in descending order, the highest is 'one who attains final deliverance early, down to the 'one going upstream.'

5. *Akanit̥ṭṭhagāmī*: bound for the gods (*devā*) of the highest of the Pure Abodes. This is the lowest of the five types of *Anāgāmī* who, starting from the lowest, has to work his way through all five Pure Abodes before attaining final deliverance.

6. The four *satiṭṭhānā* or foundations of mindfulness are most important and the basis of all the meditation practices leading to liberation found within Buddhism. In its stress upon 'sati': mindfulness, attentiveness, awareness or recollection, and in its detailed instruction, Buddhism is unique. Its importance is emphasised here by its being described as 'the sole way' (the 'one', the 'only,' the 'direct way', *ekāyano*).

7. Besides meaning awareness in the present, in the here and now, mindfulness also has the secondary meaning of memory.

8. *Sāriputta* calls it 'this impressive speech' (literally, 'bull-like utterance, *āsabhī-vācā*) for it is the Ven. *Anuruddha*'s declaration of having attained the status of a Perfected One.

9. Faith (*saddhā*) or confidence (*paṇāda*) in Buddhism is not mere belief in something or someone, but arises upon the attachment of (spiritual) knowledge and realisation, the vision of the goal—*Nibbāna*. A Noble Disciple is a person who has obtained this knowledge by entering upon one of the Noble Paths, of stream-entry, Once-returning, Never-returning and Arahant. The 'four things' are also called the 'four factors of stream-entry, Once returning, Never-returning and Arahant. The 'four things' are also called the 'four factors of Stream-entry' (*sotāpattiyanga*). A stream-enterer is liable to be born seven times at the most, either in

the human world or one of the heavens, but never lower than human (eg. in hell, the animal state, etc.), before attaining final deliverance.

10. The attainment of one of the Noble Path (which is a kamma, a willed action) is immediately followed by its fruit (result).

11. The 'four pairs' are those who have attained to the Path of stream-entry and the fruit of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga*, — *phala*) and similarly for the other three, making the 'eight persons.'

12. In XLVII. 48 a similar exhortation is found, substituting the four foundations of mindfulness for the four factors of stream-entry.

13. These last two forms of craving are : the desire for the perpetuation of existence and for self annihilation, and are connected with the two extreme views of eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*), belief in the continuation of a 'self' or 'soul' after death, and annihilation (*ucceheda-diṭṭhi*), belief that the personality, identified with the five aggregates, ceases completely at death.

THE WHEEL

The following translations from the Discourses of the Buddha have been published in this series :—

7. The Practice of Lovingkindness. *Nyanamoli Thera.*
8. Kalama Sutta. transl. by *Soma Thera.*
10. Sakka's Quest (Digha Nik. 21).
14. Everyman's Ethics. *Narada Thera.*
17. Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha. (The First Sermon, Sermon on Not-self, The Fire Sermon).
19. The Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta).
21. The Removal of Distracting Thoughts (Majjh. 20).
26. The Five Mental Hindrances. Selected Texts
33. Advice to Rāhula. Four Discourses of the Buddha.
47. Buddhism and the God Idea. Selected Texts.
- 48/49. The Discourse on the Snake Simile. (Majjh. 22).
51. Taming the Mind. Discourses of the Buddha.
- 57/58. Tevijjā Sutta. A Discourse of the Buddha on the Path to God. (Digha 13).
- 61/62. The Simile of the Cloth (Majjh. 7) & The Discourse on Effacement (Majjh. 8).
- 67/68/69. The Last Days of the Buddha (Maha-Parinibbana Sutta)
79. Kandaraka Sutta, Potaliya Sutta (Majjh. 51 & 54).
32. The Discourse Collection (Selections fr. Sutta-Nipāta).
37. The Greater Discourse on Voidness.
- 98/99. Apannaka Sutta, Cula-Malunkya Sutta. Upali Sutta (Majjh. 60, 63, 56)
101. The Greater Discourse on the Elephant-footprint Simile (Majjh. 28)
- 05/106. The Four Nutriments of Life. Translations from the Discourses and Commentaries.
- 07/108/109. An Anthology from the Saṃyutta Nikāya.
11. Raṭṭhapāla Sutta (Majjh. 82)

Please write for our complete Book List

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

P.O. Box 61

KANDY

Ceylon

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

P. O. Box 61

KANDY - CEYLON

Founded in 1958.

OBJECTS: To make known the teachings of the BUDDHA by the regular publication and distribution of booklets and tracts throughout the world.

PUBLICATIONS:

The Wheel: A series of booklets, consisting of translations of texts and essays, covering all important aspects of Buddhism.

Bodhi Leaves: A series of tracts comprising shorter essays and translations.

Damsak : A series of booklets in Sinhala.

Both series issued bi-monthly and distributed in 65 foreign countries. Associate Membership Rs. 25/-, £ 2/- \$ 5/- U.S. yearly subscription.

RATTHAPĀLA SUTTA

Majjhima Nikāya No. 82

Translated from the Pāli

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
Kandy 1967 Ceylon

This version has been adapted from
an unpublished translation by the
late Venerable Nāṇamoli Thera.

The story of Raṭṭha pāla, the young aristocrat of the Kuru clan who vowed that he would die if his parents refused him permission to go forth into the homeless life under the Enlightened One, is told with a simplicity and directness that come straight from the heart of the Buddhist experience. Himself a stranger to the world of suffering, he understood the perils inherent in sensory attachments and material possessions on hearing the Master's Teaching alone. By strenuous effort he gained Arahantship, and it was only then that he revisited his parents' home — a solitary bhikkhu unknown to all but the slave woman who had been his nurse. There is a curious parallel between her recognition of him by his hands, feet and voice, and the way in which Odysseus was recognised by his old nurse when she washed his feet.

This is an Odyssey of the spirit in brief: a tale of heroic renunciation without any of the conventional panoply of heroism. In Raṭṭhapāla's testimony we feel the depth of the realisation that moved him to hold the world as nothing, and the peace and assurance he found in his attainment of the Further shore beyond the perilous ocean of saṃsāra. His words to the aged king speak to us across the centuries with an extraordinary power. They carry a vital message for the pleasure-intoxicated yet fear-haunted world of today.

RATTHAPĀLA SUTTA

1. Thus I heard. On one occasion when the Blessed One was wandering in the Kuru country together with a large community of bhikkhus, he eventually arrived at Thullakoṭṭhita, a town of the Kurus.

2. The Brahmin householders of Thullakoṭṭhita heard this: “The ascetic Gotama, a son of the Sakyans who went forth from a Sakyan clan, it seems has been wandering in the Kuru country with a large community of bhikkhus and has come to Thullakoṭṭhita. Now a good report of Master Gotama has been spread to this effect: ‘That Blessed One is such since he is accomplished (*araham*) and fully enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable guide of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and men, enlightened, blessed. He describes this world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmā divinities, this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, with its princes (by divine right) and its men, which he himself realised through direct knowledge. He teaches a doctrine (dhamma) that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter. He proclaims the Holy Life, altogether perfect and pure.’ It is good indeed to see such Accomplished Ones.”

3. Then the Brahmin householders of Thullakoṭṭhita went to the Blessed One, and drawing near, some respectfully saluted Him and sat on one side; some exchanged friendly greetings with the Blessed One and, after the customary words of friendship and civility, sat aside; some, before taking their seats, extended their hands with palms together towards the Blessed One; some announced their names and families to Him before sitting down; whilst others sat down in silence.

4. When they were seated, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused and encouraged them with talk on the Teaching (dhamma).

5. Now at that time a clansman called Raṭṭhapāla,¹ the son of the leading clan in that same Thullakoṭṭhita, was sitting in the assembly. Then it occurred to him: “As I understand the Teaching given by the Blessed One, it is not possible, while living in a household, to lead the Holy Life as utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow cloth, and go forth from the home life into homelessness?”

6. Then the Brahmin householders of Thullakoṭṭhita, having been instructed, urged, roused and encouraged by the Blessed One with talk on the Teaching, and delighting in his words and agreeing, rose from their seats and after paying homage to him, they departed, keeping their right sides towards him.

7. Soon after they had gone,² Raṭṭhapāla the clansman went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, sat down at one side. Then he said to the Blessed One: “Venerable Sir, as I understand the Teaching given

by the Blessed One, it is not possible, while living in a household, to lead the Holy Life as utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Venerable Sir, I want to cut off my hair and beard, put on the yellow cloth, and go forth from the home life into homelessness. May I receive the Going Forth³ under the Blessed One, may I receive the Full Admission?"⁴

"Have you your parents' permission, Raṭṭhapāla, to go forth from the home life into homelessness?"⁵

"No, Venerable sir, I have not."

"Perfect Ones (Tathāgatas) do not give the Going Forth to a son without the parents' permission, Raṭṭhapāla."

"Venerable sir, I shall see to it that my parents permit me to go forth from the home life into homelessness."

8. Then the clansman Raṭṭhapāla rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, he left keeping his right side towards him. He went to his parents and said to them: "Mother and father, as I understand the Teaching given by the Blessed One, it is impossible, while living in a household, to lead the Holy Life as utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. I want to shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow cloth, and go forth from the home life into homelessness. Give me permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness."

When he had said this his parents replied: "Dear Raṭṭhapāla, you are our only son, dear and beloved: you have been nurtured in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering, dear Raṭṭhapāla.⁶ Even in case of your death, only unwillingly we should lose you.

But while you are still living, how should we give you our permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness?"

For the second time . . . For the third time the clansman Raṭṭhapāla said to his parents: "Mother and father, Give me permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness."

For the third time his parents replied: "Dear Raṭṭhapāla, . . . But while you are still living, how should we give you our permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness?"

9. Then, not receiving his parents' permission for the Going Forth, the clansman Raṭṭhapāla lay down there on the bare floor (and said), "Right here I shall either die or get the Going Forth."

10. Then the clansman Raṭṭhapāla's parents said to him: "Dear Raṭṭhapāla, you are our only son, dear and beloved; you have been nurtured in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering, dear Raṭṭhapāla. Get up, dear Raṭṭhapāla, eat, drink and amuse yourself. While eating, drinking and amusing yourself, you can enjoy sense pleasure and do meritorious deeds. Even in case of your death, only unwillingly we should lose you. But while you are still living, how should we give you our permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness?"

When this was said that clansman Raṭṭhapāla was silent.

For the second time For the third time his parents said to him: "Dear Raṭṭhapāla, you are our only son how should we give you our permission to go forth?"

For the third time Raṭṭhapāla was silent.

11. Then the clansman Raṭṭhapāla's friends went to him and said: "Dear Raṭṭhapāla, you are the only son of your parents, dear and beloved; you have been nurtured in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering, dear Raṭṭhapāla. Get up, dear Raṭṭhapāla, eat, drink and amuse yourself. While eating, drinking and amusing yourself, you can enjoy sense-pleasures and do meritorious deeds. Your parents do not permit you to go forth from the home life into homelessness. Even in case of your death, your parents would lose you only unwillingly. But while you are still living, how should they give you their permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness?"

When this was said, the clansman Raṭṭhapāla was silent.

For the second time . . . For the third time his friends said to him; Dear Raṭṭhapāla, you are the only son . . . how should they give you their permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness?"

For the third time Raṭṭhapāla was silent.

12. Then Raṭṭhapāla's friends went to his parents and said to them: "Mother and father, this clansman Raṭṭhapāla has lain down there on the bare floor (thinking), 'Right here I shall either die or get the Going Forth'. Now if you do not give him your permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness, he will die there. But if you give him your permission, you will see him after he has gone forth. And if he does not enjoy the Going Forth, what else will he do than return here? So give him your permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness."

13. "Then we give the clansman Raṭṭhapāla our permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness. But when he has gone forth, he must visit his parents."

So Raṭṭhapāla's friends went to him and told him: "Get up dear, Raṭṭhapāla, your parents have given you their permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness. But when you have gone forth, you must visit your parents."

14. The clansman Raṭṭhapāla then got up, and when he had regained strength, he went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, sat down at one side. When he had done so, he said: "Venerable sir, I have my parents' permission to go forth from the home life into homelessness. May the Blessed One let me go forth." So the clansman Raṭṭhapāla received the Going Forth under the Blessed One, and he received the Full Admission.

15. Then soon after the venerable Raṭṭhapāla's Full Admission, when he had been fully admitted a fortnight, the Blessed One, having stayed at Thullakoṭṭhita as long as he chose, set out on tour to Sāvatthī. Wandering by stages, he arrived at Sāvatthī and stayed there in Jeta's Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.

16. Meanwhile the venerable Raṭṭhapāla lived alone and secluded, diligent, ardent and resolute. And the goal for the sake of which clansmen go forth from the home life into homelessness, that highest perfection of the Holy Life, before long he came to know directly, in that very life, realizing it for himself, entering upon it and abiding in it: "Birth has ceased, the Holy life has been lived, completed is the task and nothing further remains after this," thus he knew.

And the venerable Raṭṭhapāla was one of the Accomplished Ones (Arahant).⁷

17. Then the venerable Raṭṭhapāla went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, sat down at one

side. Then he said: “venerable Sir, I wish to see my parents, if I have the Blessed One’s permission.”

Then the Blessed One, penetrating mentally the mind of the venerable Raṭṭhapāla, knew thus: “The clansman Raṭṭhapāla is incapable of forsaking the training and reverting to what he has abandoned,” and he told him, “Do now, Raṭṭhapāla, what you think fit at this time”.

18. The venerable Raṭṭhapāla rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, he departed keeping his right side towards him. Then he set his resting place in order, and taking his bowl and (outer) robe, he set out to go to Thullakoṭṭhita. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Thullakoṭṭhita. There he lived in King Koravya’s Migacira Garden.⁸ Then when it was morning, he dressed, and taking his bowl and (outer) robe, went into Thullakoṭṭhita for alms. As he was wandering from house to house he came to his own father’s house.

19. Now on that occasion the venerable Raṭṭhapāla’s father was sitting in the hall of the central door⁹ having his hair dressed. He saw the venerable Raṭṭhapāla coming in the distance, and seeing him, he said: “Our only son, so dear and precious to us, was made to go forth by these monkish shavelings.”¹⁰ Then the venerable Raṭṭhapāla received neither alms nor polite refusal¹¹ at his own father’s house, and instead he got only abuse.

20. Now at that time a slave woman belonging to one of the venerable Raṭṭhapāla’s relations,¹² was about to throw away some stale porridge. (Seeing this,) the venerable Raṭṭhapāla spoke to her: “Sister, if that is to be thrown away, then pour it in my bowl here”.

21. While she was doing so, she recognized characteristic features of his hands and feet and of his voice. Thereupon she went to his mother and said: “If it please you, my lady! you should know that my lord’s son Raṭṭhapāla is back”.

“Oh, indeed? If you speak the truth, you are a slave woman no more!”

Then the venerable Raṭṭhapāla’s mother went to his father¹³ and said: “If it please you, householder, you should know that they say the clansman Raṭṭhapāla is back!”

22. Just then the venerable Raṭṭhapāla was eating the stale porridge by the wall of a certain (shelter.) His father went to him and said: “Raṭṭhapāla my dear, surely there is....¹⁴ and you will be eating stale porridge! Is there not your own home to go to?”

“Where, householder, is there a home for us who have gone forth from the home life into homelessness? We are homeless ones, householder. We did come to your home, householder, but we got neither alms nor polite refusal, only abuse we got.”

“Come, Raṭṭhapāla dear, let us go to the house.”

“Enough, householder, I have finished my meal for the day.”

23. “Then, Raṭṭhapāla dear, accept to-morrow’s meal.”

The venerable Raṭṭhapāla accepted in silence.

24. Knowing that his son had accepted, Raṭṭhapāla’s father went back to his own house. There he had a large heap made of gold coins and bullion and had it hidden by screens. Then he told the venerable Raṭṭhapāla’s former

wives: "Come, daughters-in-law, dress yourselves up in the way in which Raṭṭhapāla used to hold you most dear and beloved."

25. When the night was ended, the venerable Raṭṭhapāla's father had good food of various kinds prepared in his own house, and he had the time announced to the venerable Raṭṭhapāla, "It is time, dear Raṭṭhapāla, the meal is ready."

26. Then, in the morning, the venerable Raṭṭhapāla dressed, and taking his bowl and (outer) robe, he went to his father's house, and sat down on the seat made ready.

27. Then his father had the pile of gold coins and bullion uncovered and said: "This, Raṭṭhapāla dear, is your mother's wealth, this other your father's, and that is your ancestral wealth. Raṭṭhapāla dear, you can use the wealth and make merit. Come then, renounce the training, return to what you have abandoned, use the wealth and make merit!"

28. "Householder, if you would do my bidding, then have this pile of gold coin and bullion loaded on carts and carried away to be dumped in the River Ganges in mid-stream. And why (should you do so)? Because, householder, it will be for you a source of sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair."

29. Then the venerable Raṭṭhapāla's former wives clasped both his feet, saying to him, "What are they like, young master, the nymphs for the sake of which you lead the Holy Life?"

"We do not lead the Holy Life for the sake of Nymphs, sisters."

“The young master Raṭṭhapāla calls us ‘Sisters’,”
they cried, and they fell down fainting on the spot.

30. Then the venerable Raṭṭhapāla told his father,
“Householder, if there is a meal to be given, then give
it. Do not harrass us.”

“Eat then, dear Raṭṭhapāla, the meal is ready.”

31. Then with his own hands the venerable Raṭṭhapāla’s
father served and satisfied him with sumptuous food,
solid and soft. When the venerable Raṭṭhapāla had
eaten and had withdrawn his hand from the bowl, he
stood up and uttered these stanzas:

32. “Behold a puppet here pranked out,
A body built up out of sores,
Sick, and much object for concern,
Where no stability abides.

Behold a figure here pranked out,
With jewelry and earrings too,
A skeleton wrapped up in skin,
Made creditable in its clothes.

Its feet adorned with henna dye
And powder smeared upon its face,
It may beguile a fool, but not
A seeker of the Further Shore.

A filthy body, decked without,
Like a new-painted unguent pot;
It may beguile a fool, but not
A seeker of the Further Shore.

The deer-hunter sets well the snare,
But yet the deer springs not the trap;
We ate the bait, and we depart,
Leaving the hunters to lament.”

33. When the venerable Raṭṭhapāla had spoken these stanzas while standing, he then went to the King Koravya's Migacira Garden and sat down at the root of a tree to pass the day

34. Then King Koravya addressed his gamekeeper: "Good gamekeeper, get the Migacira Garden tidied up, so that we may go to the pleasure garden to see a pleasing spot."

"Yes, sire" the gamekeeper replied.

35. Now while he was having the Migacira Garden tidied up, he saw the venerable Raṭṭhapāla seated at the root of a tree to pass the day. On seeing him he went to King Koravya and told him: "Sire, the Migacira Garden has been tidied up. But a clansman called Raṭṭhapāla is there, the son of the leading clan in this same Thullakoṭṭhita, of whom you have always spoken highly, he is seated at the root of a tree to pass the day."

"Then, good gamekeeper, enough of the pleasure garden for today. We shall now pay respect to that Master Raṭṭhapāla."

36. And he further said, "Give away all the solid and soft food that has been prepared!" Then King Koravya had a number of state carriages got ready and mounting one of them, he drove out from Thullakoṭṭhita with the full pomp of royalty to see the venerable Raṭṭhapāla. He drove thus as far as the road was passable for carriages, and then he got down from his carriage and with a following of the highest officials he went on foot to where the venerable Raṭṭhapāla was. He exchanged greetings with the venerable Raṭṭhapāla, and when the

courteous and amiable talk was finished, he stood at one side. Then he said: “Here is an Elephant rug. Let Master Raṭṭhapāla be seated on it.”

“There is no need, great king. Sit down. I am sitting on my own mat.”

King Koravya sat down on a seat made ready, and having done so, he said:-

37. “Master Raṭṭhapāla, there are four kinds of loss. After undergoing these losses, some people here shave off hair and beard, put on the yellow cloth and go forth from the home life into homelessness. What are the four? They are loss through ageing, loss through sickness, loss of property, and loss of relatives.”

38. “And what is loss through ageing? Here someone is old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, and come to the last stage. He considers thus, ‘I am old aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, and come to the last stage. It is no more possible for me to acquire unacquired possessions or to increase possessions already acquired. Suppose I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow cloth and go forth from the home life into homelessness?’ So he who has undergone that loss through ageing, shaves off hair and beard, puts on the yellow cloth and goes forth from the home life into homelessness. This is called the loss through ageing. But Master Raṭṭhapāla is still young black-haired, endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life. There is none of this loss through ageing for Master Raṭṭhapāla. What has Master Raṭṭhapāla known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?

39. “And what is loss through sickness? Here someone is afflicted with sickness, is suffering and gravely ill. He considers thus, ‘I am afflicted with sickness, I am suffering and gravely ill. It is no more possible for me to acquire . . . Suppose . . . I were to go forth from the home life into homelessness?’ So he who has undergone this loss through sickness. goes forth from the home life into homelessness. This is called the loss through sickness. But Master Raṭṭhapāla has now no affliction or ailment, having a good digestion that is neither too cool nor too warm but medium. There is none of this loss through sickness for Master Raṭṭhapāla known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?”

40. “And what is loss of property? Here someone is rich, with great wealth and great property. Gradually these properties of his dwindle away. He considers thus, ‘Formerly I was rich with great wealth and great property. Gradually those properties of mine have dwindled away. It is no more possible for me to acquire unacquired possessions or to increase possessions already acquired. Suppose. . . I were to go forth from the home life into homelessness?’ So he who has undergone this loss of property goes forth from the home life into homelessness. This is called loss of property. But Master Raṭṭhapāla is the son of the leading clan in this same Thullakoṭṭhita. There is none of this loss of property for Master Raṭṭhapāla. What has Master Raṭṭhapāla known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?”

41. “And what is loss of relations? Here someone has many friends and companions, relatives and kin. Gradually these relatives of his dwindle away. He con-

siders thus, ‘Formerly I had many friends and companions, relatives and kin. Gradually those relatives of mine have dwindled away. It is no more possible for me to acquire unacquired possessions or to increase possessions already acquired. Suppose I were to cut off my hair and beard, put on the yellow cloth and go forth from the home life into homelessness?’ So he who has undergone that loss of relatives, shaves off hair and beard puts on the yellow cloth and goes forth from the home life into homelessness. This is called loss of relatives. But Master Raṭṭhapāla has many friends and companions, relatives and kin in this same Thullakoṭṭhita. There is none of this loss of relatives for Master Raṭṭhapāla. What has Master Raṭṭhapāla known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?’”

42. “These, Master Raṭṭhapāla, are the four kinds of loss, undergoing which some people here shave off hair and beard, put on the yellow cloth and go forth from the home life into homelessness. Master Raṭṭhapāla has none of these. What has he known or seen or heard that he has gone forth from the home life into homelessness?’”

43. “Great King, there are four Summaries of the Teaching (dhammuddesa), which have been given by the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness. What are the four?’”

44. “‘(Life in any) world is unstable, it is swept away’: this is the first Summary of the Teaching given by the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is

accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing it, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”

45. “‘(Life in any) world has no shelter and no protector’: This is the second Summary of the Teaching given...”

46. “‘(Life in any) world has nothing of its own; it has to leave all and pass on’: this is the third Summary of the Teaching given . . .”

47. “‘(Life in any) world is incomplete, is insatiate and the slave of craving’: this is the fourth Summary of the Teaching given by the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing it, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.¹⁵”

48. “These, great King, are the four Summaries of the Teaching given by the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.” —

49. “‘(Life in any) world is unstable, it is swept away’ was what Master Raṭṭhapāla said; but how should the meaning of that statement be understood?” —

“What do you think about this, Great King: when you were twenty years old and twenty-five years old, were you an expert rider of elephants, an expert horseman, an expert charioteer, an expert bowman, an expert swordsman, strong in thigh and arm, sturdy and proficient in warfare?” —

“Certainly, Master Raṭṭhapāla, at the age of twenty and twenty five years, I was an expert rider of elephants...

sturdy and proficient in warfare; sometimes I thought that I had superhuman strength.¹⁶ I saw none who could equal me in strength.”—

“And now, great King, what do you think: are you still so strong in thigh and arm, sturdy and proficient in warfare?”—

“No, Master Raṭṭhapāla, Now I am old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, and have come to the last stage; my years have turned eighty. Sometimes I mean to put my foot here and I put it elsewhere.”—

“It was on account of this, great King, that the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened, said, ‘(Life in any) world is unstable, it is swept away’, and when I knew and saw and heard that, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”—

“It is wonderful, Master Raṭṭhapāla, it is marvellous, how well that has been expressed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened: ‘(Life in any) world is unstable, it is swept away’, for so it is indeed!”

50. “Master Raṭṭhapāla, there are in this court elephant troops and cavalry and chariot troops and infantry, which will serve to subdue any threat to us. Now Master Raṭṭhapāla has said that ‘(Life in any) world has no shelter and no protector’. How should the meaning of that statement be understood?”—

“What do you think about this, great King: have you any chronic illness?”—

“I have a chronic wind sickness, Master Raṭṭhapāla. Sometimes my friend and companions, my relatives and kin, stand round me (thinking): ‘Now King Koravya is about to die, now King Koravya is about to die.’”—

“Now, great King, what do you think: can you have it thus with your friends and companions, your relatives and kin: ‘Come my good friends and companions, my relatives and kin! Let all of you present share out this pain, so that my feeling of pain should be less!’, or do you have to experience that feeling of pain all by yourself alone?”—

“No, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I cannot have it thus (that my friends and companions, my relatives and kin, share out my feeling of pain), but I have to experience my pain all by myself alone.”—

“It was on account of this, great King, that the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened, said. ‘(Life in any) world has no shelter and no protector’, and when I knew and saw and heard that, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”—

“It is wonderful, Master Raṭṭhapāla, it is marvellous how well that has been expressed by the Blessed One . . . : ‘(Life in any) world has no shelter and no protector’, for so it is indeed!”

51. “Master Raṭṭhapāla, there is in this court ample gold coin and bullion stored away both in the ground and above it. Now Master Raṭṭhapāla has said that ‘(Life in any) world has nothing of its own, it has to leave all and pass on’. How should the meaning of this statement be understood?”---

“What do you think about this, great King: you are now furnished and endowed with the five fields of sensual

desires and enjoy them. But can you have it thus of the life to come. ‘May I be likewise furnished and endowed with these five fields of sensual desires and enjoy them!’, or will others take over this property, while you will have to pass on according to your actions?”---

“I cannot have it thus . . . Master Raṭṭhapāla. On the contrary, others will take over this property while I shall have to pass on according to my actions.”---

“It was on account of this, great King, that the Blessed One . . . said, ‘(Life in any) world has nothing of its own, it has to leave all and pass on’, and when I knew and saw and heard that, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”---

“It is wonderful, Master Raṭṭhapāla, . . . how well that has been expressed by the Blessed One . . . : ‘(Life in any) world has nothing of its own, it has to leave all and pass on’, for so it is indeed!

52. “‘(Life in any) world is incomplete, is insatiate and the slave of craving’, was what Master Raṭṭhapāla said; but how should the meaning of that statement be understood?”—

“What do you think, great King: do you live in this prosperous Kuru country as its ruler?”—“Yes, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I do.”—

“What do you think about this, great King? If a trustworthy and reliable man came to you from the east and said, ‘Please to know, great King, that I come from the east, and there I saw a large country, powerful and rich, very populous and crowded with men. There are plenty of elephant troops there, plenty of cavalry, plenty of chariot troops, and plenty of infantry; there is plenty of ivory there, and plenty of gold and bullion both unworked and

worked, and there are plenty of women for wives. With such and such a force you can conquer it. Conquer it then, great King!’ What would you do?”— “We should conquer it and live there as its ruler, Master Raṭṭhapāla.”— “What do you think about this, great King!: if a trustworthy and reliable man came to you from the west . . . from the north . . . from the south, and there I saw a large country . . . Conquer it, great King!’ What would you do?” — “We should conquer it, too, and live there as its ruler, Master Raṭṭhapāla.”

“It was on account of this, great King, that the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened, said, ‘(Life in any) world is incomplete, is insatiate and the slave of craving’, and when I knew and saw and heard that, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.”—

“It is wonderful, Master Raṭṭhapāla, it is marvellous how well that has been expressed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, who is accomplished and fully enlightened: ‘(Life in any) world is incomplete, insatiate and the slave of craving’, for so it is indeed!”

53. That is what the venerable Raṭṭhapāla said and having thus spoken, he said further:

54. 1. “I see men wealthy in the world who yet
Give not, from ignorance, their gathered riches
But greedily will hoard away their wealth,
Through longing for still further sensual pleasures.
2. A king who by his force conquered the earth
And even lords the land the ocean bounds,
Is yet unsated with the sea’s near shore
And hungers for its further shore as well.

3. Most other men as well, not just a king,
Encounter death with craving unabated;
With plans still incomplete they leave the corpse;
Desires remain unsated in the world.
4. His relatives lament him, rend their hair,
Crying 'Ah me! Alas! Our love is dead!'
Then bear away the body wrapped in shrouds,
To place it on a pyre and burn it there.
5. Clad in a single shroud, he leaves behind
His property, impaled on stakes he burns,
And as he died, no relatives or kin
Or friends could offer refuge to him here.
6. The while his heirs annex his wealth, this being
Must now arise according to his deeds;
And as he dies nothing can follow him:
Nor child nor wife nor wealth nor royal estate.
7. Longevity is not acquired with wealth,
Nor can prosperity banish old age;
Short is this life, as all the sages say,
Eternity it knows not, only change.
8. The rich man and the poor man both shall feel
(Death's) touch, as do the fool and sage alike;
But while the fool lies stricken by his folly,
No sage will ever tremble at the touch.
9. Better than wealth is understanding, then,
By which the final goal can here be gained;
For, doing evil deeds in many lives,
Men fail, through ignorance, to reach the goal.

10. As one goes to the womb and to another world,
Renewing the successive round, so others
With no more understanding, trusting him,
Go also to the womb and to another world.
11. Just as a robber caught in burglary,
An evil-doer, suffers for his deed,
So people after death, in the next world,
The evil-doers, suffer for their deeds.
12. Sense-pleasures, varied, sweet, delightful,
In many different ways disturb the mind.
Seeing the peril in these sensual joys,
O King! I chose to lead the homeless life.
13. As fruits fall from the tree, so also men,
Both young and old, fall when this body breaks.
Seeing this too, I have gone forth, O King!
Better by far is the monk's life assured."¹⁷

Notes

1. Raṭṭhapāla was later included by the Buddha in the roll of his foremost disciples (*etad agga*; see Anguttara Nikāya, Ekaka nipāta, 'The Ones').

2. Raṭṭhapāla waited until the others had left as he feared that the relatives and friends of his family who were among the visitors, would disapprove of his wish for ordination and try to prevent it, because he was the only son of his parents. (Comy.)

3. The *Going Forth* (*pabbajja*) is the entry into monk life by receiving the first ordination as Novice (*sāmaṇera*).

4. *Full Admission* (*upasampadā*) is the higher ordination as a Bhikkhu.

5. After the ordination of his son Rāhula, the Buddha, at his father's request, did not give ordination without the parents' consent.

6. Here, many editions of the Pali text insert the following:

“Come, dear Raṭṭhapāla, eat, drink and amuse yourself! While eating, drinking and amusing yourself, you can enjoy sense-pleasures and do meritorious deeds.”

Replacing the first word “Come” by “Get up”, this sentence appears in the §§10 and 11. The Burmese Sangāyanā Edition omits it in §8 and motivates that omission by pointing out (1) that the commentary does not give an explanation of this sentence at §8, but only at §10, (2) that this sentence is likewise omitted here in the close parallel to our passage in the story of Sudinna, in the Pārājika Pāli of the Vinaya.

7. The Commentary says that it was after twelve years that Raṭṭhapāla attained Saintship (arahatta) and then asked for permission to visit his parents. The Discourse itself does not mention any period of time, except saying, as always in this stock passage, that he realised the goal “before long” (*na cirass’eva*). But the fact that the servant woman (see §20) did not recognize him by his appearance and face but only from certain characteristics and his voice, may well support the commentator’s statement.

8. This garden (possibly a deer park) had been given by the king for the use of ascetics and monks who arrived at the place too late to proceed to a monastery. Raṭṭhapāla did not wish to inform his parents of his arrival as he wanted to avoid any elaborate welcome, and therefore he preferred to stay for the night at that garden.

9. “*In the hall of the central door*”: so also in *Upāli Sutta*; see ‘The Wheel’ No. 98/99, p. 68, note 38.

10. The commentary says that he felt resentment against the bhikkhus because he wrongly believed that they had callously prevented his son from visiting his parents for so many years.

11. On receiving a refusal, the bhikkhu, without waiting longer could pass on to another house on his alms round.

12. According to the commentary, she had been Raṭṭhapāla’s wet-nurse. As a slave woman, however, she did not dare to speak to Raṭṭhapāla directly, but told her mistress about Raṭṭhapāla’s arrival.

13. Commentary: “In these high-class families it was regarded as unbecoming if ladies went outside of the house alone. Hence Raṭṭhapāla’s mother did not do so but went to see her husband.

14. “*Surely there is...*” (*atthi nāma*). According to the commentary, Raṭṭhapāla’s father was so overcome by grief that he could not complete his sentence and only exclaimed “Surely, there is...!” He may have wanted to say: Surely there is enough food and wealth in our house, “and you will be eating stale porridge!”

15. “*Summaries of the Teaching*” (*dhammuddesa*),— The Pāli text of these four terse maxims is as follows:

1. *Upanī yati loko addhuvo’ti.*
2. *Attāṇo loko anabhissaro’ti.*
3. *Assako loko, sabbam pahāya gamanīyan’ti.*
4. *Uṇo loko atitto taṇhadāso’ti.*

16. “*iddhimā’va*”, lit. as if possessed of magical power”.

17. *Apaṇṇakam sāmāññam eva seyyo*. In the commentary to Majjh. No. 60, the term *apaṇṇaka* is explained as “not contrary (incontradictible, incontrovertible), doubtless, definitely acceptable” (see ‘The Wheel’ No. 98/99, p. 19).

Ratthapāla's Verses

From the "Songs of the Brethren" (Theragāthā)

Translated by C. A. F. Rhys Davids

Full of high confidence I left the world
And joined the Order of the Conqueror.
Blameless my going forth has been, and free
From debt I live on my allotted share.

Looking on sense-desires as fire alight,
On gold and silver as a (noxious) knife,
(On life) from entry in the womb as ill,
And on the fearsome perils of the hells:—

Seeing, I say, great evils everywhere,
Thereat was I with anguish sore beset.
Then to me, pierced and wounded as I was,
Came fourfold victory: o'er sense-desires,
O'er rebirth, error, ignorance. Victory!

The Master has my fealty and love,
And all the Buddha's bidding has been done.
Low have I laid the heavy load I bore,
Cause for rebirth is found in me no more.

The goal for which I bade the world farewell,
And left the home to dwell where home was not,
That highest Good have I accomplished,
And every bond and fetter is destroyed.

(vv. 789 - 792)

THE WHEEL

The following translations from the Discourses of the Buddha have been published in this series:—

7. The Practice of Loving-kindness. *Nyanamoli Thera.*
8. The Kalama Sutta. transl. by *Soma Thera.*
10. Sakka's Quest (Dīgha-Nik. 21).
14. Everyman's Ethics. *Narada Thera.*
17. Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha. (The First Sermon, Sermon on Not-self, The Fire Sermon).
19. The Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta).
21. The Removal of Distracting Thoughts. (Majjh. 20)
26. The Five Mental Hindrances. Selected Texts.
33. Advice to Rāhula. Four Discourses of the Buddha.
47. Buddhism and the God Idea. Selected Texts.
- 48/49. The Discourse on the Snake Simile. (Majjh. 22)
51. Taming the Mind. Discourses of the Buddha.
- 57/58. Tevijjā Sutta. A Discourse of the Buddha on the Path to God. (Dīgha-Nik. 13)
- 61/62. The Simile of the Cloth (Majjh. 7) & The Discourse on Effacement (Majjh. 8).
- 67/68/69. Last Days of the Buddha (Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta). (Dīgh. 16)
79. Kandaraka Sutta, Potaliya Sutta (Majjh. 51 & 54).
82. The Discourse Collection. Selected Texts from the Sutta-Nipāta.
87. The Greater Discourse on Voidness.
- 98/99. Apannaka Sutta. Cula-Malunkya Sutta. Upali Sutta (Majjh. 60, 63, 56)
- 101 The Greater Discourse on the Elephant-footprint Simile (Majjh. 28)
- 105/106 The Four Nutriments of Life. Translations from the Discourses and Commentaries.
- 107/108/109 An Anthology from the Saṃyutta Nikāya.
- 110 Raṭṭhapāla Sutta (Majjh. 82).

Please write for our complete Book List

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

P. O. Box 61 KANDY CEYLON

BUDDHISM AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION

and other Essays

Helmuth von Glasenapp

**Late Professor of Indology
Tuebingen (Germany)**



BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Kandy

1967

Ceylon

The Wheel Publications No. 111

CONTENTS

Buddhism and Comparative Religion	1
The Influence of Buddhist Philosophy in East and West	9
The Buddha's Place in Indian Thought	21

Buddhism and Comparative Religion

EVER since the 17th century when the first news about Buddhism reached Europe, that religion has always been an object of special interest to all scholars who occupied themselves with the comparative study of the world's great creeds. And this for several reasons. The biography of the Buddha has always possessed a special human touch which appealed strongly to the imagination and the sentiments of persons susceptible to heroic deeds and moving feelings. The noble principles of Buddhism have at all times won admiration from those who believe in the inherent good in man. Historians felt particularly attracted by the changing fate of a creed that had in the course of time won so many adherents in many countries of Southern Asia, but disappeared again from many places where it had flourished for centuries. It is of special interest to see what changing forms this religion assumed during the two and a half thousand years of its existence and to observe how it adjusted itself to the requirements of nations, the very names of which were not even known to its founder. If one considers the many features in which Buddhism exists today one cannot help saying that in this one system almost all ways of religious life have found their expression, from the stern,

Reprinted with permission of the "Helmuth von Glasenapp-Stiftung", Wiesbaden (Federal Republic of Germany), from "Buddhism and Comparative Religion".

sober, calm thoughts of ascetic seekers for salvation to the highly emotional fervour of ardent worshippers of world-redeeming saviours and from the lofty speculations of mystics to the elaborate rites of magicians who try to banish evil spirits with the help of their spells.

From the point of view of the philosophy of religion Buddhism deserves a special interest because it makes dubious Kant's assertion that belief in God, in the immortality of the soul and in the freedom of the will are the three great essential parts of the dogmatics of every religion of a higher order. Of course, the Buddha was a partisan of the *kiriya-vāda* (belief in the moral efficacy of action) and a strong opponent of teachers who like Gosāla Makkhaliputta said "There is no such thing as exertion or labour or power or energy or human strength: all things are unalterably fixed."

But concerning the other two questions Buddhism takes a stand quite of its own contrasting entirely with that of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and other faiths. For Buddhism acknowledges neither the existence of permanently existing souls nor of a creator and ruler of the universe. This is a logical outcome of its fundamental philosophical conception. As a doctrine of becoming and uninterrupted flux it cannot accept the idea of unchangeable substances; just as, according to Buddhism, there is no matter which in itself is eternal though it may change its forms over and over again, so there cannot be an individual soul of everlasting life which takes up a new material clothing in the course of its reincarnations. And just as there is no everlasting personality so there can be no personal god, who remains as an immovable pole in the midst of changing phenomena. The only permanent force

that Buddhism believes in is the law that rules the universe and, from elements of existence forms lumps of transitory character which dissolve again and again to be replaced by others.

Although Buddhism denies the existence of permanent souls, it does not deny the continuation of individual life after death. The basic idea of its conception is that death means the end of a certain individual A, because the component parts which had united to form it dissolve, but the moral forces which a man or other being had produced during his life become the cause of a new individual B who is, so to say, the heir of the actions of A, so that he earns compensation for his good and punishment for his bad deeds. It is, therefore, that the new individual B is neither identical with the old one (A) nor is it different from A, because it emerges from it, just as the fire of the second part of the night is the uninterrupted continuation of the fire that burnt during the first part of it. It is not our task here to deal with the different theories of the *antarābhava** etc. which have been devised to explain or to prove this theory. In this connection it is sufficient for our purpose to establish the fact that Buddhism is in full accordance with many other religions in the supposition of a life after death in which all acts are requited. The only difference between Buddhism and other Indian religions consists in this that Buddhism gives a different philosophical interpretation. In practice it is in complete harmony with all systems that accept a metempsychosis. Instead of the theory of an immutable permanent soul which forms the nucleus of the individual A in this existence and of the individual B

* Intermediate existence between two lives : a conception developed in later schools of Buddhism.

in the next existence, it offers a different view: every individual is a stream of evanescent dharmas (physical and mental factors of existence) arising in functional interdependence. Every new individual existence is the flowing on of this stream.

This doctrine of reincarnation without the adoption of the belief in a persistent soul-substance has always puzzled scholars and it has been called a logical impossibility because it denies the identity of the man who has done an action and of another man on whom it is rewarded. But in truth it has quite the same metaphysical value as the theory of a wandering permanent soul. Professor T. V. Murti * rightly says : “How does the acceptance of the *ātman*—the unchanging permanent entity—explain karma, rebirth, memory or personal identity more plausibly? As the permanent soul is of one immutable nature, it cannot have different volitions when different circumstances call for different actions. . . . A changing *ātman* (soul) is a contradiction in terms. No *ātma*-view has accepted or can accept a changing self; for once we accept change of the *ātman*, we have no valid argument to confine this change to definite periods, i. e. it remains unchanged for an appreciable stretch of time and then changes. This would mean two different *ātmans*. Nor can we admit that one part of the *ātman* changes while the other part is permanent. If the changing part does belong to the *ātman* as integrally as the other part, then we would be having a supposedly unitary entity which has two mutually opposed characteristics. This does violence to our conception of an entity.”

* T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, London 1955, p. 32.

When Buddha replaced the theory of a permanent soul substance by the theory of a “mind-continuum” he tried to avoid the difficulties inherent in the doctrine of *ātman*. That his theory also conceals knotty points is evident. For, no sufficient philosophical arguments can be adduced for things which transcend the human faculty to demonstrate rationally matters that are not accessible to our limited comprehension. The belief that there is no continuation of any sort of life after the death of an individual is also not strictly demonstrable, for the theory of a matter out of which everything is produced is as equally an outcome of speculation and of a certain “Weltanschauung” as the different hypotheses concerning the soul or the mind-continuum.

Stranger still appears to most observers that Buddhism denies the existence of a creator and ruler of the world because for many religious minds, especially in the Occident, religion is synonymous with the belief in God. For this reason many theologians have said : Buddhism is a philosophical or ethical system but no religion. This, however, is a very superficial subterfuge. For, judging from its outward appearances as well as from its inner attitudes, Buddhism exhibits all the marks observed in other religions. It has places of worship, rites, and monasteries, and with its adherents it calls forth purely religious feelings of devotion, piety, tranquillity of mind etc. It has its legends, relates wonders etc. and tells of visions of heaven and hell. It even acknowledges a great number of celestial beings who, although they have no eternal life, exist for centuries and may give their worshippers worldly comfort and happiness. All this makes it evident that to Buddhism the appellation of religion cannot be denied. This shows that the restriction of the term “religion” to the different kinds of theism

is too narrow. The ancient Romans to whom we owe the term “religio” were no theists but adored a great number of gods and did not differ in this respect from the Buddhists of to-day or of former times. One can therefore only infer from this fact that theism is one of the forms of religion and that the term “religion” embraces a great number of varieties of beliefs. As Mohammedans and Christians and a great part of the Hindus are theists, some historians have thought that Buddhism, being a religion of the highest order, must also be in one way or the other theistic. The President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Prof. Malalasekera, writes, in his article “Buddhism and the Enlightenment of Man” in the *Listener* (London, 7th January 1954) that a Buddhist does not believe in a creator of the Universe : “If asked ‘How did Life begin?’ he would ask in return ‘How did God begin?’”, and the late Professor Takakusu, a great scholar and a pious Mahāyānist, said in his work *Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* (2nd ed. Honolulu 1949, p. 45) “Buddhism is atheistic—there is no doubt about it.” That the Buddhists of bygone ages were also atheists can easily be ascertained from the great doctrinal works of the Pali Canon and from the writings of the philosophers of the Great Vehicle. I may refer the reader to the article “Atheism” (Buddhist) by L. de La Vallee Poussin in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 2, p. 184 and to my (German) book *Buddhism and the Idea of God* * where I have collected passages from Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna works. ** To the quotations given there, may

* H. von Glasenapp, *Buddhismus und Gottesidee*. Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, Geistes—und Sozial—wissenschaftliche Klasse 1954, Nr. 8 (Wiesbaden 1954).

** See *Buddhism and the God Idea. Selected Texts edited by Nyānaponika Thera*. ‘The Wheel’ No. 47. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Ceylon.—(Editor).

be added the *Isvara-kartr̥tva-nirākṛti* published by Prof. F. W. Thomas (JRAS 1905, p. 345—349).

So there can be no doubt whatever about the fact that Buddhism has been atheistic for at least two thousand years. The stalwart champions of theism eager to uphold their thesis that every highly developed religion acknowledges the existence of God are not troubled by this fact. They maintain the assertion that the Buddha did not say anything against the existence of God. But this is clearly wrong. For in the Buddha's dialogues reported in the Pāli Canon there are several passages in which he criticizes in a most outspoken way the opinion that the world may have been created by God or may be governed by Him. So he said according to *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 3, 61 (Vol I, p. 74): "People who think that the will of God (*issara-nimmāna*) allots to men happiness and misery, must think that men become murderers, thieves etc. by the will of God." A similar argument occurs also in the *Jātakas* (No. 528, V, p. 238; No. 543, VI, p. 208). In the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (*Dīgha-Nikāya* I, 2, 2 vol. I., p. 17) Buddha propounds even a theory as to how the wrong belief in a creator has arisen. When the god Brahmā was born at the beginning of a new age of the world in a heaven prepared for him by his karma, unconscious of his former existence, he wished to have companions. When other beings came into existence because of their karma he imagined that he had created them by his will. The beings, in their turn, noticing that Brahmā existed before them thought that he had created them. So a sort of primordial monotheism originated at the beginning of the world by the error of Brahmā and the first men.

The likelihood that the Buddha was a religious teacher but did not acknowledge the existence of God

is further corroborated by the fact that his contemporary Mahāvira, the Trithaṅkara of the Jainas, took a similar attitude. In India the Mīmāṃsā philosophy and the classical Sāṅkhya propagated also the *anīsvara-vāda* (i. e., a non-theistic doctrine). But religious beliefs of this kind are not confined to India. The Neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi also denies that a personal God rules the world, as did those ancient Greeks, Romans and Teutons for whom Fate or Necessity reigned the cosmos and the life of man.

The thoughtful reader may ask how it is possible that so many religions dissent from an opinion cherished by so many religious heroes like Moses, Christ, Mohammed or the great Vaisnava and Saiva saints? The answer is that the idea of God is a very complex one. It combines the ideas of a creator, ruler and destroyer of the universe with those of an author of moral laws, of a just judge, of a helper in need and a saviour of mankind. In Buddhism the same ideas are distributed among several factors. The creation, rule and destruction of the universe are ascribed to the Universal Law as are the allotment of reward and punishment according to the automatically working karma. As this Law is immanent in the cosmos there is no need of a Lawgiver. The revealers of this Law are the Buddhas, who for this reason are venerated. The transitory devas (deities) function as helpers in worldly troubles. Concerning the question of salvation the Buddhist schools differ: for some of them it can be reached only by man's own endeavours, for other schools the grace of the Buddha Amitābha is the expedient for salvation. The feelings of devotion and reverence which the theistic religions concentrate upon God, are turned towards the Buddhas as the sages who have shown the way to Nirvāṇa.

So the same ideas, impulses, instincts, longings and hopes which determine the theistic religions, are equally alive in Buddhism and they are, above all things, the most essential feature of all religions: the conception of awe-inspiring holiness and the sense of the holy which is different from everything profane.

The Influence of Buddhist Philosophy in East and West

On the occasion of the two previous meetings of our Symposium the Contribution of Buddhism to Art and Letters was dealt with. We proceed now to our discussion on Buddhism's Contribution to Philosophy. Making use of a simile employed by Anandavardhana on poetry I may say this: Art is the beautiful corporeal frame of Buddhism, literature is its prana or life-breath, philosophy is its mind; so that the topic of our deliberation is, as it were, a task of penetrating gradually more and more into the depth of the inner core of the great spiritual movement which has given so much to the world.

Presidential Address delivered at the Fifth Session on "Buddhism's Contribution to Philosophy" of the Symposium on "Buddhism's Contribution to Art, Letters and Philosophy" arranged from November 26th to 29th, 1956 in New Delhi, by the Working Committee for the 2,500th Buddha Jayanti, Government of India, in collaboration with the UNESCO, to commemorate the 2,500th Anniversary of the Parinirvana of the Buddha.—Reprinted from *The Maha Bodhi*, Vaisakha Number 1957.

I feel deeply honoured by having been asked to preside over this session. I take it as a distinction not so much for my own humble endeavours to fathom the profundity of Buddhist philosophy but as an award of honour bestowed upon my country, because especially in Germany philosophers have since a long time shown great interest in Buddhism.

The first Germans who had heard the name of the Buddha were probably theologians who had read the works of St. Hieronymus, one of the fathers of the Christian Church. For this saint mentions the miraculous birth of the Buddha. But on Buddha's doctrine nobody seems to have had any detailed knowledge during the Middle Ages. It was not until the 17th century that a German philosopher obtained some knowledge of Buddhism. It was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) who took a very keen interest in China, whose philosophy had just been made known to Europe by the works of French Jesuits. Leibniz drew from their books some points of the Buddhist doctrine as taught in the Chinese Empire. In his most famous book, the "Theodicee", he speaks of Fo, as the Chinese call the Buddha and refers to the Madhyamika-System and its doctrine of Emptiness.

A wider range of knowledge we find with Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). It is not much known that Kant at the University of Königsberg delivered not only lectures on Philosophy but also on Geography. Without ever having left his native town he had acquired a considerable knowledge of all the parts of the globe by reading books on travel. He therefore in his lectures speaks about Buddhism in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, in China, Japan and Tibet. He draws a very sympathetic picture of the Buddhist monks in Burma. He says: "The Talapoins of

Pegu are praised as the world's kindest men. They live on the food which they beg at the houses and give to the poor what they do not need for themselves. They do good to all living beings without making any discrimination of religion. They think that all religions are good which make men good and amiable".

Kant already knew that Buddhists do not believe in a creator and ruler of the universe who judges men after death, for he writes : "They reject the idea of divine providence, but they teach that vices are punished and virtues are recompensed by a fatal necessity". Kant did not yet know anything about the Buddhist doctrine of Karma and Rebirth, and his philosophy has in no way been influenced by Buddhist ideas. But the doctrine of metempsychosis appealed to him in several periods of his life. Even a short time before his death, when asked by his friend Hasse about the future of the individual after death Kant expressed himself in favour of the doctrine of transmigration. On another occasion he called it one of the most attractive teachings of Oriental philosophy. He himself taught a pre-existence of the soul before man is born and he was of opinion that after death man has to continue his way to perfection in infinite progress. His ideas have, therefore, in this point much in common with Buddhism.

Kant lived at a time when Buddhist texts had not yet been studied and translated by European scholars. It was only after his death that English and French scholars began to occupy themselves with the Buddhist scriptures. In contradistinction to Kant the German philosophers of the beginning of the nineteenth century were better informed about Buddhist philosophy. Thus we find with Schelling and Hegel some more detailed remarks on

Buddhism, and in later times with Nietzsche and many other philosophers. An enthusiastic admirer of the great religion of the East was Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). Since he was introduced to Indian Wisdom as a young man of 26 years of age until his death at the age of 72 he read almost every book published on Buddhism and came to the conviction that Buddha together with Plato and Kant was one of the three great illuminators of the world. He was much influenced by Buddhist thought in framing his own system of metaphysics. He believed in a strong conformity of his doctrine with that of the Buddha. So he wrote: "If I were to take the results of my philosophy as a yardstick for the truth, I would concede to Buddhism the preeminence of all religions of the world. In any case I can be happy to see that my teaching is in such great harmony with a religion which has the greatest number of adherents on earth". There are, indeed, many points in which the German philosopher agrees with Buddhists; they both deny the existence of a personal God, they teach that neither a beginning nor an end of the cosmic process can be established. They both assume the existence of a plurality of world systems, they see no essential but only a gradual difference between men and animals and are therefore ardent advocates of the protection of animals against cruelty. They do not believe in permanent immortal souls and metempsychosis, but in a rebirth caused by the will (sankara) which manifests itself in the doings of the previous existence. They both acknowledge a moral law (dharma) as the moving factor in the universe. Though they both have a pessimistic outlook on life, they are optimistic in so far, as they are both convinced of the possibility of a

liberation from the trammels of existence. Just as for Buddha so for Schopenhauer too the state of deliverance cannot be explained with the help of terms and words belonging to our world of phenomena. Schopenhauer's system being an original and independent outcome of his own thinking it differs, of course, in many other points, from Buddhism. This partly finds its reason in the fact that at the time of Schopenhauer Buddhism was not yet sufficiently known in Europe.

Schopenhauer was the greatest herald of Buddhist wisdom, ever arisen among the philosophers of the western world. His works had a deep influence on many other thinkers rendering them, in their turn, very keen on studying the sacred writings of the Buddhist faith at least in translations. A remarkable witness of the overwhelming impression that Buddhism made on him are the following words of a great musician, the famous composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883). He wrote: "Buddha's teaching is such a grand view of life that every other one must seem rather small when compared to it, The philosopher with his deepest thoughts, the scientist with his largest results, the artist with his most extravagant imaginations, the man with the most open heart for everything that breathes and suffers—they all find their unlimited abode in this wonderful and incomparable conception of the world."

It is an uncontested fact that Buddhism has played a very prominent role in the realm of Indian Philosophy during the one thousand five hundred years of its existence on the sub-continent. Not only because it produced a great variety of metaphysical systems many of which belong to the most elaborate and sublime ones which the fertile Indian mind has ever created. But the

contribution of Buddhism is still greater. Through its very existence it has compelled the Brahmanic and Jaina philosophers to defend their teachings and to improve and remodel them. The discussions kindled by the struggle waged between Buddhist philosophy of permanent flux and the Upanishadic philosophy of unchangeable being have raised Indian metaphysical thought to that high level which has gained it the admiration of the world. Since the celebrated passage in Majjhima-nikaya 22 where Buddha argues controversially against the doctrine of the Vedanta, and Kathaka Upanishad 4, 14, where the Brahmins reject the Buddhist theories of dharmas, the antagonism between Vedanta and Buddhism permeates the whole history of Indian philosophy, just as the fight between the conception of the world of Heraclitus and Parmenides dominates Greek philosophy. As so often in similar cases, each of the two opponents has learned much from the other and taken over some of his ideas. To my mind the monistic Mahayana shows the deep influence which Vedanta has exerted on later Buddhism. On the other hand the lofty idealism of Yogavasishta, of Gaudapada and Shankara are indebted to Nagarjuna's and Asanga's theories on the unreality of the world.

But the contribution of Buddhism to philosophical thought is not confined to India. Buddhism has been the originator and promoter of philosophy in many countries that had not yet developed a philosophy of their own when the doctrine of the Buddha reached them. Buddhism has stimulated the intelligentsia in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Kamboja, Laos, in Korea, Japan, Tibet and Mongolia to philosophical endeavours. In China, too, which already possessed a philosophy of a high level Buddhism has

greatly developed the indigenous metaphysical thought. It is well known that Taoism, at least in its later phases, has been influenced by Buddhist theories. But also Confucianism is indebted to it. It seems to me that the founder of the Neo-Confucianist school, the celebrated Chu Hsi (1130-1200), though a staunch opponent of Buddhism, has much learned therefrom. And Idealists such as Shao Yung (1011-1077) and Wans Yangmin (1472-1528) have deeply drawn from the fountain of Mahayana.

Buddhism having had such an enormous direct and indirect influence on philosophical thought in the whole of Southern and Eastern Asia proves that it must have appealed in a high degree to Asian mentality.

It is noteworthy that in contradistinction to the overwhelming importance Buddhism has had in the East, it has till now not been able to fertilize in a comparable way thought in the West. The reason for this fact may have been that its sublime doctrines were not easy to understand for Westerners, though the emperor Ashoka had already sent missions to the Greek kings.

As far as our present knowledge goes it was only gradually that Buddhism unveiled its essence to the Occident. The Greeks already knew of the name of Buddha. They also knew of his supernatural birth and they were aware of the fact that the Samanaioi (sramana) were different from the brahmanical ascetics. In the Middle Ages the story of Buddha's leaving His home was known in the Christianized form of the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat. Marco Polo (1254-1323), the famous Italian traveller, paid his tributes to the saintly life of Gautama when he wrote in his Travel Diary: "Illec fist moult grans adbstinences, ainsi comme s'il eust este

crestien. Car s'il l'eust este, il feust un grand saint avec notre Seigneur Jhesucrist, a la bonne vie et honneste qu'il mena". "He lived a life of grand abstinence as if he had been a Christian. For had he been, he would have been a great saint with our Lord Jesus Christ, considering the good and honest life he led". The first European I know of who mentions an important doctrine of Buddhism which distinguishes it from the other great religions of the world was the French traveller La Loubere, who wrote in his work "Du Royaume de Siam", published in 1691, (vol 1, p. 395) "I think that one can establish that the Buddhists do not believe in a world-ruling deity". We are indebted to the great English indologist Henry Thomas Colebrooke * for the first interpretation of the Buddhist theory that there is no transmigrating soul but nevertheless a rebirth caused by karmic influences. In the lecture "On Indian Sectaries", read at a public meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society, February 3, 1827, he said : "There is not an eternal soul, but merely succession of thought, attended with individual consciousness abiding within body". Colebrooke also explained the "concatenation of causes and effects" which link one existence with another. Though many European scholars have dealt with this crucial point of Buddhist metaphysics it took many years of investigation before the true basis of this doctrine was elucidated. The two Russian scholars Theodore Stcherbatsky and his pupil Otto Rosenberg have shown that the doctrine of the "dharma", *i.e.* impersonal soul forces, is the central philosophical conception which is at the bottom of all Buddhist philosophical thought. The great Belgian Indologist La Valle Poussin has dealt more minutely with

* H. Th. Colebrooke, *Essays on the Philosophy of the Hindu* (1829). New edition of his Works by E. B. Cowell, London 1873 vol. II, p. 419.

the problem in his magnificent translation of Vasubandhu's Abhidharma-kosha. We understand now why the celebrated stanza "Ye dharmah hetuprabhavah" is the credo of all Buddhists.

It is to be regretted that most European indologists in former times have continued to occupy themselves less with the doctrines of living Buddhism as they have been taught for over at least 2000 years than with speculations on the doctrine that the Buddha may have taught. Many of these scholars have tried to show that Buddha's own doctrine differed greatly from the doctrines that to-day form the basis of all Buddhist philosophy. It seems to me very improbable that Buddha was no philosopher at all, as some scholars think. For in a time in which—as the texts show—a very highly developed philosophical life was going on in Ancient India, Buddha would not have been able to win adherents from the philosophically trained Brahmans and Kshatriyas if He had not propounded a doctrine which could hold its own in view of hairsplitting dialectics of materialists, agnostics, sceptics and the very elaborate systems of Brahmans and Jains. Other scholars are of opinion that Buddha's teaching was a special form of Vedanta and that the monks later on changed it to its present form. I do not think that this is probable. For to maintain this assertion it would be necessary to show in detail how the anatma-doctrine of the Buddhists has developed out of the alleged atma-doctrine of the Buddha. It will not do to quote some sayings of the Buddha unconnected with their context and to interpret them in the said manner. Nor is it to be understood that on the one side the texts at our disposal should be so reliable that the so-called true original Vedantic doctrine of the Buddha may be surmised

therefrom, and that at the same time they should be so unreliable that most of their metaphysical contents have been fabricated by the monks of a later time. Nor do I understand what necessity there may have been for the Buddha to teach a particular new doctrine, when it was only a re-hash of the Upanishadic teachings of His time. One may ask with Professor T. R. V. Murti in his excellent book on the Madhyamika system "If the atman had been a cardinal doctrine with Buddhism, why was it so securely hidden under a bushel that even the immediate followers of the Master had no inkling of it."* In my opinion from the point of view of objective scholarship we may acknowledge that the real doctrine of the Buddha cannot be ascertained to-day because we do not possess manuscripts from His own hand nor were His teachings taken down on records. All we know of Him was taken down in writing only four centuries after His Nirvana. If we cannot ascertain with absolute certainty the original doctrine of the Buddha we may ask: what may it most probably have been? I think it most likely that His doctrine was, at least in its most essential points, a predecessor of what all Buddhists of to-day agree in. I can see two reasons for the Vedantic explanation of Buddha's teachings. One is an emotional one: the Vedantist has the natural endeavour to harmonize the teachings of the great Gautama with a system which he thinks to be the most sublime in the world. I myself having written several works on Vedanta have the greatest esteem for it. I consider Vedanta to be one of the most grandiose philosophical conceptions ever originated in the world of thought. But this admiration for the Vedanta does not carry me, as an historian of Indian Philosophy,

* T. R. V. Murti, "The Central Philosophy of Buddhism" (London, 1955,) p. 17.

so far as to interpret Vedantic ideas into the Buddhist texts. The other reason why many scholars have tried to interpret the teachings of the Buddha in a Vedantic fashion is one of a view of history. It is an undoubted duty of an investigator of the history of Indian thought to show the dependence of every new system on older ones preceding it, and to trace its very roots to contemporary ideas. Now there is no possible doubt that the sublime teachings of the Upanishads were in existence before Buddha. As Buddha's Nirvana in some respect resembles the Brahma of the Vedanta it seems plausible to believe that Buddha was a sort of Vedantist. But this, in my opinion, is a delusion. For Buddha's Nirvana is in no way like the Brahma, the absolute being which is the very foundation of the world, or out of which everything that is has developed and came to existence. It is only that Nirvana is a state of peace, of rest, of calm in which it may be compared to one of the aspects of the Brahma. But there are many different systems in the world the ultimate aim of which is such a state of redemption. But the several systems as such differ widely from advaita-Vedanta because they have a theistic basis, as the Mohammedan and Christian mysticism, or as Jainism, which denies the existence of a world-ruling deity. For this reason the reference to Vedanta carries no weight. One may, of course, argue that a similar need, or requirement, is deeply rooted in many religious minds, but there is neither a necessity nor a possibility to trace all kinds of quietism to the same source.

There is yet another deliberation which speaks against the exclusive dependence of Buddha's teachings on that of the Upanishads. The Buddhism of the Theravadians and all the older schools is a pluralistic system.

Now a pluralistic interpretation of the world was very common in Magadha, for Jainism was spreading there just at Buddha's time. As far as I know nobody has ever tried to deduce Jainism from the Upanishads or to interpret its doctrine in a Vedantic manner. I cannot therefore see any reasonable ground for assuming that Buddhism must have sprung from an Upanishadic fountain. In my work on the stages of development of Indian thought published in 1940 I have tried to trace the Buddhistic dharma-theory to antecedents in the Vedic time. For the Brahmanas and the Vedic texts teach a pluralism of substantial factors which have a strong similarity to Buddhist dharmas, for in that remote period of Indian thought qualities such as love, hatred, knowledge etc. were considered as substances which had their own quasi-independent existence, and were not regarded as inherent in any substance. Of course by this I do not mean that the dharmas of Buddhism are in any way identical with these archaic concepts of the epoch of the Brahmana texts. What I would suggest is only this: that the Buddhist theory of dharmas may have arisen out of ideas that have their precursors in the Brahmana-time. Between the comparatively primitive and crude concepts of this archaic mode of thinking the highly refined means of the Buddha there lay centuries of philosophical development. It may be that between these two periods other thinkers were active in shaping and perfecting these ideas, and in this respect the Buddhist doctrine that there were Buddhas before Gautama may not be without foundation.

I have tried to show the contribution of Buddhism to philosophy. I have tried to show how the knowledge of Buddhism has developed step by step in the realm of the mind of European scholars. I have tried to show

some of the problems which European thinkers have tackled and I have taken the liberty of pointing out how I myself stand in this respect. Far be it from me to maintain that the solutions I have tried to offer are any way definitive nor do I want to force them upon others who many have more knowledge than I have. But perhaps the thoughts I have tried to expound here may form a basis for a discussion which may bring to light new facets of thinking and may serve to elucidate some problems of Buddhist philosophy.

The Buddha's Place in Indian Thought

THE BUDDHA is the greatest personality that India has produced in the many millennia of her history. For the people of Asia's wide expanses, to-day as centuries ago, the Buddha is the great exponent of the spirit of India. His name is known to the uncivilized nomad in the icy steppes of Siberia as well as to the cultured son of China. To him turn in homage the gentle Sinhalese of tropical Ceylon and the war-like Japanese of Nippon's moderate climes. When early last century scholars of the West began to study the spiritual life of Asia, the

Translated from the German. With permission of the publishers, Verlag I. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tuebingen (Fed. Republic of Germany), Extracts from Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Indisches Leben im Wandel der Jahrhunderte* (Bd. 177, *Sammlung gemeinverstaendl. Vortraege*'').

Sage of the Sakyans, as no other genius of the East, became the prime focus of interest : no other has been so often mentioned, praised and blamed; no other has exercised, even 2500 years after his death, such a significant influence on the philosophy of Western thinkers—among them I mention only Schopenhauer as an example.

When searching for the cause of this extraordinary phenomenon, we ask ourselves why just the Buddha could make such a strong and long-lasting impact, while many other Indian thinkers and prophets who at their times were equally popular, did not penetrate beyond India's borders and were even forgotten in their own home country. In looking for the reasons we find that in the personality of the Buddha several features are united which only in their totality were able to produce that universal effect which the founders of other Indian religions could not achieve. The first among these features is the fact that in the course of his preaching the Buddha summarized the results of prior philosophical thought and did so in a form that was precise and yet intelligible to the unlearned; secondly, the fact that the Buddha himself practised and embodied up to the highest point the ethical principles which he taught; and thirdly, he made his way of salvation quite independent from the limitations of Indian tradition and its caste system and therefore offered it to the whole of humanity.

. . . Like all great teachers of mankind, the Buddha was also a child of his time. From his predecessors he took over the teachings of Karma, rebirth, the sorrow-yielding transiency of all craving, asceticism,

liberation through knowledge and Nirvāna.* But by giving these teachings a distinctive philosophical character that took them out of their connection with brahminical tradition, the Buddha created a teaching of deliverance that was meant for all men. Unlike them he did not speak of sacrifices or of Brahma, but he may be called a phenomenologist who, restricting himself to the actualities of the inner and outer world as perceived by man, explained the nature of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the noble eightfold path leading to Nirvāna. Similarly as his contemporary, Heraklitus of Ephesus, he taught the *Panta Rhei*, the eternal flux of all phenomena. The Brahmins taught—as Parmenides did—a state of Being, abiding and eternal, in which every individual self has its roots. The Buddha proclaimed the very antithesis

* Certain doctrines are common features of religious thought because they are truths, or reflections of truths, similar to the natural laws discovered, often independently, by scientists. Thus it is a fact that some predecessors of the Buddha had discerned the truths embodied in the teachings of Karma, rebirth, the sorrow-yielding transiency of all craving (or rather, of all existence), asceticism, liberation through knowledge and Nirvana. But not all the religious teachers of the Buddha's time accepted them and those who did so, interpreted them in different ways. It was left for the Buddha to penetrate them further than his forerunners had done, and to see them in a clearer light, stripped of all adventitious preconceptions. To say that the Buddha 'took over' these doctrines as Hegel, for example, took over Kant's doctrine of the categories, or as Plato took over the central ideas of Socrates, is to place his thought on no more than a progressive philosophical basis. But in fact the doctrines the Buddha taught were the result of his own unique, independent confrontation with reality, his own supramundane insight (Bodhi) carried beyond the range of intellectual speculation. In some respects the Buddha confirmed his predecessors' partial realisations: in others he corrected them; but his teaching was not in any sense a mere development of something that already existed. It was the vision of one who sees clearly what others had glimpsed with eyes clouded by various forms and degrees of Ignorance (*avijja*). Editor.

of it: there is no abiding Being, no immutable Self, there is only a becoming, a flux. Only by understanding the nature not only of the external world but also of the ego, is it possible to attain to the highest selflessness that brings about Nirvana, the dissolution of the imaginary personality-complex.

The Buddha's teaching could not have had such an enormous success in India and beyond its borders if not for his so very attractive personality. The Buddha was not a theoretician who offered good counsel to others, but he was one who by his own example put the final, authentic seal on the ethical teachings he proclaimed. Aged 29, he left the luxurious court of his royal father at Kapilavatthu (in the Himālayas) and donned a mendicant's robe for seeking after salvation. In vain he searched for ultimate wisdom among other teachers; in vain he undertook the severest ascetical self-mortification for many years. Finally, after seven years of spiritual struggle, the Eye of Understanding opened within him, under the holy fig tree (the Bodhi Tree) which can still be seen at Bodh Gāyā. Thus he became a Holy One, an Awakened One, a Buddha. For over forty years he then walked through the northern parts of India, in ascetic's garb, living on collected alms food, and preaching his doctrine. Up to his death at eighty he did not shirk the hardships of the fatiguing peregrinations on foot, for the sake of spreading his message. The texts describe him as a majestic personality, a man of self-abnegation and of a rare kindness of heart, the embodiment of passion-free serenity. Pious faith may have later glorified the Buddha, surrounding him with a divine aura and with a dense overgrowth of legends and miracles. But below that sacral overpainting of the original picture there remains

the image of a man of rare equipoise and serenity; the figure of a Saint who has transcended the world and whose features radiate the perfect stillness of his mind.

The Buddha was no revolutionary in the Western sense. Though he was opposed to the Brahmins' arrogance, his aim was not a revolution against the social order as represented by the caste system in India. A graded structural organisation of society appeared to him, the aristocrat, a necessity by natural law, as natural as the gradation of beings in general, starting with the lowest animals and rising, through men and spirits, to the gods; because, according to the Buddha, even gods are subject to Karma as are men, and therefore enjoy their present position only for a limited time. What he challenged was the claim of Brahmins to be superior to the other castes, by virtue of being the guardians of the sacred Vedic tradition. For the Buddha, no class—or caste—privileges existed as far as salvation was concerned. Hence his emphatic statement: "Not by birth is one a Brahmin, but only by knowledge and moral conduct." It is only the moral qualities that determine an individual's rank in the stages of his gradual progress towards deliverance. Hence also members of the lower castes were admitted to his monastic Order. So we find among his disciples, side by side with Brahmins and warriors, those who had been scavengers or had other despised occupations, even a converted robber chief. For the Buddha neither noble birth nor wealth were decisive, but solely a man's understanding and his moral conduct.

The monks and nuns who, withdrawn from worldliness, lived either singly or in communities a life of renunciation and of active lovingkindness for all that lives, had always been only a minority among the Buddha's

followers, as they represented only the upper ranks of his disciples. Below them were numerous lay devotees who, at various stages of dedication and inner development, observed only a part of the rules binding on monks; and finally there were the still larger numbers of those who were in sympathy with the teaching and participated in its rites, but who, without exclusive allegiance and with the Indian's typical tolerance, were devoted also to other religious cults. Hence, from the Buddhist point of view, the teaching of deliverance can be understood and practised by different people to a very different extent, according to their inclinations and capacities. The "road to enlightenment" starts even as far down as on the level of animals; we hear, for instance, of pious elephants and hares, or of a frog who as reward of homage paid to the Buddha, was reborn in a devout human family and, progressing steadily, finally gained deliverance. If one wishes to have a correct idea of the Buddhist "Weltanschauung" and outlook on life, one has to familiarize oneself with the Buddhist conception that an incalculably large number of living beings, through thousands of years, in thousands of lives, proceed on their way to the light, slowly though not without relapses. The Western concept that salvation depends on the moral quality of one single life must not be used as a basis for judging Buddhist ethics. Hence the widely spread opinion that because the Buddha taught renunciation to his monks, he wanted *all* men to be monks, is quite erroneous and so also the idea derived from it, that Buddhism is averse to culture. Because only a few among the countless beings will reach Nirvana after slow progress, therefore Buddhism, from its very start, has provided less stringent ethical precepts for those who only gradually can achieve

that maturity required for final liberation. Hence, in Buddhist countries, art and sciences have always been cultivated, and it is not by chance that Buddhists have been among the founders of Indian medicine, as it was one of their foremost endeavours to help suffering humanity. For the great majority of Buddhists—and this I found also in present-day Burma, Siam, China and Japan—Nirvāṇa is only the ultimate, distant goal to which practically only the monk is devoted. Buddhism when it flourished, was certainly not a pessimistic and life-denying religion. This can be seen from the fact that some of the greatest rulers of ancient India, Ashoka (250 B. C.), Kanishka (100 A. C.) and Harsha (650 A. C.), were Buddhists.

Buddhism did not establish in India an organised Church in the Western sense, and it had no central ecclesiastical authority laying down what was the true faith and what was not. Hence there arose many schools and sects who differed from each other in several doctrinal issues, though all of them revered the Buddha as their Master. As enforced conversion is alien to Buddhism and as it did not demand exclusive allegiance nor a formal repudiation of other religions, the total number of Buddhists underwent strong fluctuations. Buddhism was never the dominant religion of India, and it was always only a section of the population that professed it. Even at periods of its widest dissemination on the Indian subcontinent, Brahmanism always remained a strong force. When, since about the 8th century A. C., Brahmanism came to the fore again and vigorous religious movements arose in its midst to which an ageing Buddhism was no match, Gautama Buddha's teaching almost vanished in India. Similarly as Christianity which

in present-day Palestine counts only very few followers but instead had conquered a large part of the world, so also Buddhism found in the Far East and in South-East Asia rich compensation for the loss in India. In Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, in Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan almost the whole population is Buddhists; in Ceylon it is a large majority, and in China, Korea and Vietnam Buddhism has a large number of followers, while in Japan it is the predominant religion.

Within the long history of Indian religion, the one and a half millennia of Buddhist history on Indian soil are only an episode—but it is an episode of a significance that can hardly be rated highly enough. Buddhism has amalgamated the currents of Indian thought in a system of ingenious synthesis which decisively influenced minds at a time of India's political and cultural greatness. It was through Buddhism that Indian ideas became known in most parts of Asia, and this was an achievement of cultural propaganda of a vast extent. But also in contemporary India, the impact of the Buddha, his teaching and his community of monks is still very much in evidence. The formulations given by the Buddha and his disciples for fundamental concepts of the Indian world-view have partly been adapted by the opponents and made parts of their systems. This applies, for instance, to formulations connected with the law of moral causality (Karma), the teachings on a gradual path to enlightenment, liberation by knowledge, and Nirvāṇa. Also the towering personality of the Buddha could not be overlooked or by-passed: hence they gave to him, the great heterodox, rank of an incarnation (avatār) of God Vishnu.

THE BUDDHA'S LAST BEQUEST

A Translation from the
Chinese Tripitaka

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Kandy

1967

Ceylon

Cover by Sugatananda

THE BUDDHA'S LAST BEQUEST

Introduction

The short Discourse of Lord Buddha presented here cannot be found within the voluminous pages of the Pāli Canon, but so much are its teachings in accord with the canonical tradition there that it deserves to be more widely known. This sutta, perhaps originally known by some such name as '*Buddha pacchimovāda Parinibbāna Sutta*', has reached us only through the Chinese translation of Ācārya Kumārajīva (died B. E. 956=412 C. E.) while the Sanskrit (?) original used by him has long since been lost. It may be taken as another example of what may well be called 'Root-dhamma'; that is, the Teachings fundamental to all Buddhist traditions.

We are fortunate that in English three translations of this brief discourse have appeared. The first was that of Chu Ch'an, published with other short discourses by the Buddhist Society, London, in 1947 and entitled 'The Sutra of 42 Sections and other scriptures.' The other is a small hard-covered booklet called 'The Last Word,' translated by Mr. P. K. Eidmann and published privately in Japan by Mr. Koyata Yamamoto in the 27th year of Showa. Both translations have their merits, as can be seen by matching them, the former being more

explanatory and therefore expanding somewhat on the substance to arrive at the meaning, while the latter stays close to the Chinese original which is evidently very concise at a number of places. I have also consulted the version of Dr. Chou Hsiang-Kuang, with Chinese text, which was published in Calcutta in 1961, and copies were sent to me through the kindness of the Editor of "The Golden Lotus". This translation I have used for altering a few phrases in my own version, but as, in that third translation, the meaning sometimes remains obscure, I have not been able to make much use of it. The three translators have respectively entitled this Sūtra: "The Sūtra of the Doctrine Bequeathed by the Buddha" (Chu Ch'an), "The Sūtra of the Teachings Left by the Buddha" (Eidmann), and "The Sūtra of the Buddha's Bequeathed Teaching" (Chou).

The version given here is mainly the result of comparing the first two translations and then selecting the best rendering both from the point of view of Buddhist meaning and from that of English style. The resulting work has been checked by the Venerable Yen Kiet against the Chinese original and he has made a number of valuable suggestions for improvement as well as corrections. We are particularly indebted to him for his re-translation of the final paragraph, in which the two existing renderings differed widely. The redactor has been particularly exercised to use the best equivalents possible of Buddhist technical terms, though few of these appear in this discourse. There will always remain a hard core of these terms which cannot be adequately translated into English, and since it is the policy of modern translations to leave these in the original, this has been done with a few words here.

Mr. Eidmann, translator of the edition called 'The Last Word', has the following note at the end of the booklet :

'This is a Parinirvāna Sūtra. It is not, however, the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, though it has parallels to many of its teachings while the Sanskrit or Pāli original is now no longer known. This Sūtra is No. 122 in the Nanjio Catalogue of the Chinese Tripitaka, and will be found in Volume 12, No. 389 in the Taisho edition of the Tripitaka.'

The section headings used in 'The Last Word', the work of the commentator Ven. Tao - An of the Eastern Tsin Dynasty, have been retained here as useful additions (except the last three which divide the text needlessly). Regarding the content of these sections, a few apply almost only to the life of homeless bhikkhus (such as: II. 1; 3; 6; III. 3) but even here the layman who is advised to emulate bhikkhu-life (as on Uposatha-days, times of meditative retreat or during temporary ordination as bhikkhu or sāmanera), will find here good advice for such occasions. Although all sections, indeed the whole Sutta, is addressed to bhikkhus, much sound advice is here as well for the lay person.

This brings to mind an important point. Those who do not know the Dhamma well—and sometimes those opposed to it—may quote such passages as: 'Seek the joy of quietness and passivity,' and such advice can be found in plenty in the Pāli Canon, and then proceed to rear a great edifice of criticism upon their text, saying that Buddhism teaches that one should go

to the forest, want little, be contented . . . and so forth, deducing from this that Dhamma is of no use to the layman and a hindrance to the progress of civilization Like all criticism upon texts torn from their context, it is invalid. This sort of advice is given to *bhikkhus* and can apply to lay people only during the special times mentioned above. It is the greatest nonsense to suppose that the teachings given by Lord Buddha to bhikkhus (and bhikkhunis) on the one hand, and to lay devotees on the other, were the same. He knew well the capacity and opportunity of people and taught them accordingly: bhikkhus with Dhamma suitable to their lives and aspirations, lay devotees with that Dhamma suited to their more social and often more turbulent lives. To confuse one with the other is to show ignorance of the vast mass of teachings given by the Blessed One to lay people. A rough estimate of the number of discourses addressed by him to the laity, or else those containing valuable advice for lay Buddhist life, would be about 400.

Apart from the direct benefits which careful reading of this short discourse will bring, lay people will also gain a good picture of the bhikkhu-life well lived. Now that bhikkhus are to be found here and there in increasing numbers outside the traditionally Buddhist countries, it is well that lay Buddhist appreciate something of the standards of their life. Of course, not all will come up to the perfection of conduct set forth here, but if one does know of one such bhikkhu, then one has in him the true Noble Friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). If one does not know of such a bhikkhu, then let the Discourse be a pointer to the directions for one's own growth in Dhamma. Here in this Discourse is good food, whether one be a bhikkhu or a householder. So highly indeed is this

Sutta rated in China that it is one of the first texts which the new bhikkhu is given to read and instructed in by his teachers. It is also printed in a very cheap edition in Bangkok and elsewhere so as to be widely available among the Chinese lay people with whom, the writer understands, it is very popular.

The present compiler would like to add the testimonies, one ancient and two modern, upon this Discourse, and then let these words of Lord Buddha summon one to the practice of the Dhamma.

First, let us listen to part of the 'Imperial Edict concerning the wide promulgation of the Discourse of the Buddha's Last Exhortation, issued by His Imperial Majesty T'ai Tsung of the T'ang Dynasty (from Chu Ch'an's translation):

‘(This Discourse) . . . contains the words spoken by the Buddha to admonish and encourage his disciples, when on the point of entering Nirvāna. It is indeed an excellent summary of essentials and by no means just a common piece of paper covered with black (ink). If it is not received and treated with respect, the great way will be obscured and the subtle words perish. Forever cherish its sacred doctrine! Bestow much thought upon it, in order to draw out and expand its meaning!’

Next, the publisher Mr. Koyata Yamamoto has written: ‘Once I asked (the nun superior of Shisendo Temple) to conduct a memorial service for Hisaya, my second son, who perished in the last war. In the middle

of the chanting I heard the words: “*Those having many desires experience much dukkha. Those with few desires do not experience such dukkha.*” These words hit me like a bolt of lightning and, after the service, I asked for the name of the Sūtra. I was given, in reply, an old and worn copy of the Sūtra of the Buddha’s Last Exhortation. Thereafter, I spent every spare moment reading this Sūtra and have become convinced that there is no Sūtra more stirring or more simple.”

Finally, these words of Mr. Ruikotsu Madani, who writes in his Foreword: ‘I am now 84 years old. My whole life has been dedicated to this single, narrow, ancient way. I hope that through the publication of this Sūtra on the Buddha’s Last Exhortations, the hearts and eyes of many will be opened.’

E V A M

May it be so.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo,
Wat Bovoranives Vihāra,
Bangkok.

THE DISCOURSE OF THE TEACHING BEQUEATHED BY THE BUDDHA

(just before His Parinibbāna)

Translated into Chinese by the Indian Ācārya Kumārajīva
sometime prior to the year 956 Buddhist Era.

I. OCCASION¹

WHEN LORD BUDDHA, Sage of the Sakyas, first turned the Wheel of the Dhamma, Venerable Aññāṅkondañña crossed over (the ocean of birth and death); while as a result of his last Discourse² Venerable Subhadda crossed over likewise. All those who were (ready) to cross over, then he (helped) to cross over: When about to attain Final Nibbāna, he was lying between the twin sāla trees in the middle watch of the night. No sound disturbed the calm and silence; then, for the sake of the disciples (sāvaka), he spoke briefly on the essentials of Dhamma:

II. ON THE CULTIVATION OF VIRTUE IN THIS WORLD

1. Exhortation on keeping the Precepts.

O bhikkhus, after my Parinibbāna you should reverence and honour the Precepts of the Pāṭimokkha.³ Treat them as a light which you have discovered in the dark, or as a poor man would treat a treasure found by him. You should know that they are your chief guide and there should be no difference (in your observance of them) from when I yet remained in the world. If you would maintain in purity the Precepts, you should not give yourselves over to buying, selling or barter. You should not covet fields or buildings, nor accumulate servants, attendants or animals.⁴ You should flee from all sorts of property and wealth as you would avoid a fire or a pit. You should not cut down grass or trees, neither break new soil nor plough the earth. Nor may you compound medicines, practise divination or sorcery according to the position of the stars, cast horoscopes by the waxing and waning of the moon, nor reckon days of good fortune. All these are things which are improper (for a bhikkhu).

Conduct yourselves in purity, eating only at the proper times and living your lives in purity and solitude. You should not concern yourselves

with worldly affairs, nor yet circulate rumours. You should not mumble incantations, mix magic potions, nor bind yourselves in friendship to powerful persons, showing to them and the rich (special) friendliness while treating with contempt those lacking (in worldly wealth, power and so forth). All such things are not to be done!

You should seek, with a steadfast mind⁵, and with Right Mindfulness (*sammā sati*), for Enlightenment. Neither conceal your faults (within), nor work wonders (without), thereby leading (yourself and) other people astray. As to the four offerings⁶, be content with them, knowing what is sufficient. Receive them when offered but do not hoard them. This, briefly, is what is meant by observing the Precepts. These Precepts are fundamental (to a life based on Dhamma-Vinaya) and accord exactly with freedom (*mokkha*), and so are called the *Pāṭimokkha*. By relying on them you may attain all levels of collectedness (*samādhi*) and likewise the knowledge of the extinction of *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness)⁷. It is for this reason, *bhikkhus*, that you should always maintain the the Precepts in purity and never break them. If you can keep these Precepts pure you possess an excellent (method for the attainment of Enlightenment),

but if you do not do so, no merit of any kind will accrue to you. You ought to know for this reason that the Precepts are the chief dwelling-place of the merit which results in both body and mind (citta) being at rest.

2. Exhortation on the control of Mind and Body.

O bhikkhus, if you are able already to keep within the Precepts, you must next control the five senses, not permitting the entry of the five sense desires⁸ by your unrestraint, just as a cowherd by taking and showing his stick prevents cows from entering another's field, ripe for the harvest. In an evil-doer indulging the five senses, his five desires will not only exceed all bounds but will become uncontrollable, just as a wild horse unchecked by the bridle must soon drag the man leading it into a pit. If a man be robbed, his sorrow does not extend beyond the period of his life but the evil of that robber (sense-desires) and the depredations caused by him bring calamities extending over many lives, creating very great dukkha. You should control yourselves!

Hence, wise men control themselves and do not indulge their senses but guard them

like robbers who must not be allowed freedom from restraint. If you do allow them freedom from restraint, before long you will be destroyed by Māra⁹. The mind is the lord of the five senses and for this reason you should well control the mind. Indeed, you ought to fear indulgence of the mind's (desires) more than poisonous snakes, savage beasts, dangerous robbers or fierce conflagrations. No simile is strong enough to illustrate (this danger). But think of a man carrying a jar of honey who, as he goes, heeds only the honey and is unaware of a deep pit (in his path)! Or think of a mad elephant unrestrained by shackles! Again, consider a monkey who after climbing into a tree cannot, except with difficulty, be controlled! Such as these would be difficult to check; therefore hasten to control your desires and do not let them go unrestrained! Indulge the mind (with its desires) and you lose the benefit of being born a man; check it completely and there is nothing you will be unable to accomplish. That is the reason, O bhikkhus, why should strive hard to subdue your minds.

3. Exhortation on the moderate use of food.

O bhikkhus, in receiving all sorts of foods and drinks, you should regard them as if taking

medicine. Whether they be good or bad, do not accept or reject according to your likes and dislikes; just use them to support your bodies, thereby staying hunger and thirst. As bees while foraging among the flowers extract only the nectar, without harming their colour and scent, just so, O bhikkhus, should you do (when collecting alms-food). Accept just enough of what people offer to you for the avoidance of distress. But do not ask for much and thereby spoil the goodness of their hearts, just as the wise man, having estimated the strength of his ox, does not wear out its strength by overloading.

4. Exhortation on sleeping.

O bhikkhus, by day you should practise good Dhamma and not allow yourselves to waste time. In the early evening and late at night do not cease to make an effort, while in the middle of the night you should chant the Suttas to make yourselves better informed. Do not allow yourselves to pass your lives vainly and fruitlessly on account of sleep. You should envisage the world as being consumed by a great fire and quickly determine to save yourselves from it. Do not (spend much time in) sleep!¹⁰ The robbers of the three afflictions¹¹ forever lie in wait to kill men so that (your

danger) is even greater than in a household rent by hatred. So, fearful, how can you sleep and not arouse yourselves? These afflictions are a poisonous snake asleep in your own hearts. They are like a black cobra sleeping in your room. Destroy the snake quickly with the sharp spear of keeping to Precepts! Only when that dormant snake has been driven away will you be able to rest peacefully, If you sleep, not having driven it away, you are men without shame (ahiri). The clothing of shame (hiri) among all ornaments, is the very best. Shame can also be compared to an iron goad that can control all human wrong-doing; for which reason, O bhikkhus, you should always feel ashamed of unskilful actions (akusalakamma). You should not be without it even for a moment, for if you are parted from shame, all merits will be lost to you. 'He who has fear of blame (ottappa) has that which is good, while he who has no fear of blame (anottappa) is not different from the birds and beasts.

5. Exhortation on refraining from anger and ill will.

O bhikkhus, if there were one who came and dismembered you joint by joint, you should not hate him but rather include him in your

heart (of friendliness -- mettā). Besides, you should guard your speech and refrain from reviling him. If you succumb to thoughts of hatred you block your own (progress in) Dhamma and lose the benefits of (accumulated) merits. Patience (khanti) is a virtue which cannot be equalled even by keeping the Precepts and (undertaking) the Austere Practices.¹³ Whosoever is able to practise patience can be truly called a great and strong man, but he who is unable to endure abuse as happily as though he were drinking ambrosia, cannot be called one attained to knowledge of Dhamma. Why is this? The harm caused by anger and resentment shatters all your goodness and so (greatly) spoils your good name that neither present nor future generations of men will wish to hear it. You should know that angry thoughts are more terrible than a great fire, so continually guard yourselves against them and do not let them gain entrance. Among the three robbers (the afflictions), none steals merit more than anger and resentment: Those householders dressed in white who have desires and practise little Dhamma, in them, having no way to control themselves, anger may still be excusable; but among those become homeless (pabbajjita) because they wish to practise Dhamma and to abandon desire, the harbouring of anger and resentment is scarcely

to be expected, just as one does not look for thunder or lightning from a translucent, filmy cloud.

6. Exhortation on refraining from arrogance and contempt.

O bhikkhus, rubbing your heads¹³ you should deeply consider yourselves in this way: 'It is good that I have discarded personal adornment. I wear the russet robe of patches and carry a bowl with which to sustain life.' When thoughts of arrogance or contempt arise, you must quickly destroy them by regarding yourselves in this way. The growth of arrogance and contempt is not proper among those wearing white and living the household life: how much less so for you, gone forth to homelessness! You should subdue your bodies, collecting food (in your bowls) for the sake of Dhamma-practice to realize Enlightenment.

7. Exhortation on flattery.

O bhikkhus, a mind inclined to flattery is incompatible with Dhamma, therefore it is right to examine and correct such a mind. You should know that flattery is nothing but deception, so that those who have entered the way of Dhamma-practice have no use for it. For this reason, be

certain to examine and correct the errors of the mind, for to do so is fundamental.

III. ON THE ADVANTAGES FOR GREAT MEN GONE FORTH TO HOMLESSNESS.

1. The virtue of few wishes.

O bhikkhus, you should know that those having many desires, by reason of their desire for selfish profit, experience much dukkha. Those with few desires, neither desiring nor seeking anything, do not therefore experience such dukkha. Straight-away lessen your desires! Further, in order to obtain all kinds of merit you should practise the fewness of desires. Those who desire little do not indulge in flattery so as to sway another's mind, nor are they led by their desires. Those who practise the diminishing of desires thus achieve a mind of contentment having no cause for either grief or fear and, finding the things they receive are sufficient, never suffer from want. From this cause indeed, (comes) Nibbāna. Such is the meaning of 'having few wishes.'

2. The virtue of contentment.

O bhikkhus, if you wish to escape from all kinds of dukkha, you must see that you

are contented. The virtue of contentment is the basis of abundance, happiness, peace and seclusion. Those who are contented are happy even though they have to sleep on the ground. Those who are not contented would not be so though they lived in celestial mansions. Such people feel poor even though they are rich, while those who are contented are rich even in poverty.¹⁴ The former are constantly led by their five desires and are greatly pitied by the contented. Such is the meaning of 'contentment'.

3. The virtue of seclusion.

O bhikkhus, seek the joy of quietness and passivity. Avoid confusion and noise and dwell alone in secluded places. Those who dwell in solitude are worshipped with reverence by Sakka and all celestials.¹⁵ This is why you should leave your own and other clans to live alone in quiet places, reflecting (to develop insight) upon dukkha, its arising and its cessation. Those who rejoice in the pleasures of company must bear as well the pains of company, as when many birds flock to a great tree it may wither and collapse. Attachment to worldly things immerses one in the dukkha experienced by all men, like an old elephant bogged down

in a swamp from which he cannot extricate himself. Such is the meaning of 'secluding oneself.'

4. The virtue of energetic striving.

O bhikkhus, if you strive diligently, nothing will be difficult for you. As a little water constantly trickling can bore a hole through a rock, so must you always strive energetically. If the mind of a disciple (sāvaka) becomes idle and inattentive, he will resemble one who tries to make fire by friction but rests before the heat is sufficient. However much he desires fire, he cannot (make even a spark). Such is the meaning of 'energetic striving'.

5. The virtue of attentiveness.

O bhikkhus, seek for a Noble Friend (kalyāṇa-mitta). Seek him who will best (be able to) aid you (in developing) the unexcelled and unbroken attention.¹⁶ If you are attentive, none of the (three) robbers, the afflictions, can enter your mind. That is why you must keep your mind in a state of constant attention, for by loss of attention you lose all merits. If your power of attention is very great, though you fall among (conditions favouring) the five

robbers of sense-desire, you will not be harmed by them, just as a warrior entering a battle well-covered by armour has nothing to fear. Such is the meaning of 'unbroken attention.'

6. The virtue of collectedness (samādhi).

O bhikkhus, if you guard your mind, so guarded the mind will remain in a state of steady collectedness. If your minds are in a state of collectedness, you will be able to understand the arising and passing away of the impermanent world. For this reason you should strive constantly to practise the various stages of absorption (jhāna). When one of these states of collectedness is reached, the mind no longer wanders. A disciple who practises (to attain collectedness) is just like an irrigator who properly regulates his dykes. As he guards water, even a small amount, so should you guard the water of wisdom, thereby preventing it from leaking away. Such is the meaning of 'collectedness'.

7. The virtue of wisdom.

O bhikkhus, if you have wisdom, then do not hunger to make a display of it. Ever look within yourselves so that you do not fall into

any fault. In this way you will be able to attain freedom from (the tangle of) the interior and exterior (spheres of senses and sense-objects—*āyatana*).¹⁷ If you do not accomplish this you cannot be called Dhamma practisers, nor yet are you common persons clad in white, so there will be no name to fit you! Wisdom is a firmly-bound raft which will ferry you across the ocean of birth, old age, sickness and death. Again, it is a brilliant light with which to dispel the black obscurity of ignorance. It is a good medicine for all who are ill. It is a sharp axe for cutting down the strangling fig-tree of the afflictions. That is why you should, by the hearing-, thinking- and development-wisdoms¹⁸ increase your benefits (from Dhamma). If you have Insight (*vipassanā*) stemming from (development-wisdom,) though your eyes are but fleshly organs you will be able to see clearly (into your own *citta*.¹⁹) Such is the meaning of 'wisdom'.

8. The virtue of restraint from idle talk.

O bhikkhus, if you indulge in all sorts of idle discussions then your mind will be full of chaotic thoughts, and though you have gone forth to homelessness you will be unable to attain Freedom. That is why, O bhikkhus, you should

immediately cease from chaotic thoughts and idle discussions. If you want to attain the Happiness of Nibbāna, you must eliminate completely the illness of idle discussion.²⁰

IV. SELF EXERTION

O bhikkhus, as regards all kinds of virtue, you should ever rid yourselves of laxity, as you would flee from a hateful robber. That Dhamma which the greatly-compassionate Lord has taught for your benefit is now concluded, but it is for you to strive diligently to practise this teaching. Whether you live in the mountains or on the great plains, whether you sojourn beneath a tree or in your own secluded dwellings, bear in mind the Dhamma you have received and let none of it be lost. You should always exert yourselves in practising it diligently, lest you die after wasting a whole lifetime and come to regret it afterwards. I am like a good doctor who, having diagnosed the complaint, prescribes some medicine; but whether it is taken or not, does not depend on the doctor. Again, I am like a good guide who points out the best road; but if, having heard of it, (the enquirer) does not take it, the fault is not with the guide.

V. ON CLEARING UP ALL DOUBTS

O bhikkhus, if you have any doubts regarding the Four Noble Truths: of unsatisfactoriness (dukkha) and the rest, (its arising, its cessation and the Practice-path going to its cessation), you should ask about them at once. Do not harbour such doubts without seeking to resolve them.

On that occasion the Lord spoke thus three times, yet there were none who questioned him. And why was that? Because there were none in that assembly (of bhikkhus) who harboured any doubts.²¹

Then the venerable Anuruddha, seeing what was in the minds of those assembled, respectfully addressed the Buddha thus: 'Lord, the moon may grow hot and the sun may become cold, but the Four Noble Truths proclaimed by the Lord cannot be otherwise. The Truth of Dukkha taught by the Lord describes real dukkha which cannot become happiness. The accumulation of desires truly is the cause of the Arising of Dukkha; there can never be a different cause. If dukkha is destroyed (the Cessation of Dukkha), it is because the cause of dukkha has been destroyed, for if the cause

is destroyed the result must also be destroyed. The Practice path going to the Cessation of Dukkha is the true path, nor can there be another. Lord, all these bhikkhus are certain and have no doubts about the Four Noble Truths.

In this assembly, those who have not yet done what should be done (i. e., attained to Enlightenment), will, on seeing the Lord attain Final Nibbāna, certainly feel sorrowful. (Among them) those who have newly entered upon the Dhamma-way²² and who have heard what the Lord has (just said), they will all reach Enlightenment (in due course) seeing Dhamma as clearly as a flash of lightning in the dark of the night. But is there anyone who has done what should be done (being an Arahant), already having crossed over the ocean of dukkha who will think thus: "The Lord has attained Final Nibbāna; why was this done so quickly?"

Although the Venerable Anuruddha had thus spoken these words, and the whole assembly had penetrated the meaning of the Four Noble Truths, still the Lord wished to strengthen all in that great assembly. With a mind of infinite compassion he spoke (again) for their benefit.

‘O bhikkhus, do not feel grieved. If I were to live in the world for a whole aeon (kappa), my association with you would still come to an end, since a meeting with no parting is an impossibility. The Dhamma is now complete for each and every one, so even if I were to live longer it would be of no benefit at all. Those who were (ready) to cross over, both among the celestials and men, have all without exception attained Enlightenment, while those who have not yet completed their crossing (of the ocean of Saṃsāra to the Further Shore or Nibbāna) have already produced the necessary causes (to enable them to do so in course of time).

From now on, all my disciples must continue to practise (in this way) without ceasing, whereby the body of the Tathagata’s Dhamma will be everlasting and indestructible. But as to the world, nothing there is eternal, so that all meetings must be followed by partings. Hence, do not harbour grief, for such (impermanence) is the nature of worldly things. But do strive diligently and quickly seek for Freedom. With the light of Perfect Wisdom destroy the darkness of ignorance, for in this world is nothing strong or enduring.

Now that I am about to attain Final Nibbāna, it is like being rid of a terrible sickness. This body is a thing of which we are indeed well rid, an evil thing falsely going by the name of self and sunk in the ocean of birth, disease, old age and death. Can a wise man do aught but rejoice when he is able to rid himself of it, as others might (be glad) when slaying a hateful robber?

O bhikkhus, you should always exert the mind, seeking the Way out (of the Wandering-on, or saṃsāra). All forms in the world, without exception, whether moving or non-moving, are subject to decay and followed by destruction. All of you should stop.²³ It is needless to speak again. Time is passing away. I wish to cross over to Freedom (from existence in this world). These are my very last instructions.'

* * * *

To these stirring words we may add the similar last words found in the Pāli of the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta:

'Handa 'dāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi vo:
Vayadhammā sankhārā; appamādena sampādethā 'ti!'

Which may be translated:

"Listen well, O bhikkhus, I exhort you:
Subject to decay are all compounded things,
with heedfulness strive on".

Notes

1. Probably the comment of Ācārya Kumārajīva.
2. See 'The Wheel' Nos. 17 (for the first Discourse) and 67/69 (for the last).
3. The 227 Fundamental Rules of training for bhikkhus (Buddhist monks). See 'The Pāṭimokkha'. Pāli text in Roman characters and English translation (Bangkok 1966, Social Science Press of Thailand). —The Chinese text refers to the Chinese Prāṭimoksha of 250 Rules.
4. This doubtless refers to animals as property, such as cattle, etc. In ancient India wealth was measured by the possession of cows, horses and other livestock.
5. *Citta*. Although most conveniently translated as 'mind' one should remember that the term includes *feelings, perceptions, volitional activities* and *consciousness*.
6. Lay people offer Buddhist monks and nuns: robes, food, shelter and medical necessities. These are the Four Supports of a bhikkhu's life.
7. Although *dukkha* is often rendered by 'suffering', this may cause misunderstanding, since it by no means conveys the full scope or force of the Pāli *dukkha*. Any experience, gross or subtle, mental or Physical, which is unsatisfactory in some way, is *dukkha*. See The Wheel No. 34/35, 'The Four Noble Truths.'

8. *Kilesa kāma*: the mental defilement by desire for the five sense-objects.
9. *Māra*: symbolic of desires and consequent birth-and-death, hence of evil. Five sorts of *Māra* are distinguished: *Māra* as mental stains, as death, as volitional activities, as the five Aggregates, and as a celestial being. Here the first is meant.
10. Although the Chinese text does not have in it the bracketed words, still these are essential since sleep can only be completely dispensed with for short periods of intense meditation. See the oft-repeated passage in the Suttas on sleeping: ‘Come you, monks, dwell intent on vigilance; during the day while pacing up and down, while sitting down, cleanse the mind of obstructive mental states; during the middle watch of the night, lie down on the right side in the lion posture, foot resting on foot, mindful, clearly conscious, reflecting on the thought of getting up again; during the last watch of the night, when you have risen, while pacing up and down, while sitting down, cleanse the mind of obstructive mental states.’
11. *Greed* (what I want and like), *Hatred* (what I do not want and dislike), and *Delusion* (I do not know, I do not want to know).
12. *Dhutanga*: for an outline of the practice of these 13 allowable austerities, a few of which can also be practised by lay people, see THE WHEEL No. 83/84, ‘With Robes and Bowl.’
13. Implying reflection.

14. Contentment is specially taught to bhikkhus, while lay people, though also cultivating it, are not expected to practise it to the same extent. Note the striking lines in the poem of Sir Edward Dyer :

My mind to me a kingdom is :
Some have too much, yet still do crave;
I little have, and seek no more,
They are but poor though much they have,
And I am rich with little store:
They poor, I rich; they beg, I give;
They lack, I leave; they pine, I live.

15. *Devā*, literally 'shining ones.' These beings are born to celestial delights as fruit of their excellent kamma, but theirs, like all life, is impermanent. See BODHI LEAVES B. 4, 'Of Gods and Men.' Sakka (another name for Indra) is their ruler in the realms of desire.
16. A teacher of meditation.
17. *Āyatana*. So far the Sutta has referred only to five senses and five sense-objects; i. e., ten sensorial fields (*Āyatanāni*). But there are altogether twelve *Āyatanāni*, the mind (as sixth sense) and mental objects being included. It is specifically the mind and ideas that are dealt with in this section.
18. Hearing-wisdom: learning from teachers or from books, implies developed memory. Thinking-wisdom: reflecting on what has been learnt, implies logical and intellectual development. Development-wisdom: arising from development of the citta, means insight and transcendental wisdom not got by intellectual

growth alone, nor to be confused with the so-called 'intuition.' In Pāli the three are: *suta-maya-*, *cinta-maya-* and *bhāvana-maya-paññā*.

19. The Pāli *citta* is retained here because 'seeing clearly into one's own citta' means knowing the nature of all the mental phenomena: feelings, perceptions, volitional activities and consciousness. See note, p (2). The passage looks to Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, 11 et seq. See THE WHEEL No. 19: 'The Foundations of Mindfulness'.
20. This is also translated "sophisticated arguments," (Dr. Chou) and would thus seem to include that futile kind of discussion about Nibbāna, Suññatā, etc., which some are fond of engaging in.
21. The Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (see THE WHEEL No. 67/9, p. 75) states that all in that assembly were at least Stream-enterers who had therefore destroyed scepticism (*vicikicchā*), since they had seen with wisdom (*paññā*) the Goal of Dhamma: Nibbāna.
22. The Stream enterers—*sotāpanna*.
23. This brief and cryptic phrase may mean in this context: You should stop yourselves from being involved in the world of birth and death: Stop revolving in saṃsāra. It recalls the Angulimāla Sutta, where the Buddha used the exhortation with dramatic effect when Angulimāla, in vain pursuit, called upon him to stand still: '*I am standing still, Angulimāla. Do you also stand still!*' (Majjhima Nikāya, 86).

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

For further exposition of some of the ideas in this text, the following BPS publications are suggested reading.

THE WHEEL

- 67/69 The Last Days of the Buddha,
- 83/84 With Robes and Bowl,
- 7 The Practice of Lovingkindness,
- 34/35 The Four Noble Truths,
- 26 The Five Mental Hindrances,
- 39/40 Purification of Character,
- 105/106 The Four Nutriments of Life,

BODHI LEAVES

- B 4 Of Gods and Men,
- B 13 An Old Debate on Self,
- B 21 Aspects of Buddhism,

Please write for our complete Book List.

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
P. O. Box 61, KANDY, CEYLON.

**BUDDHIST
COMMENTARIAL LITERATURE**

by
L. R. Goonesekere



BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
KANDY - 1967 - CEYLON

P R E F A C E

The ancient commentaries to the Pali Canon have made such an important contribution to the understanding of the canonical scriptures of Theravada Buddhism, that information about them will be welcome to an earnest student of the Dhamma. The Publishers therefore greatly appreciate the permission that was kindly granted to reproduce in 'The Wheel' series a very informative article on the Commentaries (*Aṭṭhakathā*) written by the late Mrs. Lakshmi R. Goonesekere and printed in Vol. II, Fasc 2 of the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* (publ. by the Government of Ceylon).

The contributions made by the commentaries are both to the letter and the meaning of the scriptures. Variant readings of the Pali texts have been recorded in the commentaries and the meaning of words is established either by definition or by synonyms or kindred and related terms which circumscribe the respective range of meanings. This proves helpful, for instance, with such words and terms the meaning of which in the Pali language differs from Sanskrit usage. The high degree of exegetical reliability of the commentaries is largely based on a perfect mastery of the canonical texts commanded by those ancient commentators. This enabled them to take into consideration all the different contexts in which the respective terms or doctrinal passages occur. Shades of meaning of words or terms are illustrated by quotations from the canonical texts; also where doctrinal statements in the commented text are concerned, their full significance is sometimes strikingly illuminated by the quotation of a kindred text in the commentary. Such widening and illumination of significance is also achieved by

another feature of the commentarial method : the commentaries often express in terms of Abhidhamma categories what in the commented texts is stated in the conventional language of the Suttas. This also serves to illustrate the doctrinal coherence of Sutta and Abhidhamma.

In the Suttas, there are a few texts and textual passages which would remain largely unintelligible without the commentarial explanations. One typical example is the first Discourse of the Majjhima Nikāya, the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, of which so far no entirely satisfactory translation exists, due to the fact that the translators did not make use, or not full use, of the commentarial explanations to that difficult text.

The commentarial literature also contains large sections giving full directions for the practice of the several subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), which in the Suttas are explained only very briefly and sometimes just mentioned by names and classifications only. Detailed treatment of meditative practices appears either in the Sutta commentaries themselves or reference is made there to the full exposition in Ācariya Buddhaghosa's "Path of Purification" (*Visuddhi Magga*), which, on its part, is based on the same ancient exegetical material used for the Venerable Buddhaghosa's Sutta commentaries. Part of that material may well go back to oral tradition handed on since the earliest days of the Teaching.

Held against all these and many other benefits that may be derived from a study of the Pali commentaries, the weaknesses which a modern reader may find in that type of Pali literature are comparatively insignificant and can, to a great part, be ascribed to the different requirements of the time in which and for which the commentaries had been composed. Speaking, e. g., of the vast story material in the

commentaries, by far the larger part of it is of great interest and value even today; but there are also a good many stories which judged by modern standards will be felt as rather naive and pointless, full of pious exaggerations and (often stereotype) miraculous elements. Such stories may have served as edifying sermons on a popular level and can be safely ignored by a modern reader. As often in exegetical literature, there is also a good deal of "over-explaining", while on the other hand there is sometimes a blank on textual passages where one would have wished for clarification of information. Both the excessiveness and the omissions in commenting may again be due to the fact that the commentaries or their sources very probably go back as far as 1500 or 2000 years and more. Passages or phrases in the Pāli texts for which we should welcome further explanation must have been fully understood without it by the contemporaries of the Buddha and their near successors. With the passing of centuries not only modes of expression but the texture of thought undergo change. What was readily understood by the audience for whose benefit the commentaries were composed may be obscure or difficult for us while what seems extremely simple and obvious to the present-day reader was far from being so to them. Thus the features that appear to our eyes as defects are the natural results of a gradual change in outlook, and are themselves a witness to the great antiquity of these writings.

All these shortcomings are, as we mentioned before, amply compensated for by the great help which can be derived from the commentaries for a correct understanding of the canonical Pali texts. Their great exegetical value can be gathered from the Sutta editions of 'the Wheel' series, where many extracts from the commentaries are incorporated in the explanatory notes. The Translation Series of the Pali Text Society also has many references to the commentaries.

A number of complete commentarial texts, large and small, have been published in English translations, and in concluding these prefatory remarks we shall give a list of them for the benefit of those who wish to acquaint themselves directly with the style and method of the commentaries.

As a short specimen, there is the complete commentary to "The Greater Discourse on Voidness" (Majjh. 122), appended to the translation of that text by the Venerable Nāṇamoli Thera ('The Wheel' No. 87).

A very instructive commentary of much greater length deals with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Majjh. 10), translated with excerpts from the sub-commentary in "*The Way of Mindfulness*", by Soma Thera XXII, 156 pp., 1st ed., Colombo 1949; 2nd ed. in preparation by the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy.)

The 9th Discourse of the Majjhima-Nikāya (*Sammā-ditṭhi Sutta*), together with its commentary, was issued by the same translator: *Right Understanding*, tr. by Soma Thera (X, 60 pp, Colombo 1946, Bauddha Sahitya Sabha).

The extensive commentary to a separate small work of the Sutta Piṭaka, the *Khuddakapāṭha*, appears in *Minor Readings and Illustrator*, tr. by Nāṇamoli Thera (XXIII, 342 pp., London 1960, Pali Text Society).

The commentary to the first book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, is *The Expocitor (Aṭṭhasālinī)*, tr. by Maung Tin (2 vols., 556 pp., Pali Text Society).

A small selection of short stories and anecdotes found in the Sutta commentaries appeared in 'the Wheel' series (No. 59), '*Stories of Old, Gathered from the Pali Commentaries*' (30 pp). Outside of the Sutta commentaries, there is the rich treasury of stories to the *Dhammapada*, in *Buddhist Legends*, tr. by E.W. Burlingame (3 vols, 1114 pp., Cambridge,

Mass, Harvard University Press). It may be added that also the 'Birth Stories,' the Jātakas, in their prose narrative, are regarded as Commentary (aṭṭhakathā): as only the verses are considered to be canonical.

Complete sets of the original Pali text of all commentaries (aṭṭhakathā) have been published, in *Roman script* by the Pali Text Society, London, in *Sinhala script* by the Simon Hewavitarne Bequest (Maha Bodhi Society of Ceylon, Colombo) and in *Burmese script*, edited by the Sixth Council (Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā) and published by the Union of Burma Buddha Sasana Council, Rangoon.

EDITOR.

IN MEMORIAM
Mrs. Lakshmi R. Goonasekera

This article was written by Mrs. Lakshmi R. Goonesekere, when she was an Assistant Editor of the 'Encyclopaedia of Buddhism' during 1957 to 1965. The article appeared in Volume II (pp. 335 - 352) of the Encyclopaedia and is re-printed with the permission of the Editor.

Born on 14th January, 1929, daughter of Mubandiram and Mrs. Alex S. Lamabadusuriya of Colombo, in a devout Buddhist family she received her early education in Buddhist schools and colleges at Matara, Kandy, Panadura, and Colombo, where she distinguished herself in her studies and obtained annually the respective form and other subject prizes.

At her Higher School Certificate Examination she gained a first division with distinctions in Pali and Sanskrit in 1946. She entered the University of Ceylon from Visakha Vidyalaya, Colombo, being awarded an Exhibition. At her First in Arts Examination in 1947 she was awarded another Exhibition and also the Waidyasekera Memorial Prize for Pali. She graduated in 1950, in Pali, Economics and Indian History, obtaining a second class. She taught for a short time at Visakha Vidyalaya, Colombo, and in 1951 joined the Department of Income Tax as an Assistant Assessor. In 1954 she married Raja K. W. Goonesekere and went abroad shortly afterwards.

Her association with the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism dates from March 1957 when she was appointed an Assistant Editor, and she remained devoted to this noble project until death took her away suddenly on the day after Vesak, on 16th May, 1965. She was only 36 years old.

She was a very conscientious member of the staff, always ready to do her part in the work in her calm and efficient manner. Her whole life may be summed up in those two great beautiful mental factors, *Hiri* and *Ottappa*, conscientiousness or internal devotion to duty, added to painstaking adherence to rules and regulations, which form the cadre of our social and official life.

The article here reproduced, was one of her earliest contributions to the Encyclopaedia and shows the scholarly approach which is characteristic of all her writings. The Encyclopaedia stands enriched by her efforts and contributed articles, which number well over 800.

May she reap the reward of her learning, of her devotion to duty and of her attachment to the teachings of the Buddha, and may she obtain the Peace of Deliverance.

This reprint is offered as a Dhamma-dana in her memory by her husband and relations.

Buddhist Commentarial Literature

Aṭṭhakathā

THE word *Aṭṭhakathā* is a general term, meaning exposition of the sense (*aṭṭha* = *attha*, *Skt. artha*), explanation, commentary. ¹ Although *Aṭṭhakathā* could refer to all commentarial literature, as it did during the Anurādhapura period (3rd century B.C.—10th century A.C.) when it had even a wider application and included all literary works other than the Tipiṭaka, today it is used when referring to the commentaries on the *Tipiṭaka* ² They are the expository treatises on the different texts of the Pali canon, each text having its own commentary. Their main purpose being to interpret the Buddha's teachings, they not only explain difficult words grammatically and lexically but also contain explanations and expositions of the Buddha's doctrine. Commentators have often digressed in the course of their explanations and various narratives and episodes have found their way into the commentaries making them rich in material not only for the religious history but also for the secular history of ancient India and Ceylon. The *Aṭṭhakathās* extant today are the works of Buddhaghosa and other commentators who translated into Pali the then existing Sinhala *Aṭṭhakathās* which, in turn, were translations from the original Pali.

Tradition regarding the Atthakatha

The Ceylonese tradition regarding the *Aṭṭhakathā* is that they were composed (in Pali, it is to be presumed) at the First Council (*Saṅgīti*) and rehearsed at the two following Councils. They were introduced to Ceylon by

Mahinda who also, it is said, translated them into Sinhala. The earliest record of this tradition is contained in the introduction in Buddhaghosa's commentaries.³ It recurs in the accounts of Buddhaghosa contained in the *Mahāvamsa*⁴ and the *Saddhammasaṅgaha*⁵. According to the *Dīpavamsa*⁶ and the *Mahāvamsa*⁷, the commentaries (the Sinhala version, it is to be inferred) were put into writing in Ceylon along with the Pali canon in the reign of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya in the first century B. C. The *Mahāvamsa*⁸, and *Saddhammasaṅgaha*⁹ further state that, at the time of Buddhaghosa, the Aṭṭhakathās (the original Pali) had disappeared in India. It is not known how far this statement was correct, but the original Pali Aṭṭhakathās were not recorded in writing and no trace of them exists today. As will be seen, the Sinhala Aṭṭhakathās put into writing in Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya's time have also disappeared.

This tradition regarding the origin of the Aṭṭhakathā may be accepted with certain modifications. It is hardly conceivable that the original versions of the Pali commentaries as we find them today were fixed at the First Council soon after the death of the Buddha. But, it is very likely that certain abstruse points in the doctrine and ambiguous terms were the topics of discussion at the time of the First Council and that definite expositions and meanings to be attached to these were agreed upon. These interpretations would have formed the basis of commentaries of later times. With the development of heretical views and the growth of schisms in the Sangha, at the Second and Third Councils, the elders who assembled there would have continued this process of interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. The commentaries that Mahinda is said to have brought to Ceylon, along with the canon, probably consisted of the expositions as

laid down at the Third Council which had just been concluded.¹⁰ These were not the work of one single author but of the community of monks. After Mahinda arrived in Ceylon and lived there, he transmitted these in the Sinhala language, and they came to be known as the *Sīhala-aṭṭhakathā*. The *Aṭṭhakathā* thus introduced by Mahinda received extensive treatment and further development at the hands of the Ceylonese monks, and it was this commentarial literature that Buddhaghosa and others later translated into Pali.

A later tradition contained in the *ṭīkā*s (sub-commentaries) attempts to attribute the commentaries to the Buddha himself.¹¹ While it would be impossible to think of the present version of the commentaries as *Buddha-va-cana*, the Buddha's own words, the origins of the *Aṭṭhakathā* may well be traced to the time of the Buddha himself. It has been remarked that "the need for an accurate interpretation of the Buddha's words which formed the guiding principle of the life and action of the members of the Saṅgha was felt from the very first, even while the Master was living. Of course, there was at that time the advantage of referring a disputed question for solution to the Master himself and herein we meet with the first stage in the origin of the Buddhist comments"¹² The writer goes on to describe how at the various religious centres of the time serious discussions on matters relating to religion, philosophy, ethics, morals and polity took place and the *raison d'être* of the commentaries is to be traced to these discussions.

The earliest beginnings of exegetical literature can be traced to the canon itself. They are in the nature of answers to questions. There are numerous instances in the *nikāyas* where the Buddha (and in his absence his

leading disciples) are approached for clarification of various doctrinal points. The result is a detailed exposition of the point raised. Examples of such expositions by the Buddha are to be found in the *Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta* ¹³, *Koṭṭhika Sutta* ¹⁴, *Sīvaka Sutta* ¹⁵, *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* ¹⁶, and *Sallekha Sutta* ¹⁷. The Buddha himself had recognised the ability of some of his disciples to explain in detail what he preached in brief. He had declared Mahākaccāna to be the foremost in this respect. ¹⁸ Instances of such expositions by Mahākaccāna are to be found in the *Haliddaka Sutta* ¹⁹ and the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* ²⁰. When Mahā-Kaccāna's explanation is referred back to the Buddha he asks the monks to bear it in mind as the best that could have been given. There are numerous instances of expositions by other disciples, too. ²¹

The development of exegetical activity can best be traced in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. First, there were the rules or laws, the *Pātimokkha* which had to be observed by the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. In the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* not only is a verbal commentary of the text of each rule given, but also an account of the incident which led to its promulgation. A still further development is seen in the *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga*, where much more than a series of offences is found. Passages of commentarial nature and fragments of commentaries can also be traced throughout the nikāyas. The *Udāna* and *Suttanipāta*, for example, contain prose passages which are in the nature of commentaries. The *Aṭṭhuddhāro*, the last part of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, is a kind of commentary on one of its sections, the *Nikkhepakanda*, and is in fact termed *Aṭṭhakathākanda* (commentarial division) in the *Aṭṭhasālinī* ²². The last portion of the *Nikkhepakanda* itself is worded in the phraseology of a commentary. There is a

fragment of a commentary at the end of the *Vibhaṅga*, too. The culmination of this process is reached in the *Niddesa* which is wholly a canonical commentary on the *Aṭṭhaka* and *Pārāyana Vaggas* of the *Suttanipāta*. According to Mrs. Rhys Davids,²³ “As these older incorporated commentaries are varied both in form and in method, it is evident that commentaries of different kinds had a very early beginning. And the probability is very great that the tradition is not so far wrong when it tells us that commentaries on all the principal canonical books were handed down in schools of the Order along with the texts themselves.” This statement is qualified by the observation that this does not mean that all the commentaries were so handed down in all the schools nor that each of them was exactly the same in each of the schools where it was taught.

Sinhala and Dravidian Commentaries

Sīhalaṭṭhakathā was the name given to the Sinhala translations of the commentaries Mahinda had introduced to Ceylon.²⁴ Certain verses were, however, left unchanged in Pali. Although none of the Sinhala commentaries have come down to us, information regarding them can be gleaned from the Pali commentaries which displaced them, and from later works²⁵.

The *Aṭṭhakathās* referred to are: (1) *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* or *Mūla-aṭṭhakathā*, also referred to as *Aṭṭhakathā*, (2) *Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā*, (3) *Mahā pacariya-aṭṭhakathā*, (4) *Kurundī-aṭṭhakathā*, (5) *Andhak-aṭṭhakathā*, (6) *Sanḁhe-paṭṭhakathā*, (7) *Āgamaṭṭhakathā*, (8) *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā*, (9) *Pubbopadesaṭṭhakathā*, or *Pubbaṭṭhakathā*, (10) *Vinayaṭṭhakathā*, (11) *Suttantaṭṭhakathā*, (12) *Abhidhammaṭṭhakathā*, (13) *Sīhalaṇṭikaṭṭhakathā*, (14) *Dīghaṭṭhakathā*, (15) *Majjhimaṭṭhakathā*, (16) *Samyuttaṭṭhakathā*,

(17) *Aṅguttaraṭṭhakathā*, (18) *Jātakatṭhakathā* and (19) *Vibhaṅgappakaraṇassa Sīhalaṭṭhakathā*.

Mahinda would have introduced the traditional commentaries, but during the centuries that followed his arrival commentaries had developed, and at the time Buddhaghosa arrived in the island, i. e., in the early fifth century there were commentaries belonging to different schools. The most important of them and the one on which Buddhaghosa relied most was the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* or *Mūla-aṭṭhakathā*²⁶, the commentary of the Mahāvihāra, the orthodox and traditional school in Ceylon. This is expressly named as the foundation for Buddhaghosa's commentaries on the Vinaya²⁷ and the first four nikāyas.²⁸ Quotations from it are also found in other commentaries.²⁹ The *Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā* belonged to the Uttaravihāra or the Abhayagirivihāra, the school which was the rival of Mahāvihāra. This does not appear to have been even consulted by the Pali commentators as no mention of it is made by them. It is referred to, however, in the *Vamsatthappakāsinī* where its variant readings from the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* are given.³⁰ There were also the *Mahāpaccarī* and the *Kurundī Aṭṭhakathā* which, as stated in the *Samantapāsādikā*³¹ were also written in Sinhala. According to the *Saddhammasaṅgaha*³², while the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* was the traditional commentary fixed at the first Council and introduced to Ceylon and translated into Sinhala by Mahinda, the *Mahāpaccarī* and *Kurundī aṭṭhākathā* originated in Ceylon. The *Mahāpaccarī* was so-called because it was composod on a raft in Ceylon, and the *Kurundī* was named after Kurunda-velu-vihāra in Ceylon where it was composed.³³ We do not know to which school they belonged.³⁴ The *Andhaka-aṭṭhakathā* was very likely written in the Andhaka

(Andhra) language. It may have belonged to the Andhaka school of south India as Buddhaghosa more often than not rejects its views³⁵. The *San̄khepa-aṭṭhakathā* or 'Short Commentary' quoted in the *Samantapāsādikā*, if it is to be accepted as written in south India,³⁶ was probably also the product of a south Indian school. The *Cullapaccarī* mentioned in the *Vajirabuddhiṭīkā*³⁷ was probably an abridgement of the *Mahāpaccarī*.

The scope of these different Aṭṭhakathās seems to have been varied. The *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* appears to have dealt with all three sections of the canon since it furnished material for commentaries on all three Piṭakas³⁸. The *Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā* was the corresponding commentary of the Uttara-vihāra and probably its scope was as extensive. The contents of these two commentaries were not restricted to the canon, but also dealt with the history of Buddhism and the history of Ceylon³⁹.

The *Mahāpaccarī* and *Kurundī aṭṭhakathā* were much more restricted in their scope. Copious references are made from them in the *Samantapāsādikā*⁴⁰ and they are quoted once each in the other Vinaya commentary of *Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī*⁴¹. In the introduction to the *Samantapāsādikā* they are expressly mentioned among the sources for that work. These references and the fact that they are not quoted in any of the other Pali commentaries would lead one to conclude that they dealt chiefly with the Vinaya. According to the *Saddhamma-saṅgaha*⁴², the *Samantapāsādikā* was based on the *Kurundī-aṭṭhakathā*, the commentaries on the first four nikāyas on the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* and the *Atthasālinī* and *Sammohavinodanī* on the *Mahāpaccarī*. While this would confirm that the *Kurundī* dealt mainly with the Vinaya, it would extend the contents of the *Mahāpaccarī* to the Abhidhamma.

The *Andhaka-aṭṭhakathā* and the *Saṅkhepa-aṭṭhakathā* are referred to only in the *Samantapāsādikā* and this would indicate that they dealt with the Vinaya, either solely or as part of their contents.

Apart from these, three other groups of aṭṭhakathās are mentioned as sources of the Pali commentaries. They are the *Āgamaṭṭhakathā*, the *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā* and the *Pubbopadesaṭṭhakathā* or *Pubbatṭhakathā*. The *Āgamaṭṭhakathā* are referred to as sources only in the Abhidhamma commentaries of the *Aṭṭhasālinī* (in the introduction) and the *Puggalapaññatti-aṭṭhakathā* (in the epilogue).⁴³ Although they are not referred to in the sutta commentaries, their name would indicate that they probably dealt with the āgamas or nikāyas, apart from abhidhamma. Though these appear to have been very extensive works, they cannot be identified with the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* as the two are mentioned side by side in the *Aṭṭhasālinī*⁴⁴. The *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā* is referred to both in the singular⁴⁵ and plural⁴⁶. These were followed by Dhammapāla in all his seven commentaries⁴⁷ and by Buddhadatta in his *Madhuratthavilāsinī*⁴⁸ and in the *Sammohavinodanī*⁴⁹. Different theories have been put forward regarding the nature and identity of the *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā*⁵⁰. From the above reference it is clear that the *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā* dealt at least with the sutta and abhidhamma and thus it was a very extensive commentary. The name would suggest that it was also a very old commentary. The fact that *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā* and *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* have nowhere been quoted as two separate works and the fact that those commentators following the *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā-naya* ('the method of the ancient commentary') also add that they were writing in the Mahāvihāra tradition make it very

plausible that the *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā*, 'the ancient commentary', was synonymous with the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* which most likely was the oldest commentary⁵¹. The *Pubbopadesaṭṭhakathā*, or the *Pubbaṭṭhakathā*, followed by Upasena and Mahānāma, as mentioned by them in almost identical words in the introduction and the epilogue in their commentaries, the *Saddhammapajjotikā* and the *Saddhammapakāsinī*, would also appear to be only another name for the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*.

References are also made in the body of the Pali commentaries to various specific *aṭṭhakathā*, the names of which would suggest that they dealt with specific sections of the canon. Such are the *Majjhimaṭṭhakathā*, *Samyuttaṭṭhakathā* and *Aṅguttaraṭṭhakathā* mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga*,⁵² and the *Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā* referred to in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*⁵³. The *Suttanta-aṭṭhakathā* also quoted in the *Visuddhimagga*⁵⁴ may have been the collective name for these commentaries. Reference is also made to an *Abbhidaṇṇaṭṭhakathā*,⁵⁵ *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*,⁵⁶ a *Sīhalaṇṇāṭṭhakathā*⁵⁷ and a *Vibhaṅga-pakkaraṇassa Sīhalaṭṭhakathā*.⁵⁸ It is not known whether they were independent commentaries or parts of a major commentary.

It is noteworthy that the commentaries on the four nikāyas with the exception of the *Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā* are mentioned only in the *Visuddhimagga* and not in the corresponding Pali commentaries on the nikāyas. It has been suggested⁵⁹ that these four would have been the components of the *Āgamaṭṭhakathā* and that when Buddhaghosa quotes from the *Aṭṭhakathā* in his commentaries on the nikāyas, he would be quoting not from the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* but from the corresponding Sinhala commentary. This, however, would limit the quotations from

Mahā-aṭṭhakathā only to those instances where it is specifically named. But the paucity of references to the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* in these commentaries (with the exception of *Samantapāsādikā*) does not support such a view. It would seem more likely that these commentaries individually specified were all sections of the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, or in the alternative were drawn from it, and thus by the word *aṭṭhakathā* in the Pali commentary would be indicated the corresponding commentary of the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*. On the same analogy, the *Abhidhammaṭṭhakathā*, *Jātakatṭhakathā*, *Sīhalamātikatṭhakathā* and *Vibhaṅgappakaraṇassa-sīhalatṭhakathā* were probably also parts of the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* rather than independent commentaries. 'Aṭṭhakathā' in the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*, too, would clearly refer to the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* as the word is used side by side with *Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā*.

The *Visuddhimagga* also refers to the *Vinayaṭṭhakathā* sometimes in the singular⁶⁰ and sometimes in the plural.⁶¹ It has been suggested that there may have been more than one commentary on the Vinaya and that the most important of them would have been called the *Vinayaṭṭhā*,⁶² This view is plausible as the commonest cause of disagreement in the Saṅgha was over the interpretation of the Vinaya rules and this could naturally have given rise to several *Aṭṭhakathās* on the Vinaya.

The different Sinhala *aṭṭhakathās* have been cited often in the Pali commentaries as authority for particular views, but they do not always speak in the same voice. However, they appear to disagree on matters of detail rather than on major doctrinal points. The *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, the *Mahā-paccarī* and the *Kurundī* are constantly quoted in the *Samantapāsādikā* and less often the *Andhaka-aṭṭhākathā* and the *Sanḥhepa-aṭṭhakathā*.

Sometimes the *Mahāpaccarī* and the *Kurundī* agree with each other⁶³ and sometimes they differ.⁶⁴ Often the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* differs from one or other of the other commentaries⁶⁵. There are occasions when the *Mahāpaccarī* and the *Kurundī* differ from each other as also from the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*.⁶⁶ At times they agree with each other but differ from the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*.⁶⁷ In other instances the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* agrees with one but they both differ from the other.⁶⁸ The *Saṅkhepa-aṭṭhakathā*, though it often follows the view of the *Mahāpaccarī*, occasionally differs from it.⁶⁹ Although Buddhaghosa generally accepts the view of the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, there are times when the *Mahāpaccarī* and the others are preferred to it.⁷⁰ Most often the *Andhaka-aṭṭhakathā* stands by itself and its view, when not corroborated by the other *aṭṭhakathā*, is rejected.⁷¹

In the *Aṭṭhasālinī*, a difference in view between the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* and the *Āgamaṭṭhakathā*⁷²; and in the *Visuddhimagga* between the *Vinayaṭṭhakathā* and the *Suttantaṭṭhakathā*⁷³ and *Majjhimaṭṭhakathā*⁷⁴ is recorded. But all these differences relate to details. Likewise, differences in the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* and the *Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā* are recorded in the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*.⁷⁵

The commentaries continued to be expanded and developed upon, even after they were recorded in writing in the first century B. C. The period of growth and development can be fixed from the incidents and historical events referred to in the commentaries. Buddhaghosa does not bring the events down to his day, so that it may be assumed that the last of the events recorded in his commentaries were also found in the Sinhala originals. The fact that stories about India, which can be dated (with very few exceptions of references that could be

expected of a writer in Ceylon)⁷⁶, relate to a period not later than Asoka in the third century B. C.⁷⁷, would incidentally confirm the tradition that the commentaries were introduced to Ceylon by Mahinda. The events after that are, in the main, set in Ceylon. Of the kings of Ceylon, events in whose reigns are discussed, the latest is Vasabha (67—111—A.C.)⁷⁸ Moreover, it has been shown⁷⁹ that in the introduction to the *Samantapāsādikā*⁸⁰ Buddhaghosa in his list of Vinaya teachers from Mahinda up to 'the present day' (*yāva ajjatanā*) does not include theras who lived after the 1st century A. C. This would indicate that the Sinhala commentaries, in the main, ceased to develop after this time. However, it cannot be concluded that they took the final shape at this time, for there are occasional references to events and persons even after this date, e. g., to Rudradāman, second century A. C.⁸¹ and Mahāsena (275—301 A. C.).⁸² There may have been sporadic additions down to the time of Buddhaghosa.

The Sinhala commentaries, which may be regarded as the earliest literary works in Ceylon, have been lost and no trace of them now exists. It has not been ascertained when exactly they disappeared. In the *Buddhaghosuppatti* it is stated that when Buddhaghosa completed his task of translating the commentaries into Pali, the Saṅgharājā caused the works of Mahinda to be piled up and burnt⁸³. But there is evidence for the existence of these commentaries long after this date and this episode may be considered as one more of the legends in the *Buddhaghosuppatti*. The references in the *Mahāvamsa* to the recitation of the canon together with the commentaries⁸⁴ would not prove the existence of the Sinhala commentaries at these periods, as *aṭṭhakathā* could equally refer to the

Pali commentaries. However, quotations from the Sinhala aṭṭhakathā in the works of later authors would prove their existence at the time these books were written, and they would appear to have been available till about the thirteenth century⁸⁵. It is not known how or when they finally disappeared. Just as Pali replaced Sinhala as the literary language at this time, so the Sinhala commentaries were superseded by the Pali commentaries which in addition were used more extensively. Buddhaghosa himself says, in the introduction to the *Samantapāsādikā*,⁸⁶ that the commentary written in Sinhala was of no benefit to the bhikkhus outside Ceylon and therefore he was rendering it into Pali.

Other sources of the Pali Commentaries

Apart from the specific quotations from the different aṭṭhakathā, Buddhaghosa makes use of several other authorities which show a close connection with the aṭṭhakathā. In fact, it is quite possible that some of them were found incorporated in the Sinhala commentaries. The various authorities cited are a clue to the philosophical and literary activity of the time and it would have been only surprising if the commentaries had remained static.

Two terms closely connected with aṭṭhakathās were *Aṭṭhakathikā* and *Aṭṭhakathācariya*. “Those who studied and handed down the aṭṭhakathās were known as the aṭṭhakathikās.”⁸⁷ By the other term were generally understood the teachers (*ācariyā*), responsible for the compilation of the aṭṭhakathās. Buddhaghosa holds the aṭṭhakathācariyas in high esteem and says that they knew the intentions of the Buddha and that, therefore, their word should be taken as authority.”⁸⁸ The views of these aṭṭhakathācariyas are scattered throughout the

commentaries. Quotations from them are given, often in prose and sometimes in verse.⁸⁹ The opinion of the ācariyas⁹⁰ is also sometimes quoted. This referred to the opinion of great teachers like Mahāpaduma⁹¹. The authority of *Ācariyānaṃ samānaṭṭhakathā* (similar expositions of the teachers) is often cited as opposed to the views of the Vitaṇḍavādins (unorthodox sectarians)⁹².

The commentaries contain numerous quotations from the Porāṇā (ancients), most often in verse⁹³ but sometimes in prose⁹⁴, which for the most part are introduced with words *tenāhu porāṇā* 'therefore the ancients say'. The frequency of these quotations and the manner in which they are introduced show that they formed a very important and authoritative source of the commentaries on all the three Piṭakas. It is not known whether Buddhaghosa found them already included in the Sinhala commentaries. Closely associated with the Porāṇas were the Porāṇācariyā and the Pubbācariyā whose views are also contained in the Pali commentaries⁹⁵. There were also the Porāṇakattherā⁹⁶ whose opinions are regarded with less authority than the foregoing. The relationship between these has not been definitely established and various views have been expressed. Some have identified the Porāṇā with the *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā* while others do not agree with this⁹⁷.

The Pali commentaries have also made fairly wide use of the traditions handed down by the Bhāṇakas ('the recitors'). Differences in views between the different Bhāṇakas have been recorded.⁹⁸ As in the case of the quotations from the Porāṇā it is not known whether the views of the Bhāṇakas were already found in the Sinhala commentaries or, alternatively, in what form they were available. There are also references to the different views

held by the Vinayadharas and the Suttantikas.⁹⁹ The view of the Ābhidhammikas is also recorded.¹⁰⁰ The derivation of words by the Akkharacintakas, the grammarians, is given with the alternative derivation of the Atthakathācariyas¹⁰¹. ‘Monks living beyond the sea’ (*parasamuddavāsī*) presumably Indian, have also had their share of contribution to religious discussion. Their views are recorded in the *Papañcasūdānī*¹⁰². Apart from these opinions of groups of monks and teachers, the individual views of certain eminent bhikkhus, who had a specialised knowledge of the canon, have also found their way into the commentaries. They were, undoubtedly, greatly respected bhikkhus, for their views to have assumed such importance. Among the individual opinions recorded are those of Dīgabhāṇaka Tipiṭaka Mahāsiva¹⁰³, Tipiṭaka Cūlābhaya¹⁰⁴, Tipiṭaka Cūlanāga¹⁰⁵, Tipiṭaka Mahā-Dhammarakkhita¹⁰⁶, Moravāpīvāsī Mahādatta¹⁰⁷ and Mahāsiva thera¹⁰⁸.

Buddhaghosa has also quoted from definite texts. The most frequent and copious quotations are from the canonical texts themselves and are found throughout the commentaries. The extra-canonical Pali works quoted are the *Milindapañha*¹⁰⁹, *Peṭakopadesa*¹¹⁰, *Nettipakkaraṇa*¹¹¹ and the *Dīpavaṃsa*¹¹².

Pali Commentaries

The Pali commentaries are to be dated from the first half of the fifth century A. C.¹¹³ According to the *Mahāvamsa* account (ch. xxxvii), Buddhaghosa came to Ceylon in the time of king Mahānāma (406-28 A. C.). Buddhaghosa is the only commentator known to the *Mahāvamsa* and all the commentaries are attributed to him, but this is undoubtedly an exaggerated account of his achievements.¹¹⁴ Buddhaghosa was no doubt by far the

greatest commentator and the author of the most important commentaries, but there were others who continued the task of translating the Sinhala commentaries begun by him. Buddhadatta was an elder contemporary of Buddhaghosa. The most important commentator after Buddhaghosa was Dhammapāla, the author of seven commentaries on books of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* whose talent and ability were almost equal to that of Buddhaghosa. He was followed by Upasena, Mahānāma and others ¹¹⁵. The period of the later commentators cannot be definitely ascertained, but it may be surmised that the Pali commentaries, begun in the first half of the fifth century, were completed by the end of the next century. ¹¹⁶

A list of the Pali commentaries with their authors is here inserted. In this list, Buddhaghosa's name has been marked with an asterisk, where his authorship had been generally accepted but doubts have been expressed in recent times.

The chronological order in which the different commentaries were compiled cannot be definitely ascertained because of mutual references in the works. However, this is not so in all cases and some works are clearly presupposed by others. The *Visuddhimagga* was undoubtedly Buddhaghosa's first work, for, while it does not refer to any of his other works, it is frequently quoted in them. ¹¹⁹ Of the two Vinaya commentaries, the *Samantapāsādikā* was written before the *Kaṅkhavitāraṇī*. The *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* was the first of the Nikāya commentaries and next came the *Papañcasūdanī*. Of the commentaries in the Abhidhamma, the *Atthasālinī* and the *Sammohavinodanī* were the earliest. The *Sammohavinodanī* is referred to (without any counter references) in the

The Pali Commentaries

	<i>Canonical text</i>	<i>Commentary</i>	<i>Author of Commentary</i>
		Visuddhimagga	Buddhaghosa
<i>Vinaya</i>			
	Vinaya Piṭaka Pāṭimokkha	Samantapāsādikā Kaṅkhāvitaraṇi	Buddhaghosa * Buddhaghosa *
<i>Sutta</i>			
	Dīgha Nikāya Majjhima Nikāya Saṃyutta Nikāya Anguttara Nikāya Khuddaka Nikāya	Sumaṅgalavilāsinī Papañcasūdanī Sāratthappakāsinī Manorathapūraṇi	Buddhaghosa Buddhaghosa Buddhaghosa Buddhaghosa
	(1) Khuddakapāṭha	Paramatthajotikā	Attributed to Buddhaghosa 117
	(2) Dhammapada	Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā	Attributed to Buddhaghosa 117
	(3) Udāna	Paramatthadīpanī	Dhammapāla
	(4) Itivuttaka	Paramatthadīpanī	Dhammapāla
	(5) Suttanipāta	Paramatthajotikā	Attributed to Buddhaghosa 117
	(6) Vimānavatthu	Paramatthadīpanī	Dhammapāla
	(7) Petavatthu	Paramatthadīpanī	Dhammapāla
	(8) Theragāthā	Paramatthadīpanī	Dhammapāla
	(9) Therīgāthā	Paramatthadīpanī	Dhammapāla
	(10) Jātaka	Jātakaṭṭhakathā	Attributed to Buddhaghosa 117
	(11) Niddesa	Saddhammapajjotikā	Upasena
	(12) Paṭisambhidāmagga	Saddhammappakāsinī	Mahānāma
	(13) Apadāna	Visuddhajanavilāsinī	Not known 118
	(14) Buddhavaṃsa	Madhuratthavilāsinī	Buddhadatta
	(15) Cariyāpiṭaka	Paramatthadīpanī	Dhammapāla
<i>Abhidhamma</i>			
	Dhammasaṅgaṇī	Atthasālinī	Buddhaghosa *
	Vibhaṅga	Sammohavinodanī	Buddhaghosa *
	Kathāvatthu	} Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā	Buddhaghosa *
	Puggalapaññatti		
	Dhātukathā		
	Yamaka		
	Paṭṭhāna		

Papañcasūdanī, *Sāratthappakāsinī* and *Manorathapūraṇī*. The earliest commentary of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* was perhaps the *Jātakatṭhakathā*. The *Dhammapadatṭhakathā* was written before the *Thera-Therīgāthā* commentaries and the *Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā* and *Petavatthu-aṭṭhakathā*. Of the last two, the *Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā* came earlier. The *Apadāna-aṭṭhakathā* was among the last of the commentaries.

While these Pali commentaries drew their material from the Sinhala and Dravidian commentaries, they were not *verbatim* translations of them. This is quite evident from the manner in which the Pali commentaries have been compiled. Such expressions as *Mahā-aṭṭhakathāyaṃ sāraṃ ādāya*, *Mūla-aṭṭhakathāyaṃ sāraṃ ādāya*, *Porāṇa-aṭṭhakathānaṃ sāraṃ ādāya* (having taken the essence of) in the epilogues of certain commentaries ¹²⁰ where the source has been indicated, would suggest that the Pali commentaries were not mere translations of the corresponding Sinhala commentaries. The work of Buddhaghosa and others appears to have been to make a critical study not only of the different Sinhala and Dravidian commentaries but also other sources of material, such as the canon and various traditions and opinions, and, to make a new commentary in Pali in the light of all the material available. The commentarial interpretation is often compared with the canonical, and where it disagrees it is rejected. ¹²¹ Even the narratives and episodes in the Pali commentaries do not always seem to have been taken from the Sinhala commentaries. Burlingame has discussed ¹²² how stories in the commentaries, including prose stories in the *Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā*, are to a great extent not translations from the Sinhala but borrowings from and adaptations of pre-existing Pali

material. Sten Konow has pointed out¹²³ that while some of the narratives in the Ceylonese commentaries and the chronicles are of Ceylon origin, others can be traced to a distinct Indian origin. Buddhaghosa's quotations from the *Dīpavaṃsa*, a work generally dated after the Sinhala commentaries¹²⁴, would show that he was not merely translating the original commentaries, but was making use of other available material, too, in compiling his own commentaries.

But, not much original thought is shown in the Pali commentaries. Buddhaghosa does not appear to have had a free hand in his works. According to the *Mahāvamsa* account, Buddhaghosa did not come to Ceylon on an invitation and as such he probably had to follow the instructions of the Mahāvihāra elders. In the majority of the commentaries, in the epilogue, the commentators have pledged their allegiance to the Mahāvihāra tradition. Under the circumstances, not much originality is to be expected of the Pali commentators. In the introductory verses to the *Samantapāsādikā* Buddhaghosa gives the method he adopts in his work: "In commencing this commentary, I shall, having embodied therein the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, without excluding any proper meaning from the decisions contained in the *Mahāpaccārī*, as also in the famous *Kurundī* and other commentaries, and including the opinions of the elders, perform my task well From these (Sinhala) commentaries after casting off the language, condensing detailed accounts, including authoritative decisions and without over-stepping any Pali idiom (I shall proceed to compose)" It is in the introductions to the nikāya commentaries that he sheds further light: "And now rejecting the Sinhala language, adopting the graceful language that accords so well with the order of

the text, not contradicting the faultless conclusions of the Elders of the priesthood who dwell at the Great Monastery.....and to the end that religion may long endure, I proceed to expound the meaning of my text, omitting all unnecessary repetitions.”

It is quite clear that he was confined in his writings to the Mahāvihāra tradition and also that not all the material in the Sinhala commentaries has been included in the Pali commentaries. An example of this is found in the *Samantapāsādikā* where Buddhaghosa says that the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* contained detailed accounts on certain subjects, but he does not proceed to include them.¹²⁵ Apart from expressing his opinion on rare occasions where there was no proclaimed opinion, with the note *ayaṃ pana me attano mati* ('but this is my own opinion'), Buddhaghosa does not seem to have added any original material of his own. This is clear from his list of the Vinaya teachers up to 'the present day' (*yāva ajjatanā*) in the *Samantapāsādikā* (a reference already noted) which he does not bring up to his day but stops at the first century A. C. apparently as he found in Sinhala commentaries. This might also explain, why he has not referred to such an important event as the bringing of the Tooth Relic to Ceylon. The Sinhala commentaries which were closed before this event would not have referred to it and thus it did not find a place in the Pali commentaries either. The fact that image worship, which had become quite common in Buddhaghosa's time, is hardly mentioned in the Pali commentaries, too, is probably to be explained in the same manner.¹²⁶

There are different derivations of the same word in different contexts¹²⁷ and some show the commentator's proficiency in the Sanskrit language¹²⁸ while there are

etymological errors in others.¹²⁹ The Sinhala and Dravidian commentaries would have received treatment at the hands of teachers both learned and otherwise and these inconsistencies are probably to be attributed to them. These found their way into the Pali commentaries and Buddhaghosa possibly did not consider it his responsibility to correct them. His task was not to write original commentaries but to render the existing ones into Pali, making use of all the available material. Buddhaghosa's work was that of an editor-translator, but he seems to have performed his task so efficiently and with such discretion and authority, that now he is regarded more or less as the author of the commentaries.¹³⁰

In the course of the development of the Sinhala *Aṭṭhakathā*, certain deviations from the canonical literature are to be noticed and these are repeated in the Pali commentaries.¹³¹ Firstly, there were instances where the *Aṭṭhakathā* contained readings different from the text, though in some instances the differences were very slight. Such instances are found in the *Jātakatṭhakathā*¹³². There are marked differences, however, in the *Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā*, which contains some stanzas not found in the text and omits others found in the text¹³³. These instances are so many that it has been suggested¹³⁴ that the *Buddhavaṃsa* commented upon is not the text as we have it today and that it has received many additional verses in Ceylon. There are also instances where the commentatorial view differs from that of the text¹³⁵. More frequent are instances where the canonical material has been elaborated upon. This is particularly noticeable in the biographical accounts of the Buddha. The narratives in connection with the conception and birth of the Sakyamuni contained in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* of the

Dīgha-Nikāya ¹³⁶ and the *Acchāriyabbhuta-dhamma Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* ¹³⁷ appear in their respective commentaries in a greatly detailed and exaggerated form ¹³⁸. The four guardian gods who, in the canonical accounts, protect the bodhisatta at conception are increased to 40,000 in the commentary. The extra details are sometimes given under the heading *sambahulavāra* (manifold section) which the commentator states has not come down in the text ¹³⁹. Sometimes, an attempt is made to give the stamp of the authority of *Buddhavacana* to the new material in the commentaries with a note that it was said by the Buddha, though it has not been included in the text ¹⁴⁰. A new subject that is discussed in the commentaries is the *pañca-antaradhānāni* (five disappearances) that would follow at the end of the *Sāsana*. ¹⁴¹ Certain terms, too, acquired in the commentaries distinct derivations unknown to the canon. ¹⁴²

Differences are also seen between the different commentaries themselves. These no doubt have been taken over from the Sinhalese and Dravidian commentaries. The Pali commentators themselves have pointed out some of them. ¹⁴³ The inconsistencies in the derivations of words (sometimes in the same commentary) have already been noted. There are numerous instances where accounts of the same episode in the different *aṭṭhakathā* differ as regards details. ¹⁴⁴ Sometimes differences between the commentaries are seen in the definition of words ¹⁴⁵. However, all these disagreements are with regard to details and no major discrepancies are found.

Most commentaries have been given special names, like *Samantapāsādikā*, *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* etc., while a few are merely named after the work they comment on, such

as the *Dhammapadatthakathā* and the *Jātakatthakathā*. All the commentaries have a prologue in verse, followed often by an introduction in prose of varying length (which in the *Samantapāsādikā* and *Aṭṭhasālinī* runs to several pages), and an epilogue, followed by a colophon, indicating authorship. In Buddhaghosa's commentaries to the first four nikāyas, the prologue is almost identical and the epilogue also contains similar verses. Dhammapāla's works, too, show little variation in the prologue and epilogue. Verses in common also occur in these sections in the commentaries of Upasena and Mahānāma.

In the prologue, the author usually pays homage to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, gives a brief note on the text he is commenting on and proceeds to give the method he proposes to adopt in translating. Excerpts from Buddhaghosa's works have already been quoted. Often the source of the work and the tradition followed are indicated in either the prologue or the epilogue of the commentary. In addition to this is sometimes disclosed the name of the person at whose request the work was undertaken. In the epilogue, too, is often stated why the work has been so named. Additional information, such as the name of the reigning king (usually referred to by title only) and the place where the work was compiled, is contained in the epilogues of certain works.¹⁴⁶ The colophons which are worded in almost identical language) give some meagre information about the author.

The prose introduction generally gives a literary history of the work, though much more than this is discussed in the longer introductions. In the commentary proper the commentators appear to have followed a fairly systematic method. The work is dealt with section by section, e. g., *vatṭa* or *gāthā* as the case may be, to which very often a

special introduction is given on how, when and by whom it was spoken and on the places and persons named in it. ¹⁴⁷ The text is then commented upon, every word or phrase considered doubtful being explained philologically and exegetically. In certain commentaries like the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* and *Jātakatṭhakathā*, the actual exegesis of the words of the text is restricted to only a few paragraphs while the introduction is very long and forms the bulk of the commentary. In the explanation of a word, the various interpretations as also the various derivations are given. A striking example is the eightfold derivation of the word 'Tathāgata' found repeated in many commentaries. ¹⁴⁸ The different views of the derivation of proper names are also recorded. ¹⁴⁹ Sometimes, the word is broken up into different letters and a fanciful interpretation is given. ¹⁵⁰ In the course of explanation, similes are used to make the meaning clearer. To illustrate a point, factual examples are given. It is in the course of such explanation that so much extraneous matter has crept into the commentaries. In illustration of a point, often the commentator is not satisfied with one example but gives a series of them as in the case of the explanation of *samsaggajāta*, occurring in several commentaries, where instances of many bhikkhus who had come to grief are given. ¹⁵¹

It has already been discussed how the different views of various authorities, like the *Aṭṭhakathās*, the *Porāṇas* and the *Bhāṇakas* have been quoted. There is a passage in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* ¹⁵² where the relative values of the authorities, *sutta*, *suttānuloma*, *ācariyavāda* and *attano-mati*, are discussed. *Ācariyavāda* is identified with *Aṭṭhakathā*. Of these, *sutta* is the most authoritative and should not be rejected, for it would be like rejecting

the Buddha himself. The other three are to be accepted only if they agree with 'sutta'. In the *Atthasālinī*, the reader is warned about the reliability of a statement which is not supported by the text or commentary.¹⁵³ Sometimes the different versions are introduced as the *Pālinaya*, or *Pakaraṇanaya* and *Aṭṭhakathānaya*¹⁵⁴ 'the methods of the canonical texts, of the treatises and of the commentaries'. At times, the alternative interpretation is introduced without naming the sources as, for instance, *aparo nayo* or *keci vadanti* or *apare 'ti*.¹⁵⁵ Quotations from texts often from the canon are also given without naming the source with the words *vuttam hi etam* (it has been said).¹⁵⁶ Later commentaries have borrowed from the earlier ones.¹⁵⁷ Very often the reader is referred to explanations in the earlier works.¹⁵⁸ Repetitions are also avoided by such expressions as *sesam uttānatīham eva* (the rest is clear in meaning).¹⁵⁹ However, in spite of these attempts at cutting down repetitions, numerous instances are found in the commentaries where various narratives and episodes are repeated sometimes in the same wording, sometimes slightly differently.¹⁶⁰ As has been pointed out earlier, in the definitions and derivations of words and the narratives common to different commentaries too, slight deviations are also noticed.

In language, style and method the *Aṭṭhakathā* show an advance on canonical commentaries and post-canonical works like the *Nettipakaraṇa*, *Peṭakopadesa* and *Milindapañha*. "In place of the archaic, stilted sometimes halting sutta speech, almost puritanical in its simplicity " we find in the commentaries " a language rich in its vocabulary, flexible in its use, elegant in structure, often intricate in the verbiage of its constructions and capable of expressing all the ideas that the

human mind had then conceived. Sonorous, long-winded sentences took the place of the direct simple composition of the suttas.”¹⁶¹ Striking examples of such involved and long sentences, with protracted similes, are found in the *Samantapāsādikā*¹⁶² and the *Jātakatṭhakathā*¹⁶³. The commentarial language can also be distinguished from the canonical language in its use of unusually long compounds and certain peculiar abstract formations.¹⁶⁴ But, the language and the style of all the commentaries are not uniform, varying with the author and also with the contents and subject matter dealt with. It is precisely for this reason that Buddhaghosa’s authorship of the *Dhammapadatṭhakathā* and the *Jātakatṭhakathā* is doubted, because of the difference in language and style from the works which are undoubtedly his.

The commentaries reflect the capabilities of their authors. Buddhaghosa is the author of the most important commentaries and is undoubtedly the commentator *par excellence*. Dhammapāla comes very close to to him and, had he not come after Buddhaghosa, he might have written the commentaries on the greater works that Buddhaghosa did. They both show considerable talent, “great learning, much exegetical skill and a good deal of sound judgment.”¹⁶⁵ There is much in common between Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla. They hold “very similar views, . . . they have the same method of exegesis; they have reached the same stage in philological and etymological science and they both have the same lack of any knowledge of the simplest rules of the higher criticism.”¹⁶⁶ The works of the other commentators that followed are inferior to the work of the two great commentators.

Contents : Doctrinal

The contents of the *Aṭṭhakathā* are, as only to be expected, related to the texts they are interpreting and much information regarding the subjects dealt with in the texts is to be found in the commentaries, which greatly aid the understanding of the texts. Words of doubtful meaning are clarified and explained in detail. This is particularly seen in the Abhidhamma commentaries which contain dissertations of certain Abhidhamma concepts like *khandha*, *āyatana*, *dhātu* (dealt with more especially in the *Dhātukathāpakaraṇaṭṭhakathā*, pp. 3 ff) and the *paccaya*, towards the elucidation of which the bulk of the *Paṭṭhānappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā* is devoted. The philosophical ideas contained in the canon are found in a more intelligible and systematic form in the commentaries. In the words of Mrs. C. Rhys Davids when she speaks of Buddhaghosa “ to me his work is not only highly suggestive, but also a mine of historic interest. To put it aside is to lose the historical perspective of the course of Buddhist philosophy.”¹⁶⁷

Other Contents

While a very few commentaries, like the *Dhātukathāpakaraṇaṭṭhakathā* and the *Paṭṭhānappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā* strictly adhere to the subject of the text and contain no digressions, most commentaries have, in the course of their explanations, incorporated various episodes, narratives, fables and legends, whereby the commentators have unknowingly given us much information on the social, philosophical and religious history of ancient India and Ceylon. Much geographical data and glimpses of political history are also contained in them. While some commentaries like the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, *Jātakatṭhakathā* and Dhammapāla's *Paramatthadīpāni* are rich

in material for the social and economic history of Buddhist India, most of Buddhaghosa's commentaries and the later ones, while containing material relating to India, throw a flood of light on the religious and secular history of Ceylon for centuries after Buddhism was introduced into the island. The history of Buddhism of Ceylon, the development of the monastery, the growth of worship and ritual and the history of the Saṅgha can all be traced from the information furnished in them.

India. Religious. The aṭṭhakathā greatly supplement the scattered canonical information regarding the life of the Buddha. In several commentaries biographical accounts are found, the most important of them being in the *Nidānakathā* of the *Jātakatṭhakathā*. The *Buddhavaṃsaṭṭhakathā* ¹⁶⁸ gives a list of places where the Buddha stayed during the first twenty years of his preaching before he settled down at Sāvattī. The *Samantapāsādikā* ¹⁶⁹ refers to the Buddha's three visits to Ceylon. The origins of the Buddha legend, which can be traced in the canon, developed in the commentaries. An attempt is made in the *Sāratthappakāsinī* to make the Buddha supernatural, when he is made to appear as not being subject to the signs of old age. ¹⁷⁰ Accounts of previous Buddhas are contained in the *Buddhavaṃsaṭṭhakathā*. While the *Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, the *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā* and sections of the *Manorathapūraṇī* directly deal with the biographies of the bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs in the Buddha's time, material about the Buddha's leading disciples and lay followers is scattered throughout the commentaries. The *Navāṅgasatthusāsaṇa* (ninefold division of the canon) has been explained in many works. ¹⁷¹ The six heretical teachers are also referred to. ¹⁷² The formation of schisms in the Saṅgha, the growth of the eighteen schools as also the six post-Asokan schools are

dealt with and their views discussed in the *Kathāvatthuppakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā*. The ten heretical sects in Asoka's time are named.¹⁷³ Views of the unorthodox sectarians, referred to as Vitaṇḍavādins, are found throughout the commentaries.¹⁷⁴ The development in the Saṅgha of specialist monks, the Vinayadharas and Dhammakathikas, and their disputes are recorded.¹⁷⁵ The two ideals for the bhikkhu, the *ganthadhura* (duty of study, chosen by those who are young) and the *vipassanādhura* (duty of meditation, chosen by those who enter the Saṅgha in their old age) are mentioned.¹⁷⁶ The *Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā* and the *Petavatthu-aṭṭhakathā* are the main source of material for the Buddhist idea of heaven and hell.

Social and Economic. Much of the social and economic life of the people of ancient India can be reconstructed from the information found in such commentaries as the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, *Jātakatṭhakathā*, *Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā* and *Petavatthu-aṭṭhakathā*. There were villages of particular castes like the *Brāhmaṇagāma* and the *Caṇḍālagāma*,¹⁷⁷ and sometimes various craftsmen grouped themselves in villages (*vaḍḍhakīgāma*, *kammāragāma*),¹⁷⁸ or at times in streets (*dantakāravīthi*, *rajakavīthi*, *pesakāravīthi*).¹⁷⁹ Some villages were very large.¹⁸⁰ Slavery existed and the usual price quoted for a slave is 100 kahāpaṇas.¹⁸¹ There is evidence of polygamy. Often a man with a barren wife takes another in the hope of issue.¹⁸² Frequent references are made to courtesans.¹⁸³ A woman was so religious that she hired the village courtesan to attend on her non-Buddhist husband for a fortnight while she was engaged in religious activity.¹⁸⁴ People often gathered at festivals some of which continued throughout the night.¹⁸⁵ Women used perfume, wore garlands and jewellery.¹⁸⁶ Sometimes men, too, used

ornaments, perfume and garlands.¹⁸⁷ There were high roads from Kusinārā to Pāvā,¹⁸⁸ from Pāṭaliputta to the old north west frontier¹⁸⁹ (now West Pakistan), and traders plied in caravans encountering much danger.¹⁹⁰ The more enterprising among them engaged in trade overseas.¹⁹¹ Two of the ancient ports were Bhārukacca and Gambhīra.¹⁹² The *seṭṭhi* (merchant, banker, treasurer) was an important person in the village.¹⁹³ The existence of guilds (*seṇi*) is indicated.¹⁹⁴ Coins and measures used are also mentioned.¹⁹⁵ In certain districts in South India the dead were not cremated but buried and after a period the bones were dug up, washed and smeared with scents.¹⁹⁶ Takkaśilā was the great centre of learning which drew students from distant places.¹⁹⁷

Political. Information regarding tribes like the Vajjis and the Licchavis¹⁹⁸ and kings, contemporaneous with the Buddha, like Bimbisāra, Ajātasattu and Pasenadi,¹⁹⁹ are found scattered. References are also made to later kings, like Asoka and Rudradāman.²⁰⁰

Geographical. Accounts of places in India, like the Himālayas, the Anotatta Lake, and rivers like the Ganges are contained in certain works.²⁰¹

Ceylon. *Religious.* Buddhaghosa's commentaries are very rich in material about the religious conditions in Ceylon. The Bhāṇakas, who had originated in India as the reciters of the various sections of the canon, developed in Ceylon into different schools of interpretation. Much information is available regarding the more illustrious monks such as Dīghabhāṇaka Abhaya, Tipiṭaka Cūlābhaya, Maliyadeva, Dīghabhāṇaka Tipiṭaka Mahāsiva, Tipiṭaka Cūlanāga and others,²⁰² who came to be regarded as authorities on the canon. Accounts of diligent monks who strove and attained arahantship in spite of

difficulties²⁰³ and, in other instances, monks who were deluded that they were arahants but were found out,²⁰⁴ are also mentioned. According to the commentaries, at one time arhants were very common in Ceylon.²⁰⁵ Accounts of monks who yield to temptation and fall off their religious life are also met with.²⁰⁶ An instance of a dispute between the Mahāvihāra and Abhayagiri faction over a point in the Vinaya is recorded.²⁰⁷ In the prologue of the *Jātakatṭhakathā*, reference is made to a bhikkhu of the Mahīsāsaka school. There was a disagreement between the Paṃsukūlikas and Dhammakathikas as to whether learning (*pariyatti*) or practice (*paṭipatti*) was more important and it was decided in favour of *pariyatti*.²⁰⁸ As seen from this reference, the ascendancy of *Sutta* over *Vinaya* took place after the disturbance in the country and the dangers the religion faced in the time of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya. There were various religious centres, such as Cetiyaṭṭhapa and Cittalapaṭṭhapa.²⁰⁹ The development of the idea of worship can be traced. The sacred Bodhitree and the Mahāthūpa became objects of popular worship.²¹⁰ Great festivals were held at the Mahāthūpa to which people came from distant places, beautifully dressed.²¹¹ Instances are related where the offering of flowers at the cetiya is rewarded with birth in heaven²¹² and the joy of a monk experienced after sweeping the courtyard of the cetiya leads to arahantship.²¹³ Offerings of lighted lamps to the cetiya are also referred to.²¹⁴ The destruction of a cetiya or bodhi-tree was a grave crime. The bodhi-tree was held very sacred and a branch could be cut only under very special circumstances.²¹⁵ The preaching of the Dhamma was common.²¹⁶ The preaching of the *Ariyavaṃsa* drew crowds from far and near.²¹⁷ Another festival was that

of Giribhaṇḍapūjā.²¹⁸ The efficacy of chanting of parittas is discussed.²¹⁹ The bringing of the collar bone relic to Ceylon is related,²²⁰ but no mention is made of the tooth relic. Reference is also made to images containing relics,²²¹ but no image houses are mentioned. An account of how the relics would disappear at the end of the *sāsana* is contained in several commentaries.²²² The changes in the life of the monk and the development of the monastery can also be traced. The original rules were relaxed and the monk could practise medicine under certain circumstances²²³ (Vasabha's queen was cured by a medicine prescribed, though not directly, by Mahāpaduma).²²⁴ Monasteries could hold land²²⁵ and sometimes slaves were given to monasteries by kings.²²⁶ Incidentally, slaves could not be ordained unless they were freed.²²⁷ In Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's time there were many learned bhikkhus²²⁸ while in Saddhātissa's time there was general laxity in the Saṅgha.²²⁹ Accounts of various deities, like Sakka, Vissakamma and Yama are to be found.²³⁰ References to other religious practices are also made.²³¹

Social and Economic. There is much less information regarding social conditions in Ceylon than those of India. Glimpses of village life can however be obtained.²³² A list of household utensils and articles used is found in the *Kaṅkhāvitaranī*.²³⁴ There were rest halls in ancient Ceylon.²³⁴ Instances of extreme piety among the laity are recorded²³⁵. At least one street, named after a caste (*kevaṭṭavīthi*), is mentioned.²³⁶ The king employed an officer to read out his edicts.²³⁷ There were also highly learned people among the laity.²³⁸ People engaged in cattle breeding²³⁹ and worked in sugar mills.²⁴⁰ There were tax-collectors employed by the king.²⁴¹ Coins and

measures in use are discussed.²⁴² A port often referred to is Jambukola.²⁴³ Communications between India and Ceylon were kept up. Ceylonese monks went to India in times of difficulty²⁴⁴ or in search of knowledge²⁴⁵ and Indian monks came to Ceylon on pilgrimage.²⁴⁶ In fact, they too have made their contribution to commentarial literature.²⁴⁷

Political. The piety of kings like Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and Saddhātissa, Bhātiya and Kūṭakaṇṇa is often discussed.²⁴⁸ Other royal figures like Mahānāga Coranāga, Vasabha and Mahāsena are referred to.²⁴⁹ References are also made to political figures, like the Tamil minister Dīghajantu.²⁵⁰ Historical events, such as the revolt of brāhman Tissa and the famine in the time of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya are also recorded.²⁵¹ At this time, the Saṅgha experienced much suffering. The *Mahāniddeśa* was known only by one bhikkhu and he happened to be immoral.²⁵² Bhikkhus fled to the Malaya district and many of them died of starvation. Others went to India and returned only after the famine.²⁵³

Geographical. A number of places in Ceylon, centres of learning, like the Mahāvihāra, the most important of them, and others like Tissamahārāma, Tulādhārapabbata, Kāladīghavāpi-dvāra-vihāra and Maṇḍalārāma,²⁵⁴ shrines, like Mariccavattī-vihāra, Nāgadīpa, Kalyāṇi²⁵⁵ and villages, like Vattakālaka and Setambaṅgaṇa²⁵⁶ are mentioned.

The commentaries record instances of additions to the canon in Ceylon. In the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*²⁵⁷ it is said that the verses beginning with ‘aṭṭhadonaṃ cakkhumato sarīraṃ’ in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* were added in Ceylon. According to the *Suttanipātaṭṭhakathā*²⁵⁸ the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* did not comment on the last two verses

of the *Kokālika Sutta* of the *Suttanipāta*. It has been suggested that this may indicate that these two verses were added in Ceylon.²⁵⁹ There is also an instance where a sutta is given a new name in the commentary.²⁶⁰

The *aṭṭhakathā* occupy a very important place in the literature of Ceylon, as also in Buddhist literature. The Sinhala commentaries, which are now lost, may be said to have been the earliest literary works of the Island. The Pali *aṭṭhakathā* were among the earliest works in Pali to be written in Ceylon.²⁶¹ Buddhaghosa and his successors gave an impetus to the Pali language and paved the way for the literature that followed. The Sinhala *aṭṭhakathā* provided the material for much of the literature in Ceylon. Of the two chronicles, the *Mahāvamsa* (if not also the *Dīpavamsa*)²⁶² was directly based on the Sinhala *aṭṭhakathā* and many of the later works were to a greater or lesser extent dependent on them. The influence of the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* and the *Jātakatṭhakathā* is seen on Western literature as well as on Burmese literature.

The *aṭṭhakathā* are very important for the study of Buddhism. They are essential for a proper understanding and critical study of texts. They are indispensable for a knowledge of the development of the doctrine and the history of Buddhism and the Saṅgha. These *aṭṭhakathā*, which are exegetical treatises on the canonical texts, were themselves commented upon in the sub-commentaries called the *ṭikā*. The *ṭikā* were in turn followed by further sub-commentaries, called *anuṭikā*. At least one of them, the *anuṭikā* on the *mūlaṭikā*, was still further commented upon in the *madhuṭikā*.

NOTES

1. *Etthacca, attho kathīyati etāyāti atthakathā, sāyeva atthakathā thakārassa thakāram katvā dukkhassa pīḷa-nattho'ti ādisu viya: Sāratthadīpanī* (Sinhalese edition) p. 17. Also *JRAS.* 1870 (Vol. V, New Series) p. 292.

2. W. Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon.* Intr. xxvii f.

3. *Atthappakāsanattham atthakathā ādito vasisatehi Pañcahi yā saṅgītā ca anusāṅgītā ca pacchāpē. Sīhaladīpam pana ābhatā'tha vasinā Mahā-mahindena, Thapitā Sīhalabhāsāya dīpavāsīnam atthāya.*

“For explaining the meaning, the Commentary was originally recited by the 500 Masters (i. e. the Arahats assembled at the First Council) and was later rehearsed (at the two following Councils). Then it was brought to the island of the Sinhalese by the great Mahinda, the master (of Dhamma), and was rendered into the Sinhala language for the benefit of the island dwellers.”

Verses 6 and 7, Intr. in *DA., MA., SA., AA.*—

See also verse intr. in *DhsA.*

4. Revata tells Buddhaghosa :

*Pālimattam idhānītam natthi atthakathā idha,
Tathācariyavādāca bhinnarūpā na vijjare.
Sīhalatthakathā suddhā Mahindena matimatā
Saṅgītattayam ārūlham sammāsambuddhadesitam
Sāriputtādigītañ ca kathāmagyam samekkhiya
katā Sīhalabhāsāya Sīhalesu pavattati.*

“The text alone has been handed down here (in Jambudīpa), there is no commentary here. Neither have we the deviating systems of the teachers. The commentary in the Sinhala tongue is faultless. The wise Mahinda who

tested the tradition laid before the three Councils as it was preached by the Perfectly Enlightened One and taught by Sāriputta and the others, wrote it in the Sinhala tongue and it is spread among the Sinhalas." *Mhv.* xxxvi, 227—9.

5. *JPTS.* 1890, p. 53 6. *Dpv.* xx, 20—21.

7. *Mhv.* xxxiii, 100—101. 8. See 4. 9. See 5.

10. G. P. Malalasekera, *Pali Literature of Ceylon*, p. 90 f.

11. *Na hi bhagavatā abyākataṃ nāma tantipadaṃ atthi. Sabbesaṃ yeva attho kathito. Tasmā Sammāsambuddheneva tiṇṇaṃ piṭakānaṃ atthavaṇṇanākkamo pi bhāsito' ti daṭṭhabbaṃ. Tattha tattha bhagavatā pavattitā pakiṇṇakadesanā yeva hi aṭṭhakathā : Sāratthadīpanī* (Sinhalese edition p. 18).

12. B. C. Law, *Life and work of Buddhaghosa*, 1923, p. 49. 13. *M.* III, p. 207. 14. *S.* IV, p. 145.

15. *S.* IV, p. 230. 16. *M.* I, p. 483. 17. *M.* I, p. 40.

18. *A.* I, p. 23. 19. *S.* IV, p. 115. 20. *M.* I, p. 108.

21. Ānanda's expositions are contained in the *Subha Sutta* (*D.* I, p. 204), *Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta* (*M.* I, p. 349), *Bāhitika Sutta* (*M.* II, 112), *Ghosita Sutta* (*S.* IV, p. 113) and Sāriputta's, in the *Saṅgītī Sutta* (*D.* III, p. 207), *Dasuttara Sutta* (*D.* III, p. 272), *Saccavibhaṅga Sutta* (*M.* III, p. 248), *Mahāvedalla Sutta* (*M.* I, p. 282).

Bhikkhunī Khemā's explanation is found in the *Avyākata Saṃyutta* (*S.* IV, p. 374) and Dhammadinnā's in the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta* (*M.* I, p. 299).

22. This has been ascribed to Sāriputta who is said to have compiled it for the benefit of a pupil who could not understand the *Nikkhepakaṇḍa*.

23. *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*—Intr. p. xx.

24. See 4.

22. This has been ascribed to Sāriputta who is said to have compiled it for the benefit of a pupil who could not understand the *Nikkhepakanda*.

23. *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*—Intr. p. xx. 24. See 4.

25. Such as the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*, *Saddhamma-saṅgaha* and the *tīkā*.

26. These two terms have been used synonymously in the epilogues to Buddhaghosa's commentaries on the first four nikāyas and therefore it may be concluded that they were identical. 27. *VinA*. Intr.

28. Epilogue, *DA.*, *MA.*, *SA.*, *AA*.

29. See *UdA*. p. 399; *SnA*. pp. 202, 477; *DhsA*. p. 80; *PugA*, *JPTS*, 1913—14, p. 39.

30. pp. 125, 155, 177, 187, 247, 249, 289, 290.

31. See Epilogue. 32. *JPTS*. 1890, p. 55.

33. See also *Sāratthadīpanī* p. 17. In the *Gandhavaṃsa* (*JPTS*. 1886, p. 59) they are described as the works of *Gandhācariyā* who are defined as teachers who came after the *Porāṇacariyā*. The *Porāṇacariyā* are identified with the *Aṭṭhakathācariyā*.

34. Barua in his 'Ceylon Lectures' (p. 85) suggests a connection between the Kurundī and the Jetavanavihāra, and the Mahāpaccari and the Abhayagiri vihāra. But it does not seem probable that Buddhaghosa would have made such extensive use of commentaries of 'heretical' schools when he has ignored the *Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā*, altogether.

35. *VinA*. III, 646—7, 697; IV, 747, 763; V, 970, 1055, 1069.

36. Malalasekera (*Pali Literature of Ceylon*, p. 92) and Law (*A History of Pali Literature*, p. 376) with Mrs. Rhys

Davids (*A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*, p. xxvii) are of opinion that it was probably of S. Indian origin. The fact that it is not included among the Sinhalese commentaries given in the *Samantapāsādikā* epilogue strengthens this view. However, see E. W. Adikaram (*Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, p. 12) where he suggests that it might have been an abridged version of *Mahāpaccarī*.

37. See *JRAS.* 1870 (Vol. V, New Series) p. 298.

38. See 27, 28, 29.

39. This is clear from the quotations in the *MhvA*. The main source of the *Mahāvamsa* is more definitely specified as *Sīhala-aṭṭhakathā-mahāvamsa* (*Mhva.* p. 48) and Oldenberg held the view that this formed a historical introduction to the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*. (See *The Dīpavamsa*, intr. p. 4). Geiger did not agree with him and believed that even if the *Sīhala-aṭṭhakathā-mahāvamsa* had its beginnings as a historical introduction to the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* it was in fact an extensive monastery chronicle of the Mahā-vihāra (*The Dīpavamsa and Mahāvamsa*, p. 64. See also *UCK.* Vol. IV, Oct. 1946, p. 1 f. G. C. Mendis: *The Pali Chronicles of Ceylon*). It seems very likely that the work on which the *Mahāvamsa* was based had a close connection with the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* for the word often used is plain *aṭṭhakathā*, the Uttaravihāra recension also being referred to as merely *Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā*.

40. pp. 299, 317, 783, 789, etc.

41. *Mahāpaccarī*, p. 110; *Kurundī*, p. 138.

42. *JPTS.* 1890, p. 56.

However, the *Saddhammasaṅgaha* is to be dated about the fourteenth century and too much reliance cannot be laid on its statements.

43. These two works also contain quotations from the *Agamattakathā* (*DhsA.* pp. 86, 188, 189; *PugA.* p. 193) where the word is also used in the plural,

44. p. 86. 45. See 59. 46. *VbhA.* epilogue.

47. See prologue and epilogue. 48. See epilogue.

49. See prologue and epilogue. A quotation from the *Poranattakathā* (singular) is also contained in *CpA.* p. 15.

50. H. Oldenberg, *Dīpavanīsa*, Intr. W. Geiger *Dīpavanīsa and Mahāvanīsa*, p. 43 ff. E. W. Adikaram op. cit. pp 22—3. B. M. Barua, *Ceylon Lectures*, p. 76. B. C. Law, *Buddhaghosa*, 1946, p. 53.

51. See 32. This view is strengthened by the fact that the *Sīhalattakathā-mahāvanīsa* (whose close connection with the *Mahā-attakathā* has already been noted, see 39), is alternatively referred to as *Porāṇattakathā* (*MhvA.* p. 36).

52. *Majjhima-attakathā*, pp. 72, 184, 547.

Samyutta-attakathā, pp. 387, 432.

Anguttara-attakathā, p. 315.

53. p. 87. 54. p. 272. 55. *Vism.* p. 547.

56. *J.* 62. 57. *PsA.* p. 159. 58. *YamA.* p. 83.

59. Adikaram, op. cit. p. 13. 60. p. 272.

61. p. 72. 62. See 59. 63. pp. 616, 664.

64. pp. 544, 789. 65. pp. 360—61, 377, 863, 1203.

66. pp. 817—18, 1167. 67. p. 627. 68. pp. 536—7.

69. p. 494. 70. pp. 319, 617.

71. pp. 646, 647, 697, 970, 1055, 1069. 72. p. 86.

73. p. 272. 74. p. 72. 75. p. 249. 76. See 81.

77. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification* Intr. p. xx.

78. *VinA.* II, 471; *DA.* I, 291; II, 635; *MA.* II, p. 869

79. Adikaram, op. cit. p. 87. 80. I, p. 62.

81. *VinA.* p. 297.82. *ibid.* 519.

83. Gray's edition, p. 60.

84. xii, 58; ix, 8; xci, 27.

85. The *Dhampiyā-aṭuvāgūṭapadaya* a work dated in the tenth century A. C. contains quotations from these commentaries in the original Sinhalese (pp. 136, 148, 149). In the *Sahassavatthuppakaraṇa*, a work assigned to a period before the eleventh century A. C. the author says in the introduction that he is following the method of the *Sīhalatṭhakathā*. There is evidence that the Sinhalese commentaries were available also to the author of the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* which has been dated by Malalasekera in the eighth century or ninth century A. C. (*MhvA.* intr. p. cix) and by Geiger between 1000 and 1250 A. C. (*Dīpavaṃsa and Mahā-vaṃsa* p. 34). The author of the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* has quoted from the *Sīhalatṭhakathā*, *Sīhalatṭhakathāmahāvaṃsa*, the *Aṭṭhakathā*, *Uttaravihāratṭhakathā*, *Uttaravihāramahāvaṃsa*, *Porāṇatṭhakathā*, *Vinayatṭhakathā*, *Mahāvaṃsatṭhakathā* and *Dīpavaṃsatṭhakathā*. These were all commentaries in Sinhalese. *Vinayatṭhakathā*, too, may be taken as referring to the Sinhalese commentary on the Vinaya, as the *Samantapāsādikā* has been separately quoted. The *Pālimuttaka-Vinayavinicchaya Saṅgaha* dated in the twelfth century A. C. contains quotations from the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, the *Mahāpaccarī* and the *Kurundī* (pp. 2, 4—Sinhalese edition, B. E. 2450). The *Sārasaṅgaha* which was probably written in the thirteenth century refers to a statement found in the *Vinayatṭhakathā* (p. 32, Sinhalese edition, 1898) which cannot be traced in the *Samantapāsādikā*. This would indicate that the statement was taken from the Sinhalese *Vinayatṭhakathā*, unless it was contained in the *Samantapāsādikā* of the author's time.

86. Verses 8—9.

87. *Khpa.* p. 151.

88. Adikaram, op. cit. pp. 14—15.
89. *MA.* pp. 59, 225; *SA.* III, pp. 13, 138, 185; *AA.* II, p. 53; *KhpA.* p. 110; *UdA.* p. 55; *PsA.* pp. 521; 532; *VbhA.* p. 350.
90. *AA.* II, p. 18; *Ekā ācariyā vadanti.*
91. See *VinA.* I, 283.
92. *AA.* V, 85; *ItA.* II, p. 6; *VbhA.* pp. 9, 51, 319, 459.
93. *Vism.* pp. 152, 206; *VinA.* I, p. 62; *DA.* III, p. 757; *MĀ.* I, p. 46; *SA.* II, p. 43; *AA.* I, p. 105; *ApA.* p. 101; *DhsA.* p. 84, etc.
94. *Vism.* I, p. 20; *DA.* II, p. 491; *MA.* I, p. 105; *UdA.* p. 23; *PsA.* pp. 431, 676; *DhsA.* p. 400 etc.
95. *Porāṇācariyā, Pubbācariyā (Vism.* p. 523).
96. *Vism.* p. 99; *AA.* II, p. 26; *VbhA.* p. 254.
97. See Oldenberg, *Dīpavaṃsa*, intr.; Geiger, *Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa*; Law, *Life and Work of Buddhaghosa*—Foreword; Malalasekera, *Pali Literature of Ceylon*, p. 92.; *Vaiṃsatthappakāsinī*—Intr. pp. lxi f.; Adikaram op. cit. pp. 16—22.
98. For differences in views held by (a) the *Dīghabhāṇakas* and the *Majjhimabhāṇakas*, see *Vism.* II, p. 428; *DA.* I, p. 10, (b) the *Majjhimabhāṇakas* and *Saṃyuttabhāṇakas*, see *Vism.* p. 431, and (c) the *Dīghabhāṇakas* and *Saṃyuttabhāṇakas* on the one hand and the *Majjhimabhāṇakas* on the other, see *Vism.* p. 275; *VinA.* II, p. 413; *PsA.* p. 493. The *Aṅguttarabhāṇakas'* views are also occasionally cited (*Vism.* I, pp. 74—7; *AA.* II, p. 208). The other *bhāṇakas* referred to are the *Uḍḍatovibhaṅgabhāṇaka* (*VinA.* III, p. 614), *Dhammapadabhāṇaka* (*DhpA.* IV, p. 51, *DhsA.* p. 18), *Jātakabhāṇaka* (*VinA.* p. 789; *KhpA.* p. 151; *SnA.* p. 186;

VbhA. p. 484) and *Mahā-Ariyavaṃsabhāṇakas* (*SA.* III, p. 182). The word *Mahākhuddakabhāṇaka* occurs in the Burmese edition of the *Manorathapūrāṇī*, instead of *Mahājātakabhāṇaka*. See *AA.* II, p. 249.

99. *Vism.* p. 72; Suttantiya thera's view: *VinA.* p. 454. Dhammakathika's view; *PugA.* p. 224.

100. *ApA.* p. 83. 101. *KhpA.* p. 110; *PsA.* p. 532.

102. *MA.* IV, p. 94. 103. *SA.* III, p. 281.

104. *SA.* III, p. 277, *PugA.* p. 190.

105. *SA.* III, p. 277; *PugA.* p. 190.

106. *PugA.* p. 190; *DhsA.* pp. 267, 278, 286.

107. *DhsA.* pp. 230, 267, 284, 286; *PsA.* 405; *VibhA.* 81.

108. *DhsA.* p. 405; *PsA.* 80.

109. *Vism.* pp. 283, 438; *MA.* I, pp. 118, 253; *DhsA.* pp. 112, 114, 119, 120, 122, 142.

110. *Vism.* p. 141; *PsA.* p. 181; *DhsA.* 165.

111. *MA.* I, p. 31.

112. *VinA.* I, p. 75; *KvuA.* pp. 3—5. 113. See 116.

114. See however, Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 220.

115. The author of the *Apadāna-aṭṭhakathā* is not known. The theory of (a) Culla-Buddhaghosa as the author of the *Dhammapad-aṭṭhakathā* (see discussion in Malalasekera op. cit 96 f.) and of the *Jātak-aṭṭhakathā*, *Khuddakapāṭha-aṭṭhakathā*, and *Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā* (see Barua, op. cit., pp. 88 ff. and Law, *Buddhaghosa*, 1946, p. 60) and (b) Buddhaghosa III as the author of the *Samantapāsādikā* and *Kaṇkhāvitaraṇī* (see Barua, *ibid.*; Law, *ibid.*) has been postulated.

116. This period has not been generally accepted. Barua, op. cit. p. 93; *UCR*. Vol. III, Nov. 1945, pp. 77f.; Law, op. cit. pp. 26, 29, 61, 77; A. P. Buddhaddatta in *UCR*. Vol. II, Nov. 1944, pp. 77f.

117. See references in 115 and Winternitz, op. cit. pp. 196—7; Burlingame in *HOS*. Vol. 28, intr.; Bapat and Vadekar, *Atthasālinī* intr., A. P. Buddhaddatta in *UCR*. Vol. II, Nov. 1944 pp. 77f.

118. See colophons in the commentaries and *Gandhavaṃsa*, *JPTS*. 1886. pp. 59, 68. (The *Gandhavaṃsa* also ascribes the commentary on the *Apadāna* to Buddhaghosa).

119. The *Mahāvamsa* account (ch. 37) that the *Atthasālinī* was written before the *Visuddhimagga* cannot be accepted.

120. *DA.*, *MA.*, *SA.*, *AA.*: *Sā hi Mahāatthakathāya sāram ādāya niṭṭhitā Mūlatthakathāsāraṃ ādāya mayā imaṃ karontena VbhA: Porānatthakathānīi sāram ādāya sā ayaṃ niṭṭhaṃ*

121. *Vism.* p. 315; *VinA.* V, p. 970; *YamA.*, *JPTS*. 1910—12, p. 83.

122. *JAOS*. 38, 1918, p. 267.

123. *Aus Indiens Kultur*; Festgabe für Richard von Garbe, 1927, pp. 33 f.

124. On the other hand, according to G. C. Mendis' date of the *Dīpavaṃsa* (*UCR*. Vol. IV, Oct. 1964, pp. 1 f.) these quotations could have already been included in the Sinhalese commentaries.

125. *VinA.* II, pp. 473—4.

126. See W. Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, pp. 125 f.

127. *Janetasmini*; SA. I, p. 219, *Janetasmini'ti janatasmini pajāyātī attho*; SA. II, p. 247, *Janetasmini'ti janite: pajāyāī attho* (A. P. Buddhadatta, *Aṭuvā parīksaṇaya hā Aṭuvākathāvastu*, p. 4).

128. *Indriyattho* in *Visuddhimagga*, See Adikaram, op. cit. p. 3.

129. *Dosinā* in *Dosinā ratū* in DA. I, p. 141, defined as *dosāpagatā* when it is the Pali form of Sanskrit *jyotsnā* (moonlight). See Adikaram, ibid.

130. Rahula, op. cit. Intr. p. xxiv.

131. In this paragraph, A. P. Buddhadatta, *Aṭuva-parīksaṇaya hā Aṭuvākathāvastu*, pp. 3ff. and Adikaram, op. cit., chap. 4 have been made use of.

132. J. I. p. 488; II, pp. 241, 299; IV, p. 236; V, pp. 95, 273, 276; VI, p. 36.

133. See Adikaram, op. cit. p. 34. 134. loc. cit.

135. In the *Cūḷassapura Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (M. I, p. 284) all the castes, khattiya, brāhmaṇa, vesā and sudda, are treated as suitable for recluseship. In the commentary on the *Cuḷahatthipadopama Sutta* (MA. II, p. 204), however, an attempt is made to show that the *gahapati* are most suitable for ordination, as both the khattiyas and Brāhmaṇas suffer from a sense of pride because of their high birth and high learning, respectively. For other examples see *UdA.* p. 171. and *VbhA.* pp. 27, 28.

136. D. II, pp. 1 f. 137. M. III. 118 f.

138. DA II, pp. 407 f.; MA. IV, pp. 167 f.

139. Under *sambahulavāra* is also included in the *Sumaṇḍalavilāsinī* a fabulous account of the various signs that could be seen on the soles of the bodhisatta's feet (DA. II, pp. 445 f.).

140. *DA*. I, p. 238; *SA*. I, p. 201: *idam pi kira Bhagavatā vuttam eva, Pāliyam pana na ārūlham*; *DA*. II, p. 636: *idam Pāliyam ārūlham ca anārūlham ca sabbam Bhagavā avoca*.

141. *AA*. I, pp. 89 ff.

142. For instance, the term *nibbāna* which in the canon is connected with *nibbāti* (*S*. II, p. 85; *Sn*. p. 235) and *nibbuta* (*M*. I, p. 487) and has the significance of 'blowing out', is in the commentaries explained as *ni + vāna*, 'absence of craving' (*SA*. I, p. 196; III, p. 112; *ItA*. I, p. 164).

143. *UdA*. p. 101.

144. According to the *Papañcasūdanī* (II, p. 187), at the birth of Siddhattha, all five brâhmanas predicted that he would become Buddha, whereas Kondañña alone made this prediction in the *Manorathapūranī* (I, p. 144).

145. The word *gopo* in *DhpA*. I, p. 157 and *SnA*. p. 28.

146. King referred to in the *Samantapāsādikā*, *Dhammapadattakathā*, *Saddhammappajjotikā*, *Saddhammappakāsinī*. Place where the work was compiled given in the *Madhurattavilāsinī*, *Dhammapadattakathā*, *Mahāniddesattakathā*, *Paṭisambhidāmagga-attakathā*.

147. In the words of the commentators: *Yena yathā yodā yasmā vuttā gāthā ayaṃ imam vidhim pakāsayitvāssā karissām' atthavaṇṇananti*: *SnA*. p. 2. *Kena bhāsitaṃ kattha bhāsitaṃ kasmā bhāsitaṃ'ti vuccate*. Prose intr. in *VvuA*. and *PvuA*.

148. *DA*. I, pp. 59 ff.; *MA*. I, pp. 45 ff.; *SA*. II, 287; *UdA*, pp. 128 ff.; *ItA*. I, 117; *NdA*. I, pp. 177 f.; *PsA*. pp. 207 f.; *BuvA*. p. 15; *PugA*. p. 234. Derivations of 'Tathāgatha' though less than 8 are also given in *KhṛA*. p. 196; *PvuA*. p. 64; other examples *sūkaramaddava*: *DA*. p. 568; *UdA*. p. 399. *bhūta*: 7 meanings given at *MA*. I, p. 31.

149. *Sāvatthi*: *MA.* p. I, 59; *Khpa.* p. 110; *UdA.* p. 55; *PsA.* p. 532; *Ukkaṭṭhā*: *MA.* I, p. 10; *Jetavana PsA.* p. 532.

150. *Pasenadi*: *Paccataṃ parasenaṃ jināti'ti Pasenadī* (*UdA.* p. 104). (*Bāla*: *balanti ananti'ti bālā.* *Khpa.* p. 124).

An example of a peculiar derivation is *acchariya* in *UdA.* pp. 127—8.

151. *MA.* II, p. 145; *SnA.* pp. 70 f.; *NdA.* III, pp. 111 f. *ApA.* pp. 156 f.

152. pp. 567 f.

153. *Aṭṭhakathāsu pona anāgatattā vīmaṃsitvā gahe-tabbā*, *DhsA.* p. 99; *DA.* p. 73.

154. *Pālinaya*—*DhkA.* p. 3 (*Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā*, *SHB.* Vol. XXVIII); *Paṭṭhāna-A.* p. 381 (*Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā SHB.* Vol. XL). *Pakaraṇanaya*: *DA.* p. 754. *Aṭṭhakathānaya*: *Vism.* p. 433; *DA.* p. 760; *MA.* I, p. 245; *AA.* I, p. 113; *PugA.* p. 171. *Ācariyanaya*: *PugA.* p. 174.

The definition of a word according to *Vinayapariyāya*, *Abhidhammapariyāya* and *Suttantikapariyāya* is given in *Vism.* p. 72.

155. *Aparo nayo*: *DhsA.* pp. 117, 118, 120; *Keci vadanti* *DhsA.* p. 312; *apare'ti*: *DhsA.* p. 312.

156. *Vism.* p. 285.

157. *Pātimokkha-A.* has borrowed from *VinA.*

NdA. has borrowed from *Vism.* *SnA.* and *VbhA.*

ApA. *Nidānakathā* from the *Nidānakathā* of *J.* and corresponding portions of *BuvA.*, and also from *DhpA.*, *SnA.*, *ThagA.* *J.*

158. *VinA.* V. pp. 953, 1025; *DA.* p. 1000; *MA.* II, p. 30; *SA.* I, p. 15; II, p. 285; *CpA.* pp. 3, 16; *ItA.* I, 12; II, p. 85.

159. *SnA.* II, p. 517, 507; *ApA.* p. 400; *Paṭṭhāna A.* p. 375 (*Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā*, *SHB.* Vol. XL). *Sesam uttānaṃ eva: SnA.* II, p. 508, 509. *Sesaṃ vuttanayaṃ eva: SnA.* I, 365; *KhpA.* p. 144; *ApA.* p. 199.

160. See 151.

161. Malalasekera, *Pali Literature of Ceylon*, p. 103.

162. *Sādhu bhante'ti kho Rājā Ajātasattu . . . bhikkhusaṅghassa ārocāpesi: niṭṭhitaṃ bhante mama kiccaṃ'ti: VinA.* pp. 10—11 (repeated in *DA.* I, p. 9); or *VinA.* pp. 43—4. *Imāhi iddhīhi . . . nāma akāsi.*

163. *Sakala dasasahassīloka dhātu . . . paramasobhagga ppattā ahosi: J.* I, p. 51.

164. Examples of long compounds: *massukarṇakesa-saṇṭhāpāna aṭṭhapāna aṭṭhapaḍaṭṭha (J.* II, p. 5).

Bhikkārapaṭiḡha - uluṇkadabbikaṭaṭṭhacchupāti - taṭṭaka-sarakṇsamuggaṅgārakapallakadhūmakāṭaṭṭhacchu (PātimokkhaA. p. 136). Examples of abstract formations: *jānaṇatā, KhpA.* p. 144, *PātimokkhaA.* p. 124. *ananuññātata: PātimokkhaA.* p. 114.

165. Malalasekera, op. cit. p. 115.

166. *ERE.* Vol. IV, pp. 701 f.

167. *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*, Intr. p. xxi.

168. *BuvA.* p. 3. This information is also found in *AA.* II, pp. 124—5.

169. I, p. 89. This account differs from the account in *Mahāvamsa* in that Adam's Peak is not mentioned among the places visited.

170. *SA.* III, p. 244. Incidentally this is reminiscent of the view of the Lokottaravādins.

171. *VinA.* I, p. 28; *DA.* I, p. 23; *AA.* III, p. 5; *CpA.* prose intr., *DhsA.* p. 26.
172. *MA.* II, pp. 233—4; *AA.* II, 28; III, p. 174; IV, p. 93.
173. *VinA.* I, pp. 60—61.
174. *MA.* II, p. 404; *AA.* V, p. 85; *ItA.* II, p. 6; *CpA.* p. 158; *DhsA.* pp. 3, 8, 90, 92, 241, *VbhA.* pp. 9, 51, 319, 459.
175. *MA.* II, p. 393, *DhpA.* I, 53 f.
176. *DhpA.* I, pp. 3, 154; IV, p. 37.
177. *Brāhmaṇagāma: VvuA.* p. 45. *Caṇḍālagāma: VvuA.* p. 105.
178. *Vaḍḍhakīgāma: J.* II, p. 18; IV, p. 159. *Kammāragāma: J.* III, p. 281.
179. *Dantakāravīthi: J.* I, pp. 302 f.; II, pp. 320 f., *Rajakavīthi: J.* IV, p. 82. *Pesakāravīthi: J.* III, p. 49.
180. *Sahassakuṭiko kammāragāmo: J.* III, p. 281. *kulasahassanivāso mahāvaḍḍhakīgāmo: J.* IV, p. 159.
184. *J.* I, pp. 224, 299.
182. *DhpA.* I, pp. 45 f. *PvuA.* p. 31.
183. *VvuA.* pp. 67, 76, 81; *J.* III, p. 59.
184. *VvuA.* p. 67; *PsA.* p. 671.
185. *VvuA.* p. 63; *DhpA.* I, p. 190. 186. *VvuA.* p. 157.
187. *VvuA.* p. 295; *J.* III, p. 507. 188. *J.* IV, p. 19.
189. *J.* III, p. 365. 190. *J.* I, p. 108.
191. *J.* II, p. 128; IV, pp. 150, 196, 466.
192. *J.* IV, p. 137.
193. *J.* I, pp. 120—2; IV, p. 63; V, p. 185.
194. *J.* I, p. 267.
195. *VinA.* II, p. 297; III, p. 702; *SA.* I, pp. 152, 153.
196. *DA.* I, pp. 84 f.
197. *J.* I, p. 159; II, pp. 85, 277, 282; *DhpA.* IV, p. 66.

198. Vajjīs: *DA*. II, pp. 516, 519.
 Licchavīs: *MA*. II, p. 20.
 Sakyas: *DA*. I, pp. 258—60.
199. Bimbisāra: *VinA*. II, p. 297; *AA*. I, pp. 100, 405.
 Ajātasattu: *VinA*. I, p. 10; *DA*. I, pp. 134 ff.; II, p. 516,
 Pasenadi: *DhpA*. III, p. 78; *UdA*. p. 104.
200. Asoka: *VinA*. I, p. 41; *DA*. II, p. 612; *MA*. III, 276
AA. III, p. 244; V, p. 45.
 Rudradāman: *VinA*. II, p. 297.
201. Himālayas: *AA*. IV, pp. 107 f.; *SnA*. II, p. 437.
 Anotatta: *AA*. IV, pp. 107 f.; *SnA*. II, p. 437.
 Ganges: *AA*. IV, p. 110.
202. Dīghabhāṇaka Abhaya: *VinA*. p. 474; *DA*. p. 430;
MA. I, p. 79; IV, p. 97.
 Tipiṭaka Cūlābhaya: *VinA*. III, p. 591; *DA*. pp. 442, 530;
MA. I, 230, IV, p. 94; *AA*; I, p. 26.
 Maliyadeva: *MA*. V, p. 101; *AA*. I, 38 f.
 Dīghabhāṇaka Tipiṭaka Mahāsiṃha: *DA*. pp. 375, 430,
 805, 881, 883.
 Tipiṭaka Cūlanāga: *VinA*. III, pp. 699, 892; *MA*. I,
 p. 230; *AA*. I, p. 26.
203. *MA*. I, pp. 257 f; *ApA*. pp. 145 f.
204. *MA*. I, pp. 184 f.; IV, p. 97.
205. *Imasmimi yeva dīpe ekavāraṃ puthujjana bhikkhu
 nāma nahosi*: *DA*. p. 898; *MA*. IV, p. 115.
*Sīhaladīpe yeva tesu tesu gāmesu āsanasālāya na taṃ
 āsanaṃ atthi, yattha yāgum pivitvā arahattam patta
 bhikkhu n'atthīti*: *MA*. I, p. 257; *SA*. III, p. 186.
206. *MA*. II, p. 145, repeated in *SnA*. pp. 70 f.; *NdA*. III,
 pp. 111 f.; *ApA*. pp. 156 f.
207. *VinA*. III, pp. 582 f. 208. *AA*. I, pp. 92—3.

209. Cetiya-pabbata: *MA.* II, p. 398; *VbhA.* p. 473.
Cittala-pabbata: *MA.* I, p. 185; *VbhA.* p. 445.
210. *MA.* III, p. 244.
211. *MA.* I, p. 253, repeated in *SA.* III, p. 183; *VbhA.* p. 348.
212. *MA.* IV, pp. 125, 234; *AA.* II, 17, 231 f.; *VbhA.* p. 439.
213. *VinA.* VII, pp. 1335—6. 214. *DhsA.* p. 156.
215. *MA.* IV, p. 111, repeated in *AA.* II, pp. 6 f.; *VbhA.* p. 427.
216. *AA.* II, pp. 249 f. Sometimes *bana* preaching went on throughout the night: *AA.* I, p. 39; *VbhA.* p. 348.
217. *MA.* I, p. 79; *AA.* II, p. 249.
218. *DA.* II, p. 535; *MA.* II, p. 398; *AA.* I, p. 22.
219. *VinA.* II, pp. 472, 476; *DA.* III, pp. 962—70; *SA.* I, pp. 341—2; *AA.* II, p. 9.
220. *VinA.* I, pp. 83 f.
221. *MA.* IV, p. 111, repeated in *AA.* II, pp. 6 f.; *VbhA.* p. 427.
222. *MA.* IV, p. 117; *VbhA.* pp. 432 f.
223. *VinA.* II, pp. 469 f. 224. *VinA.* II, p. 471.
225. *VinA.* III, pp. 678 f.; IV, p. 755.
226. *VinA.* V, p. 1001. 227. loc. cit.
228. E.g., Maliyadeva, Dhammadinna, Dhammagutta.
229. *AA.* I, p. 23; *VbhA.* p. 473.
230. Sakka: *DA.* II, pp. 609 f.; *DhpA.* III, p. 269; *J.* I, p. 60; *VbhA.* pp. 352, 445.
Vissakamma: *DA.* II, p. 613; *AA.* II, p. 236.
Cattāro Mahārājāno: *J.* I. pp. 51, 80; *VbhA.* p. 352.
Brahmā Sahampati: *VbhA.* p. 352.
Yama: *MA.* IV, p. 234; *AA.* II, p. 230.

231. *Sivaliṅgādīpūjanatthāya*: *VinA.* III, p. 626.
232. Soon after Tissa's revolt there were 7000 families in *Kālakagāma*: *VbhA.* p. 448.
233. pp. 135 f. 234. *MA.* I, p. 257; *SA.* III, p. 186.
235. *MA.* I, p. 146.; *AA.* II, p. 61. 236. *MA.* III, p. 272.
237. *MA.* I, pp. 193 f. 238. *VinA.* II, p. 582.
239. *AA.* II, p. 61. 240. loc. cit.
241. *VbhA.* p. 441. 242. *VinA.* III, p. 702.
243. *VinA.* I, pp. 91, 98; VII, p. 1336; *VbhA.* pp. 389, 446.
244. *MA.* I, p. 145; *VbhA.* pp. 445 f.
245. *VbhA.* p. 389.
246. *VinA.* VII, p. 1336. An instance of how a brāhman came from Pāṭaliputra to see a monk in Ceylon whose reputation had spread even in India is given in *AA.* II, p. 246.
247. *MA.* IV, p. 94.
248. *Duṭṭhagāmaṇī*: *AA.* II, pp. 212 f.
- Saddhātissa*: *MA.* II, p. 294; *SA.* III, pp. 24 f.; *AA.* II, p. 30; *VbhA.* p. 473.
- Bhātiya*: *VbhA.* p. 440.
- Kūṭakaṇṇa*: *VbhA.* p. 452.
- Kaṇiṭṭhatissa*: *VinA.* III, p. 582.
249. *Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya*: *VbhA.* p. 448.
- Mahānāga*: He went abroad with his brother: *VinA.* II, p. 473; *DhsA.* p. 399.
- Vasabha*: *DA.* II, p. 635; *MA.* IV, p. 97.
- Mahāsena*: *VinA.* III, p. 519.
250. *MA.* IV, p. 234; *AA.* II, p. 230.
251. *SA.* II, p. 111; *AA.* I, p. 92; *VbhA.* pp. 445 f.
252. *VinA.* III, p. 695. 253. *VbhA.* pp. 445 ff.

254 Mahāvihāra : *DA*. II, p. 578; *DhpA*. IV, p. 74; *VbhA*. p. 446.

Tissamahārāma : *DA*. II, p. 581; *AA*. I, p. 40; *VbhA*. p. 445.

Tulādhārapabbata in Rohaṇa: *Vism*. p. 96.

Kāladīghavāpi-dvāra-vihāra: *MA*. II, p. 141.

Maṇḍalārāma: *MA*. I, p. 66.

255. Mariccavaṭṭivihāra: *MA*. II, p. 145; *ApA*. p. 128.

Nāgadipacetiya: *MA*. II, p. 398; *VbhA*. p. 457.

Kalyāṇimahācetiya: *MA*. III, p. 249.

Kajarāgāmamahāvihāra: *AA*. I, p. 37.

256. Vattakālakā: *DhsA*. p. 116.

Setambaṅgaṇa: *DhsA*. p. 399.

257. *DA*. II, p. 615, 258. p. 447.

259. Adikaram, op. cit. pp. 11—12.

260. The *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* (Sutta No. 26 of the *Majjhima Nikāya*) is called *Pāsārāsi Sutta* in the commentary.

261. They are not the earliest, the *Dīpavaṁsa* having being compiled earlier.

262. It had been generally accepted that the *Dīpavaṁsa* was based on the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, but this has been disputed and a new theory put forward by G. C. Mendis in *UCR*. Vol. IV, Oct., 1946, p. 12 'The Pali Chronicles of Ceylon'

LIVES OF THE DISCIPLES

I

- i The Upāsaka Citta
- ii The Bhikkhu Citta
- iii Father and Mother Nakula

Translated from the German of
Dr. Hellmuth Hecker

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
Kandy 1967 Ceylon

*Adapted from a translation by
Mudita Ebert*

LIVES OF THE DISCIPLES

I

The Upāsaka Citta

On one occasion the Buddha enumerated for the benefit of his bhikkhus the names of twenty-one upāsakas (lay disciples) who had attained to Stream-entry. Fourth on this list we find Upāsaka Citta of Macchikasanda, near Sāvattthi (A. VI, 120).* At another time the Blessed One said to his bhikkhus:

‘Should a devoted mother wish to encourage her beloved only son in a proper way, she may tell him: “Try to become like the Upāsaka Citta, my dear, and like Hatthaka, the upāsaka from Alavi.” These two, Citta and Hatthaka, bhikkhus, are models and guiding standards to my lay disciples. The mother may then continue: “But if you should decide for the monkhood, my dear, then try to imitate Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna.” These two, Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna, bhikkhus, are models and guiding standards for my ordained bhikkhus.’ (S. 11, 23).

Again, the Buddha said that a devoted lay disciple should foster the wish to become like Citta and Hatthaka, while devoted bhikkhus should aspire to equal Sāriputta

* *List of Abbreviations:*— A: Anguttara Nikāya.—CV: Cūla Vagga.—D: Dīgha Nikāya.— Jāt: Jātaka — M: Majjhima Nikāya.— S: Saṃyutta Nikāya.— Thag.: Theragāthā.— Ud: Udāna,

and Mahāmoggallāna. Here model standards are set for lay people and monks. A lay follower is not to choose a bhikkhu for his guiding example, but an upāsaka; and a bhikkhu should not choose an upāsaka for guiding example, but bhikkhus, because the modes of living are quite different and an example taken from one's own background is bound to prove more potent. An upāsaka trying to live like Sāriputta should take the robe; but if he wishes to fill and permeate his life with Dhamma while still living as a householder, he is wise to look up to householders like Citta and Hatthaka.

Who was this Citta? The enumeration of foremost disciples (Anguttara Nikāya, I) begins with three persons who excelled in expounding the Law: the bhikkhu Punna, the bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā and the upāsaka Citta. There is no record of an upāsika so well gifted in that respect. (A.I, 19). This Citta, a teacher of the Good Law living the family life, the model of upāsakas, was a very wealthy merchant. He owned a whole hamlet, Miga Pathaka, and nearby a large wood, Ambātakavana. This he presented to the Sangha, building a spacious monastery there, where many bhikkhus and saints often dwelt. His devotion to the Blessed One is explained by the fact of his having been a servant to the Bodhisatta in a former life and having followed him into homelessness (Jāt. 488). There are no less than eleven accounts of the life of this devoted upāsaka, from which may be gathered a distinct outline of his personality.

Citta particularly appreciated a certain bhikkhu, Sudhamma, and always consulted him before proffering an invitation to other bhikkhus. One day, Sāriputta, Moggallāna. Anuruddha, Ānanda and some more of the

wisest and most learned bhikkhus happened to come to Macchikasanda while travelling. At once Citta approached them, and Sāriputta granted him a Dhamma talk of such profundity that Citta attained to the second stage of sanctity, that of Sakadāgāmi. Citta immediately invited the illustrious gathering for the next day's meal. Afterwards it occurred to him that in this one instance he had forgotten to let Sudhamma know first, and he hastened to inform him of his act.

Sudhamma grew jealous and crossly reprimanded Citta for not having told him before. Because of this, he said, he did not see his way to partaking of the meal, and he declined Citta's invitation with scorn. Citta repeated his civil request twice more, but in vain. So, thinking in his heart that after all, Sudhamma's obstinacy had no bearing on his deed and the deed's fruit, he went home and joyfully began preparations for the auspicious event.

Next day, however, Sudhamma could not bring himself to stay away. He joined the gathering as if nothing had happened, and praised the bounty and refinement of Citta's hospitality. 'But real consummation,' he remarked, 'would be brought about by serving cream cakes to round off the meal.'

Citta replied that his friend's ill-advised behaviour reminded him of a story he had heard. Some people known to him once bred a hybrid from a crow and a hen, but the resulting chick was afflicted with a grotesque defect. Whenever it wanted to crow like a cock, it cawed like a crow; and when it tried to caw like a crow, it crowed like a cock.

By this, Citta intended to say that Sudhamma not only failed in correct behaviour as a bhikkhu but in proper civility as a layman, too. Refusing an invitation out of jealousy was hardly right for a monk, and criticizing the food was poor manners for a worldling. Sudhamma was deeply offended by these words and wanted to leave. Thereupon, Citta offered to support him for the rest of his life, but the bhikkhu rejected his offer. The upāsaka then kindly asked him to visit the Buddha and relate what had occurred to him. Pointedly he said: ‘Till we meet again,’ when Sudhamma left.

The Buddha said to Sudhamma: ‘You foolish man, what you did was unseemly, not in accord with the rules, an act forbidden and not to be done. How could you meanly insult and show disdain for a devoted, faithful upāsaka, a benefactor and supporter of the Sangha?’

And at a meeting of the Sangha it was decided that Sudhamma was to call on the Upāsaka Citta and ask his forgiveness.

Sudhamma accordingly set out, but on reaching Macchikasanda he felt so deeply embarrassed that he could not force himself to do what he had come for, and turned back without having seen Citta. When his fellow bhikkhus asked him whether he had performed his duty, and learned that he had not, they informed the Buddha. He then advised that another bhikkhu should accompany Sudhamma on his difficult errand, and so it was done. Sudhamma asked Citta for his forgiveness and Citta pardoned him (Cv. I, 18-24).

Of the ten instructive discourses contained in the Citta Saṃyutta, three deal with questions posed by Citta to bhikkhus, three with queries put to Citta by bhikkhus, and four refer to personal events.

At one time Citta invited a group of Theras from the Vihāra he had founded for a meal, and requested the senior Thera to give an exposition of what the Buddha had said on the variety of elements. The Thera was not able to do so, and after he had been requested in vain a second and third time the youngest bhikkhu, named Isidatta, asked for permission to reply to Citta's request. The Thera consented, and Isidatta lucidly explained that all elements arise on the basis of eighteen phenomena; that is, the six inner domains, the six outer ones, and the six domains of perception.

The bhikkhus then took their leave. On the way back to the Vihāra the senior Thera commended the junior bhikkhu for his excellent exposition, and said that next time he should not hesitate to speak up in a similar situation. There was no envy in the Thera's heart, but on the contrary he felt sympathetic joy (*muditā*) over his young brother's accomplishments and depth of understanding. Isidatta on his part felt no pride, so both complied with the ideals of the bhikkhu-life. (S.41, 2).

On another occasion Citta posed the question; From what do wrong views on the world and the self originate? and asked for an exposition of what the Buddha had taught on this subject in the great Brahmajāla Sutta. Again the senior bhikkhu was ignorant of the matter and once more Isidatta offered his services. Wrong views, he said, invariably originate from the belief in a self

(*attā*). Citta then went on to ask from what the belief in a self originates, and Isidatta replied that the ordinary man, not instructed by the Buddha or his disciples, takes the Five Kandhas, the psycho physical aggregates of personality, as being 'I' and 'Mine', and so is continually creating the illusion of selfhood (*attā-diṭṭhi* or *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*).

Citta was delighted with the discourse, and asked Isidatta from where he came. From the township of Avanti, Isidatta replied. Citta, who did not know his name, then asked whether he knew a certain Isidatta there, with whom he used to correspond, explaining the Dhamma to him and encouraging him to take the robe. As he did not know what had been the outcome, he wished to learn of it. He had never seen Isidatta, and now to his great joy he learned that his former pen-friend had indeed decided upon ordination and was now sitting before him. He asked for the favour of supporting him, but Isidatta, though appreciating the generous offer, declined and took his leave, never to return.

There is no commentary to explain Isidatta's motives. He attained to Arahatsip and all we hear further of him is a short stanza, 'The Fivefold Group', dealing with the Five Aggregates (Thg. 120).

On the third occasion when Citta was the questioner, it was a monk called Kāmabhu who made reply. Citta put to him no less than eleven abstract questions—the same which the nun Dhammadinnā answered when questioned by Visākho the householder (M. 44). These questions concerned the three types of formations (*sankhārā*) and their cessation (S. 41, 6)

The first talk in which Citta is found replying to the questions of bhikkhus or upāsakas occurs as follows:

Some Theras were sitting together on the porch of the vihāra after the alms-round and discussing the problem of whether the Fetters (*saṃyojana*) and the alluring objects of the senses are the same or not. Some answered affirmatively, while some denied it. Citta happened upon the scene and joined the gathering. When invited to comment, he declared that to the best of his knowledge and belief the Fetters and the alluring objects are different, not only in word but in meaning too. As in a yoke of oxen the white one is not the fetter of the black and the black one not the fetter of the white, but both are fettered by a single rope or yoke-strap, so the sense-organs had no power to bind the external objects and the external objects had no power to bind the sense organs, but they were yoked by craving to a burden of suffering. The bhikkus rejoiced at the learned upāsaka's answer, and expressed their opinion that Citta must be in possession of the wisdom-eye (S. 41, 1).

This same simile is used on two other occasions by Sāriputta and Ānanda (S. 35, 191). Its exact import was lucidly explained by the Buddha (S. 35, 109 and 122) when he said that the six double sense domains are the things fettered and that *chandarāga* (craving or lustful desire) alone is the fetter which binds them. This is an important point to take into consideration in order to avoid a futile fight against the outer sense-objects and the inner sense-faculties, since it is our willed relationship only that binds. The simile is apt; it assigns black to the six inner domains, since the subject is what is unknown. The outer domains are white, because the

objects are evident. The same line of thought is pursued by the Venerable Nandaka, an Arahāt, with the simile of the flayed cow (M. 146),

The second talk showing Citta as a teacher starts with Kāmabhu bhikkhu reciting a stanza of the Buddha's, a solemn utterance (Ud. VII, 5) and requesting Citta to elucidate it.

N'eḷ'ango seta pacchādo, ekāro vattati ratho
Anighaṃ passa ayantaṃ chinna-sotaṃ abhandanaṃ.

First of all, Citta requested to know whether it was an utterance of the Buddha, which Kāmabhu confirmed. Obviously, to Citta only a saying of the Buddha's was worthy of deep reflection. Then he asked for a short time to reflect, and finally said: the carriage (*ratho*) is the bodily form which moves round (*vattati*); the axle (*ekāro*) is Mindfulness (*sati*); the smooth, frictionless holding together of the parts is virtue; the white silken canopy (*seta-pacchādo*) is emancipation. So the Arahāt (indicated by *ayantaṃ*) without blemish (*anigho*) or tie (*abhandana*) crosses the stream (*chinna-sota*); he has done away with greed, hatred and nescience and is safe from the ocean of craving.

Kāmabhu then told Citta the Householder that he could well be called happy and blessed, as the Eye of Wisdom had come to him in explaining that profound saying of the Buddha (S. 41, 5).

The third incident relates a conversation in the course of which the Bhikkhu Godatta (Thag. 659-672) challenged Citta to expound on the controversy whether limitless, unattached (*ākiñcaññā*), void and signless liberation of

mind are the same, or different from one another. This question is answered by Sāriputta in M 43 in the same way as Citta treats of it here: namely that they may be considered the same or different, according to the point of view. They are different as to type of emancipation, but alike in both being liberation from greed, hatred and delusion. (S. 41, 7).

Elsewhere, more personal events are also related. At one time Citta accompanied some bhikkhus, who had taken their alms-meal at his house, back to the Vihāra. It was very hot and they were perspiring freely. The youngest of the bhikkhus, Mahaka, remarked to the senior one that wind or rain would certainly be welcome now. The observation sounds banal and not worth mentioning, but its import lies in the fact that Mahaka could exercise paranormal powers and was asking permission to do so. When he actually did procure rain to refresh his companions, Citta was deeply impressed, particularly since Mahaka was still very young.

At the vihāra, therefore, he asked the bhikkhu to display his powers once more. Perhaps it was the first time Citta had seen a paranormal feat of this kind and he felt a natural curiosity about it. Mahaka complied. A coat and a bundle of hay were placed on the porch, after which Mahaka went inside and closed the door. Creating a beam of tremendous heat he directed it through the keyhole and turned the bundle of hay to ashes. without harming the coat.

Filled with enthusiasm, Citta offered to support Mahaka for life, but the bhikkhu preferred to leave the place and never return. (S. 41, 4). Bhikkhus are forbidden to impress lay people by the exhibition of

paranormal powers (Cv. V, 15). Mahaka was young, and these powers were still new and titillating to him, so he could not resist Citta's request; but he recollected himself immediately after and did the right thing by leaving for good.

Citta's town was visited not only by bhikkhus but also by ascetics of other persuasions. One of these was the leader of the Jainas, Nigantha Nāthaputta. Citta called upon him as well, for he did not look down on those of other sects and was courageous enough to take up the challenge of dispute.

Nāthaputta wanted to know whether Citta believed the Buddha's statement that there is a meditative absorption (jhāna) void of thought conception and discursive thinking. Citta's answer was that he did not believe there is such a thing, and Nāthaputta, eager to enlist the renowned Citta in support of his views, was quite pleased with the reply, having failed to catch Citta's exact meaning.

'Well said!' he extolled, and went on to expound his own belief that stilling the flow of thought formations would be paramount to stopping the Ganges with one's bare hands: 'Impossible it is to make the verbal formations (vaci-sankhāra) cease,' he declared.

Citta now countered with the query, what did Nāthaputta think more excellent, belief or knowledge? 'Knowledge,' was the answer, whereupon Citta explained that he himself had experienced all the jhānas (M 4). of which the last three are actually without thought conception and discursive thinking. Hence for him it was no longer a matter of *belief* but of knowledge from direct experience that the Buddha's statement was correct.

Thereupon, Nāthaputta blamed him severely for the form of his first reply. Citta protested that first he had been praised for being a wise man, and now he was called a fool. Only one of the two opinions could be true, so what did Nāthaputta really think of him?

But Citta was not to receive an answer, for Nāthaputta preferred to remain silent (S 41, 8). This incident shows how even famous philosophers may fall into inconsistencies, especially when their pride is involved, and Nāthaputta claimed to be more than a mere philosopher. He had always failed to attain to the higher jhānas, so he conveniently concluded them to be a myth. Now, when an entirely trustworthy man told him that he had actually attained to these jhānas, the baselessness of his theory was proved, and at the same time the inferiority of his own status. Nāthaputta's chagrin must have been increased by the fact that whereas he himself had been for so long a practiser of extreme asceticism, Citta was not even one who had gone forth from the household life. It is scarcely to be wondered at that Nāthaputta withdrew in confusion.

The third personal encounter related is between Citta and the naked ascetic Kassapa. This ascetic was a friend of Citta's family and so he visited Citta when he went to his old home town many years after leaving it. Citta asked him how long he had been leading the ascetic life. 'Thirty years,' he was told. Citta next inquired whether he had attained to superhuman states of bliss or supernatural insight. Kassapa answered No; he had just been going naked, shaving his head and dusting his seat. That was his life.

Now it was Kassapa's turn to ask questions. How long had Citta been an upāsaka? 'Thirty years,' Citta replied. Had he attained to supernatural states? was Kassapa's next question.

Well, certainly he had experienced the four jhānas, Citta said, and should he die before the Blessed One did, the Buddha would say of him that no fetter bound him any more to the worlds of sensual pleasure.

This, as Kassapa knew very well, meant that Citta was a Nonreturner (Anāgāmi), one who had attained to the third of the four stages of holiness. The ascetic, worn by painful austerities, was stunned by the idea that a layman could reach such a high attainment. Justly considering that since this was possible for a layman in the Buddha's dispensation, even more could be gained by a bhikkhu, he asked Citta to help him in taking the robe. He was duly admitted to the holy Sangha and attained Arahantship shortly after (S. 41, 9).

Three other friends of Citta's also turned bhikkhu after discussions of that kind. They were Ludhamma, Gadatta and the Isidatta who, as related before, had been in correspondence with Citta. All three of them attained to ultimate emancipation, leaving Citta, the householder, behind.

The last account we have of Citta relates the circumstances of his death. When he fell ill, Devas appeared to him and urged that he should set his heart upon becoming a world-ruler (*chakravartin*) in his next life. No, Citta answered; he was aiming at something higher, more noble and peaceful than that. He was seeking the

unconditioned—Nibbāna. In recommending Citta to be a Chakravartin the Devas must have been unaware of his attainment, which made it impossible for him. He had already gone beyond it.

His relatives, not being able to see the Devas, imagined that Citta was in delirium. He reassured them, explaining that he was conversing with invisible beings. Then, at their devout request he gave them his last advice and admonition. They were to repose trust in the Buddha and his Dhamma always, and were to remain unswervingly generous donors to the holy Sangha (S.41, 10).

Thus this noble lay follower of the Buddha passed on to his successors the pattern of conduct which he himself had followed throughout his life with such brilliant success, and which had brought him to a state of liberation from the miseries of the sensuous realm and within sight of the final end of all suffering.

II

The Bhikkhu Citta

This Citta was the son of an elephant trainer. When he was still a youth he met an elderly bhikkhu who was returning from his almsround with a particularly tasty item of food in his bowl. The bhikkhu had no desire for it, so he gave it to the young lad. Citta was greatly pleased, and under the impression that as a bhikkhu he would be fed like that every day without having to fatigue himself with work, he joined the Sangha. But with such a motivation no ascetic life is possible, and shortly afterwards he discarded the robe to return to his old life.

All the same, the spirit of the holy Sangha had left a deep and indelible impression on his mind. Soon he felt dissatisfaction with the life of a householder, and asked for ordination once more. Having obtained it, after a time he deserted the Sangha again. A third, a fourth and a fifth time this happened.

The fifth time, when he was living a married life, he was unable to sleep one night, and while he was looking at his wife, who was pregnant, the wretchedness of sensual pleasures was driven home to him so forcefully that he seized a yellow robe and hastened to the vihāra at once. On his hurried way through the silent night all the good seeds planted during his previous monkhood burst into blossom and he attained to Stream-entry there and then.

At the vihāra, however, his former fellow monks had just agreed among themselves to refuse a possible sixth request for ordination from Citta. They felt that they had been forbearing to a praiseworthy degree, and considered Citta totally unfit for the holy life and a disgrace to the Sangha.

Even while they were so deliberating, they saw Citta himself approaching. His features were aglow with a new bliss, and his manner was so calm and mild that they found it impossible to refuse him another ordination.

This time he quickly succeeded in the four jhānas and signless unification of mind.

This filled him with joy, and he felt a great urge to talk about it. On one occasion some Arahats were sitting together in conversation and Citta interrupted them again and again. The senior bhikkhu of the gathering, the Venerable Mahākotthita, advised him to wait until the senior monks had finished what they had to say. Thereupon, Citta's friends said that he ought not to be reprimanded, because he was wise and capable of explaining Dhamma from his own experience.

Mahākotthita answered that he could see Citta's heart. Then he went on to explain, by similes, that there are states of mind which may be excellent as long as they last, but are still unable to prevent a bhikkhu giving up monkhood again. In this connection he gave the following similes:

A cow securely tied up in the byre seems peaceable enough, but turned loose it quickly tramples down the green crops. Likewise a bhikkhu may be humble and

well-behaved in the presence of the Master or saints, but left on his own he tends to relapse and leave the Sangha. Again, a person may be in possession of the four jhānas and signless unification of mind, and as long as these abide he is safe; but as soon as the bliss wanes he goes among people, talkative and unrestrained and bursting with pride to announce his achievement. Then his heart becomes filled with greed and he gives up the monk's training. He may feel secure in the jhānas, but it is precisely this which leads to his ruin.

While a king and army, with drums and chariots, are camping in the woods, nobody can hear the crickets chirping and everybody might think they had been silenced. But after the troops have moved on the crickets can easily be heard again, although one might have been quite sure there were none (A VI, 60).

Later on, Citta actually did leave the Sangha for a sixth time to return to family life. His bhikkhu friends then asked the Venerable Mahākotthita whether he had himself foreseen that Citta would act thus, or whether Devas had told him. He replied that it was both. In astonishment those friends went to the Buddha and related the matter to him. The Blessed One dispelled their apprehensions by telling them that Citta would soon return.

One day Citta went to see the Buddha, accompanied by Potthapāda, a wandering ascetic of another sect. Potthapāda posed some deep questions regarding the different modes of arising in the three worlds. Citta followed up with further questions as to differentiation between these forms of becoming, since, having experienced

the jhānas he was familiar with some of them. The Blessed One's answers satisfied him fully and he requested admission to the Sangha for the seventh time, which turned out to be the last.

The Buddha gave his consent, and in a short time Citta too became one of the Arahats (D. 9).

In subsidiary books of the scriptures as well as in unrelated and later tradition we often find significant hints as to how the actions of past lives affect a man's present experiences. Thus we are told just why it was that the Bhikkhu Citta, in his last life which was to bring forth Arahantship, had to defect from the Sangha so many times. It appears that a long, long time ago, when the Buddha Kassapa was teaching Dhamma, there were two friends who joined the Sangha. One of them became dissatisfied with the hardships of a bhikkhu's life, and contemplated returning to his family. His friend encouraged him to make this decision, because in his heart he longed to be able to feel himself superior. This ugly motive had its result much, much later during the life-time of the Buddha Gotama. It subjected this false friend, now become the Bhikkhu Citta, not less than six times to the humiliation of leaving the Sangha and having to petition for acceptance again.



This shows that there are some kammās so strong that their results (vipāka) cannot be resisted; they can only be lived through with patience, towards which understanding helps. But since we do not know whether certain influences in our lives are the results of such kamma or not, or, if they are, how close we may be to the exhaustion of their force, it behoves us nevertheless to strive against them. Apart

from everything else, such striving has its own value. It may appear in this life to be futile, but in reality it will bear fruit for our good at some future time. The immutable law of cause and effect ensures that no effort is wasted. Here as elsewhere the Dhamma urges us to set our face against every form of fatalism, that most enervating and paralysing view of life, even in its most subtle guises. It encourages us to rise from our failures undaunted and ever ready to try again. Defeats there may be—bitter and heartbreaking setbacks in the battle against craving and ignorance—but the true follower of the Buddha is one who will never admit any defeat to be final. He is prepared, like an old and tried warrior, to lose every battle except the last, for he knows that if he perseveres the final victory will be his.

— Editor.

III

Nakula, the couple without blemish

The country of the Bhaggas was in the Ganges valley, and it was there that they had their town called Crocodile Hill (Sumsumara giri), where Prince Bodhi resided (M 85). Here the Blessed One spent one of the forty-five rainy seasons of his ministry (M 15).

Once, when the Buddha was walking through the streets of the town a citizen prostrated himself at his feet and cried: ‘O, my dear son, why have you never called on us? Now, please honour our home, so that your aged mother may lay her eyes on you, too!’

The man was not out of his mind. The fact is that he and his wife had been the Bodhisatta’s parents not once but a hundred times in former births. A faint memory of this had lingered on, and at the sight of

the Blessed One full recollection had broken forth and overpowered the old man. Occurrences of this kind still happen sometimes in Asian countries even today.

This old man was the householder Nakula-pitā (Father Nakula), whose wife was known as Nakula-mātā (Mother Nakula). They are mentioned together by the Buddha as being among the foremost of his lay disciples, particularly for their unfaltering faithfulness to each other. The brief account of them in the Canon depicts a divine love of each for the other, accompanied by absolute trust, based upon their common faith in the Buddha.

When the Buddha received an invitation to their home, Father Nakula gave him account of their marriage. Although he had been married very young, he said, he had not once broken faith with his wife throughout the years, not even in thought, let alone in deed. And Mother Nakula made the same declaration on her part. Neither husband nor wife had ever deviated for a moment from their fidelity to one another.

In their devotion both of them expressed a longing to be together again in their next lives, and asked what they could do to ensure that they got their wish. The Buddha did not reject the question, nor did he reprove their aspiration. He replied, 'Should a husband and wife wish to enjoy each other's company in this life and afterwards to meet again in the next, they should cultivate true faith, true virtue, true renunciation and true wisdom. Then they will meet again in their next lives.' And the Buddha added these stanzas:

Pure in life and faithful both,
Virtuous and self-restrained,
Consort ever consort meets,
Courteous and full of love.

So is highest blessing theirs,
So in joys untold they dwell,
While the Evil One slinks back
Beaten by a couple pure.

Living here praiseworthy life,
Virtuous, upright, without blame,
Leads them up to Devas' realm
Where in pleasure they abide.

(A. IV, 55)

How a man of lofty aspirations may live with a woman his peer, guarded by virtue, is explained by the Blessed One elsewhere. There he says that not only do both consorts abide by the Five Silas, but over and above that they are virtuous and noble-minded; when asked for help they never refuse, and they never despise or insult ascetics and holy men (A. IV, 54). In the light of these words it can easily be seen how much is expected of a couple like that: not religious piety only, but also a heart staunch enough to be detached from the petty events of everyday life and everything that is low and base. It is frequently said of the white-clad upāsaka that he does not refuse requests, and easily forgoes his own wishes or pleasures. This shows a detachment from men and things, a capacity for letting things go instead of clinging to them. From this comes inner freedom, the only sound basis for the cultivation

of wisdom. Virtue in action, renunciation of things in the heart, wisdom in the mind—these factors make for harmonious and gentle life together.

Knowledge concerning rebirth and of ways to obtain a favourable one was common in India at that time. In the case of the couple Nakula, since they actually remembered some of their previous lives it was not necessary to enlarge on the subject. The Blessed One's concise reply was all they needed.

Prerequisites for harmonious married life are given by the Buddha in more detail in D. 31 (Advice to Sigalaka). There we read that if the husband—who is responsible for taking the initiative—observes five courses of action, he will reap wellbeing. He is to treat his wife respectfully, and not with disdain; he should be faithful to her; he should allow her authority in the household and he should provide her with all necessities and adornments according to his means. If he conducts himself in that way his wife will take pride in looking after his needs; the household will run smoothly, she will treat callers and servants politely. She will be faithful, will protect his property and carry out her tasks skilfully and dutifully.

The Nakulas were not solely concerned with a favourable rebirth: they also took interest in the lawfulness governing the lives of men and in the deeper problems of existence. Once, Father Nakula asked the Blessed One why it is that some people attain to emancipation and others do not. The answer was: 'Whosoever goes on grasping at the objects perceived by the senses cannot gain liberation. Whoever stops grasping will be

liberated' (S. 35, 131). This is a reply which in its concentrated terseness only one well versed in the Dhamma could be expected to comprehend fully, but Nakula understood its implications at once.

On another occasion Nakula-pitā went to pay his homage to the Buddha. He was now aged and infirm, he said, and only on rare occasions could he see the Blessed One. Would the Buddha out of compassion give him a word of spiritual guidance to hold and treasure? The Buddha replied, 'The body is subject to sickness and decay. The bodily form being a burden even in the best circumstances, one should train himself thus: 'Though my bodily frame is ill, my mind should not be ill.'

Soon afterwards, Nakula met the Venerable Sāriputta, who addressed him with the words, 'Your deportment is calm, householder, and your features serene. Is it that you have today talked with the Master?'

'Thus it is,' Nakula answered. 'The Blessed One has this very day comforted me with his ambrosial words.' Upon hearing this, the Venerable Sāriputta gave a full explanation of the Buddha's concise words, expounding on the way to overcome physical sickness by not identifying with the Five Khandhas. When the time comes — as it inevitably does — that the perishableness of things becomes evident, the man who is well trained does not despair, he coolly looks on. His body may wither, but his heart remains sound (S. 22, 1).

It was not only Nakula the father who strove for wisdom to overcome death. His wife resembled him in this also, as can be seen by another report. When husband Nakula fell dangerously ill she consoled him, saying, 'Do

not harbour distress at the thought of my being left behind. To die like that is agonizing, so our Master has advised against it. For six very good reasons you need not be concerned about me: I am skilled at spinning, and so shall be able to support the children; after having lived chastely with you for sixteen years I shall never consider taking another husband; I shall never cease seeing the Master and his bhikkhus, but rather visit them even more frequently than before; I am firmly established in virtue and have attained to peace of mind, and lastly I have found firm footing in the Dhamma and am bound for final deliverance.’*

Encouraged by these words, Father Nakula recovered from his illness. As soon as he was able to walk he presented himself before the Buddha and recounted his wife’s words. The Lord thereupon confirmed that the possession of such a wife was indeed a blessing. He said: ‘You are truly blessed, householder, in having Mother Nakula as a mentor and adviser who is solicitous and concerned for your welfare. Of the white-clad female devotees who are perfect in virtue, stilled of mind and firmly established in Dhamma, not relying upon anybody else in the Master’s dispensation, Nakula is one.’ (A. VI, 16)

Here a solution is given for reconciling the seemingly opposite tendencies of life: the deep affection between husband and wife on the one hand, and the striving for deliverance on the other. Looking sympathetically at this story of the Nakula couple one may come to think that a life of renunciation may not be necessary if a married life is led in such an exemplary way; or that one can even

* By that she indicated her attainment of Stream-entry.

combine attachment and detachment. But if one looks more closely one will see that it is far from easy to follow faithfully the life led by that noble couple. It is not enough that there is concern and solicitude for one another. The conditions for a married life in chaste companionship must not be overlooked. The spouses who in their youth had led a married life of sensual fulfilment, did not abstain from physical contact only in old age when the senses were quietened; but they voluntarily lived a celibate life much earlier. In the case of the Nakula couple, they had lived without physical connection for sixteen years, as their words to the Master testify.

Hence the individual wishing to take the first steps on the road to emancipation should ask himself which is easier: to remain in the home environment and try to outgrow its sensual temptations, or to overcome worldliness as a member of the Sangha in the congenial company of brothers in the Holy Life. While the Enlightened One himself, the incomparable Knower and Guide of men, was at the head of the Order, the decision was not so difficult. But even today one is inclined to think that one who does not feel himself fitted for life in a monastic community may also lack the strength of character to renounce sexual relations in a married life devoted to progress on the Path. Both ways of life will demand acts of renunciation.

PRACTICAL ADVICE
for
MEDITATORS

Bhikkhu Khantipalo



BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
Kandy 1968 Ceylon

Cover by Sugatananda

The Wheel Publication No. 116

FOREWORD

The following pages were originally intended as new sections to be added to the second edition of my introductory book on the Dhamma, "What is Buddhism?"*. However, as many people are greatly interested in the practice of meditation and as many are also separated from the sources of a living tradition, it is hoped that the following may be of value even apart from the sections of the book which they supplement.

When we consider meditation, we cannot stress too much the importance of having the right reasons for taking it up. Meditation, or as a better translation of *samādhi*, collectedness, is only one aspect of Buddhist practice and *must*, to be successful, *go hand in hand* with such other practices as generosity, gentleness, non-violence, patience, contentment and humility. If such genuine qualities of the Dhamma neither exist in oneself initially, nor grow through one's practice, then something is drastically wrong and only a foolhardy person will try to proceed. The practice of collectedness is based upon firm roots of virtue (*sīla*) and cannot succeed in anyone who does not make a real effort to be strict in keeping the precepts,

The signs of 'progress' in collectedness are not strange visions, peculiar feelings and the like (though it is conceivable that these may arise also where progress is achieved), but rather an all-round and harmonious growth in the way of Dhamma. If one is without a teacher then one has to be doubly vigilant otherwise one will never become aware whether one of Mara's distractions is likely to succeed, or whether one does in fact, tread the Middle Practice-path.

* Published by the Social Science Press, Phya Thai Road, Bangkok, Siam.

This essay is an extract from *Buddhism Explained*, the second edition revised and enlarged of the book formerly known as *What is Buddhism?* published by The Social Science Press of Thailand, Phya Thai Road, Chula Soi 2, Bangkok.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo

TWO STREAMS IN MEDITATIONS

Two apparently distinct streams of Buddhist meditation may be discerned, though when meditation is established these are seen to be complementary.

It may be profitable for some people whose minds are very active and who incline to suffer from distraction, to follow with mindfulness the mad monkey-mind's acrobatics. As the mind is really a series of mental events which arise and pass away with incredible rapidity, each of which is a mind complete with supporting mental factors, so at the beginning this kind of mindfulness is really one 'mindful' mind watching other 'minds' (which are all within one's own mental continuity of course). One thereby develops the ability to look into the mind and to see where it has gone to. Has it gone to the past, present or future? Has it gone to materiality, or to feelings, or perhaps to cognitions, to volitional activities, or has it gone to consciousness? By this method of 'Where has it gone?' the distracted mind slowly comes under the surveillance of the mindful mind until mindfulness forms a strong foundation for further development. Considerable though mundane brilliance of mind is both needed and developed by this practice which however should be balanced by the tranquillity of the absorptions. When the mind has become calm, one should start to practise for the absorptions (jhāna) which will in their turn be the basis for the arising of real insight. This method is called wisdom-leading-to-calm.

Other methods suited to those whose minds are less disturbed initially include the classic forty subjects of meditation (see Appendix) and these, together with more developed schools of meditation practice, involve the use of a definite object for concentration. This may be one's own body or a part of it, a colour or a picture, a word or a phrase, and abstract contemplation and so forth. All these methods involve some firm but gentle discipline of the mind in that each time it strays away, it must be gently brought back again (by mindfulness of course) to concentrate again on the chosen subject.

Some people have the quite mistaken idea that practice of this sort must necessarily lead to calm tranquillity almost at once. They may be surprised when beginning to practise themselves, since they actually experience more troubles than they had previously. This is firstly because one never before really looked into one's mind to know the state it has always been in; and secondly because having taken up a discipline of the mind it is as though one stirs up with a stick a stagnant pond, or pokes with a stick a fire smouldering under ashes. The wild elephant of the mind long accustomed to roam in the jungle of desires, does not take readily to taming, or to being tied to the past of practice with the thongs of mindfulness. However, diligence and heedfulness will eventually win for one the fruits of tranquillity.

All these subjects are of this second type in which the calm gained from practice is then used for the arousing of wisdom. They are for this reason called calm-leading-to-wisdom methods and are very necessary in the present distracted age. For their full explanation one should consult the 'Path of Purification (Visuddhi-

magga translation) although even the great learning in that book cannot replace the personal contact with a teacher.

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR MEDITATORS

Turning from the psychological to the practical aspect, meditation for lay-people may be divided into two categories : that which is done intensively and that which one practises while going about one's daily life. The meditation practised intensively is also of two sorts: regular daily sitting, and occasional periodic practice. We shall first discuss the regular period of sitting which should, where possible, be made every day at the same time. One should guard against it becoming a ritual by earnestness and being intensely aware of why one has undertaken it. The following suggestions may be found helpful as well.

As to material considerations, the place for meditation should be fairly quiet. If one has a small room which can be used for this purpose, so much the better, and in any case, it is better to meditate alone unless other members of the household also practise. Where this is the case one should make sure that one's mind is pure also in relation to others, for otherwise greed, hatred and the rest of the robber gang are sure to steal away the fruits of meditation.

Quietness is best obtained by getting up early before others rise and this is also the time when the mind is clear and the body untired. The sincere meditator therefore keeps regular hours for he knows how much depends on having just enough sleep to feel refreshed.

After rising and washing one should sit down in clean loose clothing in the meditation place. One may have a small shrine with Buddhist symbols but this is not essential. Some people find it useful to begin by making the offerings of flowers, incense and light, carefully reflecting while doing so. It is very common in Buddhist countries to preface one's silent meditation by chanting softly to oneself.

“Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa” with the Refuges and the Precepts. If one knows the Pāli passages in praise of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, these may also be used at this time.*

Another useful preliminary is a reflection,—a discursive recitation of some truths of the Dhamma such as the passage suggested below :

“Having this precious opportunity of human birth, I have two responsibilities in the Dhamma : the benefit of myself and the benefit of others. All other beings whether they be human or non-human, visible or invisible, great or small, far or near, all these beings I shall treat with gentleness and wish that they may dwell in peace. May they be happy May they be happy May they be happy ! I shall help them when they experience suffering and be glad with them when they are happy ! May I develop as well the incomparable equanimity, the mind in perfect balance that can never be upset !

“In looking to the welfare of others, I shall not forget my own progress on the path of Dhamma. May I indeed come to know how, driven here and there by the winds of my kamma I have suffered an infinity of

* See Wheel No. 54, “Mirror of the Dhamma”

lives in all the realms of existence. I must also turn my mind to consider how short and fleeting is this life! How mind and body are ever changing, arising and declining from moment to moment! How neither mind nor body belong to me, neither of them are mine! I must also turn this mind to consider how beset by troubles is this brief life. Having been sired by craving and born out of ignorance, I must realize that death is inescapable, that old age and disease are natural to my condition. I must make efforts to realize for my own good and the good of others that this person called 'myself' is a complex of mentality and materiality wherein no abiding entity such as a soul or self is found.

“May I through this practice experience insight into Impermanence, Ill and Not-self! May I be one who dwells in the Void! And having realized this Sublime Truth, may I show the Way to others!”

“When sitting, care should be taken that the body is kept erect, yet relaxed. There should be no strain but neither should the head droop nor the lumbar region sag. The body should feel poised and balanced upright. Although the crosslegged positions (such as the lotus posture) are best when the meditator is seated on a fairly soft mat, a chair may be used by those unaccustomed to the lotus posture or else unable to train themselves to sit in that way. Sitting in lotus posture or half-lotus posture will be found much easier if a rather hard cushion is placed so as to raise the buttocks. The knees will then tend to touch the ground and a firm three-pointed sitting (two knees and buttocks) is then attained.

One should sit for the same length of time every day until, as one becomes more proficient in collecting the

mind, automatically one will feel like extending the practice. One widely-used method for measuring the meditation period is sitting for the length of time taken for a stick of incense to burn down. Having placed the hands in meditation posture, relaxed in the lap, the eyes may be closed or left slightly open according to which is found most comfortable.

Methods used for helping to concentrate the mind are many and the two main streams in classical meditations have been briefly reviewed in the section above. Other helpful methods include the repetition of a word or phrase and perhaps with it the use of a rosary. If one practises mindfulness of breathing, some may find the use of a word such as “Buddho”, “Araham” good for quietening the mind. The first syllable is silently repeated when breathing in while one concentrates on the second during the out-breathing. Also the counting of breaths (up to ten but generally not over this number to prevent the mind wandering) is used as an aid for concentration. But any such aids should be dropped when concentration improves. When the meditation is on a phrase only, a rosary may be used in conjunction, each repetition being marked by one bead.

One’s meditation goes well if one finds the mind increasingly absorbed on the chosen meditation-subject but one should not assume that meditation is useless just because for a period, longer or shorter, not much more than sleepiness or distractions are experienced. These hindrances have to be faced; and if they are met, not by irritation or despair but by quietly observant mindfulness, they can and will be overcome. For success, great persistence and evenness of effort are necessary.

The meditation period may close with some chanting, the usual subject being the well-being of others and the distribution of merits to them. A translation, or the original Pali of the Metta Sutta (Discourse on Loving-kindness) * may be chanted at this time and, as it is not long, can be easily memorized. As methods of chanting vary, it is very helpful if one can obtain recordings, perhaps on tape, of the passages one wishes to learn recorded by bhikkhus.

While on the subject of chanting, it is very useful to know a few Discourses of Lord Buddha in one of the Buddhist classical languages and to use these for collecting the mind if there should be an occasion when no concentration at all can be obtained. At such a time a meditator should not feel depressed but should continue sitting and chant softly to himself. This is what Buddhist monks do twice a day as part of their mental development and it is useful as well for fostering a more devotional approach necessary as a balance with intellectual characters. Another useful method for the overcoming of distraction is walking-practice which may be done in any passage of the house or in a secluded walk in the garden. A length of twenty or thirty paces will be sufficient, for if longer the mind tends to wander and if shorter, distraction may be increased. One should walk at the speed one feels to be natural with the hands clasped left in the right and arms relaxed in front of the body. At the ends of the walk one should turn in a clockwise direction.**

* See Wheel No. 7, "The Practice of Loving Kindness".

** The tradition of 'keeping the right side towards' respected persons and objects has a psychological basis. Also note in English right (for side) and right (good, correct).

Perhaps a few words on devotion would not be out of place here, for this is very necessary in meditation practice. No one who is not a devoted Buddhist takes up Buddhist meditation for the simple reason that he does not have the Buddhist ideals in his heart. The taking to heart of the Triple Refuge and the understanding of the Triple Gem is closely linked with Buddhist meditation. A really devoted Buddhist who puts his whole life into the Dhamma will have no insurmountable difficulties in meditation practice. Whatever obstacles he comes to, those he leaps over sustained by devotion. He is prepared for the Way to be long and hard because he realizes that he has made it like that. If he finds his Way blocked, his meditation failing to progress and he himself without a teacher, he does not waver or falter on the way. He thinks: "I am now experiencing the results of intentional actions (kamma) made by me in the past." And he remembers Lord Buddha's last words: "Subject to breaking-up are all compounded things. With mindfulness strive on". All difficulties are compounded things and will eventually change; meanwhile much may be done with mindfulness, vigour and devotion.

If one is not too tired after work and if there is the opportunity in the evening, another period of sitting can be undertaken then. In any case, before sleep, it is a wise practice to sit if only for a few minutes so as to purify the mind before lying down. One may consider thus: "When I lie down there is no certainty that I shall awake". One may therefore, be lying down to die and this is a good reflection to rouse skilful states of mind and banish sensual unskilful ones. If one practises this, "the lying-down to die", it will be a very good preparation for the real event which is bound to take

place at some time in the unknown future. It may even generate the right conditions for the arising of insight, allowing one 'to die', giving up the grasping at what does not belong to one, that is, the mind and body. At this time also, a Dhamma phrase or word may be used repeating which one eventually falls to sleep. In this way one ends and begins the day with practice of Buddhist Teachings. And apart from devotion of one's whole day to them, what could be better ?

Regarding the second division of intensive practice, that is, when undertaken in retreat, much will depend upon what facilities are available to the earnest student. There are now a few places in the West where meditation instruction can be sought. The most important thing is to have direct contact with an able meditation master (books serve at the beginning, while even an interpreter is later found deficient in some way). After satisfying this one condition, only one other is necessary: one must strive with diligence to practise and realize his teachings. If these two conditions are fulfilled then one is the most fortunate among human beings.

Many will be without access to a teacher and some may like to try a period of solitary meditation in some quiet part of the country. This should only be attempted if one has already developed a good power of mindfulness. Otherwise, what was meant to foster meditation may become a very unprofitable time perhaps accompanied by the seeming intensification of the mental defilements.

As to the other sort of meditation practice which is performed in daily life, though much might be written, the following few words may serve as a guide. First, one should not deceive oneself regarding concentration of the mind. It is of no use pretending to oneself or to others

that one's daily life *IS* one's meditation, - unless of course one has already great powers of concentration. Only the real adept, often one who has sat for many years keeping the monastic discipline, can really perceive ordinary life as meditation and such a one would be most unlikely to tell others of this fact. Refusing to allow pride an opportunity to distort the real state of mental affairs, one should take stock with fairness and admit one's limitations. This is already a great step forward. The layman who thinks of himself as an Arahant already, has blocked off very effectively all real progress while the honest man has at least the wisdom to be humble.

Much may be accomplished with mindfulness while without it there is no hope for meditation in daily life. How are quite ordinary events capable of being made into meditation? By mindfulness which to begin with may be defined as, *'awareness of the present work in hand'*. At first great effort has to be made in order to remain mindful of what one is supposed to be doing, nor can one pretend that such mindfulness is pleasant always. To escape from dull and unliked work and situations, we tend to turn either to phantasy worlds, hopes, or else to memories which are respectively the delusory escapes into the present, future or past. But for one really interested in understanding himself, none of these courses is very rewarding since they are compounded of delusion with various ingredients such as fear, craving or ignorance. While in the practice of strict meditation, mindfulness may follow all the wanderings of the mind, in daily life it is better that the mind should be constantly returned to the job in hand. One should not 'send' one's mind anywhere, neither to a dreamworld, nor to the past; nor to the future. Lord Buddha compared these periods

of time to -

“The past is like a dream,
The future as a mirage,
While as the present - clouds”.

Such a simile may be useful as the mind darts about between dreams, mirages and clouds, all insubstantial, though the ever-changing present, so like the clouds in the sky, is the only aspect of time compared to things of greater reality. One may also consider meditation as the exercise of mindfulness which keeps the mind ‘inside’ this body, that, is, always focussed upon some aspect of it. Of course only the most sincere meditator who sees the advantage in this to be greater than any pleasure offered by the world is likely to practise in this way since this cuts off not only interest in outer objects but also the toying with pleasant or intriguing ideas.

Indeed with work that is really uninteresting, the way of mindfulness is the only way to convert one’s day into something worthwhile. Days pass and bring us nearer to death and an unknown rebirth while it is *NOW* that one has the chance to practise Dhamma. Instead of reacting with aversion or deluded phantasies, towards what one does not like, (or in other situations indulging one’s greed), the Way of Mindfulness constitutes the Middle Practice-path transcending these ancient patterns of reaction. There is, no need to be ruled either by greed or by hatred, nor to be dominated by delusion but only mindfulness shows the way beyond these.

Constantly bringing the mind back and disengaging it from tangles is the basic practice in everyday life. It is also wise to take advantage of those odd times during work when one waits for something to do, to meet someone, for a bus or train or any time when one is alone

for a few minutes. Instead of turning to a newspaper for distraction, to the wireless, or to another person for gossip, it is more profitable to 'retire inside' oneself. Disengaging attention from exterior objects, take up mindfulness of breathing or the repetition of some phrase of Dhamma or significant word, such as 'Buddho' or 'Araham', doing this until one has again to attend to work. Going inwards as often as possible will be found very useful, strengthening one's sitting practice just as the latter in turn strengthens the ability to turn within.

Mindfulness of breathing is especially good as a concentration method for use during travel and during the times when one is restlessly expecting a bus or a train. Why be agitated or impatient? A little mindful breathing is just the practice for these moments since it calms the feverish workings of the mind and the restless movements of the body. One does not have to aimlessly stare out of windows while travelling! Why be a slave of the 'eye-dominant' when a little useful practice could take its place? One does not have to listen to the idle chatter of others so why be a slave to the 'ear-dominant'? One cannot shut one's ears but everyone can withdraw attention to some extent while practising mindfulness.

It is mindfulness also which helps to bring into focus counteractive contemplations. Lust for instance, is soon dissipated by thoughts of a decaying corpse. The looks which are bestowed on pretty girls (or handsome men) seem ridiculous when it is thought that old ladies and equally ancient men never attract such desire-filled attention. Only when one sees how lust burns up that one who indulges in it, only then does it seem worth relinquishing.

Similarly, gluttony even in a mild form can be demolished by contemplating the bodily processes connected with food. Chewed food looks a good deal less palatable than when the same stuff before mixing with spittle was nicely laid out on plates. Vomit is just the same substances in the process of change but does not readily arouse greed. Excrement even if placed on the finest gold plate fails to become attractive, - yet this is the remnants of the food so eagerly gorged. By the time that one has contemplated food in these three stages, greed has quite disappeared and one may take food just as a medicine to preserve the body.

Mindfulness is also responsible for becoming sufficiently aware in a moment of anger to turn the mind to other subjects or persons. It is mindfulness that warns one of an approaching situation where anger may arise and makes it possible to turn aside and dwell in equanimity, or where the Divine Abidings are well-developed, in Friendliness.

When envy rears its ugly head, mindfulness gives one presence of mind to know, 'envy has arisen' and if efforts to arouse gladness with others' joy fail, it is mindfulness that helps one dwell in equanimity, or if all else fails, helps turn attention to other objects.

Lord Buddha has truly said, "Mindfulness I declare, is helpful everywhere."

The social implications of meditation should be obvious from the above. Those who have the strange delusion that Buddhism is a religion of meditative isolation offering society no social benefits should understand that a Buddhist believes society can only be changed for the better and with some degree of permanence, by starting work on himself. Buddhist ideals of society are

expressed in a number of important discourses addressed by Lord Buddha to laypeople and in them the development of the individual is always stressed as a very necessary factor. The advantages of a society in which there are a large number of those dwelling at peace with themselves need hardly be stressed. The development of wisdom and compassion by one man has its effect in leavening the materialistic dough around him. The Buddhist call is therefore *first* to gain peace in one's own heart when will *follow* quite naturally, peace in the world. Trying to obtain peace the other way round will never be practical nor produce a lasting peace, for the Roots of Greed, Hatred, and Delusion have still a firm grip on the hearts of people. Impractical? Yes, but only for those who do not practise. Those who take up the cultivation of mindfulness find out for themselves how it helps to solve life's problems.

Although many journeys to remote and attractive places are now performed with ease, the Way leading to Nirvāna still needs effort. But if the Way is sometimes drear with mindfulness the only guiding light, at least from reflection one knows that the Goal is glorious and of great worth not only for oneself but for others as well.

DIVINE ABIDINGS AND PERFECTIONS

The Way to that Goal leads through what are called the Divine Abidings^{*} which train the deep-rooted emotions from being unskilful into the skilful Way of the Dhamma. As has already been emphasized above, the aim of oneself as of all beings, is to gain happiness-producing conditions. Therefore one must act in such a

^{*} See Wheel No. 6, 'The Four Sublime States'.

way that happiness will result from one's actions. One should, in this case, treat others as they would wish to be treated, for every living being is dear to itself and wishes its own welfare and happiness. One cannot expect to have an isolated happiness arising from no cause or from itself, nor can happiness be expected if one maltreats other beings, human or otherwise. Every being desires life and is afraid of death, this being as true of ourselves as of other creatures.

Only a man who constantly leads an upright and compassionate life is really dear to himself, for he does actions which are of great profit, of great happiness. Other people although they think that they are dear to themselves are really their own worst enemies, for they go about doing to themselves what only an enemy would wish for them.

Good conduct then depends on a well-trained mind which has gradually been freed from the clutches of Greed, Hatred and Delusion. To hold one's neighbour as dear as one should truly hold oneself is easily said but with difficulty done. It is the particular merit of Lord Buddha's Teachings that they always point out *how* a method is to be translated into experience, the method here being the mental raining of the Divine Abidings. When we say 'mental' this word should be understood not in the narrow sense of the intellectual processes but rather to include the full range of the mind-and-heart, intellect and emotions.

There are four states of Divine Abidings: Friendliness, Compassion, Gladness and Equanimity. These, especially the first, are very popular meditations in Buddhist countries and what follows is a short explanation of each case. Friendliness or Mettā is an unselfish love which

can be extended to everyone. This becomes easy once one has gained the meditative absorptions, when the quality of friendliness becomes an integral part of one's character. In the normal way of things, people only 'love' the few people to whom they are specially attached by ties of family, etc. Such is love with sensual attachment, a limited love and those outside that love are either ignored or disliked. Sensual love then, is not only linked to attachment (greed) but also to hatred and delusion so that the person who is content with this love, pays a heavy price for it. A love without attachment is scarcely conceivable to many people but such love is much superior to the former; being without attachment it can become infinite and need not be confined to this or that group of beings. As it can be made infinite, leaving none outside it, so there is no question of the Three Roots of Unskill being linked with it.

Friendliness can be developed gradually in one's meditation period every day *but if it is really effective* it must show in one's daily life. It makes life easier by turning persons whom one formerly disliked or hated into, at the beginning, those whom one disregards, and then as one's practice becomes stronger, into objects for the arising of loving-kindness. It is Lord Buddha's medicine for the disease of hatred and dislike. Finally, one is warned that it has two enemies: the 'near' one is sensual attachment often miscalled 'love', while the 'far' enemy to its development is hatred. In the development of friendliness one must beware of these two.

Compassion (karunā) is taking note of the sufferings of other beings in the world. It overcomes callous indifference to the plight of suffering beings, human or otherwise. Likewise, it must be reflected in one's life by

a willingness to go out of one's way to give aid where possible and to help those in distress. It has the advantage of reducing one's selfishness by understanding others' sorrows. It is Lord Buddha's medicine for cruelty, for how can one harm others when one has seen how much they have to suffer already? It has also two enemies: the 'near' one is mere grief, while its far enemy is cruelty.

Gladness (muditā) is to rejoice with others over their successes, gains and happiness. It overcomes the grudging attitude to others and the jealousy which may arise on hearing of others' joy. It must show in one's life as a spontaneous joy at the very time when one learns that other people have some gain or other, material or immaterial. It has the advantage of making one openhearted towards others and does away with secretiveness. A person who develops gladness attracts many friends who are devoted to him and with them and others he lives in harmony. It is Lord Buddha's medicine for envy and jealousy which it can inhibit completely. The two enemies of gladness are the merely personal happiness of reflecting on one's own gains - this is the 'near' enemy, while the 'far' one is aversion to or boredom with this gladness.

Equanimity (upekkhā) is to be developed to deal with situations where one should admit that it is beyond one's powers to change them. It overcomes worry and useless distraction over affairs which either do not concern one or else cannot be changed by oneself. It is reflected in one's life by an ability to meet difficult situations with tranquillity and undisturbed power of mind. The advantage to be seen in its development is that it makes one's life more simple by disengaging one

from useless activity. It is Lord Buddha's medicine for distraction and worry, and its enemies are mere indifference which is the 'near' one, while greed and its partner resentment which involve one unskilfully in so many affairs, are its 'far' enemies. The mind well-practised in these four virtues and then well-trained by their use in daily life has already gained very much.

Three of the Perfections (*pārami*) or qualities practised by many Buddhist who aspire to Enlightenment may also be outlined here as they too have an intimate bearing on the practice of meditation.

PATIENCE AND ITS PERFECTION

(*Khanti-pārami*)

This is an excellent quality much praised in Buddhist scripture. It can be developed easily only if restlessness and hatred have already been subdued in the mind, as is done by meditation practice. Impatience which has the tendency to make one rush around and thus miss many good chances, results from the inability to sit still and let things sort themselves out,—which sometimes they may do without one's meddling. The patient man has many a fruit fall into his lap which the go-getter misses. One of them is a quiet mind, for impatience churns the mind up and brings with it the familiar anxiety-diseases of the modern business world. Patience quietly endures—it is this quality which makes it so valuable in mental training and particularly in meditation. It is no good expecting instant enlightenment after five minutes practice. Coffee may be instant but meditation is not, and only harm will come of trying to hurry it up. For ages the rubbish has accumulated, an enormous pile of

mental refuse, and so when one comes along at first with a very tiny teaspoon and starts removing it, how fast can one expect it to disappear? Patience is the answer and determined energy to go with it. The patient meditator really gets results of lasting value, the seeker after 'quick methods' or 'sudden enlightenment' is doomed by his own attitude to long disappointment.

Indeed, it must soon become apparent to anyone investigating the Dhamma that these teachings are not for the impatient. A Buddhist views his present life as a little span perhaps of eighty years or so, and the latest one so far of many such lives. Bearing this in mind, he determines to do as much in this life for the attainment of Enlightenment as possible but he does not overestimate his capabilities and just quietly and patiently gets on with *living* the Dhamma from day to day. Rushing headlong at Enlightenment (or what one thinks it is) like a bull in a china shop, is not likely to get one very far, that is unless one is a very exceptional character who can take such treatment, and, most important, one is devoted to a very skilful master of meditation.

With patience one will not bruise oneself but go carefully step by step along the Way. We learn that a Bodhisatta is well aware of this and that he cultures his mind with this Perfection so that it is not disturbed by any of the untoward occurrences common in this world. He decides that he will be patient with exterior conditions—not to be upset when the sun is too hot or the weather too cold. Not to be agitated by other beings which attack his body, such as bugs and mosquitoes. Neither will he be disturbed when people utter harsh words, lies or abuse about him, either to his face or

behind his back. His patience is not broken even when his body is subjected to torment, blows, sticks and stones; tortures and even death itself he will endure steadily, so unflinching is his patience. Buddhist monks also are advised to practise in the same way.

In Buddhist tradition, the Perfection of Patience is rather better known than some of the others. This is because a quite outstanding Birth Story illustrates it. The Khantivādi (The Teacher of Patience) Birth Story * should be read many times and made the object of deep and frequent reflections. Only an exceptionally noble person, in this case Gotama in a previous life when He was called the Patience-teaching Rishi, can gently exhort a raging and drunk monarch who out of his jealous anger is slowly cutting that person's body to pieces. Such nobility did the Bodhisatta have, and such nobility, steadfast endurance and gentleness, is required of all who would try to reach the goal of Enlightenment.

ENERGY AND ITS PERFECTION

(Viriya-pārami)

Just as Enlightenment is inconceivable unless a person has patience, so it is not attainable without effort being made. The Dhamma never encourages the doctrine of fatalism and true Buddhists never think of events as being rigidly pre-determined. Such fatalism is combated by mindfulness and by energy itself. This Perfection is the counterpart of the previous one and balanced by practice they ensure that the sincere Buddhist neither passively accepts what he should

* Jātaka number 313, see translation issued by the Pāli Text Society.

combat, nor rushes around to the disturbance of himself and others when he should have patience. By way of warning it may be mentioned here that in the Buddhist world can be found a number of 'methods' which seem to promise the riches of Dhamma all in no time. One hears such remarks as, "what's the use of books and study!" Or even, "The development of calm is a waste of time! One should only develop insight." Such lop-sided approaches do not reflect the wisdom of Lord Buddha who taught time and again the necessity of a *balanced* development of mind. Books and their study *are* useful to some people who wish to gain a good background knowledge of what Lord Buddha really said before taking up more intensive practice. As for the other assertion, no real insight (only delusory ideas) will arise to the person whose mind has no experience of calm. Such 'views' as these which are usually based on some peculiar experience of those 'teachers' who originate them, are apt to mislead many since the craving for quick results coupled with the dislike of the necessary hard work, are easily stirred up. There must be patience to accept that the conditions required for success of meditation (as outlined here) have to be fulfilled and the only result of failing to do so, is straying off the Way. He applies himself steadily to whatever task he has in hand and coming to the end of it, does not feel tired at all but straightway takes up a new objective.

It is interesting in this respect that tiredness is of two kinds: that relating to physical exhaustion and the other kind which is mentally-induced and involves the unskilful factors of sloth and torpor. While the former is of course unavoidable, the latter occurs only when the

Unskilful Root of Delusion (or dullness) becomes predominant in the mind. This happens when there is a situation which is unpleasant to me, unwanted, and from which 'I' want to escape. People complain that they become much more tired sitting in meditation while practising intensively than they do when, say, they do a bit of heavy reading. When the self feels threatened by a self-revealing event, then this self, rooted in Unknowing, throws up a dense fog of torpor proceeding from the Root of Delusion. On the other hand, many who have practised much meditation remark that they do not have to sleep so long as they did formerly, while Energy when it becomes a Perfection as practised by the Bodhisatta, is quite natural and unforced.

This Perfection is illustrated by the story of the caravan - leader who saved the merchants, men and animals entrusted to his care, by vigorous action. When others would have given themselves up to death since the caravan had taken a wrong course in the desert and all supplies were exhausted, their leader forced one of them to dig for water, which he found. In this way, in a previous life did Gotama as the caravan-leader make efforts not only for his own life but also for the welfare of others. Monks are also referred to as 'caravan-leaders' in several places in Pāli scriptures, showing that it is not only Lord Buddha or a Bodhisatta who is able to guide others. If we deal energetically with our own training then we too have energy for the advancement of others. Many other stories like the above could be found in Buddhist works showing how necessary is energy, from which spring persistence and determination, for the seeing of the truly real, Nirvāna.

COLLECTEDNESS AND ITS PERFECTION

(*Samādhi-pāramī*)*

Bearing in mind the meanings of this word together with such specialized terms as '(mind-) development' (*bhāvanā*), 'absorption' (*jhāna*), 'insight' (*vipassanā*), 'one-pointedness' (*ekaggatā*), and 'meditation exercise' (*kammaṭṭhāna*), we may now examine what constitutes perfected collectedness. What especially marks off the good Buddhist's practice, whether he be a Bodhisatta or not, from that of an ordinary meditator (in any religion), is that the latter will most likely become firmly attached to the delights occurring in the upper reaches of the Sensual Realm or to the pure joys of the Realm or to the pure joys of the Realm of Form, and as a result, come to birth in one of these heaven states. If one gets oneself trapped in one of these bourns where pleasures and joys are great and sufferings but little, then it is unlikely that one will be able to generate the energy necessary for the Perfection of Wisdom. Therefore, the good meditator tries to become proficient in the absorptions (so that he can enter them when he likes, which one he likes, remain absorbed for as long as he likes, and emerge when he likes), while not being attached to them. But one should note that this applies only to the skilled meditator who has already obtained the absorptions. If one has not reached to these levels, then ardent aspiration, not detachment, will be the correct attitude.

After these absorptions have been attained they may be reviewed as *aniccam*, *dukkham*, *anattā*—impermanent, unsatisfactory and devoid of self-soul, at which time

* Listed as Perfections only in Northern Buddhist traditions (*Mahāyāna*).

detachment from them will naturally arise and insight (*vipassanā*) be experienced. The absorptions (and the powers which may arise in connection with them) are thus in the Buddhist Way of Training, never an end in themselves but are always used to promote insight and wisdom which arise when the collected mind is set the task of examining the mind and body in order to know completely their characteristics.

A story which brings out the meaning of this Perfection is told of Kuddālamuni's life. His name means the Mattock-sage and he was thus called because of the difficulty he experienced in freeing himself from attachment to his mattock. Several times leaving his house with intent to meditate in the forest, he was dragged back by the memory of his mattock and his old occupation of farming. One day reflecting on the inconstancy with which he pursued meditation, he took his mattock and whirling it round his head, sent it spinning into the depths of the nearby Ganges. Having done this, he burst out in a great cry of joy! The local rajah who was passing that way with his army sent to enquire why this farmer was so joyful, to which the sage replied by relating his experience. The rajah and many others were much impressed by his reply and some followed him to take up a meditative life in the forest, after which, we are told, all passed away to experience life in the Realm of Form. The Mattock-sage who was none other than Gotama in a past life, exhibited even then another aspect of the Perfection of Meditation: the ability to train others in meditation after gaining proficiency in it himself.

Finally, we may add brief notes on some of the dangers to meditation-practice.

DANGERS TO MEDITATION

While the number of ways a meditator may go astray are legion, the few mentioned below deserve special mention due to their common occurrence. First, a danger that cannot be stressed enough is the lack of right motivation for the practice of meditation. When the Eightfold Path is described, in its wisdom section standing next to the (at first) intellectual Right Understanding, comes Right Motivation thus emphasizing that the emotional roots underlying practice of the Way must be skilful ones: those connected with renunciation (non-greed), good-will (non-hatred) and non-violence are mentioned. If one approaches Buddhist meditation with neither Right Understanding regarding dukkha and its cessation, nor with Right Motives, then one's meditation is liable to go seriously astray.

There have, for instance, been those who took up meditation as a way to invest themselves with power so that they could easily sway or hypnotize disciples. Others have seen it as a quick way to gain both disciples and riches. Fame may also be an unworthy motive. All these as motives for playing with meditation, may easily lead the unwary into illness, and sometimes mental unbalance. There is nothing worse in Buddhist meditation, where a person's own sure experience is of paramount importance, than a half-baked disciple who sets himself up as a master.

This obviously leads on to a further danger—that of pride, of which there are several forms. One such is the pride of the person who has seen manifestations of light during meditation and supposes this to be the sign ~~preceding~~ preceding mental absorption. Then there is the pride of

one who touches on a mental absorption if only for an instant and as a result assumes that he has become a Noble One, and this can be a very powerful factor in convincing himself if not others. Quite ordinary people who take up meditation may beware of the common 'holier-than-thou' attitudes; "*I make an effort, you . . .*" or, "*I meditate every day, you . . .*" Pride is a great obstacle to any progress and while it is only a Buddha or Arahant who is entirely rid of it, everyone should have the mindfulness to check it.

Related to this is the danger for the person who always looks for so-called progress. He is sure that he is making 'progress' because in meditation he sees lights, hears sounds or feels strange sensations. He becomes more and more fascinated by these as time goes by and gradually forgets that he started with the aspiration to find the Way to Enlightenment. His 'meditation' then degenerates into visions and strange happenings leading him into the realms of occultism and magic. There is no surer way for a meditator to become entangled than this way. Fascinating though all such manifestations may be, they should be rigorously cut down by resorting to bare attention, never permitting discursive thought regarding them and thus avoiding these distractions.

Among 'visions' which one may see whether they be internal (produced from one's own mind) or external (produced by other beings) there may be for some meditators an experience of the fearful, such as the sight of one's own body reduced to bones or inflated as a rotting corpse. If such an experience occurs, or others of a similar nature, one should withdraw the mind from the vision immediately, supposing that one has no teacher. Visions of the fearful variety which occur to some people

may be very useful if rightly employed but without a teacher's guidance, they should be avoided.

Another danger is trying to meditate while still too emotionally insecure, unbalanced or immature. An understanding of the value of meritorious deeds or skilfulness will come in useful here. As merit purifies the mind, it will be an excellent basis for mind-development and both the ease with which absorptions are gained and the ease with which insight arises are to some extent dependent upon merit. Meritorious deeds are not difficult to find in life. They are the core of a good Buddhist life: giving and generosity, undertaking the precepts, help and service to others, reverence, listening whole-heartedly to Dhamma, setting upright one's understanding of Dhamma,—all these and more are meritorious deeds which bring happiness and emotional maturity. *Merit, one should always remember, opens doors everywhere.* It makes possible, it makes opportunities. To have a mind at all times set upon making merit, is to have a mind that may be trained to develop absorptions and insight.

Obviously it follows that to try to practise meditation while all the time retaining one's old cravings, likes, and dislikes, is to say the least, making one's path difficult, if not dangerous. Meditation implies renunciation and no practice will be successful unless one is at least prepared to make efforts to restrain greed and hatred, check lust and understand when delusion is clouding the heart. How far one carries renunciation and whether this involves outward changes (such as becoming a monk or nun), depends much on a person and his circumstances but one thing is sure: inward renunciation, an attitude of giving-up with regard to both unskilful mental events and bodily indulgence, is absolutely essential.

Often connected with the above dangers is another, to be seen in cases where a man suddenly has an opportunity to undertake a longer period of meditation practice. He sits down with the firm resolve, "Now I shall meditate" but though his energy is ever so great and though he sits and sits and walks and walks still his mind is disturbed and without peace. It may well be that his own strong effort has much to do with his distractions. Moreover, he has to learn that it is necessary to meditate knowing the limitations of his character. Just as any other worker who knows the limits of his strength and is careful not to exhaust himself, so is the able meditator careful. With mindfulness one should know what are the extremes of laziness and strain to be avoided.

It is through straining or forcing meditation practice that many emotionally disturbed states arise. Sudden bursts of intense anger all over insignificant trifles, fierce cravings and lusts, strange delusions and even more peculiar phantasies can all be produced from unwisely arduous practice.

With all these dangers it is a skilled teacher who is most necessary to give advice so that these and other wrong turnings are avoided and one keeps straight along the Way to Nirvāna. Those who are without a teacher should proceed with the utmost caution making sure that their development of mindfulness is very good indeed. If they are mindful and see that despite their efforts, their meditation practice is making no real difference to their lives in terms of greater internal peace, or externally in relation to others, then it should be apparent that something is wrong. Meditation may be laid aside for some time while making efforts to contact a genuine

source of information, preferably a living meditation master, in the mean time giving due attention to unsolved moral problems which until sorted out will not permit the mind to develop, and making a great effort to live one's life according to Buddhist standards. When quite basic matters of this sort are neglected, one cannot hope to make much progress upon the Middle Practice-Path.

APPENDIX

40 MEDITATION EXERCISES

as listed in the "Path of Purification".

If one has no meditation teacher from whom one may request a meditation-subject then one has to rely upon one's knowledge of one's character in order to prescribe for oneself a suitable meditation. There are forty meditation-exercises (*kammaṭṭhāna*) noted by the great teacher Buddhaghosa as being suited to certain types of character. For the purposes of meditation, he considers six: faithful, intelligent, and speculative (in which the skilful roots of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion are variously dominant), and greedy, hating and deluded (in which greed, hatred and delusion, the unskilful roots are dominant). The trouble here is twofold: firstly, very few 'pure' types can be found, most people being mixtures of two or more of them and moreover ever-changing mixtures, and secondly that it is rather difficult to judge which class one's character belongs to since one's own delusion and pride are apt to blur one's judgements. This is but one small matter in which the value of the meditation-teacher may be discerned very easily. One may learn much about oneself, however, by being mindful *at the time when some unexpected event takes place. At that time* one can spot one's reaction and the stains which are present in the mind. Later judgements are not worth very much since by that time the mind has got round to self-justifications and other kinds of distortions of the original event.

Below is given the list of the forty meditation-exercises with some notes upon their practice, the characters which are benefited and the type of stains

combated by them. The most widely used meditation exercises are starred (*).

10 KASINAS— Spheres (lit: totalities)

1. Earth		
2. water		
3. fire		
4. air		
5. blue	} 5-8 recommended for the practice of <i>hate characters</i> because of their pure, pleasing colours.	} Apart from the possible exception of 5 - 8, no special moral stain is counteracted by these ten kasinas. As these are to be developed through the eye (according to Buddhaghosa) they will not be very suitable for anyone with weak sight.
6. yellow		
7. red		
8. white		
9. light*		
10. limited space		

The only one of the ten kasinas which seems to be practised much these days is that of light which some people find arises quite naturally when they begin to concentrate the mind. While Ācariya Buddhaghosa's explanations in the "Path of Purification" tend to stress the importance of using exterior supports for practice (the making of the earth-kasina is very minutely described), whenever the writer has heard of them being employed (in Thailand), they are always in the nature of visions (nimitta) arising internally and being developed from this basis. It appears that contemplation of an exterior earth (etc.) kasina is unknown in Thailand.

10 Kinds of FOULNESS— (Asubha)

11. the bloated (corpse)	counteracting	
12. the livid	} delight in beauty of proportions	
13. the festering		" " " " " complexion
14. the cut-up		" " scents and perfumes
15. the gnawed		" " wholeness or compactness
16. the scattered		" " well-fleshed body
17. the hacked and scattered		" " grace of limbs
18. the bleeding	} " " grace of body as a whole	
19. the worm-infested		" " ornaments and jewellery
20. the skeleton		" " ownership of the body
		" " having fine bones and teeth.

11 - 20 recommended for *greed characters*.

These and similar lists in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta reflect the time when disposal of corpses upon charnel grounds was common. Now, however, even in Buddhist lands they are difficult to find, let alone in western countries. Teachers in Thailand at the present time stress that *one's own body* is to be seen in these ways as a vision (nimitta) arising in the course of mind-development. As these can be fearful, one should have the instruction of a skilled teacher for dealing with such visions, when they can be of great advantage. It may be stressed here that there is nothing 'morbid' in contemplating such sights, interior or exterior, as these. The body's decay is just something natural but normally it is not seen because people do not like to admit this. Instead of facing bodily decay and bringing it out into the open, dead bodies are even made to look attractive by embalmers and cosmeticians, and where this cannot be done, they are stowed away in beautiful coffins with bright flowers, etc. Buddhist training makes one look squarely at those aspects of life which normally (that is, with craving) are not considered 'nice', and make one calmly face them in respect of one's own mind and body.

10 REFLECTIONS (Anussati) Stains (kilesa) counteracted:

21.	upon the Buddha*	
22.	„ Dhamma	
23.	„ Sangha	
24.	„ Virtue (sīla)	bad conduct (duccarita)
25.	„ generosity	meanness (macchariya)
26.	„ celestials	scepsis (vicikicchā)
27.	„ death	laziness
28.	„ body *	lust & sensuality (kāma-rāga)
29.	„ breathing *	delusion, worry
30.	„ peace	disturbance.
21 - 26 recommended for <i>faith characters</i>		
	27 „ „	<i>intelligent characters</i>
	28 „ „	<i>greedy characters</i>
	29 „ „	<i>deluded/speculative</i>
	30 „ „	<i>intelligent characters.</i>

This group of ten has a more miscellaneous character than the previous two groups. In practising the first three recollections (21 - 23) one recites the lists of qualities of each one of these.* Or, if the mind does not become concentrated in this way, one chooses one particular quality and recites that silently and continuously (such as 'Buddho', or 'Araham'). Rosaries are used in some places in connection with practice of this sort. The recollections on virtue and generosity are specially good to cultivate in one's old age. One reviews all the meritorious deeds (puñña) made by one in the course of life and recollecting them the mind becomes tranquil and happy, and having such a mental state at the time of death, one is sure to be reborn in very favourable surrounding. One cannot recollect the celestials (deva), except by hearsay, unless one has seen them. This practice is suitable for those who have increased the range of their minds and so have made contact with other more subtle beings. Death may be recollected by *intelligent characters* since they will not be frightened at the prospects which this practice opens up. It is a great incentive to practise *now* when one does not know whether even one second from hence, one will be alive. The twenty-eighth recollection—on the body—is for *greedy characters* who need to develop dispassion regarding the body. This is achieved by the analysis of the body into thirty-two unbeautiful parts and then by selecting one or more of these and examining it. However, this practice comes to perfection when with insight the body is illuminated and its various components are clearly seen and their nature understood. The mindfulness of breathing is recommended for calming and clearing the mind and a person of almost any temperament

* See Wheel No. 54, "Mirror of the Dhamma".

may practise it with benefit though great care is needed in the subtler ranges of this exercise. The breathing is never forced but observed constantly with mindfulness, the point of concentration being usually the nose-tip or nostrils. However, teachers vary in their practice of it. The recollection of peace, says the great Ācariya, is only of certain benefit to those who have already experienced Nirvāna, such as stream-enterers, but others can gain some calm from the contemplation of peacefulness. The Peace spoken of here is really Nirvāna and as one cannot recollect what one has not known if a worldling (*puthujjana*), this is a practice for the Noble Ones (*ariya*).

4 DIVINE ABIDINGS (*Brahma-vihāra*)

Stains
counteracted

31. Friendliness*	}	hatred, dislike
32. Compassion		callous indifference
33. Gladness (with others)		envy
34. Equanimity		worry

* recommended for *hate characters*.

4 States of FORMLESSNESS. (*Arūpa-bhava*)

- 35. sphere of infinite space
- 36. „ „ infinite consciousness
- 37. no-thingness
- 38. neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

These formless absorptions cannot be developed unless one has already perfected the four ordinary absorptions of form. It is said that this group of four may be explored on the basis of the fourth absorption (*jhāna*). As few people are likely to have experienced this, we pass on to :

1 Perception of the loathsomeness of food.

39. While it is essential for the bhikkhu who has to rely upon collected food which is sometimes good and sometimes not, lay-people can also benefit from this practice which Ācariya Buddhaghosa notes is for *intelligent characters* and is designed to lessen and lead to the destruction of greed and gluttony.

1 Defining of the Four Great Elements.

40. These are, earth (solidity), water (cohesion), fire (temperature) and air (movement), all of which characterize our physical bodies. These elements may be perceived by an analysis based upon the use of mindfulness.* This practice is also said to be particularly fitted for the *intelligent character*.

Those practices not mentioned in connection with character are suited to anyone. As all of these practices are aimed at the lessening and eventual destruction of the stains (kilesa), one may appreciate how important they are thought in Buddhist training. Where the stains are present, there the darkness of unknowing holds sway, but where they are not found there shines forth the Wisdom and Compassion of Enlightenment.

* See Wheel No. 19. 'The Foundations of Mindfulness', p. 15.

The Wheel No 31/32 'Manual of Insight', p. 25, 78.

The following B P S Publications deal with aspects of
MEDITATION

THE WHEEL

- 1 The Seven Factors of Enlightenment. Piyadassi Thera.
- 6 The Four Sublime States. Nyānaponika Thera.
- * 7 The Practice of Lovingkindness. Nyānamoli ,,
- * 19 The Foundations of Mindfulness. Nyanasatta Thera.
- * 21 The Removal of Distracting Thoughts. Soma Thera
- 26 The Five Mental Hindrances & their Conquest.
Nyānaponika Thera.
- 31/32 A Manual of Insight. Ledi Sayadaw.
- 39/40 Purification of Character. Purification of View.
- * 51 Taming the Mind. (Discourses of the Buddha).
- 60 The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and its Application to
Modern Life. V. F. Gunaratna.
- * 61/62 'The Simile of the Cloth' and 'The Discourse
on Effacement'. Nyānaponika Thera.
- * 65/66 'The Way of Wisdom. Dr. Edward Conze.
- * 87 The Greater Discourse on Voidness.
Nyānamoli Thera.
- 102/103 Buddhist Reflections on Death. V.F. Gunaratna.

BODHI LEAVES

- A 9 The Buddhist Concept of Mind.
Prof. O. H. de A. Wijesekera.
- B 15 Buddhist Meditation. Francis Story.
- B 31 Control of the Senses; Meditation—First Steps.
P. M. Rao.
- * Translation of Buddhist scriptural texts with Notes and explanation.

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
P. O. Box 61 - Kandy - Ceylon

**NIRVANA,
NIHILISM
and SATORI**

By

Douglas M. Burns, M.D.

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Kandy

1968

Ceylon

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

President,
World Fellowship of Buddhists.

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

Bangkok,
1967

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 *samsāra* 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 *samsāra* — 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 self? 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.”

Saṃyutta-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 saṃsāra.

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 samsāra. 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 saṃsāra, 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.
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.”³⁸

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-

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.

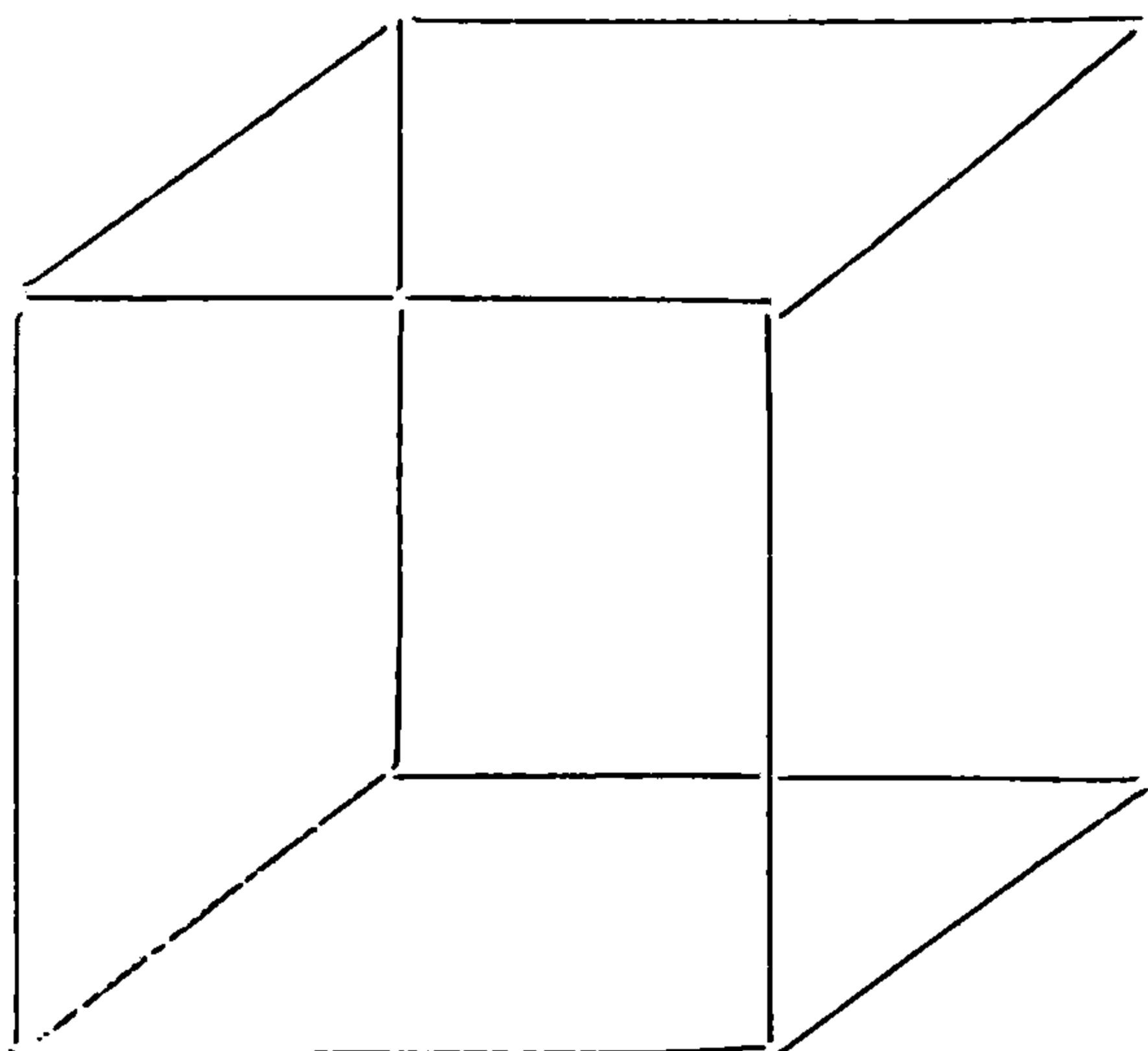
Psychology uses the word “automatization” for referring to the natural loss of awareness of the intermediate steps in perception. For example, one does not consciously give attention to the shape of each letter in the words one is reading. Automatization thus increases our mental efficiency by freeing 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 $\mathfrak{N}$, $\mathfrak{N}$, or $\mathfrak{N}$?

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 millennia) 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-

branches 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.⁵⁵ 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-Sihanāda 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.⁵⁸ 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 of 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 saṃsāra, 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 *Aṅguttara-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 Nirvāna 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.

*

*

*

*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE numbering of Pāli Canon references follows that of the Pāli Text Society, London, but not all translations are taken from this source.

1. *Buddhism, Science and Atheism*, by Douglas M. Burns. Bangkok : The World Fellowship of Buddhists, 1965, pp. 47-56.
2. *Samyutta-Nikāya* II, 113-114. (XII, 7; 67).
3. *Karma and Rebirth*, by Nyānātiloka Mahāthera. Kandy, Ceylon : The Buddhist Publication Society.
4. *Anguttara-Nikāya* I, 173. (III, 7; 61).
5. *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, 259. (No. 38, *Mahātanhāsankhaya Sutta*).
6. *Fundamentals of Buddhism*, by Nyānātiloka Mahāthera. Colombo, Ceylon : Bauddha Sāhitya Sabhā, 1949, p. 65.
7. *Dhammapada* 276.
8. *Samyutta-Nikāya* II, 117. (XII, 7; 68).
9. *Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha*, by Nānamoli Thera. Kandy, Ceylon : Buddhist Publication Society, p. 15.
10. *Visuddhimagga* XVI, 67-74.
11. *Anattā and Nibbāna*, by Nyānaponika Thera. Kandy, Ceylon : Buddhist Publication Society, 1959.
12. *Samyutta-Nikāya* II, 121-123. (No. 70, *Susimāparibbājaka Sutta*).
13. *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* IV, 358-359. (IX, 1, 4).
14. *Samyutta-Nikāya* I, 174. (VII, 2; 3).
15. *Samyutta-Nikāya* I, 27. (I, 4; 8).
16. *Path to Deliverance*, by Nyānātiloka Mahāthera. Colombo, Ceylon : Bauddha Sāhitya Sabhā, 1959, pp. 73-118.
17. *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, by Nyānaponika Thera. London : Rider & Co., 1962.

18. *Visuddhimagga* VIII, 245-251.
19. *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, 174-175. (No. 26 *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*).
20. *Ibid*, I, 164-168.
21. *Modern Clinical Psychiatry*, by Authur P. Noyes and Lawrence C. Kolb. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1963, p. 80.
22. *The Scope of Psychoanalysis*, "Buddhistic Training as an Artificial Catatonia", by *Fransz Alexander*. New York, Basic Books Publishing Co. Inc., 1961, pp. 75-76.
23. *The Word of the Buddha*, by Nyānatiloka Mahāthera. Kandy, Ceylon: The Buddhist Publication Society, 1959, p. 79.
24. *Zen Buddhism*, by D. T. Suzuki. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1956, p. 84.
25. *The Three Pillars of Zen*, by Philip Kapleau. Tokyo: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1965, pp. 103-104.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
27. *Zen Buddhism*, *op. cit.*, p. 181-182.
28. *Folia Psychiatrica et Neurologica Japonica*, Vol. 20, No. 4, "An Electroencephalographic Study of the Zen Meditation (Zazen)" by Akira Kasamatsu and Tomio Hirai. December, 1966, pp. 315-336. (Supplementary data obtained by correspondence with the authors.)
29. *The Three Pillars of Zen*, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
31. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, by William James. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1952, p. 249.
32. *The Three Pillars of Zen*, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
33. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
35. *Ibid*, p. 245.
36. *The Three Pillars of Zen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-267.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
38. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, *op. cit.*, p. 235.
39. *The Three Pillars of Zen*, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

40. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Vol. 136, No. 4, "Experimental Meditation", by Arthur J. Deikman, U.S.A.: Williams & Walkins Co., April, 1963.
41. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 142, No. 2 "Implications of Experimentally Induced Contemplative Meditation", by Arthur J. Deikman. 1966, pp. 101-116.
42. *Space and Sight* by M. Von Senden. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960.
43. *Buddhist Dictionary*, by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera. Colombo, Ceylon: Island Hermitage Publication, 1956.
44. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Vol. 142, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-113.
45. *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell*, by Aldous Huxley. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1959.
46. *The Drug Experience*, edited by David Ebin. New York: The Orion Press, 1961, pp. 368-384.
47. *Dīgha-Nikāya* II, 149. (No. 16 Mahāparinibbāna Sutta Ch. V, 23).
48. *Confessions*, Book VIII, 17, by St. Augustine. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1948, p. 144.
49. *Vinaya, Suttavibhanga, Pācittiya* 8.
50. *Dīgha-Nikāya* III, 180-193. (No. 31 Sigālovāda Sutta).
51. *Majjhima-Nikāya* III, 80. (No. 118 Ānāpānasati Sutta).
52. *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* V, 421. (*Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta*).
53. *Dīgha-Nikāya* II, 93. (No. 16 Mahāparinibbāna Sutta Ch. II, 9).
54. *The Seven Factors of Enlightenment*, by Piyadassi Thera. Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1960.
55. *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, Vol. II (*Anguttara-Nikāya* II), translated by F. L. Woodward, London: The Pali Text Society, 1952, pp. 2-3.
56. *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* V, 421. (*Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta*).
57. *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* V, 61. (XLV, I, VIII, 9-10).
58. *The Four Sublime States*, by Nyanaponika Thera. Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1960.

59. *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, 58. (No. 10 *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*).
 60. *Visuddhimagga* XI, 1-26.
 61. *Samyutta-Nikāya* V, 112-115. (XLVI, II, VI, 3).
 62. *National Geographic*, Vol. 128, No. 6, "New Discoveries Among Africa's Chimpanzees", by Jane Van Lawick-Goodall. Washington, D.C.: December, 1965, pp. 802-831.
 63. *Arctic Wild*, by Louis Chrisler, New York: Harper, 1958.
 64. *Anguttara-Nikāya* I, 167-168. (III, 6: 60).
 65. *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV "Dialogues of the Buddha Part III" (*Dīgha-Nikāya* III), translated by T. W. Rhys Davids. London: The Pāli Text Society, 1957, p. 181.
 66. *Modern Clinical Psychiatry*, op. cit., pp. 62-63.
 67. *Samyutta-Nikāya* II, 30-31. (XII, 3; 23).
 68. *Anguttara-Nikāya* I 264. (III, 11; 110).
 69. *Majjhima-Nikāya* III, 104-108. (No. 121 *Culasunnata Sutta*).
 70. *Anguttara-Nikāya* III, 451. (VI, XII; 131-151).
 71. Commentary to the *Dhammapada* 142.
 72. *Vinaya, Mahāvagga* 72-91. (I, 39-71).
-

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

P. O. Box 61

KANDY — CEYLON

Objects:

PUBLICATION of Buddhist literature, primarily pamphlets and tracts, and their distribution throughout the world to all those interested in the Buddha's Teaching of Deliverance.

Publications:

The Wheel. A series of booklets which will gradually cover all important aspects of Buddhism.

Bodhi Leaves. A Series of small introductory tracts.

Damsak. A Series of booklets on the Dhamma in Sinhala. New titles are added regularly to all three serial publications. Book List available on application.

Those who wish to further the objects of the Society may join as Associate Members or contributors. Associate Membership is Rs. 25/- (£2 \$5) a year. Associate Members or Contributors receive free issues of publications.

KŪTADANTA SUTTA

(The Wrong Sacrifice and the Right)

Dīgha Nikāya No. 5

Translated by

Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids



BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
Kandy 1968 Ceylon

Reprinted from

*Dialogues of the Buddha. Translated from the
Pali of the Digha Nikaya,*

by T. W. Rhys Davids

(“Sacred Books of the Buddhists”). Pali Text Society,
London.

The Wheel Publication No. 120.

From the
INTRODUCTION

by

Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids

WHOEVER put this Sutta together must have been deeply imbued with the spirit of subtle irony that plays no less a part in the Suttas than it does in so many of the Jatakas. I have already called attention to the great importance for the right understanding of early Buddhist teaching of a constant appreciation of this sort of subtle humour. It has been hitherto, so far as I am aware, entirely overlooked—that is, in the Suttas; every one recognises it in the Jataka tales. The humour is not at all intended to raise a laugh, scarcely even a smile. And the aroma of it, pervading the whole of an exposition—none the less delightful because of the very serious earnestness of the narrator, all the while, as regards the ethical point at issue—is apt to be lost sight of precisely because of that earnestness. And just as a joke may be explained, but the point of it spoilt in the process, so in the attempt to write about this irony, much more delicate than any joke, one runs great danger of smothering it under the explanatory words. The attempt, nevertheless, must be made.

. . . What is the especial point in this fun—a kind of fun quite unknown in the West? It is the piquancy of the contrast between the mock seriousness of the extravagant, even impossible details, and the real serious earnestness of the ethical tone. The fun of the

extravagance can be matched, easily enough, in European, and especially in American humour. The piquancy of this contrast is Indian, and especially Buddhist . . .

The whole legend is obviously invented *ad hoc*. Its details are not meant to be taken seriously as historical fact. The forced twist given to the meaning of the words *vidhā* and *parikkhāro* is not serious. The words could not be used in the new sense assigned. What we have is a sort of pun, a play upon the words, a piece of dialectic smartness, delightful to the hearers then, and unfortunately quite impossible to be rendered adequately, in English prose, for readers now.

And it is quite open to question whether this does not apply as much to the whole Sutta as to the legend of King Wide-realm. The Brahman Kūṭa-danta (pointed-tooth) is mentioned nowhere else, and is very likely meant to be rather the hero of a tale than an historical character. In that case we should have before us a novelette, an historical romance, in which the Very Reverend Sir Goldstick Sharp-tooth, lord of the manor of Khānumata,—cruel enough, no doubt, and very keen on being sure that his ‘soul’ should be as comfortable in the next world as he was, now, in this,—makes up his mind to secure that most desirable end by the murder of a number of his fellow creatures, in honour of a god, or as he would put it, by celebrating a sacrifice.

In order to make certain that not one of the technical details—for to the accurate performance of all these the god was supposed to attach great weight—should be done wrong, the intending sacrificer is ironically represented as doing the very last thing any Brahman of position, under similar circumstances, would think of

doing. He goes to the Samana Gotama for advice about the modes of the ritual to be performed at the sacrifice; and about the requisite utensils, the altar-furniture, to be used in making it.

The Buddha's answer is to tell him a wonderful legend of a king Wide-realm, and of the sacrifice he offered—truly the most extraordinary sacrifice imaginable. All its marvellous details, each one settled, be it noted, on the advice of a Brahman, are described with a deliberate extravagance none the less delicious because of the evident earnestness of the moral to be inferred.

The Brahman of our Sutta wants to know the three modes in which the ritual is to be performed. The three 'modes' are declared in the legend (§15) to be simply three conditions of mind, or rather one condition of mind at three different times, the harbouring of no regret, either before or during or after the sacrifice, at the expenditure involved. And the material accessories required, the altar-furniture, the priest's outfit, what is that? It is the hearty co-operation with the king of four divisions of his people, the nobles, the officials, the Brahmans, and the householders. That makes four articles of furniture. And eight personal qualifications of the king himself. That makes other eight. And four personal qualifications of his advising Brahman make up the total of the sixteen articles required. No living thing, either animal or vegetable, is injured. All the labour is voluntary. And all the world co-operates in adding its share to the largesse of food, on strict vegetarian principles, in which, alone, the sacrifice consists. It is offered on behalf, not only of the king himself, but of all the good. And the king desires to propitiate, not any god, but living men. And

the muttering of mystic verses over each article used and over mangled and bleeding bodies of unhappy victims, verses on which all the magic efficacy of a sacrifice had been supposed to depend, is quietly ignored.

It is all ironical, of course—just the very contrary, in every respect, of a typical Vedic sacrifice. And the evident unreality of the legend may be one explanation of the curious fact that the authors of the Jataka book (notwithstanding that King Wide-realm's Chaplain is actually identified in the Sutta with the Buddha himself in a previous birth) have not included this professedly Jataka story in their collection: This is the only case, so far discovered, in which a similar omission has been made.

Having thus laughed the Brahman ideal of sacrifice out of court with the gentle irony of a sarcastic travesty, the author or authors of the Sutta go on to say what they think a sacrifice ought to be. Far from exalting King Wide-realm's procedure, they put his sacrifice at the very bottom of a long list of sacrifices each better than the other, and leading up to the sweetest and highest of all, which is the attainment of Arahantship.

Here again, except in the last paragraph, there is nothing exclusively Buddhistic. That sacrifice of the heart is better than a sacrifice of bullocks, the ethical more worthy than any physical sacrifice, is simply the sensible, rational, human view of the matter. The whole long history of the development of Indian thought, as carried on chiefly by Brahmans (however much it may have owed in the earliest period to the nobles and others), shows that they, the more enlightened and cultured of the Brahmans, were not only as fully alive to

this truth as any Buddhist, but that they took it all along for granted.

Even in the Vedas themselves there is already the germ of this view in the mental attitude as regards Aditi and Varuna. And in the pre-Buddhistic Chandogya, in the mystic identification of the sacrifice with man*, we find certain moral states placed on an equality with certain parts of the sacrificial procedure. And among these moral states, *ahimsā*, the habit of causing no injury to any living thing, is especially mentioned. This comes very near to the Hebrew prophet's: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice**'.

The more characteristically Indian point of view is, no doubt, in the words of the old saying long afterwards taken up into the Mahabharata, that it is truth (not mercy) that outweighs a thousand sacrifices***. But there is a very great probability that the ahimsa doctrine, foreshadowed in the Upanishad, and afterwards so extravagantly taken up by the Niganthas, the Jains of the Buddha's time, was also a part of the earlier Jain doctrine, and therefore not only in germ, but as a developed teaching, pre-Buddhistic. Though the Buddhists did not accept this extreme position, there would seem therefore to be no valid reason for doubting the accuracy of the Buddhist tradition that their view of sacrifice was based on a very ancient belief which was, in fact, common ground to the wise, whether inside or outside the ranks of the Brahmans.

Our Sutta is, then, merely the oldest extant expression, in so thorough and uncompromising a way, of

* Chandogya Upanishad III, 16 and 17.

** Hosea vi 6; quoted Matt. ix. 13, and xii. 7. See also Micah vi. 6-8, Pro. xv. 8 and xxi. 13, are, of course, later

*** Mahābhārata I, 3095 nearly=XIII, 1544. Compare XIII, 6073.

an ancient and widely held trend of opinion. On this question, as on the question of caste or social privileges, the early Buddhists took up, and pushed to its logical conclusions, a rational view held also by others. And on this question of sacrifice their party won. The Vedic sacrifices, of animals, had practically been given up when the long struggle between Brahmanism and Buddhism reached its close. Isolated instances of such sacrifices are known even down to the Muhammadan invasion. But the battle was really won by the Buddhists and their allies. And the combined ridicule and earnestness of our Sutta will have had its share in bringing about the victory.

That they did win is a suggestive fact. How could they have done so if the Indians of that time had been, as is so often asserted of them by European writers, more deeply addicted to all manner of ritual than any other nation under heaven, more superstitious, more averse to change in religious ceremonial? There seems to me no reason to believe that they were very different in these respects, from Greeks or Romans of the same period. On the contrary, there was a well marked lay feeling, a wide-spread antagonism to the priests, a real sense of humour, a strong fund of common sense. Above all there was then the most complete and unquestioned freedom of thought and expression in religious matters that the world had yet witnessed. To regard the Indian peoples through Brahman spectacles, to judge them from the tone prevalent in the Srauta and Grihya Sutras, it would seem impossible that this victory could have been won. But it was won. And our views of Indian history must be modified accordingly.

KŪṬADANTA SUTTA

(The Wrong Sacrifice and the Right)

Dīgha Nikāya No. 5

1. Thus have I heard. The Blessed One, when going on a tour through Magadha, with a great multitude of the brethren, came to a Brahman village in Magadha called Khāṇumata. And there at Khāṇumata he lodged in the Ambalaṭṭhikā pleasaunce.¹

Now at that time the Brahman Kūṭadanta was dwelling at Khāṇumata, a place teeming with life, with much grassland and woodland and water and corn, on a royal domain presented him by Seniya Bimbisāra the king of Magadhā, as a royal gift, a full gift, with power over it as if he were the king.

And just then a great sacrifice was being got ready on behalf of Kūṭadanta the Brahman. And seven hundred bulls, and seven hundred steers, and seven hundred heifers, and seven hundred goats, and seven hundred rams had been brought to the post for the sacrifice.

2. Now the Brahmans and householders of Khāṇumata heard the news of the arrival of the Samaṇa Gotama. And they began to leave Khāṇumata in companies and in bands to go to the Ambalaṭṭhikā pleasaunce.

3. And just then Kūṭadanta the Brahman had gone apart to the upper terrace of his house for his siesta; and seeing the people thus go by, he asked his doorkeeper the reason. And the doorkeeper told him.

4. Then Kūṭadanta thought: 'I have heard that the Samaṇa Gotama understands about the successful performance of a sacrifice with its threefold method and its sixteen accessory instruments. Now I don't know all this, and yet I want to carry out a sacrifice. It would be well for me to go to the Samaṇa Gotama, and ask him about it.'

So he sent his doorkeeper to the Brahmans and house-holders of Khāṇumata, to ask them to wait till he could go with them to call upon the Blessed One.

5. But there were at that time a number of Brahmans staying at Khāṇumata to take part in the great sacrifice.

* [And when they heard that Kūṭadanta was intending to visit the Samaṇa Gotama, they went to Kūṭadanta, and asked whether that was so.

'That is my intention, Sirs. I propose to call on the Samaṇa Gotama.'

'Let not the venerable Kūṭadanta do so. It is not fitting for him to do so. If it were the venerable Kūṭadanta who went to call upon him, then the venerable Kūṭadanta's reputation would decrease and the Samaṇa Gotama's would increase. This is the first reason why you, Sir, should not call upon him, but he upon you.'

6. And they laid before Kūṭadanta the Brahman in like manner also other considerations, to wit :

* The passage in square brackets extending up to para 8 inclusive, has been supplemented here from the preceding text, the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*, as this stock passage is not repeated in the Pali editions nor in Rhys David's English translation of the *Kūṭadanta Sutta*. Apart from changing the name of the Brahman, only a very few alterations have been made in the translation.—Editor.

That he was well born on both sides, of pure descent through the mother and through the father back through seven generations, with no slur put upon him, and no reproach, in respect of birth—

That he was prosperous, well to do, and rich—

That he was a vedic scholar², knowing the mystic verses by heart, one who has mastered the Three Vedas, with the indices, the ritual, the word-analysis, (the Athārva-Veda as a fourth), and the legends as a fifth,³ learned in the words and in the grammar, versed in Lokāyata (Nature-lore),⁴ and in the theory of the signs on the body of a great man⁵—

That he was handsome, pleasant to look upon, inspiring trust, gifted with great beauty of complexion, fair in colour, fine in presence, stately to behold—

That he was virtuous, rich in virtue, gifted with rich virtue—

That he had a pleasant voice and pleasing delivery, and was gifted with polite address, distinct, not husky, suitable for making clear the matter in hand—

That he was the teacher of the teachers of many, instructing three hundred Brahmans in the repetition of the mystic verses, and that many young Brahmans, from various directions and various countries, all craving for the verses, came to learn them by heart under him—

That he was aged, old, well stricken in years, long-lived and full of days—

That he was honoured, held of weight, esteemed worthy, venerated and revered by Pokkharasādi the Brahman—

That he dwelt at Khānumata, a place teeming with life, with much grassland and woodland and corn, on a

royal fief granted him by Seniya Bimbisāra, the king of Magadhā, as a royal gift, with power over it as if he were the king—

For each of these reasons it was not fitting that Kūṭadanta the Brahman, should call upon the Samaṇa Gotama, but rather that the Samaṇa Gotama should call upon him.⁶

7. And when they had thus spoken, Kūṭadanta said to them:

‘Then, Sirs, listen, and hear why it is fitting that I should call upon the venerable Gotama, and not he should call upon me—

‘Truly, Sirs, the venerable Gotama is well born on both sides, of pure descent through the mother and through the father back through seven generations, with no slur put upon him, and no reproach, in respect of birth—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama has gone forth (into the religious life), giving up the great clan of his relations—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama has gone forth (into the religious life), giving up much money and gold, treasure both buried and above the ground—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama, while he was still a young man, without a grey hair on his head, in the beauty of his early manhood, has gone forth from the household life into the homeless state—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama, though his father and mother were unwilling, and wept, their cheeks being wet with tears, nevertheless cut off his hair and beard, and donned the yellow robes, and went out from the household life into the homeless state—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama is handsome, pleasant to look upon, inspiring trust, gifted with great beauty of complexion, fair in colour, fine in presence, stately to behold—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama is virtuous with the virtue of the Arahats, good and virtuous, gifted with goodness and virtue—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama hath a pleasant voice, and a pleasing delivery, he is gifted with polite address, distinct, not husky, suitable for making clear the matter in hand—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama is the teacher of the teachers of many—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama has no passion of lust left in him, and has put away all fickleness of mind—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama believes in Karma, and in action, he is one who puts righteousness in the forefront (of his exhortations) to the Brahman race—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama went forth from a distinguished family primeval among the Kshatriya clans—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama went forth from a family prosperous, well to do, and rich—

‘Truly, Sirs, people come right across the country from distant lands to ask questions of the Samaṇa Gotama—

‘Truly, Sirs, multitudes of heavenly beings put their trust in the Samaṇa Gotama—

‘Truly, Sirs, such is the high reputation noised abroad concerning the Samaṇa Gotama, that he is said to be an Arahata, exalted, fully awakened, abounding in

wisdom and righteousness, happy, with knowledge of the worlds, a Blessed One, a Buddha—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama has all the thirty-two bodily marks of a Great Being—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama bids all men welcome, is congenial, conciliatory, not supercilious, accessible to all, not backward in conversation—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama is honoured, held of weight, esteemed and venerated and revered by the four classes (of his followers—the brethren and sisters of the Order, laymen and laywomen)—

‘Truly, Sirs, many gods and men believe in the Samaṇa Gotama—

‘Truly, Sirs, in whatsoever village or town the Samaṇa Gotama stays, there the non-humans do the humans no harm—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama as the head of an Order, of a school, as the teacher of a school is to be acknowledged superior to all the founders of sects. Whereas some Samanas and Brahmans have gained a reputation by all sorts of insignificant matters, not so the Samaṇa Gotama. His reputation comes from perfection in knowledge and conduct—

‘Truly, Sir, the king of Magadhā, Seniya Bimbisāra, with his children and his wives, with his people and his courtiers, has put his trust in the Samaṇa Gotama—

‘Truly, Sirs, king Pasenadi of Kosala, with his children and his wives, with his people and his courtiers, has put his trust in the Samaṇa Gotama—

‘Truly, Sirs, Pokkharasādi the Brahman, with his children and his wives, with his people and his intimates, has put his trust in the Samaṇa Gotama—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama is honoured, held of weight, esteemed and venerated and revered alike by Seniya Bimbisāra, the king of Magadhā, by Pasenadi the king of Kosala, and by Pokkharasādi the Brahman—

‘Truly, Sirs, the Samaṇa Gotama has now arrived at Khānumata, and is staying at Ambalaṭṭhikā. But all Samaṇas and Brahmans who come into our village borders are our guests. And guests we ought to esteem and honour, to venerate and revere. And as he is now so come, he ought to be so treated, as a guest—

‘For each and all of these considerations it is not fitting that the Samaṇa Gotama should call upon us, but rather does it behove us to call upon him. And so far only do I know the excellencies of the Samaṇa Gotama, but these are not all of them, for his excellence is beyond measure.’

8. And when he had thus spoken, those Brahmans said to him: ‘The venerable Kūṭadanta declares the praises of the Samaṇa Gotama on such wise, that were he be dwelling even a hundred leagues from here, it would be enough to make a believing man go thither to call upon him, even had he to carry a bag (with provisions for the journey) on his back. Let us then all go to call on the Samaṇa Gotama together!’

So Kūṭadanta the Brahman, with a great company of Brahmans, went out to Ambalaṭṭhikā where the Blessed One dwelt. Having arrived there he exchanged with the Blessed One the greetings and compliments of politeness and courtesy, and took his seat on one side. And as to the Brahman householders of Khānumata, some of them bowed to the Blessed One and took their seats on one side; some of them exchanged with him the

greetings and compliments of politeness and courtesy, and then took their seats on one side; some of them called out their name and family, and then took their seats on one side; and some of them took their seats on one side in silence.]

9. And when Kūṭadanta the Brahman was seated there he told the Blessed One what he had heard, and requested him to tell him about success in performing a sacrifice in its three modes and with its accessories of sixteen kinds.

‘Well then, O Brahman, give ear and listen attentively and I will speak.’

‘Very well, Sir,’ said Kūṭadanta in reply; and the Blessed One spake as follows :-

10. ‘Long ago, O Brahman, there was a king by name Wide-realm (Mahā Vijita), mighty with great wealth and large property; with stores of silver and gold, of aids to enjoyment, of goods and corn; with his treasure-houses and his garner full. Now when King Wide-realm was once sitting alone the following thought occurred to him: “I have in abundance all the good things a mortal can enjoy. The whole wide circle of the earth is mine by conquest to possess. ‘Twere well if I were to offer a great sacrifice that should ensure me weal and welfare for many days.’”

‘And he had the Brahman, his chaplain, called; and telling him all that he had thought, he said: “So I would fain, O Brahman, offer a great sacrifice—let the venerable one instruct me how—for my weal and my welfare for many days.”’

11. ‘Thereupon the Brahman who was chaplain said to the king: “The king’s country, Sire, is

harassed and harried. There are dacoits abroad who pillage the villages and townships, and who make the roads unsafe. Were the king, so long as that is so, to levy a fresh tax, verily his majesty would be acting wrongly. But perchance his majesty might think : 'I'll soon put a stop to these scoundrels' game by degradation and banishment, and fines and bonds and death !' But their licence cannot be satisfactorily put a stop to so. The remnant left unpunished would still go on harassing the realm. Now there is one method to adopt to put a thorough end to this disorder. Whosoever there be in the king's realm who devote themselves to farming and keeping cattle, to them let his majesty the king give food and seed-corn.⁷ Whosoever there be in the King's realm who devote themselves to trade, to them let his majesty the king give capital.⁸ Whosoever there be in the king's realm who devote themselves to government service, to them let his majesty the king give wages and food.⁹ Then those men, following each his own business, will no longer harass the realm; the king's revenue will go up; the country will be quiet and at peace; and the populace, pleased one with another and happy, dancing their children in their arms, will dwell with open doors."¹⁰

'Then King Wide-realm, O Brahman, accepted the word of his chaplain, and did as he had said. And those men, following each his business, harassed the realm no more. And the king's revenue went up. And the country became quiet and at peace. And the populace, pleased one with another and happy, dancing their children in their arms, dwelt with open doors.

12. 'So King Wide-realm had his chaplain called, and said: "The disorder is at an end. Thanks to the

provisions advised by the venerable one, the revenue has increased. The country is at peace. I want to offer that great sacrifice—let the venerable one instruct me how—for my weal and my welfare for many days.”

‘Then let his majesty the king send invitations to whomsoever there may be in his realm who are Kshatriyas, vassals of his, either in the country or the towns; or who are ministers and officials of his, either in the country or the towns; or, who are householders of substance, either in the country or the towns, saying; “I intend to offer a great sacrifice. Let the venerable ones give their sanction to what will be to me for weal and welfare for many days.”’¹¹

‘Then King Wide-realm, O Brahman, accepted the word of his chaplain, and did as he had said. And they each - Kshatriyas and ministers and Brahmans and householders - made alike reply: “Let his majesty the king celebrate the sacrifice. The time is suitable, O king!”’

‘Thus did these four, as colleagues by consent, become accessories to furnish forth that sacrifice.

13. ‘King Wide-realm was gifted in the following eight ways :-

‘He was well born on both sides, on the mother’s side and on the father’s, of pure descent back through seven generations, and no slur was cast upon him, and no reproach, in respect of birth—

‘He was handsome, pleasant in appearance, inspiring trust, gifted with great beauty of complexion, fair in colour, fine in presence, stately to behold—

‘He was mighty, with great wealth, and large property, with stores of silver and gold, of aids to enjoyment, of goods and corn, with his treasure-houses and his garner full—

‘He was powerful, in command of an army, loyal and disciplined, in four divisions (of elephants, cavalry, chariots, and bowmen), burning up, methinks, his enemies by his very glory—

‘He was a believer¹², and a generous giver, a lord of gifts¹³, keeping open house, a welling spring whence Samaṇas and Brahmans, the poor and wayfarers, beggars, and petitioners might draw, a doer of good deeds—

‘He was learned in all kinds of knowledge—

‘He knew the meaning of what had been said, and could explain : “This saying has such and such a meaning, and that such and such”—

‘He was intelligent, expert and wise, and able to think out things, present or past or future—¹⁴

‘And these eight gifts of his too became accessories to furnish forth that sacrifice.

14. ‘The Brahman, his chaplain, was gifted in the following four ways :-

‘He was well born on both sides, on the mother’s and on the father’s, of pure descent back through seven generations, with no slur cast upon him, and no reproach in respect of birth—

‘He was a vedic scholar who knew the mystic verses by heart, master of the Three Vedas, with the indices, the ritual, the word-analysis, (the Atharvaveda as a fourth), and the legends as a fifth, learned in the idioms and the grammar, versed in Lokāyata (Nature-lore) and in the thirty marks on the body of a great man—

‘He was virtuous, established in virtue, gifted with virtue that had grown great—

‘He was intelligent, expert, and wise; foremost, or at least the second, among those who hold out the ladle.’

‘Thus these four gifts of his, too, became accessories to furnish forth that sacrifice.

15. And further, O Brahman, the chaplain, before the sacrifice had begun, explained to King Wide-realm the three modes:

‘Should his majesty the king, before starting on the great sacrifice, feel any such regret as; “Great, alas, will be the portion of my wealth used up herein,” let not the king harbour such regret. Should his majesty the king, when the great sacrifice has been offered, feel any such regret as: “Great, alas, has been the portion of my wealth used up herein,” let not the king harbour such regret.’

‘Thus did the chaplain, O Brahman, before the sacrifice had begun, explain to King Wide-realm the three modes.

16. ‘And further, O Brahman, the chaplain, before the sacrifice had begun, in order to prevent any compunction that might afterwards, in ten ways, arise as regards those who had taken part therein, said: “Now there will come to your sacrifice, Sire, men who destroy the life of living things, and men who refrain therefrom; men who take what has not been given, and men who refrain therefrom; men who act evilly in respect of lusts, and men who refrain therefrom; men who speak lies, and men who do not; men who slander, and men who do not; men who speak rudely, and men who do not; men who chatter vain things, and men who refrain therefrom; men who covet, and men who covet not; men who harbour illwill, and men who harbour it not; men whose views are wrong, and men whose views are right.¹⁵ Of each of

these let them, who do evil, alone with their evil. For them who do well let your majesty offer, for them, Sire, arrange the rites, them let the king gratify, in them shall your heart within find peace.”

17. ‘And further, O Brahman, the chaplain, whilst the king was carrying out the sacrifice, instructed and aroused and incited and gladdened his heart in sixteen ways :

‘Should there be people who should say of the king, as he is offering the sacrifice; ‘King Wide-realm is celebrating sacrifice without having invited the four classes of his subjects, without himself having the eight personal gifts, without the assistance of a Brahman who has the four personal gifts;’ then would they speak not according to the fact. For the consent of the four classes has been obtained, the king has the eight, and his Brahman has the four, personal gifts. With regard to each and every one of these sixteen conditions the king may rest assured that it has been fulfilled. He can sacrifice, and be glad, and possess his heart in peace.”

18. ‘And further, O Brahman, at the sacrifice neither were any oxen slain, neither goats, nor fowls, no fatted pigs, nor were any kinds of living creatures put to death. No trees were cut down to be used as posts, no Dabbha grasses mown to strew around the sacrificial spot. And the slaves and messengers and workmen there employed were driven neither by rods nor fear, nor carried on their work weeping with tears upon their faces. Whoso chose to help, he worked; whoso chose not to help, worked not. What each chose to do he did; what they chose not to do, that was left undone. With ghee, and oil, and butter, and milk, and honey, and sugar only was that sacrifice accomplished.¹⁶

19. 'And further, O Brahman, the Kshatrya vassals, and the ministers and officials, and the Brahmans of position, and the householders of substance, whether of the country or of the towns went to King Wide-realm, taking with them much wealth, and said: "This abundant wealth, Sire, have we brought hither for the King's use. Let his majesty accept it at our hands!"'

' "Sufficient wealth have I, my friends, laid up, the produce of taxation that is just. Do you keep yours, and take away more with you!"'

'When they had thus been refused by the king, they went aside, and considered thus one with the other: "It would not beseem us now, were we to take this wealth away again to our own homes. King Wide-realm is offering a great sacrifice. Let us too make an after-sacrifice!"'

20. 'So the Kshatriyas established a continual largesse to the east of the king's sacrificial pit, and the officials to the south thereof, and the householders to the north thereof. And the things given, and the manner of their gift, was in all respects like unto the great sacrifice of King Wide-realm himself.

'Thus, O Brahman, there was a fourfold co-operation, and King Wide-realm was gifted with eight personal gifts, and his officiating Brahman with four. And there were three modes of the giving of that sacrifice. This, O Brahman, is what is called the due celebration of a sacrifice in its threefold mode and with its accessories of sixteen kinds.'

21. And when he had thus spoken, those Brahmans lifted up their voices in tumult, and said: 'How glorious the sacrifice, how pure its accomplishment!' But Kūṭa-danta the Brahman sat there in silence.

Then those Brahmans said to Kūṭadanta : ‘Why do you not approve the good words of the Samaṇa Gotama as well-said?’

‘I do not fail to approve: for he who approves not as well-said that which has been well spoken by the Samaṇa Gotama verily his head would split in twain. But I was considering that the Samaṇa Gotama does not say : “Thus have I heard,” nor “Thus behoves it to be,” but says only “Thus it was then,” or “It was like that then”. So I thought: “For a certainty the Samaṇa Gotama himself must at that time have been King Wide-realm, or the Brahman who officiated for him at that sacrifice.” Does the venerable Gotama admit that he who celebrates such a sacrifice, or causes it to be celebrated, is reborn at the dissolution of the body, after death, into some state of happiness in heaven?’

‘Yes, O Brahman, that I admit. And at that time I was the Brahman who, as chaplain, had that sacrifice performed.’

22. ‘Is there, O Gotama, any other sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, with more fruit and more advantage still than this?’

‘Yes, O Brahman, there is.’

‘And what, O Gotama, may that be?’

‘The perpetual gifts kept up in a family where they are given specially to virtuous recluses.’

23. ‘But what is the reason, O Gotama, and what the cause why such perpetual giving specifically to virtuous recluses, and kept up in a family, are less difficult and troublesome, of greater fruit and greater advantage than that other sacrifice with its three modes and its accessories of sixteen kinds?’

‘To the latter sort of sacrifice, O Brahman, neither will the Arahats go, nor such as have entered on the Arahata way. And why not? Because at it beating with sticks takes place, and seizing by the throat.¹⁷ But they will go to the former, where such things are not. And therefore are such perpetual gifts above the other sort of sacrifice.’

24. ‘And is there, O Gotama, any other sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, of greater fruit and of greater advantage than either of these?’

‘Yes, O Brahman, there is.’

‘And what, O Gotama, may that be?’

‘The putting up of a dwelling place (Vihara) on behalf of the Order of all the four directions’.

25. ‘And is there, O Gotama, any other sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, of greater fruit and of greater advantage than each and all of these three?’

‘Yes, O Brahman, there is.’

‘And what, O Gotama, may that be?’

‘He who with trusting heart takes his refuge in the Buddha in the Teaching, and the Order—that is a sacrifice better than open largesse, better than perpetual alms, better than the gift of a dwelling place.’¹⁸

26. ‘And is there, O Gotama, any other sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, of greater fruit and of greater advantage than all these four?’¹⁹

‘When a man with trusting heart takes upon himself the precepts—abstention from destroying life; abstention from taking what has not been given; abstention from evil conduct in respect of lusts; abstention from lying words, abstention from strong, intoxicating, maddening drinks, the root of carelessness—that is a sacrifice better...

than open largesse, better than perpetual alms, better than the gift of dwelling places, better than the taking of refuge.’²⁰

27. ‘And is there, O Gotama, any other sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, of greater fruit and of greater advantage than all these five?’

‘Yes, O Brahman, there is.’

‘And what, O Gotama, may that be?’

The answer is a long passage from the Sāmaññaphala Sutta, the “Discourse on the Fruits of Reclusership” (Dīgha Nikāya No. 2), which contains the following sections :

1. The appearance of a Buddha, his preaching, the conversion of a hearer, and the latter’s renunciation of the world and ordination as a monk (as in *Tevijjā Sutta*, The Wheel No. 57/58, page 19),

2. the monk’s observance of the Precepts (l. c., p. 19 § 42 up to p. 21),

3. his fearlessness and confidence due to his virtue (l. c., p. 22, first para),

4. sense-control (l. c., p. 22),

5. mindfulness and full awareness (l. c., p. 23),

6. contentedness (l. c., p. 23),

7. conquest of the five Hindrances (l. c., p. 23 to 24, end of § 75).

After each of the above sections, the Kūṭadanta Sutta adds:

‘This, O Brahman, is a sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, of greater fruit and greater advantage than the previous sacrifices.’

‘(Now, having abandoned these five Hindrances, and) quite detached from sense-objects, detached from unwholesome states of mind, he enters upon and dwells in the first Absorption (*jhāna*), which is accompanied by

applied and sustained thought, filled with bliss and happiness, born of seclusion.

‘This, O Brahman, is a sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, of greater fruit and greater advantage than the previous sacrifices.’

Here follows the text of the second, third and fourth Absorption, with the same concluding paragraph as above.

(*Insight-knowledge*) “With his heart thus serene, made pure, translucent, cultured, devoid of all evil, supple, ready to act, firm, and imperturbable, he applies and bends down his mind to that insight that comes from knowledge. He grasps the fact: “This body of mine is material, it is build up of the four great elements, it springs from father and mother, it is continually renewed by so much boiled rice and juicy food, its very nature is impermanence, it is subject to erosion, abrasion,²¹ dissolution and disintegration; and there is this consciousness²² of mine, too, bound up therewith and dependent on it.²³

‘Just, O Brahman, as if there were a Veluriya gem, bright, of purest water, with eight facets, excellently cut, clear; translucent, without a flaw, excellent in every way. And through it a string, blue, or orange coloured, or red, or white, or yellow should be threaded. If a man who had eyes to see, were to take it into his hand, he would clearly perceive how the one is bound up with the other.

‘Similarly, with his heart thus serene . . . (the monk) grasps the fact: “There is this body of mine, which is material . . . ; and there is this consciousness of mine, too, bound up therewith, and dependent on it.”

‘This, O Brahman, is a sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, of greater fruit and greater advantage than the previous sacrifices.’

Here follow, according to D. 2, sections on the ‘Power of producing a mind - made body’ (*manomaya-iddhi*) and on the first five Supernormal Knowledges (*abhiññā*).^{*} The text of the sixth Supernormal Knowledge, likewise inserted here from D. 2, is as follows:

‘With his heart thus serene . . . he applies and bends down his mind to the Knowledge of the Destruction of the Cankers (*āsavakkhaya*). He knows as it really is: “This is Suffering” . . . “This is the origin of Suffering” . . . “This is the cessation of Suffering” . . . “This is the Path that leads to the cessation of Suffering.” He knows as they really are: “These are the Cankers” . . . “This is the origin of the Cankers” . . . “This is the cessation of the Cankers” . . . “This is the Path that leads to the cessation of the Cankers.” Of him, thus knowing, thus seeing, the heart is set free from the Canker of Sense-desire; is set free from the Canker of (craving for renewed) Existence; is set free from the Canker of Ignorance. In him, thus set free, arises the knowledge of his emancipation, and he knows: “Rebirth has been destroyed. The Holy Life has been fulfilled. What had to be done has been accomplished. After this present life there will be no beyond !”

‘Just, O Brahman, as if in a mountain fastness there were a pool of water, clear, translucent, and serene; and a man standing on the bank, and with eyes to see, should perceive the oysters and the shells, the gravel and the pebble and the shoals of fish, as they move about or lie within it; he would know: “This pool is clear, transparent, and serene, and here within are the oysters and the shells, and the sand and gravel, and the shoals of fish are moving about or lying still.”

^{*} To these sections no explicit reference is made in the abridgements given in the Pāli text of the Kūṭadanta Sutta. But the Commentary mentions these six sections.

‘Similarly, with his heart thus serene . . . (the monk) knows as it really is: “This is Suffering” . . . “These are the Cankers” . . . Of him, thus knowing, the heart is set free from the Cankers . . . and he knows: “Rebirth has been destroyed. . . . After this present life there will be no beyond.”’

‘This, O Brahman, is a sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome. of greater fruit and greater advantage than the previous sacrifices. And there is no performance of a sacrifice, O Brahman, higher and loftier than this.’

28. And when he had thus spoken, Kūṭadanta the Brahman said to the Blessed One:

‘Most excellent, O Gotama, are the words of thy mouth, most excellent! Just as if a man were to set up what has been thrown down, or were to reveal that which has been hidden away, or were to point out the right road to him who has gone astray, or were to bring a light into the darkness so that those who had eyes could see external forms—just even so has the truth been made known to me in many a figure by the venerable Gotama. I, even I, betake myself to the venerable Gotama as my guide, to the Doctrine and the Order. May the venerable One accept me as a disciple, as one who, from this day forth, as long as life endures, has taken him as his guide. And I myself, O Gotama, will have the seven hundred bulls, and the seven hundred steers, and the seven hundred heifers, and the seven hundred goats, and the seven hundred rams set free. To them I grant their life. Let them eat green grass and drink fresh water, and may cool breezes waft around them.’²⁴

29. Then the Blessed One discoursed to Kūṭadanta the Brahman in due order;²⁵ that is to say, he spoke to

him of generosity, of right conduct, of heaven, of the danger, the vanity, and the defilement of lusts, of the advantages of renunciation. And when the Blessed One became aware that Kūṭadanta the Brahman had become prepared, softened, unprejudiced, upraised, and believing in heart, then did he proclaim the doctrine the Buddhas alone have won; that is to say, the doctrine of suffering, of its origin, of its cessation, and of the Path. And just as a clean cloth, with all stains in it washed away, will readily take the dye, just even so did Kūṭadanta the Brahman, even while seated there, obtain the pure and spotless Eye for the Truth, and he knew: 'Whatsoever has a beginning, in that is inherent also the necessity of dissolution.'²⁶

30. And then the Brahman Kūṭadanta, as one who had seen the Truth, had mastered it, understood it, dived deep down into it, who had passed beyond doubt, and put away perplexity and gained full confidence, who had become dependent on no other for his knowledge of the teaching of the Master²⁶, addressed the Blessed One and said:

'May the venerable Gotama grant me the favour of taking his to-morrow's meal with me, and also the members of the Order with him.'

And the Blessed One signified, by silence, his consent. Then the Brahman Kūṭadanta, seeing that the Blessed One had accepted, rose from his seat, and keeping his right towards him as he passed, he departed thence. And at daybreak he had sweet food, both hard and soft, made ready at the pit prepared for his sacrifice, and had the time announced to the Blessed one: 'It is time, O Gotama; and the meal is ready.' And the Blessed One, who had dressed early in the morning, put

on his outer robe, and taking his bowl with him, went with the brethren to Kūṭadanta's sacrificial pit, and sat down there on the seat prepared for him. And Kūṭadanta the Brahman satisfied the brethren with the the Buddha at their head, with his own hand, with sweet food, both hard and soft, till they refused any more. And when the Blessed One had finished his meal, and cleansed the bowl and his hands, Kūṭadanta the Brahman took a low seat and seated himself beside him. And when he was thus seated the Blessed One instructed and aroused and incited and gladdened Kūṭadanta the Brahman with religious discourse; and then arose from his seat and departed thence.



Kūṭadanta Sutta is ended.

Notes

Notes with (Rh. D.) at the end, are by Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids; all others by the Editor of 'The Wheel' series.

Abbreviations: Comy.: Ācariya Buddhaghosa's Commentary to the Dīgha Nikāya.—SubCy: Ācariya Dhammapāla's Sub-Commentary.—NSubCy: New Sub-commentary (*abhinava-ṭikā*), by Nāṇābhivamsa Mahāthera (written in Burma in the 19th century).

1. *Ambalaṭṭhikā*, "the mango sapling". According to Comy. to D. 1, it was a shady park, surrounded by a rampart and provided with a rest house. At the entrance stood a young mango tree, after which the park was named. The Comy. says that this park was not the same as the one half way between Rājagaha and Nālanda, mentioned in D. 1, but was very similar to it.

2. *A vedic scholar (ajjhāyako)*.—Comy. to D. 3: "Because the learned Brahmins do no longer meditate (*na jhāyanti*), they are now called 'scholars', 'just scholars' (*ajjhāyakā tveva*) . . . Thus, at an earlier age, this expression "ajjhāyaka" arose as a word of blame for those Brahmans who were without attainment of the Absorptions (*jhāna*). But now it is used as a word of praise, in the sense of its derivation from the verb *ajjhāyati*, 'to recite', i. e. for those who recite the (vedic) mantras."

3. In view of the fact that only three terms precede it, the Comy. says that the Atharva Veda has here to be added as the fourth.

4. *Lokāyata*: philosophers speculating on the world (*loka*) or nature, and often using sophistry in their arguments.

5. The 32 Signs (or Marks) of a Great Man (*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*) are of pre-Buddhist origin and partly of

a symbolical nature. They are enumerated and explained in the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* of the Dīgha Nikāya.

6. Comy. to D. 4: (The Brahmans when speaking in that way, did so because they thought:) 'There is none who does not like it when his praise is spoken. Hence by praising him we might stop him from going to see the Buddha'.—(But Kūṭadanta thought:) 'These Brahmans praise me on account of my descent etc. But it will not be right for me to be taken in by such praise. Should I not counter their speech by proclaiming to them the greatness of the Buddha which may induce them to call on him likewise ?'

7. *Let the king give food and seed-corn.*—Comy.: 'If what is given, is insufficient, you should give them another supply of seed-grain, food and agricultural implements.'

8. *Let the king give capital.*—Comy.: 'You may give the money without witness or receipt (i. e. as a trade subsidy), waiving the repayment of the capital sum (*mūlacchejjasena*).'

9. *(To those in government service) let the king give wages and food.*—Comy.: 'You may give to them their daily food requirements and a monthly or weekly (*anuposathika*) salary, together with official positions, grants of villages or hamlets, in accordance with each man's skill, type of work and valour.'

10. The Chaplain's prescriptions for making the country prosperous and content sound quite modern: agricultural and trade-subsidies, ensuring a contented civil service, and in (§12) making sure of favourable public opinion before undertaking large expenditure.

11. Comy.: 'Those (invited to give their consent to the great sacrifice) will be pleased about it and will

say: "This king does not enforce the sacrifice in the thought that he is the master, but he informs us about it. How well does he act !" Without such information they might not even have shown themselves at the place of the sacrifice.'

12. *A believer (saddho).*—Comy.: he believes that charity bears fruit.

13. *A (generous) giver (dāyako).*—Comy.: He is a hero (or determined) in giving (*dāna-sūra*). He does not stop at the mere belief (that giving is good), but can actually renounce (the gift-object).—NSubCy: He is one whose Knowledge of Karma-Ownership (*kammassakatāñāṇa*) is keen and clear, and who keeps it, as it were, before his mind's eye.

A lord of gifts (dāna-pati); or, one who is a master of giving charity.—Comy.: He is one who is the master of the gifts he gives; he does not give like a slave nor like a companion. He who enjoys for himself the best and gives to others what is inferior, he becomes the slave (*dāsa*) of the thing to be given. He who gives the same as he uses for himself, gives as a companion (*sahāya*). But he who gives the best part of whatever he uses for his own livelihood, he gives in a sovereign way, as a lord or master.—NSubCy: He is one who can easily conquer attachment to the specific object. Not being carried away by his greed for the object, he is neither its slave nor its friend.

14. *Able to think out things present or past or future (patibalo atīta-anāgata paccuppanne atthe cintetum).*—Comy.: 'Thinking, "It is just because of meritorious actions done in the past, that I am now prosperous," thus he was able to think out a thing (fact or advantage; *attha*) of the past. "Doing a meritorious act now, I shall be able

to obtain prosperity in the future,” thus he thought about future advantage. “Such a meritorious act is customary with good people: furthermore, I have wealth enough to do it, and I have also the intention of giving (*dāyaka-citta*),” thus he was able to think about the present facts.’

15. These are the 10 Courses of Action (*kamma-patha*), unwholesome and wholesome.

16. While the Discourse does not relate in which way the sacrifice was finally performed, the Comy. says that it took the form of a large food distribution in the royal city. Outside each of the four city gates, and in the centre of the city, large alms halls were erected and from sunrise until nightfall food and drink of a kind suited to the time of the day was distributed to all comers. For the preparation of the food the best ingredients, like ghee, oil, etc., were used. Those who wanted to take the food along with them were allowed to fill their vessels. In the evening, cloth, incense and flowers were distributed. At several hundred locations in the city, large vessels with ghee, etc., were placed for everyone’s use.—In accordance with this explanation, the Comy. takes the textual words ‘sacrificial pit’ (*yañña-vāṭa*) as signifying alms halls.

17. The attendants, at such a general largesse, says Buddhaghosa, push the recipients about, make them stand in a queue, and use violence in doing so (Rh. D.)

18. Comy.: Though a monastery (*vihāra*) is donated just once, there is later on still work to do in connection with it, e. g. thatching and repairing it. But if one has taken the Refuge in the presence of one single bhikkhu, or the Sangha, or the full assembly of bhikkhus,* it is taken once for all (*gahitam eva hoti*). There is no necessity of taking it repeatedly.**

* NSubCy: This is said because that is the customary way for lay devotees (*upāsaka*) to take the Refuge; and because the act has a greater weight if done in that manner (i. e., if the Refuge is taken from a bhikkhu). But it is said that if the lay devotees take the Refuge by themselves, it is just as valid.

** NSubCy: This is said for people of intelligence. For them, if they are proficient in understanding the significance of the Refuges etc., the Refuge will be firm and unshakable.

Comy.: Because the merit of Taking Refuge consisting in the readiness to sacrifice even one's life for the Triple Gem,* bestows heavenly happiness**, therefore it is said to be of "greater fruit and advantage".

* NSubCy: Even if someone threatens to take the life of the lay devotee with a sharp sword, saying: "If you do not give up the Refuge taken by you, I shall kill you!", even then the lay devotee should reply: "Never shall I say that the Buddha is not the (truly) Enlightened One; that the Dhamma is not the (true) Teaching; that the Sangha is not the (true) Community of Saints".

** NSubCy: This is only an example of the possible good results of Taking the Refuge.

19. Comy, : Having heard that, the Brahman thought: "To give one's life for someone else is hard indeed. Is there not a sacrifice that is less difficult?"

20. SubCy: The Precepts are said to be less difficult than Taking Refuge, because one has only to accept them and to abstain from the respective item when occasion arises.

The Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*)

(or The Rules of Moral Training (*sikkhāpada*))

Comy.: *Abstention (virati)* is threefold: 1. factual abstention (*sampatta-virati*), 2. abstention by formal

acceptance of the Precepts (*samādāna-virati*), 3. abstention by eliminating (the evil tendencies; *setughāta-virati*, lit.: killing through the 'bridge', i. e., the Holy Paths).

1. There is one who, without having formally accepted the Precepts, remembers his birth, clan, family, country, etc., and thinking that it is not befitting for him (to commit transgressions), he does not kill, etc. He avoids (transgressing) when occasion occurs and refrains from it entirely. His abstention is called "factual" (or "taking place on a given occasion"; *sampatta-virati*).

2. If one takes upon oneself the Precepts, saying, "From today, even for the sake of my life, I shall not kill a living being", or "I take upon me the abstention (from . . .)", this is called abstention by formal acceptance of the Precepts (*samādāna-virati*).

3. The abstention of Holy Disciples (*ariya-sāvaka*) that is connected with the Noble Path (i. e. Right View, etc.), this is called abstention by elimination (*setughāta-virati*).

NSubCy: Elsewhere it is called "abstention by destruction" (*samuccheda-virati*), (e. g. in Comy. to Majjh. 9 and Aṭṭhasālini). *Setu* (bridge) is the Holy Path. The abstention included in it which destroys the evil states of mind, is called *setu-ghāta-virati*.

Comy.: The first two kinds of abstention have as objects the life-faculty (*jīvitindriya*), etc., i. e., that against which the transgression takes place when there is killing, etc.—The third (i. e., supramundane) abstention has only Nibbāna as its object.

If one who has taken the Five Precepts as a unit (i. e., using one single term in the formula), breaks one of the Precepts, in that case all of them are broken.* If one takes the Precepts (by stating them) singly,** he

breaks only that Precept against which he has transgressed. In the Abstention by Eliminating, there is no breaking of the Precepts. In a future existence too, a Holy Disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) will never kill nor (break another Precepts as) the drinking of alcohol. He will not do so even for life's sake.

* NSubCy: The Precepts are taken "as a unit", i. e., together (*ekato ekajjham*), if one says, "I take upon myself the rule of conduct with its five parts" (or the fivefold moral rule; '*Pañcaṅga-samannāgataṃ sīlaṃ samādiyāmi*'). But even in that case one has to know that the Precepts are of five (different) types, in regard to their functions (*kicca-vasena*). All five are broken (in the sense that the vow is broken), because they have been taken together (in a single formula of vow). But this does not mean that the Sīla has an (inseparably) fivefold nature. Rather by what one transgresses, just by that *Kamma* alone one is bound (*kamma-baddho*).

** NSubCy: "Taking the Precepts singly", i. e., separately, is done by saying, "I take upon myself the rule of abstention from killing" (*pāṇātipātā veramaṇi-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*). In the Comy. to the Khuddakapāṭha it is said that *veramaṇi-sikkhāpadaṃ* forms a compound; but in the text editions (*pāḷi-potthakesu*) a *niggahita* is at the end of (the first word) *veramaṇim*, and the two words are separate.

The above statements refer to laymen. In the case of novices (*sāmaṇera*), in whatever way they may have taken the Precepts, if they have violated one, all will be broken, because they have come to 'defeat' (*pārājikāppatito*).

Comy.: Because, in Taking Refuge, the obtaining of a correct idea about it (lit.: the act of straightening one's views, *diṭṭhujuka-kamma*) is difficult, while, on the other hand, in the acceptance of the Precepts, a mere abstention is required, therefore the latter 'sacrifice' is said to be less difficult and troublesome, whether one takes them in a desultory manner (*yathā tathā*; NSubCy: without much attention and respect) or carefully and

respectfully (*sakkaccaṃ*; NSubCy: no double effort need be made in the latter case). As there is no gift (to living beings) comparable to the observance of the Five Precepts, they are of great fruit and advantage . . .

These Five Precepts are called a ‘sacrifice’ (*yañña*), because they are accepted (with the resolve): ‘I shall observe them even if I have to sacrifice love of the self and love of life (*attasinehañca jīvitasinehañca pariccajīvā rakkhissāmi*) !’

Though compared with the Five Precepts, the Taking of the Refuge has the higher rank (NSubCy: through its great results), yet, provided the Five Precepts are based on the Refuges (*saraṇagamane yeva paṭiṭṭhāya*) their observation is said to have great results.

21. This is a favourite description of the body. The words for erosion and abrasion (*ucchādana parimaddana*) are cunningly chosen. They are also familiar technical terms of the Indian shampooer (and masseur), and are so used in D. 2. The double meaning must have been clearly present to the Indian hearer, and the words are, therefore, really untranslatable. (Rh. D.)—What is meant is probably that the body is so malodorous and fragile that it needs constant attention by shampooing or anointing (*ucchādana*), massaging (*parimaddana*), etc. (Ed.)

22. *Consciousness* (*viññāṇa*) stands here also for all other mental functions and faculties.

23. Rhys Davids comments:

“In spite of this and similar passages the adherents of the soul theory (having nothing else to fasten on) were apt to fasten on to the Buddhist *Viññāṇa* as a possible point of reconciliation with their own theory. Even an admirer of the Buddha (one Sāti, a member of the Order) went so far as to tell the Buddha himself that

he must, as he admitted transmigration, have meant that the *Viññāṇa* did not really depend upon, was not really bound up with, the body, but that it formed the link in transmigration. In perhaps the most earnest and emphatic of all the Dialogues (Majjhima Nikāya No. 38), the Buddha meets and refutes at length this erroneous representation of his view. But it still survives. I know two living writers on Buddhism who (in blissful ignorance of the Dialogue in question) still fasten upon Buddha the opinion he so expressly refused to accept.”—Sāti’s belief, however, was that *Viññāṇa* is reborn, implying that it is a transmigrating entity. Rhys David’s formulation of Sāti’s view does not express the error correctly. See *Dependent Origination* by Piyadassi Thera (The Wheel No. 15), p. 16ff.

24. Comy.: Having thus spoken, the Brahman sent a man to the place of sacrifice, saying: ‘Go, my man, climb down into the sacrificial pit and release all those animals from their bonds.’ The man did so and reported back to the Brahman that the animals had been released. Until the Brahman had received this message, the Blessed One did not preach Dhamma to him. And why not? Because the Brahman’s mind was still perturbed. But when he had received the message, his mind brightened at the thought. ‘To many animals I have given freedom’. When the Blessed One knew that the Brahman’s mind had brightened and was serene, he began his Dhamma instruction.

25. *In due order*: this is the Gradual Instruction (*ānupubbī-kathā*), on which see The Wheel No. 98/99, p. 50 and Notes 26.

26. These two passages indicate the attainment of the first stage of Sainthood, Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). See The Wheel No. 98/99, p. 51 and Notes 33-37.

THE WHEEL

The following translations from the Discourses of the Buddha have been published in this series:—

7. The Practice of Loving-kindness. Selected Texts.
8. The Kalama Sutta. Transl. by *Soma Thera*.
10. Sakka's Quest (Digha Nik. 21).
17. Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha. (The First Sermon, Sermon on Not-self, The Fire Sermon).
19. The Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta)
21. The Removal of Distracting Thoughts (Majjh. 20)
26. The Five Mental Hindrances. Selected Texts.
33. Advice to Rāhula. Four Discourses of the Buddha.
47. Buddhism and the God Idea. Selected Texts.
- 48/49. The Discourse on the Snake Simile. (Majjh. 22)
51. Taming the Mind. Discourses of the Buddha.
- 57/58. Tevijjā Sutta. A Discourse of the Buddha on the Path to God. (Dīgha 13)
- 61/62. The Simile of the Cloth (Majjh. 7) & The Discourse on Effacement (Majjh. 8).
- 67/68/69. Last Days of the Buddha (Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta).
79. Kandaraka Sutta, Potaliya Sutta (Majjh. 51 & 54).
82. The Discourse Collection (Selections fr. Sutta-Nipāta)
87. The Greater Discourse on Voidness (Majjh. 122)

These and other texts translated from the Pāli with notes are available separately or in bound volumes. For information and complete book list, write to :

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
P.O. Box 61 KANDY Ceylon

BUDDHISM IN A NUTSHELL

by

NARADA THERA

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

KANDY

1966

CEYLON

THE WHEEL PUBLICATIONS
Special Issue

Printed at:
Lake House Printers and Publishers Ltd.
Lake House, Colombo.

P R E F A C E

Buddhism in a Nutshell first appeared in 1933. Since then several editions were published by various philanthropic gentlemen for free distribution.

To the present edition which is based on the revised one of 1959, an explanation of the Noble Eightfold Path has been added.

For a fuller exposition of the subjects dealt with here, readers are kindly requested to read the revised and enlarged edition of *The Buddha and His Teachings*, published in 1964.

Permission may freely be obtained to reprint or to translate this book.

NĀRADA

Vajirarama
Colombo, Ceylon
July 1966

BUDDHISM IN A NUTSHELL

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahata Sammā-Sambuddhassa

Chapter I

THE BUDDHA

On the fullmoon day of May, in the year 623 B.C. there was born in the district of Nepal an Indian Sakya Prince named Siddhattha Gotama, who was destined to be the greatest religious teacher in the world. Brought up in the lap of luxury, receiving an education befitting a prince, he married and had a son.

His contemplative nature and boundless compassion did not permit him to enjoy the fleeting material pleasures of a Royal household. He knew no woe, but he felt a deep pity for sorrowing humanity. Amidst comfort and prosperity, he realized the universality of sorrow. The palace, with all its worldly amusements, was no longer a congenial place for the compassionate prince. The time was ripe for him to depart. Realizing the vanity of sensual enjoyments, in his twenty-ninth year, he renounced all worldly pleasures and donning the simple yellow garb of an ascetic, alone, penniless, wandered forth in search of Truth and Peace.

It was an unprecedented historic renunciation; for he renounced not in his old age but in the prime of manhood, not in poverty but in plenty. As it was the belief in the ancient days that no deliverance could be gained unless one leads a life of strict asceticism, he strenuously practised all forms of severe austerities. “Adding vigil after vigil, and penance after penance,” he made a superhuman effort for six long years.

His body was reduced to almost a skeleton. The more he tormented his body, the farther his goal receded from him. The painful, unsuccessful austerities which he strenuously practised proved absolutely futile. He was now fully convinced, through personal experience, of the utter futility of self-mortification which weakened his body and resulted in lassitude of spirit.

Benefiting by this invaluable experience of his, he finally decided to follow an independent course, avoiding the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. The former retards one's spiritual progress, and the latter weakens one's intellect. The new way which he himself discovered was the Middle Path, *Majjhimā Paṭipadā*, which subsequently became one of the salient characteristics of his teaching.

One happy morning, while He was deeply absorbed in meditation, unaided and unguided by any supernatural power and solely relying on His efforts and wisdom, He eradicated all defilements, purified Himself, and, realizing things as they truly are, attained Enlightenment (Buddhahood) at the age of 35. He was not born a Buddha,¹ but He became a Buddha by His own striving. As the perfect embodiment of all the virtues He preached, endowed with deep wisdom commensurate with His boundless compassion, He devoted the remainder of His precious life to serve humanity both by example and precept, dominated by no personal motive whatever.

After a very successful ministry of 45 long years the Buddha, as every other human being, succumbed to the inexorable law of change, and finally passed away in His 80th year, exhorting His disciples to regard His doctrine as their teacher.

The Buddha was a human being. As a man He was born, as a man He lived, and as a man His life came to an end. Though a human being, He became an extraordinary man (*Acchhariya Manussa*), but He never arrogated to Himself divinity. The Buddha laid stress on this important point

1 An Awakened or Enlightened One.

and left no room whatever for anyone to fall into the error of thinking that He was an immortal divine being. Fortunately there is no deification in the case of the Buddha. It should, however, be remarked that there was no Teacher, ‘‘ever so godless as the Buddha, yet none so god-like.’’

The Buddha is neither an incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu, as is believed by some, nor is He a saviour who freely saves others by His personal salvation. The Buddha exhorts His disciples to depend on themselves for their deliverance, for both purity and defilement depend on oneself. Clarifying His relationship with His followers and emphasizing the importance of self-reliance and individual striving, the Buddha plainly states: ‘‘You should exert yourselves, the Tathagatas² are only teachers’’.

The Buddhas point out the path, and it is left for us to follow that path to obtain our purification.

‘‘To depend on others for salvation is negative, but to depend on oneself is positive’’. Dependence on others means a surrender of one’s effort.

In exhorting His disciples to be self-dependent the Buddha says in the *Parinibbāna Sutta*: ‘‘Be ye islands unto yourselves, be ye a refuge unto yourselves, seek not for refuge in others.’’ These significant words are self-elevating. They reveal how vital is self-exertion to accomplish one’s object and, how superficial and futile is to seek redemption through benignant saviours and to crave for illusory happiness in an after-life through the propitiation of imaginary gods or by irresponsible prayers and meaningless sacrifices.

Furthermore, the Buddha does not claim the monopoly of Buddhahood which, as a matter of fact, is not the prerogative of any specially graced person. He reached the highest possible state of perfection any person could aspire to, and without the close-fist of a teacher He revealed the only straight path that leads thereto. According to the Teaching of the

2 Lit., Thus who hath come.

Buddha anybody may aspire to that supreme state of perfection if he makes the necessary exertion. The Buddha does not condemn men by calling them wretched sinners, but, on the contrary, He gladdens them by saying that they are pure in heart at conception. In His opinion the world is not wicked but is deluded by ignorance. Instead of disheartening His followers and reserving that exalted state only to Himself He encourages and induces them to emulate Him, for Buddhahood is latent in all. In one sense all are potential Buddhas.

One who aspires to become a Buddha is called a Bodhisatta, which, literally, means a wisdom-being. This Bodhisatta ideal is the most beautiful and the most refined course of life that has ever been presented to this ego-centric world, for what is nobler than a life of service and purity.

As a Man He attained Buddhahood and proclaimed to the world the latent inconceivable possibilities and the creative power of man. Instead of placing an unseen Almighty God over man who arbitrarily controls the destinies of mankind, and making him subservient to a supreme power, He raised the worth of mankind. It was He who taught that man can gain his deliverance and purification by his own exertion without depending on an external God or mediating priests. It was He who taught the ego-centric world the noble ideal of selfless service. It was He who revolted against the degrading caste system and taught equality of mankind and gave equal opportunities for all to distinguish themselves in every walk of life.

He declared that the gates of success and prosperity were open to all in every condition of life, high or low, saint or criminal, who would care to turn a new leaf and aspire to perfection.

Irrespective of caste, colour or rank He established for both deserving men and women a democratically constituted celibate Order. He did not force His followers to be slaves either to His Teachings or to Himself but granted complete freedom of thought.

He comforted the bereaved by His consoling words. He ministered to the sick that were deserted. He helped the poor that were neglected. He ennobled the lives of the deluded, purified the corrupted lives of criminals. He encouraged the feeble, united the divided, enlightened the ignorant, clarified the mystic, guided the benighted, elevated the base, dignified the noble. Both rich and poor, saints and criminals loved Him alike. Despotic and righteous kings, famous and obscure princes and nobles, generous and stingy millionaires, haughty and humble scholars, destitute paupers, down-trodden scavengers, wicked murderers, despised courtesans—all benefited by His words of wisdom and compassion.

His noble example was a source of inspiration to all. His serene and peaceful countenance was a soothing sight to the pious eyes. His message of Peace and Tolerance was welcomed by all with indescribable joy and was of eternal benefit to every one who had the fortune to hear and practise it.

Wherever His teaching penetrated it left an indelible impression upon the character of the respective peoples. The cultural advancement of all the Buddhist nations was mainly due to His sublime Teachings. In fact all Buddhist countries like Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Nepal, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, etc. grew up in the cradle of Buddhism. Though more than 2500 years have elapsed since the passing away of this greatest Teacher, yet His unique personality exerts a great influence on all who come to know Him.

His iron will, profound wisdom, universal love, boundless compassion, selfless service, historic renunciation, perfect purity, magnetic personality, exemplary methods employed to propagate the Teachings, and His final success—all these factors have compelled about one-fifth of the population of the world today to hail the Buddha as their supreme religious Teacher.

Paying a glowing tribute to the Buddha Sri Radhakrishnan states: ‘‘In Gautama the Buddha we have a master-mind from

the East second to none so far as the influence on the thought and life of the human race is concerned, and, sacred to all as the founder of a religious tradition whose hold is hardly less wide and deep than any other. He belongs to the history of the world's thought, to the general inheritance of all cultivated men, for, judged by intellectual integrity, moral earnestness, and spiritual insight, He is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures in history''.

In *The Three Greatest Men in History* H. G. Wells writes:-
“In the Buddha you see clearly a man, simple, devout, lonely, battling for light—a vivid human personality, not a myth. He too gave a message to mankind universal in character. Many of our best modern ideas are in closest harmony with it. All the miseries and discontents are due, he taught, to selfishness. Before a man can become serene he must cease to live for his senses or himself. Then he merges into a great being. Buddha in different language called men to self-forgetfulness 500 years before Christ. In some ways he is nearer to us and our needs. He was more lucid upon our individual importance and service than Christ and less ambiguous upon the question of personal immortality”.

St. Hilaire remarks “The perfect model of all the virtues He preaches...His life has not a stain upon it.”

Fausboll says—“The more I know Him, the more I love Him.”

A humble follower of his would say—“The more I know Him, the more I love Him; the more I love Him, the more I know Him.”

Chapter 2

THE DHAMMA

Is it a Philosophy?

The non-aggressive, moral and philosophical system expounded by the Buddha, which demands no blind faith from its adherents, expounds no dogmatic creeds, encourages no superstitious rites and ceremonies, but advocates a golden mean that guides a disciple through pure living and pure thinking to the gain of supreme wisdom and deliverance from all evil, is called the Dhamma and is popularly known as Buddhism.

The all-merciful Buddha has passed away, but the sublime Dhamma which He unreservedly bequeathed to humanity, still exists in its pristine purity.

Although the Master has left no written records of His Teachings, His distinguished disciples preserved them by committing to memory and transmitting them orally from generation to generation.

Immediately after His demise 500 chief Arahats¹ versed in the Dhamma² and Vinaya³, held a convocation to rehearse the Doctrine as was originally taught by the Buddha. Venerable Ananda Thera, who enjoyed the special privilege of hearing all the discourses, recited the Dhamma, while the Venerable Upali recited the Vinaya.

The *Tipiṭaka* was compiled and arranged in its present form by those Arahats of old.

1 Literally, the Worthy Ones. They are the enlightened disciples who have destroyed all passions.

2 The Teaching.

3 The Discipline.

During the reign of the pious Sinhala King Vattagamani Abhaya, about 83 B.C., the Tipitaka was, for the first time in the history of Buddhism, committed to writing on palm leaves (ola) in Ceylon.

This voluminous *Tipiṭaka*, which contains the essence of the Buddha's Teaching, is estimated to be about eleven times the size of the Bible. A striking contrast between the Tipitaka and the Bible is that the former is not a gradual development like the latter.

As the word itself implies the *Tipiṭaka* consists of three baskets. They are the Basket of Discipline (*Vinaya Piṭaka*), the Basket of Discourses (*Sutta Piṭaka*), and the Basket of Ultimate Doctrine (*Abhidhamma Piṭaka*).

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* which is regarded as the sheet anchor of the oldest historic celibate order—the Sangha—mainly deals with rules and regulations which the Buddha promulgated, as occasion arose, for the future discipline of the Order of monks (*Bhikkhus*) and nuns (*Bhikkhunis*). It describes in detail the gradual development of the *Sāsana* (Dispensation). An account of the life and ministry of the Buddha is also given. Indirectly it reveals some important and interesting information about ancient history, Indian customs, arts, science, etc.

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* consists of the five following books:—

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1. <i>Pārājika</i> Pāli—Major Offences | } | <i>Vibhanga</i> |
| 2. <i>Pācittiya</i> Pāli—Minor Offences | | |
| 3. <i>Mahāvagga</i> Pāli—Greater Section | } | <i>Khandaka</i> |
| 4. <i>Cullavagga</i> Pāli—Shorter Section | | |
| 5. <i>Parivāra</i> Pāli—Epitome of the Vinaya | | |

The *Sutta Piṭaka* consists chiefly of discourses, delivered by the Buddha Himself on various occasions. There are also a few discourses delivered by some of His distinguished disciples such as the Venerable Sariputta, Ananda, Moggallana

etc., included in it. It is like a book of prescriptions, as the sermons embodied therein were expounded to suit the different occasions and the temperaments of various persons. There may be seemingly contradictory statements, but they should not be misconstrued as they were opportunely uttered by the Buddha to suit a particular purpose: for instance, to the self-same question He would maintain silence (when the inquirer is merely foolishly inquisitive), or give a detailed reply when He knew the inquirer to be an earnest seeker. Most of the sermons were intended mainly for the benefit of Bhikkhus and they deal with the Holy life and with the exposition of the doctrine. There are also several other discourses which deal with both the material and moral progress of His lay followers.

This Piṭaka is divided into five Nikayas or collections, viz:—

1. *Dīgha Nikāya* (Collection of Long Discourses),
2. *Majjhima Nikāya* (Collection of Middle-length Discourses),
3. *Sanyutta Nikāya* (Collection of Kindred Sayings),
4. *Anguttara Nikāya* (Collection of Discourses arranged in accordance with numbers),
5. *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Smaller Collection).

The fifth is subdivided into fifteen books:

1. *Khuddaka Pāṭha* (Shorter Texts),
2. *Dhammapada* (Way of Truth),
3. *Udāna* (Paeans of Joy),
4. *Iti Vuttaka* (“Thus said” Discourses),
5. *Sutta Nipāta* (Collected Discourses),
6. *Vimāna Vatthu* (Stories of Celestial Mansions),
7. *Peta Vatthu* (Stories of Petas),
8. *Theragāthā* (Psalms of the Brethren),
9. *Therīgāthā* (Psalms of the Sisters),

10. *Jātaka* (Birth Stories),
11. *Niddesa* (Expositions),
12. *Paṭisambhidā Magga* (Analytical Knowledge),
13. *Apadāna* (Lives of Arahats),
14. *Buddhavaṃsa* (The History of the Buddha),
15. *Cariyā Piṭaka* (Modes of Conduct).

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is the most important and the most interesting of the three, containing as it does the profound philosophy of the Buddha's Teaching in contrast to the illuminating and simpler discourses in the Sutta Pitaka.

In the *Sutta Piṭaka* is found the conventional teaching (*vohāra desanā*) while in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is found the ultimate teaching (*paramattha-desanā*).

To the wise, Abhidhamma is an indispensable guide; to the spiritually evolved, an intellectual treat; and to research scholars, food for thought. Consciousness is defined. Thoughts are analysed and classified chiefly from an ethical standpoint. Mental states are enumerated. The composition of each type of consciousness is set forth in detail. How thoughts arise, is minutely described. Irrelevant problems that interest mankind but having no relation to one's purification, are deliberately set aside.

Matter is summarily discussed; fundamental units of matter, properties of matter, sources of matter, relationship between mind and matter, are explained.

The Abhidhamma investigates mind and matter, the two composite factors of the so-called being, to help the understanding of things as they truly are, and a philosophy has been developed on those lines. Based on that philosophy, an ethical system has been evolved, to realize the ultimate goal, Nibbana.

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* consists of seven books:—

1. *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* (Classification of Dhammas),
2. *Vibhanga* (The Book of Divisions),

3. *Kathā-Vatthu* (Points of Controversy),
4. *Puggala-Paññatti* (Description of Individuals),
5. *Dhātu-Kathā* (Discussion with reference to elements)
6. *Yamaka* (The Book of Pairs),
7. *Paṭṭhāna* (The Book of Relations)

In the Tipiṭaka one finds milk for the babe and meat for the strong, for the Buddha taught His doctrine both to the masses and to the intelligentsia. The sublime Dhamma enshrined in these sacred texts, deals with truths and facts, and is not concerned with theories and philosophies which may be accepted as profound truths today only to be thrown overboard tomorrow. The Buddha has presented us with no new astounding philosophical theories, nor did He venture to create any new material science. He explained to us what is within and without, so far as it concerns our emancipation, and ultimately expounded a path of deliverance, which is unique. Incidentally, He has, however, forestalled many a modern scientist and philosopher.

Schopenhauer in his ‘‘World as Will and Idea’’ has presented the truth of suffering and its cause in a Western garb. Spinoza, though he denies not the existence of a permanent reality, asserts that all phenomenal existence is transitory. In his opinion sorrow is conquered ‘‘by finding an object of knowledge which is not transient, not ephemeral, but is immutable, permanent, everlasting’’. Berkeley proved that the so-called indivisible atom is a metaphysical fiction. Hume, after a relentless analysis of the mind, concluded that consciousness consists of fleeting mental states. Bergson advocates the doctrine of change. Prof. James refers to a stream of consciousness.

The Buddha expounded these doctrines of Transiency, (*Anicca*), Sorrow (*Dukkha*), and No-Soul (*Anattā*) some 2500 years ago while He was sojourning in the valley of the Ganges.

It should be understood that the Buddha did not preach all that He knew. On one occasion while the Buddha was passing through a forest He took a handful of leaves and said: ‘‘O Bhikkhus, what I have taught is comparable to the leaves in my hand. What I have not taught is comparable to the amount of leaves in the forest.’’

He taught what He deemed was absolutely essential for one’s purification making no distinction between an esoteric and exoteric doctrine. He was characteristically silent on questions irrelevant to His noble mission.

Buddhism no doubt accords with science, but both should be treated as parallel teachings, since one deals mainly with material truths while the other confines itself to moral and spiritual truths. The subject matter of each is different.

The Dhamma He taught is not merely to be preserved in books, nor is it a subject to be studied from an historical or literary standpoint. On the contrary it is to be learnt and put into practice in the course of one’s daily life, for without practice one cannot appreciate the truth. The Dhamma is to be studied, and more to be practised, and above all to be realized: immediate realization is its ultimate goal. As such the Dhamma is compared to a raft which is meant for the sole purpose of escaping from the ocean of birth and death (*Samsāra*).

Buddhism, therefore, cannot strictly be called a mere philosophy because it is not merely the ‘‘love of, inducing the search after, wisdom’’. Buddhism may approximate a philosophy, but it is very much more comprehensive.

Philosophy deals mainly with knowledge and is not concerned with practice; whereas Buddhism lays special emphasis on practice and realization.

Chapter 3

IS IT A RELIGION?

It is neither a religion in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, for it is not “a system of faith and worship owing any allegiance to a supernatural being”.

Buddhism does not demand blind faith from its adherents. Here mere belief is dethroned and is substituted by confidence based on knowledge, which, in Pāli, is known as *Saddhā*. The confidence placed by a follower on the Buddha is like that of a sick person in a noted physician, or a student in his teacher. A Buddhist seeks refuge in the Buddha because it was He who discovered the Path of Deliverance.

A Buddhist does not seek refuge in the Buddha with the hope that he will be saved by His personal purification. The Buddha gives no such guarantee. It is not within the power of a Buddha to wash away the impurities of others. One could neither purify nor defile another.

The Buddha, as Teacher, instructs us, but we ourselves are directly responsible for our purification.

Although a Buddhist seeks refuge in the Buddha, he does not make any self-surrender. Nor does a Buddhist sacrifice his freedom of thought by becoming a follower of the Buddha. He can exercise his own free will and develop his knowledge even to the extent of becoming a Buddha himself.

The starting point of Buddhism is reasoning or understanding, or, in other words, *Sammā-Diṭṭhi*.

To the seekers of truth the Buddha says:

“Do not accept anything on (mere) hearsay—(i.e. thinking that thus have we heard it from a long time). Do not accept anything by mere tradition—(i.e. thinking that it has thus been handed down through many generations). Do not accept anything on account of mere rumours—(i.e. by believing what

others say without any investigation). Do not accept anything just because it accords with your scriptures. Do not accept anything by mere supposition. Do not accept anything by mere inference. Do not accept anything by merely considering the reasons. Do not accept anything merely because it agrees with your pre-conceived notions. Do not accept anything merely because it seems acceptable—(i.e., thinking that as the speaker seems to be a good person his word should be accepted). Do not accept anything thinking that the ascetic is respected by us (therefore it is right to accept his word).

“But when you know for yourselves—these things are immoral, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the wise, these things, when performed and undertaken conduce to ruin and sorrow—then indeed do you reject them’

“When you know for yourselves—these things are moral, these things are blameless, these things are praised by the wise, these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to well-being and happiness—then do you live acting accordingly.”

These inspiring words of the Buddha still retain their original force and freshness.

Though there is no blind faith, one might argue whether there is no worshipping of images etc. in Buddhism.

Buddhists do not worship an image expecting worldly or spiritual favours, but pay their reverence to what it represents.

An understanding Buddhist, in offering flowers and incense to an image, designedly makes himself feel that he is in the presence of the living Buddha and thereby gains inspiration from His noble personality and breathes deep His boundless compassion. He tries to follow His noble example.

The Bo-tree is also a symbol of Enlightenment. These external objects of reverence are not absolutely necessary, but they are useful as they tend to concentrate one's attention. An intellectual person could dispense with them as he could easily focus his attention and visualise the Buddha.

For our own good, and out of gratitude, we pay such external respect but what the Buddha expects from His disciple is not so much obeisance as the actual observance of His Teachings. The Buddha says—“He honours me best who practises my teaching best.” “He who sees the Dhamma sees me.”

With regard to images, however, Count Keyserling remarks—“I see nothing more grand in this world than the image of the Buddha. It is an absolutely perfect embodiment of spirituality in the visible domain”.

Furthermore, it must be mentioned that there are no petitional or intercessory prayers in Buddhism. However much we may pray to the Buddha we cannot be saved. The Buddha does not grant favours to those who pray to Him. Instead of petitional prayers there is meditation that leads to self-control, purification and enlightenment. Meditation is neither a silent reverie nor keeping the mind blank. It is an active striving. It serves as a tonic both to the heart and the mind. The Buddha not only speaks of the futility of offering prayers but also disparages a slave mentality. A Buddhist should not pray to be saved, but should rely on himself and win his freedom.

“Prayers take the character of private communications, selfish bargaining with God. It seeks for objects of earthly ambitions and inflames the sense of self. Meditation on the other hand is self-change”.¹

In Buddhism there is not, as in most other religions, an almighty God to be obeyed and feared. The Buddha does not believe in a cosmic potentate, omniscient and omnipresent. In Buddhism there are no divine revelations or divine messengers. A Buddhist is, therefore, not subservient to any higher supernatural power which controls his destinies and which arbitrarily rewards and punishes. Since Buddhists do not believe in revelations of a divine being Buddhism does not claim the monopoly of truth and does not condemn any

other religion. But Buddhism recognises the infinite latent possibilities of man and teaches that man can gain deliverance from suffering by his own efforts independent of divine help or mediating priests.

Buddhism cannot, therefore, strictly be called a religion because it is neither a system of faith and worship, nor “the outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a God or gods having power over their own destiny to whom obedience, service, and honour are due”.

If, by religion, is meant “a teaching which takes a view of life that is more than superficial, a teaching which looks into life and not merely at it, a teaching which furnishes men with a guide to conduct that is in accord with this its in-look, a teaching which enables those who give it heed to face life with fortitude and death with serenity”,² or a system to get rid of the ills of life, then it is certainly a religion of religions.

Chapter 4

IS BUDDHISM AN ETHICAL SYSTEM?

It no doubt contains an excellent ethical code which is unparalleled in its perfection and altruistic attitude. It deals with one way of life for the monks and another for the laity. But Buddhism is much more than an ordinary moral teaching. Morality is only the preliminary stage on the Path of Purity, and is a means to an end, but not an end in itself. Conduct, though essential, is itself insufficient to gain one's emancipation. It should be coupled with wisdom or knowledge (*Paññā*). The base of Buddhism is morality, and wisdom is its apex.

In observing the principles of morality a Buddhist should not only regard his own self but also should have a consideration for others as well—animals not excluded. Morality in Buddhism is not founded on any doubtful revelation nor is it the ingenious invention of an exceptional mind, but it is a rational and practical code based on verifiable facts and individual experience.

It should be mentioned that any external supernatural agency plays no part whatever in the moulding of the character of a Buddhist. In Buddhism there is no one to reward or punish. Pain or happiness are the inevitable results of one's actions. The question of incurring the pleasure or displeasure of a God does not enter the mind of a Buddhist. Neither hope of reward nor fear of punishment acts as an incentive to him to do good or to refrain from evil. A Buddhist is aware of future consequences, but he refrains from evil because it retards, does good because it aids progress to Enlightenment (Bodhi). There are also some who do good because it is good, refrain from evil because it is bad.

To understand the exceptionally high standard of morality the Buddha expects from His ideal followers, one must care-

fully read the Dhammapada, Sigalovada Sutta, Vyagghapajja Sutta, Mangala Sutta, Karaniya Sutta, Parabhava Sutta, Vasala Sutta, Dhammika Sutta, etc.

As a moral teaching it excels all other ethical systems, but morality is only the beginning and not the end of Buddhism.

In one sense Buddhism is not a philosophy, in another sense it is the philosophy of philosophies.

In one sense Buddhism is not a religion, in another sense it is the religion of religions.

Buddhism is neither a metaphysical path nor a ritualistic path.

It is neither sceptical nor dogmatic.

It is neither self-mortification nor self-indulgence.

It is neither pessimism nor optimism.

It is neither eternalism nor nihilism.

It is neither absolutely this-worldly nor other-worldly.

It is a unique Path of Enlightenment.

The original Pāli term for Buddhism is Dhamma, which, literally, means that which upholds. There is no English equivalent that exactly conveys the meaning of the Pāli term.

The Dhamma is that which really is. It is the Doctrine of Reality. It is a means of Deliverance from suffering, and Deliverance itself. Whether the Buddhas arise or not the Dhamma exists. It lies hidden from the ignorant eyes of men, till a Buddha, an Enlightened One, realizes and compassionately reveals it to the world.

This Dhamma is not something apart from oneself, but is closely associated with oneself. As such the Buddha exhorts:

“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 no external refuge” (*Parinibbāna Sutta.*)

Chapter 5

SOME SALIENT FEATURES OF BUDDHISM

The foundations of Buddhism are the four Noble Truths—namely, Suffering (the *raison d'être* of Buddhism), its cause, i.e. Craving, its end, i.e. Nibbana (the Summum Bonum of Buddhism), and the Middle Way.

What is the Noble Truth of Suffering?

“Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, to be united with the unpleasant is suffering, to be separated from the pleasant is suffering, not to receive what one craves for is suffering, in brief the five Aggregates of Attachment are suffering.

What is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering?

“It is the craving which leads from rebirth to rebirth accompanied by lust of passion, which delights now here now there; it is the craving for sensual pleasures (*Kāmatanḥā*), for existence (*Bhavatanḥā*)¹ and for annihilation (*Vibhava-tanḥā*).²

What is the Noble Truth of the Annihilation of Suffering?

“It is the remainderless, total annihilation of this very craving, the forsaking of it, the breaking loose, fleeing, deliverance from it.

What is the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Annihilation of Suffering?

“It is the Noble Eightfold Path which consists of right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right endeavour, right mindfulness, and right concentration’

1 Craving associated with “Eternalism” (*Sassatadiṭṭhi*) (Comy).

2 Craving associated with “Nihilism” (*Ucchedadiṭṭhi*) (Comy).

Whether the Buddhas arise or not these four Truths exist in the universe. The Buddhas only reveal these Truths which lay hidden in the dark abyss of time.

Scientifically interpreted, the Dhamma may be called the law of cause and effect. These two embrace the entire body of the Buddha's Teachings.

The first three represent the philosophy of Buddhism; the fourth represents the ethics of Buddhism, based on that philosophy. All these four truths are dependent on this body itself. The Buddha states:— "In this very one-fathom long body along with perceptions and thoughts, do I proclaim the world, the origin of the world, the end of the world and the path leading to the end of the world." Here the term world is applied to suffering.

Buddhism rests on the pivot of sorrow. But it does not thereby follow that Buddhism is pessimistic. It is neither totally pessimistic nor totally optimistic, but, on the contrary, it teaches a truth that lies midway between them. One would be justified in calling the Buddha a pessimist if He had only enunciated the Truth of suffering without suggesting a means to put an end to it. The Buddha perceived the universality of sorrow and did prescribe a panacea for this universal sickness of humanity. The highest conceivable happiness, according to the Buddha, is Nibbana, which is the total extinction of suffering.

The author of the article on Pessimism in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* writes: "Pessimism denotes an attitude of hopelessness towards life, a vague general opinion that pain and evil predominate in human affairs. The original doctrine of the Buddha is in fact as optimistic as any optimism of the West. To call it pessimism is merely to apply to it a characteristically Western principle to which happiness is impossible without personality. The true Buddhist looks forward with enthusiasm to absorption into eternal bliss".

Ordinarily the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is the highest and only happiness of the average man. There is no doubt a

kind of momentary happiness in the anticipation, gratification and retrospection of such fleeting material pleasures, but they are illusive and temporary. According to the Buddha non-attachment is a greater bliss.

The Buddha does not expect His followers to be constantly pondering on suffering and lead a miserable unhappy life. He exhorts them to be always happy and cheerful, for zest (*Pīti*) is one of the factors of Enlightenment.

Real happiness is found within, and is not to be defined in terms of wealth, children, honours or fame. If such possessions are misdirected, forcibly or unjustly obtained, misappropriated or even viewed with attachment, they will be a source of pain and sorrow to the possessors.

Instead of trying to rationalise suffering, Buddhism takes suffering for granted and seeks the cause to eradicate it. Suffering exists as long as there is craving. It can only be annihilated by treading the Noble Eightfold Path and attaining the supreme bliss of Nibbana.

These four Truths can be verified by experience. Hence the Buddha Dhamma is not based on the fear of the unknown, but is founded on the bedrock of facts which can be tested by ourselves and verified by experience. Buddhism is, therefore, rational and intensely practical.

Such a rational and practical system cannot contain mysteries or esoteric doctrines. Blind faith, therefore, is foreign to Buddhism. Where there is no blind faith there cannot be any coercion or persecution or fanaticism. To the unique credit of Buddhism it must be said that throughout its peaceful march of 2500 years no drop of blood was shed in the name of the Buddha, no mighty monarch wielded his powerful sword to propagate the Dhamma, and no conversion was made either by force or by repulsive methods. Yet, the Buddha was the first and the greatest missionary that lived on earth.

Aldous Huxley writes:—“Alone of all the great world religions Buddhism made its way without persecution, censorship or inquisition.”

Lord Russell remarks:—“Of the great religions of history, I prefer Buddhism, especially in its earliest forms; because it has had the smallest element of persecution.”

In the name of Buddhism no altar was reddened with the blood of a Hypatia, no Bruno was burnt alive.

Buddhism appeals more to the intellect than to the emotion. It is concerned more with the character of the devotees than with their numerical strength.

On one occasion Upali, a follower of Nigantha Nataputta, approached the Buddha and was so pleased with the Buddha's exposition of the Dhamma that he instantly expressed his desire to become a follower of the Buddha. But the Buddha cautioned him, saying:—

“Of a verity, O householder, make a thorough investigation. It is well for a distinguished man like you to make (first) a thorough investigation.”

Upali, who was overjoyed at this unexpected remark of the Buddha, said “Lord, had I been a follower of another religion, its adherents would have taken me round the streets in a procession proclaiming that such and such a millionaire had renounced his former faith and embraced theirs. But, Lord, Your Reverence advises me to investigate further. The more pleased am I with this remark of yours. For the second time, Lord, I seek refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha”

Buddhism is saturated with this spirit of free enquiry and complete tolerance. It is the teaching of the open mind and the sympathetic heart, which, lighting and warming the whole universe with its twin rays of wisdom and compassion, sheds its genial glow on every being struggling in the ocean of birth and death.

The Buddha was so tolerant that He did not even exercise His power to give commandments to His lay followers. Instead of using the imperative, He said:— “It behoves you

to do this—It behoves you not to do this''. He commands not but does exhort.

This tolerance the Buddha extended to men, women and all living beings.

It was the Buddha who first attempted to abolish slavery and vehemently protested against the degrading caste-system which was firmly rooted in the soil of India . In the Word of the Buddha it is not by mere birth one becomes an outcast or a noble, but by one's actions. Caste or colour does not preclude one from becoming a Buddhist or from entering the Order. Fishermen, scavengers, courtesans, together with warriors and Brahmins, were freely admitted to the Order and enjoyed equal privileges and were also given positions of rank. Upali, the barber for instance, was made in preference to all others the chief in matters pertaining to Vinaya discipline. The timid Sunita, the scavenger, who attained Arahatsip was admitted by the Buddha Himself into the Order. Angulimala, the robber and criminal, was converted to a compassionate saint. The fierce Alavaka sought refuge in the Buddha and became a saint. The courtesan Ambapali entered the Order and attained Arahatsip. Such instances could easily be multiplied from the Tipitaka to show that the portals of Buddhism were wide open to all, irrespective of caste, colour or rank.

It was also the Buddha who raised the status of downtrodden women and not only brought them to a realization of their importance to society but also founded the first celibate religious order for women with rules and regulations.

The Buddha did not humiliate women, but only regarded them as feeble by nature. He saw the innate good of both men and women and assigned to them their due places in His teaching . Sex is no barrier to attaining Sainthood.

Sometimes the Pāli term used to denote women is ‘‘*Mātu-gāma*’’ which means mother-folk or society of mothers. As a mother, woman holds an honourable place in Buddhism.

Even the wife is regarded as ‘‘the best friend’’ (*paramā sakhā*) of the husband.

Hasty critics are only making ex parte statements when they reproach Buddhism with being inimical to women. Although at first the Buddha refused to admit women into the Order on reasonable grounds, yet later He yielded to the entreaties of His foster-mother, Pajapati Gotami, and founded the Bhikkhuni Order. Just as the Arahats Sāriputta and Moggallāna were made the two chief disciples in the Order of monks, even so He appointed Arahats Khemā and Uppalavannā as the two chief female disciples. Many other female disciples too were named by the Buddha Himself as His distinguished and pious followers.

On one occasion the Buddha said to King Kosala who was displeased on hearing that a daughter was born to him:—

‘‘A woman child, O Lord of men, may prove
Even a better offspring than a male’’.

Many women, who otherwise would have fallen into oblivion, distinguished themselves in various ways, and gained their emancipation by following the Dhamma and entering the Order. In this new Order, which later proved to be a great blessing to many women, queens, princesses, daughters of noble families, widows, bereaved mothers, destitute women, pitiable courtesans—all, despite their caste or rank, met on a common platform, enjoyed perfect consolation and peace, and breathed that free atmosphere which is denied to those cloistered in cottages and palatial mansions.

It was also the Buddha who banned the sacrifice of poor beasts and admonished His followers to extend their loving kindness (*Mettā*) to all living beings—even to the tiniest creature that crawls at one’s feet. No man has the power or the right to destroy the life of another as life is precious to all.

A genuine Buddhist would exercise this loving-kindness towards every living being and identify himself with all, making

no distinction whatsoever with regard to caste, colour or sex.

It is this Buddhist Mettā that attempts to break all the barriers which separate one from another. There is no reason to keep aloof from others merely because they belong to another persuasion or another nationality. In that noble Toleration Edict which is based on *Culla-Vyūha* and *Mahā-Vyūha* Suttas, Asoka says: “Concourse alone is best, that is, all should harken willingly to the doctrine professed by others”.

Buddhism is not confined to any country or any particular nation. It is universal. It is not nationalism which, in other words, is another form of caste system founded on a wider basis. Buddhism, if it be permitted to say so, is super-nationalism.

To a Buddhist there is no far or near, no enemy or foreigner, no renegade or untouchable, since universal love realised through understanding has established the brotherhood of all living beings. A real Buddhist is a citizen of the world. He regards the whole world as his motherland and all as his brothers and sisters.

Buddhism is, therefore, unique, mainly owing to its tolerance, non-aggressiveness, rationality, practicability, efficacy and universality. It is the noblest of all unifying influences and the only lever that can uplift the world.

These are some of the salient features of Buddhism, and amongst some of the fundamental doctrines may be said—Kamma or the Law of Moral Causation, the Doctrine of Rebirth, Anatta and Nibbana.

Chapter 6

KAMMA OR THE LAW OF MORAL CAUSATION

We are faced with a totally ill-balanced world. We perceive the inequalities and manifold destinies of men and the numerous grades of beings that exist in the universe. We see one born into a condition of affluence, endowed with fine mental, moral and physical qualities and another into a condition of abject poverty and wretchedness. Here is a man virtuous and holy, but, contrary to his expectation, ill-luck is ever ready to greet him. The wicked world runs counter to his ambitions and desires. He is poor and miserable in spite of his honest dealings and piety. There is another vicious and foolish, but accounted to be fortune's darling. He is rewarded with all forms of favours, despite his shortcomings and evil modes of life.

Why, it may be questioned, should one be an inferior and another a superior? Why should one be wrested from the hands of a fond mother when he has scarcely seen a few summers, and another should perish in the flower of manhood, or at the ripe age of eighty or hundred? Why should one be sick and infirm, and another strong and healthy? Why should one be handsome, and another ugly and hideous, repulsive to all? Why should one be brought up in the lap of luxury, and another in absolute poverty, steeped in misery? Why should one be born a millionaire and another a pauper? Why should one be a mental prodigy, and another an idiot? Why should one be born with saintly characteristics, and another with criminal tendencies? Why should some be linguists, artists, mathematicians or musicians from the very cradle? Why should some be congenitally blind, deaf and deformed? Why should some be blessed and others cursed from their birth?

These are some problems that perplex the minds of all thinking men. How are we to account for all this unevenness of the world, this inequality of mankind?

Is it due to the work of blind chance or accident?

There is nothing in this world that happens by blind chance or accident. To say that anything happens by chance, is no more true than that this book has come here of itself. Strictly speaking, nothing happens to man that he does not deserve for some reason or other.

Could this be the fiat of an irresponsible Creator?

Huxley writes:—"If we are to assume that anybody has designedly set this wonderful universe going, it is perfectly clear to me that he is no more entirely benevolent and just, in any intelligible sense of the words, than that he is malevolent and unjust".

According to Einstein: "If this being (God) is omnipotent, then every occurrence, including every human action, every human thought, and every human feeling and aspiration is also his work; how is it possible to think of holding men responsible for their deeds and thoughts before such an Almighty Being?

"In giving out punishments and rewards, he would to a certain extent be passing judgment on himself. How can this be combined with the goodness and righteousness ascribed to him?

"According to the theological principles man is created arbitrarily and without his desire and at the moment of his creation is either blessed or damned eternally. Hence man is either good or evil, fortunate or unfortunate, noble or depraved. from the first step in the process of his physical creation to the moment of his last breath, regardless of his individual desires, hopes, ambitions, struggles or devoted prayers. Such is theological fatalism" (Spencer Lewis)

As Charles Bradlaugh says:—"The existence of evil is a terrible stumbling block to the Theist. Pain, misery, crime, poverty confront the advocate of eternal goodness and chal-

lenge with unanswerable potency his declaration of Deity as all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful”.

In the words of Schopenhauer:—“Whoever regards himself as having become out of nothing must also think that he will again become nothing; for an eternity has passed before he was, and then a second eternity had begun, through which he will never cease to be, is a monstrous thought.

“If birth is the absolute beginning, then death must be his absolute end; and the assumption that man is made out of nothing leads necessarily to the assumption that death is his absolute end.”

Commenting on human sufferings and God, Prof. J. B. S. Haldane writes:—“Either suffering is needed to perfect human character, or God is not Almighty. The former theory is disproved by the fact that some people who have suffered very little but have been fortunate in their ancestry and education have very fine characters. The objection to the second is that it is only in connection with the universe as a whole that there is any intellectual gap to be filled by the postulation of a deity. And a creator could presumably create whatever he or it wanted”.

Lord Russell states:—“The world, we are told, was created by a God who is both good and omnipotent. Before He created the world He foresaw all the pain and misery that it would contain. He is therefore responsible for all of it. It is useless to argue that the pain in the world is due to sin... If God knew in advance the sins of which man would be guilty, He was clearly responsible for all the consequences of those sins when He decided to create man.”

In ‘Despair’, a poem of his old age, Lord Tennyson thus boldly attacks God, who, as recorded in Isaiah, says, “I make peace and create evil”. (Isaiah, xiv. 7).

“What! I should call on that infinite love that has
served us so well?

Infinite cruelty, rather, that made everlasting hell,

Made us, foreknew us, foredoomed us, and does what
he will with his own.

Better our dead brute mother who never has heard us
groan''.

Surely "the doctrine that all men are sinners and have the essential sin of Adam is a challenge to justice, mercy, love and omnipotent fairness".

Some writers of old authoritatively declared that God created man in his own image. Some modern thinkers state, on the contrary, that man created God in his own image. With the growth of civilization man's concept of God also became more and more refined.

It is, however, impossible to conceive of such a being either in or outside the universe.

Could this variation be due to heredity and environment? One must admit that all such chemico-physical phenomena revealed by scientists, are partly instrumental, but they cannot be solely responsible for the subtle distinctions and vast differences that exist amongst individuals. Yet why should identical twins who are physically alike, inheriting like genes, enjoying the same privilege of upbringing, be very often temperamentally, morally and intellectually totally different?

Heredity alone cannot account for these vast differences. Strictly speaking, it accounts more plausibly for their similarities than for most of the differences. The infinitesimally minute chemico-physical germ, which is about 30 millionth part of an inch across, inherited from parents, explains only a portion of man, his physical foundation. With regard to the more complex and subtle mental, intellectual and moral differences we need more enlightenment. The theory of heredity cannot give a satisfactory explanation for the birth of a criminal in a long line of honourable ancestors, the birth of a saint or a noble man in a family of evil repute, for the arising

of infant prodigies, men of genius and great religious teachers.

According to Buddhism this variation is due not only to heredity, environment, ‘‘nature and nurture’’, but also to our own kamma, or in other words, to the result of our own inherited past actions and our present deeds. We ourselves are responsible for our own deeds, happiness and misery. We build our own hells. We create our own heavens. We are the architects of our own fate. In short we ourselves are our own kamma.

¹On one occasion a certain young man named Subha approached the Buddha, and questioned why and wherefore it was that among human beings there are the low and high states.

‘‘For’’, said he, ‘‘we find amongst mankind those of brief life and those of long life, the hale and the ailing, the good-looking and the ill-looking, the powerful and the powerless, the poor and the rich, the low-born and the high-born, the ignorant and the intelligent’’.

The Buddha briefly replied: ‘‘Every living being has kamma as its own, its inheritance, its cause, its kinsman, its refuge. Kamma is that which differentiates all living beings into low and high states’’.

He then explained the cause of such differences in accordance with the law of moral causation.

Thus from a Buddhist standpoint, our present mental, intellectual, moral and temperamental differences are mainly due to our own actions and tendencies, both past and present.

Kamma, literally, means action; but, in its ultimate sense, it means the meritorious and demeritorious volition (*Kusala Akusala Cetanā*). Kamma constitutes both good and evil. Good begets good. Evil begets evil. Like attracts like. This is the law of Kamma.

1 *Cūlakamma Vibhanga Sutta—Majjhima Nikāya No. 135.*

As some Westerners prefer to say Kamma is ‘‘action-influence’’.

We reap what we have sown. What we sow we reap somewhere or somewhen. In one sense we are the result of what we were; we will be the result of what we are. In another sense, we are not totally the result of what we were; we will not absolutely be the result of what we are. For instance, a criminal today may be a saint tomorrow.

Buddhism attributes this variation to Kamma, but it does not assert that everything is due to Kamma.

If everything were due to Kamma, a man must ever be bad, for it is his Kamma to be bad. One need not consult a physician to be cured of a disease, for if one’s Kamma is such one will be cured.

According to Buddhism, there are five orders or processes (*Niyāmas*) which operate in the physical and mental realms:—

i. *Kamma Niyāma*, order of act and result, e.g. desirable and undesirable acts produce corresponding good and bad results.

ii. *Utu Niyāma*, physical (inorganic) order, e.g. seasonal phenomena of winds and rains.

iii. *Bīja Niyāma*, order of germs or seeds (physical organic order); e.g., rice produced from rice-seed, sugary taste from sugar cane or honey etc. The scientific theory of cells and genes and the physical similarity of twins may be ascribed to this order.

iv. *Citta Niyāma*, order of mind or psychic law, e.g., processes of consciousness (*Citta Vīthi*), power of mind, etc.

v. *Dhamma Niyāma*, order of the norm, e.g. the natural phenomena occurring at the advent of a Bodhisatta in his last birth, gravitation, etc.

Every mental or physical phenomenon could be explained by these all-embracing five orders or processes which are laws in themselves.

Kamma is, therefore, only one of the five orders that prevail in the universe. It is a law in itself, but it does not thereby follow that there should be a law-giver. Ordinary laws of nature, like gravitation, need no law-giver. It operates in its own field without the intervention of an external independent ruling agency.

Nobody, for instance, has decreed that fire should burn. Nobody has commanded that water should seek its own level. No scientist has ordered that water should consist of H_2O , and that coldness should be one of its properties. These are their intrinsic characteristics. Kamma is neither fate nor predestination imposed upon us by some mysterious unknown power to which we must helplessly submit ourselves. It is one's own doing reacting on oneself, and so one has the possibility to divert the course of Kamma to some extent. How far one diverts it depends on oneself.

It must also be said that such phraseology as rewards and punishments should not be allowed to enter into discussions concerning the problem of Kamma. For Buddhism does not recognise an Almighty Being who rules His subjects and rewards and punishes them accordingly. Buddhists, on the contrary, believe that sorrow and happiness one experiences are the natural outcome of one's own good and bad actions. It should be stated that Kamma has both the continuative and the retributive principle.

Inherent in Kamma is the potentiality of producing its due effect. The cause produces the effect; the effect explains the cause. Seed produces the fruit; the fruit explains the seed as both are inter-related. Even so Kamma and its effect are inter-related; "the effect already blooms in the cause".

A Buddhist who is fully convinced of the doctrine of Kamma does not pray to another to be saved but confidently relies on himself for his purification because it teaches individual responsibility.

It is this doctrine of Kamma that gives him consolation, hope, self-reliance and, moral courage. It is this belief in

Kamma “that validates his effort, kindles his enthusiasm”, makes him ever kind, tolerant and considerate. It is also this firm belief in Kamma that prompts him to refrain from evil, do good and be good without being frightened of any punishment or tempted by any reward.

It is this doctrine of Kamma that can explain the problem of suffering, the mystery of so-called fate or predestination of other religions, and above all the inequality of mankind.

Kamma and rebirth are accepted as axiomatic.

Chapter 7

RE-BIRTH

As long as this Kammic force exists there is re-birth, for beings are merely the visible manifestation of this invisible Kammic force. Death is nothing but the temporary end of this temporary phenomenon. It is not the complete annihilation of this so-called being. The organic life has ceased, but the Kammic force which hitherto actuated it has not been destroyed. As the Kammic force remains entirely undisturbed by the disintegration of the fleeting body, the passing away of the present dying thought-moment only conditions a fresh consciousness in another birth.

It is Kamma, rooted in ignorance and craving, that conditions rebirth. Past Kamma conditions the present birth; and present Kamma, in combination with past Kamma, conditions the future. The present is the offspring of the past, and becomes, in turn, the parent of the future.

If we postulate a past, present, and a future life, then we are at once faced with the alleged mysterious problem—‘What is the ultimate origin of life?’

Either there must be a beginning or there cannot be a beginning for life.

One school, in attempting to solve the problem, postulates a first cause, God, viewed as a force or as an Almighty Being.

Another school denies a first cause for, in common experience, the cause ever becomes the effect and the effect becomes the cause. In a circle of cause and effect a first cause is inconceivable. According to the former, life has had a beginning, according to the latter, it is beginningless.

From the scientific standpoint, we are the direct products of the sperm and ovum cells provided by our parents. As such life precedes life. With regard to the origin of the

first protoplasm of life, or colloid, scientists plead ignorance.

According to Buddhism we are born from the matrix of action (Kammayoni). Parents merely provide an infinitesimally small cell. As such being precedes being. At the moment of conception it is past Kamma that conditions the initial consciousness that vitalizes the foetus. It is this invisible Kammic energy, generated from the past birth that produces mental phenomena and the phenomenon of life in an already extant physical phenomenon, to complete the trio that constitutes man.

For a being to be born here a being must die somewhere. The birth of a being, which strictly means the arising of the five aggregates or psycho-physical phenomena in this present life, corresponds to the death of a being in a past life; just as, in conventional terms, the rising of the sun in one place means the setting of the sun in another place. This enigmatic statement may be better understood by imagining life as a wave and not as a straight line. Birth and death are only two phases of the same process. Birth precedes death, and death, on the other hand, precedes birth. The constant succession of birth and death in connection with each individual life flux constitutes what is technically known as *Samsāra*—recurrent wandering.

What is the ultimate origin of life?

The Buddha declares:—“Without cognizable end is this *Samsāra*. A first beginning of beings, who, obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, wander and fare on, is not to be perceived”.

This life-stream flows *ad infinitum*, as long as it is fed by the muddy waters of ignorance and craving. When these two are completely cut off, then only, if one so wishes, does the stream cease to flow, rebirth ends as in the case of the Buddhas and Arahats. An ultimate beginning of this life-stream cannot be determined, as a stage cannot be perceived when this life-force was not fraught with ignorance and craving.

The Buddha has here referred merely to the beginning of the life-stream of living beings. It is left to scientists to speculate on the origin and the evolution of the universe. The Buddha does not attempt to solve all the ethical and philosophical problems that perplex mankind. Nor does He deal with theories and speculations that tend neither to edification nor to enlightenment. Nor does He demand blind faith from His adherents anent a First Cause. He is chiefly concerned with the problem of suffering and its destruction. With but this one practical and specific purpose in view, all irrelevant side issues are completely ignored.

But how are we to believe that there is a past existence?

The most valuable evidence Buddhists cite in favour of rebirth is the Buddha, for He developed a knowledge which enabled Him to read past and future lives.

Following His instructions, His disciples also developed this knowledge and were able to read their past lives to a great extent.

Even some Indian Rishis, before the advent of the Buddha, were distinguished for such psychic powers as clairaudience, clairvoyance, thought-reading, remembering past births etc.

There are also some persons, who probably in accordance with the laws of association, spontaneously develop the memory of their past birth, and remember fragments of their previous lives. Such cases are very rare, but those few well-attested, respectable cases tend to throw some light on the idea of a past birth. So are the experiences of some modern dependable psychists and strange cases of alternating and multiple personalities.

In hypnotic states some relate experiences of their past lives; while a few others, read the past lives of others and even heal diseases.¹

Sometimes we get strange experiences which cannot be explained but by rebirth.

1 See—*Many Mansions* and *The World Within* by Gina Cerminara

How often do we meet persons whom we have never met, and yet instinctively feel that they are quite familiar to us? How often do we visit places, and yet feel impressed that we are perfectly acquainted with those surroundings?

The Buddha tells us:—

“Through previous associations or present advantage, that old love springs up again like the lotus in the water”.

Experiences of some reliable modern psychists, ghostly phenomena, spirit communications, strange alternating and multiple personalities and so on shed some light upon this problem of rebirth.

Into this world come Perfect Ones like the Buddhas and highly developed personalities. Do they evolve suddenly? Can they be the products of a single existence?

How are we to account for great characters like Buddha-ghosa, Panini, Kalidasa, Homer and Plato, men of genius like Shakespeare, infant prodigies like Pascal, Mozart, Beethoven, Raphael, Ramanujan, etc.?

Heredity alone cannot account for them. “Else their ancestry would disclose it, their posterity, even greater than themselves, demonstrate it”.

Could they rise to such lofty heights if they had not lived noble lives and gained similar experiences in the past? Is it by mere chance that they are born of those particular parents and placed under those favourable circumstances?

The few years that we are privileged to spend here, or for the most five score years, must certainly be an inadequate preparation for eternity.

If one believes in the present and in the future, it is quite logical to believe in the past. The present is the offspring of the past, and acts in turn as the parent of the future.

If there are reasons to believe that we have existed in the past, then surely there are no reasons to disbelieve that we shall

continue to exist after our present life has apparently ceased.

It is indeed a strong argument in favour of past and future lives that “in this world virtuous persons are very often unfortunate and vicious persons prosperous.”

A Western writer says:

“Whether we believe in a past existence or not, it forms the only reasonable hypothesis which bridges certain gaps in human knowledge concerning certain facts of every day life. Our reason tells us that this idea of past birth and Kamma alone can explain the degrees of difference that exist between twins, how men like Shakespeare with a very limited experience are able to portray with marvellous exactitude the most diverse types of human character, scenes and so forth of which they could have no actual knowledge, why the work of the genius invariably transcends his experience, the existence of infant precocity, the vast diversity in mind and morals, in brain and physique, in conditions, circumstances and environment observable throughout the world, and so forth”.

It should be stated that this doctrine of rebirth can neither be proved nor disproved experimentally, but it is accepted as an evidentially verifiable fact.

The cause of this Kamma, continues the Buddha, is *avijjā* or ignorance of the Four Noble Truths. Ignorance is, therefore, the cause of birth and death; and its transmutation into knowingness or *vijjā* is consequently their cessation.

The result of this analytical method is summed up in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

Chapter 8

PATICCA SAMUPPADA

Paṭicca means because of, or dependent upon: *Samuppāda* “arising or origination”. *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, therefore, literally means—“Dependent-Arising” or “Dependent Origination”.

It must be borne in mind that *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is only a discourse on the process of birth and death and not a theory of the ultimate origin of life. It deals with the cause of rebirth and suffering, but it does not in the least attempt to show the evolution of the world from primordial matter.

Ignorance (*Avijjā*) is the first link or cause of the wheel of life. It clouds all right understanding.

Dependent on ignorance of the Four Noble Truths arise activities (*Sankhārā*)—both moral and immoral. The activities whether good or bad rooted in ignorance which must necessarily have their due effects, only tend to prolong life’s wandering. Nevertheless, good actions are essential to get rid of the ills of life.

Dependent on activities arises re-birth consciousness (*Viññāṇa*). This links the past with the present.

Simultaneous with the arising of rebirth-consciousness there come into being mind and body (*Nāma-rūpa*).

The six senses (*Salāyatana*) are the inevitable consequences of mind and body.

Because of the six senses contact (*Phassa*) sets in. Contact leads to feeling (*Vedanā*).

These five, viz., consciousness, mind and matter, six senses, contact and feeling are the effects of past actions and are called the passive side of life.

Dependent on feeling arises craving (*Tanhā*). Craving results in grasping (*Upādāna*). Grasping is the cause of

Kamma (*Bhava*) which in its turn, conditions future birth (*Jāti*). Birth is the inevitable cause of old age and death (*Jarā-maraṇa*).

If on account of cause effect comes to be, then if the cause ceases, the effect also must cease.

The reverse order of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* will make the matter clear.

Old age and death are possible in, and with, a psycho-physical organism. Such an organism must be born; therefore it pre-supposes birth. But birth is the inevitable result of past deeds or Kamma. Kamma is conditioned by grasping which is due to craving. Such craving can appear only where feeling exists. Feeling is the outcome of contact between the senses and objects. Therefore it presupposes organs of senses which cannot exist without mind and body. Where there is a mind there is consciousness. It is the result of past good and evil. The acquisition of good and evil is due to ignorance of things as they truly are.

The whole formula may be summed up thus:—

Dependent on Ignorance	arise	Activities (Moral and Immoral).
„	„	Activities arises Consciousness (Re-birth Consciousness).
„	„	Consciousness arise Mind and Matter.
„	„	Mind and Matter arise the six Spheres of Sense.
„	„	the Six Spheres of Sense arises Contact.
„	„	Contact arises Feeling.
„	„	Feeling arises Craving.
„	„	Craving arises Grasping.
„	„	Grasping arise Actions (Kamma).
„	„	Actions arises Re-birth.
„	„	Birth arise Decay, Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief and Despair.

Thus does the entire aggregate of suffering arise. The first two of these twelve pertain to the past, the middle eight to the present, and the last two to the future.

The complete cessation of Ignorance leads to the cessation of Activities.

The cessation of Activities leads to the cessation of Consciousness.

„ „ „ Consciousness leads to the cessation of mind and matter.

„ „ „ Mind and Matter leads to the cessation of the six Spheres of Sense.

„ „ „ the six Spheres of Sense leads to the cessation of contact.

„ „ „ Contact leads to the cessation of Feeling.

„ „ „ Feeling leads to the cessation of Craving.

„ „ „ Craving leads to the cessation of Grasping.

„ „ „ Grasping leads to the cessation of Actions.

„ „ „ Actions leads to the cessation of Re-birth.

„ „ „ Re-birth leads to the cessation of Decay, Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief, and Despair.

Thus does the cessation of this entire aggregate of suffering result.

This process of cause and effect continues ad infinitum. The beginning of this process cannot be determined as it is impossible to say whence this life-flux was encompassed by nescience. But when this nescience is turned into knowledge, and the life-flux is diverted into Nibbāna-dhātu, then the end of the life process or *Samsāra* comes about.

Chapter 9

ANATTA OR SOUL-LESSNESS

This Buddhist doctrine of re-birth should be distinguished from the theory of re-incarnation which implies the transmigration of a soul and its invariable material rebirth. Buddhism denies the existence of an unchanging or eternal soul created by a God or emanating from a Divine Essence (*Param-ātmā*).

If the immortal soul, which is supposed to be the essence of man, is eternal, there cannot be either a rise or a fall. Besides one cannot understand why “different souls are so variously constituted at the outset”.

To prove the existence of endless felicity in an eternal heaven and unending torments in an eternal hell, an immortal soul is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, what is it that is punished in hell or rewarded in heaven?

“It should be said”, writes Bertrand Russell, “that the old distinction between soul and body has evaporated quite as much because ‘matter’ has lost its solidity as mind has lost its spirituality. Psychology is just beginning to be scientific. In the present state of psychology belief in immortality can at any rate claim no support from science”.

Buddhists do agree with Russell when he says “there is obviously some reason in which I am the same person as I was yesterday, and, to take an even more obvious example, if I simultaneously see a man and hear him speaking, there is some sense in which the ‘I’ that sees is the same as the ‘I’ that hears”.

Till recently scientists believed in an indivisible and indestructible atom. “For sufficient reasons physicists have reduced this atom to a series of events. For equally good reasons psychologists find that mind has not the identity of a

single continuing thing but is a series of occurrences bound together by certain intimate relations. The question of immortality, therefore, has become the question whether these intimate relations exist between occurrences connected with a living body and other occurrences which take place after that body is dead''.

As C. E. M. Joad says in 'The Meaning of Life', matter has since disintegrated under our very eyes. It is no longer solid; it is no longer enduring, it is no longer determined by compulsive causal laws; and more important than all, it is no longer known.

The so-called atoms, it seems, are both "divisible and destructible''. The electrons and protons that compose atoms "can meet and annihilate one another while their persistence, such as it is, is rather that of a wave lacking fixed boundaries, and in process of continual change both as regards shape and position than that of a thing."'¹

Bishop Berkeley who showed that this so-called atom is a metaphysical fiction held that there exists a spiritual substance called the soul.

Hume, for instance, looked into consciousness and perceived that there was nothing except fleeting mental states and concluded that the supposed 'permanent ego' is non-existent.

"There are some philosophers'', he says, "who imagine we are every moment conscious of what we call 'ourselves', that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence and so we are certain...both of its perfect identity and simplicity. For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call 'myself' I always stumble on some particular perception or other—of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself...and never can observe anything but the perception...nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect non-entity''.

1 C.E.M. Joad, *The Meaning of Life*.

Bergson says, "All consciousness is time existence; and a conscious state is not a state that endures without changing. It is a change without ceasing, when change ceases it ceases; it is itself nothing but change."

Dealing with this question of soul Prof. James says— "The soul-theory is a complete superfluity, so far as accounting for the actually verified facts of conscious experience goes. So far no one can be compelled to subscribe to it for definite scientific reasons". In concluding his interesting chapter on the soul he says:— "And in this book the provisional solution which we have reached must be the final word: the thoughts themselves are the thinkers".

Watson, a distinguished psychologist, states:— "No one has ever touched a soul or has seen one in a test tube, or has in any way come into relationship with it as he has with the other objects of his daily experience. Nevertheless to doubt its existence is to become a heretic and once might possibly even had led to the loss of one's head. Even today a man holding a public position dare not question it".

The Buddha anticipated these facts some 2500 years ago.

According to Buddhism mind is nothing but a complex compound of fleeting mental states. One unit of consciousness consists of three phases—arising or genesis (*uppāda*) static or development (*ṭhiti*), and cessation or dissolution (*bhanga*). Immediately after the cessation stage of a thought-moment there occurs the genesis stage of the subsequent thought-moment. Each momentary consciousness of this ever-changing life-process, on passing away, transmits its whole energy, all the indelibly recorded impressions to its successor. Every fresh consciousness consists of the potentialities of its predecessors together with something more. There is, therefore, a continuous flow of consciousness like a stream without any interruption. The subsequent thought-moment is neither absolutely the same as its predecessor—since that which goes to make it up is not identical—nor entirely another—being the same continuity of Kamma energy.

Here there is no identical being but there is an identity in process.

Every moment there is birth, every moment there is death. The arising of one thought-moment means the passing away of another thought-moment and vice versa. In the course of one life-time there is momentary rebirth without a soul.

It must not be understood that a consciousness is chopped up in bits and joined together like a train or a chain. But, on the contrary, "it persistently flows on like a river receiving from the tributary streams of sense constant accretions to its flood, and ever dispensing to the world without it the thought-stuff it has gathered by the way".¹ It has birth for its source and death for its mouth. The rapidity of the flow is such that hardly is there any standard whereby it can be measured even approximately. However, it pleases the commentators to say that the time duration of one thought-movement is even less than one-billionth part of the time occupied by a flash of lightning.

Here we find a juxta-position of such fleeting mental states of consciousness opposed to a super-position of such states as some appear to believe. No state once gone ever recurs nor is identical with what goes before. But we worldlings, veiled by the web of illusion, mistake this apparent continuity to be something eternal and go to the extent of introducing an unchanging soul, an Attā, the supposed doer and receptacle of all actions to this ever-changing consciousness.

"The so-called being is like a flash of lightning that is resolved into a succession of sparks that follow upon one another with such rapidity that the human retina cannot perceive them separately, nor can the uninstructed conceive of such succession of separate sparks".² As the wheel of a cart rests on the ground at one point, so does the being live only for one thought-moment. It is always in the present, and is

1 See *Compendium of Philosophy*, Tr. by Shwe Zan Aung (Pali Text Society, London)—Introduction p. 12

2 Comparé the cinematograph film where individual photographs give rise to a notion of movement.

ever slipping into the irrevocable past. What we shall become is determined by this present thought-moment.

If there is no soul, what is it that is reborn? one might ask.

Well, there is nothing to be re-born. When life ceases the Kammic energy re-materialises itself in another form. As Bhikkhu Silacara says: “Unseen it passes whithersoever the conditions appropriate to its visible manifestation are present. Here showing itself as a tiny gnat or worm, there making its presence known in the dazzling magnificence of a Deva or an Archangel’s existence. When one mode of its manifestation ceases it merely passes on, and where suitable circumstances offer, reveals itself afresh in another name or form.”

Birth is the arising of the psycho-physical phenomena. Death is merely the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon.

Just as the arising of a physical state is conditioned by a preceding state as its cause, so the appearance of psycho-physical phenomena is conditioned by causes anterior to its birth. As the process of one life-span is possible without a permanent entity passing from one thought-moment to another, so a series of life-processes is possible without an immortal soul to transmigrate from one existence to another.

Buddhism does not totally deny the existence of a personality in an empirical sense. It only attempts to show that it does not exist in an ultimate sense. The Buddhist philosophical term for an individual is *Santāna*, i.e., a flux or a continuity. It includes the mental and physical elements as well. The Kammic force of each individual binds the elements together. This uninterrupted flux or continuity of psycho-physical phenomenon, which is conditioned by *Kamma*, and not limited only to the present life, but having its source in the beginningless past and its continuation in the future—is the Buddhist substitute for the permanent ego or the immortal soul of other religions.

Chapter 10

NIBBĀNA

This process of birth and death continues *ad infinitum* until this flux is transmuted, so to say, to Nibbānadhātu, the ultimate goal of Buddhists.

The Pali word Nibbāna is formed of *Ni* and *Vāna*. *Ni* is a negative particle and *Vāna* means lusting or craving. “It is called Nibbāna, in that it is a departure from the craving which is called *Vāna*, lusting”. Literally, Nibbāna means non-attachment.

It may also be defined as the extinction of lust, hatred and ignorance. “The whole world is in flames”, says the Buddha. “By what fire is it kindled? By the fire of lust, hatred and ignorance, by the fire of birth, old age, death, pain, lamentation, sorrow, grief and despair it is kindled.”

It should not be understood that Nibbāna is a state of nothingness or annihilation owing to the fact that we cannot perceive it with our worldly knowledge. One cannot say that there exists no light just because the blind man does not see it. In that well known story, too, the fish arguing with his friend, the turtle, triumphantly concluded that there exists no land.

Nibbāna of the Buddhists is neither a mere nothingness nor a state of annihilation, but what it is no words can adequately express. Nibbāna is a Dhamma which is “unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, and unformed”. Hence it is eternal (*Dhuva*), desirable (*Subha*), and happy (*Sukha*).

In Nibbāna nothing is “eternalised”, nor is anything “annihilated,” besides suffering.

According to the Books references are made to Nibbāna as *Sopādisesa* and *Anupādisesa*. These, in fact, are not two kinds of Nibbāna, but the one single Nibbāna, receiving its

name according to the way it is experienced before and after death.

Nibbāna is not situated in any place nor is it a sort of heaven where a transcendental ego resides. It is a state which is dependent upon this body itself. It is an attainment (Dhamma) which is within the reach of all. Nibbāna is a supramundane state attainable even in this present life. Buddhism does not state that this ultimate goal could be reached only in a life beyond. Here lies the chief difference between the Buddhist conception of Nibbāna and the non-Buddhist conception of an eternal heaven attainable only after death or a union with a God or Divine Essence in an after-life. When Nibbāna is realized in this life with the body remaining, it is called *Sopādisesa Nibbāna-dhātu*. When an Arahāt attains Parinibbāna, after the dissolution of his body, without any remainder of physical existence it is called *Anupādisesa Nibbāna-dhātu*.

In the words of Sir Edwin Arnold—

“If any teach Nirvana is to cease
Say unto such they lie.
If any teach Nirvana is to live
Say unto such they err”.

From a metaphysical standpoint Nibbāna is deliverance from suffering. From a psychological standpoint Nibbāna is the eradication of egoism. From an ethical standpoint Nibbāna is the destruction of lust, hatred and ignorance.

Does the Arahāt exist or not after death?

The Buddha replies—“The Arahāt who has been released from the five aggregates is deep, immeasurable like the mighty ocean. To say that he is reborn would not fit the case. To say that he is neither reborn nor not reborn would not fit the case.”

One cannot say that an Arhat is reborn as all passions that condition rebirth are eradicated; nor can one say that the Arahāt is annihilated for there is nothing to annihilate.

Robert Oppenheimer, a scientist, writes:—

“If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say ‘no’. if we ask whether the electron’s position changes with time, we must say ‘no’; if we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say ‘no’; if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say ‘no’.

“The Buddha has given such answers when interrogated as to the conditions of man’s self after death;¹ but they are not familiar answers from the tradition of the 17th and 18th century science”.

¹ Evidently the writer is referring to the state of an Arahat after death.

Chapter 11

THE PATH TO NIBBĀNA

How is Nibbāna to be attained?

It is by following the Noble Eight-fold Path which consists of Right Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Thoughts (*sammā-sankappa*), Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Actions (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) and Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

1. *Right Understanding*, which is the key-note of Buddhism, is explained as the knowledge of the four Noble Truths. To understand rightly means to understand things as they really are and not as they appear to be. This refers primarily to a correct understanding of oneself, because, as the Rohitassa Sutta states “Dependent on this one-fathom long body with its consciousness” are all the four Truths. In the practice of the Noble Eight-fold Path, Right Understanding stands at the beginning as well as at its end. A minimum degree of Right Understanding is necessary at the very beginning because it gives the right motivations to the other seven factors of the Path and gives to them correct direction. At the culmination of the practice, Right Understanding has matured into perfect Insight Wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), leading directly to the Stages of Sainthood.

2. Clear vision or right understanding leads to clear thinking. The second factor of the Noble Eight-fold Path is, therefore, *Right Thoughts* (*sammā-sankappa*), which serves the double purpose of eliminating evil thoughts and developing pure thoughts. Right Thoughts, in this particular connection, are threefold. They consist of:

i. *Nekkhamma*—Renunciation of worldly pleasures or the virtue of selflessness, which is opposed to attachment, selfishness, and possessiveness.

ii. *Avyāpāda*—Lovingkindness, goodwill, or benevolence, which is opposed to hatred, ill-will, or aversion; and

iii. *Avihimsā*—Harmlessness or compassion, which is opposed to cruelty and callousness.

3. Right Thoughts lead to *Right Speech*, the third factor. This includes abstinence from falsehood, slandering, harsh words, and frivolous talk.

4. Right Speech must be followed by *Right Action* which comprises abstinence from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

5. Purifying his thoughts, words and deeds at the outset, the spiritual pilgrim tries to purify his *livelihood* by refraining from the five kinds of trade which are forbidden to a lay-disciple. They are trading in arms, human beings, animals for slaughter, intoxicating drinks and drugs, and poisons.

For monks, wrong livelihood consists of hypocritical conduct and wrong means of obtaining the requisites of monk-life.

6. *Right Effort* is fourfold, namely,

- i. The endeavour to discard evil that has already arisen;
- ii. the endeavour to prevent the arising of unarisen evil;
- iii. the endeavour to develop unarisen good;
- iv. the endeavour to promote the good which has already arisen.

7. *Right Mindfulness* is constant mindfulness with regard to body, feelings, thoughts, and mind-objects.

8. Right Effort and Right Mindfulness lead to *Right Concentration*. It is the one-pointedness of mind, culminating in the Jhānas or meditative absorptions.

Of these eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path the first two are grouped under the heading of Wisdom (*paññā*), the following three under Morality (*sīla*), and the last three under

Concentration (*samādhi*). But according to the order of development the sequence is as follows:

I. Morality (<i>sīla</i>)	{ Right Speech Right Action Right Livelihood
II. Concentration (<i>samādhi</i>)	{ Right Effort Right Mindfulness Right Concentration
III. Wisdom (<i>paññā</i>)	{ Right Understanding Right Thoughts

Morality (*sīla*) is the first stage on this path to Nibbāna.

Without killing or causing injury to any living creature, man should be kind and compassionate towards all, even to the tiniest creature that crawls at his feet. Refraining from stealing, he should be upright and honest in all his dealings. Abstaining from sexual misconduct which debases the exalted nature of man, he should be pure. Shunning false speech, he should be truthful. Avoiding pernicious drinks that promote heedlessness, he should be sober and diligent.

These elementary principles of regulated behaviour are essential to one who treads the path to Nibbāna. Violation of them means the introduction of obstacles on the path which will obstruct his moral progress. Observance of them means steady and smooth progress along the path.

The spiritual pilgrim, disciplining thus his words and deeds, may advance a step further and try to control his senses.

While he progresses slowly and steadily with regulated word and deed and restrained senses, the Kammic force of this striving aspirant may compel him to renounce worldly pleasures and adopt the ascetic life. To him then comes the idea that

“A den of strife is household life,
And filled with toil and need;
But free and high as the open sky
Is the life the homeless lead”.

It should not be understood that everyone is expected to lead the life of a Bhikkhu or a celibate life to achieve one's goal. One's spiritual progress is expedited by being a Bhikkhu although as a lay follower one can become an Arahāt. After attaining the third stage of Sainthood, one leads a life of celibacy.

Securing a firm footing on the ground of morality, the progressing pilgrim then embarks upon the higher practice of Samādhi, the control and culture of the mind—the second stage on this Path.

Samādhi—is the “one-pointedness of the mind”. It is the concentration of the mind on one object to the entire exclusion of all irrelevant matter.

There are different subjects for meditation according to the temperaments of the individuals. Concentration on respiration is the easiest to gain the one-pointedness of the mind. Meditation on loving-kindness is very beneficial as it is conducive to mental peace and happiness.

Cultivation of the four sublime states—loving-kindness (*Mettā*), compassion (*Karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*Muditā*), and equanimity (*Upekkhā*)—is highly commendable.

After giving careful consideration to the subject for contemplation, he should choose the one most suited to his temperament. This being satisfactorily settled, he makes a persistent effort to focus his mind until he becomes so wholly absorbed and interested in it, that all other thoughts get ipso facto excluded from the mind. The five hindrances to progress—namely, sense-desire, hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and brooding and doubts are then temporarily inhibited. Eventually he gains ecstatic concentration and, to his indes-

cribable joy, becomes enwrapt in Jhāna, enjoying the calmness and serenity of a one-pointed-mind.

When one gains this perfect one-pointedness of the mind it is possible for one to develop the five Supernormal Powers (*Abhiññā*)—Divine Eye (*Dibbacakkhu*), Divine Ear (*Dibbasota*), Reminiscence of past births (*Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*), Thought Reading (*Paracitta-vijānana*), and different Psychic Powers (*Iddhividha*). It must not be understood that those supernormal powers are essential for Sainthood.

Though the mind is now purified there still lies dormant in him the tendency to give vent to his passions, for, by concentration, passions are lulled to sleep temporarily. They may rise to the surface at unexpected moments.

Both Discipline and Concentration are helpful to clear the Path of its obstacles but it is Insight (*Vipassanā Paññā*) alone which enables one to see things as they truly are, and consequently reach the ultimate goal by completely annihilating the passions inhibited by Samādhi. This is the third and the final stage on the Path to Nibbāna.

With his one-pointed mind which now resembles a polished mirror he looks at the world to get a correct view of life. Wherever he turns his eyes he sees nought but the Three Characteristics—*Anicca* (transiency), *Dukkha* (sorrow) and *Anattā* (soul-lessness) standing out in bold relief. He comprehends that life is constantly changing and all conditioned things are transient. Neither in heaven nor on earth does he find any genuine happiness, for every form of pleasure is a prelude to pain. What is transient is therefore painful, and where change and sorrow prevail, there cannot be a permanent immortal soul.

Whereupon, of these three characteristics, he chooses one that appeals to him most and intently keeps on developing Insight in that particular direction until that glorious day comes to him when he would realize Nibbāna for the first time in his life, having destroyed the three Fetters—self-

illusion (*Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), doubts (*Vicikicchā*), indulgence in (wrongful) rites and ceremonies (*Sīlabbataparāmāsa*).

At this stage he is called a *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Winner)—one who has entered the stream that leads to Nibbāna. As he has not eradicated all Fetters he is reborn seven times at the most.

Summoning up fresh courage, as a result of this glimpse of Nibbāna, the Pilgrim makes rapid progress and cultivating deeper Insight becomes a *Sakadāgāmi*—(Once Returner)—by weakening two more Fetters—namely, Sense-desire (*Kāmarāga*) and ill-will (*Paṭigha*). He is called a Sakadagami because he is reborn on earth only once in case he does not attain Arahatsip.

It is in the third stage of Sainthood—*Anāgāmi* (Never-Returner) that he completely discards the aforesaid two Fetters. Thereafter, he neither returns to this world nor does he seek birth in the celestial realms, since he has no more desire for sensual pleasures. After death he is reborn in the ‘Pure Abodes’ (*Suddhāvāsa*), a congenial Brahma plane, till he attains Arahatsip.

Now the saintly pilgrim, encouraged by the unprecedented success of his endeavours, makes his final advance and destroying the remaining Fetters, namely, lust after life in Realms of Forms (*Rūparāga*) and Formless Realms (*Arūparāga*), conceit (*Māna*), restlessness (*Uddhacca*), and ignorance (*Avijjā*) becomes a perfect Saint—an Arahāt, a Worthy One.

Instantly he realizes that what was to be accomplished has been done, that a heavy burden of sorrow has been relinquished, that all forms of attachment have been totally annihilated, and that the Path to Nibbāna has been trodden. The Worthy-One now stands on heights more than celestial, far removed from the rebellious passions and defilements of the world, realizing the unutterable bliss of Nibbāna and like many an Arahāt of old, uttering that paeon of joy:—

‘‘Goodwill and wisdom, mind by method trained,

The highest conduct on good morals based,
This maketh mortals pure, not rank or wealth''.

As T. H. Huxley states—''Buddhism is a system which knows no God in the western sense, which denies a soul to man, which counts the belief in immortality a blunder, which refuses any efficacy to prayer and sacrifice, which bids men look to nothing but their own efforts for salvation, which in its original purity knew nothing of vows of obedience and never sought the aid of the secular arm: yet spread over a considerable moiety of the world with marvellous rapidity—and is still the dominant creed of a large fraction of mankind.''

APPENDIX

CONCENTRATION ON RESPIRATION

Ānāpāna Sati

Ānāpāna Sati is mindfulness on respiration. *Āna* means inhalation and *Apāna*, exhalation.

Concentration on the breathing process leads to one-pointedness of the mind and ultimately to Insight which enables one to attain Sainthood or Arahatsip.

The Buddha also practised concentration on respiration before He attained Enlightenment.

This harmless concentration may be practised by any person irrespective of religious beliefs.

Adopting a convenient posture, keep the body erect. Place the right hand over the left hand. Eyes may be closed or half-closed.

Easterners generally sit cross-legged with the body erect. They sit placing the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. This is the full position. Sometimes they adopt the half position, that is by simply placing the right foot on the left thigh or the left foot on the right thigh.

When the triangular position is assumed the whole body is well-balanced.

Those who find the cross-legged posture too difficult may sit comfortably in a chair or any other support sufficiently high to rest the legs on the ground.

It is of no importance which posture one may adopt provided the position is easy and relaxed.

Head should not be drooping. Neck should be straightened so that the nose may be in a perpendicular line with the navel.

Buddhas usually adopt the full lotus position. They sit with half closed eyes looking not more than a distance of three and half feet.

Before the practice, bad air from the lungs should be breathed out slowly through the mouth and then the mouth should be closed.

Now inhale through the nostrils normally, without strain, without force. Mentally count one. Exhale and count two. Inhale and count three. Count up to ten constantly concentrating on the breathing process without thinking of anything else. While doing so one's mind may wander. But, one need not be discouraged. Gradually one may increase the number of series—say five series of ten.

Later, one may inhale and pause for a moment, concentrating merely on inhalation without counting. Exhale and pause for a moment. Thus inhale and exhale concentrating on respiration. Some prefer counting as it aids concentration while others prefer not to count. What is essential is concentration and not counting which is secondary.

When one practises this concentration one feels very peaceful, light in mind and body. After practising for a certain period a day might come when one may realize that this so-called body is supported by mere breath and that body perishes when breathing ceases. One fully realizes impermanence. Where there is change there cannot be a permanent entity or an immortal soul. Insight can then be developed to attain Arahatsip.

It is clear that the object of this concentration on respiration is not merely to gain one-pointedness but also to cultivate Insight to obtain deliverance from suffering.

In some discourses this simple and harmless method of respiration is described as follows:—

“Mindfully he inhales; mindfully he exhales.

1. When making a long inhalation he knows: ‘I make a long inhalation’; when making a long exhalation he knows: ‘I make a long exhalation’.

2. When making a short inhalation he knows: 'I make a short inhalation'; when making a short exhalation he knows; 'I make a short exhalation'.

3. Clearly perceiving the entire breathing process (i.e., the beginning, middle and end), 'I will inhale'; thus he trains himself; clearly perceiving the entire breathing process, 'I will exhale'; thus he trains himself'.

4. Calming the respirations, 'I will inhale': thus he trains himself; calming the respirations, 'I will exhale': thus he trains himself.'''

MEDITATION ON LOVING-KINDNESS (*Mettā*)

Be still and peaceful.

Recite three times—*Namo Buddhāya*—(Honour to the Buddha)

Recite three times—*Araham*—(The Pure One)

Recite—

Buddham saraṇam gacchāmi—(I go to the Buddha for refuge)

Dhammam saraṇam gacchāmi—(I go to the Dhamma for refuge)

Sangham saraṇam gacchāmi—(I go to the Sangha for refuge)¹

*

*

*

Think thus—

My mind is temporarily pure, free from all impurities; free from lust, hatred and ignorance; free from all evil thoughts.

My mind is pure and clean. Like a polished mirror is my stainless mind.

As a clean and empty vessel is filled with pure water I now fill my clean heart and pure mind with peaceful and sublime thoughts of boundless loving-kindness, overflowing compassion, sympathetic joy and perfect equanimity.

I have now washed my mind and heart of anger, illwill, cruelty, violence, jealousy, envy, passion and aversion.

Think ten times—

May I² be well and happy!

May I be free from suffering, disease, grief, worry and anger!

May I be strong, self-confident, healthy and peaceful!

1 This introductory part may be omitted by non-Buddhists.

2 Here the term “I” is used in a conventional sense.

Think thus—

Now I charge every particle of my system, from head to foot, with thoughts of boundless loving-kindness and compassion. I am the embodiment of loving-kindness and compassion. My whole body is saturated with loving-kindness and compassion. I am a stronghold, a fortress of loving-kindness and compassion. I am nothing but loving-kindness and compassion. I have sublimated myself, elevated myself, ennobled myself.

Think ten times—

May I be well and happy!

May I be free from suffering, disease, grief, worry and anger!

May I be strong, self-confident, healthy and peaceful!

Think—

Mentally I create an aura of loving-kindness around me.

By means of this aura, I cut off all negative thoughts, hostile vibrations. I am not affected by the evil vibrations of others. I return good for evil, loving-kindness for anger, compassion for cruelty, sympathetic joy for jealousy. I am peaceful and well-balanced in mind.

Now I am a fortress of loving-kindness, a stronghold of morality.

What I have gained I now give unto others.

Think of all your near and dear ones at home, individually or collectively, and fill them with thoughts of loving-kindness, and wish them peace and happiness, repeating May all beings be well and happy!... Then think of all seen and unseen beings, living near and far, men, women, animals and all living beings, in the East, West, North, South, above and below, and radiate boundless loving-kindness, without any enmity or obstruction, towards all, irrespective of class, creed, colour or sex.

Think that all are your brothers and sisters, fellow-beings in the ocean of life. You identify yourself with all. You are one with all.

Repeat ten times—May all beings be well and happy... and wish them all peace and happiness.

In the course of your daily life try to translate your thoughts into action as occasion demands.

PERFECTIONS (*Pārami*)

1. May I be generous and helpful! (*Dāna*—Generosity)
2. May I be well-disciplined and refined in manners! May I be pure and clean in all my dealings! May my thoughts, words and deeds be pure!
(*Sīla*—Morality)
3. May I not be selfish and self-possessive but selfless and disinterested!
May I be able to sacrifice my pleasure for the sake of others!
(*Nekkhamma*—Renunciation)
4. May I be wise and be able to see things as they truly are! May I see the light of Truth and lead others from darkness to light! May I be enlightened and be able to enlighten others! May I be able to give the benefit of my knowledge to others!
(*Paññā*—Wisdom)
5. May I be energetic, vigorous and persevering ! May I strive diligently until I achieve my goal! May I be fearless in facing dangers and courageously surmount all obstacles! May I be able to serve others to the best of my ability!
(*Viriya*—Energy)
6. May I ever be patient! May I be able to bear and forbear the wrongs of others! May I ever be tolerant and see the good and beautiful in all!
(*Khanti*—Patience)
7. May I ever be truthful and honest! May I not hide the truth to be polite! May I never swerve from the path of Truth!
(*Sacca*—Truthfulness).
8. May I be firm and resolute and have an iron will! May I be soft as a flower and firm as a rock! May I ever be

high-principled!

(*Adhiṭṭhāna*—Determination).

9. May I ever be kind, friendly and compassionate! May I be able to regard all as my brothers and sisters and be one with all!

(*Mettā*—Loving-kindness)

10. May I ever be calm, serene, unruffled and peaceful! May I gain a balanced mind! May I have perfect equanimity!

(*Upekkhā*—Equanimity).

May I serve to be perfect!

May I be perfect to serve!

STUDY GUIDE

through THE WHEEL Publications

Selected titles from 100 issues

Life of the Buddha

The Buddha. His Life and Teaching. Piyadassi Thera.
(No. 5a/b) Double Number.

The Light of Asia. Edwin Arnold. (Chapters VI-VIII,
beginning with the Enlightenment) (No. 29)

Last Days of the Buddha. Full translation of the Mahā-
Parinibbāna-Sutta. (No. 67/69) Triple Number.

Salient Features of the Teaching

The Four Noble Truths. Francis Story. (No. 34/35) Double
Number.

The Three Signata. Prof. O. H. de A. Wijesekera. (No. 20).

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment. Piyadassi Thera.
(No. 1).

Karma and Rebirth. Nyanatiloka Thera. (No. 9)

The Case for Rebirth. Francis Story. (No. 12/13). Double
Number.

Dependent Origination. Piyadassi Thera. (No. 15a/b)
Double Number.

The Five Mental Hindrances. Nyanaponika Thera. (No. 26)

Anattā and Nibbāna. Egolessness and Deliverance. Nyana-
ponika Thera. (No. 11)

The Truth of Anattā. Dr. G. P. Malalasekera. (No. 94)

The Way of Wisdom (The Five Faculties). Dr. Edward
Conze. (No. 65/66) Double Number.

The Satipatthana Sutta and its Application to Modern Life.
V. F. Gunaratne. (No. 60)

Buddhist Meditation and Depth Psychology. Dr. D. M.
Burns. (No. 88/89) Double Number.

General

Dialogues on the Dhamma. Francis Story. (No. 80/81)
Double Number.

The Contribution of Buddhism to World Culture. Soma Thera. (No. 44)

Buddhism and Science. (No. 3)

Buddhism and the Age of Science. U Chan Htoon. (No. 36/37) Double Number.

Buddhism and Peace. Dr. K. N. Jayatilleke. (No. 41)

Buddhism and the God Idea. Nyanaponika Thera. (No. 47)

Buddhism and Christianity. Prof. H. v. Galsenapp. (No. 16)

Early Western Buddhists. Francis Story. (No. 42/43)
Double Number.

Discourses of the Buddha

Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha. Nyanamoli Thera. (No. 17)

The Kālāma Sutta. The Buddha's Charter of Free Inquiry. Soma Thera. (No. 8)

Everyman's Ethics. Four Discourses. Nārada Thera. (No. 14)

The Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta). Nyanasatta Thera. (No. 19)

The Removal of Distracting Thoughts. Soma Thera. (No. 21)

Tevijja Sutta. A Discourse of the Buddha on the Path to God. (No. 57/58) Double Number

The Discourse on the Snake Simile. Nyanaponika Thera. (No. 47/48) Double Number.

The Simile of the Cloth. The Discourse on Effacement. (No. 61/62) Double Number.

Taming the Mind. Discourses of the Buddha. (No. 51)

Buddhist Ethics

The Five Precepts. Dr. Dahlke and others. (No. 54)

Everyman's Ethics. Four Discourses. (No. 14)

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

P. O. Box 61

KANDY — CEYLON

Objects:

Publication of Buddhist literature, primarily pamphlets and tracts, and their distribution throughout the world to all those interested in the Buddha's Teaching of Deliverance.

Publications:

The Wheel. A series of booklets which will gradually cover all important aspects of Buddhism.

Bodhi Leaves. A series of small introductory tracts.

Damsak. A series of booklets on the Dhamma in Sinhala.

New titles are added regularly to all three serial publications. Book List available on application.

Permission to reprint or translate the publications may be had on application.

Those who wish to further the objects of the Society may join as Associate Members or contributors. Associate Membership is Rs. 25/-, £2, \$5 a year. Associate Members or Contributors receive free issues of publications.

BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

(Founded 1958)

Report for the year 1967

In December 1967 the Buddhist Publication Society completed the tenth year of its service to the Dhamma. To mark the anniversary our friends and well-wishers were sent a Greetings Card which carried the closing words of the Society's First Annual Report 1958.

‘ May the merit acquired by all those who so generously helped our movement of making known the Dhamma, be shared by all beings in the world, and may this *puññakamma* (meritorious act) be an aid on their path to Deliverance.’

Since those words were written, 974,000 booklets and books – The Wheel, Bodhi Leaves, Damsak (Sinhala) and special book publications have been issued and distributed in 70 countries.

The Greetings Card then went on to thank our members and well-wishers whose co-operation has contributed to the success of the BPS, and conveyed thoughts of Metta to all on the happy anniversary, with the wish that the Blessings of the Dhamma might reach all quarters of the earth, It concluded with the following verses :

No trumpet sounds, no warlike music shrills,
But quietly they stream forth with modest looks
And peaceful mien, to overcome life's ills —
The noble army of the Dhamma-books.

The Wheels roll on, the Bodhi Leaves disperse,
Each with some precious teaching for mankind
Of that grand Law no power can reverse —
The Liberation Army of the Mind.

The following are extracts from some of the many
congratulatory messages sent by our readers :

‘I wish to extend my heartfelt congratulations for
the most splendid work in which you have been
engaged these last ten years. The whole
conception of your venture and the amazing
amount of material you have already published is
really outstanding, and I am sure it will forever
remain as an invaluable source of Buddhist know-
ledge and information.’

M. Rene de Berval, Director, France-Asie.

“How refreshing and lovely it was in these sad
days of tension and strife to receive the card of the
Buddhist Publication Society’s 10th anniversary.
The happiness and joy this card brought me lasted
throughout the whole day.

“I read my books, pamphlets and tracts etc. on this
subject. In quite a few the Dhamma is either mis-
understood or misinterpreted and my heart sinks
thinking of those people who will be misinformed.
But where the BPS is concerned, I am totally free
from this fear, knowing that nothing that is not the
purest Dhamma will ever be set forth in either the
Wheel or Bodhi Leaves.”

Mrs. Irene Quittner, London.

‘ I am writing on behalf of Dr. I. B. Horner and myself to wish you and the Buddhist Publication Society every possible good wish on the 10th anniversary, and to congratulate you and all concerned on the wonderful results achieved during the past 10 years. Your unswerving devotion to the publication of Buddhist works has had its effects, and your Society is now known throughout most countries in the world. The books and pamphlets have been of great comfort and help to thousands of people. Many of them have penetrated into prisons and are part of their libraries, ready to help more people who have to spend long or short periods there. Now you are starting another decade which we hope will have equally inspiring success.’

Miss Joan P. Pope, London.

‘ The good work of your Society almost defies calculation. Your publications are constant reminders of the power of the Dhamma, and are my constant companions, and so too with other people I have met. As reference books and sources of practical inspiration for the daily application of the Dhamma to our lives they are invaluable.’

Allan R. Gordon, England.

We sincerely thank all those who sent us similar messages, and share our merit with them.

* * * * *

Publications

The following were issued in 1967 :

THE WHEEL

- No. 101 The Greater Discourse on the Elephant
 footprint Simile (Majjh. 28)
- 102/103 Buddhist Reflections on Death -
 V. F. Gunaratna
- 104 Early Buddhism and the taking of life.
 Dr. I. B. Horner
- 105/106 The Four Nutriments of Life. Selected
 texts, transl. by Nyanaponika Thera.
- 107/109 An Anthology from the Samyutta
 Nikaya. transl. by J. D. Ireland.
- 110 Ratthapala Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 82)
- 111 Buddhism and Comparative Religion,
 and other Essays by Prof. Dr. H. von
 Glasenapp.
- 112 The Buddha's Last Bequest. A Transla-
 tion from the Chinese Tripitaka. Ed. by
 Bhikkhu Khantipalo.
- 113/114 Buddhist Commentarial Literature -
 Lakshmi R. Goonesekere.

BODHI LEAVES

- No. B 32 The Threefold Division of the Noble
 Eightfold Path. Piyadassi Thera.
- 33 Extinction without Remainder
 Buddhadasa Bhikkhu.
- 34 Protection Through Satipatthana.
 Nyanaponika Thera.
- 35 The Four Cankers. - T. H. Perera.
- 36 Renunciation. - T. Prince.

දම්සක් (DAMSAK)

අංක : 39 සුවර්තය - පැළෑෂේ ශ්‍රී වජිරඥාණ මහා
නායක මාහිමිපාණෝ.

40/41 අවර දිගුන් දුටු සුනරුවත්පත්තිය -
අමරසිරි විරරත්න.

42 මහා පජාපති ගෞතමී චරිතය -
පඤ්ඤාකිත්ති මාහිමිපාණෝ.

43 භාවනා මාර්ගය - පියදස්සි සාමිනි
වහන්සේ.

44 කසිහාරද්වාප සූත්‍රය - මාහෝ සුමේධ
සාමිනිවහන්සේ.

45/46 පුරාණ ඉන්දියාවේ බෞද්ධ විශ්ව
විද්‍යාල - කේ. එච්. ඇම්. සුමතිපාල.

Special WHEEL issue

Buddhism in a Nutshell

REPRINTS

Wheel No. 3 Buddhism & Science - Essays by
Prof. K. N. Jayatilleke and others.

7 The Practice of Loving Kindness
(Metta) transl. by Nanamoli Thera.

36/37 Buddhism & The Age of Science.
U Chan Htoon

63/64 Aids to Abhidhamma Philosophy
with charts. Dr. C. B. Dharmasena.

BODHI LEAVES

A 2 - Influence of Buddhism on a People.
Nyanatiloka Thera.

A 3 - Two Buddhist Parables. Nyanasatta Thera.

A 10 - A Teaching of Our Time. Soma Thera.

B 4 - Of Gods and Men. Francis Story.

Special BODHI LEAVES issue

Buddhism a Living Message. - Piyadassi Thera

SPECIAL BOOK PUBLICATIONS

Word of the Buddha - Nyanatiloka Thera

Way of Mindfulness. - Satipatthana Sutta and
Commentary. Soma Thera

The year's output was 134,000 copies made up as follows:

45,000	copies	The Wheel
25,000	,,	Bodhi Leaves
25,000	,,	Damsak දම්සක්
11,000	,;	The Wheel Reprints
12,000	,,	Bodhi Leaves Reprints
10,000	,,	Buddhism in a Nutshell
3,500	,,	Word of the Buddha
1,000	,,	Buddhism - A Living Message
1,500	,,	Way of Mindfulness

The total production since inception of the Society in 1958 has been 974,000 booklets and books.

Distribution

The steady increase in the Society's mailings which has been noted in previous years has been fully maintained during the past twelve months. In addition to the enrolment of new Associate Members and subscribers, the free mailing list has been substantially enlarged by the inclusion of newly-formed Buddhist groups, to which the BPS is ever ready to lend its support by providing the literature necessary for collective study and private reading. The continual demand for BPS publications from Buddhists abroad gives abundant proof that what is sought by intelligent people to-day is the original and fundamental Teaching of the Buddha without accretions or subtractions.

It is not possible to make a detailed analysis of the response to the Dhamma as it appears in letters to the BPS from readers abroad; but a general survey confirms the belief that what appeals most to thoughtful people of this age is that Buddhism from the beginning had no need or place for certain concepts which have become an embarrassment to other religions in their confrontation with knowledge and actuality. Having thrown off the shackles of myth and of theories no longer found to be necessary for an understanding of the world we live in, the modern mind does not desire substitutes for them under other names. Rational thinking cherishes the law of parsimony, which holds that phenomena should not be given a complete explanation if a simpler one will cover all the observed facts, and it is precisely according to this rule that Buddhism deals with the human situation and its basic problems. An integrated view of life gives meaning and direction to our actions, resolves conflicts between the ethical and the instinctive, and restores the faith that is needed to meet the challenge of day-to-day living. Buddhism is action directed by a clear view of reality unclouded by myth and dogmatism.

The many letters of appreciation that we receive almost unanimously point to this as one of the chief features that draw people to the Dhamma in an age when critical thinking has vitiated so many traditional religious beliefs.

Dhamma Information Service

At the same time, questions are many, and the BPS Information Service has been kept active in answering them. This branch of the Society's work has produced a number of interesting exchanges, and we hope in the

near future to publish some of the more important questions and answers in an issue of THE WHEEL.

A few of our readers have sent us helpful criticism. Such letters are always given careful consideration and we thank the senders for their interest in our work.

Bound Volumes

The bound volumes of The Wheel and Bodhi Leaves have met with great success. They can now find a place in libraries wherever English is understood. Some of our members and subscribers have been good enough to donate sets of them to libraries in which they are interested, and we are glad to report that they have been welcomed in every case. We hope to provide early attractive dust-jackets for the bound volumes.

Considering the high cost of books at present, the BPS bound volumes of The Wheel in serial order, and Selected Buddhist Texts are very inexpensive, a fact which has contributed in some measure to the demand for them. We have reason to believe that for their intrinsic value many people would consider them worth double the price, but the Society's aim is still, as it was from its inception, to place the Dhamma within the reach of every one; and to have made our books permanently accessible in public and institutional libraries is a great step towards that goal.

BPS on the air

We have been informed by our good friend Mr. Richard Petterson of the U. S. A., that some excerpts from our publications were broadcast from a major Philadelphia radio station. They were read by two Christian clergymen, who 'commented very favourably on the ideas found therein.'

Mr. Petterson wrote to the Programme Directors to thank them; and this has resulted in a further radio discussion 'during which the BPS was mentioned several times.' BPS books are now being regularly sent and acknowledgments are made regularly in the broadcasts.

Translations

As before our books continued to be translated into foreign languages, and published separately or serialised in magazines. We add Portugese to the ten languages into which some of our Wheels and Bodhi Leaves have been translated.

Hotels - Free Distribution

The Ceylon Hotels Corporation has now been added to the list of recipients of our free literature. The bedrooms of the hotels and resthouses run by the Corporation are supplied with two of our publications: "Buddhism in a Nutshell", "Buddhism: A Living Message". This service has been greatly appreciated and a number of visitors to the Island have called at the BPS headquarters as the result of reading these introductory books. We thank the Corporation and the managements of the other leading hotels both here in Kandy and in Colombo for their co-operation.

The Buddhist Hospital Services in Colombo and Kandy and several religious and social organisations were issued as before liberal supplies of our publications.

Publicity

We had never given thought to publicise our work except through the medium of our publications alone, which we have always held was our best publicity.

Mr. B. P. Kirthisinghe, our friend in the U. S. A., nevertheless has regularly brought our work to the notice of the American public by his advertisements in magazines and papers.

Another good friend Mr. J. Vandariet in NewGuinea inserted in the local papers monthly the following notice:

“ Buddhist view of life and basic human problems.
Write for free literature to the Buddhist Publication
Society, Box 61, Kandy - Ceylon”

Many contacts have been made through these advertisements; and requests have been met with liberal supplies of Wheel and Bodhi Leaves. We are most ful thank to both Mr. Kirthisinghe and Mr. Vandariet for this assistance to our work.

We also wish to place here on record our debt of gratitude to the Editor of the “Middle Way” for the free advertisements given to our Society over the past years.

Some New Contacts.

The Ven. Piyadassi Thera's mission in Ghana and Brazil for seven months has strengthened the bonds of friendship which our books and correspondence had already established in those countries; and has besides brought in many new contacts. The frequent demands for our books augurs well for the growth of the Dhamma in these lands where Buddhism is so very little known.

Visitors.

Many friends visited us during the year. Those who called at our headquarters sometimes found the time to visit our Venerable Editor at the Forest Hermitage, and a few even lodged with him for a night or two. We

welcome these visits from our friends whose contact with us has been through the medium of our books and correspondence. We have no doubt that these personal contacts will further develop our relationships.

Finance.

The statement of accounts for 1967 comes with this report. A noticeable feature in these accounts is the fall of our surplus of income over expenditure to a few hundred rupees, notwithstanding the increase in our subscriptions and contributions. We attribute this to the increased costs in printing; and more especially to our other extra publications eight reprints of the Wheel and Bodhi Leaves, a special Wheel ‘Buddhism in a Nutshell’ and three other books.

Establishment and postage costs have also risen consequent to the considerable increase in work. The daily average expenditure on stamps was over Rs. 17/-.

Donations

The annual subsidy from the Department of Cultural Affairs has been a valuable support; and we are most thankful to the Government for this assistance.

We continue to receive the royalties on the ‘Heart of Buddhist Meditation’ and ‘The Buddha’s Ancient Path’ turned to us by the Venerable authors.

The Presidents of the Rural Courts at Kuliyaipitiya and Wariyapola sent us a share of the court fines available for distribution to charitable institutions. Supplies of our publications were always sent in return for distribution to the parties concerned.

Special donations came in as before from several good friends both in Ceylon and abroad. To all of them and others we offer the merit of our service in spreading the Dhamma.

Acknowledgements

Our Editor, the Ven. Nyanaponika Thera with the assistance of Mr. Francis Story continued to shoulder the burden of editing and proof reading, while the Ven. Piyadassi Thera carried on with the editing of the Sinhala Series 'Damsak'. They have laboured on this work for the last ten years; and were it not for their devotion we would not have been able to produce our books with such regularity.

In this connection we must not fail to mention Mr. H. G. A. Van Zeyst, the Chief Assistant Editor of the Buddhist Encyclopaedia, who took the sole responsibility of editing and reading through the proofs of 'The Way of Mindfulness'. It was his help alone that made the publication of 'The Way' possible; and we offer our warmest thanks for this invaluable service.

We continue to receive the support of our helpers. We may however specially mention the assistance given throughout the year by Mr. M. Mohotti of the Kandy Municipal Council in keeping our books of accounts and in preparing the final statements; and that of Mr. K. R. Perera of the C.A.S. who despite his transfer from Kandy attended to the complete audit of our accounts at much personal inconvenience. We are most grateful for the continuance of this co-operation and ready assistance.

Puññānumodana

We look back with much happiness on the success of our work during the last ten years in the spreading of the Dhamma throughout the world - a service perhaps unparalleled in the propagation of the Dhamma through literature. To all who have helped us in this service either directly or indirectly by giving us their time and service and by assisting us financially through subscriptions and special donations we return our warmest thanks and gladly share with them the merit of our Dhamma dāna to the world. May this help be always to their happiness.

R. Abeyasekera

P. B. Mudannayake.

Honorary Secretaries.

THE WHEEL SERIES

A COMPENDIUM OF BUDDHIST
DOCTRINE comprising essays on
Buddhist Philosophy, Ethics,
Psychology, Meditation and
miscellaneous subjects, together
with Translations of
BUDDHIST TEXTS